

Interest Group Success, Descriptive Representation, and Legislative Alliances in the California State Legislature

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ABSTRACT: Interest groups that advocate for the interests of racial and ethnic minority groups (RMIGs) have historically had limited resources and access compared to other interest groups lobbying policymakers. Now that the CA State Legislature is more diverse, do RMIGs take advantage of a potentially advantageous strategy—lobbying legislators that descriptively represent their members? Analyzing RMIG bill stances and legislator votes across four sessions of the California State Legislature, I find that when RMIGs were descriptively represented by legislators, they were more likely to find legislative success in terms of garnering a legislator’s vote, though evidence of an effect on bill outcomes is less conclusive. Moreover, surveying legislator staffers and RMIG staffers with an original and IRB-exempted questionnaire, I find that RMIGs actively seek alliances with legislators that descriptively represent them, confirming the theory that RMIGs pursue alliances with legislators who descriptively represent them to increase their legislative success, though a low response rate hinders generalizability.

California is generally considered the progressive bellwether of the United States, a perception that fails to acknowledge the ideological diversity of the state (PPIC 2020). But despite potential debates around just how liberal California is today, this left-facing lean has not been the historical norm. In fact, much of California’s early policy, like many policies and practices across the early-to-mid 20th-century United States, centered around race-based economic, cultural, and social exclusion. It is through this lens that California’s politics should be viewed, especially when studying the political representation and lobbying behavior of marginalized groups today.

Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black, and Latinx residents of California share a history of political and socioeconomic marginalization (Van Vechten 2021, DeBow and Syer

2000). Though experiences certainly vary across racial groups, decades, and communities, racial and ethnic minorities have undeniably held less political power compared to white Californians. In response, racial and ethnic minorities formed interest group organizations (RMIGs) to combat the white hegemony of the 20th century (Van Vechten 2021, DeBow and Syer 2000). Fighting against marginalization, these RMIGs developed lobbying strategies adapted to their relatively low resource standing compared to other interest groups (Ganz 2009, Strolovitch 2007, Minta 2019). RMIGs focus their lobbying efforts on specific areas of interest and work not just in policymaking spaces but also in the press and courts (Ganz 2009, Watson 2009, Self 2005, Berg 1967). While white allies were the only available lobbying partners in many cases through much of the 20th century, eventually RMIGs were presented with more and more legislators of color in the legislatures where they were lobbying (Watson 2009, Van Vechten 2021). I theorize it was these legislators who became the foremost strategic option, and the best option in terms of legislative success, for RMIGs to ally with.

Research Question Overview

My thesis analyzes whether RMIGs, groups that advocate specifically for the interests of racial and ethnic minority constituents (e.g., the NAACP, and the MALDEF), find success when lobbying and if that success is correlated with descriptive representation from California State legislators. Specifically, this thesis brings together theories of alliance formation and interest group-legislator interactions with descriptive representation to assess a potential causal mechanism underlying RMIG success. I theorize that RMIGs form alliances with legislators who descriptively represent them to maximize their limited resources and gain stronger substantive relationships than possible when allied with non-representative legislators.

To reiterate, my thesis targets the role of descriptive representation on RMIG success in the California State Legislature. I will first determine whether RMIGs and the legislators who descriptively represent them are more likely to be aligned in their policy views and votes, and if this alignment relates to RMIGs' ability to influence bill outcomes. To study this, I merge and modify a pair of datasets provided by UCSD PhD candidate Nhat-Dang Do that includes the roll call votes of California State legislators from the 2007-2008 legislative session to the 2013-2014 session and RMIG bill stances on each bill during the same period. As a research assistant and research apprentice, I helped Do code much of this data, including confirming the group names, group types, the race of the legislators, and the racial group the RMIGs were advocating for. My two primary independent variables are unique variables not present in the original data sets provided by Do. To complement the observational data, I then explore survey responses from an original and IRB-exempted survey of interest group leaders and legislators concerning their alliances to further assess whether alliances between RMIGs and their descriptive representation are a common lobbying strategy among RMIGs.

Before going into the theory behind these expectations and a more in-depth discussion of the research design, I provided background on California's racial-political history, exploring how that context shapes the time frame of my study, 2007 to 2014. I demonstrate how RMIGs have a history of political action, motivated by political and socioeconomic marginalization, and how these barriers were at times overcome through strategic action. In the following sections, I will further define RMIGs and examine the existing literature on interest group-legislator alliances, legislative success, and descriptive representation to demonstrate how, with a more diverse electorate and State legislature, RMIGs in California have a new strategic option available in descriptively representative legislative allies, an option they are likely to utilize and benefit from.

The Early Asian American and Pacific Islander Experience in California

Prior to and directly following 1900, immigration into California was marked by both economic and legal obstacles for AAPI residents. California's state constitution and federal statutes combined at various points to limit many of their immigration rights and exclude them from employment (Van Vechten 2021, DeBow and Syer 2000). Policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1856, which ended Chinese immigration into the state and the so-called "Alien Land Laws" in 1913, which denied Asian-born Californians and their descendants many civil and property rights, translated white racial animosity into law (Van Vechten 2021, DeBow and Syer 2000). These policies demonstrate how Japanese internment, which removed more than 100,000 Japanese Californians from their homes and jobs and placed them in concentration camps, was justified (Van Vechten 2021, May Chuan Fu 2005, DeBow and Syer 2000).

The political landscape for AAPI residents was very one-sided well into the 20th century. Groups like the white-dominated Asiatic Exclusion League lobbied the state government to see the Chinese Exclusion Act and later immigration quota policies pass (Van Vechten 2021, DeBow and Syer 2000). These political conditions, and the challenges they presented in residents' everyday lives, prompted collective action and organizing among AAPI residents. It did, however, mean that potential white allies were few and far between, and that organizations that we may consider ideologically aligned with RMIG interests today, such as labor organizations, were motivated by racial animosity to further marginalize these RMIGs throughout the early and mid-20th century (Van Vechten 2021, Ganz 2009).

A clear example of this political history can be seen in Japanese labor organizing. In the early 20th century, Japanese citizens were still ineligible for citizenship and generally faced stiff racial hostility from white residents, meaning that there were few politically powerful AAPI

residents to back any labor organizations (Van Vechten 2021, Ganz 2009). This was seen clearly in 1903, when the AFL-CIO split a coalition between a Mexican farmworkers union and a Japanese farmworkers union, only recognizing the Mexican organization because of organized labor's commitment to policies of Asian exclusion (Ganz 2009). With the first AAPI legislators coming into office in California in the 1960s, and organizations on the left working against AAPI interests, California's AAPI residents had little political representation during the first half of the 20th century ("A History of Asian Americans in the California Legislature.").

Part of how AAPI RMIGs found increased political power comes from the federal Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished earlier quotas, increasing the numbers of immigrants from Asian countries into California. With an increasing population and increasing social justice organizing experience due to the civil rights movement, AAPI organizations began to institutionalize their demands for political representation with formal AAPI advocacy organizations (May Chuan Fu 2005). One of the most prominent AAPI RMIGs today, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, considers their role to be filing lawsuits and educating lawmakers on diversity of people and issue areas within the AAPI community, while also helping more AAPI legislators win office (Hwang 2020).

The Early Black Experience in California

Black people in California began seeing descriptive representation in both government and advocacy organizations in the early 1900s (Van Vechten 2021, Kirk 2009, DeBow and Syer 2000, Watson 2009, Self 2005). On the policymaker side, Frederick Roberts became the first Black state legislator in California in 1919, serving until 1934, and he was replaced by a new slate of Democrat Black legislators in the post-Depression era (DeBow and Syer 2000). Black

RMIGs, namely the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Congress on Racial Equality, formed alliances with some organized labor and church groups in the mid-20th century, as well as among some liberal whites, while fighting discriminatory policies in many forms (Berg 1967, DeBow and Syer 2000, Watson 2009, Hall 2007, Kirk 2009). The NAACP and Urban League both lobbied the federal government from the 1940s through the early 1960s on discrimination in housing, but “acting alone could not attain” policy victories, necessitating a strategy centered around “winning friends... in the white majority” (Berg 1967 p. 100-101).

Even with this strategy, lobbying Congress was still not all that successful, and so the NAACP largely turned to the courts in their housing, education, and employment rights battles (Van Vechten 2021, Kirk 2009, Berg 1967) and sometimes to the press (Cripps 2010, Kirk 2009, Self 2005). These court battles provided grounds for success that often foreshadowed legislative gains, with a string of legislative successes in the 1950s and 1960s for the NAACP (Kirk 2009). Black RMIGs also organized protests, fought for executive orders, and lobbied Congressmembers in committee hearings, all strategies that Black residents fought for, overcoming obstacles of discrimination (Kirk 2009, Berg 1967, DeBow and Syer 2000).

In California specifically, the NAACP had local branches spring up throughout the 1910s, though these local chapters had limited memberships until wartime migration in the 1940s brought more Black residents (Watson 2009, Cripps 2010, Self 2005). These branches found financial support from a largely middle-class and elite Black membership, seven primary local Black-owned newspapers operating in the early 20th century, and from some liberal whites, such as some movie studio owners in Hollywood (Watson 2009, Cripps 2010, Hall 2007). As the Black population in the state grew, so too did white backlash in the policy arena and violence across the state, further necessitating organizing to help protect the “fragile freedoms”

experienced by NAACP members at that time (Watson 2009 p. 191, Hall 2007, Self 2005).

Beginning in earnest in the 1930s, the Black vote became an important political consideration in Congressional races in California, and local branches of the NAACP were able to influence how Black residents voted, a powerful lobbying tool (Watson 2009).

California's policies largely mirrored the national discriminatory environment, and to counteract these policies and derive the resources to fight them, local NAACP branches joined together for the first time in 1936 to form the first California State Conference of the NAACP (Watson 2009). With this consolidation, the NAACP was sometimes able to find powerful allies in California, such as workers unions in employment fights and Hollywood entertainment executives (Watson 2009, Cripps 2010). But like AAPI Californians during this time, these same allies sometimes were political opponents protecting only white workers in what was still a very stratified political system (Watson 2009, Hall 2007, Self 2005). An example of this came in Oakland in the 1950s, with the NAACP's struggle to desegregate the AFL-CIO through the formation of the Negro American Labor Council as a "permanent pressure group" within broader union (Self 2005, p. 180-181). The organizing of the NALC led to Black AFL-CIO members earning promotions to chapter leadership roles (Self 2005).

The overarching strategy of the NAACP in California during the mid-20th century was focused on maximizing limited resources to gain political successes that would benefit Black interests, much like the strategy of Latinx interest groups that will be discussed in the next section, with purposeful decisions based on regional constituency needs (Kirk 2009, Self 2005). One elucidating example comes with court battles in 1948 surrounding racial covenants, where housing deeds included language prohibiting nonwhite residents from purchasing homes (Watson 2009). The NAACP Legal Defense Fund supported attorneys Thurgood Marshall and

Loren Miller, allowing them to bring racial covenant cases brought to their attention by local NAACP branches to the Supreme Court (Watson 2009). This strategy of local-statewide-national organization utilized by the NAACP allowed for more success and resources than most RMIGs, but even still, the NAACP struggled to succeed in an era that placed burdensome obstacles on nonwhite political participation, in California and around the country. RMIGs, like the NAACP, would continue to adapt to the shifting political environment to increase their political representation.

