

# HISPANIC MEDIA USE AND PERCEPTIONS OF DISCRIMINATION: Reconsidering Ethnicity, Politics, and Socioeconomics

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This study utilizes data from the Latino National Political Survey to evaluate the relationship between several social and cultural variables, media use, and Hispanic perceptions of discrimination. We examine the effects that level of income and education, personal experience, ethnicity, and political party preference and media exposure have on these perceptions. The examination builds on social-psychological theories and media framing/cultivation arguments. The cross-section, regression analysis considers Hispanics as a whole and as various subgroups (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans), respectively. Contrary to conventional wisdom that media use is positively related to perceived discrimination, we find that socioeconomic and ethnic conditions are of greater import for understanding perceptions. Further, it appears that media use has little impact on perceptions of discrimination.

The relationship between media use and Hispanic perceptions of social reality is an open field for sociological study. The mass media are said to frame social issues such as race, poverty, and crime, and these interpretations allegedly shape public perceptions (Gamson 1989; Entman 1990; Iyenger 1991; Barlow 1998; Gilens 1999). Exposure to newspaper reports of crime, for example, leads people to perceive ethnic minorities as threatening (Vergeer, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2000), and media underrepresentation and negative portrayals of Hispanics create negative social images of them (Navarrete and Kamasaki 1994). Downtrodden images of minorities are not any guarantee however, that *white* Americans, and perhaps minorities themselves, will be swayed to think discrimination exists (Wilson and Gutiérrez 1985; Entman and Rojecki 2000). In other words, negative media portrayals may stimulate the *denial* of discrimination among whites, and similar outcomes may hold for minorities. Yet, studies of Hispanic perceptions of discrimination are rare, and existing media research focuses on what white Americans think about minorities after exposure to the forum.

Arguments about the media's influence effectively account for matters of minority

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ensorship, negative portrayals, ideological and structural domination by whites, and the effects such conditions have on individuals and groups. Negative media portrayals of minorities stimulate racism; perpetuate discrimination, stereotypes, myth, and social distance; and create negative self imagery (Gandy and Matabane 1989; Graves 1999; Entman and Rojecki 2001). Hispanic perceptions, however, have less to do with the media because negative portrayals of them do not usurp their group's position or personal experience (Gandy and Matabane 1989). Some Hispanics may even be "'conditioned' by the media to either accept discrimination or to deny its existence entirely" (Navarrete and Kamasaki 1994, p. 25).

At least two divergent views emerge from media research: (1) greater exposure to negative media portrayals leads minorities to a heightened awareness of discrimination and (2) Hispanic media use produces a tendency to *deny* that discrimination exists, as it does in the white population. Although these positions are perhaps mutually exclusive, an improved understanding is required of whether media use modifies perceptions of discrimination directed toward Hispanics.

We suggest that a three-pronged approach be employed to understand Hispanic perceptions of discrimination. First, our perspective builds on framing and cultivation analyses which suggest that media depictions of race coincide with a prevailing ideological framework that is set by whites and asserts that discrimination is part of a bygone era. The dominant media image characterizes racism and discrimination as outdated, and media portrayals coupled with the use of minority anchors convey to minorities the notion that discrimination has declined (Campbell 1995). Second, we add to this basic premise the important suggestion that minority perceptions of racial issues are mediated by ethnicity and personal and social variables (Sigelman and Welch 1991; Gary 1995; Brown 2001). Finally, Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, which analyzes how personal meaning is obtained from group membership, is used to understand how perceptions are affected by class and ethnicity, elements that are central to attitudinal development and perceptions.

Similarly, we contribute to the literature on race relations in a three-fold manner. First, we examine the three largest Latino<sup>1</sup> groups in the United States (Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans); second, we specify how Hispanic news media use is associated with perceptions of discrimination; finally, we highlight the social, personal, and ethnic influences on Latino views. The present discussion adds to the study of race relations by focusing on intra-Hispanic group membership, rather than relying solely on interethnic comparisons (Yoon 1995; Entman and Rojecki 2000).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, media may legitimate a dominant ideological framework for some Hispanics and confirm for them the obsolescence of discrimination. Finally, we emphasize structural and subjective matters to help decipher the complex variables that influence Hispanic perceptions. Our intention is to therefore determine if increased media use among Hispanics would heighten or dampen their perceptions of discrimination against the three Hispanic subgroups.

### **MEDIA FRAMES AND THE CULTIVATION OF RACIAL ATTITUDES**

Framing and cultivation analyses have laid some of the empirical groundwork for understanding the media's influence on public perceptions. Frames "highlight and link data selectively to tell more or less coherent stories that define problems, diagnose

causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies” (Entman and Rojecki 2000, p. 49). Furthermore, the news consumed by Americans is affected by an unbalanced system of reporting that is controlled by Anglos. The news creates a negative public image of racial minorities (Lee and Solomon 1990; Hunt 1997) that casts them as having or causing problems in society (Entman 1994). Although “mass media are . . . marginalized in the projects of mainstream sociologists who study race” (Hunt 1997, p. 6), the literature on media influences gives context to the present analysis.

Media research demonstrates how viewers and readers obtain a sense of reality from news programming that is both vested in and supported by a hegemonic mainstream white-American culture (Means-Coleman 2000). According to Hunt (1997, p. 33), this culture validates the “status quo, common-sense versions of reality.” Minorities are catalogued in frames, thus explaining “the tenacious survival of racial stereotypes despite a social norm that dampens public admission of prejudice” (Entman and Rojecki 2000, p. 49). Media framing also facilitates elite-group domination and legitimates and reproduces social advantage (Hunt 1997).

