

Latino Public Opinion

David L. Leal
Assistant Professor
Department of Government
The University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

Does “Latino public opinion” exist? In other words, do Latinos and Anglos (non-Hispanic whites) express varying opinions, and is there agreement among respondents from different Latino national-origin groups? Political scientists have studied whether Latino political participation differs from that of Anglos when intervening socioeconomic status (SES) and other factors are taken into account. Less commonly investigated, however, is whether policy opinions vary by race and ethnicity. While recent work suggests that African-American opinion is unique, it is unclear whether such is the case for Latinos. This paper therefore uses a recent national survey of Latinos, African Americans, and Anglos to determine whether opinions on a variety of key policy and political questions vary by race and ethnicity, *ceteris paribus*. The distinctiveness of Latino national-origin group opinions is also tested in order to see to what degree one can speak of an aggregate “Latino” perspective on politics. The results show that Latinos, as a group, hold attitudes that are both distinctive from and similar to those of Anglos. When there are differences, Latino respondents typically take more liberal positions. Some issues also see a high level of agreement across Latino national-origin groups, while other issues find respondents from these groups in disagreement. Overall, the data suggest there are more differences than similarities in the opinions of Anglos and Latinos, whether the latter is specified as a single category or disaggregated into component groups. Nevertheless, the results suggest that “Latino” opinion should only be cautiously discussed because of the variation obscured by this pan-ethnic label.

Introduction

While increasing attention has been paid in the policy, political, and scholarly worlds to Latino public opinion, there is relatively little understanding of whether Latino attitudes are fundamentally different from those of Anglos (non-Hispanic whites). This paper therefore investigates whether Latino political attitudes are distinctive even after taking into account multiple socio-economic status (SES) and other factors. In addition, the distinctiveness of Latino nation-origin group opinions will also be tested, which will help understand to what degree we can speak of an aggregate “Latino” opinion.

When academics, journalists, and politicians discuss Latino opinion, the source is typically aggregate survey data. Such information is only partially useful to social scientists, however, as many intervening variables are likely to affect public opinion. For instance, it is well known that Latinos systematically differ from Anglos in terms of income, education, age, and other factors. Perhaps the former do not express different opinions than their socio-economic status would suggest. There is also the possibility that Latinos, *ceteris paribus*, express more liberal or conservative views than do Anglos.

To investigate this question requires a survey with nationally representative Latino and Anglo samples. The research design should include regression models with political and policy opinions as the dependent variables. The independent variables should include race and ethnicity, SES, and other demographic factors. In this way we can see if any unique ethnic or racial attitudes remain.

A long line of research has used this approach to determine whether Latino and African-American political participation differs from that of Anglos. It is well established in political science that voting is correlated with factors such as education and

age, and to some extent income (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Many scholars have wanted to know whether minority political behavior is different when such factors are taken into account.

Some have found that minority participation is greater than minority SES would suggest. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, 90-91) showed that while blacks participated less in the aggregate than did whites, regression results showed no participatory differences in 1974 and slightly higher black participation in 1972. The latter finding was consistent with previous work by Olsen (1970) and Verba and Nie (1972), with the explanation being the role of African-American identity and consciousness (Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981). In more recent work, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) and Ellison and Gay (1989) found that although African Americans participated in the 1960s at higher levels than Anglos when controlling for SES, there has since been convergence.

Much research on Latino political participation is interested in explaining if, how, and why political participation has lagged in comparison to the rest of society. Calvo and Rosenstone (1989, 2) concluded that “Hispanics are less likely to participate in politics than are other Americans,” a view that reflects conventional political wisdom. Hero (1992, 8) also noted that Latinos have a reputation for low levels of political activity. As “Latinos are disproportionately younger, poorer and less educated than the general population” (Hero 1992, 63), it is important to test whether their participation lags when such variables are controlled for in a regression model.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone found that Latinos were not less likely to vote than Anglos and may have been slightly more likely to vote, *ceteris paribus*. On the other

hand, Antunes and Gaitz (1975) noted that Mexican Americans in Houston voted less than Anglos even controlling for age and SES. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) found that Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans,¹ and African Americans were less likely than Anglos to vote in presidential and congressional elections, although not less likely to engage in some non-electoral activities. Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet (1989) found very few differences among Latinos, Anglos, African Americans, and Asian Americans in California with or without various SES and demographic controls.

In the most recent major study, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) found almost no racial or ethnic differences in political participation. Variables for Latinos and African Americans were not associated with overall participation, time-based acts, voting, political contributions, or political discussion.²

Political scientists have not often sought, however, to understand minority public opinion in a similar way. Among the few are Kinder and Sanders (1996), who studied whether and how there is a public opinion divide between Anglos and African Americans for multiple policy questions. They concluded that, “blacks and whites are deeply divided over racial policy...The differences are enormous, quite unlike any other social cleavage, and cannot be explained by black-white differences in income or educational attainment or indeed anything else. The racial divide in political aspirations and demands is really racial” (9). This paper will similarly test whether the Latino-Anglo differences that sometimes appear in aggregate polling data are racial and ethnic at their heart or only apparently so.

Combs and Welch (1982) and Hall and Ferree (1986) likewise tested whether whites and African Americans held different attitudes toward abortion. Both studies

found significant differences, although they disagreed whether this dynamic was changing over time. This research provides additional evidence for racial attitude differences.³

A number of scholars have emphasized the importance of studying Latino opinion in a comparative manner. As Cain and Kiewiet (1987, 47) noted, “it has been hard to tell from exclusively Latino surveys how unique or similar Latino attitudes and political behaviors are to those of other racial and ethnic groups in the electorate.” Garcia (1987, 116) similarly commented that,

Comparative methodology should be the preferred approach to this kind of research. Simply surveying one population without reference to another group in comparable circumstances may leave as many questions unanswered as it answers. Research comparing a Hispanic group with the majority culture, with other distinctive ethnic cultures, and with other Hispanic groups which vary in terms of national origin, geographic location, or socioeconomic circumstances must be conducted if we are to understand more fully the orientations of Hispanics.

Among the small number of scholars who have tested for distinctiveness in Latino public opinion are de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia (1996). They used the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) to compare Mexican-American and Anglo support for “core American political values.” Their regressions revealed that, “Mexican-Americans are no less likely and often more likely to endorse values of individualism and patriotism than are Anglos” (335). Uhlaner (1991) examined the attitudes of California Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans about perceived discrimination and prejudice in order to assess the potential for cross-racial political coalitions.

Earlier research used an aggregate approach to investigate policy differences. De la Garza and Weaver (1985) examined the spending priorities of Anglos and Mexican

Americans in San Antonio, finding differences for only a relatively small number of issues. De la Garza (1985) studied Anglo-Mexican American opinion on a wide range of issues, finding evidence of some but not extensive Mexican American uniqueness, and he concluded that Mexican Americans were not a distinct electorate. Lovrich (1974) explored differential Anglo, African-American, and Mexican-American attitudes toward service provision by local government in Denver, finding that Anglos were the most satisfied.

Cain and Kiewiet (1987) used a 1984 California poll to compare the attitudes of whites, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans on bilingual education, bilingual ballots, amnesty for illegal immigrants, employer sanctions, partisanship, and voting for Reagan in 1984. They found that Latinos were the most likely to favor bilingualism and amnesty, were closer to African Americans than Anglos in terms of partisan identification, and just over a third claimed to have voted for Reagan.

The most prominent aggregate effort is found in *Latino Voices* (de la Garza, DeSipio, F. Garcia, J. Garcia, and Falcon 1992). They concluded that, “On many key domestic issues, significant majorities of each [Latino] group take the liberal position. On other issues, there is no consensus and, depending on the issue, Mexicans may be on the right, while Cubans and many Puerto Ricans are on the left of the nation’s current political spectrum. Thus, labels such as liberal or conservative do not adequately describe the complexity of any one group’s political views” (15).

As the above quotation indicates, it is important to test whether Latino opinions vary according to national-origin group status. While relatively few scholars have investigated overall Latino opinion, even less work has studied whether the opinions of

Latino national-origin groups are distinctive. While *Latino Voices* provided evidence that respondents from these subgroups sometimes express varying opinions, we do not know whether such differences will persist after the introduction of SES and other control variables. It is possible, for instance, that aggregate-level opinion differences across Latino subgroups largely reflect socioeconomic and demographic factors.

