

## ETHNIC CUEING ACROSS MINORITIES A SURVEY EXPERIMENT ON CANDIDATE EVALUATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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**Abstract** The number of minority voters in the United States continues to rise, and politicians must increasingly appeal to a diverse electorate. Are ethnic cues effective with different groups of minority voters? In this article, we investigate this question across the two largest minority groups in the United States: Blacks and Latinos. Drawing on American politics research, we propose that Black respondents will react positively to coethnic and cominority cues, while Latinos will be less receptive to such cues, and that this difference will be due at least in part to varying perceptions of discrimination across the two groups. We test this argument with an experimental design that leverages Congressman Charles Rangel's mixed heritage as Black and Latino. Our results confirm that Black participants respond positively to both coethnic and cominority cues about Rangel, while Latino participants do not. Reactions to ethnic cues in turn correspond to differences in perceptions of discrimination.

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## Introduction

The US racial landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decade. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population rose by 15.2 million, and now one in six residents is of Hispanic ethnicity (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011). The proportion of Americans identifying as Black also increased over this time (Jones and Bullock 2012). All told, almost one-third of Americans now identify with a racial or ethnic minority group. The American voting population has also shifted substantially. From 2008 to 2012, the number of Hispanic, Black, and Asian American voters rose by 3.7 million, while the number of White, non-Hispanic voters actually declined (Barreto and Manzano 2013).

Given such diversity, it has become increasingly important that politicians market themselves to a broad racial constituency in order to be electorally viable. However, traditional theories of racial cueing, which focus largely on the effectiveness of implicit messages and on Whites' attitudes and behavior, do not necessarily extend to racial and ethnic minorities (White 2007; McConaughy et al. 2010; Fraga 2016). Minority Americans have, to varying degrees, experienced racial discrimination in this country, and may thus respond to explicit racial appeals in ways that White Americans do not (White 2007). Alternatively, the political behavior of minority voters may be highly responsive to local demographic changes but not to the ethnicity of candidates themselves (Fraga 2016). Understanding the extent to which explicit racial appeals exert effects among different groups of minority voters, and the dimensions along which their effectiveness varies, requires continued empirical investigation.

This article examines the effects of explicit coethnic and cominority cues on the two largest racial minorities in the United States: Blacks and Latinos.<sup>1</sup> Following existing American politics research, we argue that, at least in part due to relatively higher levels of perceived discrimination against their group, Black participants are more likely than Latino participants to respond to explicit coethnic cues. By the same token, however, we argue that Blacks will also be more likely than Latinos to identify with and support candidates belonging to marginalized ethnic minority groups in general. Thus, whereas Blacks will respond positively to coethnic and cominority cues, Latinos are likely to exhibit more muted responses to both.

We test our theory with a survey experiment that leverages New York City Congressman Charles Rangel's mixed racial heritage as Black (through his African American mother) and Latino (through his Puerto Rican father).

1. A *coethnic* cue is a cue appealing to the respondent's ethnic or racial self-identification (for a Black respondent, this would be a Black cue; for a Latino respondent, this would be a Latino cue). A *cominority* cue is a cue appealing to the respondent's identification as part of an ethnic, but not a coethnic, minority group (for a Black respondent, this would be a Latino cue; for a Latino respondent, this would be a Black cue).

In early 2012, redistricting increased the proportion of Latinos relative to Blacks in Congressman Rangel's constituency.<sup>2</sup> Rangel is well known and had for decades represented himself primarily as African American, but during the campaign that spring, a number of media outlets and his political allies drew attention to an attribute that had previously been less pronounced: his Latino heritage through his father.<sup>3</sup> The use of these strategies implied that playing up Rangel's Latino parentage might increase Latino voters' support for him.

But are such cueing strategies effective among Latinos, and do such strategies have costs or benefits vis-à-vis Black voters? In this survey experiment, we expose respondents to a news article that randomly describes Congressman Rangel as either the son of a Latino father or the son of a Black mother, or provides no cue to his ethnic heritage.<sup>4</sup> We then analyze three main outcomes: respondents' political attitudes toward Rangel, their beliefs about his ethical standing in light of alleged misconduct in 2010, and their behavioral support for Rangel as measured by a monetary donation toward a cause he represents. Our empirical strategy draws on the ethnic cueing we observed on the part of media outlets and politicians during Rangel's primary campaign in May 2012.

Our analysis confirms that Black participants respond positively to both a coethnic *and* a cominority cue, and this holds for both attitudinal and behavioral measures of support. By contrast, Latino participants exhibit a much more muted response to both coethnic and cominority cues. Through a series of robustness checks, we confirm that these main results hold for respondents previously familiar with Rangel and for respondents who read the article carefully.

We then examine what might be driving this difference, and propose two possibilities. We first test whether the Latino cue was simply less effective at manipulating Latino respondents' perception of Rangel's identity. After all, Rangel has traditionally portrayed himself as African American and only recently referenced his Latino origins. And yet, in an open-ended post-treatment question about Rangel's racial identity, we find that our

2. Rangel's congressional district, which had been New York's 15th prior to redistricting, was historically considered and described as an African American district, but the size of the Latino voting population is now much larger. Just before 2013, it was 46 percent Latino, 26 percent Black, and 21 percent White. After redistricting converted the district into New York's new 13th, it became 55 percent Latino, 27 percent Black, and 12 percent White (see [Colvin and Mays 2012](#)).