The Early Latinx Experience in California

Latinx residents outnumber white residents in California, and have since 2014, but despite population size, Latinx Californians still have a history of political inequality and oppression relative to White residents (Census Table DP05, Van Vechten 2021). In early Gold-Rush era California, Mexican residents were political actors, helping draft the first state constitution in 1849, even including a provision that made legislation be published in both English and Spanish (DeBow and Syer 2000). A few decades later, this biculturalism was replaced by white political hegemony, with Latinx residents moving into manual labor, including agricultural work, as white interests forced Latinx elites out of positions of power and influence (Van Vechten 2021, DeBow and Syer 2000).

With this massive occupational transition, agricultural unions of Latinx workers formed through the 1930s onward, culminating with the United Farm Workers (UFW) operating in the 1960s (Ganz 2009, DeBow and Syer 2000). Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the UFW fought to become major political players in California and nationally, bolstering the wider Chicano Movement of the 1960s and lobbying with significant legislative successes on bills like the

California Agriculture Labor Relations Act (Van Vechten 2021, Ganz 2009). The UFW found political success despite facing antipathy from labor organizations like the Teamsters Union and the AFL-CIO, organizations that also limited the labor successes of Black and AAPI labor movements of this period (Ganz 2009, DeBow and Syer 2000).

In his book on the UFW, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*, Marshall Ganz argues that this success comes from “greater motivation” and “better access to salient knowledge” about their communities that ultimately increased their “strategic capacity” in comparison to other labor organizations (Ganz 2009, p. 8, 16-17). The UFW, according to Ganz, made a “focused choice to commit resources to specific outcomes,” a strategy of issue targeting like that of the Asian Sisters in the 1970s and the NAACP in the 1940s (Ganz 2009, p. 9). This strategy seems to have been the primary path for interest groups advocating for racial and ethnic minority groups to find success in a resource-limited, politically marginalized arena. An example of this success came in the policy battle surrounding the California Agriculture Labor Relations Act, which saw the UFW succeed in placing a Latinx commissioner on the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (Ganz 2009).

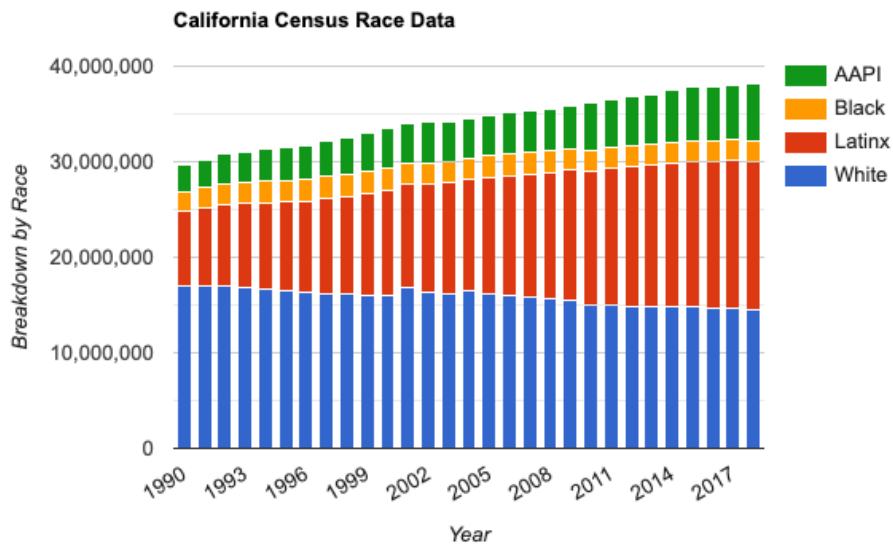
In the following decades, defining political moments for Latinx Californians surrounded a variety of issues, though organizers did not always succeed in creating positive outcomes. In the 1980s and 1990s, California’s initiative process demonstrated how Latinx Californians, particularly undocumented residents, were still the subject of discriminatory attitudes from voters. In 1986, voters passed an initiative making English the state’s official language and 12 years later passed a proposition prohibiting bilingual education, though this was repealed by Proposition 58 in 2016 (Van Vechten 2021). Proposition 187 in 1994 directly prohibited many

undocumented Californians from utilizing public healthcare services and called for state agencies to report potential undocumented immigrants to federal immigration enforcement (Van Vechten 2021, Ganz 2009, DeBow and Syer 2000).

The Political Climate for California’s Racial and Ethnic Minorities Today

Over the last two decades, California has continued to experience a demographic and political transformation. As shown in Figure 1, California’s AAPI and Latinx populations have grown steadily, contributing to the state’s majority-minority population distribution.

Fig. 1 – California’s Population from 1990 to 2018, by racial group

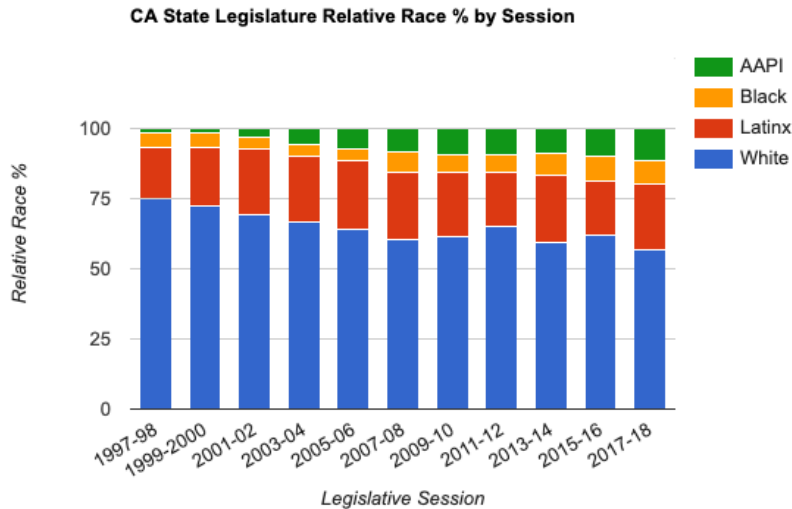


This data is drawn from Census Table DP05.

This majority-minority population distribution has meant a more diverse electorate voting not only in local and federal elections, but also in State Legislature races. With this newly diverse electorate, coupled with decades of reforms in term limits and term lengths, reapportionment, and primary elections, the demographic composition of the California State

Legislature is more representative of the population, shown in Figure 2 (Van Vechten 2021, Caress and Kunioka 2012).

Fig. 2 – California State Legislature Relative Racial Breakdown of Members



This data was pulled from the CA State Legislature Black, API, and Latino caucus web pages.

Figure 2 demonstrates the newfound political representation of AAPI Californians and the growth of political representation for Latinx residents in the Legislature from the 1990s into the present, along with the relative descriptive reflectiveness of policymakers increasing. Ultimately, California is one of few states, if not the only state, with communities of AAPI, Black, and Latinx residents that are large and dense enough to support such a diverse state legislative makeup, though certainly there are variations within all three groups in terms of political efficacy and behavior (Caress and Kunioka 2012). But perhaps more important than demographic change is how the RMIGs that advocate for these populations are seeking to best maximize their lobbying effort to capitalize on the diversification in the Legislature to help their constituents.

Literature Review

Across political science, there are varied opinions on whether race affects legislator behavior, specifically on the “quality of ... representation” the legislator provides certain groups with (Whitby 1997, p. 82). One potential explanation for why one legislator may be providing higher quality representation to a constituent relative to another policymaker is descriptive representation. Descriptive representation is defined as the “representativeness” of the legislator, “not what he does, but what he is, or is like” (Pitkin 1967, pp. 10-11). Put another way, descriptive representation describes an instance where the legislator’s demographic characteristics are reflected in a constituent or group of constituents, which can be exemplified with racial, gender, class, and many other demographic categories.

Descriptive representation in legislator behavior has been the subject of academic scrutiny, especially over the last few decades. While some scholars argue that demographic background factors little in legislator decision making (Heinz 1993, Guinier 1994, Swain 1993), and many still do not consider race when analyzing legislator behavior in the first place, another contingent argues that descriptive representation *does* influence legislator decisions (Conyers 1976, Button 1989, Browning, Marshall and Tabb 1984, 1997, 2003, Whitby 1997, Burns 2006, Butler and Broockman 2011, Broockman 2013, Masuoka and Junn 2013, Minta 2019).

In his seminal 1997 book *The Color of Representation*, Kenny Whitby found that “race matters” for representation quality, even after controlling for party and region, specifically studying Black and white legislator roll call votes since Black-white was the primary racial binary in Congress at the time of his study (Whitby 1997, p. 110). Whitby found that Black representatives cared more about civil rights issues than white representatives, even controlling for party and region (Whitby 1997). Whitby justified these findings utilizing theories of group

consciousness and linked fate, which suggest that the political interests of Black people in general will be mirrored by the interests of Black legislators because of a bond forged in shared experiences. These theories have since been further advanced by scholars surrounding other racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. (Masuoka and Junn 2013).

Increasing descriptive representation in political spaces does not necessarily mean more substantive representation for *all* members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Indeed, some scholars argue that Black legislators tend to represent the middle and upper-class interests of their race (West 1993, Gaines 1996, Carby 1998). Ultimately this literature falls in line with Schattsneider's oft-quoted line that "the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent" (Schattschneider 1960, p. 35). Legislators and interest groups are likely to represent interests that are not fully representative of the majority, or as Schattsneider puts it "the 90-percent," a distinction amongst RMIGs deserving of future study (Strolovitch 2007).

Descriptively representative legislators are not the exclusive route for racial and ethnic minority group representation though, as was clearly demonstrated by the political histories of RMIGs in California outlined earlier. RMIGs are interest groups that advocate "explicitly... as representatives for a specific ethnic or pan ethnic group" (Do 2020, Prospectus p. 5-7). RMIGs are exemplified by such groups as the NAACP, MALDEF, and others who primarily advocate for the interests of their own specific racial and/or ethnic group. Do describes RMIGs as "organizations that take part in political activity to influence legislative behavior for the benefit of or on behalf of a specific racial minority group" (Do 2020, Prospectus p. 5-7). There is a sizable literature that demonstrates that neighborhood-level organizations can elevate minority communities into decision-making discussions (Cruz 1995, Ferman 1996, Rabrenovic 1996,

Skerry 1998, May Chan Fu 2005, Burns 2006). Some of these same organizations act at the state level as well, working as advocates with resources that can lift minority communities and issues particularly pertinent to them into policymaking spaces.

