

# The Effectiveness of Coethnic Contact on Latino Political Recruitment

Political Research Quarterly  
XX(X) 1–12  
© 2009 University of Utah  
Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>  
DOI: 10.1177/1065912909352774  
<http://prq.sagepub.com>



Matt A. Barreto<sup>1</sup> and Stephen A. Nuño<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Since the 2000 presidential election, voter education and mobilization have witnessed a renaissance in targeted contact and segmented messaging. Candidates, political parties, and interest groups have taken advantage of advances in electronic databases to divide and subdivide the electorate into different groups and have different messages and messengers for each subgroup of voters. This article takes up the question of whether or not personalized or segmented contact during a campaign is more successful at convincing voters than “generic” contact or no contact at all. Using data from a national survey of Latino registered voters in 2004, the authors examine the impact of being contacted by a coethnic messenger on support for the Republican and Democratic Parties. While some previous studies have examined voter turnout or vote choice, this article examines the deeper implications of coethnic contact, including support for public policy and candidate favorability. The authors find that when Latinos were contacted by non-Latino Republicans, they were significantly *less likely* to support Bush and Republican issues, but when Latinos were contacted by Latino Republicans, they were significantly *more likely* to support Bush and Republican issues. Democratic contact did not have a significant effect on support for Democratic policy, which remained very high among Latino voters.

## Keywords

Latinos, partisanship, recruitment, Republicans, Democrats

Since the 2000 presidential election, voter education and mobilization have witnessed a renaissance in targeted contact and segmented messaging. Candidates, political parties, and interest groups have taken advantage of advances in electronic databases to divide and subdivide the electorate into different groups and have different messages for each subgroup of voters. For decades, scholars and practitioners have known that personalized campaign appeals are more effective (e.g., Wolfinger 1965; Uhlaner 1989; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Labor unions, religious leaders, military veterans, and racial and ethnic community leaders have typically been used by campaigns to make a stronger, more personalized, and perhaps more trusting connection with voters. While nationwide and one-size-fits-all campaigns can be cheaper and easier to implement, smaller, targeted campaigns might be more effective in winning the hearts and minds of voters. This article takes up the question of whether or not personalized or segmented contact during a campaign is more successful at convincing voters than “generic” contact or no contact at all.

Using data from a national survey of Latino registered voters in 2004, we examine the impact of being contacted by a coethnic partisan messenger on support for presidential candidate affect and support for public policy issues.

While some previous studies have examined the effect of mobilization on voter turnout (Michelson 2003; Ramírez 2005, 2007) and to a lesser extent vote choice (Nuño 2007), this article is the first to examine the deeper implications of coethnic contact, including support for public policy and candidate affect.

A significant advancement in targeted voter mobilization was marked in 2004. Steve Lombardo, a Republican pollster who assisted the Bush–Cheney effort in 2004, notes that “we’re going to a form of electronic retail politics that’s more individualized than ever before. We see companies doing that with relationship marketing. This is about having an ongoing relationship and a conversation with my customer. And my customer is a voter” (Barnes 2004, 3038). Despite these new efforts, little is known about the effectiveness of targeted voter campaigns, especially among Latinos.

<sup>1</sup>University of Washington, Seattle

<sup>2</sup>Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff

## Corresponding Author:

Matt A. Barreto, University of Washington, Department of Political Science, Box 353530, Gowen 101, Seattle, WA 98115  
Email: [mbarreto@u.washington.edu](mailto:mbarreto@u.washington.edu)

In short, we find that the Democratic Party continues to receive broad-based support from Latinos, and among Democratic recruitment, neither Latino nor non-Latino contact provided an additional effect in favor of the party. Among Republicans, who have somewhat of an image problem with Latinos (see Segura, Falcon, and Pachon 1997; Fraga, Ramírez, and Segura 2004), coethnic outreach had a significant mobilizing effect on Latinos, while non-Latino (presumably Anglo) outreach had a significant *negative* effect on Latinos.

## Our Argument

Underlying our argument is the importance of trust—trust between Latinos and the political system. The discussion about Latino political behavior has focused primarily on turnout. The 1990s brought to the forefront a particularly viral dialogue about issues that disproportionately affected Latinos, such as bilingual education, affirmative action, and immigration. While politicians, such as California governor Pete Wilson, sought to use these issues to mobilize the moderate to conservative white constituency, they also succeeded in casting a shroud of intolerance over the Republican Party. Several years after Wilson was out of office, Latinos still associated those negative attacks with Pete Wilson and Republicans (Fraga and Ramírez 2003; Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2000). Not surprisingly, Michelson (2001) found that Latinos become increasingly distrustful of the political system the longer they are here and exposed to American politics. In a follow-up study on political trust, Michelson (2003, 926) notes, “If respondents have experienced discrimination or feel that individuals of Mexican origin are targets of discrimination, then they are more likely to be cynical.” Further, Pedraza (2009) has found that when Latinos perceive hostility toward their group, their political integration is slowed, even as acculturation increases.

