

Constituent Service Events and Minority Representation in State Legislatures*

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Abstract

Although roll call voting behavior does not distinguish legislators of different racial and ethnic groups, recent scholarship shows distinctiveness for minority representatives from white representatives because of informal legislative actions that increase substantive representation for minority groups, including enhanced constituency services. The theories of credit claiming, group consciousness, electoral threat, and legislative professionalism all provide a foundation for understanding dynamics of constituent service provision. This paper addresses the gaps and limitations of existing scholarship by exploring the interaction between the race of a representative and the demographics of the electoral district on patterns of constituent service provision and legislator engagement. I analyze how members of state legislatures provide constituency services through in-district events, and what factors affect the overall level of engagement and the amount of tailoring displayed in the content of these events to serve the needs of African American and Latina/o constituencies. Using an original dataset, I ran three models that tested the effects of district demographics and preferences, legislator characteristics, and statewide demographics on the number of constituency service events and the number of events tailored to same-race constituents. I find that African American and Latina/o state legislators display suggestive evidence of group consciousness in the types of events they hold for same race constituents, while also displaying strong demographic responsiveness in the events they hold tailored to out group constituents.

Introduction

In 2017 California state legislator Tony Thurmond held roughly 33 in-district legislator events. Many of the events focused on economic empowerment, policing, and civil rights issues that were tailored to appeal to the needs of the largely African American and working class state legislative district in California. On the other hand, only twenty miles away California state legislator Jim

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Frazier held only roughly 7 events in their legislative district, and most of the events featured little policy or service provision content, instead broadly inviting people to meet and talk with the representative. At first glance, it appears that these two legislators are representing their districts in very different ways, with the former representative providing considerably more effort in regards to constituent engagement and service provision. In other words, the former district's legislator is applying greater effort to win the support of their constituents and serve them in a personalized manner. A major theory that has attempted to address these varying dynamics in legislator engagement is "home style" politics. Additionally, an emerging literature in minority representation has focused on the distinct role that minority representatives play in advocating for their constituents beyond what provides them an electoral benefit.

Elevated levels of legislator engagement, constituent service tailored to the diverse needs of the residents in a district, and behind the scenes legislator activity are all believed to come from the group consciousness held by the minority legislator (Broockman 2013, Minta 2009, Minta 2011). Those possessing group consciousness are thought to have salient group identification, a preference for one's own group, a recognition that their group's current status and subsequent dissatisfaction, and a belief that their group's status is attributable to to inequities in the social system (Miller et al 1981). Until recently, scholars have largely focused their attention on the influence of group consciousness on mass political behavior, but this project contributes to a growing literature that analyzes group consciousness held by elite political actors. This project addresses two interrelated questions:

1. Do minority legislators engage with their constituents and provide constituency services beyond what would be predicted through electoral motivations?
2. How well do theories of legislator engagement explain these activities in state legislatures?

This study analyzes theories related to legislator engagement and constituent service provision,

conducting text analysis on the event-related content of twitter accounts operated by state legislators. I found that the effects predicted by theories of legislator engagement often considered to be universal to politicians are actually contextual to the interaction between the type of legislator and the demographics and preferences of the electoral district.

Home style politics is a strategy used by legislators to develop a personal vote among their constituents beyond what their partisan voters would provide them (Fenno 1978). This theory provides one of the most comprehensive explanations for why legislators act the way they do when they are in their legislative district. In this explanation there are voters within a district that will always support or oppose a candidate, and these voters are primarily policy oriented. The other portion of voters are theorized to be very responsive to how a legislator presents themselves to their constituents, with a particular electoral benefit given to legislators that provide constituency services, have frequent personal interactions with their constituents, and tailor their presentation to the social background of the district. The theory has two weaknesses: first, it strictly focuses on the electoral motivations of legislators and treats it in a uniform manner. Under this theory all legislators perceive electoral threat from either a general election defeat or primary challenger. This is despite strong variations in electoral threat from district to district and the emerging evidence that legislators are often motivated in their actions by loyalty to party, ideology, and group consciousness in addition to reelection concerns. Second, it does little to explain the variation in the number of the events or in the content of the events held, despite the substantive differences in legislator strategies and constituent outcomes that can be observed along the range of the variation.

There is emerging data showing that legislators instead display extremely wide variation in how much they reach out to their constituents and how personalized these events are to the population of the electoral district. These data would have been extremely difficult to collect in the past, as there are few official sources for the events legislators hold in their districts. Therefore, in a pre-digital age

most data sources have come from case studies for particular districts and interviews with legislators (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978, Pressman et al 1984). There are two methodological issues with this approach, although it should be noted that case studies and interviews give a richer detail of content and are often useful for theory development. First, there is the issue of selection bias: the legislators who agree to interviews and to have an academic shadow them for the purpose of a case study may be different from the general population of legislators. In particular, this approach may not reveal the large number of legislators who are relatively absent from their district and provide little outreach or services to their constituents. Second, interviews and shadowing a representative may not capture the full population of events held by a legislator, instead capturing the more notable events. In particular, it is possible that many events held where the legislator does not make an appearance would be missed under this approach.

In a pre-digital age, obtaining information on the full population of events for all legislators and then transcribing the content for each event by hand would be extremely time consuming and overwhelmingly difficult. However, although still somewhat difficult, it is now possible through social media, legislator websites, and legislator e-newsletters to obtain a much richer picture of the types of events held by legislators. Additionally, using text analysis via keywords to categorize events makes organizing the events (numbering in the tens of thousands) much more practical, although less accurate than the hand coding approach.

Another weakness of past literature on home style politics is that the theories were considered to be universal but were largely created using data on white members of Congress (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978, Arnold 1990, Hall 1996). This is a possible oversight given the emerging distinctiveness of minority legislators, particularly in regards to non-roll call vote activities and constituent services. Additionally, by only focusing on members of Congress the full spectrum of legislators that can be observed in all levels of government are ignored, instead focusing on those who have reached

the pinnacle of political power and professionalism within the legislative system. There are many reasons to expect that members of Congress may act quite differently than legislators at different levels of government, given their larger staffs, higher name recognition, and many other variables relevant to their methods of interaction with constituents (Squire 2007).

There are a lot of reasons why we would not expect Congressional behavior to be consistent with state legislators. There are both strong general differences between state legislators and members of Congress, along with a wide degree of variation between states in not only professionalism, but also level of party competition and various demographics. In my collection of data on state legislatures, I can observe several factors that make them quite distinct from Congress. While at the national level the Republican and Democratic Parties have been competitive and fairly evenly divided in control over the U.S. Senate and House over the last 25 years, in many states one political party is fairly dominant. States also vary greatly in the level of political polarization between the two main political parties. Additionally, several states have a greater proportion of third party and independent elected officials in office than exist at the national level, and some state Republican and Democratic parties are significantly to the left or right of their national counterparts. Lastly, state legislatures vary greatly in their proportion of non-white elected officials, with some states containing almost 100 percent white elected officials to other states in which non-white elected officials are the majority. A corollary to this is that some states have a much stronger party-race association than others. In states like Alabama and Mississippi, over 80 percent of white voters vote for Republican candidates and over 90 percent of African American voters vote for Republican candidates. These voting patterns are borne out in representation, in which elected Democratic officials are majority African American and the Republican Party has an all white representation. On the other hand, states such as New Mexico have a closer than average percent of Latina/os represented in the Republican and Democratic Parties.

Theories of Legislator Engagement

Legislator engagement or ‘Home Style’ politics is the process in which representatives communicate and build relationships with their constituents to signal what the representative is doing to serve their interests on capitol hill (Fenno 1978). These actions are key to building a personal vote for a representative, and although there are exceptions, are theorized to be relatively equally distributed among the constituents in a district and a preferred technique by ideological moderates in legislatures (Fiorina 1989, Cain et al 1987). These actions include hosting town hall meetings, legislative meet and greets, attending community events, giving speeches at graduation ceremonies, and many more. Legislator engagement has been thought to contribute to representation outcomes in both symbolic and substantive ways. Legislators who make a strong effort to reach out to constituents may help foster a sense of belonging and trust in government, particularly among minority groups if a special effort is made to reach them (Brown 2014, Tate 2004). In addition, at times legislator engagement events contain a significant component of constituent service provision and may help contribute to gains in substantive outcomes for constituents, particularly those low in socioeconomic status (Broockman 2013, Uslander 1985). Legislator engagement has been investigated in classics of Political Science literature and also has been increasingly adopted in a revived analysis of credit claiming in American Politics (Mayhew 1974, Grimmer et al 2012).

Credit Claiming

Credit claiming, broadly defined, is the process in which representatives send messages to their constituents on what the representative is doing to help bring legislative pork back to the district. It is operationalized as public statements to constituents by legislators on expenditures that are flowing into an electoral district that legislators are responsible for (Ferejohn 1984, Grimmer et al 2012). This is an effective strategy to boost morale in the district because it is a nonpartisan

message that signals the activities that the legislator partakes. This leads to increased support for the representative, and the cultivation of a personal vote in a manner that would not occur if the representative were solely sending out partisan content. Building a personal vote is seen as very important among legislators, and they engage in many other actions to help cultivate a personal vote beyond this specific type of credit claiming. Representatives have staff to help perform constituency services and engage in a wide variety of actions at the district level to help cultivate a personal vote. Additionally, members of Congress use their franking privileges, allowing them to send mail without postage, to deliver nonpartisan legislative updates to their constituents (Glassman 2007). An important distinction from the general definition of legislator engagement is that under this theory engagement is strictly non-ideological and focused on revenue streams that the legislator is procuring for the district (Arnold 1979). There is less of a focus on ideological engagement with constituents and constituent service.