RMIGs are generally subject to steep obstacles within the legislative arena in the United States, particularly when it comes to financial resources (Strolovitch 2007, Baumgartner and Leech 1998, Berry 2000, Scholzman 1987). Because of this, it would be logical to believe that RMIGs do not experience much legislative success, if any at all. From the historical background provided earlier, RMIG success is shown to be a muddled prospect. Still, there is little literature on RMIGs influencing legislative outcomes to date—though one notable recent paper comes from Minta (2019)—a gap in discussions on legislator-interest group interactions I hope to begin to fill in with my thesis.

In fact, most literature providing potential explanations for interest groups successfully lobbying legislators involves resources, specifically campaign contributions from interest groups and other financial considerations. While many claim that these sorts of resources do indeed impact organizations finding legislative success (Neustadt 1990, Varone 2020, Grasse and Heidbreider 2011, Varone 2016, Costain 1998), there is frequently cited literature that discounts these claims (McKay 2012, Baumgartner 2009).

Another seemingly under-studied explanation for legislative success is the impact of an alliance between legislators and interest groups. Interest group allies are defined somewhat sporadically across the literature. One definition categorizes allies as government officials, including legislators, who act as “prominent advocates” of the policy outcome an interest group is fighting for, and not legislators who simply voted in line with an interest group stance on a policy (Baumgartner 2009, Moreno 2019). Alliances have been found to predict successful

legislative outcomes when legislators are more senior allies, meaning that legislators with more experience and/or a higher institutional rank are strong allies (Baumgartner 2009).

Ultimately the literature assumes the existence of alliances due to a logical co-dependence between lobbying interests and legislators (Ainsworth 1997, Hall and Deardorff 2006, Minta 2019). This “mutual dependence,” as articulated by Scott Ainsworth (1997), exists because interest groups rely on legislators to directly vote to pass and kill laws, while interest groups can provide support to legislators with money, information, or legislative strategy (Schnakenberg 2016, Hall and Deardorff 2006, Scholzman and Tierney 1986).

Alliances between legislators and interest groups are also important because legislators do not act in a vacuum; they work and collaborate certainly with more than one interest group, but also with other legislators (Heinz 1993, Ainsworth 1997, Minta 2019). These so-called legislative networks suggest that a legislator who is influenced by a descriptively represented RMIG, for example, is providing more than just a singular vote to that group, but instead access to their network. Legislators would theoretically provide access to their networks to interest groups that have influenced their votes because they, in line with the interest group lobbying them, have the ultimate objective of either passing or killing a piece of legislation. For minority legislators, this network can involve clearly delineated racial caucuses, such as those that exist in Congress and in the California State Legislature (Minta 2019). It is this line of thinking, the impact of descriptive representation on RMIG representation through alliances and consequently through legislative coalitions and networks, that I feel is understudied to date, representing a gap I hope to begin to fill with my thesis.

Theory

The literature on descriptive representation suggests that RMIGs are likely to share objectives with the legislators that descriptively represent them. Different scholars have also noted the prevalence and salience of alliances between interest groups and legislators, and the legislative networks these alliances provide interest groups with access to. Combining these two areas of research, I theorize that RMIGs will experience greater levels of success when they experience support from legislators who descriptively represent them.

***H1:** RMIGs' bill stances will be more likely to align with a legislator's vote when they are descriptively represented by the legislator.*

***H2:** RMIGs' bill stance will be more likely to align with the bill's outcome with relatively higher levels of descriptive representation on a vote for a given bill.*

Hypothesis 1 focuses on the primary interaction between RMIGs and legislators, the ability of the RMIG to translate their stance and lobbying into a vote. Legislator votes are a common unit of analysis in interest group success analyses (Whitby 1997, Baumgartner 2009, McKay 2012, Gause 2022). This hypothesis is based on research on descriptive representation on legislator decisions (Whitby 1997, Butler and Broockman 2011, Broockman 2013, Minta 2019). Theories of group consciousness and linked fate explain why descriptive representation could improve RMIG lobbying. These concepts suggest that legislators and RMIGs who descriptively represent the same race share similar stances on issues because of similar lived experiences (Masuoka and Junn 2013, Minta 2019). I predict that the presence of descriptive representation will improve California State legislator interactions with the RMIGs lobbying them and that the

presence of descriptive representation will result in vote alignment between RMIGs and their descriptively representative legislators.

Hypothesis 2 extends the above vote-level interaction and brings in the literature on alliance salience and legislative networks. Alliances, on the interest group-legislator level tested in Hypothesis 1, have been found to be meaningful when studying legislative success for interest groups (Baumgartner 2009, Moreno 2019). Many scholars connect the success these alliances provide interest groups with to the legislative coalitions that alliances bring interest groups into contact with (Heinz 1993, Ainsworth 1997, Hall and Deardorff 2006, Minta 2019). Legislators who descriptively represent an RMIG would theoretically be more likely to vote with the RMIG lobbying them, and because legislators are active advocates of this stance, they seek to maximize their vote by working with all of their legislative allies, legislators, and other interest groups they have connections with, to translate their vote into a favorable bill outcome. Therefore, in a legislature with more descriptive representation, there should be a greater proportion of legislators – even beyond those who are descriptive representatives – willing to support RMIGs’ stance on a bill. And a bill is likely to pass or fail in alignment with RMIGs’ stance as more legislators are lobbied to support RMIGs’ bill stance.

***H3:** RMIGs will actively seek alliances with legislators who descriptively represent them.*

***H4:** Legislators who descriptively represent a racial/ethnic minority group will actively seek alliances with RMIGs that descriptively represent the same group.*

Across both initial hypotheses (H1 and H2) is the argument that RMIGs act strategically by making a “focused choice to commit resources to specific outcomes” to best make use of their relatively limited resources (Ganz 2009, p. 9). Hypotheses 3 and 4 target this assumption directly, predicting that RMIGs and the legislators that descriptively represent them will actively

seek one another out to best realize their shared objectives. This prediction relies upon the theory underlying Hypotheses 1 and 2, which assumes RMIGs will lobby legislators who are most likely to be their supporters, and based on descriptive representation, these legislators are likely to be legislators who descriptively represent the RMIGs. Likewise, legislators will look to maximize their own objective by accessing their existing coalitions of other interest groups and legislators who share their descriptive identity.

Research Design

My thesis project aims to answer the question of whether interest groups that advocate for the interests of racial/ethnic minorities (RMIGs) find more legislative success (the dependent variable), both in terms of legislator votes and overall bill outcomes, when they substantively represented by legislators who descriptively represent them (the independent variable). To assess the causal mechanism behind the benefits of descriptive representation, I conduct a survey of both legislators and their staffers and a second survey of RMIG staffers, asking both groups about their alliances with one another. Thus, my research design combines an observational study that tests for an association between RMIG's descriptive representation and legislator support of RMIG stances with a complementary study that specifically asks if alliances between these two actors exist to demonstrate that *alliances* between RMIGs and legislators with shared race or ethnicity increases RMIGs' lobbying success, not simply the presence of descriptive representation on a bill-to-bill basis.

Methodology A: Data Sources, Operationalizing and Testing Variables in Observation Study

I first analyze the association between RMIG legislative success and descriptive representation with observational data. Access to this dataset is provided by UCSD PhD candidate Nhat-Dang Do, who created an original dataset of interest groups lobbying behavior in the California State legislator. The dataset includes the roll call votes of California State legislators from the 2007-2008 legislative session to the 2013-2014 session, with information on the bill outcomes, the race of the legislators, and other demographic information about the legislator, including party, ideology, house in the legislature.

This dataset was merged with a data set from Do that included information on interest group stances on each bill during the same period, broken down by interest group type, including whether the interest group is an RMIG. Additional information includes data on potential confounders (party, ideology, and gender). As a research assistant, I helped Do code much of this data, including confirming the group names, group types, the race of the legislators, and the racial group the RMIGs were advocating for. The data set I utilize for this thesis is unique in that I have created new variables, including the DR Presence variable measuring descriptive representation between an RMIG and a legislator, and other variations of that variable, including the proportion variable that denotes the percentage of potential descriptively representative legislators whose vote on a bill aligned with a given RMIG.

The 'IG Stance' variable is a binary variable, which describes the interest groups' stance on a particular bill, with a "1" meaning the group supports passage and with a "0" meaning the group does not support passage. The 'Legislator Vote' variable is also a binary variable. This variable describes how the legislator voted on a particular bill, either in support of a bill, coded as a "1", or in opposition to a bill, coded as a "0". The DR Presence variable is coded as the

presence, “1”, or absence of, “0”, descriptive representation. In practice, each bill-session-group includes the votes of all 120 legislators as the unit of analysis in relation to each RMIG signal on a bill.

In analyzing this data, the primary independent variable is “DR Presence”. When ‘IG Stance’ and ‘Legislator Vote’ are the same, that is, they are both in support of or in opposition to a bill, then Success Vote is coded affirmatively, as a “1”. Otherwise, the variable is coded as a “0”. In my hypothesis H1, I predict that *RMIGs’ bill stances will be more likely to align with a legislator’s vote when they are descriptively represented by the legislator*. To assess this hypothesis, I will run a logistic regression (logit) to determine if DR Presence is a meaningful predictor variable on the dependent variable Success Vote.

Other explanatory variables for legislative voting behavior include political party (Grasse and Heidbreider 2011, Heinz 1993, Caress and Kunioka 2012), legislator seniority (Grasse and Heidbreider 2011, Neustadt 1990, Baumgartner 2009, Heinz 1993, Caress and Kunioka 2012), having a coalition (Bernhagen 2011, Ainsworth 1997), and lobbying group resources (McKay 2012, Binderkrantz and Pederson 2012, Heinz 1993, Costain 1998). A significant number of authors condition their findings with considerations of whether the policy goal contends with or maintains the status quo (Baumgartner 2009, Varone 2016, Heinz 1993, Caress and Kunioka 2012). Accordingly, I include the following control variables in the models to account for each of these relationships: party, ideology, legislator race, session, bill topics, and total signals.

A second regression is run to address my hypothesis H2, which states that *RMIGs’ bill stance will be more likely to align with the bill’s outcome with relatively higher levels of descriptive representation on a vote for a given bill*. While the first regression tests for the impact of descriptive representation on the ability of RMIGs to see their stance in legislator

votes, this regression will utilize a collapsed version of the initial data set – with the unit of analysis at the bill-session-group level – to test the relationship between the success of an RMIG at acquiring as many descriptively representative allies as possible and whether the RMIG’s stance was reflected in the bill’s outcome.

One row in this data set will describe an RMIG on a given bill in a given year, the proportion of descriptively representative legislators of the RMIG that aligned their vote with the RMIG’s stance, and the outcome of the bill (either a pass or fail). The regression analyzes whether RMIGs who achieved a higher proportion of the potential descriptively representative legislators is a statistically significant and positive predictor of an RMIG’s ability to influence the outcome of a bill.

