Motivating Participation: The Symbolic Effects of Latino Representation on Parent School Involvement*

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Objective. Decades of research suggest that parental involvement is vital for positive student academic achievement and thus one often-proposed solution to alleviate the poor educational outcomes of minority students is to increase their parents' participation in school. Building on a psychological motivation argument, I investigate how the symbolic effects of minority representation impact minority parent involvement. *Method.* I test my hypotheses with original survey data from 324 Latino parents in Chicago. *Results.* My analysis suggests that, as hypothesized in the symbolic representation literature, Latinos in positions of power within schools send important heuristic cues to Latino parents that change their orientations to participation and ultimately manifest as increased school involvement. *Conclusions.* These results support education policies that attempt to increase the minority presence in schools at the administrative and governance levels, and highlight the need for greater enforcement of current diversity requirements under NCLB.

Research over the past 30 years has shown that parents are critical contributors to student achievement. Parent involvement has been positively linked to indicators of teacher ratings of student competence, student grades, and achievement scores (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Simon, 2004). Given these rewards, the challenge for educators and policymakers has been to develop strategies and policies that foster school-parent collaborations.

Unfortunately, addressing this challenge for all students has proven extremely difficult for school districts. For numerous reasons, researchers have found that parents of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students often fail to participate in school activities (Shin, 2004). Moreover, these same students continue to fare worse than their white counterparts on standardized achievement tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). In other words, the challenge of developing strategies that encourage

parental involvement has been most acute in those same populations that tend to require the most help in traversing the U.S. public school system. As school districts struggle to achieve annual yearly progress for all students under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), finding working solutions to minority achievement has become paramount.

Understanding why minority parents participate less poses a complicated puzzle for school administrators. Studies indicate that minority parents care about their children's achievement and academic success, and want to be involved in their children's schooling (Trumbell et al., 2001). Yet despite this desire, minority parents participate less than white parents (Jeynes, 2003), and research suggests that their participation is hindered by both structural constraints and motivational barriers. In particular, numerous studies have acknowledged the importance of education and income in predicting levels of participation in schools (McKay et al., 2003; Shin, 2004). Unfortunately, from a policy perspective, these types of analyses are unfulfilling—school districts have few options that could directly impact the social or economic conditions of their students' parents.

However, schools do have the ability to change how they motivate parents to become involved in their children's education. A model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler emphasizes the psychological factors that impact parental involvement: "the processes and mechanisms most important to parents' thinking, decision-making, and behaviors underlying their decisions to become involved in their children's education" (1997:5). According to this model, it is not the types of literature available to parents or the number of opportunities provided to be part of school activities that matter but, rather, how the social context makes parents feel about being involved. Indeed, theories of political participation have also acknowledged that psychological factors are important predictors of participation (Levi and Stoker, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Thus, if participation is in part driven by psychological resources, policies to motivate parental involvement must include strategies that alter these beliefs in parents.

Scholars of minority participation in politics have noted the positive effects of descriptive representation on psychological beliefs. This *theory of symbolic representation* is rooted in the political reality model, which posits that generally lower levels of political efficacy and trust among blacks (relative to whites) stem from the realization that "blacks (and members of other disadvantaged subcultural groups) have less capacity to influence political leaders than whites (and members of advantaged groups) have" (Abramson, 1983:160). Low participation rates among minority groups are thus a manifestation of their internalized feelings of powerlessness. These attitudes change, however, when they see people "like themselves" in positions of authority. More specifically, the theory of symbolic representation predicts that minority representatives, by their appearances alone or by symbolic gestures, send heuristic cues to their constituents (parents) that, first, they have gained some political power and, second, they will be more

responsive to their needs (Tate, 2001; Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2003). Or, as Eulau and Karps note, constituents are symbolically represented through "public gestures of a sort that create a sense of trust and support in the relationship between the representative and the presented"(1978:78). Importantly, symbolic representation occurs irrespective of actual substantive change—it is the *expectation* of change that motivates behavioral change. Thus, the theory of symbolic representation predicts that the psychological orientations of minority parents will change in response to the presence of minority school board members or administrators (regardless of actual policy shifts), and that this internal change will manifest in the form of behavioral alterations.

