Testing the ‘Identity-to-Politics’ Link:  
Racial and Ethnic Identity and Political Participation in the U.S.

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Abstract: Conventional wisdom among scholars of political behavior in the United States suggests a positive relationship between group membership and political participation. The more identified and linked individuals feel with racial and ethnic groups the more likely they are to be active in politics. This expectation is based on the work of Michael Dawson and his influential theory of “linked fate” among African Americans. Does linked fate work the same way for other racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. as it does for Blacks? This paper tests the ‘identity-to-politics’ link with national survey data with large populations of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Whites.

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1 Conceptualizing Racial and Ethnic Identity

The diverse racial environment of the United States today provides the best indicator that racial identities are not created equally. Distinctive historical conditions, migration patterns, and governmental policies influence the politics of group affinity in particular ways for Americans classified by race. Making the connection from shared classification in a racial category to group-based political behavior is neither simple nor obvious for non-black minorities, particularly those whose population growth is attributed to new immigration. The arrival of tens of millions of immigrants to the United States over the last several decades has transformed the demographic landscape of the nation, expanding both the size and diversity of racial minority populations. Nearly half of immigrants are from Latin America, and classified by the government as “Latino.” A quarter of new Americans today are from Asia, and Asian Americans are among the fastest growing groups, increasing from less than a million people in 1960 to roughly 14 million. Indeed, the dramatic growth of the Asian American population has recently earned them the status as a decisive swing vote in state elections in California, New York and Washington. But even more importantly, the demographic movement beyond the black-white racial binary in the United States presents us with new questions about the role of racial identity in politics.

Despite this diversity, there remains a certain reflexivity in the notion that racial classification implies group consciousness at the individual level and mobilization at the mass level. I begin with the prior that the importance of racial group consciousness for political behavior should be treated as a hypothesis rather than an assumption. Making the connection from shared classification in a racial category to group-based political behavior is neither simple nor obvious for non-black minorities, particularly those whose population growth is attributed to
new immigration. It is unclear how new immigrant members will adopt and apply the racial and ethnic categories imposed upon them. In contrast, the shared historical experience of profound structural, economic, and social bias aimed against Blacks coupled with low immigration of new black immigrants leaves less room for maneuvering (Cohen 1999; Dawson 1994; Rogers 2006). Michael Dawson’s (1994) theory of the “Black utility heuristic” remains a powerful explanation of strong racial group identity among Blacks, and has had important influence on the language social scientists use to understand the interaction between racial identity and politics. The contemporary study of racial identity in the United States is based largely in concepts developed from the Black case, and it remains an important foundation for the politics of race.

The maintenance of the system of racial classification in the U.S. and the accompanying persistence of racial and ethnic identity among those so categorized resilience reveals that the processes of racial categorization also influence the group identities of minority groups who do not share the same history of subjugation and degree of discrimination that is key to explaining Black racial group identity. Asian Americans have been historically situated in a triangulated position in relation to the Black-White binary, and therefore represent a critical case to examine how racial identification influences political behavior in a multi-racial political environment.

Using the dynamism of racial construction and the implicit comparisons across groups in the racial order of the U.S. as a backdrop, I first analyze data from a national survey sample of whites, African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans collected during the 2004 election. Multiple measures of group identity were asked of minority respondents, and the relationship

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1 Longstanding discriminatory practices aimed against Asian Americans and Latinos existed prior to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. The formation of racial group consciousness is rooted in these historical experiences of racial discrimination among those Asian Americans and Latinos whose families immigrated to the U.S. before 1965 although this population represents a small share of both these communities, though the legacy of racial discrimination continues to be felt by new immigrants as they enter the receiving country (Hero 1992; Lien Conway and Wong 2004; Wong 2006).
between these indicators and forms of political participation is analyzed. Next, I consider the
dynamics of racial group consciousness among Blacks and Asian Americans by examining the
results of an embedded survey experiment designed to activate group identity. The findings from
the experiment raise a number of questions about how to study and think about how racial group
consciousness is manifested in politics once we consider racial identity beyond Black and White.
I introduce a set of theoretical imperatives outlining how to better understand the formation of
racial group identity among non-black minorities. In particular, I advocate for more explicit
consideration of the structural incentives and costs of adopting racial and ethnic identities by
highlighting the significance of U.S. immigration policy and its role in creating group-based
stereotypes and racial tropes.

2 Racial and Ethnic Group Identity and Its Relationship to Participation

In this section I analyze data from the 2004 Ethnic Politics Survey collected during November of
2004 and self-administered via the Internet by Knowledge Networks of Menlo Park, California.
Respondents were selected for the Knowledge Networks panel using standard methods of
random digit dialing. Hence, the resulting interview data is a random probability sample of the
U.S. population of Blacks and Asian Americans. The Knowledge Network panel is not limited to
those with internet access: those households without the internet are provided access by
Knowledge Networks to assure a nationally representative sample. Unlike other surveys, the
dataset offers the ability to compare political attitudes across racial minority groups and our
analysis here utilizes valid data collected from 416 Black and 354 Asian American respondents.2

2 The demographic composition of the Black sample is comparable to the Black population in the U.S. However, the
Asian American sample varies from that in the national population in some respects. In particular, Asian Americans
in the survey are more likely to be native-born: 42% of the sample is foreign born while the actual Asian American
While there is fast-growing interest in the significance of identity to politics, and in particular, racial identification and group consciousness to political behavior, there are correspondingly few studies with systematic empirical measures of the underlying concepts. In a comprehensive and wide-ranging review of research in political psychology on group identity, Leonie Huddy describes the study of identity as “…a research area that has been troubled by a lack of consistent measurement, divergent measurement approaches between psychologists and political scientists, and relatively few studies that have attempted to crossvalidate measures.” As a result, the scant and somewhat inconsistent evidence on the link between racial identity and behavior provides uncertain guidance for assessing the relationship. Indeed, most of the existing measures of racial identification and group consciousness were developed in the study of African American politics, and it is not clear whether these measures tap similar phenomena among different minority populations.

Complicating matters is a similar dearth of data suitable for comparisons across racial and ethnic groups in the United States. At the same time, groundbreaking studies such as Dawson’s work on “linked fate” (1994) and political ideology among African Americans (2003), Tate’s work on black electoral behavior (1993), de la Garza et. al.’s pioneering study of Latino political behavior (1992), and DeSipio’s work on Latino ethnicity and voting (1996) have laid much of the groundwork for how we think about the role of racial identification in influencing political behavior and public opinion. In addition, there is a growing body of scholarship in the study of Asian American politics utilizing similar survey methodologies, most notably the work of Pei-te Lien and colleagues analyzing the Pilot National Asian American Political Study (Lien 2001; Lien et. al. 2004).

