

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LATINO VOTER TURNOUT IN THE UNITED STATES

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In this article, we address a number of unresolved questions about Latino electoral participation. First, we examine differences between Latinos and other groups and establish a persistent pattern of low Latino turnout that remains even after taking into account the fact that a large proportion of Latinos are not citizens and are therefore ineligible to vote. Then we investigate the extent to which differences in turnout between Latinos and other groups can be explained by standard socioeconomic variables. Finally, we consider whether there are meaningful differences in turnout between foreign-born and native-born Latino citizens and argue that framing the question in terms of a foreign-born/native-born dichotomy is misleading. Nativity status does have a powerful effect on turnout, but only when considered in conjunction how long foreign-born citizens have lived in the United States. Throughout, we distinguish the three largest Latino subgroups, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans.

Understanding the role of Latinos in the American political process is an increasingly important task. The 1990 census revealed that the proportion of the population classified as Hispanic increased nearly 50% in the previous decade, from 6.4% in 1980 to 9.0% in 1990 (Roberts, 1993). Recent Census Bureau reports based on the 2000 census indicate that Hispanics have now surpassed African Americans in number, making them the largest minority group in the United States (Schmitt, 2001). There are now more than 35 million Latinos who live in the United States.¹ Adding to its political importance, the Latino population is regionally concentrated with 86% of Latinos living in just nine states, including the four most populous (DeSipio, 1996). According to the 1990 census, Latinos in California and Texas constituted more than one quarter of the population and more than one

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eighth of the population in Florida and New York (de la Garza & DeSipio, 1999).

In this article, we analyze a set of factors that influence how Latinos translate their growing numbers into electoral strength. In particular, we examine the differences between Latino turnout and the turnout of other major groups from 1976 to 1996, consider the extent to which Latino voter turnout can be explained by standard socioeconomic variables, and assess the hypothesis that there are significant differences between native-born and foreign-born citizens. Throughout, we distinguish the three largest groups of Latino citizens in the United States—Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Cuban Americans—to investigate the similarities and differences in their patterns of electoral participation.

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

When considering the potential electoral power of Latinos, one feature of the population should immediately be considered: A substantial number of Latinos are not citizens and are therefore ineligible to vote. Of the 18 million adult Latinos who live in the United States, slightly more than 7 million (39%) are not citizens (Casper & Bass, 1998). Thus, although Latinos constitute a sizable proportion of the voting-age citizen population (6.1%), due to the large number of noncitizens, they are an even larger percentage of the voting-age population (9.3%).²

In this light, it is possible that a comparatively low level of citizenship explains what appears to be persistently low Latino turnout. Based on Census Bureau estimates, the average Latino turnout in presidential elections between 1976 and 1992 was just 30.4%, nearly 31 percentage points below that of all Whites and 22 points lower than that of African Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). However, these differences are misleading because the Census Bureau routinely calculated turnout as a percentage of the voting-age population.³ Of course, the voting-age citizen population is a more appropriate base for the calculation because noncitizens, like 17-year-olds, are ineligible to vote. For the 1996 election, the Census Bureau (Casper & Bass, 1998) incorporated this line of thinking and provided two turn-

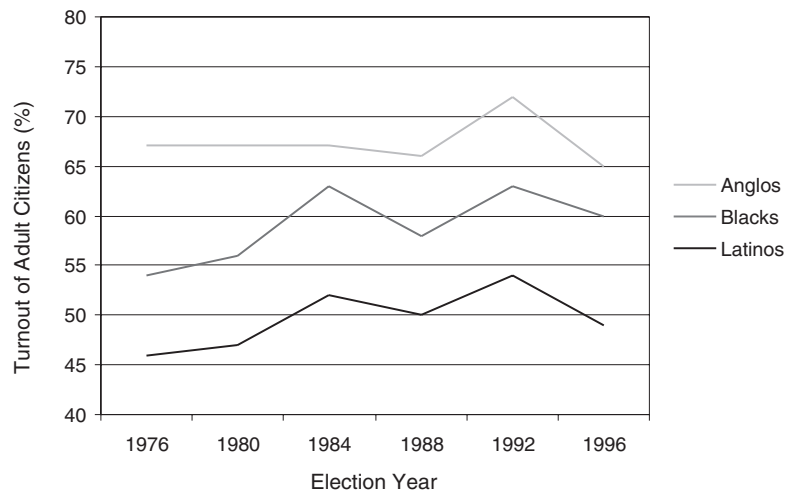


Figure 1: Turnout by Ethnicity and Race, 1976-1996

SOURCE: Current Population Survey Voter Supplements, 1976-1996 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

out estimates, one based on the voting-age population and the other based on the voting-age citizen population. Using the latter increases the estimate of 1996 Latino turnout 17.4 percentage points to 44.3%. However, Latinos still lagged behind Anglos (i.e., non-Latino Whites) by 16 percentage points and behind Blacks by 9 points. Figure 1 shows the turnout⁴ of citizens by race and ethnicity for all the presidential years from 1976 to 1996.⁵ Clearly, low Latino turnout is not simply the result of including noncitizens in the base of turnout calculations. Nor is low Latino turnout unique to a single election year. The explanation requires that additional factors be considered, a task we undertake in this article.