Latinos and Public Opinion

The political science understanding of Latino public opinion is much less developed than that of Anglo public opinion. One key reason is the historic lack of interest in Latino opinion and the concomitant desultory efforts to include Latino respondents in major polls. This was particularly true in the early decades of post-war public opinion polling, but this situation continued into the 1970s and 1980s and still exists today. The most prominent polling project in political science, the American National Election Study (ANES), does not contain a large and nationally representative sample of Latino respondents and could therefore be renamed the Anglo National Election Study.

It was not until 1979 that an attempt was made to collect national-level survey data on political attitudes for even a single Latino national-origin group. The Chicano Survey (Arce 1997) included 991 Mexican-American respondents, of whom 667 were citizens. The survey focused on respondents' demographic characteristics, employment history, health issues, and social identity, with only a smaller cluster of questions examining political opinions, attitudes, and participation. The sample, representative of an estimated 90 percent of the Mexican-American population living in the United States

at the time, was drawn from five states (California, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona) and the city of Chicago.

It was not until 1989 that political scientists would survey a national sample of Latinos. This project, the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS), included respondents from the three most prominent national-origin groups: Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans. It gathered information on a wide range of political activities, preferences, and behaviors among Hispanics in the United States. Unlike the 1979 Chicano Survey, the focus of the LNPS was expressly political. The survey population, randomly selected from forty Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) across the United States, was representative of 91 percent of the nation's Latinos (de la Garza et al. 1992, 7).

These efforts notwithstanding, by the end of the 1980s (the so-called “Decade of the Hispanic”),⁴ there existed only scattered data on Latino opinion. This largely consisted of uneven exit polls conducted by news organizations and occasional state and local surveys conducted by academics.⁵ This situation caused de la Garza (1987, 1) to lament:

For whom did Latinos vote in the 1984 elections? What were their views on the issues and candidates in that election? Surprisingly, reliable answers to these and related questions are unavailable. No independent source – not the national press, not the nation's leading public opinion pollsters, no one – systematically asked Latinos their views or monitored their participation in the 1984 election.

Why is such inattention by the field of public opinion consequential? As de la Garza (1987, 4) further argued, “Polls can and do influence candidate selection and issue resolution. By not having their views regularly reported in polls, Latinos are effectively

excluded from influencing both of these outcomes. In a fundamental sense, because of the role that polls play in our political life, being excluded from them is tantamount to partial disenfranchisement.”

Political scientists today have more polls at their disposal, but the situation is far from ideal. Foundations and media organizations are more involved in devising quality surveys, although not always with input from the scholarly community. Many of these polls are therefore not devised with key political science questions in mind, and scholars are therefore limited in the types of questions they can investigate.

This lack of commitment by the political science discipline to Latino opinion is sometimes justified by the cost and technical difficulty of surveying Latinos. This argument points to the need for Spanish-speaking interviewers, the variety of Latino national-origin groups, the difficulties encountered in reaching Latino respondents, the citizenship issue, the need to represent respondents according to generational status, as well as a number of purported challenges best described as cultural.⁶

This paper does not deny such challenges exist, but there is more to the story than affordability. When political scientists decided that the study of Senate elections was unduly neglected, the ANES responded with the 1988-1990-1992 Senate Study, which was not a costless undertaking in terms of time and (taxpayer) dollars. Why was the Senate chosen for special consideration and not Latino opinion? In many ways, this is a political issue. As Page (1987, 45) suggested, “If you want oversampling, organize!” This implies that a professed interest in Latino politics from political scientists and political science institutions may not be enough. Just as in the real world of politics,

Latinos must continue the struggle to reach positions of power in order to ensure that the needs of their community are met.

Despite these challenges, a number of authors have gathered data on Latino public opinion and sought to understand it systematically. Sometimes Latino opinion is explored by itself and sometimes in comparison with Anglo and African-American opinion. Due to a lack of data, many scholars have designed or used surveys that encompass a specific population or locale. As Cain and Kiewiet (1984, 315) noted in their study of the election of Marty Martinez in the 30th California congressional district, “Although national election surveys do not sample a sufficient number of Mexican Americans to permit adequate analysis of their attitudes and political behavior, there have been many excellent regional studies.”

For example, Miller, Polinard, and Wrinkle (1984) surveyed Mexican-Americans in Hidalgo County, TX about the perceived benefits and problems associated with undocumented immigration. De la Garza, Polinard, Wrinkle, and Longoria (1991) surveyed Mexican Americans in Travis and Hidalgo counties, Texas, finding that “Mexicanness” and contact with the undocumented were associated with support for immigration.

Latinos, African Americans, and the Political Future

As the size and percentage of the nation’s non-white population grows, it is increasingly difficult to understand public opinion and political participation without reference to Latinos and African Americans. One key demographic trend is the declining share of the Anglo population. Much of this relative decline is the result of the growing Latino population, which is reshaping the political and cultural landscape. As a result,

the traditional and straightforward bifurcated black-white paradigm on racial questions is slowly changing into a more complex black-white-Hispanic perspective.

The 2000 U.S. Census found that Latinos are now America's largest minority group. Although the Census Bureau in 1999 estimated that Latinos would be 11.4 percent of the population in 2000, the census revealed that they are 12.5 percent – a figure Latinos were not projected to reach until 2005. This may understate the true Latino population, as the census is an actual count, not an estimate, and many Latinos are non-citizens with incentives to avoid contact with government officials.

These figures for the first time put Latinos ahead of African Americans, who constitute 12.1 percent of the population. Given the substantial levels of immigration from Mexico, as well as the relatively high birthrate of Latinos in the United States, this population will only continue to grow. Anglos currently constitute 69 percent of the U.S. population, and in a number of states they are dropping from majority to plurality status. By the year 2050, at least one in every four Americans will be Latino. 'Minority' attitudes will therefore be of critical importance as the U.S. transitions to a society in which no single ethnic or racial group is the majority.

On the issue on political ideology, there is some debate as to just how liberal or conservative Latinos and African Americans are. According to aggregate data, members of both groups are, on the whole, less politically conservative than Anglos. Latinos are much stronger supporters of the Democratic Party than are Anglos in terms of both partisan identification and voting in presidential and congressional elections. Latinos are also more likely to support an activist government, and to differ on language and ethnic issues, such as bilingual education, making English the official language, requiring English in the

workplace, providing public services in Spanish, and affirmative action.⁷ African Americans are even stronger supporters of the Democratic Party, are more likely than Anglos to favor an activist government and redistributive programs, and are more liberal on economic issues and affirmative action.⁸

This is not to imply that Latinos or African Americans are monolithically liberal. There are well-known conservative issue positions within the Latino community; Latinos in the aggregate are less likely to support abortion, are often reported to be well disposed toward faith and family issues, and Cuban Americans are more likely to oppose diplomatic relations with Cuba and to support the Republican Party. Latinos are also more likely to identify themselves as conservatives than liberals. Swain (1995, 11) similarly found that “a strand of social conservatism runs through black America. More blacks than whites disapprove of abortions on demand (41 versus 28 percent). Fewer blacks than whites approve of married women working (70 versus 76 percent) or like the idea of female politicians (65 versus 75 percent).”

In sum, there are some conservative elements even in populations that have voted in the liberal direction for decades. This suggests we should not simply test for whether populations are in the aggregate liberal or conservative. Stances may vary by issue, which means that the individual analysis of multiple dependent variables is necessary.

Nevertheless, the Republican Party is worried about a future in which an expanding Latino population augments Democratic political power. Some Republicans, however, have used aggregate data to suggest their party might successfully compete for a large share of the Latino vote. For instance, some point to evidence that Latinos are socially conservative. The most prominent evidence is abortion attitudes, as Latinos are

about ten percentage points more likely than Anglos to oppose it. School vouchers are another issue that Republicans hope will bring minority voters closer to their party. According to one analysis from the 2000 campaign, “Bush thinks his support of vouchers will score points among usually antagonistic minority voters...”⁹

Ideological self-identification also provides some hope for Republicans. In the LNPS, 36 percent of Mexican Americans considered themselves conservative and 29 percent liberal. In the Kaiser survey almost a decade later, a similar 35 percent identified as conservative and 24 percent as liberal. Nevertheless, Gimpel and Kaufmann (2001) found few reasons to think Republicans could attract a significant number of Latino voters, largely because “the Democrats are in line with Latino policy preferences on education, health care, and social services” (9).