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3 Huddy 2003, p 522.

population is 31% foreign born. Similar to findings from other surveys of Asian Americans, our sample leans toward Democratic respondents and those who are comfortable using English.
These studies reveal a great deal about the relationship between ethnic and racial identity and political behavior and attitudes among blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Taken together, the data demonstrate that the relationship between racial identification and political activity is not uniform across groups, and that the contours and strength of group membership vary both over time as well as between subgroups of the larger pan-ethnic racial categories. However, these studies tell us less about the dynamics of racial politics among groups in relation to one another. Variations in sampling frames, mode of interview, question wording, and the different times at which the data were collected, limit the validity of comparisons across groups in distinct data collections. There are only a few studies sharing the same time period, sampling frame, and questionnaire combining interviews with or observations of whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.\(^5\)

Six distinctive measures of racial identification and consciousness were included in the 2004 Ethnic Politics Pre-election survey, including several widely-utilized questions tapping group identity, along with some new instrumentation. Of the former, the first is the classic “close to” questions, most familiar from the American National Election Study. These items are the most common measures of group identity in the study of political behavior, whether as measures of racial, gender, or other group affinity. In addition, the “linked fate” question introduced in the study of African American political behavior was also included on the survey. Complementing these two standard measures was a new question asking respondents about how important their

\(^4\) There are a few exceptions including Leighley’s 2001 analysis of African Americans and Latinos, Leighley’s and Vedlitz’s 1999 analysis of participatory patterns among Anglo-whites, blacks, Mexicans, and Asian Americans in Texas, in which they find no statistically significant effects of racial group identity (measured as closeness to groups); the study by Uhlman, Cain, and Kiewitt (1989) of minority political behavior in California, Verba et. al.’s (1999) comparison of whites, blacks, and Latinos with a U.S. sample, Junn (1999) using the Verba et. al. screener data to examine differences in participation between the four groups, and Lau’s 1989 comparison of group consciousness with data from the U.S. population.

\(^5\) Vincent Hutchings, James Johnson and Cara Wong of the University of Michigan have recently completed a data collection of large populations of whites, blacks, Afro-Caribbeans, Latinos and Asian Americans.

race is to their ideas about politics, and a question asking which ethnic or racial descriptor is most important to be (i.e., “Cuban” or “Latino”), requiring a forced choice between racial, ethnic, and hyphenated terms. These questions were asked of non-white respondents only. In addition, a series of questions on the importance of cultural homogeneity were included on requiring children to study an African or Asian language or Spanish, the importance of marrying others of the same racial group, and the importance of learning about the history and culture of one’s race. Finally, a new item asking respondents to enumerate their racial background in terms of points to sum to a score of 10 was included. Marginal distributions for these items by racial group are presented in Table 1.

With the exception of the enumeration of one’s racial background, Black respondents were the strongest identifiers, while whites were least likely to identify with their racial group on all of the measures. Latinos and Asian Americans are stronger identifiers with their racial group than whites, but less likely than Blacks to espouse a racial political identity and agree that their fate is linked with others who share their racial background. For the first three measures of racial identification – closeness to one’s racial group, linked fate, and racial political identity – African Americans are significantly more likely to identify with blacks than are individuals in the three other racial groups. Eighty-two percent of Blacks say they feel close to other African Americans, as compared with 73% of Asian Americans, 67% of Latinos, and 62% of whites who say they feel close to members of their racial group. Similarly, 60% of Blacks either agree or agree strongly with the statement “as things get better for blacks in general, things get better for me.” Somewhat smaller, and similar proportions of Asian Americans and Latinos (51% and 48%)
indicate linked fate, while only a quarter of whites (26%) believe their fate is linked to that of other whites. The new question on racial political identity asked respondents to say, when thinking about their political identity, how important is being their race to their ideas about politics. Nearly half of Blacks said being black was very important to their political identity, while a quarter of Latinos, 16% of Asian Americans, and only 3% of whites responded similarly.

[Table 1 here]

Questions on self-classification juxtaposing race and ethnicity were asked of non-white respondents only, and different categories were provided for Blacks than for Latinos and Asian Americans. In the forced-choice format, the majority of Blacks said it was most important to be both Black and American, with 30% indicating it is most important to be American. Half of Latinos, on the other hand, said being American was the most important, followed by the pan-ethnic-hyphenated term of Latino and American. Asian Americans were equally as likely to say that being American was the most important (37%), or that being Asian and American (37%) was the most important. Similar proportions of Latinos (13%) and Asian Americans (14%) chose the ethnic-specific hyphenated American (i.e., “Mexican-American” or “Korean-American”) as being most important.

The one set of questions for which the data go in the opposite direction from the other items on racial identification is the question asking people to describe their racial background by assigning points to categories. Whites were the most likely to allocate all 10 points to “White or Anglo,” with three-quarters of the sample replying they were 100% white. Asian Americans

8 Regrettably, the question format for blacks did not include separate response categories for particular ethnic groups (i.e., Jamaican). In future studies, we intend to expand the response categories to indicate an ethnic identification in subsequent studies. While only a small proportion (5%) of the black sample in the study is foreign born, differences in racial identification compared with native-born African Americans may be substantial.
were the next most homogeneous racial group, with 60% saying they were all Asian. Of those who were less than 100% Asian American, 17% said they were one or more points white, and relatively small numbers said their background was part Black or Latino. In contrast, less than half of blacks (39%) – the strongest racial identifiers on the linked fate and politicized racial identity measures – called themselves 100% Black. Nearly a third of Blacks allocated at least 1 or more points of white in their race, and smaller proportions called themselves part Latino and part Asian Americans. Latinos were the least likely to say they were 100% Latino, with only 28% of the sample reporting their racial make-up as homogeneous. Forty-seven percent said they were part white, and another 16% allocated 1 or more points to being black. By these data, Latinos are the most racially heterogeneous of the four groups.

Next we turn to examine patterns of variation among whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in the dependent variable in question – political participation. With a number of important exceptions, the overwhelming emphasis in studies of mass political action in the U.S. context is on the act of voting. Voting is certainly important; it is the most common form of participation among Americans, and it is also one of the first political acts of naturalized citizens. At the same time, however, there is much more to participation than voting, and respondents in the study were asked about their participation in a number of electoral activities as well as other types of participation including contacting government officials, signing petitions, protesting, and boycotting. The marginal distributions for these measures of political participation among the four racial groups is presented in Table 2.

[Table 2 here]
In terms of electoral participation, including voting, persuading others how to vote, attending campaign meeting or rallies, working for a candidate, and contributing to a campaign, Blacks and Latinos are the least active across electoral activities. Just over half of Latinos reported voting in the 2000 Presidential election, compared with nearly two-thirds of whites, Blacks, and 61% of Asian Americans. Alternatively, African Americans are likely to give campaign contributions, whereas more than 1 in 10 whites and Asian Americans report making a contribution. A similar pattern across racial groups is clear for other forms of participation. While whites and Asian Americans contact government officials at a higher rate than either blacks or Latinos, they also outpace both groups in political activities traditionally considered to be “weapons of the weak” – signing petitions, protesting, and boycotting. These forms of activity, most often associated with group mobilization and anti-establishment causes, are as much and more the province of whites and Asian Americans as they are for the relatively economically disadvantaged racial groups of African Americans and Latinos.