This article proceeds as follows. I begin by answering the key theoretical question: How do the symbolic effects of representation impact the psychological motivation of parental participation in schools? Extending the theory of symbolic representation to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parental involvement, I test a theory of Latino parental involvement that predicts that the psychological factors that impede participation in schools by Latino parents are transformed with the presence of Latinos in positions in power, and that these psychological shifts manifest in measurable behaviors (see Figure 1). I then test my hypotheses with data from 324 Latino parents with children in the Chicago Public Schools. My analysis suggest that Latino representation does matter, and that even controlling for other factors that motivate participation within schools, those parents whose children attend schools having Latino teachers and school board members

FIGURE 1

Conceptual Model of Latino Representation and Parental Involvement
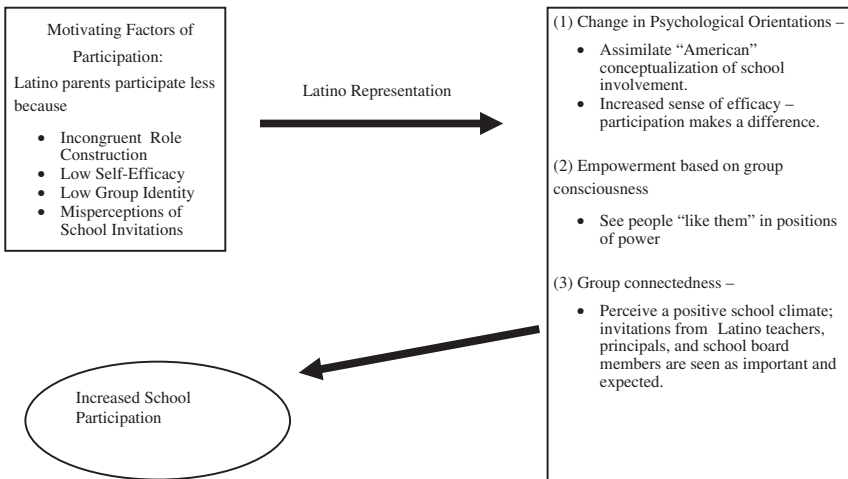
participate more in their child's school. Lastly, I discuss the implications of this research for policymakers in light of NCLB.

Conceptual Model of Latino Parent Involvement

Attempting to uncover the motivating factors of behavior, political scientists have produced an abundant body of research on mass political behavior over the past several decades. Much like the research on parental involvement in schools, scholars have generally found that race and socioeconomic factors are main predictors of participation. In particular, blacks and Latinos, and low-income and less-educated citizens, participate less in political activity (Leighley, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1972). However, from a policy perspective, this type of analysis is unsatisfactory—race, income, and education levels are intractable variables outside the scope of most policy efforts. Moving away from these individual traits, minority scholars have developed theories that focus on factors that are socially constructed and thus may change in response to intentional efforts to alter contextual conditions. Examining participation in schools, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) focus on two psychological resources—role construction and efficacy—and perceptions of invitations to participate as the key factors that determine participation rates among parents. In this section, I define these factors and review the research examining the relationship between these particular variables and Latino parental involvement in schools. I then draw on the theory of symbolic representation to discuss how having Latino school board members and administrators may affect each of these psychological orientations.

Psychological Resources

Broadly, a psychological resources argument asserts that participation is internally driven by particular belief systems. That is, how people feel about the political process in general and their place within it, their sense of efficacy, and their trust in the institutions shape their behaviors (Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) point to two psychological resources that are critical in motivating parental involvement—role construction and sense of efficacy.

Role Construction. Participating in a political event requires an understanding of what the concept of participation means within a given context. More broadly, role construction emphasizes the importance of congruent conceptions of participation: Are parents' expectations of involvement the same as the school's expectations? Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) define

parental role construction as ''parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the patterns of parental behavior that follow those beliefs,'' and recent work by scholars suggests that how parents construct their role within the school-parent relationship is a strong indicator of their desire to be involved in schools (Drummond and Stipek, 2004).

However, there is significant evidence that Latino parents and school administrators have very different conceptions of the role of parents within school. On the one hand, studies by Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) and Valdes (1996) suggest that Latino parents confine their role in their children's education to the home—ensuring their children are fed and clothed, and providing the moral support to stay in school. Schools and teachers are highly respected, and many Latino parents see involvement in schools as an encroachment (Trumbell et al., 2001).