De la Garza et al. (1992, 3) noted that the claims of both parties about Latino opinion were suspect because they were often built on unrepresentative samples or unreliable data. Republican claims about Latino conservative views and ‘traditional’ values, for instance, were either extrapolations from the Cuban American community or were based on the opinions of affluent Latinos who lived in mixed or majority-Anglo areas. Furthermore, much of the data on Mexican Americans derived from surveys over-representing liberal respondents from regions such as Southern California and South Texas. They concluded that, “Taken together as a Hispanic population, then, they do not fit neatly within either the Democratic or the Republican parties. Nonetheless, if it were necessary to locate Hispanics as a single population within the party structure as it currently exists, their policy preferences would better fit under the Democratic umbrella” (16).

As discussed previously, one problem with aggregate analyses is that any ethnic and

racial policy differences may or may not be statistically significant once SES and other factors are taken into account. Members of a minority group may be more conservative, more liberal, or no different than Anglos after appropriate controls are introduced. This brings up the question of whether Latino populations are in some ways attitudinally unique at their core, or are similar to Anglos with similar SES and other characteristics. If the latter, then politicians could politically engage Latinos solely in terms of these characteristics. If the former, then a more concerted effort will have to be made to understand Latino cultures and interests.

The above issue is also related to the debate about the political future of Hispanic Americans in the United States, as some suggest that any distinctiveness in their opinion has implications for their political incorporation. According to de la Garza (1985, 236), “Another factor that will influence the effect of Mexican-American participation on the political process is the nature of the demands Mexican-Americans make. If their demands differ radically from those of the general public, an increased Mexican-American presence could destabilize regional and national political processes.”

He concluded, using aggregate data, that Anglos and Mexican Americans “do not constitute distinct electorates.” While Mexican Americans held unique opinions on government spending on minority-related issues, education, welfare, and space, they did not uniquely favor or oppose spending on crime, drugs, defense, foreign aid, and urban problems. This paper will also help assess whether and in which ways Latinos are distinct electorates, and thereby provide some insight into how Latinos will impact the political system in the future.

Data and Models

This paper uses the 1999 Washington Post/Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University National Survey on Latinos in America (NSLA). This is a nationally representative sample of 4,614 respondents, including 1,802 Anglos, 2,417 Latinos, and a smaller group of 285 non-Latino African Americans.

It is the most appropriate survey for the purposes of this paper because it contains a large number of policy and political questions as well as a large Latino sample. Most national surveys of American political opinion, such as the American National Election Studies, do not include a sufficient Latino sample to confidently assess this large and complex population. The NSLA, however, not only includes respondents from the three largest Latino national-origin groups (Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American), but also those of Caribbean and Central/South American heritage.¹⁰

For each regression, we will therefore rerun the analysis using dummy variables for Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Central/South Americans in place of the aggregate Latino variable. Some of the Latino political participation research investigates differences among particular Latino national-origin groups, and the NSLA allows us to do so for public opinion.

Scholars have argued that such analysis is critical because of the many Latino subgroup differences. Trueba (1999, 33) noted that, “we cannot trivialize the ethnic, social, racial, and economic differences of Latino subgroups.” De la Garza and DeSipio (1994, 3) argued that the study of the aggregate Latino population:

confuses rather than clarifies our understanding because of the characteristics that distinguish the national-origin groups thus subsumed (Bean and Tienda 1987; de la Garza, Fraga, and Pachon 1988; Pachon and DeSipio 1988; Fuchs 1990). This approach fails to assess differences in

political culture associated with the distinct socialization experiences within the United States and the countries of origin and neglects the link between those differences and political behavior.

Some surveys are problematic because they do not use bilingual interviewers. This dramatically under-represents Spanish-dominant respondents and generates a Latino sample that is biased in a number of important ways. In the Kaiser survey, 49 percent of the Latino respondents choose to be interviewed in Spanish, which indicates the importance of this option.

A. Dependent Variables

The political opinion questions are grouped into several related categories: (1) policies; (2) policies with specific relevance to Latinos; (3) moral (sometimes referred to as “social”) issues; (4) orientations toward government, and (5) opinions about political parties and figures.¹¹

The first set of policy questions involves health care and criminal justice issues. The former include HMO reform and government-provided health insurance. Previous research suggests that Latinos support government health care and social insurance programs (Martinez-Ebers, Fraga, Lopez, and Vega 2000), and these regressions will test whether this is largely a function of SES.

The criminal justice issues include opinions on handgun control and attitudes toward the police and the courts. Research in several cities has found that Latino violence rates are generally higher than those of Anglos while lower than those of African Americans (Block 1993; Martinez 1996; Bradshaw et al. 1998). This suggests that minority respondents may favor crime-prevention plans, such as gun control, and perhaps express support for law enforcement institutions, such as the police and the

courts. On the other hand, problems such as racial profiling and the disparate sentencing of minority group members (Holmes and Daudistel 1984; Welch, Gruhl, and Spohn 1984) may lead to negative assessments of the criminal justice system.

Three policy questions are of particular concern to Latinos: bilingual education, immigration policy, and college affirmative action. Bilingual education is considered by most Latino activists to be of critical importance to the Latino community for both educational and cultural reasons.¹² There has been some debate, however, about whether Latinos favor bilingual education. The issue was brought to the fore during the debate over Proposition 227, the 1998 California ballot initiative to end bilingual education. Some early polling suggested that many Latinos supported the proposition, but ultimately 63 percent of the Latino vote was negative (Pyle, McDonnell, and Tobar 1998).¹³

Latino attitudes toward immigration have been more complex than is commonly understood. While Mexican Americans today generally recognize the ties that bind them to new immigrants from Mexico, there has historically been concern that additional immigration would undercut their fragile economic position and stir up nativist sentiment among Anglos (Gutierrez 1995; Barrera 1998). Research has also found that Latinos who are older and highly educated are more likely to support restrictions on immigration (Hood, Morris, and Shirkey 1997). There are also cultural differences and issues of economic competition between native Latinos and new arrivals (Richardson 1999).

The affirmative action question is more straightforward. As Latinos are beneficiaries of the program, one might expect them (as well as African Americans) to be more likely than Anglos to support it.¹⁴

The next set of questions involves attitudes toward moral issues with political implications. Latinos, according to some observers, are particularly conservative on such questions and therefore somewhat uncomfortable in the relatively liberal Democratic Party. Some Republicans hope to attract Latino votes by emphasizing such issues to this largely Catholic population.¹⁵ Latino political leaders have also been criticized for their pro-choice positions.¹⁶ Whether Latinos uniquely express conservative moral positions, however, is not well investigated except at the aggregate level.

We therefore examine attitudes toward abortion, the death penalty, and assisted suicide – the three policies addressed by the Pope’s Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (Paul 1995). Republicans typically mean abortion when they discuss Latinos and morality. It is possible, however, that Latino morality is consistently “pro life” in light of Catholic Church teaching by including not just anti-abortion but also anti-death penalty and anti-assisted suicide stances. If so, this could work to the disadvantage of Republicans, who are stronger death penalty proponents than are Democrats.

In addition, the survey asks three questions that involve traditional morality: the acceptability of divorce, homosexual/lesbian sexual activity, and bearing children out of wedlock.¹⁷ Such issues sometimes arise in politics and might benefit Republicans if Latinos have particularly conservative views.

Three attitudes about the U.S. government are also examined. The first asks whether Washington or the individual should be responsible for solving problems, the second solicits opinions about the size of government, and the third asks about trust in government. If Latinos look to Washington, favor a larger government, and trust government in general, this would suggest a liberal political orientation. Previous

aggregate research has found that Latinos have higher levels of trust in the U.S. government than do Anglos,¹⁸ so this variable will test for statistically significant differences.

To further test where Latinos stand politically, we include two questions about party support and two about presidential evaluations. The former ask about the respondent's party affiliation and which party best looks out for the interests of Latinos. The latter ask whether the respondent supported presidential candidate Al Gore or George W. Bush, and for an evaluation of outgoing president Bill Clinton.

B. Independent Variables

When Kinder and Sanders (1996) tested whether policy opinions differed by race, they included variables for race, income, education, and occupational status. We were able to follow their lead and include all of these as well as a number of others.