Similar to the first regression, the primary independent variable assesses the presence of descriptive representation. DR Prop Alliance operates at the bill-session-group unit of analysis, as opposed to the vote-level unit of analysis. This variable is a proportion, with the numerator being the number of legislators who descriptively represent an RMIG and whose vote aligned with that RMIG’s stance on a bill; the denominator is the number of legislators who descriptively represent the given RMIG, regardless of their vote. This proportion captures the percentage of descriptively representative legislators, who theoretically are the best allies for RMIGs, that an RMIG was aligned with on a given bill. For example, in a scenario where the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund was in support of a bill, and there were 40 Latinx legislators voting on that bill, if 30 of those 40 Latinx legislators supported the bill, the DR Prop Alliance value would equal 0.75, representing that three-fourths of the potential descriptively representative legislators aligned with the RMIG on the given bill.

Methodology B: Data Sources, Description of Variables for Survey Component

The second component of my thesis involves survey data assessing RMIG and legislators' pursuit of lobbying alliances. Both original surveys received IRB exemptions on October 19, 2021 prior to being sent out to respondents, and were exempted because the survey procedures protected the subjects' identities. The first survey was sent to legislators in both the California Assembly and State Senate, a total of 120 potential respondent offices. In most cases, the questionnaires were sent via general office email. When email addresses were not publicly available, calls were made to the legislator offices and, in some cases, staff members requested that the survey be sent to specific staff members. Each legislator's office received the survey on Dec. 9, 2021, receiving reminders on Dec. 20 and on Jan. 5, 2022. Two offices responded to the first distribution, with the third response coming following the third distribution. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions, a mix of ranked choice and free response questions.

The second questionnaire was sent to the publicly available emails of RMIGs. A sample of 400 organizations from the overall population of interest groups from Do's dataset was randomly selected. I contacted RMIGs who did not have publicly available email addresses over the phone in attempts to locate email addresses. In some cases, a specific staff member's email was provided as opposed to a general office email address. The first sample of RMIGs received surveys on Dec. 1, 2021 with non-respondent groups receiving reminders on Dec. 20 and again on Jan. 7, 2022. Four organizations responded to the first distribution and two organizations responded to the second distribution. A second sample of RMIGs was conducted in an attempt to supplement the low response rate. This second sample received the survey only once, on Dec. 30, with two respondents answering the survey for this distribution. Of the 400 RMIGs sampled, only 274 organizations provided email addresses on their web sites or if asked via phone call.

The goal of both surveys is to investigate the causal mechanism behind alliance formation in the California State Legislature, specifically targeting information on alliances between RMIGs and the legislators who descriptively represent them. With two surveys, both sides of the policymaking process are represented, which should help fully understand a causal mechanism underlying legislator-interest group support in policymaking. While drafting both surveys, the design and wording of the questions were constructed in a way that was meant to maximize respondent comfort and likelihood of completing the survey based on existing literature, which included choices to make each question on its own page to make respondents feel they were making progress, along with including a progress bar (Pasek and Krosnick 2010).

The legislator survey asks legislators and their staffers to answer questions surrounding three disparate interest group types (business, education, and RMIGs) and how often they make alliances with the legislator and how represented their interests are in the legislature. Staffers are included in the survey because while legislators make the final decision on their vote, staffers can serve as filters or gatekeepers in terms of relaying interest group signals to the legislator (Caress and Kunioka 2012). Legislative staffers are commonly consulted in academic surveys surrounding legislative processes and outcomes (Caress and Kunioka 2012). The RMIG survey will ask organization staff members to identify their allies, specifically if their allies are more likely to be legislators who descriptively represent them and examples of their interactions with allies in the most recent legislative session. This version asks organization members to describe how well represented they feel in the California State Legislature and who they feel has represented them best, specifically asking if legislators who descriptively represent them are the strongest representatives of their interests.

To avoid social desirability biases, which may be especially prevalent amongst elected officials and interest group staffers who are in the public eye who have a need to remain socially desirable, respondents will be assured “that their answers will be kept confidential...—making it pointless not to tell the truth” (Pasek and Krosnick 2010 p. 42.) Copies of the survey will be included in the appendix section of the thesis.

Results

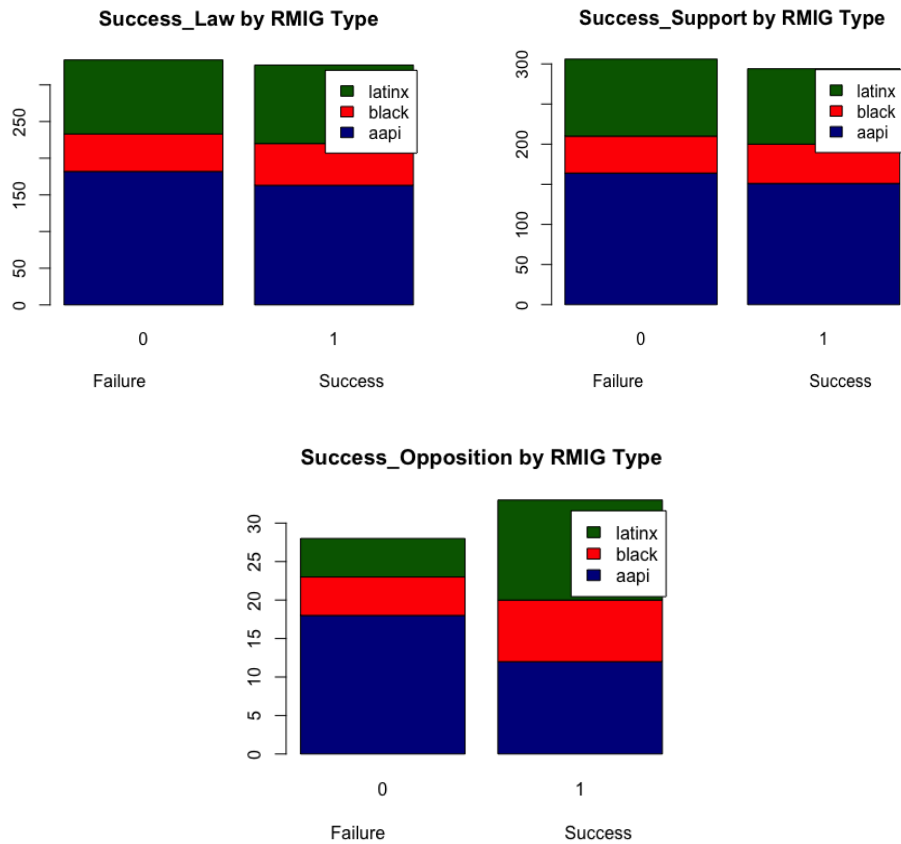
Summary Statistics – Outlining the Initial Information from the Observational Data Set

Before presenting the results from the observational data, I will first share some summary statistics. In the observational data set, there were 273 unique RMIGs that signaled on bills in the California State Legislature from the 2007-08 session through the 2013-14 session. Most RMIGs signaled on less than one bill per session, with some of the more well known, nationally active RMIGs signaling on multiple bills per session. Given literature that has demonstrated RMIGs as having a lower resource capacity in comparison to other interest group types, RMIGs may be limiting the number of bills they signal on, focusing on specific policies to maximize their likelihood of success (Strolovitch 2007, Ganz 2009).

There were, however, a few groups that stood from the rest in terms of signaling. From 2007 through 2013, eight groups signaled on 15 or more bills. Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality (40), Asian Law Alliance (18), Asian Pacific American Legal Center (17), and Asian Americans Advancing Justice (15) were the top signaling AAPI groups. MALDEF (37) and Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (28) were the top signaling Latinx groups. California State Conference of the NAACP (32) was the top signaling Black group, followed by the California Black Health Network (16). No other RMIGs signaled more than 15 times during this

period. Across racial groups, AAPI RMIGs signaled the most (345 different bills), followed by Latinx RMIGs (208 different bills) and Black RMIGs (108 different bills).

Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c: RMIG Success at Translating Bill Stances into Law



Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c demonstrate RMIG success at converting signals on bills into their desired outcome. Figure 3a describes how often RMIGs' bill stance results in a bill's outcome, Figure 3b describes how often RMIG's successfully support a bill that is passed, and Figure 3c displays how often an RMIG successfully signaled that it opposed a bill that ultimately failed.

As shown in Figure 3a, AAPI RMIGs converted their bill stances into their desired bill outcome 47.25% of the time, Black RMIGs 52.78% of the time, and Latinx RMIGs 51.44% of the time. Subset by supporting and opposing bills, AAPI RMIGs translated their stance into their

desired bill outcome 44.36% of the time when supporting bills, compared to 27.52% of the time when opposing bills. For Black RMIGs, they succeeded 65.37% of the time when supporting bills versus 25.72% when opposing bills. Latinx RMIGs succeeded at a rate of 55.96% when supporting bills, compared to a 52.80% rate when opposing bills. The variation in these findings could potentially be attributed to various factors, including differences between the types of bills each RMIG type signals on and differences amongst RMIGs representing the same race (e.g. a business-oriented RMIG will signal differently than a civil rights-oriented RMIG).

These findings do not confirm the literature on interest groups arguing that interest groups are generally more successful in opposing bills than supporting bills, though this may have something to do with the unique types of bills RMIGs signal on (Baumgartner 2009). Overall, RMIGs achieved their desired bill outcome (either in support or opposition to a bill) 49.47% of the time (see Figure 3a).

