How Minority Politicians Are Elected, Represent Minorities Differently, and Affect Citizens' Political Behavior: Five Empirical Contributions

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"The principle difficulty lies, and the greatest care should be employed in constituting this representative assembly."

It should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large.

It should think, feel, reason, and act like them.

That it may be the interest of this assembly to do strict justice at all times, it should be an equal representation.

In other words, equal interests among the people should have equal interests in it."

– John Adams

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Essay Abstract

In this essay, I examine how and why minority elected officials represent minority constituents differently, or what political scientists term *the effects of descriptive representation*. In other words, this essay considers the consequences of when citizens and their elected representatives share *descriptive* characteristics in common – e.g. their race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. I address this topic in four chapters, each of which employs a different methodological approach to bring new evidence to longstanding political and scholarly debates.

First Chapter – Linked Fate. In my first chapter, I provide new evidence on what many consider to be the central question about minority representation: are minority politicians more likely to work on behalf of their groups' interest, even without political incentive to do so? This question has proven difficult for researchers to address because politicians' public behavior cannot provide a reliable basis for inference about their motivations.

This chapter reports a unique field experiment that attempts to answer this question while surmounting the obstacle that public behavior represents. With help from a Geographic Information System (GIS), I sent 6,928 state legislators in the United States a request for help registering for state unemployment benefits that, randomly, purported to come from an individual living in a city either within or far from each legislators' district. Critically, all the letters came from a name that strongly signaled the sender was black (Tyrone Washington). Because half the letters came from an individual who ostensibly lived hundreds of miles from each legislator's constituents, the experiment manipulated the level of political incentive legislators had to respond to these letters. The experiment thus offers a unique systematic portrait of legislators' behavior towards members of a minority group when their constituents could not observe their behavior. The results show that black legislators were far less sensitive to this change in political incentive. Whereas non-black legislators were half as likely to respond to the letter if it came from a person far from their district, black legislators were only slightly less likely to respond. This implies that black legislators are more likely than their non-black counterparts to act in the interest of blacks when they have little political incentive to do so. This has direct implications for the degree to which non-black legislators can be expected to provide the same degree of representation as black legislators to black constituents. The methodology I developed in this chapter may also be of use to scholars studying other groups or areas.

Second Chapter – Political Participation. My second chapter shifts from a focus on the behavior of politicians to analyze the behavior of everyday citizens. It is often lamented that many historically excluded groups still do not vote, make political contributions, tell their legislators their opinions on political issues, or otherwise politically participate as frequently as other Americans.

In this chapter I use a field experiment and a regression discontinuity design to show that minorities are markedly more likely to communicate their political views to a legislator of their group, though they are no more likely to vote because a member of their group represents them. Existing literature on this subject presents mixed findings, has difficulty measuring political participation, and does not adequately disentangle the causal relationship between the election of minorities and political participation among minorities. However, I develop and implement a methodology that addresses these longstanding inferential challenges.

I first report the results of a field experiment conducted on more than 20,000 voters that takes advantage of a unique electoral rule in Maryland. Maryland's legislative districts are multimember districts, meaning that in several instances a black and a white legislator both serve the same district. I called black and white voters in districts represented by legislators of both races and administered a survey purportedly on behalf of one of their legislators, the race of which I randomly assigned. Blacks were nearly twice as likely to signal willingness to complete the survey when offered the opportunity to communicate to their black state house member, whereas whites were more likely to communicate to their white state house member. Blacks and whites were both thus significantly more likely to politically communicate with a legislator of their race.

I then discuss a regression discontinuity design that tests whether the election of women causes women to turn out to vote at relatively higher rates. This approach employs a statistical technique to take advantage of the natural experiment that occurs when a woman just wins or just loses a contest in a general election against a man. By comparing districts where women just won and just lost in the previous election, I estimate the effect of electing a woman on women's subsequent voter turnout. Contrary to what much existing literature claims based on strictly correlative evidence, my results, based on more than 3,000 elections, show that the election of women does not cause women to vote at relatively higher rates.

These findings represent new evidence for the argument that minority descriptive representation increases political communication between minorities and their representatives, though also show that this increase in political participation does not appear to extend to voting. The results thus show that descriptive representation is an important conduit for minorities to express their policy preferences, though it appears not to increase political empowerment more generally.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter also represents the first experimental and natural experimental tests of these questions of which I am aware and thus represents two additional methodological contributions of potential use to other scholars. *Third Chapter – Life Experience and Policy Expertise.* My third chapter departs from the quantitative approaches of my first two chapters and reports the results of three months of qualitative research I conducted in majority-minority districts in the American south. During the summer of 2010, I conducted "participant-observation research" – that is, I travelled along with and interviewed – twenty-seven state legislators who represent heavily-black districts. I usually spent between three and five days with each legislator, often (at their request) posing as their aides and following them to their meetings, speeches, and other events.

From the evidence gathered during this fieldwork, I argue that minority elected officials often have unique life experiences which prove relevant to their roles as policymakers. I first support the argument that minorities have systematically different life experiences that are relevant to politics with a unique dataset I gathered in the field that shows that civil society is extremely racially segregated. I then defend the general premise that life experiences generally matter for a legislator's ability to provide representation: those with previous professional experience in finance, for example, could be expected to better understand the details of financial regulatory policy if elected to the legislature. I then argue both from these premises and with additional evidence that minority legislators' significantly different pre-political life experiences allow them to better understand certain policy issues relevant to minority constituents. Existing scholarship often considers the difference between how black and white legislators provide representation by analyzing legislative roll call votes on issues that are very narrowly defined as racial, such as civil rights votes. By contrast, this chapter argues that we should expect differences in how minorities provide representation in far more behavior than casting final roll call votes and on a far greater number of issues.

In sum, then, the third chapter marshals extensive evidence to argue that minority

legislators' greater ability to provide representation on issues relevant to minorities means that minority legislators play an invaluable role in representing minorities' interests in the policymaking process.

Fourth Chapter – How To Increase Minority Representation. My fourth and final chapter then turns to the question of how to increase minority representation. Existing techniques employed by the federal government and scholars alike rely exclusively on statistics about minority population size, which I show to ignore significant differences between regions in how likely minorities are to elect one of their own.

Guided by existing theory on how groups exercise a collective voice, I propose a fuller model that takes into account minorities' level of political participation and resources. I then show that this model is more successful than scholars' and the federal government's current model at predicting when minorities will be elected with the largest dataset ever gathered on the election of minorities in the United States. Subsequent analysis shows that the information used by the existing model provides essentially no additional predictive information above what my proposed model offers. The proposed model thus has immediate practical implications for judicial, executive, and legislative efforts to increase the presence of minority elected officials in the United States and potentially elsewhere.

I conclude by discussing the broader practical significance of these chapters to ongoing debates in American democracy. The Supreme Court and Congress frequently review, respectively, the constitutionality and renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Recently, many decision-makers in these bodies have indicated that they judge American democracy as having matured sufficiently that the need for minority representation has passed. To the contrary, the results presented in my four chapters all indicate that ensuring minority representation among the

ranks of elected officials remains crucial to the political representation of minorities in the United States and can be done in a more efficient, effective way.

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Replication data for the quantitative portions of this essay will be deposited in the ISPS Data Archive at http://isps.research.yale.edu/research-2/data/.

Introductory Remarks

As I was making final preparations for summer research on this essay in 2010, a friend asked me with incredulity, "are you really going to drive all the way to Mississippi for three months just to show that people prefer people like them?" My truthful answer was simple: "yes."

Of course, the reality of this essay's topic – how are minorities elected and why does it matter if they are? – is more complicated. Though my friend found my research question trivial, its political implications represent a longstanding series of important debates. In the context of American politics especially, the word 'longstanding' may not do due justice to the length and significance of this question's historical heritage: since even before the Constitutional Convention, how minority groups should best be represented in American politics has been a touchstone of debate with enormous practical consequences for American government and society. The US Constitution's clauses establishing the Senate and infamously counting blacks as three-fifths of a person for the purposes of apportionment are only two examples of how central the question of how groups are represented was to early Americans. Other, more subtle features of American government – like the proviso that the President must have been born in the United States and the tradition of "citizen legislators" in state legislatures who hold other occupations – also all point towards a broader understanding that *who* our elected leaders are matters tremendously for how they provide political representation.

In the twentieth century, such debates have centered to an even greater extent around the political representation of women, blacks, and other minority groups, especially the degree to which members of these groups are elected to serve in political office. Perhaps most notably, though blacks have constituted a significant share of the American population for centuries, it was not until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that significant numbers of blacks

were elected to Congress (save for a brief period during reconstruction).

To many, without the need for a moment's reflection, any gaps in political office-holding among any group feel intuitively wrong. As Phillips (1991) wrote in the context of gender equity in political representation, "if women are not elected in much the same proportions as men...then something fishy is going on." Supporting this intuition, political science has repeatedly concluded that the presence of minority elected officials in politics is crucial to ensuring that minority communities have an equal voice in government. Previous research has demonstrated, for example, that minorities are more responsive to minority requests for help registering to vote (Butler and Broockman 2011), more faithfully represent minorities' policy preferences (e.g. Canon 1999), conduct greater oversight of government agencies that traditionally serve minorities (Minta 2009), and even succeed in inspiring significantly greater trust among their constituents (e.g. Gay 2002).

Yet as one digs deeper into existing research, it remains difficult to fully answer the question: *why* do minorities appear to provide different political representation?

At first, the question may seem obvious, absurd, or even offensive. Would a researcher have queried Frederick Douglass, for example, why he, instead of the slaveholder from whom he escaped, became a champion for emancipation? Likewise, though some Americans have been quick to forget the history of reconstruction, Jim Crow, lynching, World War I, World War II, and the civil rights movement, such events still live on to a tremendous extent in black collective memory. Today many blacks still have a sense of the "pervasiveness of black oppression", while on average blacks have significantly different views than other Americans on numerous political and social issues that cannot be explained by other factors (Dawson 1994). There is also considerable evidence that racial resentment continues to animate many Americans' views on a number of political questions (Feldman and Huddy 2005; Kinder and Kam 2009). In this environment, it may be difficult to understand how it would be possible that elected officials from minority groups could *not* pursue their jobs differently than their counterparts.

Still, even with these compelling facts in the foreground, previous research offers us many different and entirely plausible reasons to believe that it may matter when minorities are elected – or, in academic parlance, when minorities have *descriptive representation*. Perhaps most connected with the history of minority oppression in the United States is an explanation that minority legislators' higher propensity to in favor of their constituents are animated by "linked fate" (see Dawson 1994). Others have suggested that minority politicians are more likely to be beholden to political machines that extract special favors in exchange for continuing support (e.g. Thernstrom 1987). Still other scholarship has argued that minority politicians are more of their "re-election constituency" (Fenno 1978; 2003). Yet more prominent scholarship has suggested that minority constituents themselves form the core of the explanation as they are more likely to express their views and participate in politics when they are represented by someone of their group (e.g. Gay 2002).

Meanwhile, though little work has sought to systematically evaluate these claims, a fuller understanding of these aspects of minority descriptive representation would have real consequences. For example, if much of the reason descriptive representation tends to lead to substantive representation is because politicians count on supporters of their own race to form the core of their "re-election constituency" (see Fenno 1978), different policy prescriptions might follow for groups like women than for groups like blacks. Likewise, if the patterns the literature has observed occur because minority politicians themselves feel "linked fate" with their constituents, governments and political parties may want to adopt policies encouraging the election of minorities that come from backgrounds most likely to coincide with this "linked fate." Though some of these explanations may seem intuitively more plausible than others, as I discuss in the chapters to follow, few of them can be wholly accepted or rejected with confidence based on the evidence we have.

More broadly, more empirically robust scholarship may sway the Supreme Court and Congress as key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and other legislation remain in danger. With these actors frequently intervening in quests to ensure the minorities have equitable representation in government, addressing this question thus holds an even greater number of potential consequences (see Butler and Broockman 2011). Of course, such questions are not limited to American politics – across Europe, India, Asia, and Africa, governments are actively grappling with the question of when and how to increase descriptive representation (Hassim 2009).

Better understanding descriptive representation is thus not an idle curiosity but an important task. Though academic and political debates on this question will never (and should never) be considered resolved, it is my hope that the scholarly contributions I attempt to make in the four chapters to follow may, at the very least, better inform them.

However, despite what I hope is this essay's relevance to these debates, a word on what this essay is not. Political theorists have made numerous persuasive arguments that descriptive representation is inherently fundamental to political justice. Thus, in what remains the most-cited work on representation to this day, Hanna Pitkin wrote in *The Concept of Representation* (1967: 68) that "representation seems to require a certain distance or difference as well as resemblance or correspondence." In this essay I take no position on these normative questions nor do I attempt to argue *a priori* what conditions satisfy an adequate definition of representation.¹ These are worthwhile discussions, but, as Pitkin also argues, a person "can only be held to account for what he has done, not for what he is" (1967: 90). In this essay I focus only on understanding what elected representatives tend to do *with* and *given* who they are.

A Note On The Role of My Participant-Observation

One aspect of this research bears special comment before beginning: the role of my participant observation research. Only my first and third chapters explicitly discuss my participant-observation research, and only my third chapter relies on evidence from this research. However, this research played an integral role in all four of the chapters to follow.

So-called participant-observation research consists of following and travelling with actors of interest for several days, asking them questions and observing their activities. As the third chapter will explain in more detail, I did so with twenty-seven state legislators during the summer of 2010. Half white, half black, and all representing heavily black districts, these legislators allowed me to observe their activities and ask them sensitive questions as I built a fuller understanding of how their identities affected their representation over the course of several days each.

Such participant-observation methodology had its genesis in American political

¹ The theoretical literature contains three main normative arguments. The first is explained simply by Phillips' (1991) rhetorical question: would it be just if all cooks were women? Similarly, the underrepresentation of women in any profession – including the political profession – might not be just because it implies that women do not have equal opportunities. Second, Phillips (1998, 232) articulates another argument from the perspective of justice, arguing that "equality of presence...is already implicit in the notion of participation." A sentiment echoed by Young (1990), Phillips (1991), Williams (1998), and Mansbridge (1999), this argument posits that for reasons separate from any other factors like behavior in office or benefits to constituents it is intrinsically important to have equality of presence. Third, some theorists take a more extreme position, arguing that historically dispossessed groups such as racial minorities and women remain in active conflict with dominant groups and thus need representatives in this fight. As Phillips articulates in the beginning of her work *The Politics of Presence* (1995: 1), this school of thought contests the "broadly secular understanding of politics as a matter of judgment and debate, and expects political loyalties to develop around politics rather than people." This position is defended by few theorists, but mentioned by Young (1990) and Phillips (1991; 1995). My short summaries of these arguments do not do them full justice, and I direct those interested to the original works. However, these three arguments are fundamentally normative claims, and though important, are beyond the purview of this essay.

scholarship with the celebrated work of Richard F. Fenno, *Home Style* (1978). Despite the nearuniversal familiarity Fenno's *Home Style* enjoys among American political scientists and its stillfrequent citation after more than three decades in circulation, few have sought to replicate Fenno's work or employ his methodology. The practical reasons for avoiding doing so are clear enough, as are the methodological ones. Still, Fenno's methodology has value in certain circumstances because, as Fenno himself noted, participant observation is "exploratory" (1978: 250). In this sense, even taking seriously critiques that several or even a few dozen cases may say little with great confidence about a wider whole, such observations can form the basis for wider theorizing and hypothesis testing. In other words, Fenno's methodology can help bring dynamics to researchers' awareness and provide the initial outlines of a picture of what mechanisms are at work for observed phenomenon. My field research played just such an "exploratory" role in this project, substantially informing my choice of approach in every chapter. The first such chapter begins now.

Chapter 1

Do Politicians Act on Linked Fate? A Field Experiment Manipulating Their Political Incentives

Abstract

In this chapter I find evidence for the hypothesis that black politicians respond to the needs of blacks even when they have little political reason to do so. In November 2010, I sent 6,928 legislators an email asking for help signing up for state unemployment benefits. I then manipulated the degree of political incentive the legislators had to respond by randomizing whether the emails purported to come from a black person living in a city either within or far from each legislator's district. Politicians should have little incentive to respond to the out-of-district emails, and indeed I find that politicians of all races are markedly less likely to do so. However, with a difference-in-difference design, I also show that black politicians are much more likely to respond to the out-of-district requests on the margin than are non-black politicians. This implies that black politicians are more likely to respond to the general needs of blacks even when doing so carries little political reward.

"What's the proof that I care about the black community? Every time I get a letter from a black person outside my district, I respond." – Anonymous Black State Legislator

1. Introduction

Why are politicians more responsive to the interests of those who share their personal characteristics? Much scholarship has shown that politicians are more likely to favor policies that benefit members of their group. The literature on this subject is as broad as it is consistent: as measured by roll call votes, bill sponsorship, constituent request responsiveness, and policy outcomes, politicians' propensity to provide substantive representation for certain groups differ strongly across a variety of their own descriptive characteristics, including gender, race, sexuality, age, and profession. Scholars have even found differences between how legislators vote on tobacco legislation that correlates with their smoking habits (Burden 2007).

However, though the literature has shown that politicians with different personal characteristics engage in different public political behavior, the conclusion that politicians'

personal, non-electoral motivations are a primary mechanism for this finding is difficult to test. Indeed, there are many reasons beyond politicians' own personal preferences that their public behaviors might benefit groups who share their personal characteristics. For example, politicians facing discriminatory bias in the electorate among voters who do not share their characteristics may rationally shape their platforms to most appeal to the voters like them. Alternatively, as Bianco (1994) discusses, politicians are engaged in a signaling game with voters in which they develop reputations for truly holding particular policy views; minorities may face different incentives in such games because of the signal their traits send. Thus, there are many plausible mechanisms for the link between descriptive and substantive representation of which legislators' own preferences is only one; meanwhile, the existing literature offers little empirical evidence for any one explanation.

Even as there are many reasons scholarship suggests might drive the link between descriptive and substantive representation, understanding the mechanisms for this link is crucial to forming reliable predictions about and evaluating alternative institutional arrangements for promoting descriptive representation. Legislative and judicial decision-makers around the world are also actively considering many potential alternative institutional arrangements that would promote descriptive representation (Hassim 2009), meaning that scholarship in this area has great potential to improve real-world outcomes.

In this chapter I attempt to shed light on the question of *why* politicians are more likely to represent the substantive interests of their own group by evaluating the hypothesis that they engage in this behavior even when they have little political incentive to do so. To scholars, this is commonly referred to the hypothesis that legislators act on a sense of "linked fate" (Dawson 1994) with other members of their group. I attempt to address this question in the American

context by comparing how black and non-black politicians behave in the presence and absence of political incentives when they have the opportunity to improve the welfare of a black individual.

In particular, employing a methodology that borrows elements from Butler and Broockman (2011) and Enos (2011), I emailed all 6,928 United States state legislators in mid-November 2010 asking for help with filing for state unemployment benefits. All of the emails came from an ostensibly black alias, Tyrone Washington. Using a Geographic Information System (GIS), I then assigned each legislator to the name of a city² within and a city far from that legislator's district. I then randomized the legislators into two groups: one group received emails that claimed to be from the city in the legislators' district, while the other claimed to be from a city located far from the legislators' district but in the same state.

Politicians are re-elected by their constituents, but the opinions of those living far away from their districts have essentially no effect on their re-election chances. These treatments were thus meant to vary the level of political incentive that legislators had to respond. The results indicate that the manipulation was successful in doing so, as all legislators are markedly less likely – by about half – to respond to the request claiming to come from outside the their district.

However, I also find that black legislators are far more likely to respond to the out-ofdistrict email relative to legislators of other races. This difference-in-differences is highly statistically significant, robust to a number of controls and alternative specifications, and implies that black legislators are more willing than their counterparts to expend scarce resources for the welfare of blacks in their states even when they have little political incentive to do so. I also find that non-black Democrats and non-black Republicans do not differ in their behavior towards the out-of-district emails.

² Throughout this chapter I use the term "city" for convenience, though I refer to any city, town, or other named settlement regardless of its size. Not every district has a town or village large enough to be technically referred to as a "city", though every district does either fall within or contain at least one named settlement.

These results have direct implications for the study of descriptive representation in the United States, of institutions meant to increase descriptive representation more generally, and of the role of politicians' own preferences in their decision-making. The methodology I develop in this chapter is also easily reproducible and thus may help scholars and policymakers better measure the degree to which descriptive representation may lead to substantive representation through the mechanism of linked fate in other political contexts.

I also supplement these results with data from anonymous interviews conducted during May through August of 2010 with 27 state legislators – 13 black and 14 white – who represent heavily black (>30%) state legislative districts. Their observations add further context to my substantive interpretation of the results.

In the body of this chapter I first discuss the literatures on descriptive representation and linked fate at greater length. I then describe the experimental procedures and results in detail as well as their implications.