Wilson and the Republican Party eventually lost hold of power in California, but they retained the image of intolerance in the eyes of many Latinos. At the same time, the national debate turned anti-immigrant with the passage of the 1996 National Welfare Reform Act. Championed by Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA), disqualified many Latino immigrants from public benefits and portrayed Latinos as a drain on the American social welfare system. Although President Bill Clinton signed this into law, every vote against the act in the Senate came from Democrats, and 85 percent of the Democrats in the House of Representatives voted against the first version of the act, with half voting against the act in its final form. By contrast, every Republican Senator voted for PRWORA, and only two Republicans in the

House of Representatives voted against the act. As a response, Latino leaders and Democrats helped push state legislation in California restoring aid to those families who were no longer eligible for federal benefits. Because of the divisiveness of these issues, Latinos have been consistent in their belief that the Democratic Party serves Latino interests better than the Republican Party (Leal et al. 2005), and this has been reflected in their historical voting patterns (DeSipio, de la Garza, and Leal 2009). Many were hopeful of finally witnessing the emergence of the sleeping giant, but while there was some increase in voter registration and turnout in the late 1990s, Latino participation continued to lag behind that of non-Latinos.

Why did Latinos not come out to vote in the numbers Latino leaders had hoped? One answer may be complacency on the part of the political parties. The cost of recruiting new voters is prohibitive, and both parties may have had different incentives for not reaching out to Latino voters. While the raw number of Hispanics voting increased from 1980 to 2004, from 2.5 million to 7.6 million, this is largely attributable to population and naturalization growth, not a deeper incorporation of Latinos into the political system by the Democratic and Republican Parties.<sup>1</sup> For the Democrats, outreach may have been viewed as an inefficient use of funds since (non-Cuban) Latinos who would come out to vote would pull the lever for Democrats regardless (DeSipio, de La Garza, and Leal 2009). Poor mobilization and incorporation of African Americans by the Democratic Party follow similar arguments (Dawson 1994). On the other hand, the Republican Party saw little promise in convincing Latinos to vote for their candidate because they had spent the better part of the last decade campaigning on the backs of Latino issues. This is consistent with previous findings by Leighley (2001) and de la Garza, Menchaca, and DeSipio (1994), who find that traditional campaigns ignored Latino voters. Without clear evidence that a strategy existed for winning over the hearts and minds of Latino voters, campaign strategists in both parties focused on turning out their trusted constituency, whites.

However, we believe focusing only on voter turnout confounds the answer to why Latinos have evidenced lower levels of participation. Lower participation levels by Latinos may be a function of their unique characteristics in education, religion, language, and age, in which they disproportionately represent the lower strata of the job markets. These factors have considerable effects on the pool of resources available to Latinos and present barriers in communicating their needs to the political system. However, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 237) find that there is little difference in participation rates once Latinos are contacted. In other words, it might well be that nobody is asking Latinos to participate.

The focus of political incorporation is better suited to Latino political and candidate preference. The goal of any campaign is not to simply get people to vote but to influence a majority of voters to pull the lever for their candidate or policy issue. With limited budgets and little room for error, campaigns seek to maximize their get-out-the-vote activities by charting familiar territory. Campaigns are hesitant to canvass areas they are not confident will reap positive results, and without an effective strategy partisan voter mobilization in Latino neighborhoods will continue to lag behind. Indeed, the robust findings of Ramírez's (2005, 2007) research on nonpartisan Latino mobilization is evidence of the historically huge gap in Latino outreach created by the political parties. Both Ramírez and Michelson (2005) find that mobilization by Latino nonpartisan groups is successful in turning out the Latino vote. Unfortunately, part of their success has been that they were the only show in town.

However, the focus on mobilization and turnout by academia made significant steps in providing evidence that Latino voters were more sophisticated than both parties had given them credit for. These studies have found Latinos to be generally moderate and, like whites, to respond to mobilization efforts when those efforts are made (Michelson 2005; Ramírez 2005; de la Garza and Cortina 2007). Specifically, the research clearly demonstrates that coethnic candidates and coethnic party recruiters can act as positive conduits between the Latino community and the parties (Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000; Leighley 2001; Barreto 2007; Barreto, Villarreal, and Woods 2005; Sanchez and Manzano 2009). We argue that as the 2000 election approached, Latino voters were skeptical of the political system and historically ignored by party mobilization efforts. At the same time, the mobilization research does find that Latinos are responsive to mobilization efforts that they trust, namely, by other Latinos.

The notion of trust has a long tradition in political behavior, and recent work has shown that Latinos may be more open to a variety of candidates and policy issues if they are recruited by a friendly face. Latinos have been generally trusting of the policies and candidates within the Democratic Party, but beginning with Texas governor George W. Bush's presidential campaign in 1999, there was growing evidence that the Republicans were not going to write off Latino voters. Hero et al. (2007) observed that very little analysis had been conducted on the reasons underlying Latinos' preference for the Democratic Party. After the Bush (electoral college) victory in 2000, it was apparent that Latinos were a factor in the Republican calculus, especially as compared to Dole's numbers in 1996. Even though a strong majority of Latinos voted for Gore in 2000, both the Bush and Gore campaigns emphasized reaching out to Latino "swing" voters (Segal 2003). In his review of the literature over the past decade,

de la Garza (2004, 103) noted that "now that Republicans are heavily engaged in convincing the electorate of [a] need for change, scholars would be well advised to monitor the extent to which those efforts are penetrating Latino communities." But do Latinos trust the new Republican outreach efforts?

