

MICHAEL D. MINTA
*Washington University
in St. Louis*

Legislative Oversight and the Substantive Representation of Black and Latino Interests in Congress

When determining whether or not legislators are representing their constituents' interests, scholars using voting studies may overstate the role of strategic factors, such as reelection goals and constituent influence, while understating the effect of descriptive characteristics. I argue that race and ethnicity matter in congressional oversight of bureaucratic policymaking. My examination of hearing transcripts from the 107th Congress indicates that minority legislators are more likely than white legislators to participate in racial-oversight hearings but not more likely than whites to participate in social welfare hearings. The results show that descriptive representation contributes to substantive representation, even if the costs of participating outweigh the electoral benefits.

In the United States, ensuring that the interests of the nation's least advantaged citizens are represented in Congress has been a primary concern of scholars and public policymakers. The extent to which a legislator's race or ethnicity helps provide a voice to underrepresented groups, such as blacks and Latinos, has been heavily debated. To evaluate whether or not the race or ethnicity of legislators matters for their representation of minority interests in Congress, most empirical scholars have relied on Hanna Pitkin's (1967) delineation of descriptive and substantive representation. Although many studies have found that race or ethnicity plays a significant role in determining the likelihood of legislators to support minority group interests, such as the enforcement of civil rights and social welfare policies (see, for example, Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Canon 1999; Lublin 1997; Tate 2003; Welch and Hibbing 1984; and Whitby 1997), others have reported that race or ethnicity does not influence whether or not members will support these policies (Hero and Tolbert 1995; Swain 1993). Scholars have examined the effects of race on the substantive representation of minority interests in other areas, such as bill

sponsorship, constituency service, and participation in committee markups (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Canon 1999; Gamble 2007; Hall 1996; Haynie 2001; Sinclair-Chapman 2003), but the bulk of what we know about race or ethnicity and substantive representation comes from analyses of roll-call voting.

Assessments of voting behavior provide valuable insight into the effect of race or ethnicity in this important legislative arena. Yet if we rely solely on these studies, we may overstate the degree of partisan unity among legislators and understate black and Latino members' responsiveness on minority interest issues. For example, Hall and Heflin (1994) argue that when the Democrats control the House, the differences are not apparent between black and white legislators in the Democratic Party, because the controversial racial issues are censored by party leaders before they come to the House floor for a vote. This censorship may be especially pronounced in a Republican-majority Congress; as the modal legislation moves farther to the right, more agreement should exist between moderate and liberal Democrats in opposition to the legislation (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Lawrence, Maltzman, and Smith 2006). As a result, white legislators might appear to be in step with minority legislators and minority constituents.

My research shifts focus from assessing if legislators are voting the "right way" to examining how much time and effort they spend intervening in agency policymaking on behalf of their constituents. Specifically, I argue that black and Latino legislators, because of their racial or ethnic group consciousness or shared group experiences, are more likely to intervene in oversight hearings that pertain to minority interest issues than are white legislators (see Dawson 1994; Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989; Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998; and Young 2000). Legislative intervention is a measure of legislators' intensity or commitment to an issue. Legislators must devote scarce time and resources to this activity, which may not significantly enhance their electoral fortunes. The next section examines the importance of oversight activity and how intervention in agency policymaking relates to the substantive representation of minority interests.

Congressional Oversight and Substantive Representation

Exploring the possible effects of descriptive representation on legislative oversight provides valuable insights for several reasons. First, federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of Housing and Urban Development are responsible for implementing and enforcing civil rights and social welfare legislation.

Although Congress delegates much of the enforcement of these laws to federal bureaucratic agencies, constituents still rely on Congress to ensure that agencies uphold these laws (see, for example, Carpenter 2001; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2002; Mayhew 1991; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; and Weingast and Moran 1983). Very few studies have linked Congress's attempts to control the bureaucracy to the political representation of constituent interests by individual legislators. Engaging in oversight is particularly important for black and Latino legislators, because many minority interest policies, such as civil rights enforcement and social welfare policy implementation, have been institutionalized by the federal bureaucracy (Walton 1988). The importance that minority interests attach to oversight of federal agency policymaking is reflected by the increase in the number of African Americans on oversight committees (Canon 1999). During committee deliberations, individual legislators can request either verbally or in writing that federal agencies dedicate more resources to agency enforcement efforts. Legislators can also be critical of the inaction of agency officials to respond to previous congressional requests to replace or remove agency personnel. For example, in a hearing focused on efforts by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to enforce fair housing laws, Representative Nydia Velazquez, D-NY, expressed dissatisfaction at the inability of the Bush administration to find a replacement to head the Civil Rights Section of HUD:

Eighteen months into the President's term, the position of Assistant Secretary for Housing—for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity—remains unfilled. In fact, the current nominee, Ms. Carolyn Peoples, was only submitted by the President in May. Furthermore, she has had very limited experience administering fair housing laws. I take this to be a troubling indication of the low level of importance placed on these issues by the administration, one that I hope will soon be reviewed. This void has left us with a backlog of fair housing complaints that members of our communities tell us take far longer than the statutorily required deadline of 100 days to address. (U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Financial Services 2002a)

Although legislators can intervene positively on behalf of minority interests, some legislators defend the status quo or do not want an increased effort by the agency. For example, in the same 2002 HUD oversight committee hearing, Representative Gary Miller, R-CA, defended the Bush administration's efforts to implement anti-discrimination laws:

I am very pleased that we are having this hearing. I think some things might be blown out of perspective. I have to agree there has been lack of enforcement on certain programs and policies, and especially when it comes to disabled and minorities in the

past. But I think that is somewhat in the past. I think the new administration is making every attempt to remove the problems that we faced in the past. So I do not know if it is necessarily a problem that requires new legislation. (U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Financial Services 2002a)

Second, examining the possible effects of race or ethnicity in legislative oversight is likely to demonstrate legislators' intensity of commitment to an issue. Despite the importance of ensuring that agencies enforce these laws, legislators with limited time and resources—as well as reelection concerns—may be hesitant to engage in oversight (Fiorina 1974; Mayhew 1974). The decision to intervene in agency policymaking requires a heavy investment of legislators' scarce resources and time and may not offer much in the way of electoral rewards (Aberbach 1990; Arnold 1990; Hall and Miler 2000; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). Unlike roll-call voting records, which are more visible and followed closely by constituents and potential election opponents, most oversight occurs out of the purview of most constituents. Consequently, the degree of involvement by legislators in oversight activities may not be easily traced back to individual legislators (Arnold 1990). Because the benefits may be broad, it is unlikely that constituents will be able to attribute the action to their individual member or that the member will be able to claim credit successfully for his or her actions (Arnold 1990; Hall and Miler 2000; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). If intervening in legislative oversight is costly, then why might minority legislators from safe districts be expected to engage in, as Mayhew would term it, a “workhorse” activity?

Normative theory and existing survey research of the mass public suggest that shared experiences, racial or ethnic group consciousness, or some combination thereof may motivate black and Latino legislators to intervene in agency policymaking on minority interests beyond the instigation of standard strategic-based factors (Dawson 1994; Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989; Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998; Young 2000). First, in relation to blacks, a consistent finding in these studies is that the majority of blacks, regardless of their socioeconomic status, believe that what happens to the group also affects them individually (Dawson 1994; Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989). Blacks who possess common-fate perceptions and racial group consciousness are more likely to favor racial programs and social welfare programs than are whites (Conover 1984; Tate 1993). Although the findings relating to racial or ethnic group consciousness and common fate mainly focus on the mass public and not political elites, research suggests that black legislators may also possess a racial group consciousness (Fenno 2003;

Whitby 1997). Comments during a legislative oversight hearing pertaining to racial and ethnic profiling offer support for this theory. Representative Elijah Cummings, D-MD, recounted his experience of being an African American male and the challenges that African American men encounter with law enforcement officials:

It's so interesting when we talk about the perceptions of how some white people look at racial profiling and maybe African Americans or Hispanics may look at it. But, you know, as an African American man, I can tell you that you begin to live your life with an extra bit of caution. I mean, you talk to most black men, they will tell you that they make sure that their lights are fixed on their cars, they make sure that no tags are hanging down, they make sure that everything is in place, because they don't want to be stopped and because we're afraid of what's going to happen. (U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Government Reform 2001)

In addition, some scholars have found a commitment among black legislators to represent the interests of blacks nationally, not only the interests of black constituents in their district (Fenno 2003; Swain 1993), a commitment to what Mansbridge (2003) calls "surrogate representation." In fact, the stated purpose of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) is to serve the interests of all blacks in the country (Clay 1993).

Much of the literature related to group identification focuses on black Americans, but research demonstrates that Latinos also possess an ethnic group consciousness (Stokes 2003; Welch and Hibbing 1984). Scholars have found that ethnic group membership plays a significant role in determining Latino Americans' partisan and ideological attitudes. Specifically, Latinos tend to be more liberal and more supportive of the Democratic Party than are whites (Welch and Sigelman 1993). Although Latinos are more diverse in terms of ideology and party affiliation than blacks, there is strong reason to expect ethnic group consciousness to play a role in determining Latino policy preferences on issues that include perceived discrimination or a threat to all Latinos (Sanchez 2006).

Relying on these insights, we may make the logical assumption that ethnic group consciousness found in the mass public may extend to Latino legislators. For example, in a legislative oversight hearing regarding the implementation of affirmative action by the federal government, Representative Matthew Martinez, D-CA, a Latino legislator, relayed his experience of being discriminated against:

... let me say that as a kid I understood what discrimination is. Just because I am in Congress does not make me believe that there is no more discrimination. I can remember as a kid people telling me to go back where I came from. (U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities 1995)

In addition, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) is organized to advocate for the interests of all Latinos, not only the interests of Latinos in individual districts.

I expect that black and Latino legislators, as a result of racial or ethnic group consciousness and membership in the CBC and CHC, are more likely than white legislators to intervene in legislative oversight hearings pertaining to racial or ethnic and social welfare issues. Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately affected by poverty, and the CBC and CHC both claim to represent the interests of all blacks and Latinos, including the poor.