3. For example, in the lead-up to the Democratic primary election, Representative José Serrano—who endorsed Rangel in the primary and is himself Latino—referred to Rangel as Latino and asked voters to consider Rangel as no different than himself ([Moore 2012](#); [New York One News 2012](#)). See [Grose \(2011\)](#) for a discussion of other contexts in which Rangel's Latino parentage has emerged.

4. We use written ethnic cues alone ([Sigelman et al. 1995](#)), rather than photographs or images of Rangel (e.g., [Iyengar et al. 2010](#); [Berinsky et al. 2011](#)). By using written descriptions alone, we are able to compare the effect of exposure to explicit ethnic cues to a condition without exposure to explicit ethnic cues.

manipulation worked for the Latino cue as well as for the Black cue, and for Latino as well as for Black respondents. In short, while racial cueing strategies such as the ones we observed in Rangel's primary successfully shift the salience of different aspects of the candidate's ethnic identity, they do not equally translate across ethnic groups into a boost in support. We then propose and test an alternative mechanism: that different levels of perceived discrimination across ethnic groups are driving our effects, at least in part. Our data indicate that Black respondents score higher on levels of perceived discrimination than do Latino respondents, and that within each group, the effect of coethnic cueing is driven at least in part by perceptions of discrimination.

This article advances our understanding of racial and ethnic politics in the United States in several ways. While research on racial cues has largely prioritized understanding their effects on White respondents across the Black–White cleavage, our study joins others focusing on minority respondents and draws attention to possible differences across the two largest minority groups in the United States: Blacks and Latinos. In this way, we heed the calls for greater comparative research on how Latinos and other racial minorities do or do not respond to political racial cues (Segura and Rodrigues 2006; Fraga 2016). In addition, studies of racial cues often rely on fictional characters (e.g., Berinsky and Mendelberg 2005) or trained actors (e.g., Dunning and Harrison 2010); we, however, build on the few experimental studies examining reactions to real politicians (Iyengar et al. 2010; Berinsky et al. 2011; Adida 2015) and offer a new way for researchers to estimate the effects of racial cueing from these real-world figures. Our analysis offers an identification strategy that uses parentage to randomly vary signals about a real-world politician's ethnic group memberships, while holding the actual politician constant. In doing so, it gains some leverage over classic inference problems that plague our estimation of ethnic effects (Holland 1986; Sen and Wasow 2016). Finally, we propose and test two possible mechanisms underlying differential effects of ethnic cueing, and push this agenda as an avenue for further research.

## Racial Cues, Minorities, and Attitudes in American Politics

Direct references to the race or ethnicity of a candidate's family member often offer explicit ethnic cues. Previous work (e.g., White 2007; Mendelberg 2001) has argued that White Americans now reject explicit ethnic cues because they conflict with today's widely held egalitarian norms. But for members of minority groups, explicit ethnic cues may instead evoke a positive sense of coethnic solidarity, one that symbolizes the possibility of *surmounting* economic and social discrimination (White 2007; McConaughy et al. 2010). For minority groups, explicit ethnic cues do not conflict with norms of achieving

racial equality, and these cues are likely to move the political attitudes of racial minorities.

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), or SIT, suggests that, given the lack of conflict with egalitarian norms, the salience of shared coethnic membership should increase certain minority citizens' affective ties toward political candidates. At a minimum, SIT simply requires that individuals be aware of common membership in a social category for them to feel positively toward one another and to favor one another. Yet, beyond these minimal conditions, citizens with a stronger sense of political group consciousness should be more likely to respond to in-group cues.

Much research on minority political behavior has thus focused on the role of discrimination in explaining the racial consciousness of minority groups (McClain et al. 2009). Most notably, for Blacks, linked fate—a classic measure of racial group consciousness tied to preferences for same-race politicians (Gay 2002)—derives from a perceived common historical experience that is rooted in racial discrimination (Tate 1993; Dawson 1994). Encounters with discrimination have also been shown to be a central component of ethnic group consciousness for Asians and Latinos (e.g., Junn and Masuoka 2008; Wallace 2014). Perceptions of discrimination can activate racial/ethnic identities (Schildkraut 2012) and are a core component of political solidarity.

In keeping with this previous research, we expect that cueing Black respondents to a politician's Black heritage, even one with which they are already familiar, will on average bolster their positive affect for him. By contrast, while we expect Latinos who perceive discrimination against Latinos as a group to respond positively to coethnic political cues, we expect a more muted response from Latino respondents overall, compared to Black respondents. While they do often face discrimination in this country, they do not share the same history of slavery, segregation, and exclusion as Blacks (Gonzales 1985; Garcia 1988). Latinos have also come to the United States more recently, and from many different nations of origin, and may not link discrimination against any one national group to the need to support a Latino politician.

Indeed, the current evidence as to whether Latinos are susceptible to ethnic cueing is somewhat mixed. Some studies suggest that Latinos respond more strongly to partisan and candidate quality cues than to coethnic cues *per se* (Graves and Lee 2000; Manzano and Sanchez 2010); others argue that Latinos will vote for a Latino candidate even if it contradicts their partisan interests (Hill, Moreno, and Cue 2001; Barreto 2007). Although we do not expect explicit coethnic cues to contradict egalitarian norms for Latinos (McConaughy et al. 2010), the question as to whether Latinos respond strongly and positively to explicitly co-Latino cues remains an empirical one. Latinos may react positively to a coethnic cue based on the minimal conditions of shared group membership. But, based on possible differences in perceived

discrimination against their respective groups, we expect Latinos' response, if any, to an explicit coethnic cue to be weaker than Black respondents' reaction to an explicit coethnic cue.<sup>5</sup>