Cultivation analyses, however, reveal the potency of media message systems in shaping personal preferences, attitudes, and views. Research seeks to understand how exposure to television affects audience conceptions and actions about issues including gender and racial stereotypes (Gerbner et al. 1994). In the news media, for example, Hispanics and other minorities are depicted negatively or stereotypically as criminals, gang participants, or illegal immigrants, or as is commonly the case, they are dismissed altogether (Wilson and Gutiérrez 1985; Navarrete and Kamasaki 1994; Barlow 1998; National Council of La Raza 1998; Méndez-Méndez and Alverio 2001). Thus a jaundiced and racist image of minorities is cultivated and reproduced through media interpretations and frames (van Dijk 1991, p. 243).

Following the logic of media framing, Barlow (1998) and others (Entman 1990, 1994; Mendelsohn 1996; Peffley, Shields, and Williams 1996; Valentino 1999; Entman and Rojecki 2000) illustrate how media portrayals and news coverage relate to race. Barlow (1998, p. 177) suggests, for example, that cover stories provide an example of the “symbolic connection between ‘young Black males’ and crime.” Crime is “racialized” in these periodicals or equated with inner-city black youth. The influence of media on perceptions ranging from political beliefs and alignment to notions of crime and equality is certainly applicable to Hispanics.

Greenberg et al. (1983c) find, for instance, that cities with fewer Hispanic newspapers print stories about them that focus on criminal behavior. Based on these findings, Faber, O’Guinn, and Meyer (1987) speculate that “in towns where Anglos might have less opportunity for direct experience with Hispanics . . . media portrayals might . . . play a greater role in influencing perceptions,” providing a larger proportion of negative Hispanic images (p. 158–159). Since Anglos have no other source about minorities but media depictions, their perceptions of Hispanics become negative and distrustful.

Using cultivation theory, however, Faber, O’Guinn, and Meyer (1987) demonstrate that Hispanics who are heavy television viewers will show “greater recognition of the poor treatment [minority] people received in television programs” (p. 166). The authors conclude that stereotypical portrayals resonate with minorities and forestall interaction with the majority. Television viewing thus drives an ideological and behavioral wedge between whites and Hispanics that maintains separation and checks assimilation.

According to Wilson and Gutiérrez (1985, 1995), media effects on Hispanic populations vary by age, psychological makeup, class, and other variables. However, the media "have their greatest effect when they are used in a manner that reinforces and channels attitudes and opinions that are consistent with the psychological makeup of the person and the social structure of the groups with which he or she identifies" (Wilson and Gutiérrez 1995, p. 44). Negative, stereotyped, or one-sided media portrayals of minorities support racist attitudes in individuals already holding such views.

We might consider, then, whether negative images lead minorities to think media portrayals are inaccurate or the product of a discriminatory forum wherein their sense of discrimination in the broader society is reinforced. It is just such an assumption that drives one of our main research questions: does an increase in media use among Hispanics coincide with an increase in perceived discrimination against Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans? We think not, because the media's influence is moderated by social class, ethnicity, racial attitudes, level of acculturation, and other cultural, contextual, psychological, and structural factors. Gandy and Matabane (1989) indicate, for example, that television's power "is realized through the differential filters of concrete social experience," much of which "is structurally conditioned, and flows through the conduits of race and class" (p. 341).

In summary, Lewels (1981) maintains that Mexican Americans' attitudes reflect a "deep-seated distrust of the media (particularly large corporations) and a suspicion that racial or ethnic interests are not their prime concern" (p. 27). Although not all Hispanics distrust the media, they may follow two divergent paths in response to it: they turn away from stereotypical media coverage and those manipulating the news and use their real-world experiences to interpret their circumstances; or, they accept the dominant ideological framework represented in the media and deny that discrimination exists.

### **PERCEPTIONS OF DISCRIMINATION: SOCIAL IDENTITY AND ATTRIBUTION THEORIES**

The literature on perceptions of discrimination against Hispanics is not extensive, but according to Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan (2002), the growth of this population, efforts against affirmative action, as well as claims of reverse discrimination require that Hispanic perceptions be investigated. Race and ethnic relations research on perceptions usually relies on samples of African Americans and whites. The absence of research on Hispanic perceptions of discrimination does not mean, however, that the extant literature cannot be applied usefully to the present study. What follows, then, is our attempt to make use of the theoretical approaches (primarily social identity and attributional theories) that establish the social, cultural, and psychological conditions affecting minority perceptions.<sup>3</sup>

Social identity theory emphasizes that intergroup conflict must be understood with reference to the "subjective" dimensions of in-group membership (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 8). Operario and Fiske (2001) demonstrate that discrimination is viewed as more of a group problem than an individual one and that minorities perceive more discrimination overall than whites. The authors indicate that ethnic-group identification moderates the discrepancy phenomenon for minorities. Minorities that are highly affiliated with and derive meaning from their group "incorporate societal bias directed at the group into the self-concept" (Operario and Fiske 2001, p. 554), and this leads them to perceive personal vulnerability to prejudice and discrimination. When high ethnic

identification exists, awareness of the group's condition stimulates a personal sense that discrimination might be experienced individually. Operario and Fiske (2001) study the association between ethnic identity and perceptions of prejudice, arguing that level of ethnic-group identification is related to perceptions of and responses to racial prejudice.

Acknowledging or denying prejudice originates in "multiple situational variables" including having social support, the extent to which prejudice is apparent, and group status. Operario and Fiske (2001) build on social-psychological theories that employ the "personal/group discrimination discrepancy" (PGD) and social identity theories. PGD involves the distinctions people make when they conceptualize their experiences of personal or group discrimination: "members of stigmatized groups . . . concede that their group is a target of prejudice yet tend to deny that prejudice affects themselves personally" (Operario and Fiske 2001, p. 551; see also Sigelman and Welch 1991; Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999).

Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan (2002) account for Hispanic perceived discrimination and its association with self-esteem, control, individualism/collectivism, and social dominance orientation (SDO). SDO is an ideological measure of perceived status and refers to the degree to which an individual prefers a given social hierarchy and inequality among social groups (Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan 2002, p. 7, 11). Social dominance orientation assists individuals in determinations regarding the approval of equality or inequality.

The authors find that Hispanics with higher personal and interpersonal control are less likely to think discrimination bears heavily on them as a group or as individuals. Hispanics who consider themselves victims of discrimination may sense having little control over their experience, are likely to attribute discrimination to ambiguous situations, and tend to see discrimination as affecting the group rather than thinking it influences personal failure. The latter finding confirms the personal/group discrimination discrepancy by demonstrating that individual Hispanics try to protect their self-image by convincing themselves that they are better off than the group (Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan 2002). Hispanics who consider the social hierarchy to be legitimate may lack a sense of entitlement to social rewards and thus feel unable to control the discrimination they confront (Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan 2002). Ultimately, Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan (2002) explain that individual experiences shape Hispanic perceptions of personal discrimination, while perceptions of group discrimination are conditioned by one's orientation to dominant ideological frameworks.

Some research suggests that experiencing personal discrimination may both positively and negatively affect individual behavior, psychology, collective action, and coping abilities (Crosby 1984; Foster 2000). Foster (2000) indicates that coping mechanisms such as avoidance, social support, or denial variably influence outcomes of perceived discrimination. Crosby (1984), however, posits that it is easy for individuals to admit personal victimization from discrimination is painful, and although people acknowledge discrimination affects the group, they consider themselves immune to it personally. Thus personal experiences with discrimination manifest an individual's understanding of group experiences with discrimination.

### **THE DENIAL OF DISCRIMINATION**

The literature specifically addressing the denial of discrimination generally pits group perceptions of discrimination against individual perceptions. Some studies emphasize

that sociocultural indicators such as ethnicity have a limited influence on perceptions of discrimination, and others illustrate how perceptions vary according to psychological conditions. Finally, denial may depend on situational context and mediated messages, and thus explanatory variations foster questions about how to understand perceptions to begin with.

Ruggiero and Taylor (1995) address several contextual situations that influence how minorities might attribute personal failure to discrimination, and thus its perceived consequences. They claim attributions to discrimination are a function of situational ambiguity where the more obvious discrimination is to a participant the more often it is linked to personal failure. Disadvantaged group members, however, may minimize personal discrimination by not attributing it to personal failure. To this end, people deny discrimination is a problem affecting personal failure in order to save face and enhance their sense of personal control over situations.

According to Phinney, Madden, and Santos (1998), ethnic identity is not related to perceptions of discrimination (PD). The authors examine the influence of psychological factors, hypothesizing that positive self-evaluation, a sense of mastery/control, intergroup competence, and a secure ethnic identity predict low levels of PD. Depression and anxiety, however, are expected to be associated with higher levels of PD. Phinney, Madden, and Santos (1998) find that stable psychological factors such as having a sense of control over one's life lower perceived discrimination. Higher self-esteem also inclines individuals to report less PD, thus confirming attributional perspectives suggesting that stable personality traits affect PD. Consequently, the authors counter sociocultural perspectives that suggest ethnicity is influential in understanding minority perceptions of discrimination.

Finally, we return to the media's role in fostering notions that discrimination, racism, and inequality are fading. Entman and Rojecki (2000) indicate that the media play an ancillary but important role in "depleting racial understanding" by creating suspicion and animosity among white Americans (p. 44). This fact is particularly significant to what they term the "ambivalent majority," which does not harbor fear or resentment of blacks and recognizes discrimination is a problem, but lacks patience when it comes to race relations (Entman and Rojecki 2000, p. 33). Patience is lost, for example, when blacks' "abuse" welfare, engage in criminal, violent, or crude behavior, exaggerate discrimination, or misappropriate government-derived benefits. The authors conclude that mediated messages push the ambivalent white majority in the direction of denial largely because it is fed a regular dose of stereotypes from which it draws misguided conclusions that are seldom based on personal experience with minorities. Consequently, the denial of discrimination among whites is facilitated, a finding that may hold for minorities.

Taken together, the literature reviewed above raises a number of intriguing questions about Hispanics and perceptions of discrimination. Are there variations in the way Hispanics perceive discrimination against Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans? Do social and cultural variables more effectively explain variations in perceptions when compared to media variables? Do Hispanics respond to the media by conforming to its dominant ideological framework and, thus, reject notions that discrimination is commonplace? We emphasize that Hispanic perceptions are to be understood with regard to social and cultural matters primarily, and media sources secondarily.

### SUMMARIZATION OF HYPOTHESES

A number of working hypotheses are generated from our literature review on media, minority perceptions of discrimination, and its denial. Primarily, we are interested in determining the extent to which framing and cultivation arguments might apply to Hispanic perceptions of discrimination: does an increase in Hispanic media use lead to a heightened sense that Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans are discriminated against in the United States? Generally speaking, however, there is no coherent way to make predictions across Hispanic groups, and our analysis is largely exploratory in this regard.

Based on our review of the literature on media use and perceptions of discrimination, and the affect of ethnicity, our first hypotheses are:

*Hypothesis 1:* The higher the level of media use (intensity), the greater the perception of discrimination among Hispanic ethnic groups.

*Hypothesis 2:* Hispanic groups that are the least well-off economically and most closely associated with blacks and crime (Puerto Ricans) would be most sensitive to media images, followed by Mexicans and Cubans.