The two key independent variables are for Latino and African-American respondents. Just as in the minority political participation literature, these variables will test whether racial or ethnic differences remain after the inclusion of multiple control variables. For each regression, we will also rerun the analysis using dummy variables for Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Central/South Americans in place of the aggregate Latino variable.

A variety of SES measures are also included. Those at the lower end of the SES spectrum should support government programs, particularly those designed to alleviate poverty. More generally, Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993) found income and education to be associated with liberal identification using individual-level data. On the other hand, Himmelstein and McRae (1988) found that income was generally associated

with conservatism while education was generally associated with liberalism. We therefore include variables for median family income and education level.

A variable for gender is included, although the attitudes of women are complex. They are often considered to be more liberal than men, as they express more liberal opinions on social welfare programs and general ideology (Cook 1979; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Deitch 1988; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993). They are also more conservative than men on traditional value issues, such as school prayer, sex education, drug use, alcohol laws, and pornography (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 252) found that, “to the extent that there are opinion differences between the sexes, they tend to be more pronounced on issues like war and the use of violence than on what are often referred to as ‘women’s issues,’” such as the ERA and abortion.

Also included are measures of age and marital status. Older Americans are more likely to express greater conservative ideological identification (Erikson, Wright, McIver 1993). There is also survey evidence that married people are more politically conservative and more likely to vote Republican than are single people.¹⁹

Two variables measure Latino acculturation. Those who are more acculturated may possess less distinctive beliefs, as the process of “boundary reduction” (Yinger 1985)²⁰ moves them toward mainstream Anglo opinion. The first variable is citizenship status, as citizens are more likely to be acculturated than non-citizens. Latino non-citizens are also less cynical toward government than are Latino citizens, and so might be more likely to support government programs. The second variable is language ability, specified as the language chosen by the respondent for the interview. Those who chose

to answer the survey in English are likely to be more acculturated than those who preferred Spanish.²¹

For simplicity of presentation, the models will use the same set of independent variables for each opinion regression.²² The general model is therefore:

Opinion = f{Latino, African American, income, education, employment status, age, gender, marital status, citizenship, English language}

Results

A. Aggregate Latino Opinion

The first policy questions asked about health care reform and the criminal justice system. Table 1 shows that Latinos and African Americans were more likely than Anglos to favor government-provided health insurance and HMO reform. This is not simply a consequence of relatively high poverty and a consequent lack of adequate health care, as SES variables are taken into account.

** Insert Table 1 here **

Latinos and African Americans also expressed relatively negative evaluations of the police. Both groups experience disproportionate levels of crime and violence, and it is unclear from the data whether they see the police as ineffective or as engaged in racial profiling or other practices targeted at minority communities. No group had unique opinions about the court system, however. This suggests no racial or ethnic concerns about the ability of juries and judges to ultimately deliver just decisions. African Americans were also distinctively favorable toward gun control, but Latinos were not.

The three policy variables of specific interest to Latinos are modeled in Table 2. We see that Latinos are more likely than Anglos to favor collegiate affirmative action, increased levels of immigration, and bilingual education. This was not unexpected, as such policies have the power to directly impact large numbers of Latinos.

** Insert Table 2 here **

African Americans do not have unique attitudes toward bilingual education and increased immigration. Falcon (1988) found that African Americans in New York City opposed bilingual programs, and the ‘competition thesis’ for Latinos and African Americans would predict such negativity. The results also show that African Americans most likely support affirmative action.²³

For moral issues, Table 3 reveals that neither group expressed unique attitudes toward abortion. While aggregate data suggest Latinos would be particularly opposed, this was not the case. Respondents from both groups did express relatively high opposition to assisted suicide, but this has yet to become a potent political issue.

In addition, both Latinos and African Americans expressed opposition toward the death penalty. When combined with the previous finding of negativity toward the police, this suggests minority respondents are less well disposed to significant elements of the criminal justice system.

** Insert Table 3 here **

We also see that Latinos and African Americans do not have distinctive views of traditional moral questions. While African Americans disapprove of homosexual/ lesbian sexual activity, this is the only difference for either group. Taken together, the results in Table 3 provide little encouragement to political conservatives who hope that social conservatism is at the heart of Latino culture.

Table 4 shows generally positive minority orientations toward the federal government. Latinos favor a large government but are indistinct on the role of the government vs. the individual, and African Americans favor a large government and see government as the solution to problems. Both groups are also more likely than Anglos to trust the government, which bears out previous research suggesting that the former are generally favorable toward government expenditures and programs. On the other hand, it also confirms the de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia (1996) finding that Latinos are not less supportive of individualism than are Anglos.

** Insert Table 4 here **

The next questions ask about political orientations. The results show that Latinos and African Americans are more likely than Anglos to identify themselves as Democrats and to see the Democratic Party as favoring the interests of Latinos. In addition, respondents of both groups are more likely to favor Gore over Bush and to positively evaluate Bill Clinton.

** Insert Table 5 here **

We should also consider the significance of the other independent variables. As might be expected, women generally exhibit a more liberal orientation than do men. They favor government provided health insurance, gun control, bilingual education, abortion rights, the Democratic Party, Bill Clinton, and Al Gore. They also support a larger government and see the government as responsible for solving problems. They are more tolerant of gay and lesbian sexual activity and oppose the death penalty, but they are also more likely to positively evaluate the police and to oppose assisted suicide.

Married people also exhibit distinctive opinions on multiple questions, and in a conservative direction. They are against HMO reform, abortion, divorce, bearing children out of wedlock, gay and lesbian sexual activity, and larger government. They also favor the court system and have low opinions of Clinton and Gore. While Weisberg (1987) found that marital status was insignificant when race and income were taken into account, these results suggest it does affect some contemporary policy opinions.

Citizens are generally more conservative than are non-citizens. They are less likely to favor HMO reform, are against increased immigration and larger government, and favor the death penalty. They are also more likely to believe that the Democrats are the party favoring Latinos, and they are less likely to support the police. While this suggests that Latinos may become less liberal as they naturalize, the dynamic only applies to a few questions.

In addition, those who are Spanish-language dominant are generally more liberal. They are more likely to favor government provided health insurance, increased immigration, and bilingual education. They also want larger government, are more likely to trust government, give high evaluations of Bill Clinton, and oppose the death penalty.

On the other hand, they express some culturally conservative values; they are opposed to abortion, assisted suicide, and gay and lesbian sexual activity, and they positively evaluate the police. This suggests that as Latinos acculturate and gain greater proficiency with English, their opinions may change but not in a clear ideological direction.

For African Americans, the overall results often but not always mirror those discussed for Latinos. The major differences are unique African-American support for gun control, a belief in the role of government over the individual, and opinions on bilingual education and immigration similar to those of Anglos. The data therefore suggest a generally distinct and liberal African-American community, which is consistent with previous research on race and public opinion.

Do the above *ceteris paribus* findings reflect the results from the aggregate data? On the whole, these data reflect the differences found in the regressions. There are some exceptions, however, that suggest the utility of introducing the control variables.

First, a reading of the aggregate data alone would suggest that Latinos hold relatively more conservative opinions on social issues. In particular, Latinos appear to particularly oppose divorce, gay and lesbian sexual activity, and abortion rights, but these differences do not appear in the regressions. This suggests that a key opinion dynamic often discussed in the political world – the social conservatism of Latinos – is more a function of SES and other demographic factors than a distinctive and unique feature of Latino opinion.

In addition, we see two instances where Latinos appear relatively more liberal in the aggregate than in the regressions. Overall, Latinos are more likely than Anglos to favor a strong role for the government in Washington and to favor gun control, but these

two differences disappear when control variables are introduced. Taken together, these results suggest that the aggregate survey data somewhat overstate both the relative political liberalism and conservatism of Latinos.

B. Latino National-Origin Group Opinion

As noted above, the regressions were rerun using four dummy variables for the largest Latino national-origin groups in place of the aggregate Latino variable. A key question for the Latino politics literature is whether it makes sense to discuss an aggregate “Latino” opinion, or whether there are important differences by subgroups. The five following new tables will therefore be discussed below, followed by a summary of the patterns in Latino subgroup opinion revealed by the data.