The large number of Latino noncitizens is related to another important aspect of the Latino population in the United States: Many of those who are citizens were not born in the United States. In 1996, 1 in 3 Latino citizens was foreign-born compared with about 1 in 25 of the rest of the population.⁶ With regard to electoral participation, an interesting question arises: Are there turnout effects that result from the fact that the political socialization of the foreign-born is quite different from that of the native-born? This is the second question addressed in

this article. As we will see, both the question and the answer are more complicated than they initially appear.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Latinos in the United States are a sizable population with a number of distinctive characteristics. Despite this, we know relatively little about their patterns of electoral participation. Writing in 1980, Wolfinger and Rosenstone surveyed the literature and found that “little research has been done on the political behavior of Hispanic-Americans” (p. 91). More than a decade later, this view was echoed by Hero (1992) who wrote that “Latino politics has not been studied extensively” (p. xi).⁷

The relative lack of attention to Latino voting—and some of the shortcomings of the studies that do exist—can be traced in large part to a historical lack of adequate data. The major data source for most studies of voters and voter turnout, the National Election Studies (NES), generally has not included sufficient numbers of Latino respondents for analysis. For example, in the 1980-1998 period, the average number of Latino respondents in the biennial NES has been just 137 (Miller & NES, 1999).

Among the work that has been done, there are two rather distinctive approaches. The first focuses on low Latino turnout and attempts to explain the disparity as rooted in socioeconomic differences between Latinos and other groups. As DeSipio (1996) has written, “Latinos are more likely to have large components of the population with characteristics that predict high levels of nonvoting: relative youth, low levels of income, and low levels of formal education” (p. 61). To investigate the implications of these differences for low Latino turnout, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) analyzed the Current Population Survey and found that among Mexican Americans in the midterm election of 1974, the turnout gap with Anglos was eliminated once a standard set of demographic factors had been held constant.⁸ The model was less effective at explaining the gap between Puerto Rican and Anglo turnout. “With other demographic variables held constant, Puerto Ricans were about 7 percent less likely to vote in 1974” (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980, p. 93).

The disparate results for Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans provides empirical support for the notion that Latinos should not be considered as an undifferentiated population.⁹ Analyses that combine Latinos of all national origins in a single group and thereby implicitly assume that they are all similar will likely conceal important differences.¹⁰ Unfortunately, due the sort of data limitations we have discussed, many subsequent studies have not been able to distinguish between Latino subgroups. For example, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) combined Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans into a single category in their pooled NES sample that spanned a 32-year period (1956-1988) and found that, after controlling for a variety of factors, Latino turnout was 6 percentage points lower in presidential elections and 9 points lower in midterm elections than the turnout of Anglos.¹¹

Our review of previous research has failed to turn up a single multivariate analysis of the effect of socioeconomic variables on turnout since Wolfinger and Rosenstone's (1980) that uses a nationally representative sample and distinguishes between Latino subgroups and compares them with Anglos.¹² Given that their study is based on a midterm election held more than a quarter of a century ago, we think it prudent to revisit this question. Not only will we examine how Mexican American and Puerto Rican turnout compares with Anglo turnout in a recent presidential election, but we will add to our analysis another politically important group of Latinos, Cuban Americans.

The second approach to explaining Latino turnout is less concerned with demographic differences. Although not denying their existence and importance, it focuses on other characteristics that distinguish the Latino population in the United States. For example, Nelson (1979) claimed that low levels of Latino political participation could be explained as the result of a "weak participation culture," a hypothesis that has since been refuted by Garcia and Arce (1988). More recently, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) located a source of lower Latino political participation in religious factors: "Being Latino is connected to other characteristics—of which religion is the most important example—that affect participation. . . . [Latinos,] a mostly Catholic group . . . are relatively unlikely to have the chance to develop civic skills in the context of church activity" (p. 523).¹³

With regard to turnout specifically, scholars have been drawn to the role of nativity, theorizing and attempting to empirically investigate

whether there exist turnout differences between native-born and naturalized citizens. Tam Cho (1999) hypothesizes that the turnout of the foreign-born will be lower than that of the native-born because members of the former group have less experience and exposure to the American political system, which makes voting a more difficult task:

For the native-born, past political experiences provide an understanding of American government, party politics, the voting process, etc. For the foreign-born, past experiences may not have provided the same familiarity with democratic political processes in general, and will not have created familiarity with American politics in particular. (p. 1144)

Tam Cho's hypothesis is persuasive, especially when considered in conjunction with research on the turnout effects of aging, which contends that as "people grow older, in short, they accumulate information, skills, and attachments that help them to overcome the costs of political involvement" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, p. 137). This line of reasoning leads to the prediction of lower turnout among naturalized citizens because they have had less time to acquire these resources.

