

here suggest that rather than encouraging Asian Americans to retreat into ethnic enclaves, a sense of linked fate with other Asian Americans, membership in Asian American organizations, and even activism related to the politics in the home country may spur political participation in the United States, leading to more, not less, political integration for Asian Americans. These unique features provide new insight into a future of activity amidst diversity for Asian Americans in the decades to come.

RODOLFO O. DE LA GARZA, MARISA A. ABRAJANO,
AND JERONIMO CORTINA

5 Get Me to the Polls on Time Coethnic Mobilization and Latino Turnout

Until recently, Latinos were nearly invisible on the national political scene, garnering little attention from political parties, candidates, and scholars alike. Much has changed in the last several decades, and Latinos are now the largest minority group in the country, making up more than 12 percent of the U.S. population. With a steady stream of immigrants from Mexico and Latin America, the proportion of Latinos is expected to more than double by mid-century to a quarter of the population. Once small and geographically concentrated in states in the American west and southwest, new patterns of settlement among immigrants to nontraditional gateway metropolitan areas in the United States has resulted in a highly diverse Latino population that is increasingly dispersed across states in the United States. Nevertheless, substantial populations of Latinos reside in five of the most electorally rich states in the United States – California, New York, Texas, Florida, and Illinois – and the dynamics of elections in those states and across the nation simply cannot be understood without accounting for Latino voters (Leighley 2001; Shaw et al. 2000).

Despite the momentous demographic changes and the resulting imperative to understand Latino electoral behavior, surprisingly little is known about how Latino voters are mobilized, and what impact that mobilization has on their voting behavior. In general, political scientists have focused their attention on developing models to explain voting among Anglos and African Americans. Patterns of electoral participation by new groups of voters such as Latinos have been analyzed with the assumption that Latino turnout is shaped by the same factors that influence voting in these traditional models. But the unique experiences of Latinos in terms of discrimination, racialization, immigration, national origin, ethnic ties, and political context all lead us to expect that explaining Latino voting turnout requires going beyond the effects of demographic and political characteristics

identified as central factors in traditional models of Anglo voting behavior. We focus on the significance of coethnic mobilization among Latinos, and investigate the extent to which ethnicity and the interaction of ethnic factors, as well as mobilization within particular political contexts have an impact on Latino turnout. Analysis of electoral behavior also must account for variation in the particular political contexts of states, and we emphasize the significance of structural and compositional differences between states with large Latino populations in our analysis.

DOES THE SHOE FIT? TRADITIONAL MODELS AND LATINO VOTING

There is a venerable tradition in studies of American voting behavior focusing on the individual characteristics of voters as the primary explanation for why people choose to vote. The most enduring of these findings is the propensity of high social and economic status individuals to cast a ballot and participate in politics more generally (Campbell et al. 1960; Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). High-status individuals have more resources such as time, money, and skills that facilitate political activity. But as Verba and Nie (1972) show in their analysis of the importance of civic attitudes in explaining voting, individual level social and economic indicators alone cannot fully explain political participation. Also, Verba et al. (1995) highlight the significance of racial group membership for political participation, showing Anglos are far more likely to report being asked to participate than either African-Americans or Latinos.¹ Another explanation of turnout focuses on voter mobilization, and acknowledges that although socioeconomic status remains the primary determinant of political mobilization, high-status individuals are also more likely to participate because they are more likely to be recruited (Verba et al., 1995). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argue mass participation levels reflect the mobilizing activities of political elites and suggest much of the decline in voter turnout since the 1960s reflects changes in mobilization patterns.

The effect of individual resources and mobilization for voter turnout may be systematically different for Anglos than for African Americans

¹ Once the resource differences are accounted for, Latinos and blacks are no less likely to be asked to participate than are Anglos. Get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaigns targeting African Americans and Latinos differ in that African Americans are most likely to report being recruited by other African Americans, whereas Latinos are most likely to report being contacted by Anglos (CITE).

and Latinos. Mobilization takes many different forms; among the most common in minority populations is through groups such as unions and ethnic institutions. These groups are especially salient for the mobilization of Latinos. Hero (1992) notes that various groups such as the League of United Latino Citizens (LULAC), Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SWVREP), farm workers unions, as well as local neighborhood associations played substantial roles in the Chicano movement of the 1970s. Tate (1993) and Gurin et al. (1989) find that even after accounting for resources and political attitudes, self-reported church membership and group membership has a positive effect on African American electoral turnout. Similarly, Diaz (1996) and de la Garza and Lu (1999) find reported memberships in voluntary groups or organizations among Latinos are also related to higher levels of voter registration and turnout. Nonetheless, despite mobilization's potential importance, most of the empirical evidence regarding how it affects African American and Latino voters is indirect. This is because the unit of analysis related to reaching out to voters from these groups is the mobilizing institution, whereas systematic data on the actual behavior of the individuals who are the targets of mobilizing campaigns is rare.

Verba et al. (1995) provide the most comprehensive approach to test the importance of group mobilization on minority participation among African Americans and Latinos. They suggest civic groups mobilize participation by directly asking individuals to vote and also by fostering skills that can be useful in political activity. They conclude that mobilization patterns are quite consistent across the three racial groups, including Anglos. Regardless of the form mobilization takes, after accounting for social and economic characteristics, African Americans and Latinos generally report being asked to participate at about the same rate as Anglos. How this affects turnout for Latinos as a group rather than as individuals is unclear because as a group, Latinos have relatively low levels of social and economic resources and status. Groups that are resource-poor are precisely the ones least likely to be mobilized to vote. In this regard, it is difficult to estimate how outreach influences the Latino vote overall.

Leighley (2001) addresses the political mobilization of racial and ethnic minorities by analyzing the relationship between group size and mobilization, and political empowerment and mobilization. As the size of a minority group increases, its potential for electoral influence also rises, and group size has an independent positive role on political participation. Political empowerment refers to increased political involvement by minorities as a result of having minorities elected to public office.