Credit claiming can include such actions as hosting town hall meetings, legislative meet and greets, attending community events, giving speeches at graduation ceremonies, and many more actions. A key component of all these actions is that they are officially nonpartisan; these types of actions do not include fundraisers, campaign rallies, or the like; however, they can include events like ribbon-cutting ceremonies. In effect, all of these actions are sending the message that the representative cares about people like them and is an advocate for their preferences. Even something as innocuous as a legislator meet and greet can help build a personal vote for the representative. The cultivation of a personal vote through credit claiming is often thought to be strictly broad based, targeted equally throughout the district. However, at times it is rational for representatives to engage in a more targeted form of legislator engagement that falls short of ideological campaigning, but instead tries to particularly build a personal vote among a specific group of people. One of those instances is for minority representatives to build an especially strong personal vote among

co-ethnics.

Group Consciousness

Group consciousness, particularly among African American representatives, has been linked to higher levels of constituency service provision directed towards same-race constituents beyond what would be predicted from electoral incentives (Broockman 2013). These positive interactions with representatives may lead constituents to have higher levels of trust in government. Additionally, seeing members of systematically oppressed minority groups in leadership positions may lead minority groups to have higher levels of belonging and belief in the fairness of the United States political system. Seminal texts in the study of African American legislators have found that African American Republicans do not display much of the behavior and traits consistent with those holding group consciousness (Brown 2014, Rouse 2013, Tate 2004).

There are two important ways that representation and legislator engagement may function differently in districts represented by minority groups (especially African American representatives). First, there are inherent differences in the representation styles of minority representatives. This may come from the group consciousness held by the legislators. It may also come from minority representatives being recruited from different social networks. It may also come from different perceptions of upward political mobility (the moderating effect of contemplating a future run for governor, House of Representatives, Senate, President). It may also come from being part of a minority caucus (usually within the Democratic Party) in a legislature. This could lead to different elite actors and ‘whips’ for the legislators themselves to follow. Second, there are sharp differences in the type of districts they represent, particularly for African American representatives. Minority representatives predominantly represent districts in which their group is a numerical majority or at least a plurality. These districts are different from the mean district on several demographic variables

beyond race, including median income and wealth, along with poverty rates. Districts represented by minority legislators, particularly African Americans, are likely to have a lower median income (Proximity 2017). The discrepancies are even larger when it comes to poverty, and they are the largest when it comes to wealth (Proximity 2017). What are the implications of this? These districts may have a greater need for legislator engagement that contains constituent service provision. A low-income district would likely have more of a need for events with free legal aid, navigating the bureaucratic process, getting signed up for the ACA, along with other constituent service events. Additionally, these districts are more likely to be politically homogenous. On every measure, districts represented by minority groups and particularly African Americans are far more liberal/left than the average district, and even the average district represented by a Democrat (Tausanovitch and Warshow 2015). While there is only so far a liberal member can show their left-leaning nature in legislatures due to party control of what gets voted on, by holding ideological events, advocating for legislation behind the scenes, sponsorin and co-sponsoring left wing legislation, they can better make their legislator activity reflect their ideological orientation.

Electoral Threat

Both mass level political behavior and elites are affected by electoral threat. Electoral threat can be defined as when a legislator is in danger of losing reelection (Mayhew 1974). While scholars disagree on the exact electoral cutoffs that determine electoral threat, most agree that in the prescence of electoral threat elite and mass political actors change their behavior (Pantoja et al 2001). Given the threat of a close election, voter turnout often increases and in some cases may form the basis of the development of social movements and local political organizations (Berch 1993). The latter is particularly common in elections that display ideological polarization or racial, ethnic, or religious cleavages between the candidates and groups in the district (Bowler et al 2005).

Electoral threat has also been shown to have strong effects on elite political actors. Legislators may display changes in their voting behavior and the issues they emphasize in a campaign, but they are often very constrained by their political party and the groups that elected them; in fact, most legislators display very little ideological movement over the course of their political career (Bawn et al 2012). On the other hand, legislators are relatively unconstrained in their behavior in less ideological actions, such as legislator engagement. In traditional theories of Congressional politics, legislators assured to secure reelection will spend less time in their electoral districts and less attention will be paid to constituency services (Fenno 1978, Eulau et al 1973, Davidson et al 1984). Therefore, legislators who face a strong electoral challenger will respond by spending a greater time on constituency services along with other strategies to appeal to their constituents in ideologically neutral ways. However, African American and Latina/o representatives often find themselves in a very unique environment compared to the average legislator. Whereas legislators often are facing a modest threat of losing their next general election, this is almost never the case for African American and Latina/o representatives, who usually reside in districts that heavily favor the Democratic Party. Rather, perhaps compared to the average legislator the strongest electoral threat comes from the primary election. A testable hypothesis that emerges from the electoral threat literature is that state legislators facing a competitive environment (less than 65 percent of the vote received) in their last general or primary election will display higher levels of legislator engagement and constituent work and work much harder to produce a ‘personal vote’ for their next election. The electoral threat hypothesis is the one most strongly tied to the literature on ‘home style’ politics and personal vote building. It takes a middle ground between the non-ideological and non-service based credit claiming theory and the group consciousness theory focused on constituent service and ideological engagement.

Argument

The theories of credit claiming, group consciousness, and electoral threat all provide a solid foundation for understanding dynamics of constituency service provision. However, most studies on this topic have not disaggregated by the race of the representative. Lastly, almost all studies of credit claiming and constituency services have looked at members of Congress. An advantage of looking at state legislators rather than members of Congress is the much larger sample of African American and Latina/o legislators to draw from, making it easier to find results that are statistically robust.

There is a growing literature demonstrating the importance of minority representatives because of the informal actions they take for their minority constituents, one of which being constituency work (Rouse 2013, Minta 2011, Brown 2014). These informal legislative actions may be reflected in the legislator events held within electoral districts along with constituency services. These events often have an indirect effect of improving constituency services and perceptions of belonging among minority constituents. There may be an important interaction between the race of a representative and the demographics of the electoral district on patterns of legislator engagement, but few studies directly analyze this effect. I argue that minority legislators have internal and external forces that may cause them to act in ways contrary to what traditional and supposedly universal theories of credit claiming and legislator engagement would predict.

I argue first that minority legislators show a much stronger effort at constituency work and engaging with their constituents than what would be predicted by electoral motivations alone. This is reflected in elevated levels of engagement and constituency work across all racial groups, but particularly in the case of their same-race constituents. Similar patterns are found in bill sponsorship, behind the scenes policy making activity, and other actions that contribute to the substantive representation provided to constituents. Much of the explanation for this effect has

been tied to the group consciousness held by the legislator, but why a minority legislator displays greater effort on average for these activities for out-race constituents is less clear. It could be linked to the difficulty for many minority legislators to reach leadership positions within their legislative bodies. Additionally, others have pointed to the greater hurdles particularly women of color face to achieve elected office, so the greater effort displayed at representing constituents may come out of the higher level of emotional commitment to service needed to reach the position in the first place. Additionally, it may be due to the unique environment minority legislators often face, in which building a personal vote is less about universalistic and ideologically neutral constituent service and engagement but rather non-neutral policy and advocacy based legislator engagement and constituency service tailored to specific communities within an electoral district.

I argue next that minority legislators often find themselves in a unique electoral environment, an external force quite unique from what the average legislator faces. As discussed earlier, most minority legislators find themselves in districts very safe for Democrats in general elections. Therefore, while perhaps most legislators work to build a personal vote to avoid losing their general election and focus on relatively non-ideological content, most minority legislators lack an incentive to act in this way. Instead, they may make a stronger effort to incorporate ideological content and tailor their legislator events to specific constituencies in their district. This may be coupled with more partnership with community organizations and local political groups than the average legislator to help sponsor events that incorporate constituency services or activism with traditional credit claiming content. This unique electoral environment may also cause effects contrary to what group consciousness theories would predict. African American and Latina/o state legislators may make a greater effort at providing constituency services and reaching out to their constituents than what their mean electoral environment would predict, in part because of the chance of strong primary election challengers. Additionally, there is a strong case for the contextual role of the race and demographic context of the

electoral district in these contexts. Although African American and Latina/o legislators often have a relatively invariant and safe general election contexts, their primary election context can vary widely based on the racial and ethnic demographics of their electoral district. Almost all African American and Latina/o state legislatures represent heavily Democratic voting and ‘majority-minority’ electoral districts, but districts greatly vary in how diverse these districts are. Many are overwhelmingly African American or Latina/o, but others are relatively divided between racial groups. Given that voters consistently display a preference for being represented by someone of their own race or ethnic group, the latter situation creates a much more competitive electoral environment. In the latter environments, legislators may display a much stronger effort to evenly distribute their constituency services and constituent engagement events than what would be predicted by group consciousness. Therefore, I predict that minority legislators may demonstrate both demographic responsiveness and group consciousness in their patterns of constituent events.

I will measure the level of outreach and tailoring of constituency work through the framework of in-district legislator events. The use of this proxy variable builds off the credit claiming literature, which often use e-newsletters as an independent variable. As will be shown below, in-district legislator events and e-newsletters often contain very similar content, which makes twitter announcements of in-district legislator events an appropriately similar measure of legislator attention and outreach.