2. The Importance And Difficulty of Identifying Linked Fate Among Politicians

Over the last two decades, an impressively broad literature has developed which illustrates strong linkages between legislators' personal characteristics and their behavior in public roll call votes. In particular, this literature shows that legislators are more likely to support policies favored by a group to which they personally belong (e.g. Kingdon 1981; Carroll 1994; Whitby 1997; Hood and Morris 1998; Hutchings 1998; Canon 1999; Cobb and Jenkins 2001; Grose 2005; Griffin and Newman 2007; Grose, Magnum, and Martin 2007; Burden 2007; Washington 2008; Grose 2011; Carnes 2011). Much of this literature compares black and nonblack politicians (e.g. Canon 1999), though many other studies show these links hold for other characteristics. Carnes (2011), for example, illustrates the correlation between Congresspeople's class backgrounds and their roll-call voting in Congress.

A related body of work shows that such patterns also have real implications for actual policy *outcomes* in forums ranging from school boards and city councils to state legislatures, both houses of Congress, and even in foreign countries with randomized quota systems (e.g. Meier and England 1984; Haider-Markel, Joslyn, and Kniss 2000; Bratton and Ray 2002; Pande 2003; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Preuhs 2006; Haider-Markel 2007; Nye, Rainer, and Stratmann 2010). Scholars have similarly shown that these patterns hold for committee behavior (Gamble 2007; Minta 2009) and responsiveness to requests for help registering to vote (Butler and Broockman 2011). This large literature is also marked by very few dissenting studies (e.g. Swain 1993).

These literatures are likewise nearly unanimous in assuming that these differences are attributable to the mechanism of legislators' own personal preferences, their sense of "linked fate" with constituents that share their characteristics (Dawson 1994). For example, Burden's work on *The Personal Roots of Representation* (2007) discusses the "introspective influences" of politicians' own personal experiences on their policymaking and concludes that "selection of a *like-minded* representative on election day remains the most potent means" for voters to promote their policy preferences because Members of Congress bring their "values…and ideologies to office" (see p. 148-150).

2.1. The Difficulty of Disentangling Political and Personal Motivations With Public Behavior

Despite the strength of the literature's descriptive evidence, it is also widely accepted in the discipline that all legislators face very strong incentives to comply with constituency opinion (e.g. Mayhew 1974; Bartels 1991; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002). Given the strength of electoral incentives, are there reasons that political considerations might be wholly responsible for the finding that legislators with different personal characteristics behave differently towards their groups?

One reason this might occur is because of discriminatory bias in the electorate. For example, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) discuss a natural experiment in India where only women are eligible to run for a randomly selected third of the parliament's seat each year. They find that these women are more likely than their male counterparts to support policy priorities that benefit women. It may be the case that these women are faithfully voting their personal policy preferences in parliament, but it may also be the case that the best re-election strategy for female politicians in a sexist society is to secure as much female support as possible because securing male support would prove so difficult. Krasa and Polborn (2010) illustrate a related point more formally, showing that candidates with different personal traits may have incentives to court voters they can more easily serve given their personal skills.

Another such explanation might be as follows: as Bianco (1994) discusses, politicians have strong incentives to develop reputations for their "true type" and "true preferences" among their constituency, especially with regard to common interests. In such signaling games (e.g. the "beer and quiche" game in Kreps 1990), black politicians who do not have a true preference for helping blacks in their state would nevertheless face the incentive to behave in ways consistent with this preference so that voters cannot determine their true type.³

Such dynamics could also easily explain findings such as Butler and Broockman (2011)'s

³ For an example of this logic, consider Burden (2007), who shows that legislators who smoke are friendlier to the priorities of the tobacco lobby. In Bianco (1994)'s framework, voters would attempt to classify politicians into "protobacco" or "anti-tobacco" types. However, politicians who smoke may find more difficulty convincing voters they are of the "anti-tobacco" type and greater ease doing the opposite. This would be consistent with evidence that voters make assumptions about candidates based on their personal traits (Koch 2002) and have clear consequences for legislators' and voters' political behavior. Analogously, given evidence that the black public feels a very strong sense of linked fate (Dawson 1994) and that the electorate expects black politicians to share these convictions, black politicians may have incentives to behave more consistently with this reputation (Fenno 2003).

result that white and minority Democrats are both more likely to respond to constituents from their racial group: the political incentives of heavily-minority districts – where Democratic primaries matter more than general elections – may be entirely consistent with a strategy where politicians face incentives to most serve their racial group *within* the Democratic Party.

In sum, there are many plausible mechanisms for the link between descriptive and substantive representation, while the existing literature offers little empirical evidence for any one explanation. In the following subsection I argue that understanding the mechanisms for this link is both important and achievable.

2.2. Why Does It Matter If Legislators Act On Linked Fate?

As I argued in the last subsection, studies of politicians' public behavior may not provide robust insight about the hypothesis that politicians act on linked fate. Understanding whether they do so is important because the linkage between groups' presence in government and the representation of their policy interests might not hold equally well under all schemes to improve minority representation if linked fate varies across contexts. Different countries have adopted radically different measures for promoting descriptive representation, yet it may be difficult to form reliable predictions about and evaluate alternative institutional arrangements without an understanding of the strength of linked fate. Given that active attempts at institutional design are taking place worldwide in this area (Hassim 2009), it is especially worthwhile to be able to do so.

Whether politicians act on linked fate is also of independent substantive interest: in private meetings, closed committee hearings, informal negotiations, conference committees, and many non-observable settings, politicians make important decisions with little to no "traceability" between their private actions and public outcomes (Arnold 1992). Understanding

how politicians behave when they do not face strong political incentives is thus not only theoretically interesting but substantively important to debates over descriptive representation and representation more generally.

2.3. An Approach To Studying Linked Fate: Examining Private Behavior

As discussed, despite linked fate's importance, it has proven difficult to study with public data because of the incentives legislators face. In this subsection, I propose a solution to this problem: analyzing legislators' ostensibly private behavior.

Anonymous interviews I conducted with state legislators representing majority-minority districts and their staff indicate the plausibility of this approach. When I pressed one black legislator for evidence that he/she was truly more motivated to represent black interests, he/she said the following: "*What's the proof that I care about the black community? Every time I get a letter from a black person outside my district, I respond. That's because I know what it's like to be the underdog. The white folks don't do that.*" This conversation led me to the experiment described in this chapter, where I test this legislator's claim.

Other legislators routinely characterized their peers in ways consistent with the idea that their public and private behavior may in fact greatly diverge. One black politician discussed a white colleague as "insincere" in his support for black issues based on his private behavior in the legislature, while describing another white colleague as "a true friend to blacks." The black politician came to these judgments despite the fact that the two white representatives in question have nearly identical voting records and serve similarly black districts. Likewise, the head of a southern state's legislative black caucus went through a list of white state legislators in their state with me, easily characterizing each as either a "person who doesn't get it" (i.e. does not truly care about black interests) or "someone who doesn't see color" (i.e. someone who fights for

black interests). Again, public perception of these legislators' priorities was quite similar.

Work by other political scientists suggests that testing such claims about less publicly salient behavior is an important way to understand politicians' intrinsic motivations. For example, Hutchings (1998) describes a historical case study where such a pattern played out in Congress. When Congress considered the Civil Rights Act of 1990, southern Democrats were highly responsive to constituency pressures on the well-publicized final passage of the bill; however, they were far less responsive in their voting decisions on an important amendment with lower public salience. Hutchings interprets this finding as indicating that legislators may act substantially differently on racial issues when they believe the public is watching them. This underscores that how politicians act when they do not think they are being closely monitored can differ in ways that have important policy consequences. Similarly, Minta (2009) analyzes how minority legislators behave in committee meetings, where he argues electoral pressures are less likely to come to bear on legislators' behavior. Political theorists have also discussed the importance of politicians' intrinsic motivations to some extent; see, for example, Mansbridge (1999; 2010) and Williams (1998).

The question of how politicians respond to their groups' interests when they have less political incentive is thus of significant inherent and theoretical interest to the literature on descriptive representation. In the next section I describe how my experiment endeavors to shed light on this important question.

3. Experimental Design

My experimental design attempts to measure how politicians treat a black individual when their constituents do not observe their behavior. I do so with an experiment that builds on Butler and Broockman (2011) and Enos (2011).

3.1. Email's Text and the Choice of Unemployment Benefits

I sent every state legislator in the United States serving in mid-November 2010 (N = 6,928) an email asking for help signing up for state unemployment benefits. I sent the e-mails in a random order, all within 20 minutes of each other in the early morning hours on a weekend.

The emails all came from the alias Tyrone Washington, an alias that strongly signals being black.⁴ The email's sender purports to live in, randomly, either a city in the legislator's district or a city far from the legislator's district. The text of the email appears in Box 1.

By the choice of an email about unemployment benefits, I sought to further minimize any political benefits legislators might have perceived from answering the out-of-district emails. First, previous work by Cho (2003) shows that many minority politicians rely on political contributions by co-ethnics across their state. Asking about unemployment benefits was meant to greatly reduce the chance that any legislators might expect a political contribution from the email's sender. The email's text also attempts to signal that its sender is unlikely to be part of any statewide political networks due to their low socio-economic status. In these ways the email minimizes any benefit legislators might perceive from responding.

Box 1. Text of email sent to state legislators.

<u>From:</u> Tyrone Washington <u>Subject:</u> unemployment benefits in [TREATMENT CITY NAME] <u>Text:</u> Dear [Mr./Ms.] [STATE REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME], My name's Tyrone Washington and I live in [TREATMENT CITY NAME]. Can you tell me how to get unemployment benefits? I lost my job but nobody will tell me where to get them and I don't know what to do. Thank you Tyrone Washington

3.2. City Assignment and Randomization Procedure

By a process described and graphically explained in the Appendix, I assigned each state

⁴ Essentially no whites are named Tyrone (Fryer and Levitt 2004) and 89.9% of those with the last name Washington are black (Word, Coleman, Nunziata, and Kominski n.d.). Washington is the last name most likely to be associated with a black person among the most common 1,000 last names in the country.

legislator the names of two cities using GIS: one city was located within each legislator's district (e.g., for a legislator representing Dallas, Texas, "Dallas"), and another city was located well outside of their district but within their state (e.g. for a Dallas legislator, "Houston"). I then randomly assigned each legislator to the in- and out-of-district email groups with block randomization on state, party, and race. The Appendix shows a randomization check that indicates the randomization was successful.

The names of these cities appeared in the subject line and the first line of the email's text, as shown in the "treatment city name" field in Box 1. Note that each legislator only received one email, with half assigned to each of the treatment groups.

In sum, examining legislators' propensity to respond to such emails attempts to directly address the claim of the descriptive representation literature that minority politicians are relatively more likely to act on behalf of the welfare of members of their group, even when doing so carries some cost and little to no political benefit.

3.3. Data on Legislators

Data on legislators' names, races, and email addresses were collected in the summer of 2010 from public state legislative websites for all 50 states, yielding a sample of 6,928 legislators in total. The data also include a variety of covariates about the legislators' districts, including their total population, the percent of the districts that are black, the percent of the electorate that blacks consist of (as measured by the percentage of votes cast in the 2008 election that were cast by blacks),⁵ the rural and urban makeup of the district, median household incomes for blacks and whites, and the Squire index of state legislative professionalism.

⁵ These data were purchased from Catalist and were only available for 18 states. However, this data was collected for the 18 states in which together over 75 percent of black state legislators serve.

3.4. Dependent Variables Collected

In all, I received 2,695 replies. Following Butler and Broockman (2011), my analysis primarily employs the objective dependent variable of whether or not I received a reply from a legislator at all.

I also collected data on whether or not the replies were helpful. I code emails as helpful if they (1) provide the website, email address, or telephone number of a person that could help a person register for unemployment benefits or (2) invite further contact from the alias first (such as the many replies that ask Tyrone for his phone number so that the legislator could call him). 85.4% of the replies satisfy these criteria. All the chapter's results hold when considering only these helpful replies as the dependent variable instead of all replies; replication tables for this alternative dependent variable are available in the Appendix.

3.5 Excluded Observations

Some observations were excluded from the dataset. First, 297 observations (4.3% of the sample) were dropped because they immediately bounced as undeliverable. They bounced because the email addresses were reported incorrectly on the state legislative websites or were entered with typographical errors.

Second, when the experiment ran, some state legislators also carbon copied their replies to the legislators who actually represented the cities whose names were used for the out-ofdistrict cities. For example, a legislator who represented Fort Worth, Texas replied to an email that claimed to come from Houston with a carbon copy to a legislator from Houston. However, the Houston legislators' office had also received their own copy of the letter claiming to come from a different city. Some legislators from the 100 cities like Houston whose names I used for the treatments thus received multiple copies of the letters. Though no such legislators appear to have suspected that they were being experimented upon, some of these legislators still received emails with contradictory information about the senders' location or might have had greater reason to respond when a colleague forwarded them the message. Excluding all such legislators who might have received a carbon copy reply removed an additional 713 observations, or around 10.3% of the dataset.

Finally, all remaining 334 legislators in Georgia and Indiana were excluded because legislators in these states share staffers. Shared staffers often responded to the emails on behalf of all the legislators for whom they worked, rendering it unclear to which legislator the replies should and should not be credited. These exclusions represented 4.8% of the sample.

In all, 19.3% of the sample was removed because of these criteria, resulting in 5,593 usable observations. However, all of the chapter's substantive conclusions hold when these observations remain. There were 4,965 white legislators and 364 black legislators in the resulting dataset. The 264 remaining legislators were members of some other minority group.⁶

3.6. Ethical Considerations

As in any deceptive experiment, research ethics were an important factor in the design of this experiment. First, note that I sought and received IRB exemption for this study. However, there are still ethical considerations to consider when deceiving legislators and placing a burden on their time. The request was therefore designed to be fairly commonplace and easy for state legislators to answer without placing an excessive burden on their time. From the replies it appears that this was successful: the median reply we received was 298 characters in length, or about 50 words, a third of the length of this chapter's Abstract. Next, deception was unavoidable

⁶ I show in a randomization check in the Appendix that these exclusion criteria are independent from the treatment randomization. Furthermore, these exclusions are unrelated to the substantive topic at hand and are unlikely to place any restrictions on the experiment's external validity.

in this experiment in order to determine how legislators would respond differently to people inside and outside of their districts. Without claiming that the email in question came from other cities, the experiment would have been impossible. Last, it is unlikely that this study caused harm to any individual actually named Tyrone Washington. I chose both names in the alias to be so common that no state legislator would assume that any individual named Tyrone Washington would be the same Tyrone Washington who emailed.

4. Results

In the following subsections I review the experiment's main results. In the last subsection I also discuss and respond to several potential methodological criticisms.

4.1. All Legislators Are Less Likely to Respond to Out of District Emails

This study is predicated upon the assumption that legislators will find little political reason to respond to a request from a person living hundreds of miles away from their district. The data reflects this assumption: overall, legislators are 26.6 percentage points less likely to respond to emails in the out-of-district group (p < .0001). Legislators assigned to the in-district group respond to 55.5 percent of emails, whereas about half that number respond to the out-of-district email, only 28.9 percent in total. Put differently, the experimental counterfactual implies that half of the legislators who respond to the in-district email would not do so were they assigned to the out-of-district email treatment group.

These results are reported in Table 1. Column 1 presents the simple comparison of means, while Column 2 presents the estimate with covariates for the legislators' race, party, whether the legislator is a state senator, if the legislator is from the south, the black population of the district, the district black and white populations' median household income, the Squire (2007) index of state legislative professionalism, the district's total population, and the percent of

the district which is urban.

Table 1. Main Treatment Effect				
Specification (all OLS)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Legislators	All	All	18 States	18 States
Covariates	None	Some	All	All
Experimental Treatment Effects				
Out of District Email	-0.266**	-0.267**	-0.290**	-0.286**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Covariates				
Black Legislator	-	-0.050	-0.091*	-
		(0.038)	(0.044)	
Other Non-Black Minority Legislator	-	-0.035	0.024	-
		(0.031)	(0.057)	
Democratic Legislator	-	-0.051**	0.004	-
		(0.014)	(0.022)	
State Senator	-	0.089**	0.019	-
		(0.016)	(0.027)	
South	-	-0.005	-020	-
		(0.017)	(0.025)	
Black Population Percent	-	0.087	0.650**	-
		(0.067)	(0.327)	
Black Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	-0.000	-0.006	-
		(0.007)	(0.023)	
White Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	0.021*	-0.004	-
		(0.010)	(0.015)	
Squire Index	-	0.488**	0.345**	-
		(0.068)	(0.115)	
District Total Population (10,000s)	-	-0.004**	0.002	-
		(0.001)	(0.001)	
Urban Percent	-	0.013	0.065	-
		(0.023)	(0.041)	
Black Percent of Electorate	N/A	N/A	-0.487	-
			(0.292)	
Overall Electorate Turnout	N/A	N/A	0.445**	-
			(0.106)	
Constant	0.555**	0.438**	0.241**	0.579**
2	(0.009)	(0.025)	(0.062)	(0.013)
\mathbf{R}^2	.073	.090	.111	.083
Ν	5593	5593	2508	2508

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator responded to the email. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

Column 3 controls for two additional factors for which data was available for only

eighteen states:⁷ the percentage of the general election electorate in 2008 that was black in each district⁸ and the percentage of each district's population that voted in the 2008 general election. These variables were meant to capture blacks' political power in these districts as well as the overall level of political participation in the district.

The coefficients change slightly between Columns 1 and 2 and Column 3 because Column 3 is estimated on a nonrandom subset of the data (i.e. only the eighteen states where this data was gathered). Column 4 also shows that the result in Column 3 holds in this subset of the data even without the covariates. In sum, the overall effect of the experimental manipulation is large and consistently robust.

4.2. Difference-in-Difference Analysis

The data also strongly confirm the hypothesis behind this chapter's central question: conditional on their overall rates of reply, black legislators are more likely than other legislators to respond to an email from a black person outside their district.

Table 2 reports the difference-in-difference estimates. As Butler and Broockman (2011) find, black legislators are slightly less likely to respond overall for reasons that are unclear. However, black and non-black legislators exhibit a markedly different marginal treatment effect to the out-of-district email. Column 1 shows that non-black legislators respond to the out-of-district emails 27.5 percentage points less (p < .001). However, black legislators respond to the out-of-district emails only 14.7 percentage points less (p < .01), a marginal treatment response 12.8 percentage points higher (p < .01) than that of their white counterparts.

⁷ These states eighteen are Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

⁸ These data were purchased from Catalist LLC.

Specification (all OLS)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Legislators	All	All	18 States	18 States
Covariates	None	Some	All	All
Experimental Treatment Effects				
Out of District Email	-0.275**	-0.276**	-0.313**	-0.314**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.025)
Out of District Email X Black Legislator	0.128*	0.128*	0.189**	0.183*
	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.057)	(0.085)
Out of District Email X Black % of	N/A	N/A	-	0.012
Electorate				(0.129)
Covariates				
Black Legislator	-0.097**	-0.112*	-0.184**	-0.182**
	(0.036)	(0.045)	(0.052)	(0.060)
Other Non-Black Minority Legislator	-	-0.035	0.025	0.026
		(0.031)	(0.057)	(0.057)
Democratic Legislator	-	-0.051**	0.005	0.005
		(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.022)
State Senator	-	0.089**	0.019	0.019
		(0.016)	(0.028)	(0.028)
South	-	-0.004	-0.019	-0.019
		(0.017)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Black Population Percent	-	0.084	0.667*	0.667*
		(0.067)	(0.326)	(0.326)
Black Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	-0.000	-0.005	-0.005
		(0.007)	(0.023)	(0.023)
White Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	0.021*	-0.005	-0.005
		(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Squire Index	-	0.489**	0.346**	0.346**
		(0.071)	(0.115)	(0.115)
District Total Population (10,000s)	-	-0.004**	0.002	0.002
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Urban Percent	-	0.014	0.066	0.066
		(0.023)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Black Percent of Electorate	-	N/A	-0.502	-0.507
			(0.292)	(0.298)
Overall Electorate Turnout	-	N/A	0.456**	0.457**
			(0.106)	(0.106)
Constant	0.561**	0.442**	0.246**	0.247**
	(0.009)	(0.025)	(0.062)	(0.062)
\mathbf{R}^2	.074	.091	.115	.115
Ν	5593	5593	2508	2508

Table 2. Difference-in-Difference Estimates

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator responded to the email. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

Put differently, holding constant the overall differences between how likely black and white legislators are to respond to their messages, the experimental counterfactual implies that around 1 in 8 black legislators respond to the black out-of-district email when their non-black counterparts would not. Similarly, nearly *half* of the non-black legislators who do not respond to the email would respond if they were black, all else equal. This result remains robust to a variety of controls in Column 2.

As in Table 1, Column 3 estimates the model on a subset of the sample for which data is available on the electorate's political participation and blacks' political power. Again, the coefficients cannot be directly compared because Column 3 is estimated on a nonrandom subset of the data (i.e. only in the 18 states where this data was available), but shows that the substantive result holds to these more general controls.