District and Institutional Factors

In addition to racial or ethnic group consciousness, district and institutional factors identified in the roll-call voting literature and legislative participation literature may be relevant to understanding why legislators decide to intervene in agency policymaking. Scholars have found that district constituents exert varying degrees of influence on legislators' roll-call voting behavior and their levels of participation in Congress (Achen 1978; Erikson 1978; Fenno 1978; Fiorina 1974; Hall 1996; Hutchings, McClerking, and Charles 2004; Jackson and King 1989; Kingdon 1989; Mayhew 1974; Miller and Stokes 1963). Specifically, researchers have found that representatives of districts where blacks and Latinos represent a significant percent of the voting-age population tend to be supportive of liberal policies favoring blacks and Latinos (see, for example, Canon 1999; Hutchings, McClerking, and Charles 2004; and Lublin 1997, 1999). I used *Percent Black Voting-Age Population* and the *Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population* in members' districts to assess constituent influence.

Beyond the demographic makeup of the district, some scholars argue that safe districts, or districts with low electoral competition, may decrease the responsiveness of black representatives to their constituents (Swain 1993; Thernstrom 1987). These safe districts may also decrease the political participation of white constituents while only occasionally increasing black political participation in the district (Gay 2001). I measured *Electoral Safety* by the percentage of votes that the legislator received in the 2000 general election. My other standard controls include partisan affiliation of the legislator (*Party*), region (*South/North*), and district class interests (*Median Family Income*).

Finally, scholars have found that legislators who hold institutional positions of power on a committee, such as committee chairs or members with ranking minority status, have more resources to engage in

oversight than do members who do not hold such positions (Duffin 2003; Hall 1996; Ogul 1976). In addition to their individual office staff, these leaders have committee staff dedicated to gathering information and monitoring issues that concern the committee. Here, *Committee Leadership* positions are held by members who are either full-committee chairs, subcommittee chairs, or ranking minority members.

Data and Methods

To test whether or not racial or ethnic group consciousness is significant in motivating legislators to intervene in agency policymaking, I examined the verbal comments and written statements of members of Congress (*Legislative Interventions*) in transcripts of legislative oversight hearings from the U.S. House of Representatives, 107th Congress (2001–02). I broadly define minority interest policies as falling into two separate policy domains: explicitly racial and general social welfare policies (see Appendices A and B).¹ Explicitly racial hearings pertain to issues such as civil rights, discrimination, racial profiling, and enforcement of civil rights. General social welfare hearings may involve issues such as the implementation of welfare reform, review of community development block grants, domestic food distribution programs, and Medicaid. The social welfare policies may not directly target the interests of black or Latino constituents, but these policies may have a disproportionate effect on these constituents.

Approximately 16 explicitly racial or ethnic hearings took place from 2001 to 2002 in the House of Representatives. I coded 6 of the 16 hearings, excluding 3 oversight hearings that focused on funding for historically black colleges and universities because they were held at off-site locations away from Washington, DC. The differences in venue probably affected the likelihood of legislators to attend and actively participate. I randomly selected 6 hearings from the remaining 13. The remaining hearings not included in this study focused on issues such as operations oversight of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and racial disparities in the health care system. For the broader social welfare issues, I randomly selected 10 of 28 hearings to test the hypothesis.

Legislators' Interventions measures the intensity of legislator commitment to black and Latino interest policies.² Legislators' Interventions differs from Hall's (1996) and Gamble's (2007) concepts of legislators' participation in committee activities, because interventions do not simply tell how much legislators participated in deliberations; they also establish whether these legislators were "for" or "against" a policy. Consequently, interventions allow us to gauge if the legislators'

actions were consistent with the interests of black and Latino legislators.³ From the transcript of each hearing, I recorded the frequency and length of each legislator's verbal and written comments that expressed distinct policy preferences consistent with minority policy interests. Legislators who made or submitted comments that were neutral or expressed opposition to minority interests were assigned values of 0, as were legislators who did not make or submit comments.⁴ The criteria used to assess the valence of legislators' comments are explained in Appendix C.⁵ A count of the number of lines has previously been used by researchers to assess legislators' intensity (Hall 1996; Maltzman and Sigelman 1996).

I pooled intervention data for all individual legislators who did or did not engage in oversight across committees into a single sample for each policy dimension, respectively. For example, for the racial or ethnic hearings, verbal and written intervention data by individual legislators at the House Government Reform Committee hearing regarding racial profiling were combined with those by individual legislators who did or did not make verbal or written interventions at the House Financial Services Committee subcommittee hearing relating to enforcement of fair housing laws. Pooling the data was necessary because no single committee held enough racial/ethnic or social welfare oversight hearings for multivariate analyses of the various hypotheses to be appropriate.⁶ The common thread linking the racial or ethnic hearings is that they pertain to agencies' efforts to enforce or implement policies that specifically target black and Latino constituents. I used the same method to construct the sample for the social welfare hearings.

Finally, I examined intervention data for only those legislators assigned to the committee responsible for conducting the specific hearing. For example, the House Financial Services' Housing and Community Opportunity subcommittee held a hearing that examined fair housing enforcement by HUD, and the full committee of House Government Reform conducted a hearing that examined efforts to combat racial profiling. Only legislators serving on the Financial Services subcommittee and Government Reform's full committee were included in that sample.