E-Newsletters are emails that are sent to constituents by legislators, a modern update to the legislator mail that constituents receive (Grimmer et al 2012). A standard email contains information on bills in Washington, and usually contains information on in-district legislator events. This section of the e-newsletter often has a title similar to: “Congresswoman x in the Community” or “Events in CA-16.” These sections of the e-newsletter almost always have credit claiming content. Events frequently contained in an e-newsletter, that also qualify as credit claiming content include: Ribbon cutting ceremonies, town hall meetings, ‘Breakfast with the legislator’ events, community health

forums, High school graduation ceremonies and many other events in this same vein. Additionally, e-newsletters very rarely have content pertaining to campaign rallies, fundraisers, or any other type of event with explicit electoral content. This is helpful because these types of events are not considered a form of legislator events.

While there is an emerging literature analyzing the use of e-newsletters by members of Congress to engage with constituents (Grimmer et al 2012), there is little work applying a similar framework to social media use by legislators. Furthermore, there is no work known to the author that analyzes legislator engagement through social media among state legislators. Therefore, this paper has the potential to make a distinct contribution to an emerging literature. Additionally, by analyzing the role of the race of the representative and the demographic context of the district, the project also may help shed light on distinctive types of representation among non-white legislators and the role of local political and demographics in determining the representational strategies of legislators.

I will analyze how state legislators provide constituency services through in-district legislator events. What factors affect constituency service provision and the tailoring of constituency services to varied racial groups, and how are these effects determined by the context of the electoral district? My research project will answer these questions.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is the strongest link between the percent Latina/o in a legislative district for African American representatives, and the weakest link for Latina/o representatives. This is because Latina/o representatives operate from a place of group consciousness for their constituents, while African American representatives will display responsiveness to Latina/o constituents.

Hypothesis 2

There is a stronger link between the percent African American in a legislative district and African American events for Latina/o representatives than for African American representatives. This is because African American representatives operate from a place of group consciousness for their constituents, while Latina/o representatives will display responsiveness to African American constituents.

Hypothesis 3

White state legislators will display strong responsiveness to the percent African American and Latina/o in a legislative district and the number of events tailored to African American and Latina/o constituencies.

Methodology

In this project I analyze how members of state legislatures provide constituency services through in-district legislator events. I will focus my attention on members of state legislatures for legislative sessions starting in 2014 to the present. The comparison of how members of state legislatures provide constituency services in their districts across the same legislative session will be on two dependent variables: the number of constituent service events and the number of all constituent service events tailored to same-race constituents. The independent variables will be the demographics of the electoral district, the policy preferences of the legislative district, and ideology of the legislator. Various control variables were also applied, including the political party of the legislator, the professionalism of the state legislature, state legislature polarization, various measures of Democratic Party state legislature control (Democratic Governor, proportion Democratic State House, proportion Democratic State Senate), state level demographic variables, and the proportion of racial/ethnic groups in state legislatures. The main data source for this paper is an original data set of state legislator events assembled from Twitter feeds associated with the representative. Using

a web scraping process I assembled the text of events held within the electoral districts, and apply them to three models that test my hypotheses.

The three models separately test the effects of legislator characteristics, district preferences, and statewide demographic, political, and institutional forces on constituent engagement and service events. The first model tests the relationship between district characteristics and constituent engagement events. This is my primary model that I test my hypotheses. I have also created two alternate models that test other variables for their effects on constituent events. The second model tests the relationship between legislator characteristics on constituent engagement events. The last model tests state level demographic and political variables. These models are subset by the race and ethnicity of the legislator. They separately test three key dependent variables: the overall number of constituent engagement and service events, the number of events tailored toward African American constituents in a district, and the number of events tailored toward Latina/o constituents in a district.

Additionally there will be two primary groups of analysis. The first group is a random sample of 217 of white state legislators, along with all African American and Latina/o state representatives. I will also analyze a smaller group of multimember districts in which a mix of African American, Latina/o and white representatives were elected. However, the number of legislators that fall into this category are rather small ($n=96$), and the number with twitter accounts is even smaller ($n=56$), which is why I also use a larger sample which trades off independence of variables for greater statistical power.

In summary, there are three models with three independent variables, subset among three different racial and ethnic groups within two different subgroups of analysis (multimember districts and general population).

Table 1: Variables of Analysis

Dependent Variables	Model 1 IVs	Model 2 IVs	Model 3 IVs
Number of Constituent Events	District Ideology	Legislator Ideology	Democratic Governor
Number of African American CE	District % African American	Political Party	% Democratic State House
Number of Latina/o CE	District Percent Latino	% Received in Prior Election	% Democratic State Senate State % African American State % Latino % African American in State Legislature % Latina/o in State Legislature

Data

The data sources used for the paper are organized into four different categories: constituent event data, legislator characteristics, district demographics and preferences, and state level demographics and effects.

Constituent Event Data

For this project I collected the tweets of all African American and Latina/o state legislators in office who have twitter accounts, along with a random sample of white legislators. 632 state legislators had twitter accounts among the 955 sitting African American and Latina/o state legislators. There were 46 Republicans and 586 Democrats. Due to time and resource constraints, twitter data was only collected on a portion of white state legislators and no twitter data was collected for state legislators of other races and ethnicities. Out of the 6235 white state legislators, 217 legislators were selected for twitter analysis using a random number generator. The random generator produced a number that corresponded to the row in an excel spreadsheet containing state legislators. Keywords were used to determine the number of tweets that referred to a constituent engagement event and the number of tweets tailored to African American and Latina/o constituents. The coding process is described in the table below.

Table 2: Constituent Engagement Event Keywords

Keyword Event	Explanation
Hall	Aimed to capture town hall events.
Greet	Aimed to capture meet and greet events.
Gather	Wanted to capture community gatherings
African Black	Aimed to capture uses of African American
Prison	Aimed to capture events on the school to prison pipeline, prison-industrial complex.
Latin Hispanic	Aimed to capture uses of Latino, Latina, Latinx
Immigration	Wanted to capture a variety of immigration related events.

Legislator Characteristics

State legislator ideology data was compiled from the American Legislatures Project (Shor and McCarty 2015). The methodology used to determine state legislator ideology uses a very similar scaling to that of DW-Nominate, and is considered to be the standard for state legislator ideology scores. These data was used to determine the relative extremism of the state legislator, which was formed by taking the absolute value of the legislator ideology scores. A weakness of this data source is that many recently elected state legislators are missing ideology scores. A forthcoming update to the data set will likely resolve this issue.

Another data source utilized was state board of elections data to determine electoral threat of a sitting representative. The election results for all state legislative primary and general elections for 2013-2016 were recorded. Additionally, the official legislative websites for all chambers of the fifty states were used to determine the race of the state legislator, along with basic identifying information such as the name, party, and caucus membership of the state legislator. Occasionally, the combination of caucus membership, official photo, and surname was inefficient to be have high

confidence in correct classification of the representative. In these cases, further information from the legislator's campaign and personal website were used to determine racial identification.

District Characteristics

2014 American Community Survey data was used to supply information on the demographics of each state legislative district in the United States (United States Census Bureau 2014, Proximity 2017). Information included in the final data set are as follows: total population, percent non-Hispanic white, percent African American, percent Hispanic or Latina/o, percent Asian American, and percent Native American for each state legislative district.

Additionally, state district ideology estimates were obtained from the American Ideology Project (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2015). This project produces ideology estimates for various electoral districts and local geographies, including congressional districts, state house and state representative districts, and state and city-level ideology estimates. The ideology estimates come from aggregating the policy preferences obtained from American National Election Study survey responses rather than aggregate voting behavior.

State Characteristics

I assembled information on the racial and political demographics of each state and the proportion of legislators in a state legislature belonging to a given racial group. This was drawn from United States Census Bureau data and my existing data set of state legislators stratified by race.

Results

The results are presented below. The effect of state district demographics and preferences on the number of constituent engagement and service events (abbreviated hereafter at CE) among

African American legislators will be discussed first, followed by the variables' effects on the number of CE tailored toward African American constituents and the number tailored toward Latina/o constituents. Secondly the effects of legislator characteristics on the number of CE and the number tailored toward African American and Latina/o constituents will be discussed. Lastly, the effect of statewide demographics, and legislature characteristics on the number of CE will be discussed. Following this, the same process will repeat in the discussion of Latina/o and white legislators. Please refer to the appendix for descriptive statistics of the constituent events and graphical representations of Model 1.