The model in Column 4 is particularly interesting for the purposes of this chapter. This model also includes an interaction term between the treatment and the percent of the 2008 general election electorate that was black, a measure of the political power blacks hold in a district (Griffin and Newman 2005). This term thus supplies additional information about electoral incentives to be responsive to blacks that politicians in districts with more black voters might face. Yet, the coefficient is essentially zero, indicating that blacks' political strength in a district has no independent effect on how legislators respond to the out-of-district email. This sits with my assumption that the design of this experiment minimizes the degree to which political incentives effect how legislators behave in responding to out-of-district email.

4.3. Comparing Non-Black Democrats and Non-Black Republicans

Some literature indicates that non-black Democrats may be nearly as responsive to black interests as black Democrats (e.g. Lublin 1997, who suggests that drawing more districts to

encourage the election of more white Democrats may paradoxically increase black substantive representation). However, similar to Butler and Broockman's (2011) main finding, I find that non-black Democrats and Republicans are statistically indistinguishable in their treatment of out-of-district emails relative to in-district emails. This result is reported in Column 1 of Table 3. (In fact, Democrats are slightly less responsive than Republicans to the out of district email, by 1.9 percentage points, though again this result does not approach statistical significance).

Figure 1 graphically displays the treatment effects among each of the relevant subgroups. The first bar shows that all legislators are significantly less likely to respond to the out-of-district email. Non-black legislators and non-black Democrats have similarly rates of response to the out-of-district email relative to their overall response rates. However, though black legislators are also less likely to respond to the out-of-district email, they are much more likely to respond to it than their non-black counterparts. The differences are clear and consistent between blacks and their non-black counterparts.





Treatment Effects Among Subgroups

³⁶

Difference Between Rates of Reply to In- and Out-of-District Letters
Specification (all OLS)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Experimental Treatment Effects					
Out of District Email	-0.266**	-0.271**	-0.271**	-0.266**	-0.342**
	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.041)
Out of District Email X Black	0.137**	0.129*	0.161*	0.139**	0.131**
Legislator	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.074)	(0.052)	(0.051)
Out of District Email X	-0.019	-	-	-	-
Democratic Legislator	(0.026)				
Out of District Email X Squire	-	-0.023	-	-	-
Index		(0.103)			
Out of District Email X Black	-	-	-0.072	-	-
Pop %			(0.119)		
Out of District Email X Southern	-	-	-	-0.037	-
State				(0.029)	
OoDL X Black Median HH	-	-	-	-	0.002
Income (\$10,000s)					(0.014)
OoDL X White Median HH	-	-	-	-	0.027
Income (\$10,000s)					(0.018)
Covariates					
Black Legislator	-0.116*	-0.112*	-0.127*	-0.118**	-0.114*
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.052)	(0.046)	(0.045)
Non-black Minority Legislator	-0.035	-0.035	-0.036	-0.035	-0.033
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Democratic Legislator	-0.042*	-0.051**	-0.051**	-0.051**	-0.052**
8	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
State Senator	0.089**	0.089**	0 089**	0.089**	0 090**
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
South	-0.004	-0.004	-0.004	0.014	-0.005
South	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.022)	(0.017)
Black Population Percent	0.084	0.084	0.118	0.089	0.087
Didek i opulation i ereent	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.088)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Black Median HH Income	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.001
(\$10,000s)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0,007)	(0,009)
White Median HH Income	0.021*	0.021*	0.021*	0.021*	0.006
(\$10,000s)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0,010)	(0,010)	(0.014)
Squire Index	0 489**	0 500**	0 489**	0 489**	0 487**
Squite much	(0.071)	(0.087)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.071)
District Total Population	-0.004**	-0.004**	-0.004**	-0.004**	-0.004**
(10,000s)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)
Urban Percent	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Constant	0 437**	0 440**	0 440**	0 438**	0 477**
Constant	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.032)
B ²	0.020	001	001	001	001
N	5593	5593	5593	5593	5593
± 1	~~/~	~~//	~~//	~~//	00/0

Table 3. Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator responded to the email. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

4.4. Potential Criticisms and Additional Robustness Checks

In this subsection I address several potential criticisms to my empirical results and conduct additional robustness checks.

4.4.1. Possibility that Black Offices are Less Sensitive To All Signals. The first alternative explanation I consider is that black legislators in general are simply less likely to differentiate between emails based on their content or are simply less sensitive to political incentives in general. Put differently, it may be the case that black legislators simply have lower marginal rates of treatment response than other legislators across *all* variations in emails, regardless of what might set emails apart.

However, there is clear evidence that this hypothesis is not true. Butler and Broockman (2011) report that blacks were actually far more likely than whites to respond to the partisanship and race signals in their experiment – in fact, the treatment effects Butler and Broockman found among black legislators were more than *three times* as large in magnitude as those for whites (see Table SI2 Parts C and D in Butler and Broockman 2011). It is thus seems very unlikely that black legislators are systematically less likely to respond to the treatment manipulations or political incentives employed in this experiment in particular.

Finally, if this alternative hypothesis better explained my results, one would also expect there to be heterogeneity among factors like district median household income or state legislative professionalism that might also correlate with general attentiveness to email text. That is, if it is true that some groups of legislators are less responsive to treatment manipulations in general, one would also expect this to be true across more domains than just the legislators' race. However, Table 3, to be further discussed in a coming subsection, shows that there is no such heterogeneity by other traits. 4.4.2. Staff Responses and Heterogeneous Effects by Legislative Professionalism. Another potential criticism of this chapter's approach is that I treat state legislators' email addresses, not necessarily the legislators themselves. In highly professionalized legislatures where staff often answer emails, the treatment effect thus captures the effect of treating a legislative office instead of the legislator per se. To address this concern, following Butler and Broockman (2011), Table 3 shows that the results are robust to the inclusion of a heterogeneous treatment effect for state legislative professionalism (as measured by the Squire index from Squire 2007). The result holds even in states where legislators have no staff helping answer their email.

4.4.3. Blacks Respond Less Overall, So The Results Ultimately Say Little. As Butler and Broockman (2011) found, I find that black legislators are less responsive to e-mails overall. Thus from a strict welfare analysis point of view, whites still respond to the out-of-district letters much more similarly to blacks than my results otherwise imply. However, the purpose of this chapter was to better understand the *differences* in how blacks and whites respond to the level of political incentive, and thus employed a difference-in-difference design to estimate the *difference in the marginal effect of the out-of-district treatment* between blacks and whites.

4.4.4. Being A Black Legislator Merely Correlated With Other Traits. My difference-indifference design entails assumptions that are significantly less restrictive than that of other studies. Still, in attributing the differences between the groups to their races, I assume that there is nothing other than the legislators' races that causes them to respond to the out-of-district emails differently than the in-district-emails. I check the plausibility of this assumption by also analyzing heterogeneous treatment effects by the black population of the district, the median household incomes of blacks and whites, and whether the state is in the American south. As the Table 3 shows, none of these effects are significant while the main results remain almost exactly the same in the presence of controls for these effects.

4.4.5. Plausibility and External Validity Concerns. There may be concern that the experimental treatment might have been implausible to legislators, rendering the results externally invalid. For example, it may seem strange to a legislator from rural Pennsylvania to receive an email from someone who claims to live in Philadelphia. However, during the interviews I previous discussed, many white and black state legislators alike indicated that state legislators routinely receive many out-of-district requests. Most legislators with staff even reported having standing policies about handling out-of-district mail because such requests are so common.

4.4.6. Comparing Apples and Oranges. Another concern may be that this chapter employs incomparable observations as counterfactuals. Because blacks are usually elected in heavily black districts, comparing treatment effects between heavily black districts and districts where there are few blacks may be in some sense comparing incomparable observations (e.g. King and Zeng 2006). To address this issue, I present the main results in Column 1 of Table 4 on a dramatically smaller subset of the data which include only districts where blacks make up at least 30% of the population and thus only where blacks are likely to be elected (e.g. the "pruning" recommended by Ho, Imai, King, and Stuart 2007). The results again remain the same.

4.4.7. Sensitivity to a Linear Specification. The second column of Table 4 also shows that the same substantive results hold with logistic regression and are not model-dependent on the linear specification.

40

Specification	(1) OLS	(2) Logistic Regression
Legislators	>30% Black Districts	All
Covariates	Some	Some
Experimental Treatment Effects		
Out of District Email	-0.341**	-1.181**
	(0.070)	(0.059)
Out of District Email X Black Legislator	0.214*	0.550*
	(0.089)	(0.227)
Covariates		
Black Legislator	-0.107	-0.479*
C C	(0.072)	(0.197)
Non-black Minority Legislator	-0.145	-0.241
	(0.186)	(0.138)
State Senator	-0.037	0.400**
	(0.060)	(0.072)
South	-0.037	0.016
	(0.066)	(0.075)
Black Population Percent	-0.150	0.157
	(0.184)	(0.292)
Black Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	0.217*	0.003
	(0.077)	(0.031)
White Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-0.072	0.095*
	(0.046)	(0.045)
Squire Index	0.006	2.139**
	(0.299)	(0.321)
District Total Population (10,000s)	0.003	-0.015**
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Urban Percent	-0.018	0.022
	(0.093)	(0.105)
Constant	0.544**	-0.369**
2	(0.170)	(0.110)
\mathbf{R}^2	.093	-
Ν	491	5593

Table 4. Robustness to Alternative Specification and A Subset of the Sample

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator responded to the email. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

5. Discussion

An enduring empirical and theoretical question about democratic representation is the extent to which elected representatives take actions to improve the welfare of members of their group in private or when they have little political reason to do so. Despite much suggestive

evidence on this question, existing research has had difficulty identifying such behavior from public data because politicians have incentives to develop public reputations for serving their group. Not only is how politicians act in such circumstances significant in and of itself, politicians also make many important decisions while under little or no public scrutiny.

In this chapter, I developed and executed a new experimental approach to this question. Specifically, I showed that black legislators are more likely than their non-black counterparts to respond to the needs of blacks outside of their constituencies even when they have little political reason to do so. In the experiment, I sent state legislators an email asking for help signing up for state unemployment benefits. Randomly, half the emails purported to be sent from a person living in the largest city in each legislators' district, while the other half purported to live in a city far across the state from each legislators' district. All legislators were far less responsive to the out-of-district request. However, a difference-in-difference estimator shows that black legislators are far more likely to respond to the out-of-district request than are whites, even though they have no incentive to do so. Black politicians thus appear to act on an intrinsic motivation to help blacks in their state, even when doing so has little straightforward political benefit.

5.1. Implications for Minority Representation

My results have several implications for the study of minority representation. First and foremost, this chapter suggests that linked fate is an important mechanism for the link between descriptive and substantive representation for blacks in the United States. Previous studies have shown a consistent correlation between legislators' personal traits and their behavior towards policies that benefit those that also have these traits. However, because all existing studies analyze behavior that legislators' constituencies also observe, it is difficult to draw inferences

about legislators' true motives or how they might behave in private settings. My experiment attempted to overcome this obstacle by analyzing how legislators respond to an ostensibly private opportunity to improve the welfare of black person.

Several strong caveats are attached to this point: I do not mean to argue that responses to emails alone can accurately represent or form the basis for reliable predictions about the broad and complex nature of representation. Rather, this chapter adds to the growing understanding of representation by examining a testable implication of a frequently articulated but rarely tested causal theory. Likewise, this chapter also cannot show that in settings other than email responses – for example, in closed committee hearings – the costs to legislators of engaging in similar behavior would not be too great. Still, these results strongly suggest that black legislators are more motivated to undertake costly behaviors to improve the welfare of blacks even in the absence of political incentives to do so.

Next, this chapter adds to evidence from Butler and Broockman (2011) that Democratic and Republican politicians may not treat blacks as differently as scholars commonly assume. Specifically, Lublin (1997) and Grose (2005) argue that the election of more white Democrats is the best way to improve substantive representation of black interests. Canon (1999, p. 178-9) similarly finds that political party is more than twice as predictive as a legislator's race in determining their behavior on roll call votes pertinent to black interests. Though my findings do not disprove such claims, they add further credence to the doubt that non-black Democrats are as responsive to black interests as scholars have supposed, especially when they are not being closely monitored.

Such differences also suggest that scholars of representation must take the distinction between public and private behavior seriously. Behavior that legislators' constituents cannot or

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are unlikely to view is likely to be a much more reliable guide of their true priorities (Hutchings 1998; Minta 2009). Such priorities also substantively matter because legislators reach a variety of political decisions (and 'non-decisions') without public oversight or when the "traceability" of their actions is either low or non-existent (Arnold 1992).

Most of all, this chapter underscores that mechanisms for encouraging the election of blacks will remain crucial to ensuring that blacks in the United States are substantively represented. On the whole, non-black legislators are significantly less likely to promote the welfare of the blacks when they have less political incentive to do so. As legislators undertake a multitude of important tasks in unmonitored situations, this renders crucial the presence in government of blacks intrinsically motivated to improve blacks' welfare (e.g. Mansbridge 2010).

5.2. Research Design

My research design may also be of interest to scholars on other subjects or of other political contexts. Even though my results cannot speak to the presence of linked fate in other national contexts or among other groups, my methodology is easily adaptable to a wide variety of contexts where politics similarly confounds the interpretation of public data but private actions have important consequences. Many political bodies are currently considering institutions for increasing the substantive representation of minority groups through an increase in their descriptive representation in legislatures (Hassim 2009). Without understandings of if and how linked fate manifests among political elites in these other political contexts, it would be difficult to provide well-informed advice about policy solutions in these areas.

In addition, this experiment offers scholars another method for understanding the nature of legislators' priorities. This is one of the first experiments of which I am aware that directly sought to manipulate elites' political incentives. Other work has addressed how elites respond to different racial primes (e.g. Shayo and Zussman 2011), but little how addressed how the presence of a political incentive interacts with politicians' decisions.

5.3. Future Research

This chapter also suggests possibly fruitful avenues for future research. This chapter is meant as a step in the effort to understand how to improve the substantive representation of minorities in American politics. Future research should consider other aspects of the topic of descriptive representation, including how to understand the trade-off between the relative lack of substantive representation non-blacks appear to offer in private behavior and the relatively more robust substantive representation they provide in more public contexts. There also remains the question of why studies consistently find black legislators respond slightly less to such requests overall. This chapter does not attempt to speak to such questions directly.

Next, this chapter grants some urgency to efforts to devise institutions that can better monitor elected officials' behavior, in effect expanding the scope of behavior that is public. Though the debate over the positive and negative aspects of greater transparency is much larger than the scope of this chapter, my results imply that elected officials behave much differently in each setting.

Finally, given how important the 'personal roots' of representation appear to be for ensuring minority representation, Canon (1999; 2005)'s points about the "supply side" of candidates – how candidates are recruited and which run for office – should not be neglected. *Who* governs has consequences.

6. Appendix

6.1. In- and Out-of-District City Selection Method

Recall that to conduct the experiment, I assigned each legislator to the names of one city

within and one city far from their state legislative district. I then randomly assigned whether each legislator would receive an email purporting to be from the city located in their district or the city located far away from it. I did so in order to manipulate the level of political incentive legislators might have for responding to the email.

In this subsection I briefly summarize how I assigned each state legislator the names of the in- and out-of-district cities. The graphical illustration at the end of this Appendix provides more detailed information, and the cities I chose are also all listed for each district in the replication data.

Figure A1 provides a graphical summary of the treatment city name selection process. Assigning legislators to an in-district city name was relatively simple. I identified the largest city in each district and associated that district with that city in GIS using state legislative district geographic boundary files available from the Census and data on the geographic location of the centers of US cities and towns. In Figure A1, note the cities labeled and marked by triangles and the corresponding city names in plain text associated with each state legislative district.

Some districts were not accommodated with this simple algorithm because data is only available on city centers, not the full boundaries of all cities. For example, as shown in Figure A3, the city of Chicago contains many state house districts but only one of these districts contains the city's center. For remaining districts such as these, I estimated city boundaries using a power law algorithm (e.g. Zipf 1949) and assigned districts to be in cities that fell within the estimated boundaries of such cities.

To associate each district with the name of a city far across their states, I first manually split each of the fifty states into two regions. A map of all these regions for each state appears in Figure A2. Note, for example, that northern Alabama is associated with Mobile and southern

Alabama is associated with Birmingham because Mobile is in southern Alabama and Birmingham is in northern Alabama. I then assigned districts to the names of the 'out-of-districtcity regions' in which they geographically resided. Legislators who represent southern Alabama and were assigned to the out-of-district treatment group thus received an email from a person claiming to be from Birmingham, even though Birmingham is 250 miles to the north of this region. In all there were thus 100 different cities used as 'out-of-district' cities, two for each state.



Figure A1. In- and out-of-district city selection process

Notes: The upper right map shows how each state was partitioned into two areas, with the outof-district cities labeled in italics. A list of all areas for each state is in the Appendix. Legislative districts that fall in these areas are assigned this value for "out-of-state city" – there are thus only two possible values of this variable within each state. For example, northern Florida districts are assigned to Miami, though Miami is in southern Florida. The main panel at left

illustrates this further. As the legend at middle right indicates, the thin lines demarcate state legislative district boundaries. Each district takes on the name of the largest city within it for the in-district city, labeled by triangles and larger text. These in-district city names are also shown in regular text elsewhere within each district. The out-of-district city names appear in italics. The thick black line demarcates the boundary between two states, in this case between Kentucky and Tennessee.





Randomization Check

Table A1. Randomization Check. DV = Assignment to Out-of-district Treatment Group					
Specification	(1)	(2)			
Included in Final Analysis	-0.017	-			
	(0.015)				
Black Legislator	-	0.009			
		(0.033)			
State Senator	-	0.003			
		(0.015)			
Democratic Legislator	-	-0.001			
		(0.013)			
District Black Percentage	-	-0.020			
		(0.053)			
Black Median Household	-	-0.005			
Income (\$10,000s)		(0.007)			
White Median Household	-	0.013			
Income (\$10,000s)		(0.009)			
State Squire Index	-	-0.022			
		(0.067)			
District Total Population	-	0.000			
(10,000)		(0.001)			
District Urban Percentage	-	0.006			
		(0.022)			
Constant	0.514**	0.479**			
	(0.014)	(0.022)			
R	.000	.000			
Ν	6928	6928			
F statistic	F(1, 6926) = 1.24 n=0.265	F(9, 6918) = 0.28 n = 0.979			

Table A1 D $\mathbf{\alpha}$ DX7 t to Out a f district Tr . 4 -+ C

F statisticF(1, 6926) = 1.24, p=0.265F(9, 6918) = 0.28, p=0.979Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator was assigned to the out-of-
district treatment group. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

Specification	(1)	(2)	(3)
Legislators	All	All	18 States
Covariates	None	Some	All
Experimental Treatment Effects			
Out of District Email	-0.295**	-0.296**	-0.308**
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.018)
Covariates			
Black Legislator	-	-0.054	-0.060
		(0.036)	(0.043)
Other Non-Black Minority Legislator	-	-0.043	0.021
		(0.029)	(0.056)
Democratic Legislator	-	-0.027*	0.010
		(0.013)	(0.022)
State Senator	-	0.085**	0.012
		(0.015)	(0.027)
South	-	0.016	-0.009
		(0.016)	(0.024)
Black Population Percent	-	0.079	0.647*
		(0.064)	(0.318)
Black Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	0.002	-0.005
		(0.007)	(0.022)
White Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	0.028**	-0.002
		(0.010)	(0.015)
Squire Index	-	0.613**	0.442**
		(0.068)	(0.112)
District Total Population (10,000s)	-	-0.003**	0.003*
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Urban Percent	-	-0.001	0.055
		(0.022)	(0.040)
Black Percent of Electorate	N/A	N/A	-0.538
			(0.284)
Overall Electorate Turnout	N/A	N/A	0.407**
			(0.103)
Constant	0.507**	0.338**	0.197**
	(0.009)	(0.024)	(0.060)
\mathbf{R}^2	.094	.117	.130
Ν	5593	5593	2508

Results with Helpful Response as the Dependent Variable

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator responded to the email in a way that was coded as helpful. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

Specification (all OLS)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Legislators	All	All	18 States	18 States
Covariates	None	Some	All	All
Experimental Treatment Effects				
Out of District Email	-0.303**	-0.304**	-0.334**	-0.334**
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.019)	(0.024)
Out of District Email X Black Legislator	0.127*	0.127**	0.209**	0.206*
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.056)	(0.083)
Out of District Email X Black % of	N/A	N/A	-	0.006
Electorate				(0.126)
Covariates				
Black Legislator	-0.086*	-0.116**	-0.163**	-0.162**
-	(0.035)	(0.043)	(0.051)	(0.058)
Other Non-Black Minority Legislator	-	-0.043	0.022	0.022
		(0.029)	(0.055)	(0.055)
Democratic Legislator	-	-0.027*	0.011	0.011
		(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.022)
State Senator	-	0.085**	0.012	0.012
		(0.015)	(0.027)	(0.027)
South	-	0.017	-0.008	-0.008
		(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Black Population Percent	-	0.076	0.666*	0.666*
		(0.064)	(0.317)	(0.317)
Black Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	0.002	-0.005	-0.005
		(0.007)	(0.022)	(0.022)
White Median HH Income (\$10,000s)	-	0.027**	-0.003	-0.003
		(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Squire Index	-	0.614**	0.444**	0.444**
		(0.068)	(0.111)	(0.111)
District Total Population (10,000s)	-	-0.003**	0.003*	0.003*
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Urban Percent	-	0.002	0.056	0.056
		(0.022)	(0.040)	(0.040)
Black Percent of Electorate	-	N/A	-0.558*	-0.558
			(0.284)	(0.289)
Overall Electorate Turnout	-	N/A	0.420**	0.420**
_			(0.103)	(0.103)
Constant	0.513**	0.342**	0.202**	0.202**
	(0.009)	(0.024)	(0.060)	(0.060)
\mathbf{R}^2	.095	.118	.135	.135
Ν	5593	5593	2508	2508

Table A3. Table 2 (Difference-in-Difference Estimates) with Helpful Response as the Dependent Variable

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the legislator responded to the email in a way that was coded as helpful. *=p<.05, **=p<.01.