Schools, on the other hand, have an alternate view of participation. In particular, teachers and administrators tend to focus on activities that bring parents into schools—parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and academic exhibitions. As a consequence, teachers interpret low Latino parental involvement in these activities as a sign of their indifference to their children's education (Lopez, 2001; Tinkler, 2002). Moreover, efforts to increase Latino parent involvement in these specific activities tend to fail. As Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994:43) note, invitations to parent meetings and other school events, which have historically been effective in drawing white parents into the schooling process, have not worked with Latino parents. A national study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998) confirms these results—parent attendance as school-sponsored events was negatively correlated to minority enrollment in schools. Thus, the challenge for school districts is how to move Latino parental role constructions closer to their own.

This transformation in role construction can be perhaps best understood within the larger social process of assimilation and acculturation. As new immigrants contend with unknown and foreign cultural traits, theories of assimilation suggest that seeing others like themselves in positions of power helps them understand and potentially incorporate the host country's cultural traits, attitudes, and beliefs (Gozdziak, 2005). Under the rubric of symbolic representation, Latino school board members and administrators serve as ''activists'' (Bump, 2005)—an important bridge between the homeland culture and the newer host culture. They provide the school setting with important information about Latino culture, and Latino families important information about how to navigate institutions.

Given this role in the assimilation process, I hypothesize that Latino representation within these roles of power sends important cues to Latino parents and changes how they envision their role within their child's education and their place within the school. Although they may continue to

value their role as parents within their traditional culture, Latino administrators and school board members provide Latino parents with information about how they are expected to act in U.S. schools. The hypothesized outcome, then, is a more congruent conception of their role in their child's education and, ultimately, more participation in school-based activities—such as parent-teacher conferences, volunteering within the school, speaking to administrators, and participating in school governance.

Efficacy. Correlated to role construction is efficacy, or the belief that your actions will produce the desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Taken one step further, political efficacy is the belief that you can influence government and that government is responsive to your needs (Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson, 1990; Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999). Extending this concept to the institution of schools, scholars have argued that parents who believe that their actions impact school decisions and feel that their expectations are met have high efficacy and will participate in schools (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), whereas those who believe their actions will be useless will not participate. As Cummins (1986) and Darder (1991) argue, when minority parents are not actively involved with their children's schooling, a feeling of powerlessness in their ability to influence their child's educational outcomes develops, ultimately preventing their involvement. In other words, a low sense of self-efficacy renders parents unable to participate. Research on efficacy offers considerable support for its influence as a motivator of parental involvement (Shumow and Lomax, 2002) and political participation (Mangum, 2003).

The theory of symbolic representation posits that seeing a Latino in power will positively affect Latino parents' sense of efficacy as well. The Latino school board member or administrator, by their appearance alone or by symbolic gestures, send heuristic cues to the Latino parents that they now have some political power, that their actions will have positive results, and that the school will be more responsive to their needs (Tate, 2001; Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson, 1990). I thus hypothesize that Latino parents will have a greater sense of efficacy when they have some Latino representation, and that this will in turn lead to more participation within schools.

Perceptions of Invitations to Participate

In general, people are more likely to participate if asked to do so (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Within the school context, these invitations serve as an important cue to parents that their participation is welcome, valuable, and expected by the school and its members (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Moreover, these invitations are important mediators of parental role construction and efficacy (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001). However, the invitation is not enough—parents must

have positive perceptions of the invitation as well (Lopez, Sanchez, and Hamilton, 2000). Similar to psychological resources, perceptions of invitations are socially constructed and relate to how parents feel about the school environment and the persons making the invitations.

Previous work suggests that Latino parents often find the school environment "unwelcoming" or "discouraging." Invitations from school administrators to participate are therefore not seen as opportunities to interact with their child's educators but, rather, as criticisms of their parenting and opportunities to highlight their ignorance as parents (Inger, 1992; Moles, 1993). Thus, while numerous school districts have invested time and money in creating more parental involvement opportunities within the school, few have found a significant effect on the levels of Latino parental involvement (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).