African American Legislators- District Demographics and Preferences (Model 1)

As seen in the table below, district ideology has a strong effect on constituent events. State district preferences are coded similar to DW nominate in which negative values correspond with more liberal districts. Therefore, it can be seen in the table below that the more conservative a district gets, the fewer constituent events are given by African American state legislators. Additionally, the number of events tailored to African American and Latina/o constituencies strongly decrease with the increasing conservatism of a district. On the other hand, district ideology has no significant effect on the number of constituent events or the number tailored to African American or Latina/o constituencies. On the other hand, the percent of African Americans in a state district has no significant effect on the number of constituent events or the number tailored to African American or Latina/o constituencies. As shown in the descriptive statistics in the table below, African American state legislators give significantly more African American tailored events than white or Latina/o state legislators, which suggests that African American state legislators give a lot of these tailored events even in districts with a low percent of African Americans. Given that there are 43 African American legislators in the data set that represent districts fewer than 10 percent African American,

Table 3: African American State Legislators and Constituent Events

	Dependent Variables								
	Constituent Events	African American CE	Latino CE	CE	AfAmCE	Lat CE	CE	Af Am CE	Lat CE
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
District Ideology	-15.184*** (3.667)	-22.139*** (5.702)	-6.195*** (1.172)						
% African American	-3.851 (5.719)	2.274 (8.892)	-2.908 (1.827)						
% Latino	20.064** (8.706)	14.477 (13.536)	11.349*** (2.782)						
Legislator Ideology				-3.025 (2.967)	-11.454*** (4.383)	2.573*** (0.756)			
Republican				13.562 (12.492)	7.972 (18.451)	4.843 (3.181)			
% Vote Received				0.040 (0.056)	0.085 (0.083)	0.010 (0.014)			
Democratic Governor							2.870 (2.805)	-7.588* (4.384)	0.331 (0.929)
State House % Democrats							52.361*** (20.087)	66.375** (31.422)	15.741** (6.656)
State Senate % Democrats							-41.096** (17.521)	-56.072*** (27.401)	-6.687 (5.804)
State % African American							-48.825 (36.838)	-40.012 (57.515)	-4.032 (12.183)
State % Latino							43.125 (53.009)	-103.946 (82.945)	-7.762 (17.570)
% State Legislators African American							50.254 (45.964)	-3.457 (71.740)	3.188 (15.196)
% State Legislators Latino							-45.557 (75.074)	140.230 (117.469)	23.275 (24.883)
Constant	13.582*** (3.493)	12.527** (5.430)	1.184 (1.116)	13.963** (5.572)	5.999 (8.230)	0.168 (1.419)	10.581** (4.753)	35.401*** (7.438)	-0.476 (1.575)
Observations	375	375	375	238	239	239	374	375	375
Adjusted R ²	0.062	0.039	0.135	-0.005	0.022	0.035	0.056	0.020	0.063

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

this result is likely not the result of a selection effect. Lastly, the percent Latino in a state district has a strong and positive effect on the number of constituent events and the number of Latina/o tailored events, but not the number of African American tailored events. This demonstrates the responsiveness that African American state legislators show to Latina/o constituents. Unlike African American constituents, these legislators don't give many events tailored to Latina/o constituents until they are a sizable proportion of the district.

African American Legislators- Legislator Characteristics (Model 2)

As shown in the table below, legislator ideology has a strong effect on the number of African American and Latina/o events, but not the overall number of constituent events. Like the district ideology variable, the variable is coded such that increasing conservatism leads to a decrease in the number of African American and Latina/o events. This interesting effect speaks to the more ideological nature of tailored events rather than a general town hall or meet in greet. Given that many events tailored to African Americans and Latina/o events take a political point of view, it makes sense that these events would be tied to legislator ideology while general events are not. On the other hand, political party does not exhibit any significant effects for any of the dependent variables. This most likely is linked to the fact that there are only 12 African American Republicans in the data set, and only seven of these legislators have twitter accounts. Additionally, the percent vote received did not have any significant effects for any of the dependent variables. This may be linked to the low level of electoral threat that many African American state legislators face. Most reside in heavily Democratic-voting districts, and 241 out of the 696 in the data set were unopposed in their most recent election. There is little indication that electoral threat is a large part of the decision making process for African American state legislators.

African American Legislators- Statewide Demographics and Legislature Characteristics (Model 3)

The party competition variables displayed conflicting results, which make them difficult to interpret. As displayed in the table below, the presence of a Democratic governor is correlated with a decreased number of African American tailored events. On the other hand, the proportion of Democrats in the State House of Representatives is strongly and positively related with the overall number of constituent events and African American and Latina/o tailored events. However, the proportion of Democrats in the State Senate is negatively related with the number of constituent events and African American events. Given that the presence of Democratic governors and the proportion of Democrats in state legislatures are correlated, this makes the results difficult to interpret. It is possible that an outlier state is driving these odd results. The percent of African American and Latinos in a state has no significant effects with the constituent events in a district or the number tailored to African Americans and Latina/os. The proportion of African American or Latina/o legislators in a state legislature also has no significant effects on the constituent events in a district.

Latina/o Legislators- District Demographics and Preferences (Model 1)

As shown in the table below, district ideology has no significant on constituent events performed by a Latina/o state legislator. This is an interesting contrast in comparison to the strong effects displayed among African American legislators. There is a strong and significant relationship between the percent African American in a legislative district on the number of constituent events and the number of events tailored to African American constituents. This is similar to the result shown among African American legislators, in which there is a strong relationship between the percent Latino in a district and events tailored to Latina/o constituencies. Latina/o legislators display

Table 4: Latina/o State Legislators and Constituent Events

	Constituent Events (CE)		Dependent Variable						
	(1)	(2)	African American CE (AfAm CE)	Latino CE (Lat CE)	CE	AfAmCE	Lat CE	CE	Af Am CE
District Ideology	-1.822 (3.586)	-1.822 (3.586)	-9.121 (16.754)						
% African American	25.056*** (8.455)	25.056*** (8.455)	3.492 (39.506)						
% Latino	-3.666 (4.442)	-3.666 (4.442)	27.891 (20.753)						
Legislator Ideology				-4.959 (3.626)	-2.122 (2.645)	-3.604 (6.224)			
Republican				2.296 (8.402)	-0.451 (6.130)	-15.734 (14.424)			
% Vote Received				0.067 (0.091)	0.001 (0.066)	-0.074 (0.155)			
Democratic Governor							-0.218 (4.442)	-5.240 (3.330)	-20.427 (15.174)
State House % Democrats							83.089*** (26.955)	21.710 (20.207)	71.779 (92.071)
State Senate % Democrats							-71.301*** (22.324)	-8.560 (16.735)	-60.725 (76.250)
State % African American							239.761*** (57.850)	74.048* (43.367)	356.345* (197.597)
State % Latino							51.388 (50.739)	6.114 (38.036)	174.253 (173.309)
% State Legislators African American							-252.429** (54.231)	84.307** (40.654)	-290.059 (185.236)
% State Legislators Latino							-38.179 (70.062)	-10.616 (52.521)	-213.554 (239.307)
Constant	6.727** (2.777)	6.727** (2.777)	16.235 (12.973)	17.231** (8.112)	5.177 (5.918)	32.870** (13.926)	11.237 (8.970)	3.666 (6.725)	15.536 (30.640)
Observations	208	208	208	139	139	139	208	208	208
Adjusted R ²	0.045	0.045	-0.003	0.016	-0.005	0.033	0.109	0.008	0.009

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

strong responsiveness to African American constituents in their legislative district. There are no significant effects of the percent Latino in a legislative district on constituent events among Latina/o legislators. This is a parallel result for the lack of relationship between the percent African American in a district among African American legislators. Similar to African American legislators, Latina/o legislators hold substantially more events tailored to Latina/o constituents than other legislators and display no responsiveness to the percent Latino in a district. Therefore, both African American and Latina/o representatives display strong responsiveness to out groups within their legislative district in the events they hold, but display a high number of constituent events towards same-race constituents regardless of the demographics in their district. This effect may come from group consciousness held by African American and Latina/o legislators that is manifested in a desire to hold events tailored to their own racial or ethnic group.

Latina/o Legislators- Legislator Characteristics (Model 2)

Similar to the district ideology variable, there are no significant effects for constituent events held by Latina/o legislators while there were strong effects for African American legislators. This suggests that holding constituent events is less politicized for Latina/o state legislators than for African American state legislators, although more work is needed to investigate why that may be true. Likewise, there are no significant effects between political party and constituent events. This is similar to the result found among African American legislators, even though there are significantly more Latina/o Republican state legislators than African American Republicans. Similar to African American legislators, there are no significant effects between the percent vote received in the last election and patterns of constituent events. This is despite Latina/o legislators facing slightly more electoral competition, with 82 out of 278 being unopposed in their previous election.

Latina/o Legislators- Statewide Demographics and Legislature Characteristics (Model 3)

Similar to the results displayed among African American legislators, the effects displayed in regards to party competition are conflicting and difficult to interpret. No significant results are displayed for the presence of a Democratic governor. On the other hand, a strong positive relationship exists between the proportion of Democrats in the State House of Representatives, while a strong negative relationship is shown between the proportion of Democrats in the State Senate and constituent events. The results that come from statewide demographics also are difficult to interpret. The statewide percent African American has a strong positive relationship between the number of constituent relationships and the number of African American and Latina/o tailored events. On the other hand, there is no relationship between the statewide percent Latino and constituent events. Lastly, the results arising from state legislature demographics are suggestive but make it hard to draw conclusions. The proportion of African American legislators in a state legislature has a strong negative relationship with the number of constituent events and African American tailored events. There is no significant effect for the proportion of Latina/o legislators in a legislature and constituent events.