Figure 4: Histogram of Bill Topics, Subset by RMIG Type

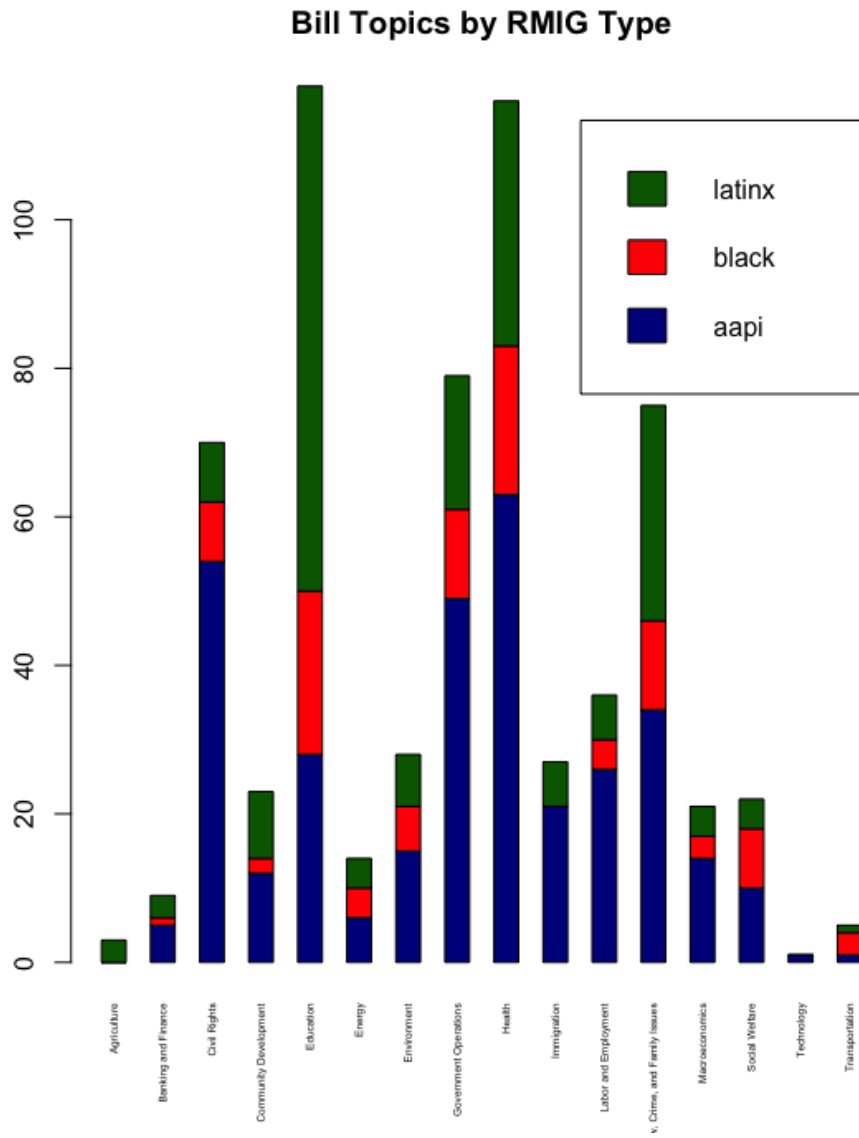
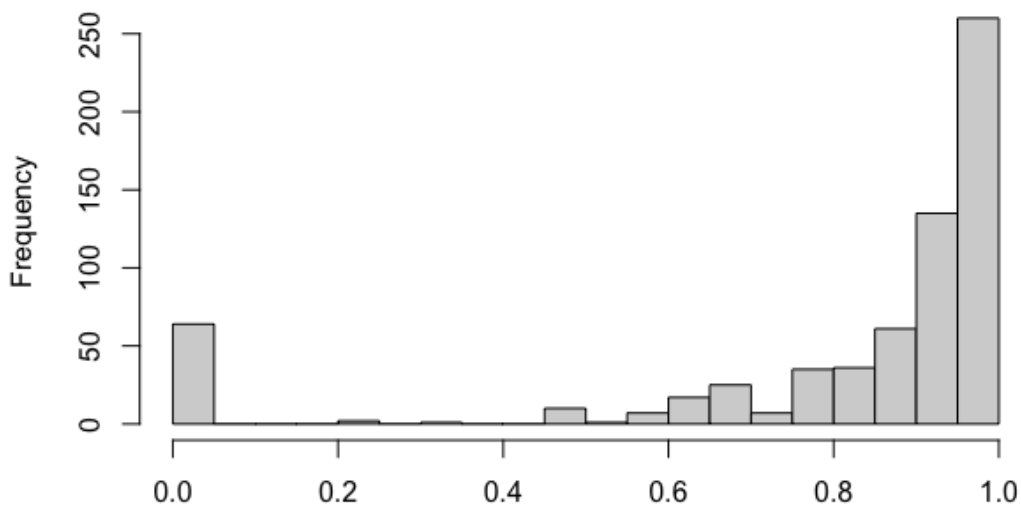


Figure 4 displays the various bill topics that RMIGs signaled on during the four sessions present in this study, subset by racial group. The most prominent topics in this period were bills related to education (118), health (116), government operations (79), law, crime, and family issues (75), and civil rights (70). All three RMIG racial groups signaled frequently on bills related to education, health, and law, crime, and family issues. AAPI RMIGs were the most

frequent RMIG sending signals on civil rights bills and also disproportionately signaled on immigration and social welfare bills compared to Black and Latinx RMIGs.

Across the 163,954 legislator vote and bill stance pairings present in this data set, only 19,789 (12.07%) represent instances of descriptive representation. AAPI RMIGs experienced descriptive representation on 9.36% of their signals, Black RMIGs received descriptive representation 7.23% of the time, and Latinx RMIGs were descriptively represented 19.93% of the time. Again, these percentages do not demonstrate how often RMIGs saw their bill stance translated into a vote or into law, but only how often the legislators they were providing bill stances for were legislators who shared their race.

Figure 5. Histogram of Proportion of Potential Descriptively Representative Allies



Some initial support for H2 is presented in Figure 5, which is a display of the variable ‘prop_DR_alliance.’ This proportion captures the percentage of descriptively representative legislators, who theoretically are the best allies for RMIGs, that aligned their votes with an RMIG on a given bill. Figure 5 demonstrates that on the majority of bills, at least 75% of

descriptive representatives aligned their votes with RMIGs. That is, on 528 bills (79.88% of bills), at least 75% of legislators descriptively representing an RMIG align their votes with that RMIG. On a plurality (239, or 31.16% of bills in the data with an RMIG stance) of bills, 100% of legislators voted in line with the stance of the RMIGs with a shared descriptive identity. In the 528 instances where 75% of the potential descriptively representative legislators aligned with RMIGs, RMIGs achieved their desired bill outcome 51.52% of the time, this compared to their 49.47% success rate overall. In the 239 instances where 100% of the potential descriptively representative legislators aligned with RMIGs, RMIGs achieved their desired bill outcome 50.21% of the time. While these figures suggest that legislators who descriptively represent RMIGs are overwhelmingly representing those RMIGs' issue stances, the lack of variation in the 'prop_DR_alliance' variables suggests that H2—*RMIGs' bill stances will be more likely to align with the bill's outcome with relatively higher levels of descriptive representation on a vote for a given bill*—may not be easily confirmed by the results of this study. Nevertheless, this hypothesis will be further explored in the multi-variate regression analysis section.

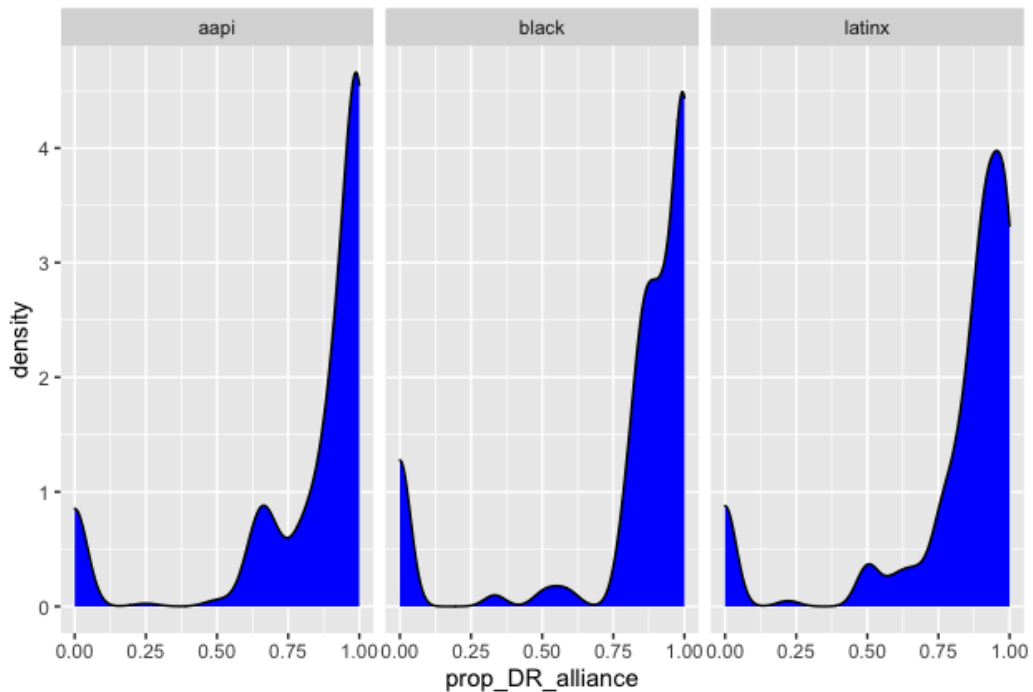
Interestingly, there were 64 instances where an RMIG received 0% of descriptively representative legislator support. These RMIGs did not experience any notable difference in bill outcomes—they actually achieved their desired bill outcome at a nearly identical rate to other RMIGs. AAPI RMIGs experienced 0% legislative support from descriptive representative allies the most frequently, with 33 of the 64 instances, while Black and Latinx RMIGs experienced this less. Additionally, 44 of these 64 unsuccessful RMIGs signaled two times or less throughout the four sessions covered in this study, though frequent signaling groups were not immune. Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality, MALDEF, and the California State Conference of the

NAACP, the top-signaling RMIGs for each racial group, each experienced a lack of support from descriptive representatives at least once across the four sessions.

These instances are highly irregular though, representing just 9.68% of RMIG signals in this data set, and likely could be explained by the RMIGs varying from the consensus amongst RMIGs or descriptively representative legislators on that particular issue. Interestingly, 51.56% of these RMIGs did see their bill stance translated into law, suggesting that at least in some cases, descriptively representative legislators do not have objectives that align with RMIGs, positioning themselves outside of the optimal alliance network for RMIGs in those few cases.

Figure 5 offers some support for the predictions outlined in H1, which theorizes that *RMIGs' bill stances will be more likely to align with a legislator's vote when they are descriptively represented by the legislator*, because most of the RMIGs experienced high levels of alignment from the legislators that descriptively represented them. Figure 6, displayed below, displays this data subset by racial group. It demonstrates that all three RMIG types were able to garner similar levels of support from legislators that descriptively represent their constituents.

Figure 6. Proportions of DR Legislator Allies' Stance Support Subset by Race



In my hypothesis H1, I predict that *RMIGs will be more successful at garnering a legislator's vote when they are descriptively represented by the legislator*. Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate that H1 might be confirmed, as RMIGs clearly are better able to translate their stances into their legislator's votes when the legislator is descriptively representing their constituents.

To better assess this relationship, I will present multivariate regression analyses in the following section. The regressions allow potential confounding variables to further assess the relationship between RMIG's descriptive representation and legislative support. I will then analyze the regression results surrounding H2 and the descriptive representation proportion variable on the likelihood of bill passage, before outlining shortcomings and discussing my results and areas of future study.

Regression Analyses – Descriptive Representation and Legislator’s Votes and Bill Success

Regressions for H1 assess the connection between the predictor variable DR Presence and the outcome variable Success Vote, along with potential confounding variables, which will I present later in this section. Table 1 presents the results from a bivariate regression between the primary independent and dependent variable. This regression demonstrates that descriptive representation has a statistically significant, positive influence on RMIGs’ in garnering legislator votes. This provides further preliminary support for H1. That is, a legislator’s vote is more likely to reflect an RMIG’s bill stance when the legislator shares the same race and ethnicity of the RMIG’s primary constituency.