The similarity between whites and Asian Americans in political participation might seem unexpected in terms of what some of the existing literature in Asian American politics conditions us to expect. But the high levels of formal educational attainment and income among Asian Americans render the results predictable from the perspective of an explanatory model implicating socioeconomic status as a necessary condition for political activity. Among all four groups, Asian Americans have by far the highest levels of education and income; 60% have a college degree, and a full 25% of the Asian American sample has a graduate degree. Even among whites, the proportion with a college degree or more numbers only 25%, and the proportion of highly-educated Blacks (17%) and Latinos (19%) are even smaller. Similarly, Asian Americans

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9 In this sample, 89% of Latinos reported being citizens, and of those 58% said they voted in 2000. Citizenship is somewhat lower among Asian Americans, with 85% U.S. citizens. Among Asian American citizens, 70% report voting in the 2000 election.
are disproportionately represented among high income earners, with 20% reporting annual family income above $100,000. Nine percent of whites, 6% of Blacks, and 7% of Latinos are in this income bracket, and a large proportion of African Americans (38%) and Latinos (29%) make less than $20,000 a year. From these data, the enduring importance of socioeconomic factors for political participation appears in no danger of being replaced as a critical predictor of political activity.

To test the extent to which racial group identification influences political activity, we estimated a set of models predicting level of electoral participation – voting in 2000, persuading others how to vote, attending campaign meetings, working for a candidate, and contributing to a political campaign. In addition to educational attainment, the model includes the three measures of racial identification asked of all respondents, including closeness to one’s racial group, linked fate, and racial political identity. Summed measures of racial cultural identity and homogeneity of racial background were added as explanatory variables in the equations for Blacks, Latinos and Asians, as was a question asking minority respondents to choose how it is most important to identify. Indicators of socioeconomic status and racial group identification were augmented with two measures of “assimilation” – being born in the United States, and the use of English at home. For the white and Black samples which are overwhelmingly native-born and English-speaking, these variables have little variance, and we do not expect any significant

10 Electoral activity is operationalized as an additive scale of activities, and estimated with regression models using a method of Ordinarly Least Squares. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are reported in the table of results.
11 For none of the four racial groups are any of the measures of racial identification correlated above .50.
12 The racial cultural identity measure is operationalized as a count of agreement with the three measures asking whether children should study an African/Spanish/Asian language, whether racial groups should marry within their group, and the importance of learning about the culture and history of one’s race. The measure of racial homogeneity is number of points the respondent (between 0 and 10) assigned to their race when enumerating racial background. The question on how to identify asked respondents to choose which was most important to be – e.g., “Mexican,” “Mexican-American,” “Hispanic or Latino,” “Latino and American.” See the Appendix for exact question wording.
relationships. To account for variations in other “usual suspects” in political activity, the specification included a measure of length of residence, frequency of religious attendance, gender, a dummy variable for young age, partisan identification as a democrat or republican, and a measure of whether or not the respondent was contacted about a political campaign. The results of the estimations are presented in Table 3.

[Table 3 here]

Does racial identification influence the political activity of whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans? There is little consensus in the study of race and politics on the significance of racial group consciousness to political action. For some groups, most notably African Americans, racial identification has been found to have positive and significant effects on political activity. Studies of Latino political participation demonstrate weaker and inconsistent influence of pan-ethnic racial group identification on behavior. Among Asian Americans, the findings are more mixed, though some studies, most notably the 2004 analysis by Lien, Conway, and Wong, find that a sense of linked fate is associated with higher levels of political activity. The results from these models provide consistent evidence that stronger racial identity and consciousness does indeed increase the participatory activity of Blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans in elections. Alternatively, whites see no increase in political behavior as a function of their identification with other whites. Comparing across measures of identification, the question on linked fate – agreement with the statement “as things get better for [group] in general, things get better for me” – has significant and positive influence on electoral activity for African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.

The remaining 5 measures of racial identification and consciousness, however, have distinctive influence on behavior across groups. The new item on racial political identity, which
asks respondents “Now, thinking about your political identity, how important is being [group] to your ideas about politics?” has a strong and positive influence on electoral activity among African Americans, but a negative influence on behavior for Latinos. Alternatively, racial cultural identity, measures of the extent to which respondents agree with preserving cultural homogeneity of their group, has a negative influence on activity for Asian Americans only. Similarly, the racial background enumeration question, which asks people to allocate points totaling 10 to various races to describe their heritage, also has negative effects on electoral activity for blacks only. Finally, the standard measure of closeness to one’s racial group, and the question asking respondents which identification is most important to be, shows a significant relationship to electoral participation only for Asian Americans. Where there is comparatively little divergence in the results is the overwhelming importance of both formal educational attainment and political mobilization, measured here as contacts about a political campaign. Affiliation with a political party, especially the Democratic party, also influences electoral activity for all groups except Asian Americans. Being a Republican, however, aids in increasing participation among Latinos (and Asian Americans, but the coefficient barely misses statistical significance), but not among whites or African Americans.

Viewing the results by group rather than across explanatory measures yields a different angle on the findings. Among whites, there are no surprises in the data; all of the “usual suspects” in typical estimations of electoral behavior are significant, and in the expected direction. None of the measures of racial identification are relevant to electoral behavior among whites. For African Americans, the findings are also quite consistent with the conventional wisdom, and the only coefficient that is unusual is the negative parameter estimate for the measure of racial background enumeration. This is a new survey question, yet to be tested.
systematically either among subpopulations grouped by race or for its effect on political behavior. There is no simple or forthcoming explanation for the negative coefficient on this variable, which can be interpreted as the more black one describes their racial background, the less active they are in electoral politics, all else equal.

Among Latinos, there are two interesting findings, the first being the strong negative coefficient on the racial political identity question in conjunction with the positive coefficient on the measure of linked fate. One way of interpreting these findings is perhaps politically active Latinos feel that they are perceived externally as one group and to that extent, collective benefits pertain, but that in their own thinking about politics, being Latino is not important to their political activity. A second finding that stands out for the Latino sample is the importance of identification with the Republican party in predicting electoral activity. Asian Americans also benefit from an affiliation with the Republican party, though the coefficient barely misses reaching statistical significance.

Among Asian Americans, there is a negative coefficient on the racial cultural identity measure, indicating that the more committed one is to maintaining cultural homogeneity (e.g., no intermarriage, preserving language), the less likely one is to take part in electoral politics. To the extent that these measures capture lower levels of assimilation in U.S. society and politics more generally, the estimate is consistent with our expectations. Interestingly, being born in the U.S. is a positive and significant predictor of participation among Asian Americans but not Latinos. Finally, gender is significant (and negative) only in the Asian Americans data, signifying the advantage for women in terms of electoral participation. This is certainly a unique finding, and distinctive from the results Lien, Conway, and Wong report in their 2004 study.
3 Racial Categorization and Stereotypes: A Closer Look at Asian Americans and African Americans

Asian Americans are a remarkably diverse group of Americans, made up primarily of immigrants. This population is diverse in terms of national origin and language. No one group is predominant and, according to the 2000 Census, more than 6 national origin groups are combined as Asian American, including Chinese (23%), Filipino (18%), Asian Indian (17%), Vietnamese (11%), Korean (11%), and Japanese (8%), along with an “other Asian” category (12%). Some scholars have suggested that this diverse group of Asian Americans may favor distinctive national origin groups over a pan-ethnic racial identity (Tam 1995). It is also important to underscore that racial formation and the definitions applied to racial categories in the U.S. are uniquely American constructs, and represent new categories to immigrant Asians. New immigrants may not adhere to the categories imposed on them upon their entry into the U.S. and so cannot be expected to automatically identify with a pan-ethnic racial category.