*H1: Relative to no racial cue, we expect a strong coethnic effect for Blacks and a weaker coethnic effect for Latinos.*

Regarding *cominority* cues, we have good reason to expect that the effects will not necessarily be negative, and may even be positive, for Black respondents in our study. Animosity toward *cominorities* usually requires some perceived threat to the coethnic's status or material interests in addition to minimal group cues (LeVine and Campbell 1972; Brewer 1999). Empirically, studies of Black–Latino politics have revealed the possibility of animosity when the material success of one group threatens the well-being of the other (Johnson and Oliver 1989; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Kaufmann 2003; Meier et al. 2004; Gay 2006) but of mutually *supportive* relationships when the two groups share common interests in promoting issues that affect minorities *qua* minorities (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984; Hero and Preuhs 2009). A perceived threat to group status or material interests is unlikely to be present in the case of a politician like Rangel, who has an established record on issues affecting both the Latino and Black communities (e.g., low-income housing and drug crimes), and we highlight his work on these issues for all respondents in the experiment.

Furthermore, according to social identity complexity theory (Roccas and Brewer 2002; Brewer 2010), evaluating an individual who belongs to both one's in-group *and* an out-group can complicate social categorization and reduce out-group bias (e.g., Crisp and Hewstone 2000). In the case of an established politician who has represented himself as a member of one group, emphasizing his membership in *another* group might not necessarily cost him his existing in-group supporters. While there has been concern that Black voters will be wary of mixed-race politicians—unsure if they are “black enough” (Coates 2007)—research on Obama's 2004 Senate race indicated that Black respondents actually rated him equally if not more positively when he was framed as multiracial than when he was framed as Black (Harris-Lacewell and Junn 2007). Further, many Black Americans are themselves of mixed race (David 2001). We thus expect that Black respondents will respond positively to explicit coethnic and *cominority* racial cues.

5. However, research suggests that recent events may be contributing to stronger Latino group consciousness. For example, Latino identity has been galvanized during periods of anti-Latino sentiment (Bedolla 2005) and in light of the 2006 immigration protests, during which hundreds of thousands of people across major cities (Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and many others) demonstrated opposition to HR 4437, a bill that would have increased penalties for illegal immigration (Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa 2014).

However, due to the Black community's long and severe history of discrimination and segregation, Blacks may also be more likely than Latinos to see themselves as belonging to a larger marginalized minority community (Kaufman 2003). Additionally, fewer Latinos express feelings of commonality with Blacks (Masuoka 2008). Latinos may thus be less responsive to both coethnic and cominority cues than are Blacks.

*H2: Relative to no racial cue, we expect a positive effect of cominority cueing for Blacks but not necessarily for Latinos.*

## Experimental Design

We test the implications of ethnic cueing across minorities with an online, English-language survey experiment conducted in May 2013 on a sample of 1,035 Black and Latino respondents. The sample was drawn from Survey Sampling International's (SSI) panel of adult US residents who identify as either Black or Latino.<sup>6</sup> SSI recruits its respondent panels through invitations sent to online communities; it then targets individual studies to respondents deemed, based on a short set of key questions, most likely to take the surveys.<sup>7</sup> For our study, SSI reported to us that the cooperation rate with the survey was approximately 80 percent.

Although a sample of New York City respondents might have been ideal, practicalities necessitated that we draw from a national pool in order to ensure a large enough sample of racial minorities. However, this national sample remains relevant for our purposes: As a Congressman for over four decades, Charles Rangel is a widely known political figure, particularly to minority Americans. To wit, prior to treatment, 67 percent of our sample correctly identified his position as a member of Congress, and we confirm that our results hold among these respondents.<sup>8</sup>

Respondents initially answered a series of questions intended to measure basic demographic characteristics as well as racial and political attitudes.<sup>9</sup> An

6. Of these, 44 identified as mixed race (Black and Latino). Because of the very small sample of mixed-race respondents, we exclude them from most analyses, though their inclusion does not alter results. Previous power calculations indicated that a sample size of  $N = 963$  would yield an 80 percent chance of detecting average treatment effects of racial cues on politician support using a 95 percent confidence interval.

7. SSI reports, "Participants are selected from SSI's online sample stream ... To minimize the risk of bias, SSI uses a three-stage randomization process in matching a participant with a survey they are likely to complete" (SSI 2014, 4).

8. Respondents were given a choice between mayor of New York City, attorney general, and member of Congress. If respondents were selecting an answer at random among these choices, we would have found approximately 33 percent identifying Rangel's position as a member of Congress. Our actual rate of 67 percent is well above that.

9. See table OA-1 in the online appendix for basic summary statistics. In a pre-analysis plan registered with Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP. Available at <http://egap.org/registration/620>), we further specified a series of heterogeneous treatment effects for each of these pretreatment covariates. We take these hypotheses into account when correcting for multiple comparisons.

early question on the respondent's racial identity was used to screen eligible participants. If respondents answered "no" to the question "Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" or left it blank, and then either did not select "African American" or left the race question blank, they were disqualified from completing the rest of the survey.<sup>10</sup>

Respondents who were not disqualified (i.e., Black and Latino respondents) were then randomly assigned to read one of three versions of a political news article. The text was loosely based on a Politico.com article from June 2012 that described Congressman Charles Rangel, his victory in a competitive primary, his activities in Congress, and recent accusations against him of ethical misconduct (see [appendix A-1](#) at the end of this article for the full text).