Pantoja and Segura (2007, 280) investigate the issue of trust in government and political alienation among Latinos and find strong evidence that shared ethnicity matters. Their study in California and Texas found that Latinos who had a Latino representative in the state legislature or the U.S. House were significantly more likely to feel that the government "is run for the benefit of all people," as opposed to a few big interests. Pantoja and Segura also found respondents who felt Hispanic elected officials better represented Latino interests to be more confident in their government, further suggesting that Latino trust is based in part on coethnic representation. For Latinos, who have at best been ignored and at worst discriminated against by the political system, it stands to reason that a trustworthy messenger is one key to political incorporation and recruitment.

Still, even with greater efforts on the part of the Republican Party, we should expect Latino Democratic contact to work even better. For the Republican Party, Latinos have a long (and current) history of not trusting their policies and candidates (with the exception of Cubans). Because of previous rhetoric (Pete Wilson) and current rhetoric by Republicans such as Congressman Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, Congressman Tancredo of Colorado, and local leaders such as Representative Pearce of Arizona who establish their conservative credentials on the basis of their anti-immigrant rhetoric, Latinos are rightfully skeptical. Republican campaign consultant Lionel Sosa (2004) stated that "before you can ask for Latino votes, you have to earn their trust." We argue that in using fellow Latinos to conduct partisan outreach, both parties should be more successful at consolidating Latino opinion and support. In contrast, non-Latino (Anglo) outreach might reinforce the existing negative image of the Republican Party, while it should have little to no effect on the Democratic Party, for which Latinos have a higher degree of trust.

### Addressing a Gap in the Literature

The research on voter mobilization and contact focuses almost exclusively on voter turnout. Countless studies have addressed the important role of get-out-the-vote drives, especially in resource-poor communities (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). The fixation with turnout may be somewhat misguided. In fact, the goal of mobilization is not simply to turn out the voter but to turn out the voter in favor of a specific candidate or party. The contact

with the voter generally contains an important message about the candidate or political party and usually ends by asking if “we can count on your support on election day.”<sup>2</sup> By focusing only on the decision to vote, mobilization research ignores the substance of the appeal to the voter, in which the messenger highlights the policy positions of the candidate and the benefits that will come to the voter if the candidate is elected. Given that voter mobilization is attempting to win the hearts (if not minds) of voters, we extend this research beyond turnout and vote choice and question whether partisan contact affects support for the policies of each candidate, or candidate affect. It could be that the effects of partisan contact are short lived, influencing the voter only on election day. However, we argue that campaigning for the Latino vote could have deeper implications, given the lack of outreach in the past.

The central importance of mobilization necessarily draws our attention toward the institutional and psychological factors of participation, such as party recruitment, social connectedness, identity politics, and group politics. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) illustrate the primary and secondary effects of party mobilization by questioning the growing disposition that parties have a small influence on participation. Contrary to this sentiment, they found that parties had a valuable secondary effect in relaying the party’s message to the electorate and a substantial primary influence on mobilizing the faithful advocates of the party message. This is an essential part in maintaining a consistent voice and face in politics. A persistent institutional voice is the primary reason Carol Cassel (2002, 391) finds such a high variance in Latino turnout between presidential elections and midterm elections. While the presidential election is more visible and enjoys more resources dedicated to mobilizing voters, midterm elections require an entrenched institutional base to maintain the resources necessary to win.

Specifically, we test whether or not coethnic partisan contact makes Latino voters significantly more likely to like or trust the candidate in question and, furthermore, whether they support the candidate to address policy issues of concern. If there are no significant results for partisan contact on these measures, it provides evidence that the mobilization is short lived and heavily focused on just turning out the vote. However, if respondents who received partisan contact, and especially coethnic partisan contact, are more supportive of candidates and their platforms, it suggests mobilization could have longer term effects of incorporating Latinos into one party or another. Although any contact or message should be more valuable than no message, our argument above suggests that coethnic contact should really help sell the candidate and party. This is consistent with research by Valentino, Hutchings, and White (2002) that found racial cues in

political ads to be particularly effective at mobilizing the White vote. Preexisting social linkages, such as ethnicity, can be capitalized on to influence political decision making (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002, 75), and these cues can have a more powerful impact when the linkages are compounded with political party congruence (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). Although the Valentino, Hutchings, and White findings are limited to White voters, their theory suggests coethnic partisan racial messages should have a positive impact on Latino behavior. Thus, for our two sets of dependent variables, candidate likability and support for the candidate’s policies, we hypothesize,

*Hypothesis 1:* Latinos who report coethnic partisan contact will be significantly more likely to (like the candidate/support candidate’s policies).

*Hypothesis 2:* Latinos who report nonethnic Democratic contact will not be significantly different.

*Hypothesis 3:* Latinos who report nonethnic Republican contact will be significantly *less* likely to (like the candidate/support candidate’s policies).

Because Latinos are still a distinguishable group in politics, and because of the population density of Latinos, group factors must be taken into account when analyzing Latino political behavior. In this sense, the concept of relational goods developed by Uhlener (1989) has been underappreciated in its applicability to Latino voting behavior. The relational goods model addresses the gap between the social context and rational interests of the voter by assigning relational payoffs that depend on interests that could be communicated on a group-based context. The relational goods model places a central role on a proactive elite to communicate those interests and provides a theoretical basis for an expectation of mass behavioral activity.