Part 1. Associate the name of the largest city in each district to each district.





Step 4. Now consider only the districts



Step 8. Combine the file of districts that contained city centers and districts which needed their city inferred in the previous steps. *Part 1 complete.*

Part 2. Associate each district with the name of a large city far across its state.



Step 2. Manually create new polygons that cover roughly half of each state, with all of a state included in one of the two polygons created. Manually enter the name of a large city (from the 20,000+ cities from Step 1) that is far from the polygon. Do this for each of the two polygons that together cover each state.



Step 3. Break apart parts of these polygons that cross state lines.

Creat Fails Cities over 20,000 Population Area that is far from a city narek ange discount of the second of the				· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·				
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	Prescott	Albuquerque	С	tovis	Altus		Little Rock	la Rock



Step 4. Remove areas that cross state lines, yielding two areas for each state.

Step 5. Associate these names to the state house districts. Each house district now contains the name of a city within its state far but far from it. *Part 2 complete.*



Chapter 2

Does Descriptive Representation Cause Political Participation? Evidence From A Field Experiment and a Regression Discontinuity Design

Abstract

This chapter evaluates claims that descriptive representation causes political participation with a large-scale field experiment and a regression discontinuity design. The results show that descriptive representation substantially increases political communication but does not increase voter turnout. Though descriptive representation can greatly change the nature of the relationship between constituents and representatives, it does not appear to promote general empowerment or political efficacy among the descriptively represented.

First, I present a large-scale field experiment demonstrating that citizens are markedly more likely to communicate with political representatives of their race. The experiment takes advantage of unique electoral rules in Maryland where several multi-member state legislative districts are represented by both a black and a white state house member. I called approximately 30,000 voters who live in such districts and asked them to participate in an opinion survey purportedly administered on behalf of, randomly, either their black or white state representative. Voters were thus offered the chance to politically communicate with one of their state representatives, the race of which I randomized. The results show that blacks are far more likely to choose to offer their opinions when they believe they would be communicating with a black representative. Whites are also significantly more likely to offer their opinions to a white representative, though the effects among whites are smaller than among blacks.

Second, I present evidence from a regression-discontinuity design that the election of women does not increase women's presence in the electorate. With data on thousands of state legislative elections where women faced off against men, I exploit the natural experiment at the discontinuity where women "just win" and "just lose" their elections to examine the effect of a woman's victory on women's voter turnout in subsequent elections. These results show no effect of a woman's victory, though the literature's existing methodology mistakenly identifies substantial effects.

In sum, these findings indicate that descriptive representation increases political communication but does not lead to a greater sense of empowerment or voter turnout. My findings improve upon existing literature, which presents mixed findings, has difficulty measuring political participation, and does not adequately disentangle the causal relationship between the election of minorities and political participation among minorities. These results also have immediate significance to debates about how to increase political participation among minorities and the importance of minority representation.

1. Introduction

The question of why and when some citizens are more likely to participate in politics has

garnered a great deal of prominent attention from a diverse group of scholars (e.g. Putnam 2000; Gerber and Green 2000; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). One of the most widely explored set of questions on this subject concerns whether the descriptive characteristics of elected representatives – e.g. elected officials' own race and gender – have an effect on the likelihood that members of the public who share their characteristics will participate in politics.

In this chapter I shed light on this question by examining whether minority descriptive representation increases minorities' likelihood to politically participate in two ways: (1) by communicating with their elected representatives and (2) by turning out to vote. In summary, with a large-scale field experiment and a regression discontinuity design, my results show that descriptive representation does increase communication between constituents and their representatives but does not increase voter turnout.

I first test whether Americans are more willing to communicate their political views to their representatives with a new field experimental design that takes advantage of unique electoral rules in Maryland. In Maryland, several multi-member state legislative districts are represented by both black and white state legislators. That is, there exist several legislative districts in which a black and a white state house member both serve. I called voters in these districts and purported to be administering a survey about political views on behalf of one of their legislators, thus offering individuals the opportunity to politically communicate. However, I randomly assigned with which legislator voters were purportedly communicating. The experiment thus captured the difference between how likely voters were to take the opportunity to communicate with their legislator depending on that legislator's race.

The results of this experiment show that both blacks and whites are more likely to politically communicate with the legislator of their race. The results are also substantively large:

blacks were about 50% more likely to communicate with a black representative, while whites were about 20% more likely to communicate with a white representative. Though usual caveats apply to the generalizability of this finding to other political contexts, the results strongly indicate that descriptive representation can substantially increase political communication.

I then test whether descriptive representation increases voter turnout using a regression discontinuity design on the election of women and female voter turnout in the United States. With datasets on women who ran against men in state legislative elections, election results in these elections, and voter turnout behavior among women, I test whether a woman just winning a close election causes female voter turnout to increase in subsequent elections. The results show that, contrary to the existing literature's findings, women represented by women are no more likely to turn out to vote than men are. I also show how the existing literature's methodology is biased and reaches the opposite conclusion. These results indicate the limits of what descriptive representation can achieve: though descriptive representation can greatly change the nature of the relationship between constituents and representatives, it does not appear to create additional empowerment or political efficacy among the descriptively represented.

In the next section I review the existing literature on the link between descriptive representation and political participation and discuss the enduring empirical challenges it has encountered. I then describe my experimental and natural experimental designs in more detail and how they attempt to overcome these issues. I next present the results and discuss their implications before concluding.

2. Literature Review – Existing Debate and Empirical Approaches

2.1. Why Would Descriptive Representation Cause Political Participation?

The effect the election of minority representatives has on minorities' political

participation has perhaps received more scholarly attention than any other aspect of descriptive representation. There are two main reasons existing literature gives us to expect descriptive representation might cause political participation.

2.1.1. Trust and Political Communication. Political science plays host to a wellestablished literature on political trust (e.g. Bianco 1994). Much existing literature finds that legislators build a degree of "identification" with their constituents; as Fenno put it, legislators attempt to show constituents "you can trust me because we are like one another" (1978, p. 58).

Theorists and empiricists have argued that politicians are more likely to build such bonds with constituents when they share descriptive characteristics (like race and gender), and that therefore people are more likely to communicate with representatives of their group (Williams 1998). In fact, this was a primary finding of Fenno (2003)'s participant-observation work about black Congresspeople: as Fenno noted about Congressman Stokes, "his community and his constituency" seemed to Fenno to be "virtually coterminous." Gay (2002)'s noted study about "spirals of trust" between legislators and constituents likewise provides quantitative evidence for this hypothesis, showing that blacks with black representatives are more likely to contact their representatives and thus perhaps to trust them individually.

Minorities may also be more likely to trust minority descriptive representatives in part because such representatives may be more likely to agree with their policy views. As Orey and Larimer (2011) show, female legislators are more likely to introduce and pass bills relevant to women's political issues. Perhaps as partially a result, women also are more likely to run on platforms that feature issues traditionally associated with women like education and child care (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). Fowler and McClure (1989) likewise show that women running for office anticipate and generally receive higher levels of support from women. *2.1.2. Self-Empowerment and Voter Turnout.* Beyond feelings of trust with a particular individual, many political theorists have also argued that minorities will feel better represented and thus formally participate in politics to a greater extent when they have descriptive representatives (Williams 1998; Mansbride 1999). This is the favored explanation of much empirical literature on descriptive representation as well (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 2004).

In sum, such studies argue that in contexts where groups feel historically disempowered, the knowledge that a group member has been elected to office will generally increase feelings of political efficacy and thus lead to higher voter turnout. Washington (2006) likewise argues that black candidates and incumbents increase voter turnout because black citizens believe that black politicians will provide them with better representation. Or, as Barreto, Segura, and Woods (2004) put it, "repeated trips to the polling place with nothing to show for your effort would get old, fast."

2.2. Why Descriptive Representation Might Have No Effect

The previous section discussed the reasons why existing literature posits descriptive representation might have an effect on political participation. However, there are also some reasons why descriptive representation might have little to no effect on the minorities' likelihood of participation.

2.2.1. Potentially Declining Salience of Minority Group Status. Recently, some scholars of minority politics, and even black politics, have argued that political incorporation has dramatically changed the nature of minority groups' political opinions and outlooks, perhaps even decreasing the salience of their minority group status (e.g. Tate 2010). Scholars have similarly argued that this trend has been accompanied by choices by many black candidates, such as Harold Ford and Barack Obama, not to feature their race as prominently as did black candidates many years ago (see Franklin 2009). To the extent race may have declined in salience for Americans, any impact of racial descriptive representation might have similarly declined. (Note, however, that numerous studies show race continuing to matter for public opinion in American politics, e.g. Kinder and Kam 2009; Barreto and Pedraza 2009).

2.2.2. Public Ignorance of Representatives' Identities. Perhaps the most compelling reason descriptive representation might have little impact on political participation is because members of the public are famously ignorant about who their representatives are. However, in order for individuals to feel empowered by the knowledge that a member of their group represents them in government, they must actually be aware that they are represented in this way. Yet as Keeter (1996) and others have shown, most Americans do not know who their elected officials are; for example, Keeter finds that more than 70 percent of Americans cannot name both of their Senators. In an environment where most voters know little about who represents them in the Senate, it thus may seem unlikely that voters would behave differently due to personal characteristics of their representatives. (However, see Pantoja (2005), who shows that though very few African-Americans could recall the name of their representative, a majority could still remember that person's race.)

2.2.3. Rational Choice To Not Participate. A final reason descriptive representation might actually *decrease* political participation is that citizens may actually expect a higher payoff from communicating with legislators who are *less* like them. Just as the famous "calculus of voting" depends heavily on the likelihood that one will be pivotal (Downs 1957), so too might the probability that a person communicates with their representative depend on the likelihood that that communication will result in a change in the representative's voting behavior. To the

extent blacks are more likely to agree on political issues than are other groups (Dawson 1994), blacks might therefore see *less* reason to communicate or participate once blacks have achieved political success.

In summary, in the previous two subsections I outlined several reasons existing literature gives for why minorities may or may not be more likely to politically participate when they are represented by a member of their group. In the next subsection I discuss how existing literature has sought to evaluate these claims empirically and the enduring challenges it has faced in doing so.

2.3. Existing Empirical Strategies – Approaches and Challenges

The empirical record for the hypothesis that descriptive representation increases political participation is mixed. There are a number of dissenting studies that report no major effects of descriptive representation on participation (Gay 2001; Tate 2002; Lawless 2004; Overby 2005) and even studies which have even found evidence that political incorporation *decreases* political participation at some levels of government (Spence, McClerking, and Brown 2009). However, despite the presence of empirically dissenting studies, there are also wealth of studies that show strong correlations between descriptive representation and many modes of political participation (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Gay 2002; Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 2004; Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005; Washington 2006; Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2007).

One reason the existing literature may reach conflicting findings is that existing methods for testing these hypothesis are based on potentially problematic procedures and vulnerable to selection bias. By far the most common method of testing claims about the effects of descriptive representation on political participation is with surveys or voter turnout statistics that compare minorities' behavior between areas with and without minority descriptive representatives. For example, Banducci, Donovan, and Karp (2004) survey minorities in districts with and without minority representatives and find that in areas with minority representatives minority citizens view their representatives as more responsive.

However, such approaches have struggled with two enduring issues that may prevent them from identifying the causal effect of descriptive representation.

2.3.1. Selection Bias. The first and most major drawback of the existing literature's approach is its extreme vulnerability to selection bias. Consider, for example, Bobo and Gilliam (1990), who find that blacks living in an area with black mayors are more politically empowered. Bobo and Gilliam attribute this association to the black mayors themselves, and argue that the mayors' elections cause blacks in the city to become more empowered and politically active. However, Bobo and Gilliam cannot disentangle the role that black political empowerment plays in causing the election of mayors in the first place from the effect Bobo and Gilliam attribute to black mayors' presence. Stated differently, Bobo and Gilliam's data may simply indicate that cities with more participatory black political communities are more successful in electing black mayors. In fact, this seems likely.

Similarly, Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) find that in countries with higher female descriptive representation in parliament, adolescent girls are more likely to discuss politics with their friends and signal an intention to participate in politics as adults. Wolbrecht and Campbell argue that this is because girls have more role models and feel more empowered in such countries due to the presence of female members of parliament. However, it may also be the case that countries with cultures more accepting of female participation in politics both elect women at higher rates and feature women whose survey responses reflect this underlying culture. Or, alternatively, the fact that women are more likely to be politically empowered may be responsible for their higher degree of officeholding (see Anzia and Berry 2011). Again, such explanations seem very likely to be responsible for at least part of Wolbrecht and Campbell's findings.

There is also good reason to believe that a time-series approach to this question such as that taken by Washington (2006) might fail to identify the effect of descriptive representation on participation. Though scholars have not yet assembled a full theory about what causes individuals to run for political office, events such as racially charged incidents or economic changes that would cause blacks to run for office would likely have a similarly simulative effect on black voter turnout. More broadly, nearly any plausible assignment mechanism for the election of blacks would correlate with black voter turnout.

Existing studies that compare rates of minority participation between different districts may thus miss substantial unobserved heterogeneity that correlates with districts' likelihood to elect minorities and minorities' political participation in that district. Therefore, existing studies that establish correlations between political participation or empowerment with descriptive representation might substantially misidentify cause and effect and present bias estimates of the effect of descriptive representation. In my next major section I argue why my approach overcomes this issue. I first discuss a second issue my approach seeks to address.

2.3.2. Reliance on Survey Self-reports. A second major issue in existing literature on the link between descriptive representation and political communication in particular is the literature's reliance on survey self-reports. As Gerber and Green (2000) show and many other social scientists have appreciated (e.g. Bertrand and Mullainathan 2001), survey self-reports of behavior are often inaccurate in systematic ways. However, nearly all existing studies of the

effect of descriptive representation on behavior beyond voting rely on subjects' own self-reports to draw inferences about their actual behavior.

Even some of the most noted studies in this literature are also vulnerable to this issue. For example, Gay (2002), arguably the most influential study on this subject, shows that both blacks and whites are more likely to report having contacted their member of Congress when their Congressperson is of their race. Self-reporting might be particularly unreliable in this case because subjects might consider themselves more politically active when represented by a member of their group even if this self-conception has no basis in fact. When asked if one has contacted one's member of Congress in the last year, it might be far more likely for one to reflect on one's beliefs about oneself than to accurately remember if one had engaged in this potentially-forgettable behavior at any point.

Though Gay (2002) is only one example, there are no studies of the link between descriptive representation and political behavior other than voting of which I am aware that do not rely on survey self-reports instead of measuring actual behavior. In the next main section of the chapter I discuss how my first experimental design attempts to overcome the problem of selfreporting endemic to existing studies of communication.

3. Testing The Link Between Descriptive Representation and Political Communication: An Experiment in Maryland's Multi-Member Districts

3.1. The Experimental Design

In this section I describe how my experimental design attempts to test whether citizens are more likely to communicate their views on politics to elected officials of their race. In summary, my experiment called voters who are represented by both a black and white state legislator and asked them to participate in an opinion survey that was purportedly being taken on behalf of, randomly, either their white or black state legislator. The null hypothesis is thus that subjects are equally likely to signal willingness to complete the telephone survey regardless of whether they believe the survey consists of politically communicating with their black or white representative.

In the following pages I describe my experimental design in more detail. The design relies on two main innovations over the existing literature's approach.

3.1.1. Simulating Participation. First, my experiment avoids relying on self-reports of communication by attempting to simulate an actual opportunity to communicate with one's representative. To do so, I mimicked how a politician would survey constituents by phone to gauge constituent opinion.

The full text of the call, shown in Box 1, begins with the sentence "*Would you like to tell Delegate [RANDOMIZED NAME OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE] your opinion on a political issue?*" (In Maryland, state house members have the title "Delegate" instead of "Representative," because the state house is known as the House of Delegates.)

The dependent variable of interest is simply whether or not the subject chose to politically communicate with the representative; i.e., if they chose to participate in what was ostensibly the representative's opinion survey. In a subsequent subsection I discuss how I recorded the dependent variable and the ethical considerations behind this choice at greater length, however for now I will note that this script attempted to simulate the conditions of an opinion survey actually conducted by the representative as closely as possible. To the extent that any voters were not successfully led to believe that their state representative was polling them, note also that this would effect both treatments equally and thus bias my effects towards zero.

As can be seen in Box 1, after recording the dependent variable the subject is

immediately fully debriefed that the call is a research survey being conducted by Yale and will

not be sent to their state representative. For those who signaled willingness to participate, the call

concludes by conducting an actual short survey about the issue of crime.

Box 1. Message in Phone Call

When person first picks up the phone: "Hello. Would you like to tell Delegate [RANDOMIZED NAME OF STATE REPRESENATIVE] your opinion on a political issue? Press 1 if you would participate. Press 2 if you would not participate." *Dependent variable recorded.*

If person pressed 2 (and thus declined to participate):

Thank you. This research survey was conducted by Yale University and intended to measure people's views on politics. Please note that no results will be sent to your state representative. If you have any questions about the survey, e-mail [e-mail address]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, e-mail [e-mail address] or call the Yale Human Subjects Committee phone number at [phone number]. Thank you.

If person pressed 1 (signaling willingness to participate):

Thank you. This research survey is being conducted by YU for research purposes. It should take about two minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate without penalty. Please also note that no results will be sent to your state rep and all your responses will be kept confidential.

Our question is: In general, do you think penalties for convicted criminals should increase, stay the same, or decrease? Press 1 if you think penalties for criminals should increase, press 2 if you think they should stay the same, 3 if you think they should decrease. Again, press 1 if you think penalties for criminals generally should increase, 2 if you think they should stay the same, and 3 if you think they should decrease."

After response recorded:

Thank you. That concludes the survey. The reason we only asked one question was to determine people's views on politics. If you have any questions about the survey, e-mail [email]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, e-mail [email] or call the Yale Human Subjects Committee phone number at [phone number]. Thank you.

With this procedure, the experiment attempts to more directly measure how citizens

behave when they have an opportunity to communicate to a representative. Short of actually

intercepting such constituent-to-representative communication as it happens in the real world

(e.g. by going through legislators' mail or e-mails), this design attempts to come as close as is

possible to mimicking the conditions under which individuals make the choice to politically

communicate with their representatives or not.

3.1.2. Multi-member Districts. A second important feature of this experiment is that it takes advantage of a unique electoral arrangement in Maryland: the state's multi-member state legislative districts. In Maryland's state house districts, three legislators are elected by the same voters to serve the same constituency. As a result, there is the possibility that legislators of different races will serve the same constituents and the same district. In fact, there are ten such districts where a black and white legislator both serve. I ran this experiment in six of these districts: Districts 13, 18, 26, 28, 41, and 43, all of which were, as of April 2011, served by at least one black and at least one white state house member. The house members' names I used are available upon request but not printed here to retain their privacy. In all six cases, I always chose Democrats as well as the two house members who had served the most similar amount of time in the legislature, as measured in absolute terms.⁹

This feature of the experiment overcomes the selection issue that, as discussed, may significantly bias existing studies on this subject insofar as the election of minorities groups is endogenous to other characteristics of legislative districts or nations. By contrast, I can ensure that all is held equal between the groups between which I draw comparisons for inference because I randomly draw each group's subjects from the same population.

One potential downside of this approach is that it does not allow my experiment to test all potential mechanisms for descriptive representation. Specifically, since all the subjects in the study are represented by at least one legislator of their race, I cannot test the causal effect of simply *being represented by* a legislator of one's own race in an ambient sense. Therefore, any effects due to the sense of empowerment minorities may gain from being represented by a

⁹ For example, if the black legislator had been elected in 2006 and the two white legislators had been elected in 2008 and 2002, respectively, I would have paired the only black legislator with the white legislator elected in 2008.

minority, for example, will not appear in my data. However, this narrow scope of the experiment could also be viewed as a feature since it allows me to more finely test the aspect of descriptive representation that might cause political participation. (I also test the more ambient empowerment effects in the next major section.)