In the *control* condition, respondents were given no information about Rangel's ethnic or racial background. In the *Latino cue* condition, the second paragraph of the article began with the additional clause "The son of a Latino father," whereas the *Black cue* condition read "The son of a Black mother." Similarly, in the third paragraph of the article, the control condition stated that "Rangel became the chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee," whereas the Latino cue and Black cue conditions noted that Rangel was "the first Latino chairman" or "the first Black chairman," respectively. All of these statements are true, but the Latino cue and the Black cue each emphasize different aspects of Rangel's ethnic background.

After reading the news article, respondents were asked three questions intended to gauge their support for Rangel. First, they were asked to report the degree to which they felt "warm" or "cold" toward Rangel on a 100-point scale (with 100 being the warmest). Second, they were asked how likely they think it is that Rangel "is guilty of the ethics violations for which the House censured him but which he disputes? (Extremely likely; very likely; moderately likely; not very likely; not likely at all)." Third, respondents were informed about a center at City College in New York named for Rangel that supports minority students interested in careers in public administration. Respondents were told, "At the end of this survey you will receive an additional \$1.00 for participating. Would you like to donate any part of that dollar to the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Service at City College in New York?"<sup>11</sup>

10. For ethical reasons, we did not force respondents to answer any of the questions on the survey. For most questions, however, respondents who proceeded without providing an answer were shown a message reminding them that they had not answered the question. Due to an unintended technical error, the only question that did not prompt this reminder was the feeling thermometer question about respondents' feelings of warmth toward Rangel. This may explain the higher rate of missing data for that question. When we correct for this by filling in the missing values using extreme-value bounds (for example, assuming that all missing values take on the maximum value for warmth, or vice versa, that they all take on the minimum value for warmth), our results hold.

11. We used a dollar because it is easy to divide and because it is an amount individuals are often asked to donate in routine charity drives. Consider, for instance, dollar drives for charities at drug-store and grocery store checkout counters.



They could keep whatever they did not donate, including the entire dollar if they so chose, and we sent the total amount donated (\$134.60) to the Rangel Center.

Finally, respondents were asked a series of follow-up questions intended to measure how carefully they had read the news article and whether it had made different aspects of Rangel's ethnicity salient to them. Specifically, respondents were asked in an open-ended question, "How would you describe Charles Rangel's ethnic or racial background?"<sup>12</sup> See [Appendix A.2](#) at the end of this article for the coding of variables in the survey.

## Results

In this section, we first present our main results: While Black participants respond positively—both attitudinally and behaviorally—to coethnic and to cominority cues, Latino respondents exhibit no significant response to either a coethnic or a cominority cue. We then consider a set of robustness checks and confirm our main results. Finally, we test two possible mechanisms driving our results: each group's differing levels of perception of discrimination, and differences in how well our ethnic cues manipulated the groups' perceptions of Rangel's identity.

### COETHNIC CUES ON MINORITY RESPONDENTS

We hypothesized that Black respondents would respond to coethnic cueing while Latino respondents would exhibit a much weaker reaction (H1). [Tables 1 and 2](#) present the average treatment effects among Black respondents only and among Latino respondents only, respectively. In the subsample of Black respondents ([table 1](#)), the coethnic cue boosts support for Rangel relative to the control for all three outcome variables. Black respondents who were cued to Rangel's Black mother felt more warmly toward him than Black respondents in the control condition (a 16 percent increase over the average in the control condition); they estimated that he was less likely to be guilty of ethical misconduct than Black respondents in the control condition (a 9 percent decrease from the average in the control condition); and they donated more money on average than Black respondents in the control condition (a 48 percent increase over the average in the control condition). These effects are statistically or marginally significant at conventional confidence levels (99 percent for warmth, 95 percent for guilt, and 90 percent for donations).

Also consistent with our hypotheses, Black respondents who were cued to Rangel's Latino father felt more warmly toward Rangel and donated more money on average than Black respondents in the control condition (an 8

12. See [tables OA-3 and OA-4](#) in the online appendix for evidence of balance. Additionally, a multinomial regression of treatment assignment on the covariates revealed no systematic imbalance.

**Table 1. Difference in Means for Support for Rangel by Treatment Frame, Black Respondents**

	Coethnic	Control	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Warmth	69.28 ( <i>N</i> = 159)	59.42 ( <i>N</i> = 146)	+9.86 (2.62)	0.00*
Guilt	0.52 ( <i>N</i> = 187)	0.57 ( <i>N</i> = 171)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.03*
Donated	15.10 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	10.19 ( <i>N</i> = 167)	+4.91 (2.82)	0.08
	Cominority	Control	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Warmth	63.92 ( <i>N</i> = 164)	59.42 ( <i>N</i> = 156)	+4.50 (2.60)	0.09
Guilt	0.55 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	0.57 ( <i>N</i> = 171)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.45
Donated	15.83 ( <i>N</i> = 179)	10.19 ( <i>N</i> = 167)	+5.64 (2.93)	0.06
	Coethnic	Cominority	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Warmth	69.28 ( <i>N</i> = 159)	63.92 ( <i>N</i> = 164)	+5.36 (2.55)	0.04*
Guilt	0.52 ( <i>N</i> = 187)	0.55 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.17
Donated	15.10 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	15.83 ( <i>N</i> = 179)	-0.73 (3.21)	0.82

NOTE.—The sample excludes 44 respondents who identified as *both* Black and Latino. Sample sizes in parentheses under “Coethnic” and “Cominority” columns. Standard errors in parentheses under “Difference” column.

\**p* < .05

percent increase over warmth reported in the control condition, and a 55 percent increase over the average amount donated in the control condition, both marginally statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level). This result indicates that a cominority cue, rather than an exclusively coethnic cue, increased candidate support among Black respondents.