We described the potential consequences personal experiences with discrimination have on an individual's understanding of their group's experiences. A logical conclusion to draw is that personal experiences with discrimination heighten one's sense that the group also experiences discrimination. Specifically:

*Hypothesis 3:* Individual experience with discrimination heightens Hispanic perceptions of discrimination against the subethnic groups.

The following hypotheses are based on our consideration of the social, political, and ethnic contexts in which perceptions are situated:

*Hypothesis 4:* Perceptions of discrimination vary by Hispanic ethnic group, with Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans more likely to perceive discrimination than Cubans.

*Hypothesis 5:* The higher the level of education, the greater the perception of discrimination against Hispanic ethnic groups.

*Hypothesis 6:* The higher the level of annual income, the greater the perception of discrimination among Hispanic ethnic groups.

*Hypothesis 7:* Democrats will be more likely than Republicans to perceive discrimination against each Hispanic ethnic group.

### METHODOLOGY: DATA AND MODEL ESTIMATION

The data used in the present analysis are derived from the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) developed by de la Garza et al. (1992). Between July 1989 and March 1990, de la Garza et al. (1992) sampled over 3,400 Hispanics and whites, conducting interviews in 40 U.S. standard metropolitan statistical areas that included over 90 percent of the Cuban, Mexican, and Puerto Rican populations (Santos 1992, p. 219). The LNPS is a collection of "data describing Latino political values, attitudes, and behavior" (de la Garza et al. 1992), and it uses ideological indicators such as support for core American values, attitudes toward other groups, major social issues, foreign policy, and political

partisanship and behavior (p. 4–6). Demographic information includes education, income, ethnicity, and gender. Although the LNPS was developed in the early 1990s, it is perhaps the most comprehensive and reliable Hispanic data set available.

In order to empirically test the hypotheses described above, a cross-section, regression is estimated to analyze the relationship between both media use and perceptions of discrimination, as well as ethnicity and several important personal, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical variables. The dependent variable(s) is (are) Hispanic perceptions of discrimination against Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans (respectively) in the United States. The independent variables are personal experience with discrimination, income, education level, party affiliation (i.e., Democrat or Republican), ethnicity, and media use (i.e., newspaper use and television news viewing).<sup>4</sup>

### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS, CODING, AND MEASURES

The LNPS includes 682 Cubans, 1,546 Mexicans, and 589 Puerto Ricans (de la Garza et al. 1992, p. 7). People of Mexican descent comprise the largest proportion (55 percent) in terms of national identity, with Cubans a distant second at 24 percent and Puerto Ricans at 21 percent. The LNPS includes 456 non-Hispanic Anglos, but this group was removed because of considerable overlap regarding ethnic identity—respondents cross-listed themselves as white and Hispanic. Given that our primary interest is to isolate the Hispanic populations, we reduce the chance for crossover effects by removing Anglos from the analysis. As a result of the dependent and independent variables utilized in the models, our analysis includes between 2,629 and 2,838 Hispanics, as illustrated in Table 1.

For the three separate dependent variables (perceptions of discrimination against Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, respectively), the scale ranges from 1 (none) to 4 (a lot). The question measuring perceptions of discrimination reads:

Now I would like to ask you about how much discrimination or unfair treatment you think different groups face in the U.S. Do you think the following groups face a lot of discrimination, some, a little, or no discrimination at all? (de la Garza et al. 1992, p. 213)<sup>5</sup>

**TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

Variable	Observation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Media use	2,820	6.92	4.16	0	14
Personal discrimination	2,815	0.28	0.504	0	1
Annual income	2,629	6.45	3.96	1	15
Education	2,838	9.50	4.44	0	17
Democrat	2,838	0.40	0.49	0	1
Republican	2,838	0.51	0.50	0	1
Mexican discrimination	2,838	2.88	1.12	1	4
Puerto Rican discrimination	2,838	2.57	1.36	1	4
Cuban discrimination	2,838	2.57	1.37	1	4

In looking at the independent variables, media use is a composite index of two questions from the LNPS survey that queries respondents on how many days a week they watch national network television news or “read about politics and public affairs in a daily newspaper” (de la Garza et al. 1992, p. 202). Responses range from no exposure to either source (0) to utilization of both outlets every day (14). The personal discrimination variable is a simple dichotomous measure that indicates whether an individual has personally experienced discrimination (1, yes; 0, no). Annual income is an incremental measure that divides income by fifteen categories (where 1 is less than \$5,000 and 15 is more than \$75,000). Education is measured as number of school years completed (0–17). Political party affiliation examines a person’s self-identification as a Republican or Democrat, each of which is dichotomized where one (1) indicates affiliation with the given party and zero (0) otherwise. While there is no thermometer scale utilized, this operationalization works relatively well for this variable.

## RESULTS

We have estimated three models for each of the three dependent variables (perception of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban discrimination). An additional model was developed to examine whether the Hispanic subgroups are differentially sensitive to media use effects. The results of the separate estimation are reported in Table 2. The remaining models are presented in Table 3 (Mexican discrimination), Table 4 (Puerto Rican discrimination), and Table 5 (Cuban discrimination). Throughout all of the tables, the results do not support the predicted relationship between media use and Hispanic perceptions of discrimination. Although the findings on media use are of marginal predictive value, the fact that coefficients are in the negative direction in all estimations and models suggests that media use among Hispanic groups may foster the denial of discrimination against the ethnic subgroups. However, this claim must be taken with a measure of caution since we find that media use among Hispanics has little overall utility in understanding changes in perceptions of discrimination. Rather, the social and personal variables we examined more significantly influence perceptions of discrimination against the Hispanic subgroups.