White Legislators- District Demographics and Preferences (Model 1)

Similar to African American and Latina/o state legislators, there is a strong and negative relationship between the conservatism of a district and the number of constituent events and the number of events tailored to African Americans. Contrary to the previous results, the number of events tailored to Latina/o constituents is not tied to the ideology of the district. Surprisingly, unlike the previous results there is no significant relationship between the percent African American and constituent events. Given that 1422 out of the 6234 white legislators represent districts that

Table 5: White State Legislators and Constituent Events

	Dependent Variables								
	Constituent Events (CE)	African American CE (AfAm CE)	Latino CE (Lat CE)	CE	CE	AfAmCE	Lat CE	CE	Af Am CE
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
District	-9.685**	-2.917**	-1.542						
Ideology	(4.076)	(1.379)	(1.095)						
% African American	2.781 (13.866)	2.067 (4.673)	-0.528 (3.717)						
% Latino	13.555 (12.430)	0.636 (4.198)	11.579*** (3.335)						
Legislator Ideology				-2.955 (3.479)	-0.742 (1.156)	0.125 (0.693)			
Republican				-0.163 (7.776)	-0.758 (2.585)	-2.239 (1.549)			
% Vote Re- ceived				0.016 (0.077)	-0.027 (0.026)	-0.010 (0.015)			
Democratic Governor							-6.568* (3.644)	-0.348 (1.275)	-0.235 (0.999)
State House % Democrats							55.957** (26.397)	4.325 (9.241)	1.884 (7.225)
State Sen- ate % Democrats							-36.329* (21.597)	-4.493 (7.587)	-2.050 (5.932)
State % African American							-39.870 (58.242)	-3.531 (20.368)	5.989 (15.896)
State % Latino							63.270 (52.160)	10.137 (18.493)	-21.792 (14.483)
% State Legislators African American							50.460 (65.368)	11.571 (22.842)	-5.118 (17.834)
% State Legislators Latino							-27.881 (70.802)	-8.207 (25.007)	57.026*** (19.585)
Constant	15.068*** (2.145)	3.536*** (0.728)	1.177** (0.580)	17.889*** (6.639)	6.545*** (2.207)	4.322*** (1.322)	3.807 (4.883)	2.668 (1.718)	2.610* (1.341)
Observations	216	213	212	130	130	130	216	213	212
Adjusted R ²	0.024	0.012	0.056	0.001	0.019	0.039	0.063	-0.015	0.065

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

are 10 percent or more African American, this may or not be coming from a lack of variation in the demographics of the districts white legislators represent. On the other hand, white legislators display strong responsiveness to the percent of Latinos in their legislative district. There is a strong relationship between the percent Latino in a legislative district and the number of constituent events tailored to Latina/os. This is mostly consistent with the results shown for African American legislators.

White Legislators- Legislator Characteristics (Model 2)

Similar to Latina/o legislators and unlike African American legislators, white legislators showed no relationship between their ideology and patterns of constituent events. Consistent with all previous results, white legislators showed no relationship between political party and constituent events. This is notable in part because white legislators were the closest to having a balance between Republican and Democratic legislators. Also consistent with African American and Latina/o legislators, white legislators show no relationship between their previous election vote received and constituent events.

White Legislators- Statewide Demographics and Legislature Characteristics (Model 3)

Similar to African American and Latina/o legislators, the results in the last model are difficult to interpret. While the presence of a Democratic Governor and the proportion of Democrats in a State Senate have a negative relationship with constituent events, the proportion of Democrats in a State House of Representatives has a positive relationship with constituent events. Additionally, statewide demographics have no significant effect on constituent events. Lastly, while the proportion of African American state legislators in a state legislature has no significant relationship with constituent

events, the proportion of Latina/o legislators in a state legislature has a positive relationship with the number of Latina/o constituent events.

Multimember District Analysis

Regression analysis was performed on the multimember legislative districts, but the low number of multimember districts containing legislators of different races and ethnicities had a detrimental effect on regression based results. Due to space constraints, the results of the regression analysis is not shown. Similar to the statewide demographic variables in the main regression analysis, the results for the multimember district analysis were contradictory and returned largely null results. Out of the original sample of 96 state legislators, only 56 legislators had twitter accounts.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the importance of district level demographics and preferences on patterns of constituent events in state legislative districts. Furthermore, this paper demonstrates the contextual nature of the way legislators engage with their constituents; African American and Latina/o state legislators only show responsiveness to racial demographics in their patterns of constituent events when for outgroup constituents. For same-race constituents, African American and Latina/o legislators display high levels of tailoring in their events that does not seem tied to the demographics of their district. This effect may be driven from a group consciousness that state legislators feel for their constituents, as my results do not give any indication for electoral threat as a motivator for holding constituent events. In particular, events tailored to same-race constituents are in excess of what would be predicted from district demographics or legislator and legislature characteristics apart from race (legislator ideology, political party, statewide demographics and party competition, and proportion of racial groups among legislators). In summary, state

legislators show responsiveness for outgroup constituents and group consciousness (or some other intrinsic motivation) for in group constituents. The second key finding is the importance of district preferences for constituent events. The more liberal the district, the more events were held and the more were tailored towards African American and Latina/o constituents. This held when adjusting for district demographics, and it far outweighed the mixed results shown for legislator ideology, which was only important as a predictor for African American representatives.

Legislative professionalism may also play a large role in legislator engagement. Legislators with larger staffs, higher pay, and on average more political experience upon becoming a legislator may plausibly devote more time to legislator events (Squire 2007). The implications for minority representation are less clear, but this theory can act as an excellent control case to test the validity of how the race of representative and demographic context interacts with the expected effects predicted with established theories of legislator outreach. More work needs to be done to develop the needed variables to test these hypotheses, but I plan to include legislative professionalism in future versions of work on constituent service events.

However, there are limitations to this study, which may be addressed through further research on the topic. At the moment, the coding process is perhaps overly simplistic. It certainly contains both false positives and negatives. Additionally, it does not have a way of specifying the tone for events within a district. For example, a legislative event providing free legal aid to immigrants and a legislative event talking about the ‘problems of illegal immigration’ may both be coded as tailored toward the Latina/o community under the current coding system. Additionally, my current method of measurement for statewide demographic and political variables seems inadequate. My current results for these variables give strong and theoretically contradictory effects; in particular, my variables of Democratic Party strength (Democratic Governor, Percent Democrat State House, Percent Democrat State Senate) should be reformulated. Lastly, there is the most fundamental

question of if constituent events are measuring what I intend to measure. I chose to study constituent events because I argue they are a mode of representation; they provide a substantive benefit for constituents who attend them, in particular the events that are tailored to a specific group or issue. Additionally, I believe I have found evidence of some legislators holding events far in excess of what is electorally necessary, mostly directed towards their own racial or ethnic group. However, without further work on the substantive content and constituent service provision that may go along with such events, there is the possibility that even events tailored towards minority groups are purely promotional and have little substantive effect on representation.

I plan to address these limitations in further work on this project, with the ultimate goal of publication. In future work I hope to develop a more sophisticated coding process to better measure the substantive content of legislator events. This will likely involve using a machine learning process to discover series of words that are linked to the main key words in tweets that contain the events I want to analyze. Additionally, some qualitative analysis will likely be necessary. Doing an in depth study of a select number of state legislators on the events they hold, perhaps including attending events and interviewing state legislators, may be necessary for measuring the substantive importance of constituent events. Additionally, there is the need to further develop the statewide demographic, electoral, and institutional variables. In particular, I hope to analyze how legislative professionalism may affect patterns of constituent events. I have done preliminary work on this subject and found that states that are more professionalized seem to have more constituent events overall but less likely to hold events that are ideological or tailored towards a specific racial or ethnic group. However, more analysis needs to be done on this subject before it can be incorporated into the overall study. I hope to continue this work in the future because I believe it is an important and understudied topic. Furthermore, I hope scholars increasingly turn to state legislatures to help address longstanding questions in Political Science.