In addition to the internal diversity among Asian Americans, the relatively high levels of social and residential integration could also mitigate racial identity formation. They are more likely than Blacks and Latinos to be economically integrated with Whites. In particular, high average levels of formal education drive a similarly high degree of occupational status and income earnings.13 Taken together, these resources produce a population that is less likely to reside in ethnic enclaves and more likely than other minority groups to live in racially integrated neighborhoods and attend racially diverse schools (Lai and Arguelles 2003). To the extent that classic assimilation models are correct, this level of economic and residential integration suggests that Asian Americans will more quickly become incorporated into American society.

13 While high socioeconomic standing is an average across all people classified as Asian American, the distribution of educational and income resources within the Asian American community is bi-modal, with those from less developed nations occupying the lower end of the economic spectrum.
compared to other racialized immigrant groups with fewer resources for mobility. Citing these social and demographic trends, political observers from both ends of the ideological spectrum predict the rapid assimilation of Asian Americans into the U.S., while presumably leaving behind an Asian or Asian American political identity (Huntington 2004; Haney Lopez 2006).

The notion that Asian Americans are less constrained by negative racial stereotypes portend a diminution in Asian Americans racial group identity and a gradual assimilation into mainstream, white America. Yet at the same time, Asian Americans are highlighted as a distinctive racial group that is, in some cases, critical to the outcome of a national election. Speculation about Asian American racial identity vacillates between these two perspectives, and there is little theoretical grounding to explain how or why Asian American racial group consciousness is exercised in certain events but not in others. Political scientists have generally accepted the idea that Asian Americans are racially triangulated between White and Black (Kim 2000), and that this racial position most likely has implications on Asian American racial identity. But even if an Asian American racial consciousness can be found, it may not function as racial group identity does for Blacks. I argue that racial identity for Asian Americans exists as a more latent identity compared to African Americans, and find Asian American racial group consciousness much more susceptible to the surrounding context than that demonstrated by Blacks. Given this latent characteristic, how and what helps to activate a sense of group membership in political terms among Asian Americans?

In order to determine if a racial group consciousness has political consequences, I test the relative ease with which identity can be activated in specific political contexts. One common type of context in contemporary politics in which minorities may take part in is a campaign that either highlights or promotes a particular minority candidate. Minority candidates have been
found to have a positive impact on levels of political efficacy and trust particularly among those of the same racial background (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Tate 2003). The concept of descriptive representation asserts that the notion of shared characteristics – particularly race, ethnicity or gender – invite feelings of solidarity, familiarity, and self-esteem among members of that respective group (Dovi 2001; Mansbridge 1999; Pitkin 1967). Recent empirical studies also suggest that minority candidates can mobilize their respective minority communities thereby increasing turnout levels beyond that expected for a White candidate (Barreto 2007; Defrancesco-Soto 2004; Gay 2001; Lai 2001; Leighley 2001; Tate 2003). Underlining these studies is the argument that shared racial group identity is the key explanatory mechanism behind these patterns.

Although scholars speculate that descriptive representation is linked with racial group consciousness, we do not know the causal direction between the two. If, as hypothesized, minority candidates do have a mobilizing effect – either in terms of turnout or heightening perceptions of political efficacy – then descriptive representation should activate group consciousness. By including a manipulation that highlights the importance of descriptive representation, we can see whether racial group identification is heightened in a positive direction. The use of experimental methods also highlights the influence of short term communications on racial identification. Since experimental methods create a specific context for a short period of time, an experimental design also tests the malleability of racial identity and the degree to which identity is driven by context. Thus, racial group identity may not necessarily be a stable psychological predisposition, but instead a perception that may be cued by outside contexts.
I hypothesize that, in terms of racial group consciousness, the more active that group consciousness is, the harder we would expect it to be to move. In this regard, groups with strong and deeply held racial identity should show a smaller increase, if any, in group consciousness as compared to those members of groups for which racial identity has latent political content. If racial group identity among Asian Americans has such a latent political content, respondents should reveal a stronger sense of group consciousness when they are reminded of the political consequences of being Asian American. To the extent that Blacks’ racial political identity is more active than it is for Asian Americans, claims for group-based political action may have less efficacy in eliciting stronger racial consciousness among Blacks. However, I also expect to find higher levels of racial group consciousness for Blacks compared to Asian Americans in the absence of any reminder of the racial bases of group political action.

The 2004 Ethnic Politics Survey included an embedded experiment that was designed to measure the effect of descriptive representation on racial group consciousness. Respondents from each racial group were randomly assigned into two groups. Half were assigned to the condition and were exposed to pictures of U.S. Presidential cabinet officials – Ronald Brown and Rod Paige for the Black respondents, and Norman Mineta and Elaine Chao for the Asian American respondents (see Figures 1 and 2). The photographs were placed on the same screen and introduced with the text: “Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets.” Underneath the photographs was identifying information about the cabinet official, and a description of their position. For example, the caption under Elaine Chao’s picture read, “Elaine Chao, the first Asian Pacific American Secretary of Labor, serves under President George W. Bush.” The images were balanced to include photographs of both a Republican and a Democratic appointee, and text accentuated the race of the officials.
For the dependent variable, we included five distinctive measures of racial identification and consciousness relying on several previously developed questions tapping group identity as well as some new instrumentation. The first measure is the classic “close to” question which represents the most common measure of group identity in the study of political behavior. The second question is the “linked fate” question that has been established in studies on Black political behavior (Dawson 1994). The third measure asked the respondent’s preference for a racial or ethnic descriptor such as a hyphenated “Asian-American” or “Black-American” or simply an “American.” The fourth measure included three statements on the importance of cultural homogeneity within their racial group. Finally, the fifth measure was a new question asking respondents about how important their race is to their ideas about politics. The question asked, “Now, thinking about your political identity, how important is being Black/African American or Asian/Asian American to your ideas about politics?” The appendix provides the question wording for all of these items.

The logic of the experimental frame was to reinforce positive images of Blacks and Asian Americans as legitimate and powerful actors in U.S. national politics. The impetus for this manipulation is based in theories of descriptive representation described above which is assumed to evoke a positive sense of racial group identity. To measure the effect of the primes, I use chi-square tests to compare the difference in responses between the control and treatment groups on each of the on the racial identity questions. I focus on the extent to which racial group identity can be heightened through the use of short-term communications and if the magnitude of the effect varies by racial group.

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What difference did viewing the faces of U.S. cabinet officials have on the extent to which Blacks and Asian Americans express racial group identifications? The results are presented in Table 1, pairing the marginal distributions for the measures of racial identification for the control and treatment groups. Any differences can be attributed to the efficacy of the stimulus, and statistically significant relationships are highlighted by shaded cells in the table.