Creating a welcoming atmosphere, however, may have more to do with *who asks* than what is asked. Several studies report that the presence of Latinos as teachers and administrators positively affects school policies and institutional practices that affect Latino students and their parents (Polinard, Wrinkle, and Longoria, 1990; Urban Teacher Challenge, 2000) and that principals' and teachers' efforts to reach out to parents and their attitudes about parental involvement in schools have been found to be strong predictors of parent decisions to become involved in schools (Griffith, 2001). In other words, there is evidence to suggest that minority leaders both symbolically and substantively represent their constituents. The focus of this study, however, is to ascertain if the expectation of a policy or institutional practice shift results in behavior change.[1]

Given these effects, I hypothesize that Latino representation within schools positively affects Latino parents' perceptions of school invitations. In particular, they will find invitations from Latino teachers and principals to be friendly and nonthreatening, and perceive their involvement to be important and expected, which will ultimately lead to more participation within their child's school.[2]

As summarized in Figure 1, I posit that the psychological barriers to Latino parental participation will be positively altered by Latino representation in these schools. Seeing others like themselves in a position of power and authority, Latino parents will adjust their role construction to be more congruent with the school's expectations, envision their actions as more

[1]To be sure, Latino leadership within the schools most likely acts both substantively and symbolically, as others have found in previous research on congressional representation (see, e.g., Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2003; Tate, 2001). Although I cannot attest to the substantive effects of representation with these data, I control for their impact by including school policies and characteristics.

[2]Measuring changes in beliefs is difficult, especially with a cross-sectional study. Corroborating data from school administrators or teachers would be an effective way to verify if it is indeed Latino representation that changes behaviors. However, I do not have access to those data, and thus attempt to rule out alternative explanations by including various indicators of participation within the model.

efficacious, and perceive invitations from the school to be welcoming and expected. In other words, these internal processes will result in measurable and visible changes in parental behavior and increase parental participation. In the next sections I detail how I test this model in Chicago Public Schools.

Data and Operational Definitions

Based on the review of the literature, the model I test claims that Latino parental involvement is a function of LATINO REPRESENTATION, SCHOOL POLICIES, SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS, STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS, and INDIVIDUAL (PARENTAL) CHARACTERISTICS with a survey of 374 Latino parents in Chicago.[3]

Focusing on Chicago allows me to test two different indicators of LATINO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT. The first, SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT, is an index of four questions asking parents about how often they (1) speak to administrators or teachers in their child's school, (2) attend school activities and if they (3) volunteer in the school, and (4) participate in the Parent Teacher Association (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.7134$). The second taps into a particular type of school involvement in a decentralized governance system—the local school council (LSC). Thus, LSC PARTICIPATION is measured by the following questions: "(1) Have you ever voted in a LSC election? (2) Did you vote in the last LSC? (3) Do you attend LSC meetings? (4) Have you ever run for a seat on the LSC?"(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.8165$).

LATINO REPRESENTATION is measured by four factors. The first is the number of Latinos on the local school council in 2005 (LATINOS LSC 2005), which can range from 0 to 11. Additionally, I include the number of years between 1995 and 2005 in which that school had any Latino representation (LENGTH LATINO LSC), which can also range from 0 to 11. Two additional questions come from the survey: (1) Is [name]'s current teacher Latino or Latina, like you?" (LATINO TEACHER), and (2) "Is [name]'s current principal Latino/Latina, like you?" (LATINO PRINCIPAL) (1 = yes). Lastly, I include a survey question that taps the respondent's attitudes toward Latino teachers and principals: "Do you think it is important for your children's education to have Latino teachers and principals?" (1 = yes) (IMPORTANCE OF LATINO T/P). I expect each of these indicators of Latino representation to positively impact

[3]The survey was based on a 1995 survey conducted by Schneider, Teske, and Marschall (2000). Additional questions were added that pertained specifically to Chicago's local school councils and to Latinos. Collaborating with the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform and the Community Service Department at Chicago Public Schools, I enlisted 50 Latino (bilingual) high school students from five high schools to serve as interviewers of Latino parents. The actual interviews were conducted between April 1 and April 30, 2006. The convenience sample inevitably raises questions about the representativeness of any findings (Sears, 1986), and thus I do not generalize these findings to all Latinos. However, given the paucity of survey research specifically with Latino parents, and the inability of many surveys to adequately target Latinos and immigrants, I believe these results begin to tell an important story regarding Latino political participation in schools.