3.2. Ethics

This experiment was slightly deceptive; as with any experiment on human subjects, especially which includes deception, ethics were an important consideration in this study's design. First, note that I did seek and receive an exemption from the Human Subjects Committee for this study. Second, I sought to minimize harm to subjects by informing them of the deception as soon as possible. I also made the first sentence of the call as short as possible so that most subjects likely heard the disclaimer within fifteen seconds of picking up the call. Third, at the request of the Human Subjects Committee I inserted an actual survey into the call for those people who signaled a willingness to participate. This was meant to decrease any likelihood that subjects would feel misled or angry since the call claimed that it would be administering a survey. Last, I sought to make the call as short as possible in general so as to represent a minimum imposition on subjects' time. I also followed standard federal calling guidelines and regulations and did not call any subjects after 9 pm in the evening.

In these ways I sought to minimize any harm that might come to subjects as a result of participating in the study. Still, this experiment was somewhat deceptive, but this deception was necessary in order to measure my effect of interest. As discussed, existing research relies on self-reports which copious research has demonstrated can be unreliable, sometimes in ways that systematically bias findings. Only by simulating the conditions under which political participation might actually take place could I cleanly estimate the effect of descriptive

representation on political participation.

3.3. Data, Randomization Procedure, and Response Measurement Procedure

3.3.1. Data. Phone numbers for this study came from TargetSmart Communications, a large consumer data firm. TargetSmart identified voters in each of the six state legislative districts I listed who met the following criterion: (1) are members of a household with members of only one race (so that any person who answered the phone would almost certainly be of that race, (2) are registered voters, (3) had landline phone numbers (i.e. no cell phones were called), and (4) had a race that was almost certainly clear from publicly available information on their surname, neighborhood, etc. TargetSmart provided me approximately 30,000 phone numbers that met these criteria, or approximately 2,250 white phone numbers and 2,750 black numbers in each of the six state legislative districts of interest.¹⁰

3.3.2. Randomization Procedure. I assigned subjects to treatment groups with block randomization by district, race, zip code, party affiliation, gender, whether the subject was over 50, and whether the subject had voted in the 2008 election. This procedure retains the equal and random likelihood that each observation would be assigned to each treatment group while balancing the number of observations in each of these categories that would be assigned to the treatment and control groups.

3.3.3. Implementation and Response Measurement. I called participants using a robotic dialer administered by Impact Dialing, LLC. The robotic dialer played the script discussed previously and that appeared in Box 1. The dialer called the treatment and control groups in each districts at exactly the same time and pace so that the groups remained comparable.¹¹ Individuals

¹⁰ I requested more black phone numbers than white phone numbers because I expected black response rates to be lower.

¹¹ A simple randomization check I preformed was whether or not the two treatment groups (black legislator and white legislator) picked up the phone at similar rates. Because the groups were randomly assigned and called at the

within each group were also called in a random order. Phone numbers that were not picked up the first time the experiment was implemented were attempted twice more by the same procedure. The dialer records whether the call was picked up, the date and time of the call, subjects' input on the keypad during the call, and the length of the call.

The dependent variable of the study is whether or not subjects said they would complete the survey (which ostensibly was being conducted on behalf of their legislator). I assigned this dependent variable first by excluding all observations where no person ever picked up the phone or where the phone was hung up within 6 seconds of the call, before the subjects might have heard the name of the legislator and thus before the treatment was administered. After these exclusions, there remained 8,928 observations in total where the treatment was successfully administered to the subject. 4,838 of these observations described black subjects and 4,090 described whites subjects. Subjects were coded as having signaled they would complete the survey if they dialed the numeral 1. In accordance with the script, this indicated that they wished to participate in a survey to describe their views on politics to the legislator to which they had been randomly assigned. All other subjects – including both those who pressed 2 and those who simply hung up after hearing the name of the legislator – were coded as having declined to participate.

3.4. Results

Overall, 6.2% of whites and 4.9% of blacks who received the treatment indicated that they wanted to tell their representative their views on a political issue. However, crucially, these rates greatly differed depending on the legislator to which they were assigned.

same time, both groups should have a similar no answer rate. Reassuringly, an F-test did not reject the null hypothesis that there were no differences between how likely the calls in the two treatment groups were to be called (p = .68).
Sussification	(1)	(\mathbf{i})	(2)	(4)	(5)	(\mathbf{f})
Specification	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(0)
Race of Subject	Blacks	Blacks	Blacks	Whites	Whites	Whites
Experimental						
Treatment Effects				1 1 1		
Asked To Tell	0.020***	0.021***	0.022***	-0.014*	-0.015*	-0.014*
Views To Black	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Legislator						
Covariates				1		
Female Subject	-	-0.008	-0.007	-	-0.005	-0.006
· ·		(0.006)	(0.006)		(0.008)	(0.008)
Subject Voted in	-	0.022***	0.019**	-	0.018*	0.020*
2008		(0.007)	(0.007)		(0.008)	(0.008)
Leg. District Fixed	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Effects						
Zip Code Fixed	-	-	Yes	-	-	Yes
Effects						
Constant	0.039***	n/a	n/a	0.070***	n/a	n/a
	(0.004)			(0.005)		
\mathbb{R}^2	.0022	.0067	.0174	.0009	.0036	.0172
Ν	4838	4838	4838	4090	4090	4090

Table 1. Treatment Effect Estimates (OLS) – Communicating With A Black Legislator

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is whether the subject indicated willingness to participate in the survey. *=p<.10, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001.

Table 1 presents the full results. Blacks (see Column 1) only indicated a willingness to communicate to their white legislator 3.9 percent of the time, yet were a full 2 percentage points more likely to do so when they were asked to communicate with their black legislator (p < .001). Though small in percentage *point* terms, this difference represents an astounding *greater than 50% increase* in response rate among blacks. Put differently, the experimental counterfactual implies that *more than a third of the blacks who signaled willingness to communicate with their black representative would not have done so had they heard the name of their white representative.*

Among whites, the opposite held: as Column 4 shows, whites were 1.4 percentage points less likely to signal willingness to communicate to a black representative (p < .06). In the context of the 7% of whites who were willing to fill out the survey for their white representative, this

represents a decrease in response rate of about 20%. Put differently, the experimental counterfactual implies that *about one in five whites who indicated willingness to communicate to their white representative would not have done so had they been asked to communicate with their black representative.*

Columns 2, 3, 5, and 6 show that these results hold in the context of some covariates. Columns 2 and 5 present the results with dummy variables for whether the phone number belonged to someone female, whether that person voted in the 2008 election, and fixed effects for each of the six state legislative districts that came under study. Columns 3 and 6 introduce zip-code level fixed effects. Reassuringly, these controls barely change the topline estimates discussed. These results also remain statistically significant when clustering standard errors on the politician level.





Figure 1 displays the results of the experiment graphically. The participation rates among black and white respondents are grouped together at the top and bottom of the graph, respectively, and their rates of participation are displayed separately for each of the treatment groups. The small black lines represent the standard errors of the estimates.

3.5 Summary

In this experiment, I showed that blacks and whites are more likely to communicate with their legislators when they are of the same race. I arrived at these estimates with a unique experiment that took advantage of rare institutional circumstances in Maryland – multi-member districts where both blacks and white serve – and asked individuals to communicate with these legislators. Blacks were 2 percentage points more likely to participate in a survey ostensibly conducted for their black representative than for their white representative, while whites were 1.4 percentage points more likely to do so for their white representative than for their black representative. These findings indicate that race substantially impacts the degree of communication that occurs between citizens and their representatives, and may have broader theoretical implications for the degree of trust that exists between citizens and legislators of the same group.

4. Descriptive Representation and Political Empowerment – A Natural Experimental Approach

In this section I describe the results from a natural experimental approach to measuring the effect of descriptive representation on political participation of another kind: voter turnout. In summary, I use a regression discontinuity design to compare elections where women "just won" and "just lost" state legislative races against men. As I will argue, because these close elections can be considered quasi-randomly determined, differences between subsequent behavior between these districts can be causally attributed to the election of a woman. If the election of women increases female voter turnout, one should expect women to comprise a greater share of the electorate in districts where women have "just won" the previous election.

However, in this section I find no evidence that women represented by women are more likely to vote. In areas where women have "just won" previous elections, women are no more likely to turn out to vote than men. Furthermore, I also apply the literature's standard methodology to my data and find substantial effects, illustrating the bias in the current literature's approach. In the following subsections I describe my methodology, data, and results. *4.1. Regression Discontinuity Designs*

Regression discontinuity designs (RDDs) have grown increasingly common in political science and have been employed in a wide variety of prominent applications (e.g. Lee 2008; Eggers and Hainmueller 2009). RDDs are applied when a theoretical outcome of interest such as an election is determined at a discontinuous point on a continuous variable, such as when a candidate's share of the vote just crosses the 50% threshold – with anything below 50% of the vote the candidate loses, and just above it she wins. The RDD uses data very close to each side of the threshold to estimate the value of the dependent variable directly at the threshold, then attributes differences between these estimates to the change in the independent variable that occurs right at the threshold. For example, Lee (2008) finds that Democrats who "just win" Congressional elections can expect a substantial increase in their vote shares in subsequent elections over those who "just lose" (i.e. the incumbency effect). Thus, though no one election can be considered randomly determined, the RDD uses data on each side of the threshold to estimate the limit. For more on RDDs and for a formal proof of their properties, see Lee (2008). For readers not familiar with the procedure, the Figures in the

subsequent subsections will clarify its approach.

4.2. Data

My data come from three sources. First, the Center on American Women and Politics at Rutgers University collects and graciously made available data on all female candidates for state legislature since 1999. I dropped from these data all cases where a woman ran against another woman, since the victor in either case would have been female. The resulting dataset thus represents all state legislative races since 1999 where a woman faced a man in the general election.

For the purpose of isolating the natural experiment around the discontinuity, I also required data on the election results for these elections. I merged available election results datasets into this dataset from the years 2000, 2002, and 2006. These data were collected from official state historical election data websites in early 2011. The new combined dataset thus represents the number of votes each man and woman received in all the state legislative contests that occurred between a male and a female candidate in 2000, 2002, and 2006.

For my dependent variable, I collected data from Catalist, a well-known political data clearinghouse. Catalist provided me with data on the total number of votes cast in the general election and the number of votes cast by women specifically in every even-numbered election year between 2000 and 2010. Dividing the number of votes women cast by the total number of votes yields my dependent variable of interest, the share of the state legislative electorate of which women consisted in each district-year.

Finally, I matched each of the elections during which a female candidate ran against a man to female voter turnout in that election, the next election, and the election after that. For example, I matched all female/male races in 2000 with data on women's share of the electorate

in these districts in 2000, 2002, and 2004. Last, before conducting my analysis, I further

excluded from these data any states that contained multi-member state legislative districts (as it

would not be clear where to draw the discontinuity). The resulting dataset described 3,827 state

legislative elections across 2000, 2002, and 2006.

4.3. Results from the Regression Discontinuity

Table 2 presents the results. In all regressions, I follow standard RDD procedure and limit

the bandwidth to races only within a certain margin of the discontinuity, in this case 25%.

Specification	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent	Election 1	Election 2	Election 3
Variable Election #			
Quasi-Randomly			
Assigned			
Female Won	-0.001	0.002	0.001
Election 1	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Covariates			
Female Vote	0.002	-0.133	-0.030
Percentage (FVP)	(0.151)	(0.137)	(0.138)
FVP^2	-0.108	-2.486	-0.477
	(2.673)	(2.456)	(2.488)
FVP ³	-3.803	-16.89	-4.200
	(17.06)	(15.85)	(16.16)
FVP^4	-11.40	-35.68	-10.20
	(35.56)	(33.24)	(34.05)
Female Won *	0.186	0.194	0.124
FVP	(0.223)	(0.203)	(0.205)
Female Won *	-3.018	2.151	-0.681
FVP^2	(3.929)	(3.660)	(3.699)
Female Won *	20.55	15.50	8.936
FVP ³	(25.28)	(23.87)	(24.11)
Female Won *	-15.59	45.99	7.439
FVP^4	(53.24)	(50.76)	(51.19)
Constant	0.530***	0.532***	0.526***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
R^2	.0124	.0083	.0128
Ν	2447	2447	2447

Table 2. Effect of A Woman's Election on Women's Relative Voter Turnout

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is the percentage of the electorate that women comprise. *=p<.10, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001.

4.3.1. Election 1. To ensure the robustness of my regression discontinuity procedure, I first examine the effect of a woman just winning an election on voter turnout in that same election. Because the events are concurrent, there should be no causal effect of a woman's victory in Election 1 on her vote share in that same election. If I were to find some effect, it would indicate that the procedure or the data is in some way biased. Reassuringly, Column 1 in Table 2 shows that the procedure finds no effect (p = .71). When a woman just wins Election 1, there is no discontinuous jump in female voter turnout in that same election.

Figure 2. Effect of Woman Winning Election 1 on Female Voter Turnout in Election 1 (Robustness Check)



Figure 2 visually depicts these results. The solid black lines represent the model's estimate of female voter turnout at each level of the woman's vote share in Election 1. The dotted lines on each side of the model represent the 95% confidence interval of the model. The

plotted circles represent the average value of the true data, with the size of the circles corresponding to the number of observations at each point. The vertical line at 0% margin of victory represents the discontinuity that separates women's victories from defeats, and the gap between the two black lines at this vertical line represents the causal effect of interest estimated in the model. It is clear from this visual that the model finds no effect of a woman's victory on women's voter turnout in the same election.



Figure 3. Effect of Woman Winning Election 1 on Female Voter Turnout in Election 2



their elections, there is no increase in relative female voter turnout in the next election compared to when women barely lose them.

These results are displayed in Figure 3. The fitted model and the data both leave no impression that a female candidate's victory causes increased female presence in the electorate in the next election.



Figure 4. Effect of Woman Winning Election 1 on Female Voter Turnout in Election 3

Likewise, Column 3 displays the model's estimate for the effect of electing a woman in Election 1 on the election four years later, Election 3. The estimate is again extremely small (0.1 percentage points) and insignificant (p = .72). These results are displayed in Figure 4. Similar to Figure 3, the data in Figure 4 give no indication that electing a woman in Election 1 has any

impact on women's share of the electorate in Election 3.

4.4. The Current Literature's Approach

This data also permit a replication of the current literature's approach. In fact, even though the natural experiment shows no effect, the current literature's methodology finds substantial effects for electing a woman on female participation on this same data.

Current literature directly compares mean values for minority groups' voter turnout in a subsequent election between districts where minorities do and do not serve. In Table 3, I run a simple regression comparing mean values of female voter turnout in districts where women do and do not win Election 1. First, note that Column 1 finds a substantial and significant positive effect for the election of a woman on women's voter turnout in that same election. Of course, this result interpretation of the results is nonsensical; rather, it indicates simply that the sort of districts where women win elections are also likely to feature higher female voter turnout.

 Table 3. Current Approach to Determining Effect of Female Representation on Female Turnout

Specification	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent	Election 1	Election 2	Election 3
Variable Election #			
Female Won	0.008***	0.007***	0.008***
Election 1	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.534***	0.537***	0.531***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
R^2	.0186	.0147	.0194
Ν	3827	3827	3827

Notes: Dependent variable in all regressions is the percentage of the electorate that women comprise. *=p<.10, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001.

The specifications in Columns 2 and 3 in Table 3 reach similarly large and significant estimates for the effect of female descriptive representation on women's voter turnout in subsequent Elections 2 and 3. However, as before, the natural experimental specification found no effect, indicating that existing methodology is likely significantly biased.

Figure 5 visually displays the current literature's methodology. The approach reaches estimates by comparing mean values of female voter turnout in subsequent elections across the space of all elections that included women and attributes difference in these means to the successful election of women. However, following the data plotted near the discontinuity shows that this model significantly misidentifies the true effect.



Figure 5. Current Literature's Approach to Estimating The Effect of Descriptive Representation

4.5. Summary

In this section I presented an estimate of the effect of female descriptive representation on female voter turnout from a regression discontinuity design, a form of natural experiment. My data from state legislative elections in the United States during the years 2000, 2002, and 2006 indicate that there is no effect of descriptive representation on voter turnout.

These results differ substantially from estimates presented in previous studies. As discussed, numerous empirical and theoretical studies have posited that the presence of minorities in government makes members of their groups grow more politically empowered, increasing their voter turnout. As Barreto, Segura, and Woods (2004) wrote in the context of Latino turnout in majority-minority districts, "repeated trips to the polling place with nothing to show for your effort would get old, fast." However, it appears from my results that there is no such general empowerment effect among women in the United States when a woman represents them.

There are two important caveats to this result's generalizability. First, regression discontinuity designs measure the local average treatment effect only in the area around the discontinuity. It may thus by the case that there is a treatment effect in the sort of districts where women generally receive a much higher or lower proportion of the vote. Second, unlike the rest of this essay, this section focused on the descriptive representation of women instead of blacks. However, is possible that findings from one of these groups will not generalize to the other. Future research thus should replicate this methodology for the election of blacks as well.

5. Discussion

In recent decades, scholars of American politics have grown increasingly alarmed at flagging levels of political participation in the United States, especially in the context of historically disadvantaged groups' relatively lower rates of participation (e.g. Lijphart 1997; Bartels 2008). As Mayhew (1974) notes, in mass electorates the relationship of electoral accountability can be "distant" (p. 165-7), especially without strong political participation among citizens both on Election Day and beyond.

In this chapter I showed that descriptive representation may help address these crucial

issues as it substantially increases political participation among minority groups in one way: minorities are much more likely to communicate with a descriptive representative. However, I also showed that these salutary effects of descriptive representation do not appear to have any broader effects on empowerment or voter turnout.

I demonstrated that descriptive representation increases communication with a large-scale field experiment that took advantage of multi-member state legislative districting in Maryland and ostensibly offered citizens the opportunity to communicate with one of their actual state representatives, whose race I randomized. The results showed that both blacks and whites were substantially more likely to take the opportunity to communicate with a representative of their race. My second empirical contribution presented a regression discontinuity design of female voter turnout using the near-victory or near-defeat of female candidates for state legislature as a natural experiment. I also replicated the existing literature's methodology and discussed why its estimates were likely to be biased. These results indicated that existing studies of descriptive representation and voter turnout likely overestimate the effect of descriptive representation and that there appears to be no causal effect of descriptive representation on voter turnout.

As discussed, these results speak to several important ongoing debates about the nature and effects of descriptive representation. First, they indicate that descriptive representation has important consequences for the relationship between constituents and their representatives. Constituents, especially minorities, are much more likely to communicate their views on policy issues to representatives of their race, an empirical question on which existing research reaches mixed conclusions. Many minorities currently represented by whites thus may be expressing their views to their representatives at a far lower rate than they might otherwise (and the same might be said of whites who are represented by blacks). Given strong evidence that politicians are responsive to information about public opinion (Butler and Nickerson 2011), this finding has potentially large downstream consequences for the representation that descriptive representatives provide.

However, this result is tempered by the finding that descriptive representation does not appear to more generally increase empowerment and voter turnout, despite what much literature claims. Women in the United States are no more likely to vote than men when they have a female representative. Though it may be that being descriptively represented changes citizens' evaluations of government in other ways, any such changes do not appear to be reflected in different behavior towards the political system.

Beyond my results' immediate relevance to these important debates about the representation of women and blacks in the United States, my methods may also be of independent interest to scholars seeking to understand the relative impact of descriptive representation in other areas or among other groups. Though my results speak to the position of racial and gender minorities in the United States, these results may be substantially different in other national contexts or in the context of other forms of descriptive representation, such as by age, class background, or sexual orientation.

Future research should further consider the mechanisms by which descriptive representation increases communication between constituents and representatives. Though following from political theorists' claims much empirical literature has asserted that increased trust drives this link, we lack strong empirical evidence that trust is the true mechanism for this link. Other mechanisms might also be responsible: citizens might simply be more likely to have heard of a representative from their group, or might rationally expect such a representative to be more responsive to their communication. Finally, though existing literature gives us reason to believe that differences in the amount of communication groups provide to their representatives will have effects on representatives' actions, it would be worthwhile to fully establish that there is a link between descriptive representation and policy outcomes with increased communication as the mechanism. Such a demonstration would invaluably add to important debates, especially as political and judicial decision-makers continue to weigh the relative benefits and costs of descriptive representation.