Relational goods theory, however, excludes any discussion on the practical effect of making group-based appeals to Latinos. Elite leaders need an army of campaigners and organizers to act on their behalf, and we argue that these political conduits can overcome some barriers to communication that may have been erected as a result of past differences. Previous literature has shown that a coethnic recruiter can overcome barriers to communication, even if the candidate is Anglo (Nuño 2007), but a greater measure of the impact of coethnic recruitment is the impact it has on policy choice.

There is evidence to suggest that party policies are significant factors in Latino voting behavior (Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2003), but how those policy choices are communicated to Latinos is a central component of how those policy preferences are made. A negative affiliation

with a party recruiter and his or her party may obscure the message, whereas a coethnic recruiter may open up the channels of communication between the party policies and the Latino voters' preferences. While the Latino may still prefer certain policies, the open communication between the party and the voter makes it more likely the voter will cast a vote for the party's candidate.

We anticipate Republicans to be the greatest benefactors of coethnic recruitment strategies, given their comparatively larger deficit in trust, similar to a study that looked at candidate choice in the 2000 presidential election (Nuño 2007). However, Nuño examined only vote choice and did not extend his analysis to examine candidate affect or policy preferences. We seek to shed light on this aspect of Latino political recruitment.

## Data and Method

We rely on the 2004 *Washington Post*/Tomás Rivera Policy Institute National Survey of Latino Registered Voters to examine the impact of coethnic recruiters on candidate likability and policy preference. The survey was fielded in October 2004, two weeks before the Bush–Kerry presidential election, and was administered by telephone in English and Spanish. Latinos were identified by a registered voter database in the eleven states with at least 100,000 Latino registered voters, accounting for approximately 90 percent of all Latino voters nationwide. In full, 1,600 interviews with Latino registered voters were collected.

To investigate the effect of coethnic partisan mobilization, we employ two multinomial logit regressions looking at candidate approval ratings and four multinomial logit regression models to look at support for a candidate on several policy areas. The two favorability models (Models 1a and 1b) and the four policy models (Models 2a to 2d) are specified with identical categories of independent variables that have been traditionally used to predict voting behavior and public opinion among Latinos. The dependent variable for Model 1a asks which candidate “understands the problems of people like you,” while the dependent variable in 1b asks which candidate “is a likable person.” The dependent variables in 1a and 1b are categorical variables for whether or not the respondent believed each statement applied more to Bush or more to Kerry. Respondents could also select “applies to both equally,” “applies to neither,” or “don’t know.” Since these answers are not necessarily neatly ordered between selecting Kerry or Bush, we grouped them together as the “other” category and used multinomial logit rather than ordered logit. Similarly, the dependent variables for Models 2a to 2d are categorical variables that ask the respondent to choose between Bush and Kerry (or both, neither, don’t know) on whom they trust to do a better job

handling certain policy areas: their most important issue (Model a), the situation in Iraq (Model b), the campaign against terrorism (Model c), and education (Model d).<sup>3</sup> For the policy support models, we constructed the dependent variables so that *prefer Kerry* = 0, *prefer Bush* = 2, and *all other responses* = 1 (prefer both, prefer neither, don’t know), and once again we use multinomial logit.

The first category of independent variables for each model includes age, education, income, and gender. The second category includes religion, nativity, generation, language, and country of origin. The third category includes partisanship and past voting record. Unfortunately, we were not able to include a control variable for efficacy, as it was not asked on this survey. All variables are coded consistent with previous research. Our key independent variables are in the category of political contact: Democratic contact, GOP contact, and Latino contact.

We interact party contact with Latino contact to isolate the impact of contact between Latino party members, that is, GOP Latino contact and Democratic Latino contact versus GOP non-Latino contact and Democratic non-Latino contact. The control group (or constant) is those who reported no contact at all. When the interaction variables are introduced, the GOP contact variable takes on the effect of GOP Anglo contact and the Democratic contact variable takes on the effect of Democrat Anglo contact. Latino contact takes on the effect of nonpartisan Latino contact. To assess the full impact of receiving coethnic partisan contact, we simulated predicted probabilities for each model, and those are reported below.

A final note about the contact variables, and especially the interaction terms, is that it is important to differentiate contact by a Latino Democrat as opposed to being contacted by both a Latino and separately a Democratic, who may have been White. To address this argument head on, we rely on a slightly smaller subset of the data, *excluding anyone who received competing forms of contact*. Specifically, we dropped those individuals for whom we could not be certain about their contact patterns, such as those who reported both Democratic and Republican contact or both Latino and non-Latino contact. This approach unfortunately eliminates some valuable data; however, the end result is very similar to that of a controlled experiment, with no cross-contamination. Because of our ability to create exclusive cells for the types of contact Latinos reported, this approach might be considered more reliable than even a controlled field experiment. Although researchers have the ability to create equal, randomly assigned groups and apply treatments, it is impossible to account for the real-world campaign contact that voters might receive and potentially contaminate the field experiment. Furthermore, while a field experiment

would provide a validated measure of contact, it would not provide individual-level data on candidate favorability and support for policy issues, which only a public opinion survey can.