Descriptive Results

A review of the descriptive statistics shows that the general participation rate at racial or general social welfare oversight hearings by legislators is relatively low. Table 1 shows that only 39% of legislators in the race or ethnic sample participated in the oversight

TABLE 1
Participation Rate at Social Welfare and Racial Oversight Hearings
by House Members, 107th Congress

	Participation Rate at General Social Welfare Hearings		Participation Rate at Racial Hearings
All Legislators (n = 265)	43%	All Legislators (n = 174)	39%
Black (n = 29)	62%	Black (n = 25)	72%
White and Others (n = 231)	41%	White and Others (n = 141)	33%
Latino (n = 5)	20%	Latino (n = 8)	38%

Note: *Participation Rate* indicates the rate at which members of Congress attended, spoke, or submitted written statements at the respective oversight hearings. The participation rate, unlike the intervention rate, does not indicate whether legislators' statements or comments were "for" or "against" stronger enforcement.

hearings, compared with 43% in the social welfare sample. Although participation is sparse at the hearings, the breakdown of the overall participation rate by race and ethnicity provides preliminary support for the hypothesis that black and Latino legislators have a higher participation rate at the race and ethnic hearings than white legislators have. Black legislators have a participation rate of 72%, compared with 38% for Latinos and 33% for white legislators. The findings in the general social welfare hearings are consistent with the expectation that blacks participate at a higher rate (62%) than whites do (41%). Latino legislators participate at a lower rate than both black and white legislators. This result is surprising, since Latino legislators are more likely to represent districts with higher poverty rates and lower median family incomes than black and white legislators are.

These data show that black and Latino legislators participate at a higher rate than whites on racial and ethnic issues, but determining the *direction* of the intervening activity is important for assessing substantive representation of minority interest policies. Legislators' interventions differ from participation; intervention tells us not how much members of Congress engaged in committee deliberations, but whether these legislators actively advocated for or against policy proposals related to minority interests. One can assume that legislators who intervene more frequently are more intense in their support or opposition for minority interest policies.

FIGURE 1
Intensity of Interventions for
Stronger Enforcement of Civil Rights

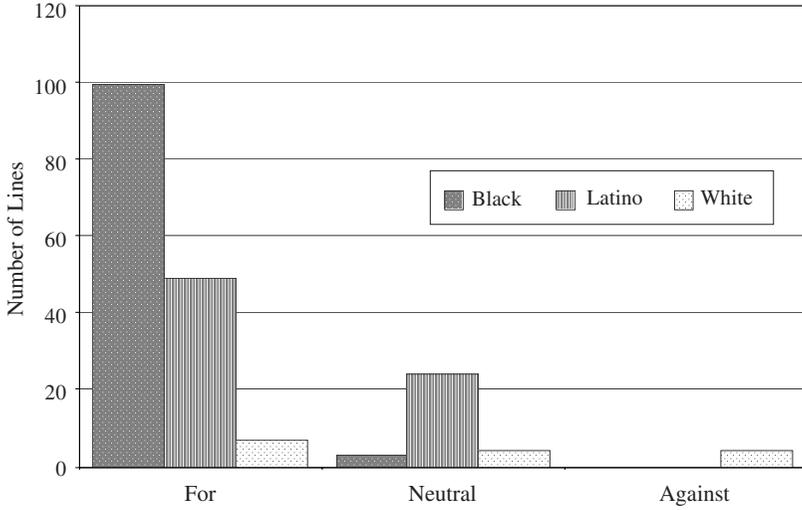
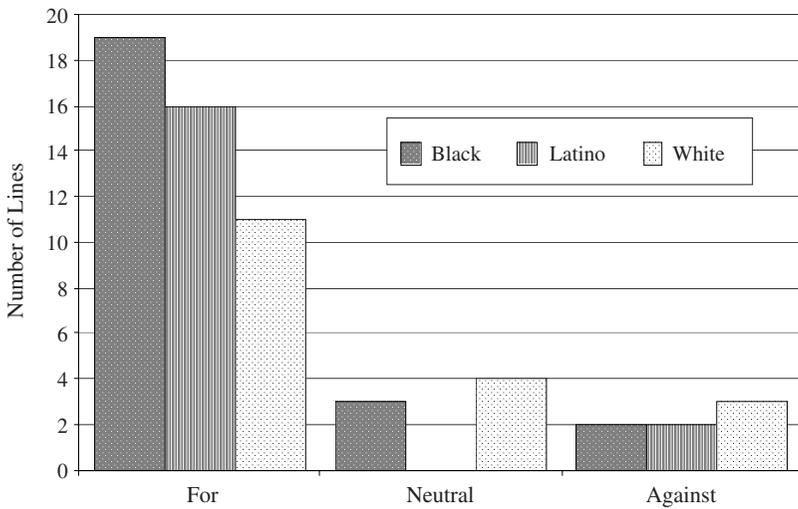


FIGURE 2
Intensity of Interventions for Implementation of
Social Welfare Policies Benefiting Lower Socioeconomic Groups



Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the differences in intensity as reflected by the mean number of transcript lines attributed to each racial or ethnic group. In racial/ethnic hearings, black legislators spend the most time intervening for stronger enforcement efforts, with an average of 99 transcript lines; Latinos are next with 49 lines and whites with 7 lines. In the social welfare hearings, blacks spend the most time intervening for stronger enforcement efforts, with an average of 19 transcript lines; Latino legislators average 16 lines and whites, 11 lines. Most striking in the descriptive statistics is the average length of interventions by whites for social welfare hearings versus their average in racial hearings: the average number of transcript lines dedicated to stronger intervention is 11 in the social welfare hearings, but 7 in the racial hearings.