Table 1: Vote Alignment, ‘DR_Presence’ Regression, no control variable

	Dependent Variable: Success Vote
Independent Variable: DR Presence	0.904*** (0.019)
Constant	0.489*** (0.005)
Observations: 163,082	Note: *** p < 0.01

Does this relationship change with confounding variables? In the next regression (Table 2), the party of the legislator and the ideology of the legislator are included as potential confounders. Both variables would be expected to change how likely a legislator’s vote is to align with an RMIG’s stance. A Republican or conservative legislator is less likely to vote in line with an RMIG with typically liberal policy preferences. The legislator’s race is included to assess differences between legislators and how these differences impact the ability of RMIGs to garner votes from those who descriptively represent them. On the RMIG level, Total Signals is

included as a proxy for RMIG resources. This variable describes how many signals an RMIG sent to the legislature over the four-session period of this study. The assumption is that groups that sent in greater numbers of signals are more resource-rich than other RMIGs and consequently are more likely to provide resources (based on legislative subsidy literature) that could influence a legislator to vote with the RMIG's bill stance (Neustadt 1990, Varone 2020, Grasse and Heidbreider 2011, Varone 2016, Costain 1998, Hall and Deardorff 2006), though some frequently cited literature pushes back against these claims (McKay 2012, Baumgartner 2009). The bill topic variables assess bill topics and account for variations amongst issue areas that could influence a legislator's vote alignment with RMIGs.

Table 2: Vote Alignment, Descriptive Representation with control variables

	Dependent Variable: Success Vote
Independent Variable: DR Presence	0.176*** (0.024)
Republican Party	-0.590*** (0.044)
Independent (not Democrat/GOP)	1.190*** (0.255)
Ideology Score	-0.625*** (0.015)
Legislator Race = Black	-0.254*** (0.034)
Legislator Race = Latinx	-0.245*** (0.028)
Legislator Race = White	-0.075*** (0.028)
Session	0.0000*** (0.00000)
Bill topic: Banking and Finance	0.519*** (0.111)
Bill topic: Civil Rights	-0.075 (0.099)
Bill topic: Community Development	0.097 (0.100)

Bill topic: Education	0.507*** (0.097)
Bill topic: Energy	-0.067 (0.104)
Bill topic: Environment	-0.966*** (0.099)
Bill topic: Government Operations	0.342*** (0.098)
Bill topic: Health	0.313*** (0.097)
Bill topic: Immigration	1.493*** (0.109)
Bill topic: Labor and Employment	-0.169 (0.099)
Bill topic: Law, Crime, and Family Issues	0.051 (0.098)
Bill topic: Macroeconomics	0.693*** (0.102)
Bill topic: Social Welfare	0.578*** (0.104)
Bill topic: Technology	2.878*** (0.410)
Bill topic: Transportation	0.826*** (0.125)
Total signals	0.003*** (0.0005)
Constant	-92.365*** (5.703)

In this regression, the primary predictor variable of interest, DR Presence, is again positive and statistically significant, which further confirms H1 that RMIGs are more successful at garnering legislator votes when the legislator descriptively represents the RMIG's constituents, even when controlling for potential confounding explanatory variables. The negative and statistically significant coefficient on Ideology Score suggests that RMIGs experience greater support from legislators with liberal ideology scores. The Total Signals variable was positive and statistically significant, demonstrating that RMIGs that signaled frequently were more likely than other RMIGs to see a legislator's vote reflect their bill stance,

which is supported by the literature that presents resources as the primary explanatory variable behind interest group legislative success. The most frequently signaled bill topics, education and health, were both positively correlated with Success Vote. Immigration-related bills, most frequently signaled by Latinx and AAPI RMIGs, have one of the stronger positive correlations.

Table 3: Bill Outcome, DR Proportion Alliance with no control variables

	Dependent Variable: Success Law
Independent Variable: DR Prop Alliance	0.060 (0.066)
Constant	0.446*** (0.058)
Observations: 661	Note: *** p < 0.01

Next, Table 3 presents the results from a bivariate regression of DR Proportion Alliance on Success Law, which measures whether a bill’s outcome aligns with an RMIG’s stance. The coefficient is positive but is not statistically significant. This result does not fully confirm H2, which predicts that RMIGs will find more success in terms of passing and killing bills as a greater proportion of legislators who descriptively represent them voted in their favor. However, these results may be slightly misleading. Reviewing Figure 4 provides a reminder that the vast majority of RMIGs experienced a proportion of descriptively representative allies greater than 80%. Because of this, there is not much variation in the proportion of descriptive representatives who support RMIGs to determine whether bill outcomes are more likely when RMIGs experience greater levels of support among descriptively representative legislators.

Table 4 suggests a similar result. When controlling for potential confounders in the regression the primary independent variable, DR Proportion Alliance, has a negative, but

statistically insignificant relationship with Success Law. This finding fails to support H2, which expects a positive relationship between these two variables. Again, I believe this lack of corroboration can be explained by the lack of variance in the DR Proportion Alliance variable.

Table 4: Vote Alignment, Descriptive Representation with control variables

	Dependent Variable: Success Law
Independent Variable: DR Prop Alliance	-0.012 (0.068)
RMIG Type = Black	0.027 (0.056)
RMIG Type = Latinx	0.049 (0.047)
Session 2009	-0.045 (0.059)
Session 2011	0.196*** (0.052)
Session 2013	0.136** (0.056)
Bill topic: Banking and Finance	0.559* (0.324)
Bill topic: Civil Rights	0.498* (0.288)
Bill topic: Community Development	0.522* (0.298)
Bill topic: Education	0.492* (0.283)
Bill topic: Energy	0.705** (0.309)
Bill topic: Environment	0.456 (0.297)
Bill topic: Government Operations	0.409 (0.286)
Bill topic: Health	0.440 (0.284)
Bill topic: Immigration	0.910*** (0.297)
Bill topic: Labor and Employment	0.497* (0.294)
Bill topic: Law, Crime, and Family Issues	0.654** (0.286)

Bill topic: Macroeconomics	0.355 (0.301)
Bill topic: Social Welfare	0.650** (0.302)
Bill topic: Technology	0.980** (0.562)
Bill topic: Transportation	0.754** (0.358)
Total signals	0.00001 (0.002)
Constant	-0.105 (0.289)
Observations: 647	Note: *** p < 0.01

Survey Results – Results, Limitations, and General Conclusions

The survey component of my thesis is limited in terms of response rate. Only 11 respondents participated in the surveys, and the respondents were not representative of the overall sample. Therefore, the results are not fully generalizable. The responses to the legislator version, with an overall response rate of 3/107 (2.80%), are largely incomplete. The responses to the RMIG version, with the overall response rate at 8/274 (2.92%), are more useful. I found legislators and RMIGs to be hard to reach populations that were likely even harder to reach during a global pandemic and the additional demands on their time that resulted. Across both surveys, respondents did not provide sufficient answers in the open-ended text box questions, but most respondents did answer the close-ended question. These findings, while limited, provide some evidence for whether descriptive representation is important for the alliances between legislators and RMIGs.

Looking at demographics, five of the eight RMIG respondents reported their organizations to be representing AAPI constituents. The three other RMIG respondents represented Black organizations. None of the RMIGs represented Latinx members. Of the six

respondents to the political party affiliation question, four reported themselves as Democrats, while the other two reported themselves to be Independents. These demographics present a very limited ability to generalize from these results. Specifically, AAPI and Black RMIGs with Democrat or independent memberships are the only ones represented in the sample, which certainly leaves out the thousands of Latinx RMIGs and Republican-leaning RMIGs active in California.

Target Question Breakdown – RMIG Survey

Still, the results provide some insights into H3 concerning RMIGs' attempts to seek alliances with legislators who descriptively represent them. As seen in Figure 7, all seven respondents described at least sometimes seeking alliances with legislators who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups. Five of the seven frequently or always seeking these alliances. This response demonstrates that RMIGs, or at least those sampled here, have generally recognized the strategic importance of interacting with legislators of racial or ethnic minority groups. This provides some support for H3—*RMIGS will actively seek alliances with legislators who descriptively represent them*. Legislators from racial and ethnic minority groups could potentially descriptively represent RMIGs, but that is not necessarily the case. An AAPI RMIG could seek an alliance with a Black legislator but that is not descriptive representation.

Figure 7: Asking RMIGs about Actively Seeking Alliances with Minority Legislators

Q4 - In general, how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups?

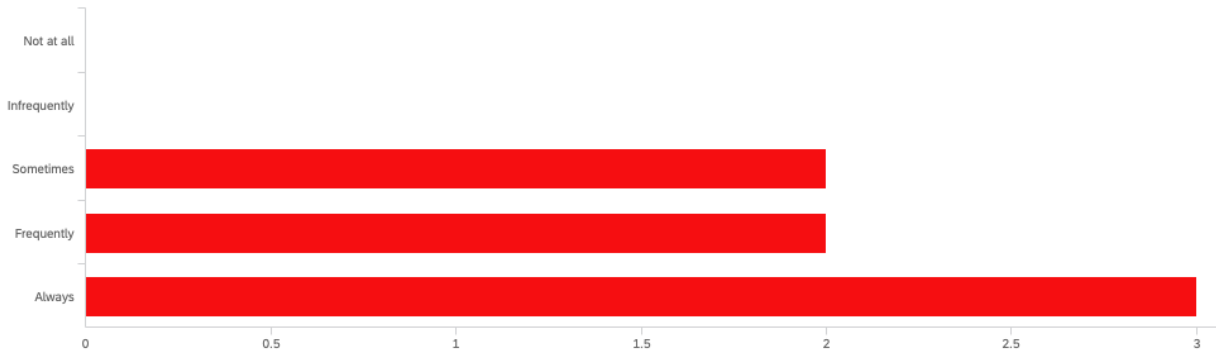
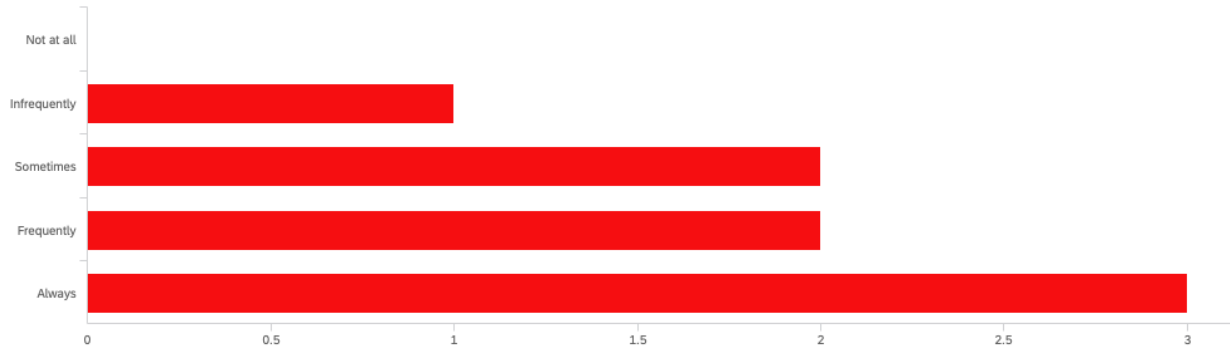


Figure 8 indicates more direct support for H3 as it asks RMIGs about seeking alliances with legislators who share their members' race or ethnicity. Of the eight respondents, seven described at least sometimes actively seeking alliances with legislators that descriptively represent their RMIGs' members, with five of the seven frequently or always actively seeking these alliances. These alliances are the key evidence for my theory and represent the potential causal mechanism for RMIG success. The limitations of the sample limit how generalizable I can claim my theory to be, but these results are still promising.