[Table 4 here]

Results for Black respondents conform to our expectations of the importance of a frame of descriptive representation for three of the measures of racial consciousness, though for only one measure are the differences statistically significant at the .05 level. Viewing the U.S. cabinet official headshot photographs did most to influence responses on the question about linked fate, increasing from 56% who agree and strongly agree in the control group to 64% among those who viewed the stimulus. Blacks in the treatment group were also more likely to say they felt close to other Blacks, and somewhat more likely to say they thought that being Black was “somewhat important” to their political identity, these differences were not statistically significant. For the remaining two measures of what it most important to be, there were only small differences, with the descriptive representation manipulation having an effect in increasing the likelihood that those who viewed the prime would say that it is most important to be “Both Black and American.” There was no discernible effect for any of the measures of racial cultural identity.

Asian Americans showed strong results from the experimental manipulation, demonstrating substantial malleability from exposure to the descriptive representation stimulus. There are large and statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups for three measures of racial political consciousness, including feelings of closeness to other Asians/Asian Americans, linked fate, and racial political identity. In addition, Asian Americans
viewing the stimulus were more likely to say it was most important to be a specific ethnic group and American (i.e., “Chinese American”) or Asian American, thereby favoring the inclusion of “American” in their self-categorization. Alternatively, there are no differences in the measures of racial cultural identity between those who viewed the U.S. cabinet officials headshots and those who received no treatment.

While the results within groups are interesting, the findings comparing Black and Asian American racial consciousness are most illuminating. In terms of feelings of closeness to members of one’s own racial group, nearly 80% of Blacks in the control group respond affirmatively. While the proportion is roughly two-thirds of Asian Americans in the control group, the proportion jumps to nearly the identical proportion for Blacks among Asian Americans who receive the descriptive representation treatment. Similarly, comparing positive responses to the linked fate question shows that Asian Americans who see the Asian American U.S. cabinet officials feel the same degree of linked fate as Blacks who have not been primed to think about racial group representation. The question on racial political identification, however, shows important differences between Blacks and Asian Americans. Though the experimental manipulation has efficacy for Asian Americans in increasing the proportion who say that being Asian American is “somewhat important” to their racial political identity, the proportion overall who say race is important to them in their racial consciousness is much smaller overall than for Blacks. The vast proportion of Blacks – more than 80% say being Black is at least somewhat important to their racial identity. In contrast, between a third and 44% of Asian Americans say that being Asian American is “not at all important” to their political identity. Though viewing the racial group representation prime has efficacy for Asian American racial consciousness,
important differences remain between Blacks and Asian Americans in terms of the extent to which they report their race being a factor in their ideas about politics.

In terms of the measures of racial consciousness asking about preferred identity label and cultural identity, there were also important differences between Blacks and Asian Americans. A direct comparison cannot be made between the choice of identity labels among respondents in the two groups because the set of response categories differs, but the data show that Asian Americans are more likely to say it is most important to be “American” at the expense of other racial or ethnic labels than are Blacks. Among the three measures of racial cultural identity, there are also interesting differences for two of the items. Exposure to the racial group descriptive representation frame had no influence on any of the items for either Blacks or Asian Americans, and respondents in both groups are nearly uniform in their agreement that Black and Asian American children should learn about their history and culture. Where the two groups differ, however, is in the importance of children marrying others of the same racial background, and the desirability of learning an African or Asian language. Among Asian Americans, more than half agree that it is important for children to learn an Asian language, but this is not surprising given the fact that more than two-thirds of Asian Americans in the United States are foreign born, and whose first language is likely one other than English. Blacks are overwhelmingly native-born, but nevertheless a third of those interviewed said it was important for Black children to learn an African language. Finally, while a quarter of the Blacks respondents agreed with the statement Blacks should marry other Blacks, a smaller fraction of Asian Americans agreed that children should marry within their racial group.

The results from our analysis affirm previous research that demonstrates that Blacks have an active racial identity. Though Blacks have a stronger racial consciousness than Asian
Americans, is surprising how close the two groups are in terms of group identity. It is unexpected because of the degree of internal diversity within the Asian American population, since the high proportion of foreign-born could mitigate feelings of racial group solidarity. Asian American as a race is a distinctly U.S. based concept, and one that may be novel to immigrants. Asian Americans from Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese, Taiwanese and other backgrounds are culturally, linguistically, and religiously distinctive. It is a shared racial identity – an imposed racial classification – that unites Asian American political consciousness rather than claims to Asian culture other non-racial and pan-ethnic characteristics. These data strongly suggest that Asian American political identity is not an oxymoron.

4 Shared Racial Status and the Formation of Asian American Group Identity

The findings from the embedded survey experiment leave some explaining to do. Why do the marginal distributions on the group consciousness items for Asian Americans look the way they do, particularly in comparison to those for Blacks? Social identity theory would suggest that the experiment encourages people to feel a sense of commonality with one’s in-group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). This explanation makes the assumption that the in-group is an obvious given for Asian Americans. But if we recognize the ethnic diversity within the Asian American population, the clear identification of the in-group is not so obvious. Indeed, the experimental stimuli present one photograph of a Chinese American and another of a Japanese American. The survey sample is a representative sample of the U.S. population of Asian Americans from a variety of national origin groups. Thus, it is unclear whether Asian American respondents are making an association by ethnicity, culture or language. Instead, it appears that Asian Americans
have identified a shared racial status with the representatives pictured in the experimental stimulus.

The assertion that Asian Americans cohere based on a shared racial status is not new, but has been recently overshadowed as scholars have focused on differences by country of origin (McClain and Stewart 2006; Ramakrishnan 2005; Segura and Rodriguez 2006). To be sure, divisions based on national origin exist, particularly given the fact that more than two-thirds of the Asian American population is foreign born. National origin differences relating to homeland politics matter to new immigrants and this presents a challenge to mobilize Asian Americans as a collective group. However, we should not assume that shared national origin, culture or language are the only factors with which Asian Americans can find commonality. Indeed, studies on group consciousness have emphasized politicized consciousness – an awareness of the group’s marginalization that, in turn, spurs commitment to collective action – as key to explaining the link between group identity and politics (Conover 1984; Conover 1988; Miller et al 1981). There are a number of other dimensions along which Asian Americans could form a shared sense of group consciousness (Masuoka 2006).

Scholars of Black politics point to the role of race and its influence on individual life chances. According to Dawson (1994), it is race rather than other individual characteristics such as class that structure Black worldviews. Black individuals are classified as a group based on their racial phenotype which is linked to a variety of negative stereotypes. Yen Le Espiritu (1992) contends that Asian Americans, like Blacks, are also subject to a similar process of racial lumping, and that their individual experiences are framed by the fact that this lumping occurs (see also Wong 2006). People of Asian origin share a set of physical characteristics that allows

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15 The literature on implicit racial priming also assumes that racial phenotype cues negative racial thinking. Emphasis on visual cues rely on the idea that Blacks are classified into one racial group based on visual recognition (Mendelberg 2001).
rational group status to be assigned quickly and at face value. Whether of East Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian origin, Asian Americans, like Blacks, both races are readily identifiable and racialized at first sight. The acknowledgement that Asians are lumped together visually as well as by the U.S. government as a racial category provides the foundation for a racial identity that is directed at politics.