The results on our subsample of Latino respondents tell a different story. In [table 2](#), differences across conditions are more subdued. Latino respondents assigned to the cue about Rangel’s Latino father did report somewhat warmer feelings toward him than Latino respondents assigned to the cue about Rangel’s Black mother (an 11 percent increase over average warmth reported by Latinos in the Black cue condition), but this difference is only marginally statistically significant using a 90 percent confidence interval. Otherwise, the differences across conditions are not statistically significant.

In hypotheses H1 and H2, we purported that the coethnic effect would be stronger for Blacks than for Latinos, and that the cominority effect would

**Table 2. Difference in Means for Support for Rangel by Treatment Frame, Latino Respondents**

	Coethnic	Control	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Warmth	59.38 ( <i>N</i> = 126)	55.76 ( <i>N</i> = 122)	+3.62 (3.11)	0.25
Guilt	0.64 ( <i>N</i> = 141)	0.62 ( <i>N</i> = 148)	+0.02 (0.03)	0.61
Donated	11.11 ( <i>N</i> = 140)	12.27 ( <i>N</i> = 147)	-1.16 (3.26)	0.72
	Cominority	Control	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Warmth	53.66 ( <i>N</i> = 152)	55.76 ( <i>N</i> = 122)	-2.10 (3.02)	0.49
Guilt	0.63 ( <i>N</i> = 161)	0.62 ( <i>N</i> = 148)	+0.01 (0.02)	0.82
Donated	12.86 ( <i>N</i> = 159)	12.27 ( <i>N</i> = 147)	+0.59 (3.20)	0.85
	Coethnic	Cominority	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Warmth	59.38 ( <i>N</i> = 126)	53.66 ( <i>N</i> = 152)	+5.72 (3.13)	0.07
Guilt	0.64 ( <i>N</i> = 141)	0.63 ( <i>N</i> = 161)	+0.01 (0.03)	0.76
Donated	11.11 ( <i>N</i> = 140)	12.86 ( <i>N</i> = 159)	-1.75 (3.14)	0.58

NOTE.—The sample excludes 44 respondents who identified as *both* Black and Latino. Sample sizes in parentheses under “Coethnic” and “Cominority” columns. Standard errors in parentheses under “Difference” column.

be most positive for Blacks than for Latinos. We cannot randomly assign respondents to being Black or Latino, so assessing these hypotheses requires some observational analysis.<sup>13</sup> We test the following specification:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Support}_i = & b_1 * (\text{Black}_i) + b_2 * (\text{Latino}_i) + b_3 * (\text{Black}_i * \text{Coethnic}_i) \\
 & + b_4 * (\text{Black}_i * \text{Cominority}_i) + b_5 * (\text{Latino}_i * \text{Coethnic}_i) \\
 & + b_6 * (\text{Latino}_i * \text{Cominority}_i) + e_i,
 \end{aligned}$$

where the outcome variable, *Support*, is measured as warmth toward Rangel (model 1), the respondent’s belief about Rangel’s ethics violation (model 2), and the respondent’s monetary donation to the Rangel Center (model 3); *i* is the respondent; and the constant is suppressed. In table 3, our results indicate some

13. These analyses were specified *ex ante* in our pre-analysis plan registered with EGAP.

**Table 3. OLS Regression on Effect of Treatment Frames on Support for Rangel**

	Model (1) Warmth		Model (2) Guilt		Model (3) Donated	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Race						
Black	59.42	(1.89)*	0.57	(0.02)*	10.19	(1.77)*
Latino	55.76	(2.12)*	0.62	(0.02)*	12.27	(2.35)*
Treatment						
Black * Coethnic	9.87	(2.62)*	-0.05	(0.02)*	4.91	(2.82)
Black * Cominority	4.50	(2.60)	-0.02	(0.03)	5.64	(2.93)
Latino * Coethnic	3.62	(3.11)	0.01	(0.03)	-1.16	(3.26)
Latino * Cominority	-2.10	(3.02)	0.01	(0.02)	0.59	(3.20)
<i>N</i>	869		990		974	
<i>R</i> -squared	0.87		0.86		0.18	
<i>P</i> -value						
Black Coethnic =						
Latino Coethnic	0.13		0.06		0.16	
Black Cominority =						
Latino Cominority	0.10		0.48		0.25	

NOTE.—The constant is suppressed. As a result, the coefficients for *Black* provide the average outcome values for Black respondents in the control condition. The coefficients for *Latino* provide the average outcome values for Latino respondents in the control condition. The coefficients for *Black\*Coethnic* provide the effects of the Black cue on Black respondents. The coefficients for *Black\*Cominority* provide the effects of the Latino cue on Black respondents. The coefficients for *Latino\*Coethnic* provide the effects of the Latino cue on Latino respondents. And the coefficients for *Latino\*Cominority* provide the effects of the Black cue on Latino respondents. Respondents who identify as both Black and Latino ( $N = 44$ ) are excluded. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < .05$

support for hypotheses H1 and H2, although the differences do not always reach conventional levels of statistical significance. A more highly powered study might have found more robust differences between these subgroups. Here, the results remain suggestive, but they are consistent with the claim that the effects of explicit ethnic cues are larger for Black than for Latino respondents.