To investigate whether different Hispanic subgroups are differentially sensitive to media use effects, we started by examining the interactions between media use and the Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban dummy variables (see Table 2). Each subethnic group is highlighted in the equations to determine how media use stacks up in comparison to ethnic origin in isolation of the other independent variables considered. Table 2 demonstrates that media use is largely inconsequential in predicting changes in perceived discrimination against each Hispanic subgroup (as the generally marginal coefficients illustrate). However, Puerto Ricans may be an exception in this case: the coefficient for media use in the case of Puerto Ricans is  $-.020$  at the  $.05$  level. Thus, there is modest support for hypothesis 2: Puerto Ricans may be the most sensitive to media images.

Generally, the adjusted  $R^2$  is very weak in each of the relationships tested, suggesting that media use and ethnic origin in isolation do not explain much of the variation in Hispanic perceptions of discrimination. Ethnic origin, however, seems rather powerful in predicting changes in perceptions of discrimination. With the exception of Puerto Ricans’ views, the ethnic origin coefficients are relatively strong and statistically significant for all ethnic subgroups.

**TABLE 2. PERCEPTIONS OF HISPANIC DISCRIMINATION BY ETHNIC ORIGIN AND MEDIA USE**

Media Use and Hispanic Subgroup	Perceptions of Discrimination Against Mexican Americans	Perceptions of Discrimination Against Puerto Ricans	Perceptions of Discrimination Against Cuban Americans
Mexican origin	.391 (.043)***	.249 (.052)***	.626 (.051)***
Media use	.002 (.005)	-.0002 (.006)	-.003 (.006)
Intercept	2.66 (.051)***	2.43 (.062)***	2.25 (.061)***
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.029	.008	.053
F	42.93***	12.05***	79.22***
Probability > F	.000	.000	.000
N	2,819	2,819	2,819
Puerto Rican origin	.090 (.005)	.477 (.061)***	.002 (.062)
Media use	-.009 (.051)	-.009 (.006)	-.020 (.006)*
Intercept	2.92 (.042)***	2.52 (.050)***	2.70 (.051)***
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.001	.021	.003
F	2.83	31.55***	4.79**
Probability > F	.059	.000	.009
N	2,819	2,819	2,819
Cuban origin	-.627 (.049)***	-.769 (.059)***	-.867 (.059)***
Media use	.004 (.005)	.008 (.006)	-.003 (.006)
Intercept	3.06 (.040)***	2.69 (.048)***	2.80 (.048)***
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.055	.057	.074
F	83.25***	86.32***	113.41***
Probability > F	.000	.000	.000
N	2,819	2,819	2,819

Figures in parentheses are standard errors, \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

It must be emphasized, though, that this initial model demonstrates a common finding in our analysis: Cuban origin has a negative effect on perceived discrimination against all ethnic subgroups. This finding carried over to all of the estimations we developed and was cause enough for us to isolate Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the remaining analyses. The expected ethnic variations in perceptions of discrimination is therefore confirmed in Table 2 and also in the full models discussed later. Hypothesis 7 finds modest support when examining the results for ethnic origin. Indeed, Table 2 demonstrates that when Cuban origin and media use are combined, the strongest adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of all the models listed emerges: ranging between .055 and .074 with significant negative coefficients. Finally, Table 2 presents two unexpected findings: Mexican origin has a significant and positive effect on perceptions of discrimination against Cubans, while for Puerto Ricans the opposite pattern emerges (i.e., Puerto Rican origin does not predict changes in perceptions of discrimination against Cubans or Mexicans). These findings will be dealt with later.

Model 1 in Tables 3–5 sets out zero order effects of media use as it affects perceptions of discrimination against each Hispanic subgroup. The relationship between media use and perceptions of discrimination is weak, with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> at or just above .000. However, we note the negative coefficient between media use and Hispanic perceptions

of discrimination against Cubans as being statistically significant at the .01 level, albeit of little predictive utility.

Model 2 (for each dependent variable) isolates the social-psychological, economic, and political variables. A modest improvement in  $R^2$  is obtained when examining these variables apart from ethnicity and media use. Unfortunately, the  $R^2$  remains fairly weak in this equation. Nevertheless, with the exception of Democratic affiliation, the coefficients show that Hispanics that have personally experienced discrimination and have more education and higher earnings tend to perceive more discrimination against all the ethnic subgroups. The coefficient for Republicans, however, is again in the negative direction and statistically significant at the .001 level for all estimations. Our expectations in hypotheses 3–6 are therefore confirmed in these models. Although Hispanic Democrats are not more likely to perceive more discrimination against the ethnic subgroups, Republicans are consistently unlikely to perceive discrimination. Hypothesis 6 is therefore supported in a rather circuitous manner since Republicans are particularly disinclined to consider discrimination as problematic for Hispanics.

These findings notwithstanding, it is not until our full model (3) is developed and all independent variables combined that more explanatory value is gained. Here, adjusted  $R^2$  for perceptions of discrimination against Mexicans is .120 and is .140 for Puerto Ricans and .121 for Cubans. Thus the adjusted  $R^2$  (while typically low with survey research) is moderately robust for each of the full models, but less so for the zero order and social and economic models.