Chapter 3

"Getting It": The Connection Between Minority Representation, Personal Experience, and Policy Expertise

Abstract

This chapter argues that minority politicians are more likely to provide substantive policy representation for minority constituents due to policy expertise they gain from previous life experience. I support this argument with qualitative participant-observation research conducted in twenty-seven heavily black districts in the south as well as a dataset gathered during this field research. Many scholars have argued that life experiences lead minority legislators to have different *values and preferences*, but scholarship neglects the role that life experience plays in actually helping minorities *understand* relevant policy issues to a greater extent. Existing research in other areas of political science supports the premise that legislators' policy expertise plays a role in how they craft policy. A quantitative dataset supports a second premise that blacks and whites have very different life experiences in heavily black areas. Participant observation data then support the conclusions that such differences lead black and white elected officials to be more likely to both be able to and have incentive to provide policy representation to members of their racial groups. These findings indicate that minority descriptive representation is invaluable to the substantive representation of minorities' unique policy needs.

1. Introduction

How do minority politicians represent minority constituents differently? In this chapter, I

argue that a salient feature of descriptive representation is that *politicians are more likely to*

understand and specialize on issues of greater significance to members of their racial group due

to their pre-legislative life experiences.

In sum, my argument is as follows: as much political science has demonstrated,

legislators build policy expertise during their time in the legislature that improves their ability to understand and craft effective policy (e.g. Krehbiel 1991). I first extend this argument and posit that similar learning can take place before entrance into public service. For example, legislators with backgrounds in finance or law might be expected to better understand the nuances of, respectively, financial regulation or election law. Such expertise is often discussed in the context of the legislature itself: for example, one of the principal scholarly arguments against term limits is that legislators who have built expertise on issues while in the legislature are replaced by legislators with less expertise (e.g. Sarbaugh-Thompson et al. 2006; Burns, Evans, Gamm, and McConnaughy 2008). Insofar as building expertise in issue areas is not strictly limited to one's time while actually serving in the legislature, differences in life experience between legislators leave different actors differently equipped to form policy.

Next, because American society remains somewhat segregated by race, some even idiosyncratic features of society are often much more familiar to members of one racial group than another. As legislators of different races have systematically different life experiences, then, these experiences will better equip them to understand issues relevant to their racial group.

I also argue that legislators actually have greater incentives to provide representation on personally relevant issues due to this greater ability. Such differences in ability and behavior between representatives of different races have implications for the likelihood that legislators will provide effective representation to their racial group and members of other groups.

The role of life experience is not new to literature on minority representation, though as far as I know it is in this sense. Many political philosophers have argued that life experiences shape legislators' *preferences* (Phillips 1991; Phillips 1995; Williams 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Mansbridge 2003). Likewise, many empirical studies which have demonstrated links between minority descriptive representation and roll call voting argue that life experiences such as "racialized experiences…incline black legislators to have more of a personal interest in black interest policies" (Gamble 2007; see also Whitby 1997; Burden 2007). However, no study of which I am aware discusses how life experience shapes legislators' *abilities* to provide policy representation.

In making these arguments, I draw on quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered during Fenno (1978)-style participant observation research conducted with twenty-seven US state legislators who represent heavily black districts in the south.¹² Half of these legislators were black (N=13) and half were white (N=14).¹³ All were Democrats.¹⁴

My quantitative evidence comes from a unique dataset I gathered in during this field work that describes the racial breakdown of attendees at events in civil society I attended in these MMDs. The data strongly show that civil society in these areas is very racially polarized, with blacks and whites participating very separately in civic life. Together with data from my participant observation research, I argue that such patterns have implications about differences between the typical black and white experience in these areas and thus also about black and white elected officials' abilities to provide policy representation to these communities.

In the chapter's main sections that follow, I elaborate these arguments at greater length. I conclude by considering the implications of my arguments and potential avenues for future research. First, however, I briefly discuss my participant-observation data.

¹² The states I visited were Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. I chose these states because they had some of the highest numbers of black representatives. Because making preparations to visit each state represented a large fixed cost, I thus sought to somewhat limit the number of states I visited. Limiting the number of states and regions I visited also limited another source of potential variation in my study, though doing so may mean my conclusions are less generalizable beyond the south. Two-thirds of state legislative districts I visited were more than 50% black by population; all were greater than 30% black.

¹³ As noted, my quantitative and qualitative analyses rely on observations at the state legislative level. While the politics of MMDs on the state level should be of interest in and of itself, I do so principally because the large number of state legislators and MMDs allows me to gain unique inferential leverage about political behavior in MMDs: there are 451 majority-black state legislative districts, 1,016 majority-minority state legislative districts, and more than 907 minority state legislators in the United States. By comparison, Congress' 435 members and districts contain only 77 majority-minority districts, while only 75 members of the 111th Congress were not white. The study of descriptive representation on the Congressional level is also difficult due to a small sample size and, the fact that, as Grose (2011) notes, essentially all heavily minority Congressional districts are represented by minorities. This leaves scholars with essentially no variation in the race of elected officials in MMDs from which to draw inferences about the effects of descriptive representation in MMDs. By contrast, on the state legislative level whites represent 287 majority-minority districts of some kind.

¹⁴ I chose to only visit Democrats simply to limit other sources of variation. Because I was mainly interested in differences between black and white legislators, concentrating on Democrats only allowed me to make the most direct comparisons. Another reason is simply that there are extremely few black Republican legislators, meaning that finding many comparable black legislators willing to participate would likely have proven difficult.

1.1. Participant-Observation Data

As Bianco (1994) discussed in his book *Trust*, the danger of extensively relying on interviews is that one will "offend everyone." Especially on issues such as representation where quantitative evidence abounds, it may be unclear what role interviews or observation could play.

In this case in particular, however, such a methodology may be preferable to quantitative methods because of the nature of my argument. Attempting to quantitatively test my argument is a worthwhile goal, yet ultimately would require a researcher to make judgments about what issues or kinds of issues one racial group would be more likely to understand. Researchers are unlikely to arrive at such judgments in a systematic way from afar; were such patterns so easily discernable, it is likely that legislators themselves would have similarly easily acquired such missing expertise. Rather, I would argue that the many specific examples I discuss can provide, on this issue in particular, the best evidence in favor of my conclusions.

Interviews have also continued to be an important resource as scholars build theories about minority representation (not to mention other topics in social science – e.g. Bewley 1999). Swain (1993), Canon (1999), Fenno (2003), and Grose (2011) thus all heavily relied on interviews to build and support their main theories, as I do here. However, though this path is well worn in studies of minority representation, four important features of my data warrant comment.

First and foremost, this study is the first interview study on minority representation to be conducted *anonymously*. The reasons no anonymous study has been conducted in this literature are clear: in the Congressional context, there are simply not enough black Congresspeople to render credible a promise of anonymity; however, with thousands of state legislators serving in the US and hundreds of black legislators, I could promise legislators the anonymity of their responses to my questions and my descriptions of their districts. The consequences of this difference for the candor of the responses I received are obvious. Hence, I refer to legislators, like Fenno (1978), by random letters, e.g. "Legislator A." (On a few rare occasions I do not attribute an anecdote I relate to a particular legislator because it would make the legislator too easy to identify.)

Second, again unlike existing studies, race was not the stated purpose of my study. I told the legislators I worked with that I was studying representation on the state legislative level, though did not specify that I was interested in minority representation in particular. Though this difference may seem minor, it is well established in interview research methodology that fully informing subjects of the purpose of the study can bias responses.

Third, the number of legislators with whom I conducted research – twenty-seven – is also of note. Grose (2011) visited seventeen districts for his study, whereas Fenno (1978) based his landmark study on only eighteen districts and his follow-up work about minority representation on only four (2003).

Fourth, and finally, I spent a large amount of time with each legislator in their district: usually three to five days each, more time than Fenno (1978) reports that he spent with most of the Congressmen he studied. This ultimately proved most important not only because of the larger scope of activities I observed but because of the rapport I gained with each member as a result. As Fenno (1978, p. 263-9) discusses, building rapport is vital to receiving truthful answers. The vast majority of the quotes I excerpt came from conversations on day three or later of my interactions with each member. By contrast, Grose (2011) reports that he only took a few minutes to establish "strong rapport" with his interlocutors in his non-anonymous interviews and Swain (1993) provides no indication of how she established a relationship with her interviewees. These differences give me confidence that my data can still shed new light in a field already rich with outstanding contributions employing similar methodologies.

One caveat to this data is that my own race undoubtedly played a role in shaping the answers I received. First, because I am white, it is likely that it took longer for me to establish rapport with many of the black representatives with whom I worked. However, as can be seen in the evidence that follows, I took many steps to verify what legislators told me and to carefully reason through their arguments. I also expect that I received somewhat more truthful answers from white representatives than I would have had I been of another race – if I were black I doubt, for example, that one white legislator would have told me he did not believe Barack Obama was born in the United States. Nevertheless, though no researcher can have interpersonal interactions without their own identity having some impact, this caveat should still be kept in mind as the reader considers the evidence to follow.

2. The Role of Personal Experience in Legislators' Ability to Provide Representation

Much research on Congress and legislatures acknowledges the role policy expertise plays in providing effective representation (e.g. Krehbiel 1991). Current scholarship, however, largely discusses policy expertise as a quantity developed during politicians' time in legislative service. Put simply, education and experience with the substantive issues at hand in a given piece of legislation improves a legislator's ability to craft legislation of higher quality. Thus, one of the principal arguments against term limits is that legislators acquire important policy expertise during their service (e.g. Sarbaugh-Thompson et al. 2006; Burns, Evans, Gamm, and McConnaughy 2008).

However, there is good reason to believe such expertise could be formed in part before service in the legislature begins. Members of the legislature often begin their careers as fortyand fifty-year-olds with substantial professional and personal life experiences behind them. Thus, in this vein, much research performed by a previous generation of scholars argued that lawyers' skills made them more suited towards succeeding in certain policy areas (e.g. Matthews 1960; Cohen 1969; Hain and Piereson 1975; McIntosh and Stanga 1976).

My interviews with legislators and officials in state politics were consonant with this idea that there is a link between legislators' pre-political life experiences and their level of policy expertise in the legislature. Legislator G (white), for example, worked in the financial industry before entering politics. He now sits on his legislature's finance committee, where he reports that he and another legislator who had also been in finance play leading roles on crafting complex financial regulation bills because they understand the issues at hand best. It even frustrates Legislator G that many other legislators on the committee haven't been able to develop the policy expertise that would allow them to contribute to the crafting of policy, leaving him forced to explain his proposals to his colleagues and, in his perception, perform a disproportionate share of the actual policymaking. "Though me and [the other legislator with a background in finance] don't agree on much," Legislator G told me, "we still share lots of winks when our colleagues say things that don't make financial sense." Note therefore that even if some less expert member of the committee did have a policy interest in finance, she may be unable to realize it to the extent that Legislator G would because of his higher level of prior experience.

Other legislators reported similar experiences on other issues. One legislator works for a national union in a professional capacity, and brings this policy expertise to his work in the legislature: he reports providing his colleagues with guidance to help understand how different policy proposals would affect labor unions. A final legislator was a builder before entering politics and now plays a large role in scrutinizing cost estimates and contracts for state

construction projects.

Unsurprisingly given the complex nature of many legal issues, the lawyers with whom I spoke were particularly exceptional in this regard. One legislator worked in election law before coming to the legislature, and has thus led a redrafting of the state's election laws, a task he reports most of his colleagues would be unable to perform without his level of familiarity with the law. Some of his colleagues chose to train themselves in election law in order to assist in this policymaking effort, but this legislator's pre-political policy expertise substituted for the training his peers were forced to gain after their elections. In this way, policy-relevant expertise gained before and after one's election can be strongly interchangeable.

Such pre-political life experiences can be so important in the eyes of legislators that many legislators reported serving as informal trusted experts to their colleagues on their issues of expertise. Legislator H (white) had also been an attorney before being elected to the legislature. As we began our first interview, a newspaper called him asking for comment on a proposed change to the state's criminal justice procedures. After he hung up he turned to me and said, "that's why we have a citizen legislature." When I asked him to elaborate, he told me that his colleagues didn't understand the details of criminal law well enough to even form opinions on the proposed changes without his help; just as the newschapter sought him for comment because of his personal expertise, both supporters and opponents of the policy relied on him to help them understand how the policy would matter.

The impact of legislators' personal backgrounds need not be limited to technical issues. For example, Legislator J (black), who represents an urban area, provided a similar story about how differences in geography or culture might also have this effect, "There are some things members just don't get because of where they're from. As an urban legislator, rural legislators have to explain farm life to me. That's not my world." Legislator J gave the example of a bill banning riding in the back of pickup trucks that he was inclined to support because he believed it would limit injury with little cost. However, rural legislators explained that doing so would also significantly hamper how farmers in the state travelled across their property. In response, Legislator J, now better understanding the measure's potential effects, readily dropped his support for the proposal.

Though this is a somewhat trivial example, it illustrates that relatively simple differences between policymaker's personal backgrounds can change *their own judgments about what the effects of a proposed policy would be*. Indeed, no legislator I spoke with denied that their personal experiences substantially informed their efforts to develop such an understanding.

3. Are There Policy-Relevant Differences In Life Experience Across Races?

In the previous section I defended the first leg of my argument: the premise that differences in life experiences can provide legislators with expertise that increases their ability to provide policy representation on associated issues. In this section, I construct the other foundation of my argument: that there are policy-relevant racial differences in life experience in areas with racial diversity.

In summary, many scholars have argued that roll call votes on civil rights issues are the best place to test differences in descriptive representation. However, what we know about race in the United States as well as my participant observation research provides many reasons to think that race matters for many issues beyond those strictly defined as race-related (like civil rights). Beyond the many ways that racial differences color Americans' views on different policy issues ostensibly not related to race (Kinder and Kam 2009), race also correlates highly with many politically relevant features of society (e.g. Massey and Denton 1993). This means that people of

different races, even who live in the same city, have, on average, extremely different life experiences. These differences in life experience, like professional differences, thus leave legislators differently equipped to understand and handle certain policy issues. Legislator AA (black) summarized my point here when she told me that "there are many issues that aren't *totally* racial issues, but where it's an issue of things like poor folks or where folks live, they might as well be."

3.1. Do Blacks and Whites Have Systematically Different Life Experiences?

As I mentioned, it is difficult to quantitatively test the claim that black legislators make 'better' policy on issues important to blacks without making many judgments that it is likely impossible for a researcher to systematically make. It is easier, however, to evaluate the degree to blacks and whites indeed have different life experiences, even in areas where many blacks and whites live.

From the perspective of the legislators themselves, this seems to be the case: I began each of my interviews as Fenno (1978) did, asking the legislators to describe their districts. As I mentioned, I did not tell the legislators that I was only visiting MMDs nor inform that I was mainly studying race and politics. Nonetheless, nearly every legislator mentioned exact Census statistics about the racial breakdown of their district in describing its salient political features. To legislators themselves, then, it is clear that race is a primary social fact.

Beyond such anecdotes, however, a very unique dataset I gathered in the field does allow me to address a question at the heart of my argument: *do blacks and whites tend to have different life experiences?* Though many believe the answer to this question may be obvious, this addresses the key assumption of existing literature on policy expertise and, if true, would well establish that members of such groups may substantially benefit from having political representatives who have shared their experiences.

There are many ways this question might be addressed. We know from Census data, for example, that even in jurisdictions with great racial diversity, people of different races tend to segregate dramatically by geography (e.g. Glaeser and Vigdor 2001).

My data allow me to contribute another layer to our knowledge of how racial differences manifest in different experiential segregations: during the course of my research, I attended dozens of meetings of civic associations and other policy-directed civic groups. When I attended open meetings of any kind,¹⁵ I recorded the number of black and white people in attendance. If it is true that blacks and whites have significantly different experiences in civic life on the whole, one would expect blacks and whites to be in attendance at significantly different events. Conversely, if blacks and whites in reality have similar policy-relevant experiences in MMDs, the racial breakdown of civic life would probably more roughly approximate represent a random draw from the district itself. These data do not directly address every issue that correlates with race, yet they do most closely address the core issue of whether blacks and whites systematically concern themselves with different politics, political issues, and political experiences even in areas with great racial heterogeneity.

The data I collected came from 45 events I attended and strongly indicate that there are strong differences between the political interests that bring blacks and whites to participate in political activities. Figure 1 displays a simple kernel density of the percentage of attendees at each meeting who were black. The horizontal axis corresponds to the percentage of the event's attendees that were black, with 1 corresponding to an event where all attendees were black. The vertical axis corresponds to the relative frequency of such an event in the data.

¹⁵ I.e. I did not record this data for closed meetings with lobbyists, during conversations that occurred during car rides, etc. I only recorded this data during meetings during which a member of the general public could have plausibly attended.





It is clear from the figure that most events can fall strongly into being either 'black' or 'white'. In fact, less than a third of the political events I attended had more than 20% of both racial groups in attendance; *more than two thirds of the events were dominated by 80% or more of one group*.

Though the graph is clear, this point holds in a statistical sense as well. A Shapiro-Wilk W test for normality (Shapiro and Wilk 1965) shows that there is a vanishingly small possibility that these events were random draws from blacks and whites, p < 0.001. (The test measures the probability that the data come from a normal distribution.)

One concern with this data may be that the districts I visited could be racially polarized in

some way. I thus recorded the percentage of each district that was black and computed a metric for the black percentage of attendees of the events I attended *relative to* the black population of the districts in which they were held. That is, a 50% on this relative scale would correspond to an event that was, for example, 90% black, but held in a district where blacks constituted 40% of the population. These adjusted data again strongly fail the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, p < 0.002. Blacks and whites participate in a strongly segregated manner in civil society, indicating persistent underlying differences in these groups' experiences in the political sphere.

4. The Relevance of Different Racial Experiences to Policy Issues - "Getting It"

My data and well-established facts about American society support the claim that blacks and whites have systematically different life experiences in the United States, even as relevant to political participation. Are these differences relevant to policymaking?

When I asked black elected officials to describe the differences between themselves and their white colleagues who also represented MMDs, their most frequent response began with the phrase "they don't get it." Upon probing, the responses resembled what Legislator M (black) offered: "At least five times a session we're talking about some bill and I just want to tell them, 'it's a black thing, you wouldn't understand.'" As an example, he told me a story about when a teacher who hailed from his district testified to the legislature that her students were so vulgar and disrespectful in class that she found it difficult to dedicate time to teaching. Several of his white colleagues approached him after the hearing and asked "teachers really get talked to that way?" Black legislators who overheard the conversation, according to Legislator M, exchanged knowing looks. As Legislator M told me, he and his black colleagues had all seen such behavior when they themselves were in school, yet were also unsurprised that their white colleagues were unfamiliar with this general pattern.

Legislator M's story, though simple, succinctly summarizes my main point. Teachers in his colleagues' districts surely face some behavior problems in their classrooms as well, yet only Legislator M happened to be familiar with this pattern. There is nothing intrinsically 'black' about witnessing disruptive classroom behavior, yet for a variety of familiar historical reasons blacks in Maryland are more likely to have witnessed such behavior. In making education policy, then, this relatively minor issue may not have been at the attention of many legislators without the presence of black legislators.

This broader point was most humorously summarized when I showed the head of one of the state legislative black caucuses a list of white legislators in his state who represented MMDs. When I asked him how they differed from the black legislators in the state, he responded:

"You know how when you hear James Brown play a chord you say, 'yeah, that's funky!"? And if Lawrence Welk tried to play it, you'd be sure he wouldn't be able to do the same? Well, it's the same with legislators. White legislators can try to write the bills like we do, but they don't quite get it. They can't. The same way that Lawrence Welk could never get James Brown. Legislation has a lot of nuances; to understand how it will affect the black community you have to have had the black experience. ... A white politician is often not going to know 'This is what this would mean for black peoples' lives.'"

Though this official couched his point in somewhat sarcastic terms, his quote underscores how different such officials believe most black politicians' life experiences are from whites'. Since white elected officials have not "had the black experience," according to this official, whites will not be able to understand how some legislation will "affect the black community" to the same extent as their black counterparts. Similarly echoing this point, when I raised this issue with Legislator B (black), he said only, "You can't make the legislation if you haven't had the experience."

The staff chairperson of another state's legislative black caucus likewise asked me rhetorically "How are you going to make policy about houses without running water if you've

never been in one?" Offering up this line very argument, Legislator O (black) even admitted the same is true for him on issues that are more likely to be important to whites because, in his words, "I don't live like [whites] live. And I don't socialize with them."

The head of another state's legislative black caucus shared another story that helps elucidate how such differences manifest. In her state, a bill came forward that would have modified how the state treated students who spent more than four years in college. However, white members did not understand why such a bill would be necessary, as they did not know that many students did not graduate college in four years. Though this issue did not concern a 'black issue' per se, racial differences in understanding on this issue still manifested among legislators because of broader racial disparities in society.

Legislators who have experienced particular kinds of disadvantage can thus bring their life experiences to an understanding of what a proposed policy's effect will be. The leader of a major state interest group that engages in public policy advocacy on behalf of those with lower incomes who echoed this logic:

"Legislators who come from humble beginnings are rare, but they make a big difference. We don't have to work nearly as hard explaining our issues to a minority or someone who grew up poor. They get what it's about right away. But most legislators don't travel in those circles so they don't understand the issues."