Table 6 illustrates Latino opinion on the five policy issues. We see some limited agreement across national-origin groups, but a number of differences do exist. Recall that the overall Latino variable was positively associated with HMO reform and negatively with police evaluations; such opinions were largely shared by all four subgroups. We also see that the national-origin variables were largely insignificant in the gun control and court evaluation regressions, which reflects the insignificant Latino variable in Table 1. On the other hand, while Latinos as a whole appear to favor government health insurance, only Cuban Americans were so inclined.

** Insert Table 6 here **

The next table shows a high degree of national-origin group unity on the issues of immigration and bilingual education. The only exception is for immigration, where the

Puerto Rican variable is insignificant. This might be related to the fact that Puerto Ricans are the only subgroup comprised entirely of U.S. citizens. In addition, while the overall Latino variable was positively associated with affirmative action opinion, Table 7 shows that only Mexican Americans appear to favor this program more than do Anglos.

** Insert Table 7 here **

For the six social issues in Table 8, we find a mixed amount of national-origin group agreement. While Latinos as a whole did not have unique views of abortion, the first column shows that Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans were more favorable than were Anglos. Latinos also generally opposed the death penalty and assisted suicide, and Table 8 shows differing national-origin group opinions for the former²⁴ but overall agreement for the latter.²⁵ For the issues of divorce, having children out of wedlock, and gay and lesbian sexual activity, the Latino variable was insignificant in each model. For the new models in Table 8, we similarly see that in only one instance is a national-origin group variable significant.²⁶

** Insert Table 8 here **

Table 9 contains the regressions for orientations toward government. Recall that the Latino variable in Table 4 was significant in the models for size of government and trust in government. We see in the new table that the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican variables were also significant and in the same direction in each model. The

Central-South American variable was not significant in any model, Puerto Ricans were more likely to favor the role of the government over the individual, and Cuban Americans were particularly likely to trust government.

** Insert Table 9 here **

Lastly, there is a clear pattern in partisan opinion. Table 5 suggested that Latinos were more favorable than Anglos in their attitudes toward the Democratic Party and Democratic candidates. Table 9 shows that the Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and Central/South American variables were all significant and positive. The one exception was Cuban Americans, who do not apparently differ from Anglos in their evaluations.

** Insert Table 10 here **

The results in Tables 6 through 10 indicate that the opinions of Latinos are complex. Most importantly, there is no evidence of a single “Latino” voice on most policy and political questions, although there is agreement on some issues. Overall, four patterns can be found in these data. First, in some of the regressions, most or all of the subgroup variables are significant when the aggregate Latino variable was significant. This was true for HMO reform, police evaluations, immigration, bilingual education, the death penalty, and trust in government. There is therefore a relatively high degree of Latino unity on these questions.

Second, the aggregate Latino variable in some regressions appears to be driven by the opinions of one or two groups. This was true for affirmative action (Mexican Americans in favor), assisted suicide (Mexican Americans opposed, Cuban Americans in favor), the size of government (Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in favor of larger government), and government-provided health care (Cuban Americans in favor).

Third, in a few regressions where the aggregate Latino variable was statistically insignificant, a national-origin group appears to have a unique opinion vis-à-vis Anglos. Mexican Americans have more negative views of divorce, Puerto Ricans are more likely to favor government over individual actions and to give higher evaluations of the court system, and Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans favor abortion rights.

Lastly, the clearest patterns are found for partisanship. Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Central/South Americans are more likely than Anglos to favor the Democratic Party, believe the Democratic Party promotes Latino interests, and positively evaluate Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Cuban-American opinion on these questions, however, is not significantly different from Anglo opinion. On the other hand, Cuban-American opinion is not particularly distinct in the policy opinion regressions, thus confirming previous, aggregate-level analyses indicating that domestic policy is not the source of Cuban-American partisan distinctiveness.

Taken together, these findings indicate that for some policy and political questions, patterns can be found in Latino opinion. In some cases, there is agreement across all national-origin groups, and in other instances most subgroup respondents hold similar opinions. For other questions, however, there is disagreement across Latino subgroups and it would be inaccurate to posit a united “Latino” position in those cases.

What is rarely found, however, is a Latino national-origin group holding a policy or political opinion that is more conservative than that of Anglos.²⁷

Conclusions

As the Latino population grows both numerically and proportionately, it is increasingly difficult to understand public opinion and political participation in America without reference to this group. This paper therefore investigates whether and how contemporary Latino opinion is distinct. It builds upon the minority public opinion and political participation literature in order to better understand the Latino placement in the American political landscape. Previous research has found statistically significant African-American and Anglo opinion differences, and this paper is the first comprehensive test of whether Latinos likewise express unique attitudes.

The research design also allows us to better understand to what degree we can speak of an overall “Latino” perspective on political and policy questions, or whether there exist substantial differences across Latino national-origin groups. Although these groups are sometimes assumed to think and act in similar ways, there are a number of socioeconomic, demographic, cultural, and other differences that cannot be overlooked.

Although aggregate survey data are important, any ethnic and racial differences at this level may not be statistically significant once demographic and other intervening factors are taken into account. This brings up the question of whether Latino respondents are (1) attitudinally unique at their core, (2) similar to Anglos with similar SES and other characteristics, or (3) somewhere in between. If the second, then politicians and others could politically engage Latinos solely in terms of these characteristics. If the former or

the latter, then a more concerted effort will have to be made to understand these complex populations.

The first regressions in the paper (Tables 1 to 5) test the aggregate Latino variable. When taken together, the results suggest that Latinos have unique policy orientations, although not in every instance. First, they favor policy issues of particular relevance to their communities, including immigration, bilingual education, and affirmative action. In addition, they also less trustful of the police and the death penalty, and would like to see HMO reform and government-provided health insurance. Trust in government is uniquely high, as is support for a larger governmental role. These orientations are in the liberal direction, and Latinos are relatively conservative only in their opposition to assisted suicide.

Latinos also uniquely support the Democratic Party and Democratic politicians. Aggregate polling data and election returns have often indicated this, and the regressions show it is not simply a function of SES or demographic variables. As DeSipio, de la Garza, and Setzler (1999, 7) noted, “Much of the talk of Latino conversion by Republican leaders is more rhetoric than reality,” a sentiment this paper generally supports.

The half dozen ‘negative’ policy findings (no Latino-Anglo opinion differences) do suggest some middle-of-the-road Latino orientations, however. Latinos do not uniquely support or oppose abortion or gun control, do not have unique opinions on the three moral issues, and do not necessarily see the government as a better solution to problems than individual effort.

When the Latino national-origin group variables are substituted for the aggregate Latino measure (Tables 6-10), we see that it is difficult to discuss an overall “Latino”

perspective on some policy issues and political questions. The regressions do show several distinct patterns, however. For many issues, these variables are all or mostly significant when the aggregate Latino variable is significant.²⁸ For those issues, we can conclude that there is a Latino policy public.

On the other hand, there are several instances where the opinions of one or two national-origin groups underlie the significance of the Latino variable.²⁹ In addition, there are a scattered number of issues where the aggregate variable is insignificant but a national-origin group variable is significant.³⁰ Lastly the Cuban-American population is unique in its support of the Republican Party and its candidates, although it is not very different from other Latino national-origin groups on domestic policy questions.

Given the above differences, it is clear that scholars and observers should only cautiously discuss “Latino” opinion. While there is some agreement across national-origin groups, there is also important variation. These differences go beyond the well-known partisan divide between Cuban Americans and other Latinos.

Overall, this paper finds more differences than similarities in the opinions of Anglos and Latinos, whether the latter is specified as a single category or disaggregated into component groups. These differences largely reveal Latinos to hold more liberal than conservative views. On the other hand, Latinos are also indistinct from Anglos on a number of important policy questions. While “Latinos” and Latino national-origin groups therefore generally appear to be liberal electorates, *ceteris paribus*, it is perhaps not to the extent some Democrats hope and some Republicans fear.