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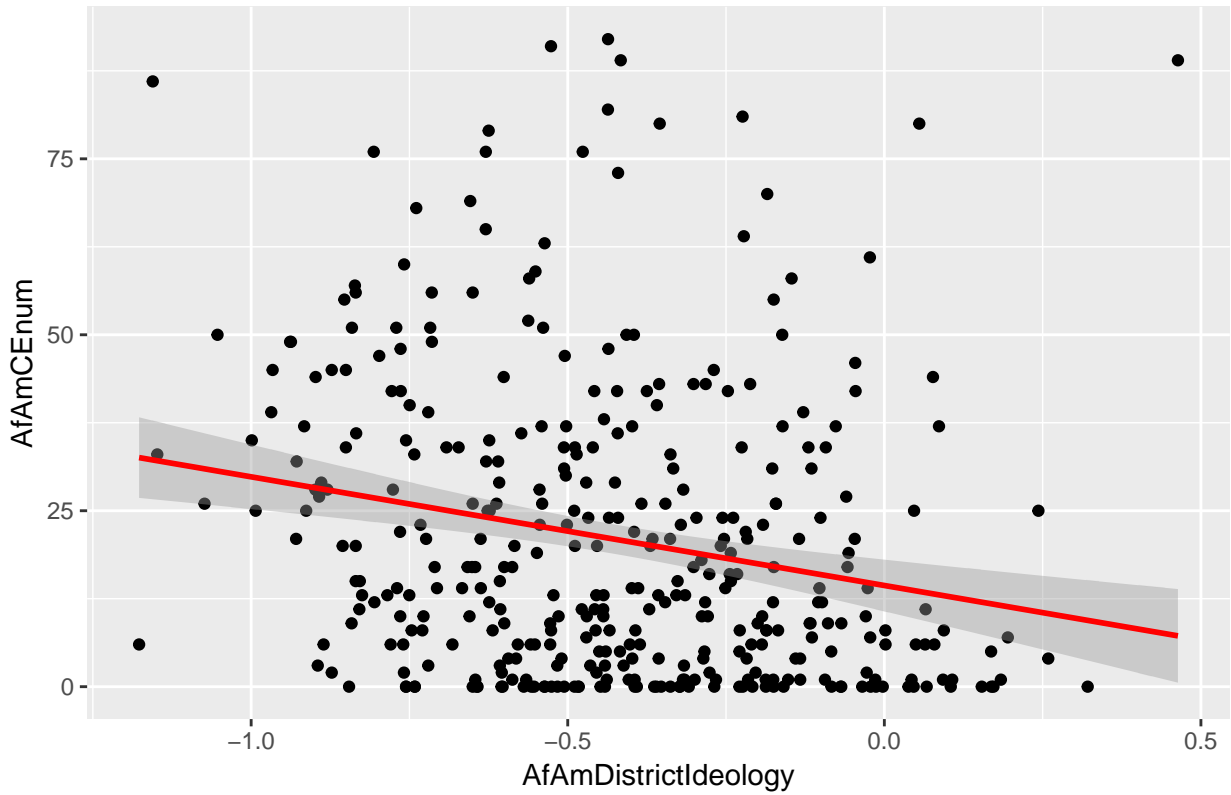
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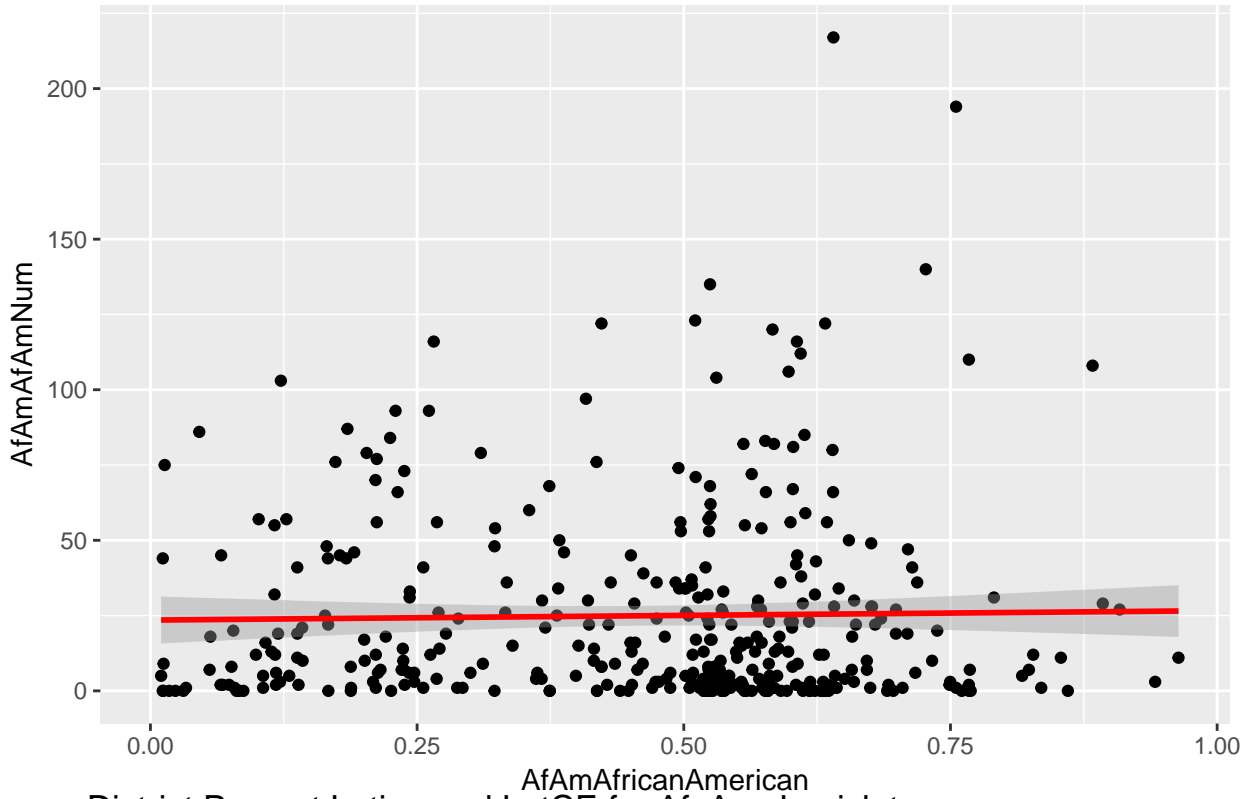
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Appendix

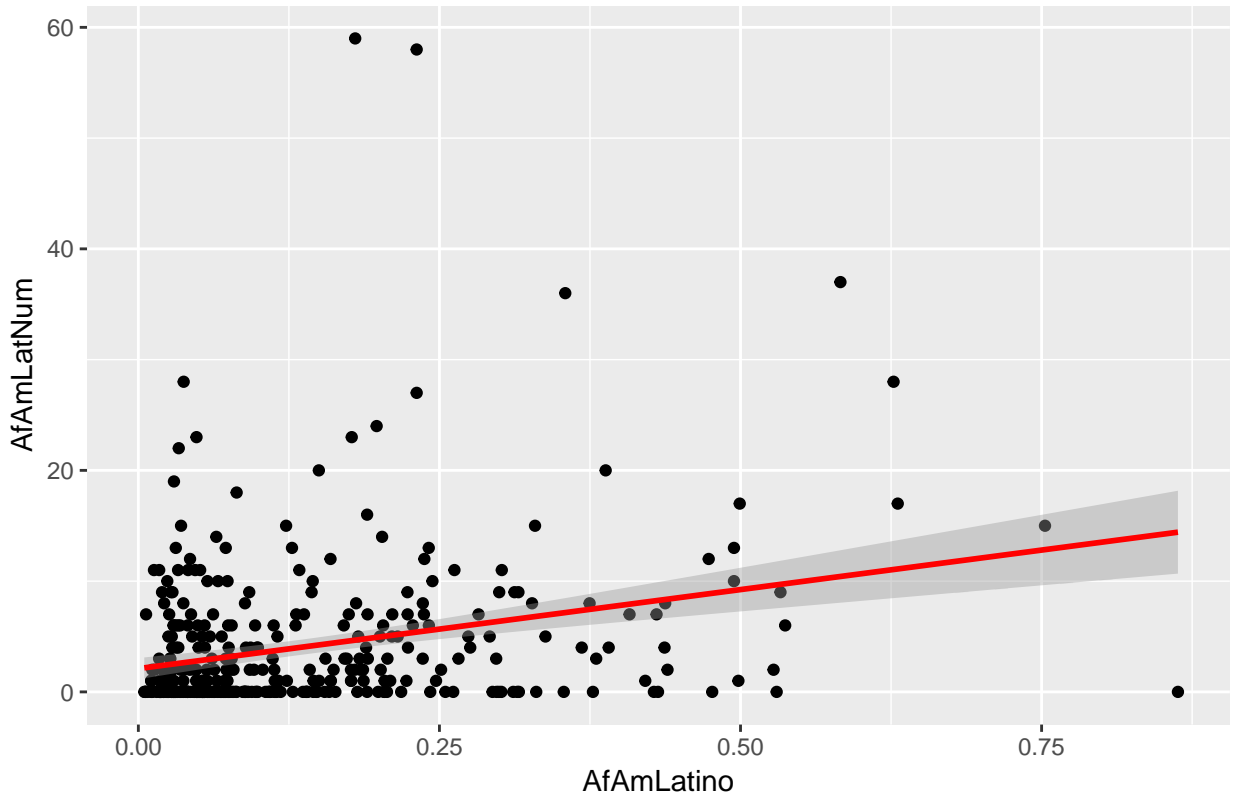
Model One Graphs: District Demographics and Preferences District Ideology and CE for African American Legislators