In sum, we find that the positive response to coethnic cueing about Rangel among Black and Latino respondents is driven largely by Blacks, who exhibit the expected response in all three measured outcomes. Furthermore, we find that Blacks tend to respond positively to a cominority cue, while Latinos do not.<sup>14</sup>

14. Our treatments vary both an ethnic cue and a parental cue. The Latino cue is associated with a reference to Rangel's father, while the Black cue is associated with a reference to Rangel's mother. If the parental cue explains our results, then it would have to be the case that, on average, respondents react positively to "mother" and negatively to "father." For Black respondents in our sample,

We also present in the online appendix a set of robustness checks that identify the results in which we have the greatest confidence. First, as shown in [tables OA-6a](#) and [OA-6b](#), we confirm that our results hold on a subsample of respondents who were able to identify Rangel's political position pretreatment. We see these respondents as having stronger priors about Rangel—and possibly his racial identity—and thus as a harder test for the effects of ethnic cueing. Second, in online [appendix OA-6](#), we consider the issue of non-compliance—whether respondents failed to read the article, or read it too quickly to notice the ethnic cues—and estimate treatment effects among compliers. Our results here are either confirmed or strengthened. Third, we offer the most conservative tests of our results with a set of adjustments for multiple comparisons, which we present in [table OA-7c](#).

Finally, we compare observable characteristics of our respondents to those of Blacks and Latinos in the 2010 American Community Survey and rerun our analyses after post-stratification weighting. The SSI sample recruited for our study does differ from national populations on some attributes (see [table OA-2](#) in the online appendix). Compared to Blacks and Latinos in the general population, our respondents were much more likely to have attended at least some college. On other observable characteristics, the samples are quite similar, although the SSI sample somewhat under-represents those living in the South and older Latinos. We therefore tested whether our main results hold after weighting for all these characteristics (age, sex, South, low/high educational attainment) within both minority groups.<sup>15</sup> We find that they do. Results also hold when we account for the differences in proportions of Blacks and Latinos living in New York. See [tables OA-8a](#) and [OA-8b](#) for these results.

#### TESTING THE MECHANISMS

In this section, we test two possible mechanisms driving our results. First, we compare the effectiveness of our cues in raising the salience of Rangel's ethnic identities across respondent groups. Second, we ask whether differences in perception of discrimination across Black and Latino respondents explain, at least in part, our differential results.

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the coethnic and maternal cues would both evoke positive responses. But for Latino respondents in our sample, the coethnic and paternal cues would evoke conflicting responses, attenuating the gross effect. Yet, if parental cues evoke such responses, it would also have to be the case that Black respondents do not react positively to the cominority cue, because it cues the father. That is, if parental cues, rather than ethnic cues, drive our results, then it must be the case that Black and Latino respondents exhibit different reactions to parental cues. To our knowledge, no existing research leads us to believe *ex ante* that this is the case.

15. Specifically, we calculated percentages of the total group population exhibiting each combination of characteristics—for example, males, over 44, with a high school diploma or less, living in the South—in both the SSI sample and the ACS and then weighted each respondent with those characteristics by the ratio of the ACS percentage to the SSI percentage.

*Manipulation check:* Was our Latino cue simply not credible? That is, did the *Latino cue* unsuccessfully move respondents to think of Rangel as a Latino politician? After all, Rangel has been a Congressman for more than four decades, and up until his most recent primary in 2012 usually presented himself and was discussed by others as Black. Since he has a Black mother, he is also potentially subject to the “one-drop rule” whereby Americans were historically considered exclusively Black if even a small percentage of their ancestors were Black. One might, therefore, wonder whether any respondents—Black or Latino—could be moved to focus on any aspect of his ethnic background other than his Black heritage.

As one might expect, a majority of respondents assigned to the control condition who answered the open-ended question about Rangel’s ethnicity reported that he is Black or African American (see [table 4](#)). Even still, the cues to his parentage succeeded in moving respondents to focus on different aspects of his ethnic background. Being assigned to the Latino cue rather than to the control increased the percentage of respondents describing Rangel’s ethnicity as Latino from 15 percent in the control condition to 75 percent in the *Latino cue* condition, a fivefold increase. By contrast, the percentage of respondents reporting Rangel’s ethnicity as Black decreases from approximately 57 percent in the control condition to 22 percent in the *Latino cue* condition. Conversely, the *Black cue* condition increased the proportion of respondents who reported Rangel’s ethnicity as Black to over 89 percent, from approximately 57 percent in the control condition; it decreased the proportion of respondents who reported Rangel’s ethnicity as Latino to 3 percent, from 15 percent in the control condition. All these effects are statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level.

When we further analyzed the effect of each cue on a subsample of Black and on a subsample of Latino respondents separately, we found that the manipulation also worked for both subsamples: Latinos exposed to the Latino cue were more likely to describe Rangel’s ethnic identity as Latino and less likely to describe it as Black; those exposed to the Black cue were more likely to describe Rangel’s ethnic identity as Black and less likely to describe it as Latino. All these effects are statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level. In sum, we have strong evidence that our manipulations successfully cued respondents to different aspects of Rangel’s racial background.