At the same time, there may also be a countervailing effect. Becoming a citizen is a choice that those who are eligible can make. Some of the attitudinal and psychological factors that influence people to switch nationalities and become American citizens, like patriotism, are the same ones that are associated with higher turnout. Moreover, the naturalization process itself may enhance the likelihood of voting. DeSipio (1996) summarizes the point:

Those who are interested [in becoming citizens] face several steps to naturalize prior to registration and voting. These include psychological ones—transferring their primary loyalties . . . to the United States. They must also prepare for the naturalization process that requires both specific knowledge—English language proficiency and knowledge of U.S. civics and history—and the ability to meet a series of confusing bureaucratic requirements. (p. 119)

Thus, there are factors that could both increase and decrease the turnout of naturalized citizens compared with that of their native-born counterparts.

Empirically, there is very little evidence pertaining to the effects of naturalization on Latino turnout, and collectively, the evidence is inconclusive.¹⁴ Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) performed an indirect test by using Puerto Ricans as a proxy for the native-born, because Puerto Ricans do not have to go through the naturalization process in order to vote. Using their finding that turnout was higher among Mexican Americans, a group that includes both native-born and naturalized citizens, they suggested that the foreign-born have higher turnout than the native-born. Of course, it would have been preferable to compare native-born Mexican Americans with naturalized Mexican Americans.¹⁵ Tam Cho (1999) made such a comparison of Mexican Americans in the 1984 presidential election in California and reached the opposite conclusion.¹⁶ She found that, controlling for socioeconomic status, the naturalized had lower turnout than the native-born. However, the limitations of the data she used suggest caution in interpreting the results.¹⁷

The meager evidence on the effects of naturalization on Latino turnout provides a compelling case for additional research. Moreover, the simple native-born/foreign-born dichotomy is probably inadequate to measure any of the hypothesized effects. Tam Cho's argument that experience with the American political system should increase turnout suggests that the key variable is how long naturalized citizens have lived in the United States.¹⁸ Simply categorizing all naturalized citizens as foreign-born entails the (implicit) assumption that there are no turnout effects of gaining more experience, exposure, and familiarity with American politics. Just as we would be skeptical of any turnout model that does not include age, we must treat all findings about the effect of nativity that do not consider how long naturalized citizens have lived in the United States as incomplete, at best.¹⁹ Furthermore, as our theoretical orientation shifts away from the nativity dichotomy to one that emphasizes how long the foreign-born have lived in the country, we think it important to analyze Puerto Ricans. Although Puerto Ricans differ from Latinos from other countries (and all immigrants for that matter) because they do not have to naturalize in order to vote, some have lived in the United States longer than others and therefore have had more exposure to, and direct experience with, U.S. politics. At the same time, there is no reason to assume that the effects are similar for Latinos of different national origins, and we will there-

fore conduct separate analyses for Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans.

Overall, then, we have a dual purpose in this article. First, we seek to explain the low overall turnout of Latinos compared with Anglos. To do this, we will distinguish between major Latino subgroups to observe whether the generalization applies to them all equally. Then, we will estimate the degree to which any differences can be traced to differences in socioeconomic status. Our second goal is to explicate nativity effects within the Latino subgroups.²⁰

DATA AND MEASURES

Conducted monthly by the Census Bureau, primarily to obtain data used to estimate unemployment, the Current Population Survey (CPS) provides valuable and underused data for studying Latino electoral participation.²¹ Its large sample size allows us to draw distinctions and conduct analyses that are impossible with more traditional survey samples. For example, the November 1996 CPS includes 84,090 adult citizens. The 4,308 Latino citizens in the CPS more than double the size of the entire 1996 NES, which interviewed 1,714 respondents. The CPS also enjoys a significant size advantage over the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS), which includes 1,777 Latino citizens (de la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1992). Moreover, the large size of the CPS sample makes it unnecessary to target areas where there are large numbers of Latinos to ensure an adequate number of respondents. As a result, the CPS sample is nationally representative, a characteristic that is lacking in surveys like the LNPS, which focus on areas of heavy concentration of Latinos.²²