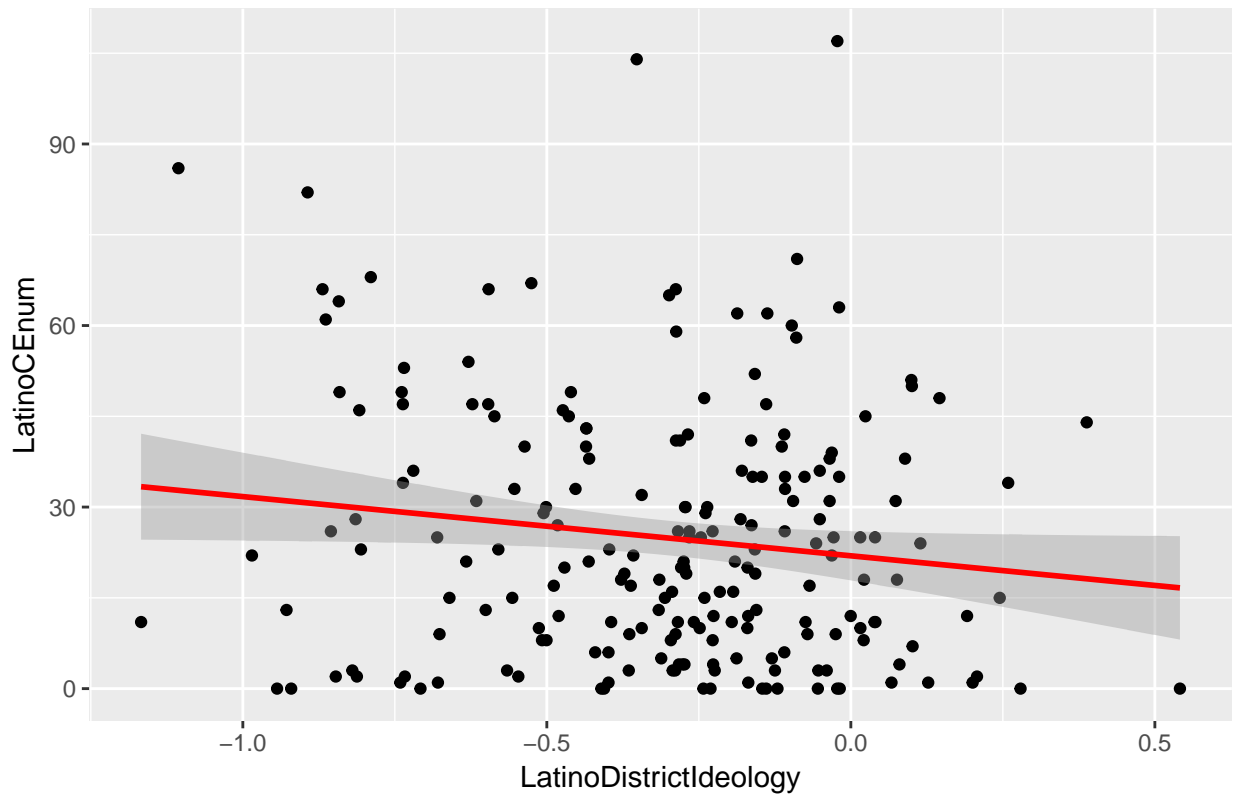
District Percent African American and AfAmCE for Af. Am. Legislators



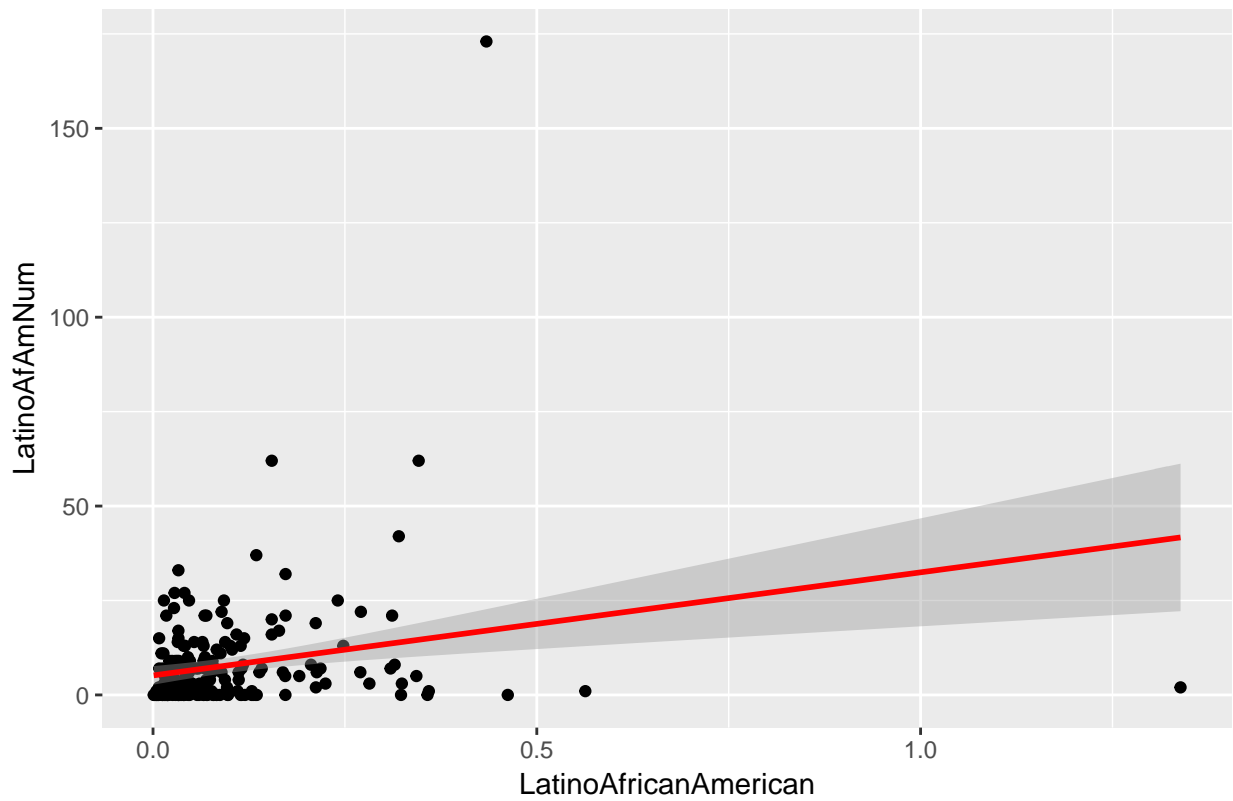
District Percent Latino and LatCE for Af. Am. Legislators



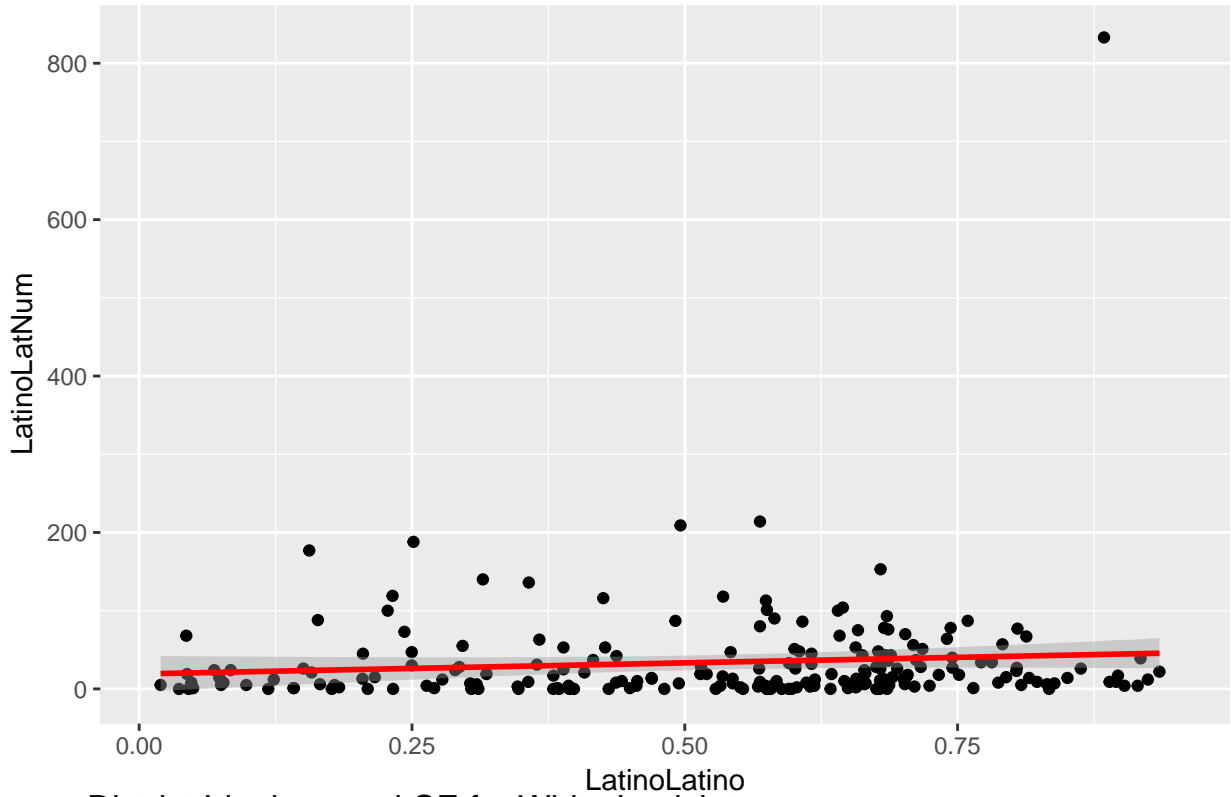
District Ideology and CE for Latina/o Legislators