Differences generally exist between minority and white legislators. When one considers a legislator's political party, however, the gap between the minority and white intervention rate does not decrease in the racial/ethnic hearings. Figure 3 shows that the number of transcript lines dedicated to intervention is 99 for black Democrats, 58 for Latino Democrats, and 14 for white Democrats. In contrast, in the social welfare hearings, the gap between minorities and whites shrinks considerably and is no longer statistically significant when one accounts for party. The number of transcript lines dedicated to interventions is 23 for white Democrats, 20 for black Democrats, and 16 for Latino Democrats (see Figure 4).

Although the descriptive statistics show differences in intervention rates in the racial and social welfare hearings, once one includes partisanship and other factors in a multivariate analysis, the differences may not hold.

Estimation Procedures for the Model

Because interventions involve the number of transcript lines attributed to legislators who participated in oversight activity, I chose the zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) model to estimate the intensity of legislator intervention for stronger enforcement of civil rights and implementation of social welfare policies that favor lower socioeconomic groups, such as blacks, Latinos, and the urban and rural poor, respectively. The ZINB model fits these data because of the overdispersion and excess number of zeros in the sample.

Overdispersion occurs when the conditional variance exceeds the conditional mean. The distribution of interventions for stronger enforcement or implementation of policies is uneven when legislators

FIGURE 3
Intensity of Interventions for Stronger Enforcement of Civil Rights
(Democratic Party)

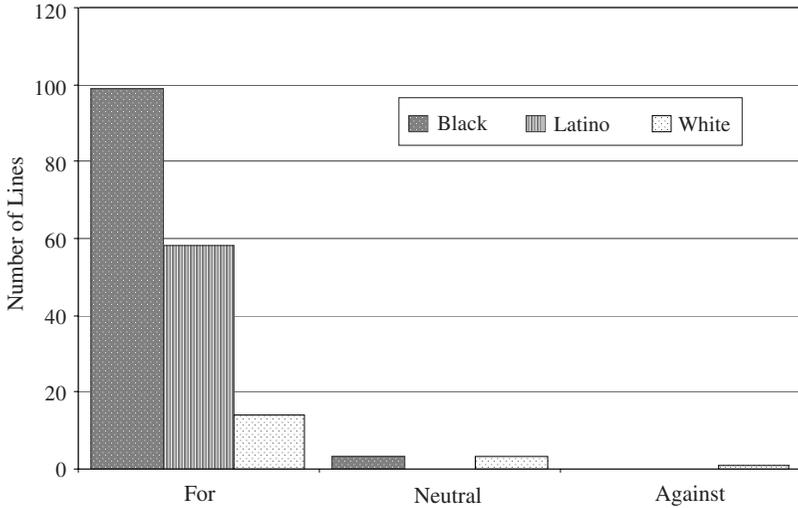
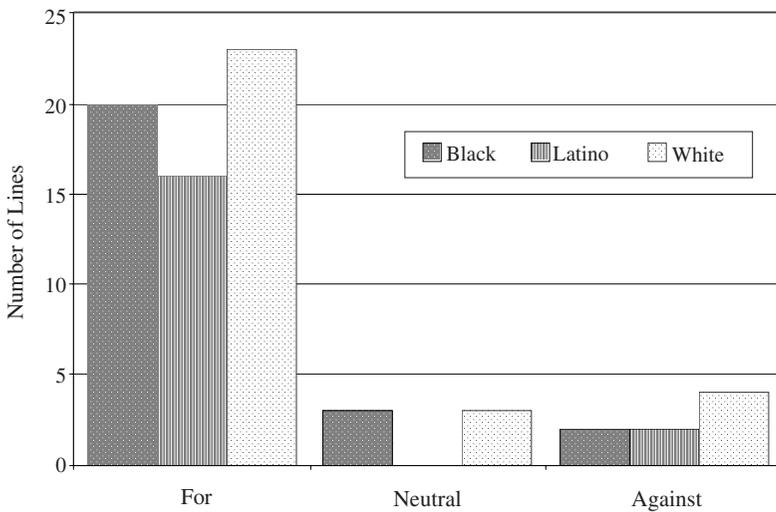


FIGURE 4
Intensity of Interventions for Implementation of
Social Welfare Policies Benefiting Lower Socioeconomic Groups
(Democratic Party)



who participated in the oversight activity participated often and spent a significant amount of time advocating their positions compared with legislators who did not participate at all. The dispersion could result from such factors as race, ethnicity, leadership position, partisanship, or unobserved heterogeneity.

The ZINB is preferable over the negative binomial regression because it accounts for the differences in the probability distributions and the large cluster of zeros, whereas the negative binomial assumes that every legislator has a positive probability distribution of intervening in favor of stronger civil rights enforcement or implementation of social welfare policies. The underlying logic of the ZINB model is that the processes that produce zeros in the observations may come from two different probability distributions. First, some zero observations are produced by legislators who do not participate in any oversight activity. These legislators do not write letters or engage in deliberations advocating for or against stronger civil rights enforcement or implementation of liberal social welfare policies. Nonparticipation by these legislators inflates the number of zeros when we examine the likelihood of legislators being in favor of minority interest policies. Second, a process produces zeros for (a) legislators who attended or wrote letters that were either against or neutral toward stronger civil rights enforcement or stronger implementation of social welfare hearings and (b) legislators who attended hearings but did not say anything. The ZINB goes one step further than the negative binomial; it allows the estimation of these mixed observations from possibly different probability distributions, accounting for the zeros by increasing the conditional variance and changing the conditional mean to the probability of the zero counts (Long and Freese 2003).