Latino parent behaviors and attitudes, and thus be positively related to school and LSC involvement.

Although the conceptual model detailed above suggests that Latino representation will be the driving force behind participation, I also control for other factors that may motivate parental involvement: school policies and characteristics, and individual characteristics. SCHOOL POLICIES include three variables from the survey that tap into school efforts to contact and involve parents in school activities. SCHOOL-INITIATED CONTACT is an index of seven survey questions (Cronbach's α = 0.7523) regarding specific school programs offered at the school.[4] Although previous research has suggested that these types of efforts by schools are not always successful with Latino parents, I expect there to be a positive correlation between attempts and involvement. I also include questions that ask about Latino-specific programs at school: "Does [name]'s school have a translator [TRANSLATORS] at school events?" (1 = yes). Given that this service is directed at Latino parents and may signal to parents the school's attempt to accommodate their special needs, I expect this variable to also be related to positive Latino involvement.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS capture school-level demographic and institutional features. In part, these variables control for the quality of schools and external factors that may influence parental attitudes and behaviors. PERCENT LOW INCOME provides a good assessment of the poverty levels within the school district and is expected to negatively impact Latino parental involvement. Previous research has also demonstrated that parental involvement is greater for younger children (Pena, 2000) and in nontraditional schools, such as magnet programs or career academies (Schneider, Teske, and Marschall, 2000), and thus I include a dummy for ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (1 = yes) and MAGNET SCHOOLS (1 = yes). In addition, I control for the size of the school (DISTRICT SIZE, LOGGED).

Including STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS acknowledges that parents may want to participate but may find doing so difficult given their life circumstances. WORK DEMAND captures parents' response that "an inflexible or demanding work schedule or inadequate childcare" (1 = yes) is the primary obstacle to their participation in schools. Large family size may also preclude parents from participating in schools, and thus NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 within the household is also included. I expect each of these variables to be correlated with less participation.

Scholars have also noted the importance of controlling for immigrant-specific sociodemographic factors such as citizenship status, nativity, and English proficiency (Calvo and Rosenstone, 1989; Uhlaner, Cain, and

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[4](1) Does [name]'s school have a regular newsletter? (2) Does [name]'s teacher make home visits? (3)Does [name]'s school have teaching teams or schools within schools? (4) Does [name]'s school have a monthly parent night? (5) Does [name]'s school offer GED or continuing education classes? (6) Does [name]'s school offer workshops to help parents assist children with homework and education more generally? (7) Does [name]'s school have a parent's liaison or resource center?

Kiewiet, 1989), noting that these may also impact ability to participate, irrespective of desire. In particular, I focus on two characteristics that may impact parent familiarity and comfort level with participating in schools—U.S. CITIZENSHIP (1 = yes) and SPEAKS ENGLISH (1 = yes).[5] Although noncitizens and non-English-speaking parents are allowed to participate in school governance in Chicago, previous research has suggested that native-born U.S. citizens with good English-speaking skills are more likely to participate in political processes (Highton and Burris, 2002) and schools (Ramirez, 2003) because of familiarity with U.S. institutions. Thus, I expect U.S. citizenship and English-language ability to be positively related to Latino involvement.

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS refers to a series of respondent-specific control variables. Much research suggests that participation differs across socioeconomic and other strata, with high SES, longer lengths of residency, employment, and homeownership being positively related to participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; Jeynes, 2003). Consequently, I control for respondent-specific attributes: EDUCATIONAL LEVEL (seven-step categorical variable),[6] MARRIED (1 = yes), EMPLOYED (1 = yes), and HOMEOWNER (1 = yes). The data also permit exploration of differences among Latino subgroups—particularly Mexican and Puerto Rican parents. Previous research has suggested that Puerto Ricans generally participate less in electoral politics than do Mexican Americans (Highton and Burris, 2002), but the politics of school participation and involvement may be more subtle. Given the long-standing presence of both groups within highly segregated neighborhoods in Chicago, a priori, I have no predictions of how they compare to each other, but do expect them to be more active in school politics than ''other,'' mainly newly arrived, Latinos.