Table 1: Policy issues

Variables	Gov. Health Insurance	HMO Reform	Police Evaluation	Gun Control	Courts Evaluation
Latino	0.473 ** (0.200)	0.617 *** (0.178)	-0.392 *** (0.129)	0.113 (0.103)	0.203 (0.136)
African- American	0.861 ** (0.414)	0.548 * (0.321)	-0.742 *** (0.192)	0.416 ** (0.187)	-0.018 (0.210)
Income	-0.061 (0.062)	0.042 (0.061)	-0.039 (0.041)	0.054 (0.040)	0.005 (0.039)
Education	0.041 (0.093)	-0.047 (0.094)	0.160 *** (0.059)	0.036 (0.056)	0.196 *** (0.058)
Age	-0.009 (0.006)	0.017 *** (0.006)	0.005 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.004)
Gender	0.542 *** (0.197)	0.148 (0.183)	0.228 * (0.136)	0.675 *** (0.102)	0.056 (0.123)
Employment Status	-0.076 (0.703)	0.102 (0.574)	0.141 (0.363)	0.201 (0.242)	0.118 (0.285)
Marital Status	-0.314 (0.210)	-0.407 ** (0.198)	0.089 (0.137)	-0.156 (0.116)	0.228 * (0.135)
Citizenship	-0.292 (0.308)	-0.532 ** (0.230)	-0.381 ** (0.171)	-0.130 (0.146)	-0.192 (0.179)
Spanish Language	1.231 *** (0.306)	-0.218 (0.248)	0.325 * (0.180)	0.184 (0.163)	0.012 (0.193)
Constant	0.876 (0.977)	0.251 (0.781)	–	–	–
Cut Points τ_1	–	–	-0.896 (0.511)	-0.942 (0.381)	0.117 (0.498)
τ_2	–	–	-0.389 (0.535)	0.265 (0.366)	0.745 (0.494)
τ_3	–	–	0.695 (0.530)	–	1.756 (0.503)
Observations	3881	3683	2004	3966	1876
Pseudo R ²	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.05	0.02

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

Table 2: Policy issues of particular relevance to Latinos

Variables	Immigration	Bilingual	Affirmative Action
Latino	0.487 *** (0.099)	0.502 *** (0.169)	0.748 *** (0.238)
African-American	0.166 (0.167)	0.429 (0.283)	0.536 (0.339)
Income	0.045 (0.038)	0.005 (0.056)	0.025 (0.067)
Education	0.171 *** (0.054)	-0.084 (0.091)	0.265 (0.117)
Age	0.002 (0.003)	-0.019 *** (0.006)	0.008 (0.007)
Gender	0.005 (0.096)	0.699 *** (0.178)	-0.003 (0.226)
Employment Status	-0.206 (0.210)	0.080 (0.436)	0.993 ** (0.403)
Marital Status	0.021 (0.109)	-0.073 (0.196)	-0.112 (0.237)
Citizenship	-0.724 *** (0.130)	-0.202 (0.223)	-0.069 (0.236)
Spanish Language	0.561 *** (0.140)	0.544 ** (0.250)	0.153 (0.301)
Constant	—	-0.395 (0.658)	-3.995 *** (0.758)
Cut Points τ_1	-0.277 (0.325)	—	—
τ_2	1.445 (0.327)	—	—
Observations	3841	3982	3957
Pseudo R ²	0.05	0.06	0.03

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

Table 3: Moral (“Social”) issues

Variables	Abortion	Suicide	Death Penalty
Latino	-0.002 (0.095)	-0.309 * (0.177)	-0.594 *** (0.196)
African-American	-0.144 (0.134)	-1.082 *** (0.284)	-1.264 *** (0.294)
Income	0.035 (0.030)	-0.016 (0.055)	-0.022 (0.071)
Education	0.186 *** (0.037)	0.228 *** (0.087)	-0.159 (0.108)
Age	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)
Gender	0.146 * (0.083)	-0.393 ** (0.178)	-0.324 * (0.196)
Employment Status	0.038 (0.243)	0.126 (0.431)	0.050 (0.459)
Marital Status	-0.191 ** (0.097)	-0.230 (0.193)	0.074 (0.204)
Citizenship	0.095 (0.121)	0.376 (0.242)	0.454 ** (0.214)
Spanish Language	-0.317 ** (0.129)	-0.528 ** (0.239)	-0.970 *** (0.256)
Constant	—	0.230 (0.667)	2.094 *** (0.720)
Cut Points τ_1	-0.033 (0.360)	—	—
τ_2	0.950 (0.360)	—	—
τ_3	1.880 (0.361)	—	—
Observations	3942	3868	3852
Pseudo R ²	0.03	0.06	0.06

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.10

Table 3 (continued): Moral issues

Variables	Divorce	Children/Wedlock	Gay/Lesbian Sex
Latino	-0.184 (0.182)	-0.007 (0.186)	0.039 (0.180)
African-American	-0.167 (0.304)	0.046 (0.329)	-0.914 *** (0.344)
Income	0.013 (0.059)	-0.009 (0.053)	0.065 (0.055)
Education	0.135 (0.090)	0.101 (0.089)	0.496 *** (0.096)
Age	0.001 (0.006)	-0.030 *** (0.006)	-0.017 *** (0.006)
Gender	0.157 (0.182)	0.254 (0.177)	0.422 ** (0.182)
Employment Status	0.207 (0.488)	0.144 (0.467)	-0.344 (0.427)
Marital Status	-0.510 ** (0.208)	-0.793 ** (0.186)	-0.387 * (0.197)
Citizenship	0.003 (0.206)	0.070 (0.224)	-0.269 (0.245)
Spanish Language	-0.171 (0.230)	0.078 (0.244)	-0.611 ** (0.275)
Constant	0.045 (0.692)	0.786 (0.723)	-1.898 *** (0.682)
Observations	3948	3957	3903
Pseudo R ²	0.02	0.08	0.11

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

Table 4: Orientations toward government

Variables	Government vs. Individual	Larger vs. Small Government	Trust Government
Latino	0.260 (0.179)	0.558 *** (0.181)	0.360 *** (0.103)
African- American	0.849 ** (0.339)	1.012 *** (0.306)	0.271 * (0.162)
Income	-0.124 ** (0.055)	-0.086 (0.055)	0.012 (0.029)
Education	-0.047 (0.086)	-0.216 ** (0.095)	-0.059 (0.057)
Age	0.000 (0.006)	-0.033 *** (0.007)	-0.002 (0.003)
Gender	0.582 *** (0.179)	0.436 ** (0.188)	0.329 (0.092)
Employment Status	0.407 (0.507)	0.079 (0.373)	0.157 (0.280)
Marital Status	-0.219 (0.196)	-0.543 *** (0.203)	-0.084 (0.105)
Citizenship	-0.327 (0.238)	-0.684 ** (0.310)	-0.171 (0.125)
Spanish Language	-0.241 (0.257)	1.235 *** (0.264)	0.380 ** (0.147)
Constant	0.103 (0.741)	2.018 *** (0.663)	—
Cut Points τ_1	—	—	-1.464 (0.427)
τ_2	—	—	0.881 (0.407)
τ_3	—	—	1.840 (0.403)
Observations	3821	3811	3996
Pseudo R ²	0.05	0.16	0.03

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

Table 5: Partisanship

Variables	Party	Party/Latinos	Clinton	Gore
Latino	0.583 *** (0.107)	0.397 *** (0.101)	1.227 *** (0.199)	0.561 *** (0.194)
African-American	1.441 *** (0.183)	0.706 *** (0.165)	2.234 *** (0.434)	1.336 *** (0.328)
Income	-0.038 (0.033)	-0.009 (0.034)	0.080 (0.061)	0.096 * (0.054)
Education	0.029 (0.058)	0.157 *** (0.054)	-0.044 (0.098)	0.069 (0.101)
Age	0.005 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.006)	0.004 (0.006)
Gender	0.180 * (0.105)	0.047 (0.094)	0.511 *** (0.190)	0.498 *** (0.188)
Employment Status	0.178 (0.272)	0.370 (0.226)	-0.565 (0.610)	-0.189 (0.573)
Marital Status	-0.107 (0.117)	-0.026 (0.104)	-0.621 *** (0.216)	-0.731 *** (0.201)
Citizenship	0.154 (0.138)	0.343 ** (0.168)	-0.643 (0.397)	0.065 (0.240)
Spanish Language	0.035 (0.144)	0.192 (0.146)	0.877 *** (0.300)	0.245 (0.265)
Constant	—	—	0.797 (0.810)	-1.619 ** (0.823)
Cut Points τ_1	0.723 (0.376)	0.025 (0.384)	—	—
τ_2	0.993 (0.374)	1.791 (0.385)	—	—
Observations	3564	3727	3769	3524
Pseudo R ²	0.07	0.03	0.11	0.06

*** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10

Table 6: Policy issues

Variables	Gov. Health Insurance	HMO Reform	Police Evaluation	Gun Control	Courts Evaluation
Mexican American	0.318 (0.229)	0.493 ** (0.203)	-0.244 * (0.147)	0.083 (0.117)	0.145 (0.156)
Puerto Rican	0.641 (0.408)	1.100 *** (0.272)	-0.548 *** (0.202)	0.152 (0.201)	0.569 ** (0.282)
Cuban American	0.686 ** (0.345)	0.546 * (0.285)	-0.436 ** (0.190)	0.202 (0.178)	0.269 (0.249)
Central/South American	0.419 (0.426)	0.649 ** (0.289)	-0.330 (0.215)	0.088 (0.200)	-0.048 (0.232)
African- American	0.854 ** (0.414)	0.541 * (0.321)	-0.732 *** (0.190)	0.413 ** (0.186)	-0.020 (0.211)
Income	-0.062 (0.062)	0.042 (0.060)	-0.038 (0.041)	0.054 (0.040)	0.006 (0.039)
Education	0.040 (0.093)	-0.048 (0.094)	0.160 *** (0.059)	0.036 (0.056)	0.196 *** (0.058)
Age	-0.009 (0.006)	0.017 *** (0.006)	0.005 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.004)
Gender	0.541 *** (0.197)	0.147 (0.183)	0.228 * (0.136)	0.675 *** (0.102)	0.056 (0.123)
Employment Status	-0.077 (0.704)	0.102 (0.575)	0.148 (0.362)	0.202 (0.243)	0.131 (0.286)
Marital Status	-0.313 (0.210)	-0.404 ** (0.198)	0.087 (0.137)	-0.156 (0.116)	0.231 * (0.135)
Citizenship	-0.327 (0.299)	-0.567 ** (0.238)	-0.339 * (0.175)	-0.140 (0.151)	-0.265 (0.177)
Spanish Language	1.311 *** (0.304)	-0.160 (0.246)	0.251 (0.180)	0.196 (0.160)	0.047 (0.191)
Constant	0.935 (0.969)	0.300 (0.778)	–	–	–
Cut Points τ_1	–	–	-0.825 (0.510)	-0.927 (0.381)	0.056 (0.484)
τ_2	–	–	-0.318 (0.535)	0.281 (0.365)	0.685 (0.490)
τ_3	–	–	0.764 (0.531)	–	1.697 (0.499)
Observations	3881	3683	2004	3966	1876
Pseudo R ²	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.05	0.02
*** p<.01	** p<.05	* p<.10			

Table 7: Policy issues of particular relevance to Latinos

Variables	Immigration	Bilingual	Affirmative Action
Mexican American	0.519 *** (0.113)	0.508 *** (0.195)	0.662 ** (0.264)
Puerto Rican	0.256 (0.171)	0.777 *** (0.280)	0.390 (0.358)
Cuban American	0.779 *** (0.171)	0.754 ** (0.292)	0.251 (0.300)
Central/South American	0.353 ** (0.2154)	0.683 ** (0.265)	0.338 (0.336)
African-American	0.158 (0.166)	0.430 (0.282)	0.510 (0.336)
Income	0.044 (0.038)	0.006 (0.056)	0.022 (0.067)
Education	0.171 *** (0.054)	-0.084 (0.091)	0.266 (0.117)
Age	0.002 (0.003)	-0.019 *** (0.006)	0.008 (0.007)
Gender	0.006 (0.096)	0.701 *** (0.178)	-0.006 (0.226)
Employment Status	-0.205 (0.210)	0.077 (0.436)	0.902 ** (0.408)
Marital Status	0.018 (0.109)	-0.071 (0.197)	-0.119 (0.237)
Citizenship	-0.726 *** (0.133)	-0.187 (0.231)	-0.113 (0.247)
Spanish Language	0.564 *** (0.139)	0.507 ** (0.247)	0.303 (0.311)
Constant	—	-0.412 (0.655)	-3.881 *** (0.753)
Cut Points τ_1	-0.290 (0.324)	—	—
τ_2	1.430 (0.326)	—	—
Observations	3841	3982	3957
Pseudo R ²	0.05	0.06	0.03

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.10

Table 8: Moral (“Social”) issues

Variables	Abortion	Suicide	Death Penalty
Mexican American	-0.043 (0.104)	-0.323 * (0.196)	-0.663 *** (0.220)
Puerto Rican	0.337 ** (0.149)	-0.086 (0.288)	-0.813 *** (0.307)
Cuban American	0.347 * (0.194)	0.418 *** (0.316)	0.251 (0.271)
Central/South American	0.134 (0.157)	-0.311 (0.293)	-0.793 *** (0.294)
African-American	-0.141 (0.134)	-1.074 *** (0.283)	-1.263 *** (0.294)
Income	0.035 (0.030)	-0.015 (0.055)	-0.022 (0.071)
Education	0.186 *** (0.037)	0.227 *** (0.087)	-0.161 (0.108)
Age	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)
Gender	0.146 * (0.083)	-0.391 ** (0.178)	-0.323 (0.197)
Employment Status	0.045 (0.244)	0.140 (0.432)	0.076 (0.459)
Marital Status	-0.188 ** (0.097)	-0.227 (0.193)	0.075 (0.205)
Citizenship	0.046 (0.125)	0.364 (0.248)	0.429 * (0.222)
Spanish Language	-0.336 *** (0.126)	-0.595 ** (0.236)	-0.972 *** (0.254)
Constant	—	0.218 (0.664)	2.111 *** (0.718)
Cut Points τ_1	-0.073 (0.360)	—	—
τ_2	0.912 (0.359)	—	—
τ_3	1.842 (0.360)	—	—
Observations	3942	3868	3852
Pseudo R ²	0.03	0.06	0.06

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.10

Table 8 (continued): Moral issues

Variables	Divorce	Children/Wedlock	Gay/Lesbian Sex
Mexican American	-0.408 ** (0.198)	-0.220 (0.202)	-0.002 (0.206)
Puerto Rican	-0.045 (0.302)	-0.102 (0.310)	0.489 (0.348)
Cuban American	-0.216 (0.310)	0.195 (0.311)	0.130 (0.392)
Central/South American	0.240 (0.286)	0.052 (0.275)	-0.467 (0.300)
African- American	-0.171 (0.303)	0.036 (0.329)	-0.914 *** (0.344)
Income	0.012 (0.059)	-0.010 (0.053)	0.065 (0.055)
Education	0.132 (0.090)	0.098 (0.089)	0.497 *** (0.096)
Age	0.001 (0.006)	-0.030 *** (0.006)	-0.017 *** (0.006)
Gender	0.156 (0.183)	0.254 (0.177)	0.422 ** (0.182)
Employment Status	0.206 (0.490)	0.146 (0.468)	-0.339 (0.428)
Marital Status	-0.505 ** (0.208)	-0.791 *** (0.187)	-0.386 * (0.198)
Citizenship	0.036 (0.213)	0.062 (0.233)	-0.394 (0.258)
Spanish Language	-0.089 (0.232)	0.183 (0.239)	-0.615 ** (0.267)
Constant	0.040 (0.689)	0.828 (0.721)	-1.782 *** (0.678)
Observations	3948	3957	3903
Pseudo R ²	0.02	0.08	0.11

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.10

Table 9: Orientations toward government

Variables	Government vs. Individual	Larger vs. Small Government	Trust Government
Mexican American	0.079 (0.196)	0.522 ** (0.214)	0.319 *** (0.122)
Puerto Rican	0.788 ** (0.340)	0.915 *** (0.330)	0.585 *** (0.160)
Cuban American	0.080 (0.295)	0.101 (0.350)	0.536 *** (0.197)
Central/South American	-0.055 (0.314)	0.270 (0.334)	0.241 (0.155)
African- American	0.842 ** (0.339)	1.006 *** (0.305)	0.268 * (0.162)
Income	-0.125 ** (0.055)	-0.086 (0.055)	0.012 (0.029)
Education	-0.047 (0.086)	-0.215 ** (0.095)	-0.059 (0.057)
Age	0.000 (0.006)	-0.033 *** (0.007)	-0.002 (0.003)
Gender	0.580 *** (0.179)	0.434 ** (0.188)	0.329 (0.092)
Employment Status	0.404 (0.509)	0.066 (0.373)	0.160 (0.281)
Marital Status	-0.215 (0.197)	-0.543 *** (0.203)	-0.083 (0.105)
Citizenship	-0.422 * (0.235)	-0.759 ** (0.311)	-0.211 (0.130)
Spanish Language	-0.132 (0.253)	1.320 *** (0.264)	0.389 *** (0.148)
Constant	0.221 (0.738)	2.111 *** (0.689)	—
Cut Points τ_1	—	—	-1.507 (0.427)
τ_2	—	—	0.838 (0.407)
τ_3	—	—	1.797 (0.140)
Observations	3821	3811	3996
Pseudo R ²	0.05	0.16	0.04