Even though we are relying on self-reported data, the survey instrument allows us to neatly compare voters who received only one of four different types of contact. For example, if a respondent answered yes to being contacted by the Democratic Party and answered yes to being contacted by a Latino—but stated he or she did not receive any other contact (e.g., nonpartisan contact or contact by Anglos)—then we can be certain that this person received contact from a Latino Democrat. The same was done for all four possible cells—Latino Democratic contact, Latino Republican contact, non-Latino Democratic contact, non-Latino Republican contact—so that all four categories are exclusive from one another. Previously, we estimated the models without this exclusivity requirement, and these results are available in the online appendix available at <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>.

## Findings

We find substantial support in our models for the hypothesis that coethnic recruiters can help moderate communications barriers erected as a result of past differences, specifically with the Republican Party. For both of the candidate affect models, GOP Latino contact has a positive effect on support for Bush, while GOP contact (the effect of GOP White contact) has a negative effect (see Table 1). The significant and negative relationship between GOP (white) contact and Bush favorability among Latinos suggests that Anglo contact may actually cue negative connotations of the GOP related to the immigration debate and other policy preferences regarding affirmative action, bilingual education, and support for social services. In contrast, receiving contact from a Latino Republican recruiter does not cue any such negative connotations, instead resulting in positive support for Bush. For Democratic contact, the predicted effect would be negative (i.e., supportive of Kerry); however, we find that Latinos who received Democratic contact were not distinguishable from those who received no contact at all. This holds for Latino and non-Latino outreach by the Democrats and suggests that Latinos already supported the Democratic candidate and additional contact from Democrats did not further increase support for Kerry. Importantly, the models include a control variable for Cuban national origin, suggesting that this is not an artifact of Cuban Americans who are more likely to be Republican. In fact, as Table A3 in the online appendix demonstrates, Republican contact with Latinos went well beyond Cubans.

**Table 1.** Impact of Ethnic Partisan Contact on Presidential Candidate Affect among Latinos

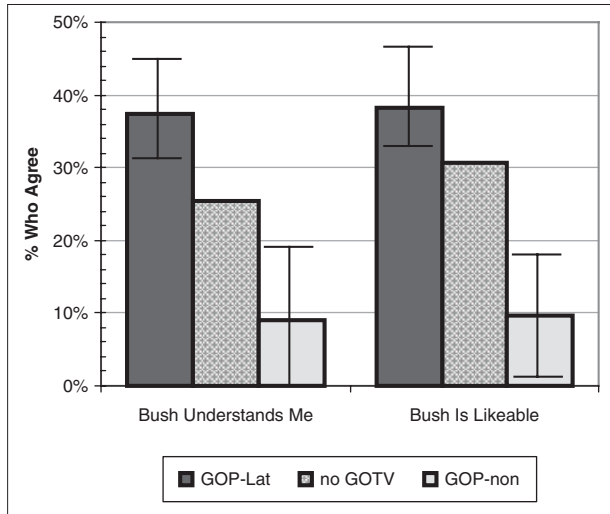
	Model 1a—Bush Understands		Model 1b—Bush Likable Person	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Dem contact	-0.196	0.527	0.269	0.531
GOP contact	-1.349	0.758 <sup>†</sup>	-1.588	0.816*
Latino contact	-0.245	0.301	-0.265	0.279
GOP Latino contact	2.109	1.019*	2.256	1.032*
Dem Latino contact	-0.001	0.700	-0.211	0.657
Age	0.002	0.005	-0.005	0.005
Education	-0.005	0.024	-0.011	0.023
Income missing	-0.326	0.364	-0.559	0.366
Less than \$15,000	0.126	0.265	0.161	0.244
\$15,000–\$24,999	0.052	0.259	0.163	0.248
\$25,000–\$34,999	0.278	0.238	0.270	0.221
\$35,000–\$49,999	-0.341	0.264	-0.023	0.242
\$50,000–\$64,999	0.451	0.293	0.274	0.281
Female	0.159	0.154	0.120	0.146
Catholic	-1.029	0.173***	-0.633	0.162***
Foreign born	0.346	0.209 <sup>†</sup>	0.465	0.194*
Third generation	0.270	0.235	0.460	0.224*
Spanish language	-0.098	0.200	-0.169	0.187
Mexican	-0.112	0.184	0.058	0.175
Puerto Rican	0.110	0.279	0.074	0.262
Cuban	1.486	0.373***	1.501	0.356***
Dominican	-1.122	0.503*	-0.062	0.413
Partisanship	0.701	0.047***	0.661	0.047***
Voted 2000	-0.130	0.201	-0.182	0.188
Constant	-2.017	0.608***	-1.626	0.580**
Cut 2				
N	1,425		1,425	

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute/*Washington Post*/Univision 2004 National Survey of Latino Registered Voters.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .100$ . \* $p < .050$ . \*\* $p < .010$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