Lastly, I include a variable that controls for the social connectedness of the respondent. Scholars have argued that the more individuals interact with others in organizations and institutions, the more they are exposed to social norms of political behavior and participation (Marschall, 2001; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Thus, I include an index of GENERAL PARTICIPATION (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.6976$), and propose that Latino parents who are more involved in general community activities will also be more involved in school activities.[7] Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the complete sample of 374 parents.

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[5]''How well do you speak English?'' Responses ''Very Well'' and ''Well'' were collapsed and transformed into a dummy variable.

[6]Ranging from 0 = no formal education, 1 = less than eighth grade, 2 = HS/GED, 3 = some college, 4 = associate's degree, 5 = bachelor's degree, to 6 = masters or professional degree.

[7]''Now we would like to know something about the groups and organizations to which you belong. I will read a list of different types of organizations; please tell me if you attended one of more of their meetings IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS: (1) A neighborhood association, like a block association, a homeowner or tenant association, or a crime watch group? (2) Social clubs or sports teams? (3) Political organizations? (4) Church-related

TABLE 1

Summary Statistics

	Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Dependent variables	School involvement	1.75	0.80	(0, 4)
	LSC participation	0.32	0.23	(0, 1)
Latino representation	Latino LSC 2005	2.80	3.56	(0, 11)
	Length Latino LSC	7.87	3.08	(0, 11)
	Latino teacher	0.54	0.50	(0, 1)
	Latino principal	0.25	0.43	(0, 1)
	Importance	0.61	0.49	(0, 1)
School policies	School-initiated contact	0.15	0.18	(0, 0.77)
	Translator	0.61	0.49	(0, 1)
School characteristics	Percent student low income	91.72	8.63	(27.8, 99.4)
	Elementary	0.59	0.49	(0, 1)
	Magnet	0.11	0.31	(0, 1)
	School size, logged	7.03	0.56	(4.86, 8.39)
Structural constraints	Work demand	0.25	0.43	(0, 1)
	Number of children	2.07	1.03	(1, 7)
	U.S. citizen	0.55	0.50	(0, 1)
	Speak English well	0.50	0.50	(0, 1)
Individual characteristics	Education level	1.89	0.99	(0, 6)
	Married	0.63	0.48	(0, 1)
	Employed	0.80	0.40	(0, 1)
	Homeowner	0.38	0.49	(0, 1)
	Mexican	0.60	0.49	(0, 1)
	Puerto Rican	0.17	0.37	(0, 1)
	"Other" Latino	0.06	0.23	(0, 1)
	General participation	0.14	0.20	(0, 0.9)

Analysis and Findings

Because I am modeling the impact of the independent variables described on two related dependent variables (school involvement and LSC involvement), I have reason to believe the errors may be correlated across equations (Zellner, 1962). Thus, to estimate the impact of Latino representation on Latino parental involvement in schools, I employ seemingly unrelated regression. In addition, since many of the contextual variables are measured at the school level, the models are clustered by school, with robust standard errors reported. Table 2 reports the results.

groups? (5) Ethnic or cultural organizations? (6) Business or professional organizations? (7) Charity or welfare organizations? (8) Labor union? In the part twelve month, have you served as an officer or served on a committee of any local club or organization (1 = yes)? In the past year, have you worked on a community project? (1 = yes)."