In addition to the large number of observations, the quality of the data collected for the CPS is better than that of most surveys. The CPS sample is drawn from 754 primary sampling units, compared with 108 for the NES (Rosenstone, Kinder, Miller, & NES, 1998; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997). The CPS historically enjoys a 95% completion rate, compared with about 70% for the NES in recent years (Brehm, 1993). It also completes interviewing quickly, which may reduce response error about voting. In 1996, the CPS finished collecting its data on voting in the 1996 election by November 19. In comparison,

LNPS respondents answered questions about voting in the 1988 election “between eight and 18 months after the election” (DeSipio, 1996, p. 88).²³

Each month, the CPS includes a supplement on a particular topic, for example, smoking or child care. Every other November, the Voter Supplement inquires about citizenship status, registration, and voting. These questions, along with the survey’s inclusion of socioeconomic indicators and variables like national origin and nativity, make our analysis possible. The country of origin is available for Cuban Americans and Mexican Americans. The survey also distinguishes Puerto Ricans from the rest of the Latinos in the sample. Thus, our analysis will focus on these three groups of Latinos.²⁴

For the first time, in 1996, the Voter Supplement (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997) included a question about how long immigrants have lived in the United States. As a result, we do not have to make the assumption that the turnout effect of being foreign-born is constant. Instead, we can investigate whether turnout increases (or decreases) with time spent in the country.²⁵

Given that we analyze a dichotomous dependent variable, voter turnout, we estimate the effects of the independent variables with logit models. To facilitate the substantive interpretation of the results, the logit coefficients are used to calculate turnout probabilities. The probability of voting is computed for different values of an independent variable, with the values of the other independent variables set at their medians.²⁶

FINDINGS

Figure 1 shows how Latino turnout has trailed that of other groups during the past 20 years. We now turn to an analysis of Latino turnout in the 1996 presidential election. First, we compare the turnout of Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans to each other and to non-Latinos. Then, we proceed to analysis of intragroup differences and focus on nativity and the length of time Latino citizens have lived in the United States.

According to the CPS, among Latinos in 1996, Puerto Ricans had the lowest turnout, only 44%. Turnout among Mexican Americans

TABLE 1
Socioeconomic Status of U.S. Citizens, 1996

	<i>Mexican Americans</i>	<i>Puerto Ricans</i>	<i>Cuban Americans</i>	<i>Anglos</i>
Attended college (%)	32	28	49	52
Family income \$40,000 or more (%)	26	23	39	48
50 years of age or older (%)	23	25	50	38
Lived in current home 3 or more years (%)	62	61	74	71

SOURCE: 1996 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

was only marginally higher, 47%. Turnout of these two groups was lower than that of American Indians (50%), Asians (53%), African Americans (60%), and Anglos (65%). In contrast, the turnout of Cuban Americans, 63%, was substantially higher, trailing Anglos by just 2 percentage points.²⁷ This straightforward analysis demonstrates that among Latinos, there is substantial variation based on country of origin, suggesting that the often-cited low levels of Latino turnout oversimplify the issue.

Undoubtedly, part of the variation in turnout rates by Latino ethnicity is due to socioeconomic differences between the groups. Table 1 shows how the groups compare on the four demographic factors that past research shows to be most strongly related to turnout: education, age, income, and residential stability (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). On each of the indicators, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans are at a disadvantage compared with Anglos. Overall, the two groups are less educated, poorer, younger, and less residentially stable. On the basis of these factors alone, one would predict lower turnout for Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. The turnout consequences of Cuban Americans' socioeconomic status is less clear because the pattern of differences is not consistent. Cuban Americans are older and more residentially stable than Anglos, factors that operate to increase turnout of Cuban Americans compared with that of Anglos. But Cuban Americans are also less educated, marginally so, and are less well off financially than Anglos, factors that lower turnout.

Whether demographic differences can completely account for the turnout differences is revealed in Table 2, which presents two turnout

models. The first logit model includes only the racial-ethnic and national-origin variables. The second model adds the four socioeconomic variables from Table 1: age, educational attainment, family income, and residential stability.²⁸ In addition, the second model includes a set of dummy variables allowing for a different intercept (constant) for each state. Given that the distribution of Latinos is not uniform across the states and that there exists state-level variation in registration laws and political contexts, we include these dummy variables to avoid conflating group differences in turnout with turnout differences across states.²⁹

The results in Table 2 indicate that virtually all of the overall Latino group differences disappear when socioeconomic variables are taken into account. Using Anglo turnout as a baseline, Puerto Rican turnout increases about 19 percentage points when socioeconomic variables are included, and the residual estimated difference of 1 percentage point cannot confidently be distinguished from zero ($p = .65$). The same pattern is evident among Mexican Americans. After including the control variables, Mexican American turnout increases substantially and can no longer be distinguished from that of Anglos ($p = .91$). Cuban American turnout demonstrates a different pattern. The marginally lower overall turnout of Cuban Americans increases only slightly after including the socioeconomic variables. And, in both cases (Model 1 and Model 2) the estimated difference between Cuban American and Anglo turnout does not approach conventional levels of statistical significance.³⁰ Despite the different patterns, then, the results in Table 2 indicate that overall turnout differences between Latino groups and Anglos can largely be explained with socioeconomic factors.³¹