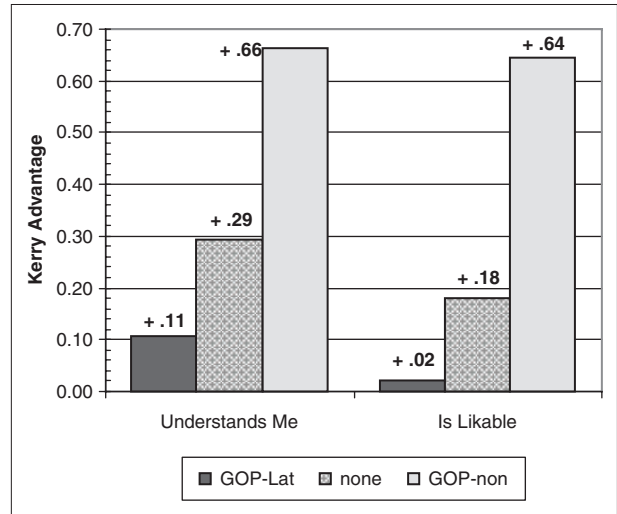
The two dependent variables we examine in Table 1 are somewhat similar to a simple measure of vote choice, and Nuño (2007) has already demonstrated that coethnic partisan contact increased the likelihood that a Latino would vote for Bush in the 2000 election. However, we argue that the dependent variables in Models 1a and 1b are different and provide additional insight into the party recruitment process. Although there is a strong correlation between candidate affect and vote choice, there are many exceptions. Convincing a voter that the candidate understands the problems of people like him or her and convincing him or her that the candidate is a likable person are very important first steps in recruiting new voters to support a candidate and the overall party.

The logit coefficients in Table 1 are difficult to interpret on their own, and the predicted probabilities displayed in Figure 1 make the relationship between ethnic and partisan



**Figure 1.** Ethnic partisan contact and Latino presidential affect

Note: Predicted probabilities, with 95% confidence interval, employed with logit regression, all other values at mean.



**Figure 2.** Impact of ethnic partisan contact on Kerry–Bush affect

Note: Predicted probabilities, with 95% confidence interval, employed with logit regression, all other values at mean.

contact much more clear. Holding all other values at their median, we set the values for Latino and GOP contact to 0 or 1 to estimate the probability of Bush approval given each type of contact. As Figure 2 makes clear, Latinos who received contact by a Latino Republican were substantially more likely to support Bush as compared to contact by an Anglo Republican. Voters who received only Latino Republican contact were 12 percent more likely to think Bush better understands people like them, compared to voters who reported no contact at all (an increase from 35 percent to 47 percent). In contrast, voters who received only Anglo Republican contact were 26 percent less likely to think positively about Bush (down to only 9 percent). The same pattern was found with respect to candidate likability. In further analysis, we set the partisanship of the voter to Democrat, Independent, and Republican and find that the effect holds across voter partisanship. The gap is widest among registered Republicans and political Independents who are more receptive to Latino Republican contact and turned off by Anglo Republican contact. Finally, we estimated the models without Cuban Americans, the strongest supporters of the Republican Party, to determine if their inclusion was driving the results, and it was not. Among our non-Cuban sample, the results were identical (reported in the online appendix).

In addition to estimating the support for Bush, we also estimate the relative difference between Kerry and Bush on both dependent variables. Although Figure 1 shows positive gains for Bush based on coethnic partisan contact, Kerry was still more trusted overall. To determine how successful or unsuccessful the contact was in bridging the

anti-Republican gap, we plot the advantage that Kerry had over Bush, based on Latino Republican contact, Anglo Republican contact, and no contact at all. The grey bars in the middle represent the advantage given to Kerry over Bush for median Latino voters, those who did not report any mobilization during the 2004 election. On the issue understands people like me, the predicted probability advantage for Kerry was .29 (54 percent vs. 29 percent). In comparison, among Latinos who reported only ethnic Republican contact, the Kerry advantage shrinks to .11 (48 percent vs. 37 percent), while among Latinos who reported only Anglo Republican contact, the Kerry advantage grows considerably to .66 (75 percent vs. 9 percent). On the second issue of which candidate is more likable, the impact of Latino Republican contact is even greater. Kerry’s likability advantage is .18 among Latinos who received no contact but drops to just .02 (40 percent vs. 38 percent) for those who were mobilized by Latino Republicans. Similarly, Anglo Republican contact hurts Bush and greatly expands the Kerry advantage to .64.

The results for policy support found in Table 2 are consistent with those for candidate affect and approval. For all four policy issues, GOP non-Latino contact has a negative effect on support for Bush’s handling of each respective policy (though not significant in Model 2a). In contrast, GOP Latino contact has a positive and significant effect on support for Bush’s handling of each respective policy. Beyond candidate-specific attributes (reported in Table 1), campaign contact appears to have a significant effect on how Latinos evaluate the two