Yet the key to the formation of Black linked fate is the idea that Blacks share a common history as a subjugated racial group. For Blacks, the experiences of slavery, Jim Crow and the persistence of barriers to mobility have demonstrated a historical pattern that underscores the inference that unless the fate of the entire racial group improves one’s own individual life also will not change. Blacks continue to link their own individual life chances to that of the racial group even as their individual socioeconomic status improves (Dawson 2001). For Asian Americans, however, this inference has less resonance because the majority of Asian Americans in the U.S. today immigrated after 1965 and therefore do not share the experience of a long history of racial discrimination. Further, structural barriers inhibiting Asian American individual life chances appear to be less rigid than that experienced by Blacks as evidenced by their relatively faster rates of assimilation and integration into the mainstream economic sector.

Why, then, would shared racial status matter to Asian Americans? I conceptualize the structuring of racial political identity as a complex interaction between policies of the state, institutions, political economy, and the stereotypes that result to create incentives for people categorized by race to either adopt or turn away from a group-based political identity.

First state-sponsored racial classification places limits on how people can identify, and there are clear incentives to accept this scheme of racial classification. “Asian” has persisted as a non-white racial group throughout most of the history of the United States, nor does it appear
that this racial classification will disappear in the near future (Anderson 1988; Haney-Lopez
2006). Throughout the history of the United States, assignment to a racial group has carried
important consequences, among them freedom, voting enfranchisement, property ownership, and
citizenship rights. The imperative for the U.S. government to classify people by race in the
census emanates from none other than the notorious three-fifths compromise codified in the
nation’s founding document. The census began to enumerate Asians as a separate racial category
in 1860 when Chinese in California were first counted. While racial classification has shifted
throughout the 20th century, Asian categories has been consistently included as a distinctive
racial group. 16

By counting groups of people through the census, the state establishes those who are
recognized members of the polity and which social categories are acceptable (Anderson and
Fienberg 1999; Kertzer and Arel 2002). Racial classification has been most significant to
Americans classified as something other than White since federal and state laws made explicit
discriminatory practices against Blacks, Mexicans, Asians, and others. Categorization has both
political antecedents as well as implications, and Asian Americans have historically provided a
critical link in the racial triangulation of minority Americans by serving as a buffer group
between other groups at various points in the continuum. As long as Asians are differentiated as
separate and non-white, those so classified will continue to understand their identity as
racialized.

Second, immigration policy plays a critical role in determining the structural advantage
and disadvantage for new immigrants (Junn 2008). Yet, many scholars have overlooked the role

16 Gibson and Jung note the following. “As an extreme example of inconsistency in the classification by race over
time, a person who was included in the Asian Indian category in 1980 and 1990 census tabulations, might have been
included in different categories previously: Hindu in 1920-1940, Other race in 1950-1960, and White in 1970”
(2002: 5).
of institutions in favor for more individual-level explanations for immigrant behavior and attitudes. Many claim point to Asian Americans’ relatively high levels of socioeconomic status as evidence of their successful assimilation into American society or even the byproduct of a superior ethnic culture. But the size and composition of the Asian population today has been fueled primarily by new immigration, and federal immigration policy offers a more accurate causal explanation for the contemporary composition of the Asian American population. U.S. immigration policies create preferences for certain types of immigrants and disproportionately awards the status of lawful permanent resident for those who match those favored characteristics. This results in a particular configuration of immigrants, both lawful and undocumented. Past policies aimed at Asian immigration favored poor and unskilled workers to serve as railroad workers, miners and farm workers. The current policies privileges legal entry for workers with high-level professional skills and advanced degrees, and is responsible for determining the shape and composition of Asian migration to the U.S. today. It is clear that immigration policy creates a selection bias that explains the highly-educated and skilled Asian American population on the one hand compared with the size of the relatively poor and uneducated Latino underclass on the other.

Thus, the relationship between socioeconomic status and assimilation for Asian immigrants today is not the same as that for European ethnics that entered the U.S. a century earlier. Traditional assimilation theories, which were used to explain European ethnics in the 19th century, note a direct and positive relationship between socioeconomic status and assimilation (Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964). I argue that the trajectory of immigrant incorporation for today’s Asian immigrants is different from that experienced by Europeans or even today’s Latino immigrants given that Asians enter the U.S. under very different economic circumstances.
Among Asian immigrants, many already enter the U.S. with an already extensive array of individual resources. Since the relationship between socioeconomic status and assimilation is unique for today’s Asian immigrants, the relationship between assimilation and ethnic identification may also be different for Asian Americans. According to Dahl (1961), ethnic identification for European ethnics faded as Europeans assimilated into U.S. society and acquired higher levels of socioeconomic status. With greater individual resources, European ethnics did not need to rely on their ethnic identity or ethnic community. Some claim that this pattern is occurring for Asian Americans today and that they will follow a similar trajectory (Lee and Bean 2004). While there are longitudinal data to counter this contention, Asian Americans clearly enter U.S. society under very different circumstances, and we know that their relatively high levels of socioeconomic status cannot be explained entirely by ethnic assimilation. Thus, one remains skeptical that Asian Americans will follow a traditional path to assimilation in terms of racial identity.

Third, as a result of racial categorization and the selection bias of immigration policy, Asian Americans are subject to specific racialized tropes that influence their individual life chances regardless of their length of residence in the U.S. As long as an Asian American is classified as “Asian” the prevalent racialized tropes of the time will be applied to them and treatment as a racial “other” will encourage Asians to maintain a sense of racial group identity. Racial tropes have implications for the incentives and costs people face when identifying with a racial or ethnic group. The most dominant trope is the “model minority” stereotype that frames Asian Americans as hard working, smart, and successful. The term model minority is applied

17 The term originated in print in a 1966 New York Times article on Japanese Americans by William Peterson. Peterson praised the group for their cultural values and a work ethic that contributed to them not becoming a “problem minority.” The popular media picked up on the “model minority” term, applying it to Chinese Americans, and then to Asian Americans more generally. Since the 1980s, some argue the term has been appropriated and
to Asian Americans as a whole, but is perceived as an individual-level trait (Kim 2000; Lowe 1996; Tuan 1996). So while Asian Americans might connect their racial identity with a particular set of stereotypical characteristics, the positive and more individualistic frame of their identity as a “model minority” provides fewer motives to form group racial identity than more economically deprived groups. Similarly, if Asian Americans believe they have greater opportunities and hold higher status than others in society, there may be less reason to engage in group solidarity to achieve political ends (Chong and Kim 2006). But this is tempered by the “forever foreigner” trope of Asian Americans as inscrutable, untrustworthy and perpetual outsiders. The image has the effect of a glass ceiling, preventing Asian Americans from full social integration. Indeed, some have argued that the construction of Asian Americans as a model minority works hand-in-hand with the characterization of Asians as perpetual foreigners (Rim 2007; Tuan 1998).