Although the group differences are largely removed by taking into account demographic factors, there still may be important distinctions within the Latino populations that have turnout implications. As we have discussed, the effects of being foreign-born and how long citizens have lived in the United States are two prime areas of question. Table 3 shows how the three groups of Latinos differ in this regard. The vast majority (82%) of Mexican American citizens are native-born. Most Puerto Ricans were not born on the mainland, and Cuban Americans have the lowest proportion of native-born citizens, 27 percent.³²

TABLE 2
Logit Parameter Estimates of Turnout

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	Logit Coefficient	Effect in Percentage	Logit Coefficient	Effect in Percentage
Mexican American	-.74** (.04)	-18.0	-.01 (.05)	-0.2
Puerto Rican	-.85** (.07)	-20.7	-.04 (.08)	-0.9
Cuban American	-.08 (.13)	-1.8	.15 (.15)	3.3
Other Latino	-.32** (.07)	-7.6	.11 (.11)	2.5
Black	-.22** (.02)	-5.1	.40** (.03)	8.5
Asian	-.51** (.05)	-12.2	-.76** (.06)	-18.5
Native American	-.62** (.08)	-15.0	-.19* (.10)	-4.4
Anglo	—	—	—	—
Age (square root)			.47** (.01)	49.2
Education			.61** (.01)	50.7
Family income			.22** (.01)	19.1
Residential stability			.37** (.01)	18.0
Constant	.62** (.01)	—	-6.15** (.07)	—
-2 * log likelihood		100,890		78,127
Correctly predicted (%)		63		71
Number of observations		78,309		71,025

SOURCE: 1996 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Although not listed in the table, Model 2 includes separate intercepts (constants) for each state. See text for details. Entries in the "Effect in Percentage" columns reflect the effect in probability (multiplied by 100) of the corresponding logit coefficient for an individual with the median values of the other independent variables. See appendix for details of the coding.

* $p < .10$, two-tailed. ** $p < .05$, two-tailed.

Table 3 also reveals that among the foreign-born, there are substantial differences across the groups. Naturalized Mexican Americans are fairly evenly distributed in terms of how long they have lived in the

TABLE 3
Nativity and Years Lived in the United States
Among Latino Citizens, 1996 (in percentages)

	<i>Mexican Americans</i>	<i>Puerto Ricans^a</i>	<i>Cuban Americans</i>
Nativity status			
Native-born	82	44	27
Foreign-born	18	56	73
Years in the United States (foreign-born only)			
0-10	20	21	2
11-21	29	23	12
22-31	26	18	41
32+	25	38	44

SOURCE: 1996 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

a. Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico are coded as foreign-born.

United States. Puerto Ricans have generally lived on the mainland longer. Whereas 25% of foreign-born Mexican American citizens have been in the country for 32 years or more, fully 38% of foreign-born Puerto Ricans have lived in the United States this long. For obvious reasons, Cuban Americans have a significantly more skewed pattern of immigration. Fully 85% of foreign-born Cuban American citizens arrived in America more than 21 years ago.

To determine the turnout effects, we distinguish the three groups, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans. For each of the groups, we estimate two models. The first includes nativity along with the same set of socioeconomic and state variables used earlier. The second model adds length of time the foreign-born have lived in the United States. The purpose behind estimating both models is to illuminate how neglecting length of time in the United States leads to a misunderstanding of determinants of turnout among Latinos.

Table 4 provides the logit estimates from both models. They are converted to probabilities in Table 5. Focusing first on those from Model 1, with the exception of the estimate for Cuban Americans, the estimates are substantively small. Moreover, none of the estimated effects reach conventional levels of statistical significance. The *p* values for the coefficients range from .21 (Cuban Americans) to .33 (Puerto Ricans).