Figure 8: Asking RMIGs about Seeking Alliances with Descriptively Representative Legislators

Q5 - Specifically, how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators who are members of the racial or ethnic group(s) your organization represents?

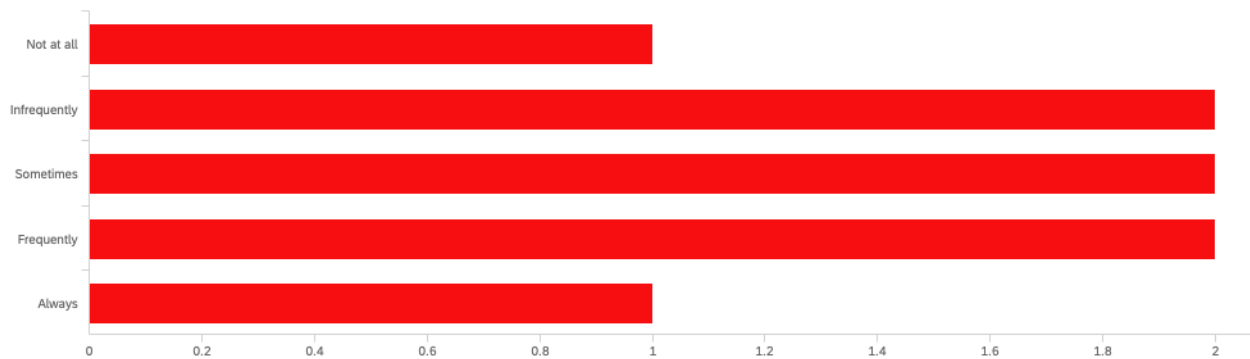


These connections are especially promising when compared to Questions 24 and 25 of the survey. Question 24 asks *“how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators who are NOT members of racial or ethnic minority groups?”* Only three of eight RMIGs described frequently or always actively seeking alliances with white legislators. Q25, shown in Figure 9, asks *“specifically, how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators who are NOT members of the racial or ethnic group(s) your organization represents?”*

As shown in Fig. 9, six of eight respondents indicated that they only sometimes, infrequently, or never actively seek alliances with white legislators. Bringing these results back to the comparison with Question 5, which determined that four of seven respondents frequently or always actively seek alliances with legislators who descriptively represent their members, demonstrates the salience of descriptive representation in alliance formation for RMIGs. Essentially, the RMIGs sampled in this survey actively seek alliances with legislators who

descriptively represent them, but do not actively seek alliances with white legislators or with other legislators that do not descriptively represent their members.

Figure 9: Asking RMIGs about Alliances with Non-Descriptively Representative Legislators



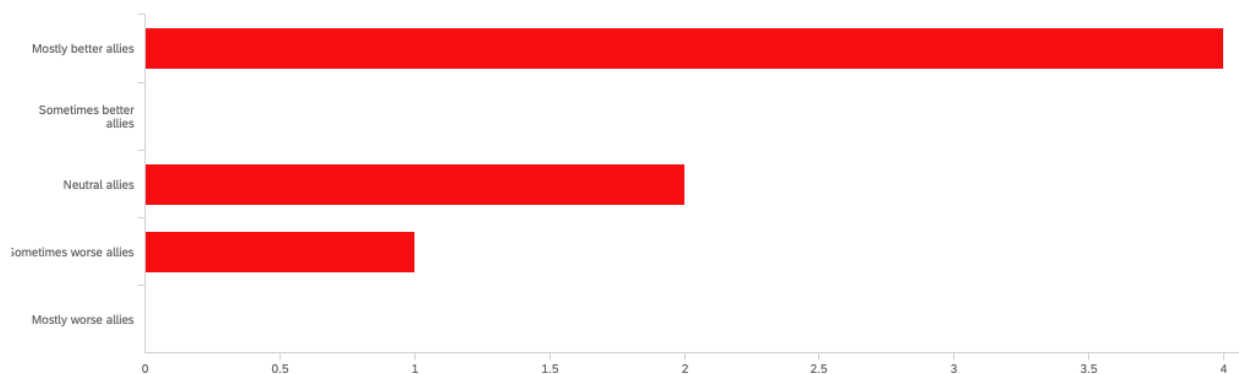
This begs the question of “Why not?” Why not seek alliances with all legislators, especially when RMIGs are low resource compared to other interest group types? Should RMIGs not be looking to make as many connections as possible? I theorize that RMIGs are not actively seeking alliances with white legislators, or with legislators that do not descriptively represent their members, because they feel they will be more substantively represented by legislators who descriptively represent them. Because of this, and because of RMIGs’ historically seeking resource-efficient strategies, I argue that it logically follows that RMIGs would primarily focus on legislators who descriptively represent them, while subsequently more or less ignoring other legislators. Additionally, based on literature surrounding legislative coalitions and networks, RMIGs, or rather the legislators they *do* ally with, are unlikely to be completely abandoning these other legislators, and in fact are certainly working with these legislators on the RMIGs’

behalf to further their mutual objectives. In helping to confirm this potential explanation, responses from questions surrounding representation perception are discussed next.

Question 8 (results displayed in Figure 10) essentially asked respondents to answer the same question I posed earlier surrounding why RMIGs do not report actively seeking alliances with white legislators and legislators that do not descriptively represent their members. Of the seven respondents, only one reported descriptively representative legislators to be sometimes worse allies, with six of the seven respondents reporting that these legislators were either neutral or mostly better allies than other legislators. The “other” legislators in this question are white legislators and legislators that do not descriptively represent their members.

Figure 10: Asking RMIGs about Alliances Quality with Descriptively Representative Legislators

Q8 - Do you feel that legislators in the CA State legislature who share a racial/ethnic identity with your members' identity are better or worse allies than other legislators?



So, why are RMIGs not actively seeking alliances with white legislators and legislators that do not descriptively represent their members? Perhaps because they feel that legislators who *do* descriptively represent their members are generally better allies. In a low-resource

environment, where it may not be possible to actively seek alliances with hundreds of legislators, it would be logical for RMIGs to only target the legislators who will best represent them. And in theory and in the descriptions provided by this sample of RMIGs, the legislators who will be the best representatives of RMIG interests seem to be those legislators who are descriptive representatives of the RMIGs' members.

Legislator Survey Response Breakdown – Limited by Poor Response Rate

Looking at demographics, all three responses came from staffers, including one chief of staff. There were no legislators in the sample. Only one of the three staffers provided other demographic information (gender, race, party). Only one staffer responded to Question 29, which asked “*Do you feel that your minority racial/ethnic group advocate-oriented interest group allies are well represented or poorly represented by members of the CA State legislature?*” The respondent answered that their RMIG allies were mostly well represented of the CA State legislature. Again, the small number of responses makes the survey quite limited in terms of generalizability and analyzing the results.

Conclusions from RMIG Survey

For the RMIG version, the general conclusions drawn from the responses support the theory that RMIGs reported feeling that legislators who descriptively represented them were mostly better, or at least neutral, allies and that these same legislators were the ones RMIGs reported actively seeking alliances with. Comparing RMIG responses on descriptively representative allies to white and other non-descriptively representative allies demonstrates a potential causal mechanism underlying RMIG success. Namely, RMIGs find success not only

because of the presence of descriptive representation, but because of their strategic use of this presence.

Despite the limited generalizability, the findings of this survey indicate that RMIGs purposefully ally with legislators who descriptively represent their members, allies who the theory and the survey responses suggest are mostly better allies for RMIGs than other legislators. This congruence between the survey responses and the theory, despite the small sample size and generalizability concerns, is encouraging and warrants further study of this linkage in future scholarship, hopefully from researchers who are better able to garner a high response rate.

The low response rates and respondent totals mean the results are not likely to be generalizable to all stakeholders. However, the RMIG version (8 respondents) does very much follow the theory I have outlined for my hypothesis, providing evidence that at least some RMIGs actively seek alliances with legislators who descriptively represent their members more often than those who do not, which could be because RMIGs perceive descriptively representative legislators as better allies than non-descriptively representative legislators.

Discussion

Reiterating Findings and Limitations and Describing Interaction with Theory

In the observational portion of my thesis, I was able to confirm H1, suggesting that *RMIGs' bill stances are more likely to align with a legislator's vote when they are descriptively represented by the legislator*, through summary statistics, bivariate, and multivariate regression analysis. This confirmation of descriptive representation was furthered by the survey portion of my thesis, which, despite a limited response rate, produced preliminary results demonstrating that at least some RMIG staffers believe they are better represented by legislators who

descriptively represent them. This is an important finding because it means that, based on the literature surrounding RMIG strategy, RMIGs would indeed seek out descriptively representative allies in the Legislature because they believe these allies will allow them to maximize their limited resources to recognize their policy objectives. This active descriptively representative alliance seeking behavior is separately confirmed by the survey portion of the study, confirming H3—*RMIGs do actively seek alliances with legislators who descriptively represent them*. While H4 could not be confirmed, due to especially low response rates among legislators, the focus of this thesis is on RMIG behavior, not legislator behavior.

The observational portion of my thesis could not confirm H2, that *RMIGs' bill stances will be more likely to align with the bill's outcome with relatively higher levels of descriptive representation on a vote for a given bill*—at least not directly. In the observational study, RMIGs were determined to be successful nearly 50% of the time and were determined to be experiencing a proportion of descriptively representative alliances of greater than 75% on hundreds of bills. RMIGs experienced legislative success in California in terms of bill outcomes, 'success_law', and generally experienced high levels of descriptive representation. These two findings could be further assess in future analyses to confirm this connection more concretely.

Implications of Findings, Limitations, and Areas of Future Study

In writing this thesis, I hoped to fill the gap in the literature surrounding RMIGs, specifically looking into whether they experienced descriptive representation and whether this descriptive representation translated into legislative success in terms of bill outcomes. On that front, I believe I have demonstrated that, at the very least, RMIGs require more study, particularly regarding their legislative success and strategies. I believe I have shown that their

legislative success can likely be explained by descriptive representation and the alliances and legislative coalitions that come with descriptive representation.