TABLE 2

Estimates of Latino Parent Involvement

		School Involvement	LSC Participation
Latino representation	Latino LSC 2005	0.076***	0.004
		(0.015)	(0.006)
	Length Latino LSC	0.053*	0.018**
		(0.021)	(0.007)
	Latino teacher	0.306***	0.098**
		(0.085)	(0.037)
	Latino principal	− 0.026	0.01
		(0.086)	(0.043)
	Importance	0.258**	0.051
		(0.087)	(0.057)
School policies	School-initiated contact	0.743**	0.01
		(0.260)	(0.091)
	Translator	0.251*	− 0.025
		(0.107)	(0.024)
School characteristics	Percent students low income	− 0.005	− 0.003
		(0.003)	(0.002)
	Elementary school	0.142	0.035
		(0.100)	(0.029)
	Magnet school	0.300**	− 0.023
		(0.097)	(0.041)
	School size, logged	− 0.008	0.021
		(0.092)	(0.038)
Structural constraints	Work demand	− 0.158	0.024
		(0.097)	(0.031)
	Number in household	− 0.042	0.000
		(0.032)	(0.006)
	U.S. citizen	0.027	0.024
		(0.077)	(0.027)
	Speaks English "well"	− 0.025	0.000
		(0.078)	(0.019)
Individual characteristics	Education level	0.031	− 0.001
		(0.042)	(0.010)
	Married	0.099	0.014
		(0.079)	(0.021)
	Employed	− 0.062	− 0.012
		(0.083)	(0.026)
	Homeowner	0.035	0.026
		(0.069)	(0.024)
	Puerto Rican	− 0.038	0.008
		(0.086)	(0.033)
	"Other" Latino	− 0.310*	− 0.051
		(0.165)	(0.040)
	General participation	0.390*	0.400***
		(0.157)	(0.079)
	Constant	1.399	0.163
		(0.716)	(0.323)
	N	374	374
	R^2	0.38	0.365

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

NOTE: Results from SUREG, clustered at school. Robust standard errors reported.

Before delving into the specifics of each model, it is quickly apparent from the results in Table 2 that Latino parent involvement in these Chicago Public Schools can be attributed to three main factors—Latino representation, school policies, and the individual characteristics of being a participator, generally. In other words, even after controlling for school characteristics, structural constraints, and individual factors that have been linked to participation, parents participate when they see others like themselves in leadership positions, when schools ask them to participate, and when they themselves often participate in community/neighborhood events.

Beginning with the SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT index, the results demonstrate that Latino representation matters for parental involvement in schools. Ceteris paribus, each additional Latino LSC member increases the expected level of participation 5.2 percent.[8] Thus, a parent with three LSC members is predicted to participate 15.4 percent more than a parent with no LSC representation. In addition, length of representation positively and significantly impacts participation. Compared with Latino parents with no representation, those parents with at least one Latino representative for four years participate 3 percent more. Representation within the teaching staff has a much larger effect. Currently having a Latino teacher increases the involvement score 0.31, or 45 percent. Those parents who believe that a Latino teacher or principal is important for the child's education were 0.26 (or 38 percent) more involved. In sum, I find substantial evidence of a symbolic effect of Latino representation on Latino parental school involvement. Further, these effects are stronger for teachers than local school board members, supporting previous studies that have highlighted the positive impact Latino teachers have within schools.

In addition, I find a strong policy effect. School efforts to contact parents are the most strongly related to school involvement: every additional attempt at contacting parents increases school involvement by 0.743, or 7 percent. Additionally, efforts to accommodate Latino and immigrant parents are also associated with increased involvement. Ceteris paribus, having a translator available at school events increases involvement by 0.251, or 13 percent. Thus, although a symbolic Latino presence within schools provides some incentive for Latino parent involvement in schools, the policies implemented by schools to address these parents' needs also has a strong affect.

With regard to the school characteristic factors, I find as expected that parents with children in magnet schools are significantly more involved in school activities. Specifically, Latino parents with children in a magnet school have 0.300 more involvement. The differences between Mexican and

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[8]Expected values are calculated with all continuous variables at the mean, all others at median (magnet = 0, elementary = 1, translator = 1, married = 1, employed = 1, homeowner = 0, U.S. citizen = 1, speaks English well = 1, Mexican = 1).

Puerto Rican parents prove to be insignificant but, as expected, "Other" Latino parents are slightly less involved (9 percent) in schools than their Mexican counterparts. Lastly, as anticipated, I find strong evidence for the social connectedness hypothesis: Latinos who are more active in their community generally are also more involved in school activities.

Column 2 of Table 2 reports the results for the LSC participation index. My question here is what encourages Latino parents to be more involved in school governance? Do Latino parents participate more in school governance activities when there are Latino representatives on the school council and within the school staff? The findings again suggest that representation matters. Although currently having a Latino LSC member does not significantly increase LSC participation, those parents with a long history of representation are more likely to participate. Each additional year of representation results in a 0.018 increase in LSC involvement. Substantively, these results indicate that a parent with eight years of representation (the mean value for the sample) is 45 percent more likely to participate in LSC activities than those without representation. Moreover, I find that a Latino parent whose child currently has a Latino teacher is more likely to participate in school governance activities (27 percent). Together, these results again suggest a strong symbolic role for Latino representation: parents who see people like themselves in positions of power are more likely to themselves become involved in school politics.