**Table 2.** Impact of Ethnic Partisan Contact on Support for Presidential Candidate's Policy among Latinos

	Model 2a—Trust Bush to Handle Most Important Issue		Model 2b—Trust Bush to Handle Iraq War		Model 2c—Trust Bush to Handle War against Terror		Model 2d—Trust Bush to Handle Education	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Dem contact	0.094	0.596	0.001	0.498	0.076	0.454	0.414	0.556
GOP contact	-1.154	0.759	-2.317	1.124*	-2.354	1.112*	-2.413	1.163*
Latino contact	-0.606	0.311*	-0.323	0.260	-0.382	0.265	-0.141	0.297
GOP × Latino	1.821	0.995†	2.642	1.300*	2.424	1.269*	2.785	1.327*
Dem × Latino	0.298	0.742	0.053	0.632	0.639	0.584	-0.511	0.696
Age	0.001	0.005	-0.005	0.005	-0.008	0.005†	-0.004	0.005
Education	-0.024	0.024	-0.015	0.023	-0.034	0.021†	-0.032	0.023
Income missing	-0.138	0.396	-0.076	0.368	-0.187	0.350	-0.736	0.382†
Less than \$15,000	0.064	0.263	0.262	0.244	0.042	0.232	0.077	0.258
\$15,000–\$24,999	0.044	0.265	0.015	0.244	-0.003	0.235	-0.201	0.252
\$25,000–\$34,999	0.267	0.233	0.251	0.218	0.247	0.210	0.105	0.223
\$35,000–\$49,999	-0.266	0.262	-0.355	0.248	-0.231	0.240	-0.495	0.251*
\$50,000–\$64,999	0.303	0.301	0.238	0.282	0.256	0.258	0.466	0.291
Female	0.135	0.157	0.187	0.146	-0.055	0.140	0.292	0.150*
Catholic	-0.757	0.175***	-0.686	0.167***	-0.675	0.161***	-0.818	0.170***
Foreign born	0.184	0.209	0.243	0.190	0.345	0.184†	0.293	0.207
Third generation	0.402	0.242†	0.349	0.215†	0.401	0.209†	0.520	0.236*
Spanish	-0.107	0.198	-0.064	0.184	0.184	0.174	-0.021	0.194
Mexican	0.083	0.187	-0.067	0.173	-0.197	0.165	0.072	0.178
Puerto Rican	0.215	0.282	0.177	0.259	0.103	0.252	-0.075	0.277
Cuban	1.694	0.347***	1.727	0.396***	1.416	0.362***	1.246	0.337***
Dominican	-0.272	0.464	-0.675	0.463	-0.623	0.408	-0.028	0.442
Partisanship	0.705	0.047***	0.675	0.046***	0.603	0.045***	0.705	0.047***
Voted 2000	-0.122	0.208	-0.124	0.188	-0.236	0.186	-0.118	0.202
Constant	-2.125	0.625***	-1.488	0.574**	-0.356	0.552	-1.866	0.589**
N	1,331		1,425		1,425		1,425	

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute/Washington Post/Univision 2004 National Survey of Latino Registered Voters.

Note: We lose approximately 100 cases in the first column because those respondents stated "don't know" to the most important issue question. † $p < .100$ . \* $p < .050$ . \*\* $p < .010$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

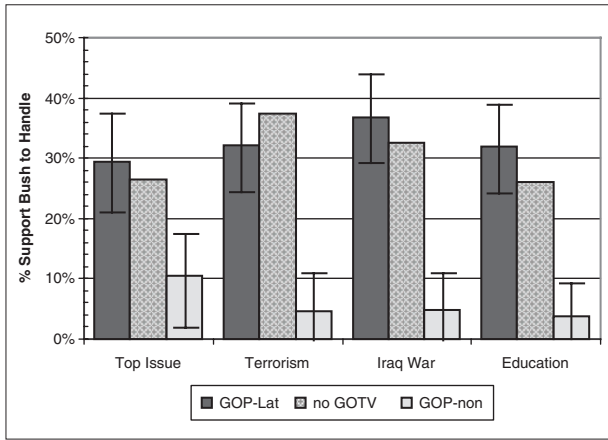
candidates on the issues, with the same results. Anglo Republican contact has a negative effect, and Latino Republican contact has a positive impact. Similar to the above analysis, Democratic contact did not provide an additional margin of support to Kerry on the issues. Other control variables performed as expected, with Catholics siding with Kerry and Cubans, Republicans, and third-generation Latinos siding with Bush.

Once again, we provide a graphical presentation of the predicted probabilities in Figures 3 and 4 for each of the four policy questions. Consistent with Figure 1, Figure 3 shows that Latinos who received Latino Republican contact were substantially more likely to trust Bush in handling policy on their most important issues, the Iraq war, the campaign against terrorism, and education than those who were contacted by non-Latino Republicans. In three of the four domains, the ethnic contact provided a boost over those reporting no contact at all. However, for the war on terror, those with no contact were actually somewhat

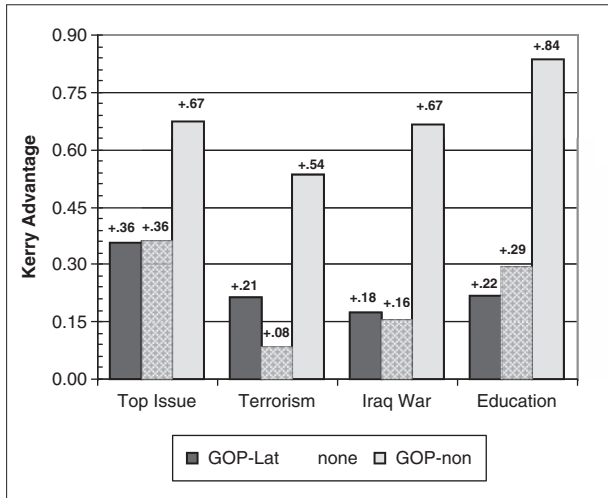
more trusting of Bush. It could be that since Bush already had higher approval on handling the war on terror issue there was less room to convince possible "leaners." Alternatively, it could be that the messenger did not heavily focus on this issue, instead trying to shore up support for the war in Iraq. More research is needed to look at exactly what the message is when partisan contact is made with voters.