*Perceived discrimination:* If both treatment cues worked across our two ethnic groups, what might account for the different reactions our Black and Latino respondents had in this study? At the start, we suggested that different histories and levels of concern about discrimination in this country might increase Black Americans’ receptiveness to political cues about candidates’ ethnic backgrounds, relative to Latinos. Feeling like a target of ethnic discrimination can increase feelings of solidarity with other group members and heighten

**Table 4. Manipulation Checks**

Control group: Open-ended question about Rangel’s ethnic identity (N = 337)				
	Percentage			
Gibberish, don’t know, or blank answer	40.4			
Substantive answer	59.6			
Only Black/African American	31.8			
Only Latino/Hispanic	7.1			
Black and Latino	1.4			
Other mixed race/biracial	1.8			
Other	17.5			
Total	100.0			
Logistic regression: Probability of answering that...				
	Rangel is Latino		Rangel is Black	
	b	SE	b	SE
Intercept	-1.73	(0.20)*	0.34	(0.15)*
Treatment				
Latino father cue	2.83	(0.25)*	-1.58	(0.22)*
Black mother cue	-1.77	(0.43)*	1.81	(0.26)*
N	657		657	

NOTE.—In the logistic regressions, robust standard errors are in parentheses; the control condition with no information about parentage is the omitted category. Respondents who provided mixed-race answers are coded “1” for each of the races they specify, if any. Responses about Rangel’s race are coded as missing if they were blank, gibberish, or not about race or ethnicity. *Latino father cue* is coded as “1” if the respondent received the Latino cue, and “0” otherwise. *Black mother cue* is coded as “1” if the respondent received the Black cue, and “0” otherwise.

\* $p < .05$

sensitivity to explicit ethnic cues (Dovidio et al. 2001; Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008). Discrimination is a fundamental element of minorities’ political identities, as it makes salient that they belong to a distinctive and, at times, marginalized population.

Our sample offers evidence for this hypothesis. Respondents in our study were asked pretreatment about their perceptions of levels of discrimination against their group.<sup>16</sup> A larger percentage of Black respondents (80 percent) than of Latino respondents (66 percent) said that discrimination against their group is a major problem in this country today. The difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ), which is consistent with findings in other surveys, such as the American National Election Studies (ANES 2012), in which

16. The question was worded as “In general, how much of a problem do you think discrimination against your ethnic group is in this country today? [A major problem; a minor problem; no problem at all].”

Black respondents are also more likely to report perceptions of discrimination against their group than are Latino respondents (see [table OA-9b in the online appendix](#)).

But does this difference have implications for our results? To answer this question, we take our more robust differential result—the effect of racial cues on Black and Latino respondents’ warmth toward Rangel—and investigate effects by respondents’ level of perceived discrimination. Although with lower sample sizes, these statistical tests are somewhat underpowered, [table 5](#) is revealing. Coethnic cueing had a very similar effect on warmth toward Rangel for Black and for Latino respondents who perceive at least some discrimination against their group: Both groups exhibit a six-percentage-point boost in warmth, and this effect is not only statistically significant at least at the 95 percent confidence level, it is comparable in size to the effect of coethnic cueing on Black respondents in our main analysis. So if we limit our analysis to respondents who express at least some perception of discrimination against their ethnic group, we find the same effect of coethnic cueing on warmth toward Rangel across Latino and Black respondents.<sup>17</sup>

Respondents in our study were also asked pretreatment about their perceptions of linked fate.<sup>18</sup> We found no statistically significant differences between the two groups on this dimension. Still, given the importance of the linked fate measure for capturing in-group attachment, at least for African Americans ([Dawson 1994](#)), we tested a possible moderating effect of linked fate. We found no evidence of it (see [tables OA-9a and OA-9c in the online appendix](#)). We propose that linked fate, a classic measure of racial group consciousness

**Table 5. Difference in Means for Warmth toward Rangel by Treatment Frame and by Respondent Perceived Level of Discrimination**

	Black respondents			Latino respondents		
	Control	Coethnic	Difference	Control	Coethnic	Difference
High discrimination	62.04 ( <i>N</i> = 299)	68.95 ( <i>N</i> = 152)	6.91* ( <i>p</i> = 0.00)	55.23 ( <i>N</i> = 246)	61.48 ( <i>N</i> = 112)	6.25* ( <i>p</i> = 0.03)
Low discrimination	55.27 ( <i>N</i> = 11)	76.57 ( <i>N</i> = 7)	21.30 ( <i>p</i> = 0.06)	49.07 ( <i>N</i> = 28)	42.57 ( <i>N</i> = 14)	-6.50 ( <i>p</i> = 0.50)

\**p* < .05

17. Note that Black respondents who scored low on perceptions of discrimination also responded positively to coethnic cueing for their feelings of warmth toward Rangel, while comparable Latino respondents responded negatively. While puzzling, these effects are not statistically significant at the conventional levels (or beyond the 90 percent confidence level for Black respondents). Indeed, we are dealing here with a very small subset of respondents who believe that their group is facing no discrimination at all.

18. “To what extent do you think what happens generally to members of your ethnic group in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? [Not very much; some; a lot].”



for Black Americans, may be less useful for capturing in-group attachment among other minority groups.<sup>19</sup> Instead, we find that measures of perceived discrimination—a variable that has also played a significant role in recent research on group consciousness among minorities (McClain et al. 2009)—provides at least a partial explanation.

## Conclusion

To what extent do explicit ethnic cues from politicians solicit reactions from the growing number of minority voters in the United States? Does the effect of explicit ethnic cues differ across minority groups? This article sheds new light on these questions, investigating the effects of explicit racial cueing on members of the two largest racial minorities, Blacks and Latinos. We join other recent studies (Iyengar et al. 2010; Berinsky et al. 2011) that use real-world politicians in the study of candidate evaluation but offer a new way to do so by leveraging politicians with mixed racial identity (e.g., Adida 2015). As an example, we used a survey experiment to raise the salience either of Charles Rangel's Black maternal heritage, or of his Latino paternal heritage, and subsequently measured levels of support for him against a control group of minority respondents that received no racial cueing.