I also find that while school policies addressing Latino parents' concerns are important for understanding their general involvement in schools, they are not important when it comes to explaining levels of LSC participation. I infer from these results that LSC participation is, first, seen as a different and perhaps more intensive type of school activity, and second, that policies that do not directly ask for LSC participation have no effect on whether parents attend LSC meetings or see themselves as potential LSC candidates. Again, I find that participators participate in a variety of activities: the Latino parents who are generally active in their communities are more likely to participate in LSC politics. In other words, Latinos connected to their communities in general also participate more within their children's schools.

Jointly, these results suggest that there are multiple factors that impact the decisions Latino parents make about participating in their child's schooling, and that even after controlling for the policies enacted by schools, and the individual dispositions of parents, Latino representation within schools matters. Latino parents, who have traditionally been seen as not interested in school activities, are more likely to be engaged in their child's school when they see themselves represented in governance and decision-making bodies. As hypothesized by the conceptual model developed earlier, representation of Latinos in positions of power results in significant changes in Latino parental role constructions, self-efficacy, and perceptions of invitations to participate, which manifest as increased parental involvement.

Discussion and Conclusions

Much of the research investigating the low levels of participation among Latino parents has pointed to low levels of education, poverty, immigration, and linguistic issues (Tinkler, 2002). However, more recent studies have indicated that parental involvement is more a function of parental beliefs than of family demographics (Sheldon, 2002; Simon, 2004). The challenge for policymakers is thus how to transform Latino parental beliefs such that they feel that their involvement can make a difference in their child's education. This study has demonstrated that Latino representation within the school can have a positive effect on the psychological orientations of Latino parents that lead to an increase in their involvement in both everyday school activities, such as PTA meetings and volunteering within the school, and school governance structures, such as LSCs. Given NCLB's requirement that school districts create and implement parental involvement policies, and the concurrent requirement that school districts meet annual yearly progress goals for all students, these findings have several significant policy implications.

First, if participation is partly the result of who is in positions of power within schools, low participation rates among Latino parents is another symptom of the current Latino teacher shortage (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Shah and Marschall, 2007; Urban Teacher Challenge, 2000). In their examination of 139 school districts across the United States, Shah and Marschall (2007) conclude that policies that encourage alternative hiring and certification programs are important in minimizing the gap between Latino students and Latino teachers. Thus, the NCLB notion of "highly qualified teachers" compels districts to balance this requirement against the issue of needing a diverse teaching staff.

Second, these results speak to policies that include parents in decision-making institutions within the school. My findings suggest that having Latino LSC members increases Latino parental involvement by changing their feelings about the decision-making processes within schools. Moreover, previous scholars have suggested that as school board or council representation increases, so does the number of Latino teachers within a school district (Leal, Martinez-Ebers, and Meier, 2004; Shah and Marschall, 2007). Thus, Latino school council representation may have both a symbolic effect on parents as well as a policy effect that also impacts representation. Since implementation of NCLB, numerous state school districts have attempted to include decentralized decision making as part of their parent involvement policies (Education Commission of the States, 2005). The majority of these, however, do not specify who should serve on these school councils or boards. Moreover, the parental involvement component of NCLB is not generally enforced (Center for Parental Leadership, 2005). Insisting that school-based councils that reflect the school population and give minority and immigrant parents a voice in school policy making may be an important step in addressing declining levels of parental involvement.

Lastly, this study points to a need for additional research that attempts to disentangle the role Latino representation plays in schools. As noted above, Latino school board members may have numerous effects on school policies and, ultimately, on parental attitudes and behaviors. Further research is needed to examine if different types of parental involvement are more closely linked to improved student outcomes. Do Latino students fare better when their parents attend PTA meetings regularly, or when they attend LSC meeting regularly? Understanding these relationships is an important step in evaluating parental involvement policies.

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