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.10

Table 10: Partisanship

Variables	Party	Party/Latinos	Clinton	Gore
Mexican American	0.578 ** (0.120)	0.343 *** (0.116)	1.135 *** (0.243)	0.419 * (0.217)
Puerto Rican	0.611 ** (0.191)	0.523 *** (0.156)	2.086 *** (0.299)	0.901 *** (0.301)
Cuban American	0.611 (0.191)	-0.056 (0.168)	0.089 (0.318)	-0.010 (0.303)
Central/South American	0.770 ** (0.174)	0.426 *** (0.167)	2.055 *** (0.346)	0.771 ** (0.319)
African-American	1.433 *** (0.183)	0.699 *** (0.165)	2.226 *** (0.433)	1.327 *** (0.328)
Income	-0.038 (0.033)	-0.010 (0.034)	0.081 (0.061)	0.095 * (0.054)
Education	0.029 (0.058)	0.158 *** (0.054)	-0.044 (0.098)	0.068 (0.101)
Age	0.005 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.006)	0.004 (0.006)
Gender	0.178 * (0.105)	0.046 (0.094)	0.509 *** (0.190)	0.496 *** (0.188)
Employment Status	0.161 (0.273)	0.360 (0.227)	-0.588 (0.608)	-0.201 (0.573)
Marital Status	-0.102 (0.117)	-0.025 (0.105)	-0.620 *** (0.216)	-0.728 *** (0.201)
Citizenship	0.185 (0.144)	0.336 * (0.177)	-0.610 (0.407)	0.066 (0.250)
Spanish Language	0.071 (0.142)	0.251 * (0.146)	1.003 *** (0.305)	0.334 (0.265)
Constant	—	—	0.798 (0.804)	-1.588 * (0.822)
Cut Points τ_1	0.729 (0.375)	-0.002 (0.386)	—	—
τ_2	1.000 (0.373)	1.763 (0.386)	—	—
Observations	3564	3727	3769	3524
Pseudo R ²	0.07	0.03	0.11	0.06

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.10

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Endnotes

¹ Respondents from these two Latino groups were combined into a single variable.

² The sole reported difference was found in the regression for overall participation when only female respondents were tested. In this instance, African Americans were more likely to participate. They also found that group consciousness was not related to political participation for any group.

³ For further research on opinion differences between African Americans and Anglos, see Sigelman and Welch (1991), Bobo and Kluegel (1993), Jackman (1994), Tate (1994), and Schuman et al. (1997).

⁴ According to Maciel and Ortiz (1996, x). "Civil rights, affirmative action, bilingual education, job-training programs, financial aid, and immigration came under constant attack during the 1980s, years ironically characterized by the print media and political establishment as the 'Decade of the Hispanic.' As the decade evolved, it became apparent that it would be many things, but certainly not the 'Decade of the Hispanic.' Instead of being years when a consolidation of earlier achievements and successes occurred, the 1980s threatened to become a period of retrenchment and regression in conditions that had taken decades to change for the better."

⁵ Although Valdez (1987, 193) in the mid-1980s identified two hundred twenty Latino public opinion data sources constructed at an estimated cost of over thirteen millions dollars, he noted that "the quality of the data is so uneven that a considerable amount of effort remains ahead. The truly adequate data resources are few."

⁶ See Lewis (1987).

⁷ De la Garza, DeSipio, F.C. Garcia, J. Garcia, and Falcon (1992).

⁸ Swain (1995, 11), Whitby (2000, 8).

⁹ *Business Week*, April 20, 2000. "The ABC's of Vouchers and Politics."

¹⁰ The survey includes 818 Mexican Americans, 318 Puerto Ricans, 312 Cuban Americans, and 593 Central/South Americans. The data were "weighted to the national Latino population, so that nationalities are represented in their actual proportions (as estimated by the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey)." From "National Survey on Latinos in America: Questionnaire and Toplevels," iii.

¹¹ For the exact wording and coding of all dependent variables, as well as the aggregate responses by Latinos, African Americans, Anglos, and the Latino national-origin groups, see: <http://www.kff.org/content/2000/3023/LatinoFullToplevelFinal.PDF>. This information is not included in the paper because of space considerations.

¹² When describing the strategies of Latino political activists, San Miguel Jr. (1984, 215) found that, "After 1975 bilingual education came to be viewed as the most appropriate instrument for attaining equality in society. Bilingual education was considered the key for ameliorating historic problems in schools with large numbers of Spanish-speaking children...This comprehensive approach of instructing Spanish-speaking children implied a fundamental reassessment of the support, governance, administration, and content of the public schools as well as an increase of state and federal intervention on their behalf and a call for greater participation by the community in educational matters."

¹³ Although not all students enrolled in bilingual education classes are Latino, they constitute three-quarters of limited English proficiency (LEP) students (Congressional Research Service 1999).

¹⁴ Of these questions, all but the immigration and INS questions allowed just two responses, so they are analyzed using logit. The three-response immigration question and four-level INS evaluation question are analyzed with ordinal probit.

¹⁵ Although with a growing Protestant component. The most recent estimates are that approximately 30 percent of Latinos are Protestant.

¹⁶ Skerry (1995), for instance, suggests that pro-choice Latino elected officials are out of touch with their pro-life constituencies, and do so in order to receive Democratic Party political resources.

¹⁷ All but the abortion question allowed two responses, so they are analyzed using logit. The four-response abortion question is examined using ordinal probit analysis.

¹⁸ De la Garza et al. (1992).

¹⁹ Although Weisberg (1987) found that this voting gap is not significant when the intervening factors of race and income are taken into account.

²⁰ For more on Latinos and acculturation, see Padilla (1980), Mendoza (1984), and Ramirez (1984).

²¹ One might question the inclusion of non-citizen respondents in the analysis, as they are not eligible to participate in electoral politics. On the other hand, they do participate in non-electoral political activities (Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989; Leal 2002), likely respond to public opinion polls that influence politicians, and may act as local opinion leaders and thereby influence those who do vote. To delete such a large share of this population would provide an inaccurate view of Latino opinion.

²² One might suggest that some independent variables are more likely to be associated with some opinions than with others. The result could be some inefficiency, but there is little reason to think that the inclusion of any 'extra' independent variables would cause bias in any particular regression. To investigate this possibility, more narrowly tailored models were separately tested for different regressions, but there were few differences from the results presented here (one such difference is noted in the following endnote).

²³ In the affirmative action model, the African-American variable was just below conventional levels of statistical significance ($p < .114$). This is one instance where slight changes to the model move a racial or ethnic variable across the .10 threshold. As such laws are designed to assist African Americans, we should not discount the possibility of their support.

²⁴ Mexican Americans were more likely than Anglos to oppose assisted suicide, while Cuban Americans were more likely to support it.

²⁵ Only the Cuban American variable was statistically insignificant.

²⁶ Mexican Americans are more likely than Anglos to oppose divorce.

²⁷ Do the results discussed in Tables 6 through 10 reflect the results from the aggregate survey data? To summarize much information, there are a number of cases where the overall survey data appear to indicate opinion differences between Anglos and particular Latino subgroups, but where no such differences are found in the regression results. This once again points out the importance of controlling for demographic and other factors. On the other hand, there are also many instances of agreement between the regression results and the overall survey data.

²⁸ As noted previously, these are HMO reform, police evaluations, immigration, bilingual education, the death penalty, and trust in government.

²⁹ These issues are affirmative action (Mexican Americans in favor), assisted suicide (Mexican Americans opposed, Cuban Americans in favor), the size of government (Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in favor of larger government), and government-provided health care (Cuban Americans in favor).

³⁰ Mexican Americans have more negative views of divorce than do Anglos, Puerto Ricans are more likely to favor government over individual actions and to give higher evaluations of the court system, and Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans favor abortion rights.