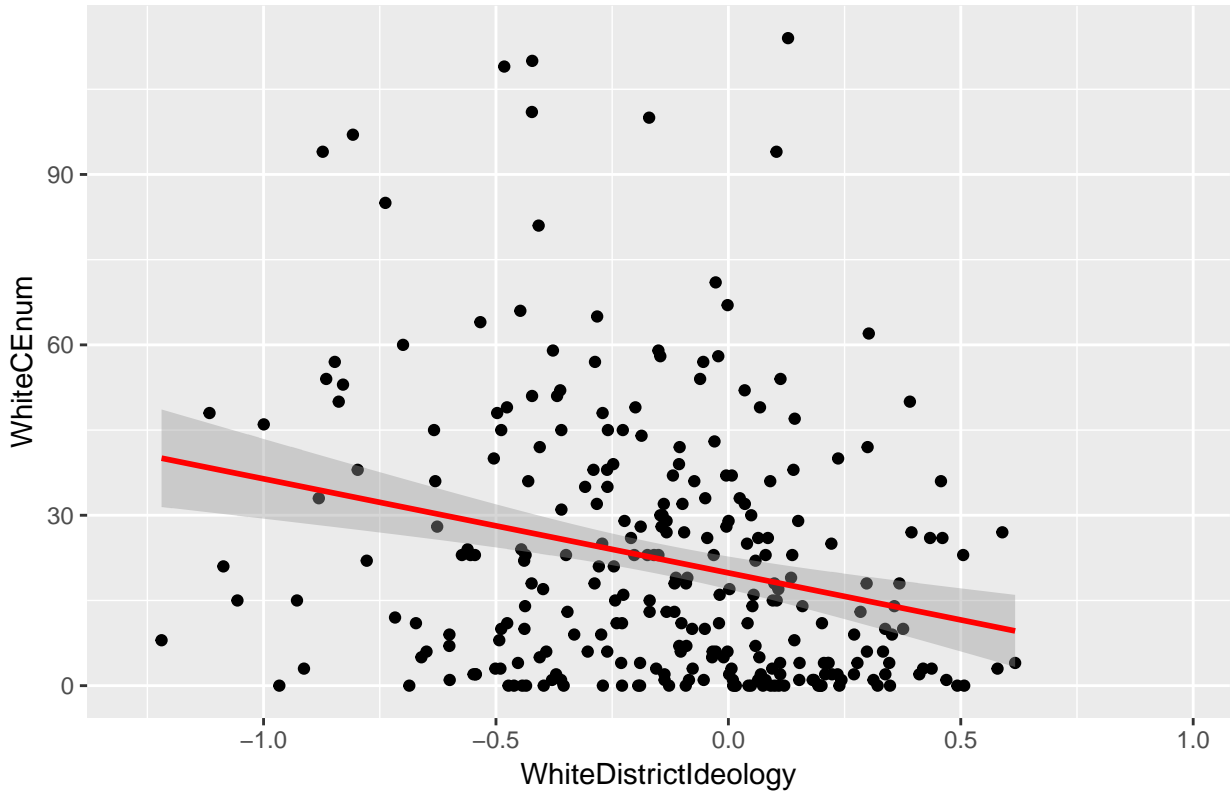
District Percent African American and AfAmCE for Latina/o Legislators



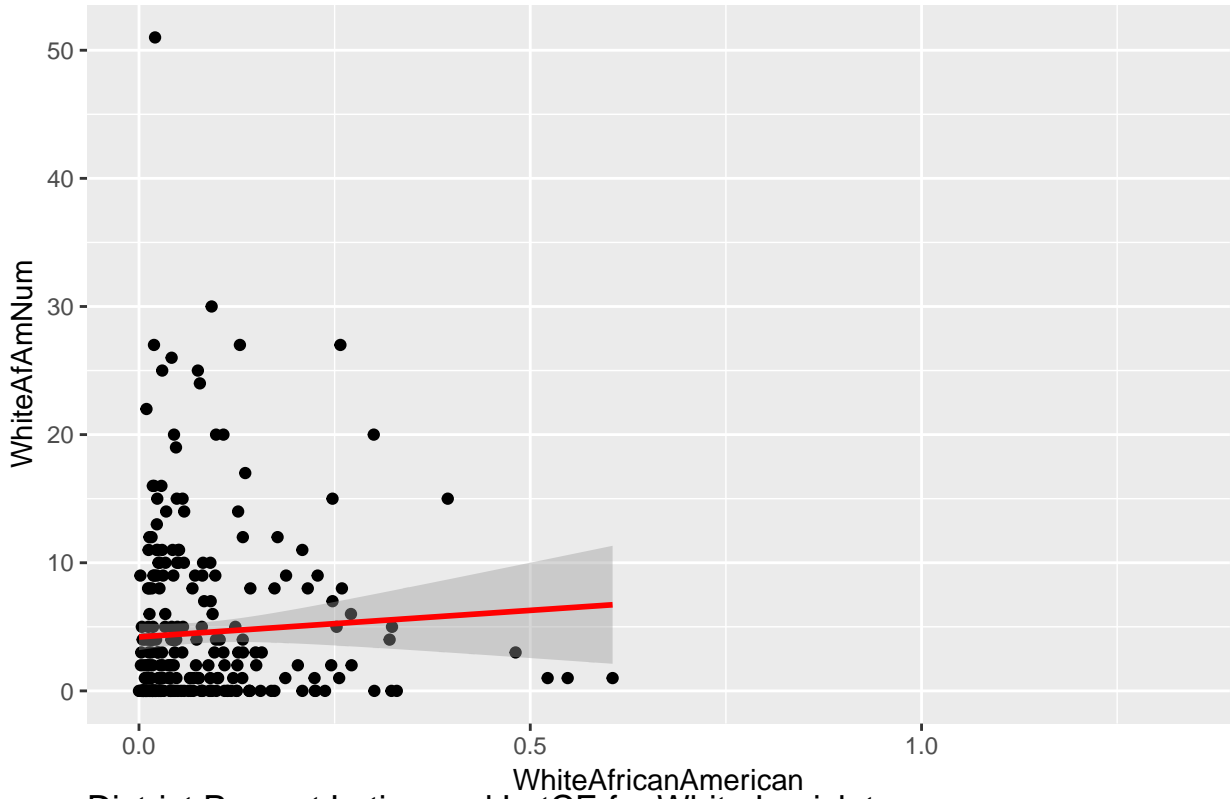
District Percent Latino and LatCE for Latina/o Legislators



District Ideology and CE for White Legislators



District Percent African American and AfAmCE for White Legislators



District Percent Latino and LatCE for White Legislators

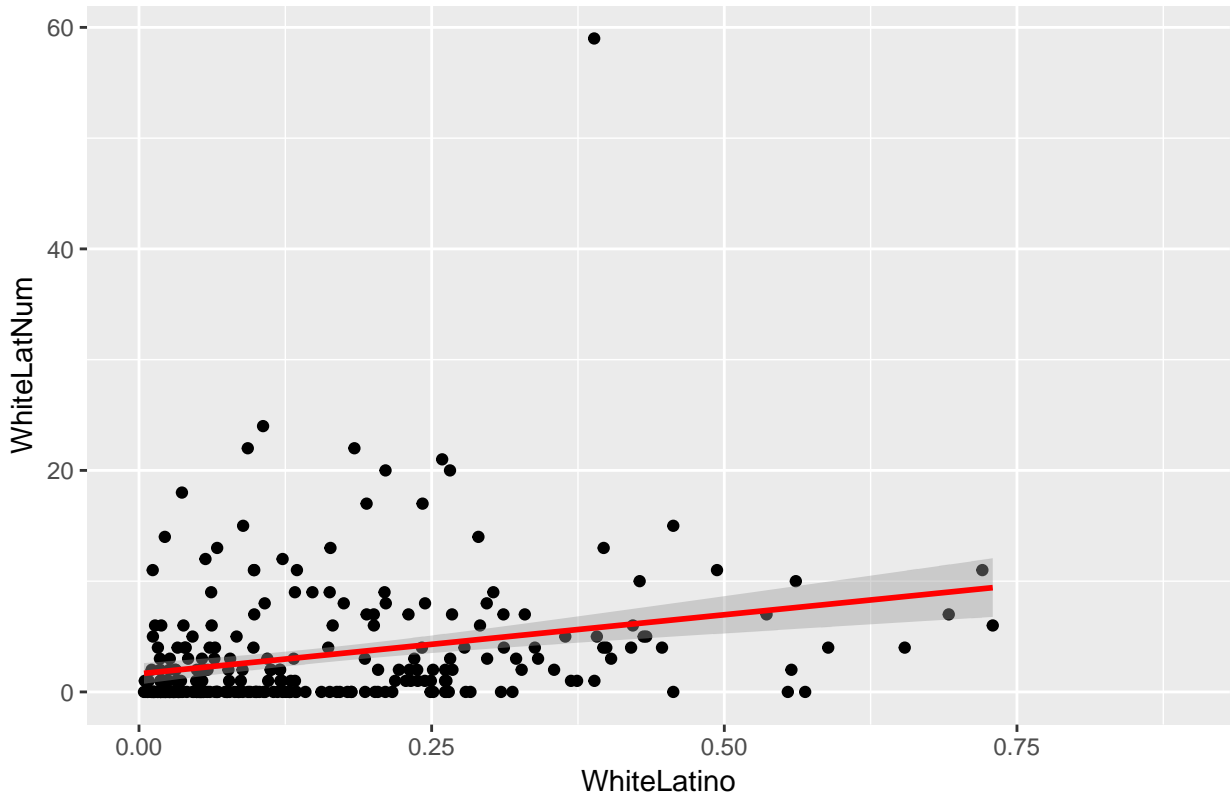


Table 6: State Legislator Constituent Events

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Number of Constituent Service Events	21.1	15	21.12
Number of African American Tailored Events	14.84	5	25.58
Number of Latina/o Tailored Events	11.42	2	37.77

Table 7: White State Legislator Constituent Events

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Number of Constituent Service Events	17.78	10	20.84
Number of African American Tailored Events	4.089	1	6.97
Number of Latina/o Tailored Events	2.509	0	5.66

Table 8: African American State Legislator Constituent Events

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Number of Constituent Service Events	20.95	14	21.03
Number of African American Tailored Events	24.93	12	32.30
Number of Latina/o Tailored Events	4	1	7.00

Table 9: Latina/o State Legislator Constituent Event

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Number of Constituent Service Events	24.9	21	21.09
Number of African American Tailored Events	7.678	3	14.98
Number of Latina/o Tailored Events	33.87	14	68.29724