TABLE 4
Logit Parameter Estimates of Turnout

	<i>Cuban Americans</i>		<i>Puerto Ricans</i>		<i>Mexican Americans</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Age (square root)	.81** (.23)	.68** (.24)	.45** (.09)	.31** (.10)	.64** (.05)	.62** (.05)
Education	1.12** (.21)	1.02** (.21)	.39** (.09)	.43** (.10)	.50** (.05)	.49** (.05)
Family income	-.07 (.17)	-.09 (.17)	.01 (.08)	-.02 (.08)	.27** (.05)	.27** (.05)
Residential stability	.29 (.29)	.29 (.30)	.45** (.12)	.40** (.12)	.26** (.07)	.26** (.07)
Foreign-born	-.69 (.55)	-2.46** (1.12)	.20 (.21)	-.84** (.39)	.17 (.14)	-.55 (.36)
Years in United States (foreign-born)		.62* (.34)		.42** (.13)		.27** (.13)
-2 * log likelihood	183.0	179.5	745.2	734.8	2,310.9	2,306.2
Correctly predicted (%)	76	78	67	67	71	70
Number of observations	204	204	654	654	1,958	1,958

SOURCE: 1996 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

NOTE: Although they are not reported in the table, the models include separate intercepts (constants) for each state. See text for details. Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < .01$, two-tailed. ** $p < .05$, two-tailed.

In contrast, the results from Model 2 suggest more substantial effects. The key to this finding is allowing the effect of being foreign-born to vary with how long one has lived in the United States. The modest differences estimated from Model 1 conceal significant variation. Among Mexican Americans, the turnout of naturalized citizens who have lived in the United States for 10 years or less is about 6 percentage points lower than that of native-born Mexican Americans. Among the foreign-born who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time, turnout increases. Naturalized Mexican American citizens who have lived in the United States for the greatest amount of time have turnout that is slightly more than 13 percentage points higher than that of native-born Mexican Americans and 20 percentage points greater than that of foreign-born Mexican Americans who have lived in the country for 10 years or less.

TABLE 5
Estimated Turnout Effects of Nativity
and Length of Time in the United States

	<i>Mexican Americans</i>	<i>Puerto Ricans</i>	<i>Cuban Americans</i>
Model 1			
U.S.-born	—	—	—
Foreign-born	4.2	4.1	-15.2
Model 2			
U.S.-born	—	—	—
Foreign-born, lived in United States:			
10 years or less	-6.4	-6.9	*
11-21 years	0	0	*
22-31 years	6.7	8.5	-14.6
32+ years	13.4	18.4	0.7

SOURCE: 1996 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

NOTE: Model 1 and Model 2 were estimated separately for each of the three groups of Latinos. In addition to the variables listed in the table, both models include age, education, family income, residential mobility, and state of residence. Cell entries report the estimated effect, in percentage points, of being in the designated category compared to being native-born for an individual with the median values of the other independent variables. See appendix for coding of variables. The asterisk (*) indicates that there are less than 50 observations in the designated category.

The pattern for Puerto Ricans is similar.³³ The estimated difference in turnout between foreign-born Puerto Ricans who have lived in the United States for 32 or more years and those who have lived in the country for 10 years or less is about 25 percentage points. Puerto Ricans who have lived in the country longer have higher turnout than those who have resided in the United States a fewer number of years. The difference of 4 percentage points between those born in the continental United States and those born in Puerto Rico that was estimated with Model 1 conceals the fact that among the latter who have not lived in the country for a long time, turnout is 7 percentage points lower than the turnout of Puerto Ricans born in the continental United States. Among those born in Puerto Rico who have lived in the United States for the longest period of time, turnout is almost 20 percentage points higher.

With regard to Cuban Americans, we cannot observe the effects of being foreign-born and living in the country for less than 22 years because there has been only a trickle of immigrants from Cuba since

the mid-1970s. We do, however, observe that naturalized Cuban Americans who have lived in the United States for 32 or more years have an estimated turnout that is 15 percentage points greater than the turnout of those who have lived in the country for 22 to 31 years. Thus, like Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, foreign-born Cuban Americans who have lived in the United States for a longer period of time have higher turnout than the foreign-born who have lived in the country for a shorter period.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The findings reported in this article contribute to scholarship on Latino voter turnout in a number of important ways. First, because we analyzed an especially large survey sample, we did not have to settle for analyzing Latinos as an undifferentiated population. In contrast to much of the previous research, we distinguished the three largest groups of Latinos in the United States—Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans—which made possible an examination of the similarities and differences in their patterns of electoral participation.

With regard to overall levels of participation, the large turnout disparities between Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, on one hand, and Anglos on the other, may be explained by the socioeconomic differences between the groups. The turnout gap between Cuban Americans and the other two groups of Latinos also largely disappears after controlling for socioeconomic status.³⁴ This pattern of minimal differences compared to Anglos, which is evident for all three Latino populations, stands in contrast to that of African Americans, whose turnout is higher compared with that of Anglos, and Asian Americans, whose turnout is lower, after taking into account socioeconomic factors.