Tables 3–5 detail the effects of all our independent variables on perceptions of discrimination against Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, respectively. Model 3 brings in Mexican and Puerto Rican heritage as independent variables and also restores the media use variable. Since there are only three Hispanic subgroups, we decided to put them all in one equation, designating Cuban origin as the excluded category since Cubans

**TABLE 3. EFFECTS ON PERCEPTIONS OF MEXICAN DISCRIMINATION**

	Model #1 Zero Order Effects	Model #2 Social-Psychological, Political, & Economic Variables	Model #3 Full Model Including Ethnic Origin
Media use	-.008 (.005)		-.004 (.005)
Personal discrimination		.449 (.043)***	.383 (.043)***
Income		.027 (.005)***	.025 (.005)***
Education		.015 (.005)**	.025 (.005)***
Democrat		.027 (.076)	.036 (.074)
Republican		-.251 (.075)***	-.106 (.076)**
Mexican origin			.539 (.054)***
Puerto Rican origin			.419 (.067)***
Intercept	2.94 (.041)***	2.54 (.089)***	2.05 (.108)***
$R^2$ (adjusted)	.0006	.083	.120
F	2.60	48.35***	53.59***
Probability > F	.107	.000	.000
N	2,819	2,607	2,593

Figures in parentheses are standard errors, \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

have been the least disadvantaged historically. In assessing the overall utility of these various models, we see a great deal of consistency and support for hypotheses 3–6. The full models in each table (i.e., each discrimination category) also exhibit a high F statistic, which attests to the overall statistical significance of each regression.<sup>6</sup>

In focusing on the issue of Mexican discrimination, Table 3 provides a number of interesting results. First, we see that the extent of media exposure has virtually no effect and actually has a negative impact. This is counter to the conventional hypothesis that argues that more media use will result in *greater* perception of discrimination. The personal, social, ethnic, and economic variables, however, appear to have a more consistent effect (at the .001 level). Hypothesis 3 is supported to the extent that experience with personal discrimination has a positive and statistically significant impact on perceptions of discrimination against Mexicans, with a coefficient of .383 (at the .001 level). The same is true for hypotheses 4 and 5 for level of income and education: the higher the level of income (.025) and education (.025), the greater the perception of discrimination. Further, hypothesis 6 is also supported in model 3: Republican political affiliation negatively affects one's perception of discrimination against Mexicans (–.106 at the .01 level of significance), while Democratic affiliation is in the position direction but lacks statistical significance.

Similar results occur in Table 4, which focuses on perceptions of Puerto Rican discrimination. Again, media exposure either has no effect or a statistically negative effect on perceptions. Personal discrimination, level of income, and education have positive and statistically significant impacts on Hispanic perceptions of discrimination against Puerto Ricans. Here again, party affiliation leans in the negative direction for Republicans and is of minimal predictive value for Democrats.

Finally, Table 5 concerning Cuban discrimination illustrates that media use once more is limited in its effect on perceptions. This finding is consistent with our divergence

**TABLE 4. EFFECTS ON PERCEPTIONS OF PUERTO RICAN DISCRIMINATION**

	Model #1 Zero Order Effects	Model #2 Social-Psychological, Political, & Economic Variables	Model #3 Full Model Including Ethnic Origin
Media use	–.006		–.005 (.006)
Personal discrimination		.320 (.050)***	.263 (.050)***
Income		.022 (.006)**	.025 (.006)***
Education		.023 (.006)***	.032 (.006)***
Democrat		.119 (.088)	.120 (.087)
Republican		–.579 (.087)***	–.364 (.088)***
Mexican origin			.477 (.063)***
Puerto Rican origin			.643 (.078)***
Intercept	2.61 (.049)***	2.35 (.104)***	1.78 (.126)***
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.000	.113	.140
F	1.11	67.21***	53.59***
Probability > F	.292	.000	.000
N	2,819	2,607	2,593

Figures in parentheses are standard errors, \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

TABLE 5. EFFECTS ON PERCEPTIONS OF CUBAN DISCRIMINATION

	Model #1 Zero Order Effects	Model #2 Social-Psychological, Political, & Economic Variables	Model #3 Full Model Including Ethnic Origin
Media use	-.019 (.006)**		-.007 (.006)
Personal Discrimination		.357 (.052)***	.263 (.051)***
Income		.028 (.007)***	.020 (.007)**
Education		.010 (.006)	.025 (.006)***
Democrat		.039 (.092)	.036 (.089)
Republican		-.424 (.091)***	-.282 (.091)*
Mexican origin			.774 (.064)***
Puerto Rican origin			.416 (.080)***
Intercept	2.69 (.050)***	2.38 (.108)***	1.78 (.130)***
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.003	.066	.121
F	9.40**	37.59***	45.64***
Probability > F	.002	.000	.000
N	2,819	2,607	2,593

Figures in parentheses are standard errors, \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

from the conventional wisdom as described in one vein of the literature. A history of personal discrimination, higher levels of income and education, and party affiliation are aligned with the above findings for Puerto Rican and Mexican perceptions of discrimination. It is significant at this point to highlight the coefficient for the effect of Mexican origin on perceptions of Cuban discrimination (.774 at the .001 level). This finding is significant for at least two reasons: (1) we did not anticipate that Mexican origin would have such an effect on perceptions of Cuban discrimination; (2) the Mexican origin coefficient for perceptions of Cuban discrimination is greater than the Mexican origin coefficient for perceptions of Mexican discrimination (.539). We might explain this finding with reference to the historical context in which the LNPS is situated. Specifically, the LNPS was developed at the end of the 1980s, roughly a decade after the Mariel exodus from Cuba. As Portes and Stepick (1993) illustrate, there was a good deal of negative press surrounding Mariel, and the exodus generated fear and retaliation in the white power structure (p. 18–37). It is certainly possible that Mexicans were sympathetic to the Cuban experience in this period, which might explain the coefficients found in the present analysis. Overall, however, such a claim is easily countered by model 1. Although the  $R^2$  is weak (.003), the coefficient for media use (–.019) is negative and significant at the .01 level, suggesting that more media use leads Hispanics to perceive *less* discrimination against Cubans.