While my observational study experienced a sufficiently large sample size, this study could certainly be expanded to determine patterns over greater periods of time surrounding representation. Primarily, I believe more studies surrounding the impacts of the composition of the legislature, as in Michael Minta's 2019 study of Congressional committees and diversity in coalitions leading to RMIG success, would be particularly useful in helping unpack how RMIGs can find greater success. Such studies could help greater represent racial and ethnic minority residents throughout the country.

The analyses could be further improved with other control variables, namely control variables that could affect the strength of a legislative ally—legislator experience. For example, a variable assessing each legislator's number of years spent in the legislature could be useful. Extant literature finds that experienced allies in Congress have an impact on the legislative outcomes of bills (Baumgartner 2009). Because of this, I would hypothesize that California State Senators may have an outsized impact on legislative outcomes compared to their less-experienced counterparts because of term restriction reforms in 2012 (Caress and Kunioka 2012). Additionally, my study only covers four sessions, which limits the ability to evaluate the change over time of the presence of descriptive representation, RMIG behavior, and strategy formation. Ideally, future studies would cover multiple decades, beginning with 1990 and moving into the present moment.

The survey results were not as compelling due to the limited generalizability of the findings due to a limited response rate of less than 3% for both surveys. I found legislators and RMIGs to be hard to reach populations that were likely even harder to reach during a global

pandemic and the additional demands on their time that resulted. Still, the results provided some limited support for the causal mechanism supporting the descriptive representation of RMIGs. Future research, with a larger survey of RMIGs and legislators, could delve deeper into alliance formation and descriptive representation, which my observational study demonstrates are potentially meaningful predictors of RMIG legislative success.

Nevertheless, this thesis demonstrates that RMIGs, who have fewer resources compared to their lobbying counterparts, are more able to successfully lobby their legislators when the legislators descriptively represent them. The findings highlight that descriptive representation is not just symbolic and it does not only directly improve the representation of racial and ethnic minorities. Descriptive representation indirectly improves marginalized groups' representation by increasing RMIGs' lobbying capacity via alliances.

###

APPENDIX: Surveys of Legislators/Staffers and RMIG Staffers

Legislator Version

(Page 1) Introductory Text: ____, an assistant professor, and ____, undergraduate researcher, at the University of California, San Diego are conducting a research study to understand legislators' perceptions of the lobbying process. We are asking you to participate in this study because you, as a California State Legislator, are uniquely knowledgeable about this process.

This survey aims to expand upon research on political representation. Specifically, this survey seeks to understand how legislators view and respond to their constituents. The survey will consist of twenty questions, of which eight will be open-ended and seven will be multiple choice. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The confidential results will be published as part of an undergraduate honors thesis paper in March 2022.

Although you will receive no compensation for your participation, completing this survey will help us to understand more about our representation. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. Your survey responses will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Any information that could be used to identify you will not be associated with any survey responses, and we will not be used in any published materials. Only ____, the principal investigator, and ____, the undergraduate student researcher, will have access to the data collected in this research survey.

If you want additional information, would like a final copy of the final research paper, or have questions or research-related problems, please email ____, at ____ or ____, at _____.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

[Proceed]

(Page 2)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research survey.

Warm-Up Question: *First, please describe your role in the legislative office you work for.*

[Open-ended response text box]

Demographic Question 1 [DQ1]:

Are you an elected official?

[1] Yes

[2] No

Demographic Question 2: {If DQ1 is NO}

Are you currently a staff member in the office of an elected official?

[1] Yes

[2] No

Demographic Question 3: {If DQ1 is NO}

Which position do you occupy?

[1] Chief of staff

[2] Senior staff member

[3] Legislative assistant

[4] Administrative assistant

[5] Intern

[6] Other, please specify _____

(Page 3) Question 1: *In general, how often do you actively seek out alliances with interest groups that focus on business interests (ie. CalTax, Chambers of Commerce, etc.)?*

[1] Not at all [2] Infrequently [3] Sometimes [4] Frequently [5] Always

(Page 4) Question 2: *Please provide one example from the most recent legislative session where you acted with such a group (ie. CalTax, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) to further that group's interests?*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 5) Question 3: *Do you feel that your business-oriented interest group allies are well represented or poorly represented by members of the CA State legislature?*

[1] Always well represented [2] Mostly well represented [3] Sometimes well represented [4] Mostly poorly represented [5] Always poorly represented

(Page 6) Question 4: *Recall any business-oriented interest groups (e.g., CalTax, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) that you consider your allies. Describe your interactions with these organizations during the most recent legislative session.*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 7) Question 5: *In general, how often do you actively seek out alliances with interest groups that focus on education interests (ie. Small School Districts' Association, California Teachers Association, etc.)?*

[1] Not at all [2] Infrequently [3] Sometimes [4] Frequently [5] Always

(Page 8) Question 6: *Please provide one example from the most recent legislative session where you worked with such a group (ie. Small School Districts' Association, California Teachers Association, etc.) to further that group's interests?*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 9) Question 7: *Do you feel that your education-oriented interest group allies are well represented or poorly represented by members of the CA State legislature?*

[1] Always well represented [2] Mostly well represented [3] Sometimes well represented [4] Mostly poorly represented [5] Always poorly represented

(Page 10) Question 8: *Recall any education-oriented interest groups (ie. Small School Districts' Association, California Teachers Association, etc.) that you consider your allies. Describe your interactions with these organizations during the most recent legislative session.*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 11) Question 9: *In general, how often do you actively seek out alliances with interest groups that focus on racial minority interests (ie. NAACP, MALDEF, etc.)?*

[1] Not at all [2] Infrequently [3] Sometimes [4] Frequently [5] Always

(Page 12) Question 10: *Please provide one example from the most recent legislative session where you worked with such a group (ie. NAACP, MALDEF, etc.) to further that group's interests?*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 13) Question 11: *Do you feel that your racial group is well represented or poorly represented by members of the CA State legislature?*

[1] Always well represented [2] Mostly well represented [3] Sometimes well represented [4] Mostly poorly represented [5] Always poorly represented

(Page 14) Question 12: *Do you feel that your racial group is well represented or poorly represented by CA State legislators of the same racial background?*

[1] Always well represented [2] Mostly well represented [3] Sometimes well represented [4] Mostly poorly represented [5] Always poorly represented

(Page 15) Question 13: *Recall any racial minority interest groups (e.g., NAACP, MALDEF) that you consider your allies. Describe your interactions with these organizations during the most recent legislative session.*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 16): The following questions are demographic questions to further contextualize your responses.

Question 14: *What is your gender?*

[1] Female

[2] Male

[3] Non-binary

[4] Prefer not to say

[5] Other, please specify _____

Question 15: *Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?*

[1] Yes

[2] None of these

Question 16: *Which of the following races do you consider yourself to be? (select all that apply)*

[1] White or Caucasian

[2] Black or African American

[3] American Indian or Alaska Native

[4] Asian

[5] Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

[6] Other (specify) _____

Question 17: Which political party do you most identify with, if any?

[1] Republican Party

[2] Democratic Party

[3] None or independent

[4] Other, please specify _____

(Page 17) Follow-up Question: This the final page of the survey. To better research the interactions between state representatives and interest groups, we may have more questions at a later date. Can we contact you if we do?"

[1] Yes [2] No

###

RMIG Version

(Page 1) Introductory Text: ____, an assistant professor, and ____, undergraduate researcher, at the University of California, San Diego are conducting a research study to understand legislators' perceptions of the lobbying process. We are asking you to participate in this study because you, as an interest group stakeholder/staffer, are uniquely knowledgeable about this process.

This survey aims to expand upon research on political representation. Specifically, this survey seeks to understand how legislators view and respond to their constituents. The survey will consist of fifteen questions, of which eight will be open-ended and seven will be multiple choice. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The confidential results will be published as part of an undergraduate honors thesis paper in March 2022.

Although you will receive no compensation for your participation, completing this survey will help us to understand more about our representation.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. Your survey responses will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Any information that could be used to identify you will not be associated with any survey responses, and we will not be used in any published materials. Only ____, the principal investigator, and ____, the undergraduate student researcher, will have access to the data collected in this research survey.

If you want additional information, would like a final copy of the final research paper, or have questions or research-related problems, please email ____, at ____ or ____, at ____.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

[Proceed]

Warm-Up Question: *First, please describe your role within the interest group/organization you work for.*

[Open-ended response text box]

Demographic Question 3: {If DQ1 is NO}

Which position do you occupy?

[1] Executive Director

[2] Senior staff member

[3] Administrative assistant

[4] Intern

[5] Other, please specify _____

(Page 3) Question 1: *In general, how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators?*

[1] Not at all [2] Infrequently [3] Sometimes [4] Frequently [5] Always

(Page 4) Question 2: *In general, how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups?*

[1] Not at all [2] Infrequently [3] Sometimes [4] Frequently [5] Always

(Page 5) Question 3: *Specifically, how often does your organization actively seek out alliances with legislators who are members of your racial or ethnic group(s)?*

[1] Not at all [2] Infrequently [3] Sometimes [4] Frequently [5] Always

(Page 6) Question 4: *Please provide one example from the most recent legislative session where your organization worked with a legislator who is a member of a racial or ethnic minority group to further your members' interests?*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 7) Question 5: *Do you feel that your own racial identity is well represented or poorly represented by legislators who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups in the CA State legislature?*

[1] Mostly well represented [2] Sometimes well represented [3] Neutrally represented [4] Sometimes poorly represented [5] Mostly poorly represented

(Page 8) Question 6: *Do you feel that legislators who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups in the CA State legislature who share your own racial identity are better or worse allies than other legislators?*

[1] Mostly better allies [2] Sometimes better allies [3] Neutrally allies [4] Sometimes worse allies [5] Mostly worse allies

(Page 9) Question 7: *Recall any legislators who are members of racial and ethnic groups and that you also consider your allies. Describe your interactions with these legislators during the most recent legislative session.*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 10) Question 8: *Recall any legislators who are members of different racial and ethnic groups than your members and that you also consider your allies. Describe your interactions with these legislators during the most recent legislative session.*

[Open-ended response text box]

(Page 11): The following questions are demographic questions to further contextualize your responses.

Question 9: *What is your gender? Please describe your gender in the box below.*

[1] Female

[2] Male

[3] Non-binary

[4] Prefer not to say

[5] Other, please specify _____

Question 10: *Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin? Please describe your racial/ethnic background in the box below.*

[1] Yes

[2] None of these

Question 11: *Which of the following races do you consider yourself to be? (select all that apply)*

[1] White or Caucasian

- [2] Black or African American
- [3] American Indian or Alaska Native
- [4] Asian
- [5] Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- [6] Other (specify) _____

Question 12: *Which political party do you most identify with, if any?*

- [1] Republican Party
- [2] Democratic Party
- [3] None or independent
- [4] Other, please specify _____

(Page 12) Follow-up Question: *This the final page of the survey. To better research the interactions between state representatives and interest groups, we may have more questions at a later date. Can we contact you if we do?"*

- [1] Yes [2] No

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