Results reveal that the effect of using explicit ethnic cues with minority groups is not consistent across the board. The explicit cues in our study succeeded in raising the *salience* of different aspects of Rangel's racial identity for both Black and Latino respondents. But the effects of the explicit cues on *support* for Rangel were much stronger for Black respondents than for Latinos. For Blacks, an emphasis on Rangel's Black mother increased feelings of warmth toward Rangel and decreased their likelihood of assessing Rangel as guilty of ethics violations. A cominority cue, emphasizing his paternal Latino heritage, also increased support for Rangel among Black respondents, relative to Black respondents who received no racial cue. Thus, raising the salience of *either* aspect of Rangel's ethnic background boosted positive perceptions of him among Blacks.

By contrast, Latinos as a group did not respond positively to an emphasis on Rangel's Latino paternal heritage or to an emphasis on his Black mother overall. On average, their response to political ethnic cues was more muted than was the response from Black respondents. Nevertheless, Latinos who reported perceiving discrimination against Latinos as a group exhibited treatment effects more similar to Black respondents. These results are consistent with literature finding that Blacks often perceive greater commonality with Latinos than the reverse (Kaufmann 2003; McClain et al. 2006) and also with studies suggesting that, while Latinos might not generally be responsive to

19. Unfortunately, we do not have a measure in the survey of group attachment alone.

ethnic cues, they are conditioned by experiences of discrimination in ways similar to members of other minority groups. Feeling like a target of ethnic discrimination can increase feelings of solidarity with other group members and heighten sensitivity to explicit ethnic cues (Dovidio et al. 2001; Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008). Our results corroborate this claim.

However, these differential effects by respondent race merit further investigation. For instance, would a specifically Puerto Rican cue about Rangel, rather than a pan-Latino cue, have boosted support more strongly among Latinos, even if perceptions of discrimination among Latinos are relatively weaker than among Blacks? Media and political allies used both pan-Latino and Puerto Rican cues during Rangel's 2012 primary campaign, but we can speak directly only to the effectiveness of the Latino cue, which turns out to have been limited. Similarly, would Black individuals respond positively to cominority cues from Black candidates with membership in other non-Latino, minority groups, or to Latino cues about politicians who have not worked as consistently on issues of concern to both communities? How would members of these two groups respond to cues about a Black–Latino politician who had historically represented himself as Latino, rather than Black? Our study draws attention to the need for more research on the effectiveness of racial cueing across different minority groups.

## Appendices

### Appendix A-1. News Article and Treatments

#### Rangel Defied Odds in 22<sup>nd</sup> House Run

Congressman Charles Rangel recently won a very close primary contest in his New York City district after a more than four-decades-long congressional career.

*[The son of a Latino father / The son of a Black mother, T]he congressman grew up in poverty. But the high school dropout enlisted in the Army and, after serving in the Korean War, used the GI Bill of Rights to earn both a bachelor's and a law degree.*

Rangel became *[the first Latino / the first Black/ ]* chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee after Democrats won control of the House of Representatives in 2006. He has also been among the leading voices in the fight against drug trafficking, has pushed for low-income housing tax credits and authored legislation to support urban communities.

But in 2010 the House ethics committee accused Rangel of ethics violations. The committee said that he failed to pay income taxes for a rental unit, filed misleading financial disclosure reports and used office letterhead to solicit donations for a center named for him at City College, among other breaches. Rangel has disputed the committee's accusations.

## Appendix A-2. Response Coding

*Warmth* is a continuous variable ranging from 0 (coldest feelings toward Rangel) to 100 (warmest feelings).

*Guilt* is a binary variable coded as “1” if the respondent believes Rangel is guilty of ethics violations, and “0” otherwise.

*Donations* is a continuous variable ranging from 0 (respondent donated nothing to the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Service) to 1 (respondent donated the entire dollar).

*Black* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent self-identified as African American, and “0” otherwise.

*Latino* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent self-identified as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and “0” otherwise.

*Black-Latino* is a binary variable coded as “1” if the respondent self-identified as both African American and as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and “0” otherwise.

*Male* is a binary variable coded as “1” if the respondent is male, and “0” otherwise.

*South* is a binary variable coded as “1” if the respondent lives in a Southern state (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia), and “0” otherwise.

*New York* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent lives in New York State, and “0” otherwise.

*Over 40* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent is born in 1971 or earlier, and “0” otherwise.

*Low education* is a binary variable coded as “1” if the respondent achieved a high school diploma or less, and “0” otherwise.

*Linked fate* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent believes that what happens generally to members of her ethnic group in the United States has some or a lot to do with what happens in her own life, and “0” otherwise.

*Discrimination* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent believes discrimination against her own ethnic group in the United States today is a major or a minor problem, and “0” otherwise.

*Knew Rangel* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent was able to identify Rangel’s political position as a member of Congress (in a closed-ended question), and “0” otherwise.

*Republican* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent self-identifies as a Republican, and “0” if the respondent self-identifies as a Democrat or Independent.

*Reported Rangel Latino* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent identified Rangel’s racial or ethnic background as Latino or Hispanic (including if this was not the only answer provided), and “0” otherwise.

*Reported Rangel Black* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent identified Rangel’s racial or ethnic background as African American or Black (including if this was not the only answer provided), and “0” otherwise.

*Reported Rangel Mixed* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent identified Rangel’s racial or ethnic background as mixed, and “0” otherwise.

*Reported Rangel Minority* is a dummy variable coded as “1” if the respondent identified Rangel’s racial or ethnic background as a member of a minority group, and “0” otherwise.

## Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are freely available online at <http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/>.

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