The issue of controlling for specific ethnic groups also presents interesting findings. Across all the tables and whether we are looking at Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban discrimination, we find some consistency within the specific group, but striking inconsistency in overall perception of discrimination. In short, being of Mexican descent has a consistently positive impact on perceptions of all discrimination, whether it is against

Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, or Cubans. The relationship between Mexican origin and perceptions of discrimination against Cubans is particularly interesting in light of the historical circumstances surrounding the Mariel exodus from Cuba and its political and social impacts. Being of Cuban heritage, however, has a consistently negative impact on perceptions of all discrimination. Here, Cubans do not perceive discrimination occurring for any subgroup of Hispanics. This finding is representative of various sociohistorical considerations as well. Namely, Cuban Americans are more politically conservative, middle class, and prone to the Republican Party than other Hispanic groups (Torres 1988; Hero 1992). Finally, being Puerto Rican has no impact on perceptions of discrimination unless the target of discrimination is actually Puerto Rican—and then it is positively related. This finding indicates that the Hispanic demographic is not homogeneous and indeed calls for further investigation into the diversity of perceptions.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our findings illustrate that Hispanics have diverse experiences with reference to perceived discrimination; as a panethnic category, Hispanics have anything but homogeneous views. By using a nationally representative sample and studying Hispanics in isolation of other ethnic groups, we provide an improved picture of minority-minority relations that is lacking in literature prone to small data sets and black-white comparisons. The most striking finding of the present research is that media use among Hispanics does not have a consistently significant effect on their tendency to perceive discrimination against the subgroups, and when it does, it tends to be in the opposite direction expected. To the extent that Hispanic media use drives perceptions in a negative direction, our results confirm for Hispanics what Entman and Rojecki (2000) assert about some whites: that media produces denial that discrimination is a problem for minorities.

The most salient findings are, however, that individual experience with discrimination, level of education and income, and political partisanship are strongly associated with perceptions of discrimination. Overall, we find that personal, social, and cultural conditions seem to be at the root of understanding Hispanic perceptions of discrimination. Personally experiencing discrimination is strongly associated with a tendency for Hispanics to think discrimination exists against the various subethnic categories considered in the present analysis. The personal/group discrimination discrepancy (PGD) indicates that stigmatized group members consider their group to be a target of prejudice, while denying that prejudice affects them personally (Ruggerio and Taylor 1995; Operario and Fiske 2001). Such denial is the consequence of a self-protective effort to preserve a sense of security and control over one's personal life. Our findings invert this premise in that individuals tend to maximize group discrimination when personal discrimination is experienced. Attributional theories take the issue of personal perceptions in relation to the group a step further by suggesting that personal discrimination depends on contextual and situational factors experienced by individuals (Phinney, Madden, and Santos 1998; Shorey, Cowan, and Sullivan 2002). Discriminatory behavior experienced at the individual level is attributed to one's group status, be it class or ethnicity.

In a similar vein, our findings illustrate that personal experience with discrimination will be attributed to the group not in the sense that group characteristics or membership are to blame for individual discrimination, but that personal experience may drive the assignment of discrimination *to* the group. Personally experiencing discrimination leads

to higher levels of perceived group discrimination, thus reversing the attributional perspective by beginning at the level of subjective experiences as they apply to the group. Given that some researchers posit that individual experiences with personal discrimination are mediated by group membership (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Operario and Fiske 2001), our findings indicate that Hispanics who personally experience discrimination are more likely to perceive each Hispanic subgroup as experiencing discrimination. Hence, individual experiences with discrimination amplify an individual's sense of discrimination against the group. This finding forces us to consider how personal experiences contribute to an individual's perception of their group's experiences.

Each model also attempts to test the predictive power of social and cultural variables as they influence Hispanic perceptions. News media use does not usefully predict Hispanic perceptions of discrimination, thus the reasoning behind framing and cultivation arguments does not hold. Our findings confirm earlier research demonstrating that group membership affects one's sense of prejudice or discrimination. Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey (1999), Gary (1995), Operario and Fiske (2001), Yoon (1995), and others indicate that minorities' perceptions of discrimination and prejudice are situated in cultural, personal, psychological, and social conditions. At least one of our class measures (education) falls in line with Yoon's (1995) and Sigelman and Welch's (1991) claims that higher education has a positive influence on perceptions of discrimination: more educated blacks perceive more discrimination against their group than do less educated blacks. Hispanic perceptions in the present analysis are consistent with this finding, demonstrating that education heightens an awareness of discrimination among and between Hispanic group members.

We also find that ethnic background variably influences Hispanic perceptions of discrimination. Cubans, for example, perceive less discrimination than Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. This finding might be explained by the Cuban identification with a conservative posture in American society. Such a posture would lead Cubans to perceive discrimination as only a peripheral consideration in explaining personal or group failings. Cubans may adhere, in other words, to a dominant ideological position that emphasizes personal merit over the structural conditions associated with discrimination. Denying that discrimination exists is perhaps a result of a more stable economic history and greater self-confidence about their condition.

Nevertheless, these findings, along with the consistent fact that ethnicity is statistically significant within and across subgroups, substantiate social identity theories by illustrating that identification with one's ethnic group affects perceptions of discrimination. Having said that, it must be noted that the dichotomous variables used to measure ethnicity do not provide an idea of the *strength* of attachment individuals might have to their ethnic group. It is easy to infer from our findings, however, that group identification influences Hispanic perceptions since it serves as a protective mechanism in the face of adversity.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to Gary's (1995) and Sigelman and Welch's (1991) findings that income level is not significantly related to perceptions of discrimination, our analysis points out that level of income is consistently in the positive direction and statistically significant. Sigelman and Welch (1991) infer little variation in the way poverty level affects perceived discrimination, asserting, "the better off one is, the less discrimination one perceives against oneself" (p. 74). Although we do not test personal perceptions of discrimination in a similar manner, our findings suggest that higher income intensifies

Hispanic perceptions of discrimination: earning more money may have an enlightenment effect similar to more education.