Multivariate Results

Legislator race or ethnicity plays a significant role in determining the legislator's degree of advocacy for racial/ethnic policies. The "Likelihood of Interventions" column in Table 2 shows that black and Latino legislators engage more extensively in committee deliberations than do white legislators. Black and Latino legislators do not limit themselves to a pro-civil rights enforcement position; they also spend significant time articulating those concerns verbally and submitting statements to agency officials, which are contained in the hearings' record. In terms of predicted level of support for minority interest policies, black legislators have the highest rate of support, with a predicted rate of 114 lines, followed by Latino legislators with 17 lines.

White legislators who take the pro-civil rights position do not spend equivalent time pressing federal agencies to be more vigorous in their enforcement actions, showing a predicted rate of 1.3 lines. When one factors in committee leadership, the differences between the groups are even greater. For example, black and Latino congressional leaders spend more time advocating for stronger enforcement than white leaders spend, with a predicted rate of 554 lines, 237 lines, and 26.1 lines, respectively.

Among Democrats, black Democrats have the highest rate of support, a predicted rate of 148 lines compared to 33 lines for Latino Democrats and 3 lines for white Democrats. Again, when Committee Leadership is interacted with race or ethnicity of legislators, black and Latino Democratic leaders have higher levels of predicted support for minority interests than white Democratic leaders have, with 611 lines, 320 lines, and 41 lines, respectively. Substantively, the predicted rate of lines indicates that black and Latino legislators may spend more time than their white colleagues, for example, in the committee deliberations advocating for the elimination of racial or ethnic discrimination in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's farm loan program.

Although black and Latino legislators intervene more than white legislators intervene on racial/ethnic policies, the same discrepancy does not hold for social welfare policies. The "Likelihood of Interventions" column in Table 3 shows no noticeable differences between minority and white legislators in terms of their levels of support for policies that benefit lower socioeconomic groups. Even legislators from districts with lower median family incomes are no more likely to be active in these hearings. These findings are surprising, because the CBC and CHC claim to represent the interests of all blacks and Latinos, which include the richest to the poorest minorities. The social welfare hearings addressed programs aimed at revitalizing lower-income communities, such as empowerment zones and community development block grants. Thus, I expected that black and Latino legislators, because of their shared experiences and commitments to engage in collective action to advance their group interests, would intervene at rates similar to those displayed in the racial/ethnic hearings. These findings provide some supporting evidence to scholars who have argued that racial or ethnic group consciousness may not extend beyond racial/ethnic issues and may mask intragroup differences (Cohen 1999; Hancock 2004; Sanchez 2006; Strolovitch 2007; Tate 1993). For example, Ange-Marie Hancock found that during the 1996 congressional welfare reform deliberations, CBC members did little to provide a voice to the subgroup in the African American constituency that was most affected by the reforms: poor African American women. Hancock

(2004) found that black legislators failed to challenge the negative myth of the “welfare queen” because members feared that attention to black welfare mothers would further marginalize the interests of the vast majority of African Americans who did not receive welfare.

In the racial/ethnic hearings, district class interests are important for predicting the level of legislator support for minority interests. Party affiliation and the size of the minority voting-age population are not significant. The insignificance of party may demonstrate differences in issue priorities among legislators and may not necessarily reflect a lack of support for racial/ethnic policies. As mentioned earlier, legislators have limited time and resources and cannot attend to all issues (Bauer, de Sola Pool, and Dexter 1963; Hall 1996). Thus, black and Latino legislators, because of racial or ethnic group consciousness, are more willing than whites to place a priority on racial or ethnic-group specific issues. Although insignificant in the racial hearings, party is an important factor in determining legislators’ likelihood of intervening in the social welfare hearings. The significance of party is consistent with accounts in the roll-call voting literature and with the expectation that Democratic legislators—both minorities and whites—generally tend to be more liberal in their support of social welfare issues than are Republican legislators. In addition, the issues in social welfare hearings usually do not have explicitly racial or ethnic overtones and have broader appeal to other groups in the Democratic Party constituency.

The “Likelihood of Intervention” columns in Tables 2 and 3 show that the sizes of the black and Hispanic voting-age populations are not significant in either the race or social welfare hearings. Recall that many scholars in the roll-call voting literature found a positive relationship between Percent Black/Hispanic Voting-Age Population and support for minority interest legislation. Multicollinearity between racial or ethnic group membership and Percent Black Voting-Age Population and Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population is relatively high.⁷ Achen (1986) has argued, however, that high collinearity is a reflection of small sample size rather than any inherent statistical problem, because the coefficients are still unbiased and consistent. Although many scholars have decided to drop one variable in favor of the other because of multicollinearity, I decided to include both variables because each represents an important part of my theoretical account of the effects of racial or ethnic group membership and constituency influence. Moreover, when one focuses only on non-black or non-Latino legislators, the racial or ethnic composition of the district variables remain insignificant.