I did not ask this official about race directly at first, but he nonetheless brought up race in his answer independently because he finds these representatives tend to be more familiar with issues that the disadvantaged face. The issues he discussed were often very particular – for example, regarding crafting regulation for the role of midwives in poor communities as an alterative to hospital care. Most white legislators, according to this official, had never experienced a birth in their family by a midwife, whereas most minority legislators had. As a result, minority legislators were far more able to understand what regulations would be

appropriate and which would be too onerous or ineffective.

Similarly, after telling a similar story about a predatory lending issue on which many white legislators did not understand the difference between , Legislator B (black) sighed, "We lose so many votes because my white colleagues don't understand the issues at hand. They just don't get it. They just don't know."

4.1. White Legislators' Views

Because black politicians and political officials often have this interest in arguing that they are uniquely able to provide policymaking for the black community, I also sought white members' views on this line of argument. To my surprise, they usually agreed. Legislator G (white), like many, reported that he frequently asked black legislators in his area whom he trusted how a policy would effect blacks.

One white former legislator I spoke with similarly told me "When I campaign in the black districts I had my black elected official friend come with me and tell me what to do." (Black legislators likewise agreed that they played this role for their white colleagues. Legislator D (black) told me, "In my area, when it comes to black issues, my word goes. They take me on my word because of my understanding of the community and my life experience.")

Some white legislators even admitted to this deficiency in their ability to provide representation without my prompting. Legislator Z (white) turned to me as we drove over a racial boundary in his district and, despite the fact that he had been born and raised in the city he represents, threw up his hands in frustration and told me that it was more difficult for him to campaign in black neighborhoods because "I'd never been here [these areas] before I ran for office." That white legislators would agree with black legislators' argument about the role their personal experiences gave their representation grants further confidence to my conclusion. However, one legislator, Legislator F (white), did disagree with this line of argument:

"Some people say that because I'm white I can't understand what happens in the black family. But it doesn't matter that I'm white; I think I understand their point of view. I know what they want: fair access to contracts, etc. I've worked with enough community groups and organizations to understand the issues. My opponent said there was no black leadership in this district, and that was offensive to me. It's not like the black community is homogenous or broken up from the white community."

Nevertheless, note that Legislator F believes he had to work with community groups in order to *acquire* an understanding he would have had were he black – "I've worked with enough community groups and organizations to understand the issues." Furthermore, when I pressed Legislator F for details on how he ascertains what blacks need, he responded,

"Well, these issues are known. I look at what economists say about jobs, poverty, income, equal rights, justice, the long-term traditional issues that just don't disappear. For example, it's clear my black constituents would prefer a millionaire's tax, or for the hospital system to be improved."

Legislator F is known as an extremely vigorous advocate for minorities in his state, yet every black legislator I interviewed provided a far more detailed view of what was important to blacks in their district than did he or any other white legislator. Nor, by contrast, did any black legislators say they relied primarily on economists to understand the lived experience of the poor. Though it is not for me to judge the extent to which Legislator F in some sense understands the typical experience of blacks in his district, the difference in his approach to understanding these issues does underscore my argument that black and white politicians bring different experiences to policymaking that has consequences for how they provide representation on many issues.

5. If Legislators Can Share Information, Why Is Descriptive Representation Important?

In the previous section I made my central argument: that black legislators are more likely to have had life experiences that equip them with policy expertise on issues relevant to black constituents. As a part of this argument, I offered evidence that non-black legislators actively seek out the opinions of their black peers because they expect to learn from their peers' personal expertise. Yet if such expertise can be shared between individuals, why is minority descriptive representation important? In this short section I offer three main reasons.

5.1. The Limited Presence of Minority Representatives In Many Areas

First, many states have very few minority legislators who could provide such a perspective to their peers. Therefore, simply because some minority legislators can provide this perspective to others does not mean that these legislators' presence can be taken for granted. As of January 2009, *more than a third* of US states had two or fewer black legislators, *more than half* had 5 or fewer, and a full three-fifths of states had 8 black legislators or fewer.

Of course, many of these states have relatively small black populations, so this does not necessarily indicate a dearth of minority perspectives per se. However, these statistics at least illustrate that black perspectives are at least not in surplus in American government. Hence, especially in states where there are very few minority legislators, each minority representative likely plays a crucial role for her peers.

5.2. Information Asymmetries and Strategic Settings

Another reason why legislators cannot always share their expertise to the fullest extent is because their information cannot always be fully trusted in strategic contexts. Legislator B helped explain why such life experience is not always easily transferrable in the course of legislative deliberation: because legislators often have a political stake in one side of a policy issue, their explanation of their personal experience is not always be fully trusted by their colleagues – it could be viewed as convenient talk offered post hoc. Indeed, many white legislators I spoke with lamented that they felt their black colleagues could use their life experiences to mislead white legislators on issues relevant to blacks. As a result of the incentive nearly all actors in the political process have to be strategic in their use and disclosure of information, legislators must often rely primarily on their own personal understandings lest they be manipulated.

5.3. Personal Expertise Impacts More Than Roll Call Voting: Legislators' Rational Incentives To Provide Personally Relevant Representation

The last and most important reason why the implications of personal expertise are not fully transferrable is because legislators may have incentives to actually specialize in providing representation on issues about which they are most personally informed. If legislators believe that they win votes through the provision of quality policy representation, they will have greater incentives, all else equal, to provide this representation concerning issues on which they judge themselves most able to provide such representation. Stated more plainly, if a black legislator believes himself more able to craft quality policy on issues relevant to blacks, he may rationally chose to specialize in making such policy rather than focusing on policy on which he does not have an inherent advantage.

Krasa and Polborn (2010) show this point formally: rational candidates will be more likely to provide representation on issues on which their personal background indicates that they will be most successful, in the sense that they will produce the most policy output for a given amount of effort they supply. Given a constraint on the amount of time and other resources a politician has, legislators substitute towards providing representation on the issues on which they are most skilled.

Thus, Legislator G (white) did not have the opportunity to apply his expertise in finance on the state's finance committee by coincidence; rather, he told me that he *chose* to sit on the finance committee *because* he expected his background would give him the greatest policymaking advantage in that setting for the purpose of credit-claiming to constituents and interest groups. The case of the legislators who worked respectively in labor unions and in construction are similarly indicative on this point. Each of these legislators discussed at length how their previous experiences dramatically shaped their comparative advantage in specializing on certain types of legislation and in determining their allocation of legislative effort.

The case of Legislator X (white) is perhaps the most instructive in distinguishing this argument from existing theories of how politicians' life experiences change their legislative behavior. Legislator X told me that the most important thing that happened to his political career was the birth of his daughter. Her birth, he claims, made his voting on women's issues far more concordant with women's preferences. Recalling recent academic research on the topic, I showed him a copy of Washington (2008), which shows that legislators with daughters vote more liberally on women's issues. Reading the abstract, he exclaimed "yes!"

Yet as I asked Legislator X why he believed his representation had changed after having a daughter, his answer was more complicated than the socialization mechanism Washington (2008) posits. Though Legislator X did say the experience changed his preferences on some issues, it also improved his *ability* to provide representation on women's issues, which led him to reallocate his time towards providing this representation: "I couldn't know a woman's perspective on something so before I had to go find a woman that I respect and ask her thoughts. I still do that, but, with my daughter, I now understand those issues better and so I focus on those issues more as a result."

Perhaps reflecting these incentives, blacks and whites are likely to join different sorts of legislative committees (e.g. Mixon and Ressler 2001; Haynie 2001). Likewise, every legislator of

the twenty-seven I travelled with told me that previous personal experience was the primary impetus for at least 20% of the legislation they authored, whereas most gave answers substantially higher. Black legislators are not only more likely to be able to provide policy representation to blacks, this fact itself also makes them more likely to choose to do so.

6. Policy Representation and Descriptive Representation: Conclusions and Directions For Future Research

If and how minorities provide different political representation is a longstanding question about democratic representation. In this chapter I shed light on this question by documenting how minority representatives' personal life experiences equip them differently for policymaking. To the degree that different groups in a society live different experiences in general, this conclusion indicates that the provision of effective political representation crucially hinges on the presence of members of minority groups in politics.

In summary, I reached this conclusion as follows: scholars have long considered policy expertise to be a meaningful quality; likewise, it is a well-acknowledge fact that members of certain minority groups tend to have very different life experiences; thus, insofar as policymaking expertise can be developed before legislative service begins, minorities are more likely to possess knowledge relevant to policymaking relevant to experiences minorities have. I provided evidence for this argument with quantitative and qualitative evidence from participantobservation research conducted with 27 state legislators who represent heavily black state legislative districts.

This chapter thus discussed a reason why descriptive representation is crucial for minorities' substantive representation that previous scholarship has not appreciated. Just as investment bankers are likely justified in their concern that few members of Congress fully
understand the complexities of the financial world, so too do minorities have good reason to be concerned when representatives that may not understand aspects of their lives make policies relevant to them. Without adequate minority representation in government, the quality of policy made on issues relevant to minorities may thus be substantially lower. Furthermore, the quantity of such policy may also decrease to the extent that non-minority legislators have less incentive to provide representation on issues with which they are not familiar.

Many political theorists have argued that the differences in life experiences across races are a key reason that descriptive representation matters, though in another sense. Mansbridge (1999) discusses the role of experience in aiding deliberation insofar as a member of a group has the legitimacy and social ability to "speak for" one group, and Mansbridge (2003) and Phillips (1991) argue that life experience gives representatives different values. Empiricists have similarly shown that life experiences tend to change politicians' personal *preferences* and voting patterns (Canon 1990; Gamble 2007; Washington 2008). By contrast, I argued that these difference in life experiences also change these legislators' *ability* to provide representation.

My argument also highlights narrowness in current scholarship on descriptive representation, which nearly always considers roll call votes on civil rights issues even though, as Grose (2011) has persuasively argued, the election of blacks has unlikely had much impact on such high-profile votes. By contrast, I argued that descriptive representation is likely to have significant consequences for minorities' policy representation when minority interests are not so narrowly defined. In the same way that bankers in a state would likely prefer to have the rules governing their industry written by others who know it well (perhaps because they themselves were once in finance), it is in the interest of blacks for legislators to serve that share and understand their experiences insofar as these experiences systematically differ. The evidence I presented indicates that they do.

Note that I do not mean race *causes* different expertise in some sense, but rather that race happens to strongly correlate with a set of different interests among a clearly identifiable of the population. This correspondence is strong enough, however, to mean that blacks and whites are likely better served by policymakers who understand the experiences they are more likely to have.

Large caveats apply to my findings insofar as more professionalized legislative bodies (such as Congress) are more likely to include diverse staffs and have access to policy resources to a greater extent than the citizen legislature system present on the state level. However, though it is likely that my argument holds to a lesser extent in such bodies, this research's relatively unique focus on the state legislative level conversely made this pattern more salient than it might have been if it had been conducted on the Congressional level.

6.1. Opportunities for Future Research

The argument I presented here indicates several opportunities for future research. One possible future direction for research is in further exploring the incentives which life experiences give legislators to represent the interests of their own racial group. One mechanism for this incentive that I do not explore in this chapter is that legislators may expect a higher payoff from campaigning to their racial group. For example, Legislator B (black) presents himself differently in front of black constituents; he reported (and I witnessed) him employing a different accent and adopting (in his words) a distinctly "black preacher-esque" tone when he spoke in front of churches. Legislator B told me no white legislator would have the cultural permission to act in such a way, a statement difficult to evaluate though distinctly likely. In this way, Legislator B might have expected a relatively higher payoff from visiting that church than a white colleague

might have. Similarly, Legislator AA (black) told me that "whites representing these districts don't usually understand how the black community will react to something" and a former legislator I spoke with described asking her black peers for advice on how to best campaign for office among blacks. Insofar as black candidates and incumbents might better understand how blacks react to political appeals, this dynamic would again lower whites' expected value of appealing to blacks in campaigns. In equilibrium, this would push legislators towards appealing to and representing their own racial groups to a greater extent (i.e. Krasa and Polborn 2010).

Of course, not all perspectives can be represented in the legislature, nor can individual legislators justifiably be held accountable for who they are. Therefore, future research should also consider how to improve the information all legislators have about the policy they make relevant to minority groups. This chapter suggests that any such efforts should involve members of these groups. For example, as Grose (2011) argues, many white members have black staff members that aid their efforts to represent black issues. Similar resources have an important role to play in any legislator's effort to represent minorities.

Chapter 4

Predicting Descriptive Representation: Improving Quantitative Analyses With Information On Participation

Abstract

Previous chapters considered the importance of descriptive representation; in this chapter, I show how descriptive representation can be increased. I do so by demonstrating that political participation and resources are significant omitted variables in existing studies of descriptive representation and majority-minority districting. Current scholarship on the impact of descriptive representation and techniques for drawing majority-minority districts (MMDs) usually rely exclusively on measures of minority population size that ignore the mechanisms by which minorities exercise political influence. With an original dataset on minority political participation and descriptive representation in thousands of state legislative elections, I find that information on black political participation and community resources greatly predicts the election of blacks in the United States while, contrary to what current literatures suppose, once these factors are taken into account there is no effect of black population size. This finding adds to our understanding of how MMDs mediate minority representation, how to empirically analyze the impact of descriptive representation, and how policymakers should draw MMDs. Directions for future research are discussed.

1. Introduction

As I argued in previous chapters, there is good reason to focus on how to promote descriptive representation for minorities: doing so increases responsiveness to groups' interests, improves communication between constituents and representatives, and improves the quality of policy relevant to minorities' lives. Consequently, scholars and practitioners have also focused on understanding how and when to draw majority-minority districts (MMDs) with good reason. Indeed, few recent political phenomena have garnered more attention from scholars of American politics than the creation of MMDs that foster descriptive representation for minorities. Likewise, in United States politics, before the US Supreme Court, in the European Union, and across Africa and Asia, policymakers are actively considering how to increase minority representation (Hassim 2009). How best to draw MMDs is thus a pressing question of interest to a wide variety of scholars and practitioners. However, despite our growing understanding of descriptive representation and how MMDs should be drawn to encourage it, literatures on these subjects currently ignore widely-accepted, central facts about political representation. As copious scholarship appreciates, groups wield power in democracies not by their mere physical presence but in large part to the extent to which they interface with the political system through voting and many other means. However, the literature concerning how to draw MMDs has principally concerned itself only with statistics on the size of minority populations.

In this chapter, I show that these omissions are significant. With an original dataset on black voter turnout and descriptive representation in state legislative elections, I show that the analysis of minority political power in MMDs has remained too focused on statistics about the size of the minority population; in fact, the data show that *minority political participation and resources are the most important determinants of minority representation, while minority population size has no effect on minority representation once they are taken into account. The original dataset supporting this conclusion describes 3,210 state legislative elections, including the successful election of 450 black state legislators, far than have ever served in the United States Congress.*

Current approaches to predicting the election of minorities thus miss significant heterogeneity between areas when evaluating where districts should be drawn or when attempting to control for minority group power for the purposes of secondary analyses. In particular, first, identical districting schemes based only on population size produce very different results in different contexts, leading to less substantive representation for minorities in some areas than would be predicted and over-"packing" of minorities into MMDs in others. Second, essentially all recent empirical models of descriptive representation (e.g. Grose 2005; Butler and Broockman 2011) rely on statistics about the size of minority populations in legislative districts to proxy for minority political influence. To the extent such models miss heterogeneity in black political influence that correlates with descriptive representation, their estimates of the effect of descriptive representation may be biased. Last, such omissions also belie the possibility of a potentially rich and interesting theoretical agenda in exploring how minorities exercise political power in MMDs and when they succeed in doing so.

In the chapter's main sections that follow, I elaborate my argument at greater length and demonstrate the superiority of the model I propose to what policymakers currently employ. I conclude by considering the broader implications of my results and potential avenues for future research.

2. Predicting Descriptive Representation

2.1. Are Current Models Incomplete?

Principal sections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and associated regulations are aimed at increasing the presence of minorities among the ranks of elected officials. Likewise, scholars have often sought to understand what factors lead to the election of minorities for this and other purposes.

To what extent have scholars and practitioners been successful at predicting when minorities will be elected? Currently, the federal government's guidelines for drawing MMDs – as well as every existing study of effective minority districting and representation in MMDs of which I am aware – measures the propensity of minorities to be elected with data on either the VAP (Voting Age Population) or VEP (Voting *Eligible* Population) of minorities living within districts (e.g. Bullock 1975; Bullock 1981; Lublin 1999; Canon 1999; Cobb and Jenkins 2001; Grose 2005; Preuhs 2006; Gamble 2007). Studies specifically oriented towards advising legal and judicial practitioners likewise essentially rely on population statistics alone, though have lamented the absence of additional data on minority behavior beyond population size (Grofman, Handley, and Lublin 2001; Lublin, Brunell, Grofman, and Handley 2009).

Figure 1. Predicting Descriptive Representation With A Standard Population Model



Is the absence of data beyond population statistics problematic for predicting when blacks will successfully be elected? Figure 1 shows a simple locally weighted smoothed (lowess) estimate of black descriptive representation in two states with significant black populations, Connecticut and Alabama. This model incorporates information only on black population sizes in the state legislative districts in each state. (Black population size is on the X axis, with the proportion of such districts represented by blacks in each states on the Y axis.) The statistics for all states are also shown in the solid line.

A passing familiarity with the politics of these states might suggest that districts with a similar population composition in each state might have extremely different politics than each other and than the nation as a whole, and indeed they do. For example, among legislative districts with around 35% black population, a preponderance in Connecticut have black representatives; however, in similar districts in Alabama, less than a quarter have black representatives.

What are the salient factors that cause Connecticut, Alabama, and other states to differ in terms of when minorities are elected? Current scholarship offers few answers. Moreover, these differences not only point to gaps in current models of minority group influence, but also highlight a deeper need to understand how and when minorities successfully exercise political power: why is it the case that a similar number of blacks could be around *twice* as likely to elect one of their own in Connecticut than in Alabama? Current scholarship on descriptive representation is silent on this puzzle.

Such differences may seem minor, yet have significant implications for how policymakers should draw MMDs to promote the substantive representation of minorities. For example, institutional designers in Alabama hoping to promote the election of minorities essentially must draw some districts which are at least 50% black by population, whereas in Connecticut districts that are around 35% can be expected to elect blacks about half the time. Yet, existing scholarly and policy gidelines do not take these differences into account.

In this chapter I argue draw on widely-accepted theories in political science to argue that two factors might explain such discrepancies and help better predict when minorities will be elected: relative minority voter turnout and relative minority political resources.

2.2. Minority Share of the Electorate (Relative Voter Turnout)

The first variable I argue is important for the election of minorities is the share of the electorate that minorities comprise. By 'share of the electorate,' I mean the percentage of all votes cast in a given election that are cast by minorities. The theoretical reason to believe this would matter is clear: the electorate determines the outcome of the election.

The importance of the vote for attaining political power is clear from political science scholarship more generally. As Griffin and Newman (2005) argue, voters are far better represented than non-voters. Voting also provides legislators with their ultimate incentive to be responsive because voting exerts such a strong selection effect on leaders (e.g. Mayhew 1974; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002). Voting thus exerts clear selection effects on leaders.

The special importance of minorities actually casting votes is, of course, also central to understanding the last three centuries of American history. Blacks did not serve in Congress for decades between reconstruction and the modern era in large part because of Jim Crow laws that limited black political participation; it was for this reason that the Voting Rights Act undertook a number of measures to protect black political participation for the purpose of, among other goals, helping improve rates of black descriptive representation. For a variety of reasons, there also remain differences between geographic areas in the degree to which minorities actually do participate in elections. Likewise, there exists a wide literature on the determinants of black political participation itself (e.g. Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005). There is thus great theoretical reason to expect that minorities' participation in government might vary between political contexts in a way that proves significant to the degree of descriptive representation they achieve.

I employ statistics on the percentage of the total electorate that blacks comprise instead of

voter turnout because political power exists in the context of contests with competitors. I expect that raw minority voter turnout would matter only in context of how other groups vote: a district where members of a minority group *cast 50% of the votes* in the general election is different by my reasoning from a district where they *cast 30% of the votes*, even if in both districts their voter turnout among minorities is at *40% of the total minority population*.

2.3. Minority Resources

Though voting matters, many scholars have also appreciated that who is elected is decided by much more than which citizens vote on Election Day. Another important factor that thus might influence minorities' political power in MMDs is the degree of resources minorities command above and beyond mere voting. The topic of political participation beyond voting (e.g. with organizational participation, informal collective action, candidate recruitment strategies, campaign donations, public protests, etc.) has, of course, received an extensive treatment in the American context more generally in some of the most well known works of political science (e.g. de Tocqueville 1835; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Putnam 2000; Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2003). Yet, like voting, it has received surprisingly little attention within the context of literature on minority representation. Existing literature on broader questions gives at least two indications for why minority political resources might matter above and beyond mere minority voter turnout.