On the question of nativity, there are strong theoretical arguments to believe that how long foreign-born citizens have lived in the United States should be of considerable importance. Our findings demonstrate that omitting this variable leads to the incorrect conclusion that there are modest, if any, effects of nativity status on Latino turnout. When properly specified, substantial effects of being foreign-born emerge. The longer that Latino citizens have lived in the United States,

the higher their turnout. Thus, although overall turnout differences may be accounted for by socioeconomic and demographic factors, there remains substantial intragroup variation that is important for understanding the determinants of the electoral participation of Latinos in the United States.

We have suggested that socializing and exposure factors explain why turnout is higher among Latinos who have resided in the United States for greater periods of time. Citizens who have lived in the country for longer periods of time have had more experience with the American political system and have higher levels of political information and understanding. All these factors facilitate turnout. In addition, Latinos who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time speak English more regularly (Grenier, 1984), which may assist the acquisition of political information and further increase turnout. Sorting out the precise causal paths between years lived in the United States and turnout is a task we leave for future research.

APPENDIX Coding of Variables

The coding of the variables used in the multivariate models was as follows:

Age: the square root of age, in years.

Educational attainment: (1) no high school degree, (2) high school degree only, (3) some college, (4) associate's degree, (5) bachelor's degree.

Family income: (1) <\$15,000, (2) \$15,000-\$30,000, (3) \$30,000-\$60,000, (4) more than \$60,000.

Residential stability: (1) <1 year, (2) 1-2 years, (3) more than 3 years.

Foreign-born: (0) native-born, (1) foreign-born.

Years in the United States: (0) native-born, (1) 10 years or less, (2) 11-21 years, (3) 22-31 years, (4) 32 years or more.

NOTES

1. Even before the release of the 2000 data, the growing size and importance of the Latino population was well-known. As an advertising executive put it, "We are dealing now with numbers that no one can ignore" (Sosa, quoted in Van Natta, 2000, p. A8).

2. Although Latinos will likely surpass African Americans as the largest minority group of voting-age citizens, their high rate of noncitizenship virtually guarantees that it will happen

sometime *after* surpassing African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States. We have been unable to locate any projections of the future size of the Latino citizen population, but estimates from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) make the point. According to the CPS, in 1996 African Americans outnumbered Latinos by nearly 4 million in the voting-age population. Among voting-age citizens, there were over 10 million more African Americans than Latinos (Casper & Bass, 1998). Perhaps needless to say, the citizenship rate of voting-age Blacks is very high, 96 percent.

3. Wrinkle and Miller (1984) point out how others have run into difficulty by not taking into account the comparative youth of the Latino population and the resulting fact that compared with other groups in the United States, a larger proportion of the Latino population is not eligible to vote because of age considerations.

4. Unless indicated otherwise, the findings we present are based on our own analysis of the CPS, which we describe in detail later. The turnout rates that we report are higher than those in census publications that rely on the CPS because, in addition to noncitizens, we exclude respondents who were coded "do not know" or "not reported" on the turnout question. Census Bureau publications treat these two groups of respondents, which amounted to 5.7% of the 1992 CPS sample (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993), as nonvoters.

5. Across these six elections, the average Latino turnout was 49.7%, compared with 67.3% among Anglos and 59.0% among Blacks.

6. The value for Latinos includes Puerto Ricans living in the continental United States who were born in Puerto Rico, about 10% of all Latino citizens. Puerto Ricans become eligible to vote as soon as they take up residence in the United States. Other Latino immigrants must go through the usual naturalization process.

7. Although there has been increased attention to Latino participation more recently (e.g., Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Shaw, de la Garza, & Lee, 2000; Tam Cho, 1999), there still are important gaps in the literature, two of which we address in this article.

8. In contrast, Tam Cho (1999) analyzed the turnout of Mexican Americans in California in the 1984 presidential election and found that Mexican turnout remained lower than Anglo turnout after "controlling for only the socio-economic variables."

9. Tam (1995) makes a similar argument about Asian Americans.

10. Hero (1992) argues that Latinos should not be analyzed as a homogeneous population, providing numerous reasons to expect patterns of participation to vary by country of origin. Moreover, Garcia (1981) suggests that there may be important differences between Latinos with the same ethnicity based on their levels and types of ethnic identities.

11. Despite having enough cases, Bass and Casper (1999) do not distinguish between Latino subgroups in their analysis.

12. To be sure, some studies (e.g., Shaw et al., 2000) that analyze turnout in individual or a limited number of states acknowledge differences between Latino ethnic groups and model them in their analyses.

13. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) used a scale of political participation based on eight different activities, of which voting was one. Although some "civic skill" is required to vote, it is the least demanding of scale components, raising the possibility that religious differences would be less effective at explaining the turnout gap between Latinos and Anglos, compared with, for example, the gap in volunteering to work on a political campaign.

14. Most studies analyzing the determinants of political participation and turnout, probably due to an inadequate number of observations, do not include any examination of differences between naturalized and native-born citizens (e.g., Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1995).