The results in the final columns of Tables 2 and 3 come from the first-stage equation of the ZINB estimation of the likelihood of legislators

TABLE 2
Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Analysis of Interventions
for Stronger Enforcement of Civil Rights Policies
(robust standard errors in parentheses)

Explanatory Variables	Likelihood of Interventions for Stronger Enforcement	Likelihood of Having the Opportunity to Intervene for Stronger Enforcement, First Stage
Party	.12 (.31)	-1.33** (.55)
Black	2.14** (.60)	-3.33** (1.73)
Latino	1.74** (.61)	-.91 (1.53)
Committee Leadership	1.22** (.33)	-2.18** (.75)
Percent Black Voting-Age Population	-.63 (1.09)	3.47 (4.65)
Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population	-.23 (.85)	.18 (2.25)
Median Family Income	.02** (.01)	-.03*** (.02)
South	-.76* (.46)	.35 (.58)
Electoral Safety	-.02*** (.01)	-.04** (.02)
Constant	3.75** (1.51)	7.00** (1.86)
Log pseudo-likelihood	-255.89	-255.89
Wald chi-square (9)	83.55 (p < .001)	83.55 (p < .001)
Alpha	.42 (.21)	.42 (.21)
N	174	174

*Statistically significant at .05 level, one-tailed test; **statistically significant at .01 level, one-tailed test; ***statistically significant at .10 level, one-tailed test.

always being in the zero category, or not intervening in favor of minority interest policies. Some legislators will not actively intervene in favor of stronger enforcement because they will not participate in any oversight activity. For example, some legislators, whether for partisan or other ideological reasons, may never put themselves in a position in which they must decide whether to favor or oppose stronger enforcement of civil rights policies or favor or oppose more liberal social

TABLE 3
Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Analysis of Interventions
for Stronger Implementation of General Social Welfare Policies
(robust standard errors are in parentheses)

Explanatory Variables	Likelihood of Interventions for Social Welfare Policies	Likelihood of Having the Opportunity to Intervene for General Social Welfare Policies, First Stage
Party	.60** (.26)	-1.35** (.36)
Black	-.21 (.50)	-.78 (.69)
Latino	-.04 (.35)	1.42 (1.20)
Committee Leadership	.37* (.23)	-1.69** (.49)
Percent Black Voting-Age Population	-1.46 (1.10)	-.32 (1.79)
Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population	.01 (.35)	-1.55 (1.47)
Median Family Income	.00 (.00)	.01 (.02)
South	-.23 (.31)	.64 (.44)
Electoral Safety	.01 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Constant	3.07** (.86)	2.04* (.86)
Log pseudo-likelihood	-368.25	-368.25
Wald chi-square (9)	36.03 (p < .001)	36.03 (p < .001)
Alpha	.44 (.18)	.44 (.18)
N	265	265

*Statistically significant at .05 level, one-tailed test; **statistically significant at .01 level, one-tailed test.

welfare policies. This avoidance inflates the number of zeros in the sample, because these legislators participate with a probability equal to zero. This portion of the equation models those factors likely to predict why certain legislators fall into this category. Table 2 shows that blacks, Democrats, leaders, and legislators from electorally safe districts are less likely to fall into the zero category, whereas Table 3 demonstrates that only Democrats and leaders are less likely to fall into the zero category.

Conclusion

Does the race or ethnicity of legislators matter in the substantive representation of minority interests? My results show that legislator race or ethnicity plays a significant role in motivating a legislator to intervene in agency policymaking on policies favorable to black and Latino constituents. Descriptive representation has the greatest effect in the racial policy dimension: black and Latino constituents have public policy preferences that are vastly distinct from the preferences of whites. On general social welfare issues, in contrast, with the differences in preferences between minorities and whites being less significant, no statistically significant difference exists between minority and white legislators.

These findings have several important implications. First, my results suggest that psychological factors such as racial or ethnic group attachments can, and do, motivate legislator intervention in agency policymaking and affect the level of legislator responsiveness to constituent interests. Thus, strategic motivations, such as constituent influence and the desire to be reelected, are not the only significant factors that might explain why legislators invest scarce time and resources in the “workhorse” activity of legislative oversight. In addition, the level of engagement by black and Latino legislators in the committee deliberations provides empirical support to claims by normative theorists that descriptive characteristics prompt legislators to voice the concerns of marginalized groups in the public policymaking process as it relates to racial/ethnic issues (Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998; Young 2000).

Second, black and Latino legislators spend a disproportionate amount of their time advocating for racial or ethnic policy compared with their white counterparts. Because minority legislators allocate more time and resources to advocating for minority interests on racial or ethnic policies, they may be less able to devote similar attention to broader social welfare policies that may be equally beneficial to their constituents. Moreover, low attention by black and Latino legislators to social welfare policies addressing issues such as poverty and health disparities may deprive minority constituents of opportunities to have their views presented during the policy formulation process. As a result, descriptive representation may not provide equal representation to lower-income black or Latino constituents, thus creating a class bias.

Finally, many policymakers and scholars have debated whether racial/ethnic redistricting, or changing various electoral rules with the aim of increasing minority representation in Congress, hinders or helps

substantive representation of minority interests (see, for example, Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Gerber, Morton, and Rietz 1998; Grofman and Handley 1989; Guinier 1995; and Lublin 1999). This research provides some insight to scholars, legislators, and bureaucrats by demonstrating that the race or ethnicity of the legislator matters not only in voting behavior, but also in determining how much time and effort legislators will devote to issues that minority constituents consider important.

Michael D. Minta <mminta@wustl.edu> is Assistant Professor of Political Science and African & African American Studies, Washington University in St. Louis, 1 Brookings Drive, Campus Box 1063, St. Louis, MO 63130.