First, groups with more resources are considered more likely to act collectively and consolidate support behind candidates that support their interests (e.g. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). As Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen (2003) discuss, even though people are more likely to vote in favor of members of their minority group, political resources like community political action groups and churches can still have a large impact on their members' vote

choice.¹⁶ Though in many contests where a minority is on the ballot it can be expected for the minority candidate to win more minority votes, many minorities still vote against members of their own group. There are thus still minority voters for whom the presence of community resources persuading and informing them might prove decisive. Of course, minority resources can also be mobilized to convince members of other groups to cast their votes for minorities as well.

A second way resources might increase descriptive representation is through the training and recruitment of candidates for office long before Election Day. As Thernstrom (1987) discusses, black political elites play an active role in preparing black candidates for office in all levels of government. Moncrief (2001) likewise reports from survey data that minorities who run for office are also very often recruited to politics by churches, neighbors, service organizations, and other local community groups. To the degree the prevalence and influence of such groups varies between places, it might also be expected for this variation to coincide with different degrees of minority descriptive representation.

2.4. The Use of Minority Population Size Statistics

In this section I argued that there are strong reasons why minorities might achieve descriptive representation to a greater extent when they comprise a greater share of the electorate and when they command greater resources. As I mentioned, these arguments stand in contrast to current literature and districting practice, which predicts descriptive representation based on population size statistics alone. I here discuss why such statistics have been used and why the approach I proposed here is superior.

¹⁶ Two legislators I interviewed even brought up this point to me independently. One interrupted one of my questions and said, "it's totally about social capital and Robert Putnam and *Bowling Alone*. That's all it is, he's right." Similarly, when I brought up a similar question to another legislator, he ran to his bookshelf and pulled down a copy of *Better Together* (Putnam 2003). Putting it in my hands he said, "Read this. That's how politics works."

Despite population data's widespread use, there is little theoretical reason to believe that the presence of more non-voting, non-participating minorities in a district would cause greater level of substantive representation. Still, some reasons why population statistics are usually used are clear. First, until recently, nationwide data on political participation by race would have been prohibitively expensive to obtain. Some studies have lamented the absence of richer district-level data on minority political behavior (Grofman, Handley, and Lublin 2001; Lublin, Brunell, Grofman, and Handley 2009), but no study of which I am aware has made use of newly available data on how frequently minorities vote.

Another reason that such data are often employed is that a minority group's share of the population and a minority group's share of the electorate are extremely collinear. In the dataset to be described in the next section, the correlation coefficient between these variables is an astounding 0.98. (In the next section I talk more about the collinearity this introduces.) As a result, data on population is enough to predict minority representation with relative accuracy. However, as Figure 1 showed, there are still substantively significant differences between places that population statistics do not capture.¹⁷

Advances in data availability, however, do make possible a more theoretically-motivated model of minority descriptive representation. In the next section I test such a model and show that predicts when minorities are elected with greater accuracy.

3. Building A Fuller Model: Incorporating Information On Minority Political Behavior

3.1. The Dataset

As noted, no existing study of which I am aware considers the determinants of minority

¹⁷ In addition, because the observations in my dataset are on the state-legislative district level, this high correlation may be somewhat artificial: though state legislative districts in many jurisdictions must pass the Justice Department's muster, political boards still draw these districts with knowledge about voter behavior that the federal government does not employ. As a result, scholarly and federal attempts to analyze descriptive representation are likely significantly less sophisticated than those of the officials actually drawing these districts.

representation with information on minority political behavior, though this behavior varies greatly across contexts with potentially great significance. However, with a new dataset generated by Catalist LLC, a voter data clearinghouse, I obtained rates of voter turnout among blacks and whites¹⁸ on the state legislative level in eighteen states¹⁹ the 2008 election. Specifically, Catalist supplied the number of votes blacks and non-blacks cast in each of these elections. I then computed the *percentage of the electorate that blacks comprised* by dividing the number of votes blacks cast by the total number of votes cast by all voters.

I also gathered data on median household income generally and among blacks from the US Census' American Community Survey. Though not perfect, annual income is our best known proxy for the degree of resources a community has. Scholarship such as Verba, Schlozman, Brady (1995)'s work has well established that people and communities with lower income are less able and likely to exercise political collective action through the channels I previously discussed, such as fielding persuasion campaigns or recruiting candidates.

I merged these data with data on the race of elected officials. Information on the race of elected officials came from a directory maintained by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. I also cross-referenced this data with data from state legislative black caucus directories to the extent those sources were available.

The resulting dataset describes the election of 3,210 state legislators in 2008, including

¹⁸ Catalist's data come from two sources. Data on voter turnout and in which district each voter resides come directly from the voter file itself – my data thus represent aggregation not from a sample but directly from the full population under study. Catalist models race through two procedures. In states where voters indicate their race on their registration forms, race is from these self-reported voter forms. In other states, Catalist employs a state of the art ethnicity model that combines surname analysis, consumer data information, ecological inference techniques, and a number of other techniques to model race with a very high degree of accuracy.

¹⁹ Data were gathered about all state legislative elections held in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. I chose these states to limit financial expense and because they are the states where blacks comprise the largest share of the population (data on black political behavior in Montana (0.4% black) would not have proved as informative).

450 black state legislators. This dataset's size merits comment: a total of only 123 blacks have ever served in Congress, meaning that this dataset provides a unique environment in which to better understand the factors that lead to minority representation in the United States. The size of the overall dataset – 3,210 observations – is also equivalent to the number of Congressional elections held every fourteen years, meaning that the dataset is uniquely comprehensive as well. Finally, since the factors under study are collinear, as discussed, this large sample size is particularly important for this topic.

However, I do somewhat limit the sample size for the purposes of my analysis: of the 450 black legislators in the dataset, only 6 were elected from districts less than 5% black. Since the propensity of the dependent variable is so low in these districts I exclude districts that are less than 5% black as they could significantly bias the estimates. As Ho, Imai, King, and Stuart (2007) discuss, such "extreme counterfactuals" provide little useful information about the model for the purpose of estimation and can introduce bias by fitting the model to areas of the data that are qualitatively different than the areas where the dependent variable has a reasonable chance of being positive. Thus, I excluded this part of the dataset because less than 0.5% of these districts are represented by blacks. Interested readers are directed to Ho, Imai, King, and Stuart (2007) for a further discussion about the importance of such "pruning." However, note that despite this modification, all the substantive results I present and discuss are the same if I include all observations in my analysis.

Last, I chose to test these data on black participation and descriptive representation rather than on that of other minority groups in the United States for several reasons. First and most importantly, there are more black elected officials than members of any other minority group in the US, giving this study better statistical power. Second, there are also more state legislative

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districts with high concentrations of blacks than of any other minority group, again aiding statistical power. Third and finally, the rich literature on and history of black political participation and representation in the United States also made this context well suited for this study.

3.2. Results

Table 1 presents the main results of the chapter. Because of the binary nature of the dependent variable – either a black legislator is elected or not – my analysis relies on logistic regression. However, I present the results as marginal effects estimates from this regression for greater ease of interpretation. To maximize the coefficients' generalizability to environments of interest and to make them easier to interpret, I also estimated the marginal effects at the point in the logistic distribution where blacks consist of half the electorate, half the population, and black and overall median household income take on their average values. Note that this choice has no effect on the broader substantive results of the chapter but merely makes the tables more accessible for the reader.

Table 1 first establishes that black population indeed substantially predicts black elections, as previous literature has found: the coefficient for black population in Column 1 is highly significant. However, Columns 2 and 3 indicate that it does so only because it is highly collinear with black political participation. (Though in the regressions with both variables multicollinearity will increase standard errors, it does not bias estimates; see Achen 1982.) Specifically, Column 3 shows that the percentage of the population who are black is small and insignificant once blacks' share of the electorate is included in the regression. Only those who actually vote determine the outcome of an election.

8						
Independent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Population Black %	0.026***	-	0.004	0.000	0.003	-
	(0.000)		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	
Electorate Black %	-	0.024***	0.021***	0.022***	0.019***	0.022***
		(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.001)
Median HH Income	-	-	_	-0.043*	-0.143***	-0.145***
(\$10,000s)				(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Blacks' Median HH	-	-	-	-	0.300***	0.291***
Income (\$10,000s)					(0.048)	(0.046)
Ν	2064	2064	2064	2064	2064	2064
Psuedo R ²	.5108	.5333	.5338	.5356	.5631	.5619
Improvement in	-	.0225	.0005	.0018	.0275	0012
Pseudo R ² Over						
Previous Column						

 Table 1. Predicting The Election of Black Representatives – Marginal Effects from Logistic Regressions

Notes: Dependent variable = black legislator elected. Results displayed are estimated marginal effects from a logistic regression. Marginal effects computed where black population percent is set to 50%, black electorate percent is set to 50%, and other variables are set to their mean values. * = p < .10, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001.

Even more indicatively, note that the pseudo R^2 statistic on Column 3 is nearly identical to that in Column 2, indicating that the size of the black population provides essentially no information helpful in predicting the election of blacks not reflected in formal political participation. Information on black population size predicts a vanishingly small 0.05% of the variance in the election of blacks once black electorate size is taken into account. Furthermore, introducing the population variable only changes the model's final predictions in 16 of 2,778 cases, and both models fare equally well in predicting these 16 cases. In sum, therefore, information on black voting is far more informative, whereas information on black population size is essentially of no use once black political behavior is taken into account.

However, consistent with my theoretical predictions, Columns 4 and 5 indicate that black participation in the voting booth alone does not tell the whole story. Column 5 shows that the socioeconomic position of blacks is highly predictive of the probability that blacks elect one of their own. Furthermore, the general income of a district is somewhat negatively correlated with the election of black representatives and barely improves the model's ability to predict in Column 4, indicating that the effect of blacks' median incomes is not due to its correlation with the district's income in general but specifically due to the resources blacks command in particular. Not only is the variable for black median household income itself highly significant, but its inclusion in the model again substantially increases the model's general predictive success as measured by the pseudo R^2 statistic.

These effects are not only significant but substantively large; a \$5,000 increase in the median household incomes of blacks in a district corresponds to a 15 percentage point increase in the chance that a black legislator is elected. Likewise, increasing blacks' presence in the electorate by about 7 percentage points also increases blacks' probability of electing a black representative by about 15 percentage points.

Column 6 again underscores that black population percent is not very helpful in predicting the successful prediction of black representatives. While adding variables for electorate black percent and black median household income improves the amount of variation the model explains by about 2.5% each, removing the variable for black population reduces the amount of variation explained in Column 5 by an amount twenty times smaller. In other words, the literature's current main and usually only variable of choice, black population size, explains only around 0.12% of the variation in the election of blacks not explained by the other factors available in this data.

In summary, this empirical analysis showed that a relatively parsimonious model can explain the election of minorities with greater accuracy and a more solid theoretical underpinning than the existing literature. In the subsequent subsection illustrates how this improved accuracy is significant for the purposes of drawing MMDs.

3.3. Graphically Validating the Model

In a previous section I motivated this chapter by showing that districts in Connecticut and Alabama were very different in terms of their likelihood of electing blacks in ways that existing models based only on minority population would fail to take into account. Though my proposed model incorporates only a small number of factors, does it significantly improve this disparity?

Figure 2. Performance of Proposed Model Predicting Descriptive Representation



Figure 2 indicates that it does. Connecticut and Alabama are extremely different in terms of minority politics, yet the model's predicted values (on the X axis) correspond closely and similarly with the true likelihood of black being elected (on the Y axis), reconciling what before were extremely large differences between the two states. The solid line shows the pattern for all eighteen states under study. Though these two states are slightly more likely to elect black representatives in very black districts than are other states, overall the general trend again sits closely with the patterns in these very different areas.

I do not mean to suggest in any way that this relatively sparse model is complete. Rather, given that simple population models are currently used to draw majority-minority districts in the United States, I mean to show that there is great room for improvement and that such improvement will likely occur by more closely considering the mechanisms by which minorities are elected. In this model I have done so only very coarsely; there is doubtless ample opportunity for improvement over this effort.

4. The Determinants of Minority Representation: Conclusions and Future Research

Previous chapters of this essay demonstrated that descriptive representation has important consequences; this chapter showed how policymakers might draw districts more effectively to further increase it. Specifically, I argued that minority political participation and resources are key determinants for the election of minorities. This conclusion would be of little surprise to many existing literatures in political science, yet nearly all current studies proxy for minority political influence with statistics on the size of the minority population alone. My analysis shows that measures of minority political participation and resources are more predictive and, in fact, that minority population size provides nearly no additional predictive information beyond these factors. This has direct implications for efforts to draw MMDs and broader implications for the understanding of how minorities exercise political power.

These results have three main implications.

First, my results demonstrate that political scientists seeking to understand how minorities are represented, even in MMDs, should be greatly concerned with minorities' political participation. Existing scholarship interested in increasing descriptive representation has focused

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to a large extent on top-down approaches like designing ideal districting plans since population is not readily manipulable. This approach neglects the role that minorities' own mass political participation can play in the quality of their representation.

From a methodological point of view, these results also indicate that observational studies of descriptive representation may not currently adequately control for minority political influence with data only on the size of the minority population, as every existing study of which I am aware attempts to do (see Grose 2005). Such studies of descriptive representation seek to capture the assignment mechanism for minority descriptive representation by controlling for minority population. My results show that such an approach may be vulnerable to bias, especially as it do so while omitting variables that capture minorities' degree of political power.

Last and most importantly, as noted, the drawing of MMDs is one of the most active fronts on which institutional design is taking place in the US and across the world. For such institutional designers, my analysis shows that we can do better than simply drawing minorities into a district by population. Instead, the goal of increasing minority representation would be best met if institutions also examined the degree to which minorities politically participate and command political resources.

Usual caveats apply to the generalizability of my results insofar as I only studied blacks in United States state legislative districts. However, with numerous countries and the United States continuing to actively consider schemes to increase minority representation, these results should be of general interest and applicability.

Future research on this area should take place on at least two fronts. First, as I mentioned, the model I offer here is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to indicate theoretical directions scholars and practitioners might take to better forecast minority representation. The growth in data availability virtually assures that much more complex models could be built which would take into account a variety of factors. Such models would profit, though, by being theoretically guided. There are a variety of ways minorities face barriers to and success in electoral life, and these factors should inform important decisions about districting and representation.

Second, which factors influence whether minorities achieve descriptive representation should also be of great independent theoretical interest. This chapter showed that minority political participation and resources are two such factors, a finding which indicates more about the mechanisms by which groups succeed in achieving electoral representation. Such mechanisms about are interesting in and of themselves for political science, and measuring descriptive representation is one way to gain purchase on these broader questions.

Conclusion: The Importance of Minority Representation

This essay presented new evidence relevant to several longstanding debates related to how minority groups can achieve greater representation of their interests in politics. These issues have animated central aspects of American politics for centuries, beginning long before the Constitution was inked and that continue to be debated to this day.

In this century in the United States, the ongoing struggle for full political equality for women, blacks, and other minority groups has led to a phenomenal increase in the number of elected officials who are members of these groups. In this essay, I considered how and why the elections of such minority representatives matter. In doing so, I attempted to make both substantive and methodological contributions to the study of descriptive representation. *Substantive Contributions To Knowledge About Minority Representation in the United States*

First, I brought new evidence to a number of debates about the effects of descriptive representation on political representation. Figure 1 summarizes these findings.

Figure 1. Graphical Summary of Arguments Made In This Essay



My first chapter attempted to shed new light on a central question about descriptive representation: are descriptive representatives more likely to act in the interest of their groups due to linked fate, even when they have no political reason to do so? Though many believe the answer to this question is obvious, scholars have long struggled with providing rigorous documentation for this intuition. In this chapter I described a field experiment I implemented that attempted to do so. The experiment was conducted on thousands of state legislators in the United States and tested if black state legislators were more likely than their white counterparts to respond to a request from a member of their group even when they had little political reason to do so. I manipulated the level of political incentive legislators had to respond by, randomly, sending some legislators letters purporting to come from locations far from their legislative districts. The results showed that black legislators were in fact far more likely to respond to these out-of-district requests than their white counterparts, all else equal. The results thus indicate that black politicians are more likely to act on behalf of blacks' substantive interests even when doing so bears a cost and the legislators will receive little benefit for doing so.

My second chapter tested whether citizens themselves behave differently when a member of their group represents them. Scholars have argued that being descriptively represented causes people to be more likely to participate in politics by contacting one's representatives and turning out to vote. With a large-scale field experiment in Maryland taking advantage of the state's unique multi-member districts, I showed that citizens, especially blacks, are in fact are far more likely to politically communicate with a representative of their race. However, a regressiondiscontinuity design I implemented on a dataset describing the election of thousands of women showed that women are no more likely to turn out to vote because they have a female representative. These findings indicate that descriptive representation appears to dramatically alter the relationship between constituents and their representatives, though is unlikely to have broader implications for how citizens politically behave.

The third chapter discussed findings from participant-observation research I conducted in majority-minority districts in the American south. This research showed that, due to the different life experiences blacks and whites tend to have, black representatives are more likely to have policy expertise relevant to the representation of black interests. As political science has long appreciated, policy expertise enables legislators to make higher quality policy. Black legislators are thus more likely to provide quality policy representation to blacks on certain issues. Furthermore, the fact that blacks have a comparative advantage in crafting such policy gives them incentives to actually specialize in crafting such policy.

Having documented important effects of descriptive representation, my final chapter considered how policymakers can increase descriptive representation. Existing techniques employed by policymakers and scholars in the United States employ statistics on the size of minority populations alone and do not take in account political and social factors that lead to minority representation. I built a fuller model that did take such factors into account and showed that it significantly outperforms existing techniques.

Methodological Contributions

In the course of making these substantive contributions, this essay also developed several new methodologies for measuring the degree to which descriptive representation leads to substantive representation. These methodologies attempted to overcome serious empirical challenges that existing literatures have long faced. My first chapter's experiment attempted to overcome the issue that politicians' underlying motivations are impossible to ascertain from public information by comparing how politicians acted in ostensibly private behavior towards a group. My second chapter's experiment and natural experiment both attempted to surmount the issue of selection bias that has plagued studies examining the link between descriptive representation and political participation by taking advantage of multi-member districting and by employing a regression discontinuity design, respectively. My experiment in the second chapter also overcame issues of self-reporting in studies of political communication by designing an intervention that simulated an opportunity for citizens to politically communicate. My third chapter illustrated a new role for quantitative data gathered during participant observation research by illustrating that traits of members of the public encountered during such research can provide a wider portrait into the nature of society in these areas. Last, my final chapter showed that existing methodologies forecasting descriptive representation have the potential to be more accurate by being more theoretically motivated.

These new techniques should prove to be of significant interest to scholars of minority representation in the United States and abroad. Descriptive representation is fundamentally contextual, so the methodologies I developed here can and should be further improved and implemented in other contexts where minorities may lack substantive representation or where measures to increase descriptive representation are under consideration. Such a possibility is not an idle prospect, as countries on nearly every continent are currently considering implementing schemes to promote descriptive representation. Scholarship can and should play a role in helping inform these efforts.

These methodologies may also be of use to research on other political or social questions. For example, the literature on political communication is far wider than just communication's interaction with descriptive representation. Scholars of communication may thus be able to use the methodology I developed to move beyond relying on survey self-reports alone. Likewise, the experiment in my first chapter may help scholars understand other aspects of politicians' underlying motivations.

Broader Implications for Minority Representation in the United States

Most importantly, each of my chapters has important broader implications for the position of minority groups in American politics. In summary, my chapters demonstrated with significant new evidence that descriptive representatives are more likely to (1) act in the interest of their group even when they have little political reason to do so, (2) receive political communication from members of their group, and (3) have experience relevant to crafting quality policy on issues relevant to them. Though I showed descriptive representatives are unlikely to promote voter turnout, I did also show that voter turnout and minority resources substantially predict descriptive representation and that attempts to promote descriptive representation should take these factors into account.

More broadly, my results indicate that descriptive representation remains crucial to providing minority groups full substantive representation in American democracy. As the Supreme Court and Congress routinely consider repealing measures like the Voting Rights Act of 1965, my results strongly indicate that removing institutions that promote descriptive representation would be extremely unwise.

Nevertheless, Chief Justice Roberts wrote in 2009 in the majority opinion for *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District v. Holder* that "things have changed in the south" and thus that the Court would soon be reviewing the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act. If the Court or Congress strikes down parts of the Voting Rights Act, my evidence indicates that minorities will have representatives less responsive to their interests, with whom they are less likely to communicate, and who will be less familiar with important details of their lives. Conversely, this essay's fourth chapter also indicated that the future of descriptive representation need not be bleak – in fact, it can improve. By more carefully considering the factors that lead to descriptive representation, American political institutions can dramatically *increase* the presence of the still-diminished voices of many minority groups in American politics. Indeed, in their totality my results show that fuller minority descriptive representation should be viewed not as an interesting possibility but as an urgent, attainable responsibility.

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