Model minority is clearly a more positive racialized trope than coolie, but it is not without negative consequence. Dueling contemporary tropes of Asian Americans as simultaneously a model minority while forever foreigner create a unique context of incentives and costs for racial group consciousness. Lauded for some characteristics and considered suspicious for others, Asian Americans exist in a distinctive racial position from other minority groups in the United States. Thus, Asian American political identity is forged out the complex interaction of all of these factors – the diversity of the population, the history of anti-Asian racism in the United States, the contemporary bias within immigration policy for high-skilled workers that produces a particular selection bias among Asian immigrants, and the competing stereotypes of Asian Americans as simultaneously a model minority while remaining forever foreigner.

promoted by political conservatives to demonize the individual-level pathologies of other racial minorities in order to assign blame for poverty (Kim 2000).
The structural factors of racial categorization, immigration policy and racialized tropes help to construct Asian American group identity based on a shared racial status. Rather than the clearly politicized racial identity of Blacks, the contours of Asian American group consciousness take shape as latent solidarity. Like Blacks, racial categorization for Asian Americans persists, and is readily identifiable on face value. In this sense, racial group membership is not a choice, and categorization as a race other than “white” will always be there and will always play a role. Yet, this racial distinction also means that the formation of Asian American racial group consciousness depends on the particular context. In our survey experiment, one specific context was tested, and the manipulation demonstrated that stronger perceptions of Asian American racial group identity can be elicited when respondents are primed with political role models. There are potentially a myriad of other contexts in which racial group identity among Asian Americans can be enhanced or diminished.

Most quantitative studies on racial identity and attitudes in the U.S. rely on cross-sectional public opinion studies that capture individual responses at one point of time. For the most part, these are devoid of measurements of the social context that acts as the respondent’s frame of reference. But social identities are formed in response to the specific context of one’s surrounding social environment and interactions with others. To properly explain the formation of racial group consciousness, one must also take into account how particular social contexts activate or dampen racial group identification. Clearly, the role of context on group identity will vary by racial group, and for Asian Americans, the formation of racial group consciousness is contingent on the context. It is distinct from that found for Blacks in which racial group consciousness is not as strongly influenced by the given environment. The over-determinacy of race on the individual life chances for Blacks makes racial group consciousness a salient and
persistent mechanism for Black political worldviews (Dawson 2001). For Asian Americans, race has less of a hold on individual life chances. Different forms and degrees of racialization among Blacks and Asian Americans in U.S. politics are critical variance to exploit in identifying contextual frames that are salient to the activation of racial identification. However, to say that Asian American racial identity is malleable does not make it any less important to the study of politics. Indeed, the fact that the formation of racial group consciousness is a response to a given event or issue makes racial identity just as intricately linked with politics as other similar forms of group identification such as partisanship.

Further, analyses comparing the magnitude of racial identity measures across various racial groups often discount groups whose level of identity does not reach the same levels of group consciousness as Blacks. Identities are not created equally, and what is important is not the magnitude of difference but rather why the differences occur in the first place. The imperative of this kind of a relational analytic strategy goes beyond the simple but useful act of comparing marginals across the racial groups. Instead, a relational strategy forces analysts to reconsider the way we study racial identity, highlighting the possibility of presenting different models to explain the activation of racial identity, and the significance of group consciousness for political participation (Junn 2006). The perspective requires both an appreciation of the historical specificity and unique experiences of each group’s construction as racially distinctive, as well as sensitivity to the malleability of those identities in different contexts. It is this very reason why it is important to understand the racial formation of those placed in the “middle” of the racial hierarchy. The politics of racial identity cannot be effectively examined by considering a single group in isolation, because racial tropes may exist in opposition to the dominant stereotypes for other groups (Kim 2000; Lee 1999).
Most importantly, racial identity should be thought about in a structural as well as constructed sense. U.S. immigration policy and the selection bias it creates has an important role by producing an Asian American population with high levels of formal education and social standing. Calling Asian Americans a model minority may be an accurate description of a selected set of Asians who successfully immigrated to the United States. But those qualities cannot be extended to characterize either Asian culture or Asian Americans in general, nor can they be applied in comparison to other minority groups with different trajectories of fortune. Overlooking structural factors has led analysts to misappropriate the economic success of Asian Americans to the realm of cultural difference in comparison with other U.S. minorities. What these final observations underscore is just how substantial the complexities are in disentangling the sources and contours of political consciousness based in racial categories. In the multi-racial U.S. polity today, we now have the opportunity to consider racial dynamics beyond the binary of White and Black. This situation signals tremendous possibilities for empirical innovation and theoretical rigor as we progress in the study of race, ethnicity, and politics.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of data collected from U.S. population samples of whites, African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans sets the stage for a more detailed study of the contours of racial identification and consciousness measured in the survey, and the impact of various dimensions on political activity, electoral and otherwise. The analyses suggest at least three points for discussion. First, it is quite clear that there are significant differences across the “big four” racial groups in terms of the degree and range of racial identification and consciousness, and its impact on behavior. In this regard, and in comparison both to what is conventionally understood about
Asian Americans, as well as juxtaposed to Latinos and Blacks, Asian Americans have a relatively high degree of racial identification.

Second, the embedded experiment attempting to elicit group pride and prime racial consciousness with a modest stimulus of paired Democratic and Republican U.S. cabinet officials matched to the respondent’s racial group, yielded strong findings among the Asian American population, and some movement among African Americans. The treatment group that viewed photographs of Asian American officials were more likely to claim feelings of closeness to other Asian Americans, linked fate, racial political identity, and attachment to a hyphenated-American group.

Third, race and the political relevance of racial consciousness is also distinctive across groups. African American behavior is strongly influenced by a politicized racial consciousness, reflected in measures of linked fate and racial political identity. Alternatively, as something of the “default” category, racial identification among whites shows no significant relationship to electoral participation. Asian American behavior is also influenced by racial consciousness, and in this case, it is helped along by a sense of linked fate and “Americanness,” but attenuated by the strength of cultural identity and resistance to assimilation. Latino political activity in the electoral sphere is also influenced positively by a sense of linked fate, but surprisingly, simultaneously negatively affected by the extent to which one feels being Latino is important to their ideas about politics.

While many questions remain unanswered, the emergence of these queries lends testimony to the utility of a data collection and relational analytic strategy that explicitly seeks inferential leverage in comparisons across racial groups. In a nation undergoing a rapid racial transformation, we have traversed beyond the black-white binary in U.S. politics, and research
studies in political science now have the opportunity to examine the contours and dynamics of this diversity to further develop our understanding of the significance of race to politics.
References


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Williams, Kim. 2006. Mark One or More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America.
Table 1. Racial Group Identification Measures (%)

<table>
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<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian American</th>
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<td>African Americans</td>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>Very important</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>B/L/A children should study</td>
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<td>African/Spanish/Asian language</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>B/L/A should marry other B/L/A</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Learn B/L/A history and culture</td>
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<td>84</td>
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<td><strong>6 Racial background enumeration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>100% own race</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>Some white</td>
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<td>Some asian</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>421</td>
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Source: 2004 Ethnic Politics Pre-election Study
Table 2. Political Participation (referent: last 2 years) by Racial Group (%)