APPENDIX A Racial/Ethnic Hearings

Subject of Oversight Hearing	House Oversight Committee/Subcommittee
USDA Civil Rights Program for Farmers	Agriculture/Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry
HUD's Enforcement of Fair Housing Law	Financial Services/Housing and Community Development and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
DOJ's Enforcement of Civil Rights	Judiciary/Constitution
U.S. Civil Rights Commission Programs and Activities	Judiciary/Constitution
Racial Profiling	Government Reform
U.N. Conference on Racism	International Relations/International Operations and Human Rights

APPENDIX B

General Social Welfare Hearings

Subject of Oversight Hearing	House Oversight Committee/Subcommittee
USDA Domestic Food Distribution Program	Agriculture/Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry
Implementation of Welfare Reform	Budget
Implementation of Welfare Reform	Education and the Workforce/21st Century Competitiveness
Implementation of Welfare Reform	Committee on Ways and Means/Human Resources
Affordable Health Care	Energy and Commerce/Health
Budget Hearing for HUD	Financial Services/Housing and Community Opportunity
Review of HUD's Community Development Block Program	Financial Services/Housing and Community Opportunity
Review of Empowerment Zone Programs	Financial Services/Housing and Community Opportunity
Review of Medicaid Claims Process	Government Reform/Government Efficiency, Financial Management, and Inter-governmental Relations
Affordable Public Transportation	Transportation and Infrastructure/Highways and Transportation

APPENDIX C

Coding Protocol for Legislative Hearings

Comments For = Number of lines included in the statement or question that indicate a clear policy preference for a federal or governmental agency to take specific action for stronger enforcement of existing laws or policies that minorities favor, such as stronger enforcement of fair housing laws, elimination of racial profiling, and so forth. For example, in a House subcommittee hearing on HUD enforcement of fair housing laws, members advocating for stronger enforcement wanted HUD officials to process HUD's backlog of unresolved discrimination complaints, dedicate resources to hire more staff to help process complaints, and hire an administrator to head the Fair Housing section at the agency.

Comments Against = Number of lines included in statements or questions that do not call for the agency to take stronger action to enforce laws or implement policies that minorities usually favor. Many legislators do not explicitly oppose antidiscrimination laws or social welfare policies such as Medicaid. This category captures members who are not actively advocating for stronger enforcement of policies that benefit minorities.

Comments Neutral = This category is intended for members who are clearly on the fence. Members state that they generally support the agency doing a better job of enforcing or implementing policies, but they propose alternatives that minorities may or may not favor.

NOTES

1. My classification of the issue dimensions is similar to the categories used by Canon (1999), “explicitly racial” and “part racial.”

2. Although we might like to attempt to link specific legislator interventions to policy outcomes, the interventions do not necessarily have to result in specific policy outcomes to be considered substantive. Any one vote by a legislator may not necessarily affect the final policy outcome, but, when seeking to understand how interventions relate to substantive representation, we must consider the high opportunity costs associated with legislators directing their scarce resources to articulate positions their constituents want expressed and providing a viewpoint that otherwise may not be heard.

3. To measure the dependent variable, I adapted the method used by Hall and Miler (2000) in their study of interest group subsidies to members of Congress.

4. Conceptually, legislators with ambiguous or neutral positions may or may not be against minority interest policies, but, for the purposes of this analysis, these legislators do not clearly express their support for the program, and straightforward support is necessary for an assessment of substantive representation of minority interests. Thus, neutral statements are included in the “against” category. To ensure that the results were not affected by the coding scheme, I estimated another model in which legislators who made neutral statements were included in the “for” category instead. Inclusion of the neutrals along with the supporters of minority interest policy did not change the substantive results relating to race or ethnicity.

5. Two research assistants and I coded the transcripts using the coding protocol described in Appendix C. The average correlation between myself and the two coders was .96.

6. Because I pooled the intervention information from different committees in the 107th Congress that held explicitly racial or social welfare hearings, some members who served on more than one of the committees appear more than once in the sample. In addition, some committees held more than one of the hearings in the respective samples. Thus, the standard maximum likelihood assumption that all observations are independent is violated. The statistical software package Stata has a clustering command that relaxes the independence assumption among observations in these data and produces correct standard errors.

7. In the racial/ethnic hearings, the bivariate correlation coefficient is .83 for black racial-group membership and Percent Black Voting-Age Population and .77 between Latino ethnic-group membership and Hispanic Voting-Age Population. In the social welfare hearings, the coefficients are slightly lower, with a coefficient of .79 for black racial-group membership and Percent Black Voting-Age Population and .58 between Latino ethnic-group membership and Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population. In addition to examining the correlation coefficient, I used the “collin” command in Stata to determine if the level of collinearity fell within commonly acceptable ranges for social science research. In the racial/ethnic hearings, the variance inflation factor is 4.42 for black, 4.43 for Percent Black Voting-Age Population, 2.85 for Latino, and 2.73 for Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population. In the social welfare hearings, the variance inflation factor is 3.21 for black, 3.59 for Percent Black Voting-Age Population, 1.63 for Latino, and 1.58 for Percent Hispanic Voting-Age Population. The variance inflation factors for these variables fall within the tolerance range of 10 or less given by most researchers (Hamilton 2004).

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