15. And, for that matter, it would be desirable to compare Puerto Ricans born in the United States with those born in Puerto Rico.

16. Within his own study, DeSipio (1996) finds contradictory results. "Naturalization has a mixed but generally positive impact on registration and voting. . . . Naturalization has a negative impact [on voting]" (p. 157). Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) distinguish between the native-born and the foreign-born but do not distinguish between citizens and noncitizens among the latter.

17. Although the exact number is not evident, it is clear that Tam Cho's analysis is based on a very small number of naturalized Mexican Americans. The overall sample size, including Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and Anglos, of the survey she analyzes is 1,300, of which 1,132 are native-born, leaving 168 naturalized citizens of all races and ethnicities. Given her finding that the "foreign-born Asian community is large," it appears likely that the estimate of lower turnout of naturalized Mexicans is based on fewer than 100 respondents.

18. As Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet (1989) put it, "For those born abroad, longer residence in the U.S. corresponds to greater opportunities for inexpensive acquisition of political information" (p. 203).

19. Evidence suggesting that how long naturalized citizens have lived in this country is related to turnout comes from Bass and Casper (1999). In a multivariate analysis of all naturalized citizens, irrespective of race and ethnicity, they find higher turnout among those who have lived in the country longer.

20. It is worth noting that these two purposes are distinct. Irrespective of whether overall turnout differences with Anglos are rooted in socioeconomic differences, there may be nativity effects within Latino populations.

21. When necessary, the CPS is administered in Spanish.

22. The virtue of the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) is that it collected data on a large number of factors, including a range of attitudinal variables such as party affiliation, ideology, and policy preferences. Given that the hypotheses we will be testing are all specified in demographic terms, the advantages of the LNPS are not relevant for this study.

23. Like most surveys, the CPS measures turnout based on respondents' reports, without external validation. Silver, Anderson, and Abramson (1986) show that the magnitude of relationships between independent variables and turnout is attenuated when validated, rather than reported, turnout is used. Shaw et al. (2000) show this generalization applies to Latino turnout. Consequently, the parameter estimates that we report in this article should be considered as "upper-bound" effect estimates.

24. The CPS combines all other Central or South American Latinos into a single category, which comprises about 16% of the Latino citizen population in the United States.

25. We would have also liked to include a variable that measures respondents' English language skills, especially in light of the evidence presented by Tam Cho (1999) and DeSipio (1996) demonstrating a connection to turnout. Unfortunately, the CPS does not inquire about English proficiency. The language question it does include, which asks if Spanish is "the only language spoken by all members of this household," elicits virtually no variation. Nearly all Latino citizens answered in the negative.

26. The "median" individual in the sample is 42 years old, has a high school education, a family income between \$25,000 and \$40,000, and has lived at the same address for 3 or more years. In an earlier version of this article, we calculated the probabilities for an individual who would otherwise vote with a probability of .5. Both methods of interpreting the logit coefficients yield identical patterns of results.

27. Turnout among "other" Latinos was 57%.

28. To account for the diminishing marginal effect of age (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980), we measure age with the square root of respondents' age in years.

29. Although the passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (Pub. L. No. 103-31 [1993]) has made registration laws more uniform across the states, there remain differences, due in part to variation in the implementation of the law (Wolfinger & Hoffman, 2001). Other variations in political context that may affect turnout include concurrent Senate or gubernatorial elections and state laws that affect Latino communities. Sorting out the turnout effects of all these factors is beyond the bounds of this article. However, given their possible relationship to the variables of interest in this article, the state dummy variables are included to guard against conflating the effects.

30. In Model 1, the p value is .51. In Model 2, the p value is .29.

31. Blacks and Asians reveal divergent patterns. Without taking into account socioeconomic factors, Black turnout was 5.1 percentage points lower than Anglo turnout. After adding the controls, Black turnout was 8.5 percentage points higher than Anglo turnout. The gap between Asian and Anglo turnout, in contrast, moves in the other direction. Asians' turnout deficit of 12.2 percentage points (compared to Anglos) grows larger, to 18.5 points, when socioeconomic variables are included in the model.

32. These differences reflect, in part, different naturalization rates. Among all foreign-born Mexican adults, just 17% are naturalized citizens. Among Cubans, the corresponding rate is 52%.

33. Because Puerto Ricans do not have to naturalize in order to vote, this finding appears at first to be somewhat puzzling. However, it is possible that the observed effect for Mexican Americans is not larger because Mexican Americans who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time are more likely to have been victims of historical patterns of exclusion that existed before Latinos were given the protections of the Voting Rights Act (DeSipio, 1996).

34. To be sure, this does not imply that there are no group-specific factors that influence Latino turnout.

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