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<tr>
<td>Persuade others how to vote</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>Attend campaign meeting or rally</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work for candidate</td>
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<td>Contact government official</td>
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<td>Sign petition</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of other activities</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2004 Ethnic Politics Pre-election Study
Table 3. Predicting Electoral Activity by Racial Group: Unstandardized OLS Coefficient Estimates (standard errors in parentheses under coefficient)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Racial identification</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.10)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.14 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closeness to own racial group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Linked fate</td>
<td>0.04 (0.05)</td>
<td>0.11*** (0.04)</td>
<td>0.11** (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Racial political identity</td>
<td>-0.05 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.14*** (0.06)</td>
<td>-0.18*** (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most important to be hyphenated American</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.04 (0.14)</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Most important to be American</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.18 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.14 (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Racial cultural identity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Racial background enumeration</td>
<td>0.00 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.04*** (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Born in U.S.</td>
<td>0.02 (0.27)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.21)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mostly English spoken at home</td>
<td>0.42 (0.38)</td>
<td>0.23 (0.27)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td>0.14*** (0.05)</td>
<td>0.14*** (0.04)</td>
<td>0.20*** (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Length of residence</td>
<td>0.00 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Frequency of religious attendance</td>
<td>0.05* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Gender (male)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.09)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.12 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Age (18-24 years old)</td>
<td>-0.50*** (0.11)</td>
<td>-0.37*** (0.11)</td>
<td>-0.19 (0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Identifies as Democrat</td>
<td>0.29*** (0.12)</td>
<td>0.23*** (0.09)</td>
<td>0.44*** (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Identifies as Republican</td>
<td>0.16 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.26* (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Contacted about political campaign</td>
<td>0.50*** (0.11)</td>
<td>0.18** (0.08)</td>
<td>0.56*** (0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2004 Ethnic Politics Pre-election Study

*** significant at .01
**  significant at .05
*   significant at .10
Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets.

Norm Mineta, the first Asian Pacific American Secretary of the Commerce Department, served under President Clinton and is now the Secretary of Transportation under President George W. Bush.

Elaine Chao, the first Asian Pacific American Secretary of Labor, serves under President George W. Bush.
Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets.

Ron Brown, the first African American Secretary of Commerce, served under President Clinton.

Rod Paige is the Secretary of Education, serving under President George W. Bush.
### Table 4. Racial Consciousness with Descriptive Representation Manipulation (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Race of the Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Close to</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to own racial group</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Linked fate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree &amp; agree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree &amp; disagree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Racial political identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Most important to be</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Black and American</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important to be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific ethnic group</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific ethnic &amp; American or Asian &amp; Am</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 Racial cultural identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/A children study African/Asian language</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/A marry other B/A</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn B/A history and culture</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2004 Ethnic Politics Pre-election Study
Statistically significant relationships are highlighted by shaded cells
Appendix: Question Wording for Racial Identification and Group Pride Manipulations

1. Racial Identification Measures

Q15. Here is a list of groups. Check ones you feel particularly close to, indicating the group is made up of people who are like you in their ideas and interests and feelings about things.

- Democrats
- Republicans
- Men
- Women
- Hispanics / Latinos
- Blacks / African Americans
- Asians / Asian Americans
- Whites
- Gays and Lesbians

Q16. How strongly do you agree with the following statement, “as things get better for [WHITES; BLACKS / AFRICAN AMERICANS; HISPANICS / LATINOS; ASIANS / ASIAN AMERICANS] in general, things get better for me.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

[IF BLACK]
Q17. Which is most important to be?
- Black
- Both black and American
- American

[IF BLACK]
Q18. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
- Black children should study an African language.
- Blacks should marry other blacks.
- It is important that blacks learn about black history and culture.
- Black people should shop in black owned stores whenever possible

[IF LATINO]
Q19. Which is most important to be?
- Specific ethnic group (e.g., Mexican)
- Specific ethnic group and American (e.g., Mexican American)
- Hispanic / Latino
- Hispanic / Latino and American
- American

[IF LATINO]
Q20. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
- Hispanic / Latino children should study Spanish.
- Hispanics / Latinos should marry other Hispanics / Latinos.
- It is important that Hispanics / Latino learn about Hispanic / Latino culture.
[IF ASIAN]
Q21. Which is most important to be?
   Specific ethnic group (e.g., Chinese)
   Specific ethnic group and American (e.g., Chinese American)
   Asian
   Asian and American
   American

[IF ASIAN]
Q22. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
   Asian / Asian American children should study an Asian language.
   Asians / Asian Americans should marry other Asians / Asian Americans.
   It is important that Asians / Asian Americans learn about Asian / Asian American history and culture.

Q23. Now, thinking about your political identity, how important is being [WHITE; BLACK / AFRICAN AMERICAN; HISPANIC / LATINO; ASIAN / ASIAN AMERICAN] to your ideas about politics?
   Very important
   Somewhat important
   Not at all important

Q49. In identifying a person’s racial background, we often use just one racial or ethnic category. Sometimes, however, more than one category applies. Imagine if our race and ethnicity could be described by using a 10-point system to allocate as we see fit to whichever racial and ethnic categories that we think accurately describes a person. For example, if you think of someone as half-white and half-Asian, you might allocate 5 points to each. Or if you think of someone as mostly black but with some Hispanic heritage, you might allocate 9 points for African American and 1 point for Latino. Now suppose you are asked to describe your own racial background in this way. How would you describe your race and ethnicity using this 10-point system?

# points
   _______ White or Anglo
   _______ Black or African American
   _______ Asian American
   _______ Hispanic or Latino
   _______ Native American or American Indian
   _______ Other race _____________________ (please specify)
   Total = 10 points

2. Group Pride Frames

[IF BLACK AND RANDOM HALF=1]
[IF WHITE AND RANDOM HALF=1]
Q10. Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets.

[PHOTO OF RON BROWN ON LEFT SIDE OF SCREEN (brown head shot.gif) WITH CAPTION BELOW]
Ron Brown, the first African American Secretary of Commerce, served under President Clinton.

[PHOTO OF ROD PAIGE (paige head shot.jpg) ON RIGHT SIDE OF SCREEN WITH CAPTION BELOW]
Rod Paige is the Secretary of Education, serving under President George W. Bush.

Q10a. How important is diversity in government?
   Very important
   Somewhat important
Not at all important

[IF LATINO AND RANDOM HALF=1]
Q11. Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets.

[PHOTO OF HENRY CISNEROS ON LEFT SIDE OF SCREEN (cisneros head shot.jpg) WITH CAPTION BELOW]
Henry Cisneros, the first Latino Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, served under President Clinton.

[PHOTO OF MEL MARTINEZ ON RIGHT SIDE OF SCREEN (martinez head shot.jpg) WITH CAPTION BELOW]
Mel Martinez served as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President George W. Bush.

Q11a. How important is diversity in government?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not at all important

[IF ASIAN AMERICAN AND RANDOM HALF=1]
Q12. Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets.

[PHOTO OF NORM MINETA ON LEFT SIDE OF SCREEN (mineta head shot.jpg) WITH CAPTION BELOW]
Norm Mineta, the first Asian Pacific American Secretary of the Commerce Department, served under President Clinton and is now the Secretary of Transportation under President George W. Bush.

[PHOTO OF ELAINE CHAO ON RIGHT SIDE OF SCREEN (chao head shot.jpg) WITH CAPTION BELOW]
Elaine Chao, the first Asian Pacific American Secretary of Labor, serves under President George W. Bush.

Q12a. How important is diversity in government?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not at all important