Generally, media priming and cultivation effects must be cautiously evaluated when assuming that such arguments apply to Latino groups in the United States. Latinos are certainly affected by the sorts of images they see on television news and the kinds of stories they read in newspapers, but not in such a way that their cultural, personal, or social experiences are subordinated. Therefore, Allen (1994) and Lewels's (1981) assertions seem to apply to Latinos in the United States: negative media news portrayals of minorities are seldom valid or worthy of consideration when opposed to real world experiences. We find that media use does not translate well into an association with how Latinos perceive discrimination. Rather, Latinos are more likely to draw from their "real-world" experiences in terms of ethnicity, education, income, and personal experience. These are the things Hispanics use to interpret the circumstances associated with discrimination, not the media. Understanding Hispanic perceptions of discrimination requires that attention be placed primarily on social, cultural, and psychological variables rather than how or why news is framed in a given manner. The cultural and social contexts in which minority groups live their lives clearly take precedence in interpreting their circumstances, while the manner in which news is framed by an Anglo-dominated institution is of less significance. Consequently, our analysis complements social-psychological theories that suggest perceptions of prejudice and discrimination are related to one's orientation and attachment to the group.

Furthermore, it is clear that Latinos are significant heterogeneous cultural and institutional forces in the United States that, due to demographic shifts, are only now "front-page news." The continued growth of this population has forced the hand of media institutions to pay attention to what Latinos have to say, where they will take the United States, and how they will contribute to its culture and institutions. Until recently, Latinos have been invisible in the media, and since they are rarely seen or heard, only a limited conception of their treatment is possible. If "no news is good news," and Latinos are indeed invisible, then media effects would remain questionable in determining perceptions of discrimination, unless their absence is driven by exclusionary policies and indifference. Hence, a longitudinal replication of this study might determine if recent, more diverse, and broader media news coverage and use translate into different findings. In the end, Allen's (1994) suggestion is significant: "[b]ecause the environment and personal experience itself provide African Americans with sufficient evidence of racial inequalities, there is little need for information from external sources," including the media. Hispanics may similarly respond to media sources in that media use does not alter their personal everyday experiences with discrimination. As a result, Latinos rely on what it means to be from a particular ethnic, economic, or class background more than they do news and media interpretations.

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## NOTES

1. "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably to refer to residents of the United States who can trace their ancestry to the Spanish-speaking regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Although our primary focus is on Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican populations, we defer to this definition despite its obviously controversial nature as an imposed panethnic category with which not all Latinos identify (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996).

2. Inclusive efforts exist in media research that draws from Latino samples (Tan 1978; Gandy and Matabane 1989; Greenberg and Brand 1994; Graves 1999), but only a few studies make them the central focus of analysis (Greenberg et al. 1983a; Navarrete and Kamasaki 1994; Quiroga 1995; Rodríguez 1998; Méndez-Méndez and Alverio 2001). Much of the latter work addresses the nature of media portrayals and coverage of Latinos or the roles they occupy in the trades. With some exceptions (Burgoon et al. 1983; Greenberg et al. 1983b; Faber, O'Guinn, and Meyer 1987; Navarrete and Kamasaki 1994; Quiroga 1995), the effects of media portrayals on Hispanic groups have been articulated poorly. To some extent, this condition is explained by the fact that racism has been considered a "white man's problem," effectively leaving minorities out of analytic purview (Sigelman and Welch 1991, p. 3–4). It is also important to emphasize intragroup differences that are missed-out when between-group differences are primary considerations (Sigelman and Welch 1991, p. 3; Operario and Fiske 2001, p. 559). Please refer to the following research for greater detail on the relationship between media and race: Armstrong, Neuendorf, and Brentar (1992); Barlow (1998); Cooper (1998); Entman and Rojecki (2000); Faber, O'Guinn, and Meyer (1987); Graves (1999); Gray (1989); Hunt (1997); Matabane and Merritt (1996); Méndez-Méndez and Alverio (2001); Navarrete and Kamasaki (1994); Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996); and Tan (1978).

3. The research on perceptions and attitudes about discrimination for both majority and minority groups is only partially useful to our analysis because it stays the black-white course, addresses international minority issues, or gives narrow consideration to the variables we consider. The following list of citations paints a broad stroke on some of the research dealing with perceptions of discrimination: Crosby (1984); Gossett and Williams (1998); Hughes and Demo (1989); Khan and Lambert (2001); Tuch and Martin (1997); Verkuyten (1998); Weitzer and Tuch (1999).

4. In order to check for the presence of multicollinearity, we employed two procedures—an ocular test that examines the Pearson's  $r$  correlation matrix and the Klein test that regresses each independent variable on all the other independent variables. For the ocular test we take a relatively conservative stance and look for any correlations exceeding .60. For the Klein test we look for any  $R^2$  that approaches 1.00.

5. The groups considered in the LNPS include blacks, Mexican-origin people, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Women, Jewish Americans, and Asian Americans.

6. The probability  $> F$  reported in Tables 3–5 tells us the probability of a greater  $F$  statistic if we draw samples randomly from a population in which the null hypothesis is true (Hamilton 1998, p. 132).

7. See Operario and Fiske (2001) and Ruggiero and Taylor (1995).

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