In further analysis, we estimated predicted probabilities by partisanship and found that, among the Republican base, Bush received majority support for handling the Iraq war when a Latino Republican recruiter was used, and he received majority opposition to the Iraq war when a non-Latino Republican recruiter was used. The pattern is consistent across all issue domains. Finally, looking to Figure 4, it appears that Latino Republican contact did not narrow the Democratic advantage among Latino voters on policy issues, as it did on candidate affect (found in Figure 2). One exception is education policy, where Latino





**Figure 3.** Ethnic partisan contact and Latino support for Bush policy  
 Note: Predicted probabilities, with 95% confidence interval, employed with logit regression, all other values at mean.



**Figure 4.** Impact of ethnic partisan contact on support for policy  
 Note: Predicted probabilities employed with logit regression, all other values at mean.

Republican contact did narrow the Kerry advantage. However, across the board, non-Latino Republican contact, which we presume to be largely Anglo, drove Latino voters away from the Republican Party.

While these results are compelling, a natural question that arises from the data is the extent of endogeneity and voter recall. Regarding endogeneity, the argument goes that parties attempt to mobilize likely supporters. So it stands to reason that people who report Republican contact are more likely to support Republican issues because they were handpicked by the likes of Karl Rove. For

Latinos in the 2004 election, we do not think this is the case, and our findings suggest it was not the case. While Latinos were targeted in 2004, the efforts by both parties were still relatively new, and both parties attempted to cast a wide net over potential Latino “swing voters.” Instead of focusing on just the tried and true voters, new efforts to mobilize Latinos represented a new approach to bring a diversity of voters into the political system that had previously ignored them (Segal 2004). Second, if endogeneity were actually a problem, we would get overwhelming results for all four types of contact. Democratic contact by Latinos and non-Latinos alike would be mobilizing, and here we find it has no statistically significant effect. For Republicans, the opposite effects for ethnic and nonethnic contact also suggest that voters were influenced by the actual messenger and not already predisposed to the Republican Party. Specifically, if the Republican Party micro targeted its campaign to likely supporters, why does contact by a non-Latino Republican drive support down? This interesting difference provides considerable confidence in the data and research design. The second question mark surrounds voter recall of contact and the endogenous relationship between whom you remember contacting you and which party you support. Here, the argument goes that Kerry supporters will overreport being contacted by Democrats while Bush supporters will overreport contact by Republicans. If this were the case, we would again expect that voters who recalled Democratic contact to be significantly more likely to support Democratic issues, yet they were not distinguishable from those reporting no contact. Likewise, there is no compelling reason to suspect that only Bush supporters would selectively recall Latino Republican contact and that Bush opponents would selectively recall Anglo Republican contact. Furthermore, Fournier et al. (2001) note that voter recall is very accurate when asked in a timely manner. Here, we rely on a preelection survey and ask voters to recall contact they received within the previous months of the active campaign, as opposed to a postelection survey. Furthermore, because it is a preelection survey, during a very close election contest, the voter does not know the outcome of the election, and social desirability to selectively recall the winning candidate should be close to none (Fournier et al. 2001). Finally, contacts by both Democrats and Republicans were widely distributed across demographic groups in the sample, increasing the diversity of the four contact and treatment groups (for a full distribution of contact, see the online appendix, Table A3). Although no measure is perfect, self-reported contact has been widely used in studies of Latinos, most notably by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee (2000), Leighley (2001), and Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura (2001).

## Conclusion

Consistent with recent work in this area by Stokes-Brown (2006) and Nuño (2007), we find compelling evidence suggesting that the race of the messenger has a significant impact on the message. We began our discussion by outlining the negative image of the Republican Party and how this might affect the ability of Anglo recruiters to garner Latino voters for the GOP. Despite an increase in outreach to Latinos by the Republican Party, this outreach may not always be positive. We then looked at Latino political preferences and conclude that Latinos provide a target-rich environment for anyone politically savvy enough to communicate their message to the Latino community. We base our argument on previous evidence that coethnic recruiters may positively affect voter turnout and extend that rationale to policy preferences and candidate favorability. Republican pundit James Barnes (2004, 3036) noted the micro-targeting phenomenon greatly expanded in 2004, particularly by the Bush–Cheney campaign: “Both parties are beginning to invest in this voter-targeting technology, but Republicans appear to be farther along in employing it. Segmenting these voters allows the Republicans to make an educated guess about what issues are of primary concern to an individual voter and to then target that person with a direct-mail piece in which Bush addresses precisely those concerns.” As the segmenting of the electorate increases, with particular attention to the Latino community, it is clear that campaigns need to use culturally sensitive messengers, not just a targeted message. Instead of presuming that increased outreach is always positive, the outreach is mediated by the ethnicity of the recruiter. For Democratic messaging, neither Latino nor non-Latino contact provided an additional boost for party support; however, our results also indicate strong support for the Democratic Party. Also, our emphasis on Latinos’ trust of the Democratic Party and distrust of the Republican Party may help explain the noneffect for Democratic messaging. For example, the 1999 National Survey on Latinos in America survey of Latinos found that the Democratic Party had a 2.5 to 1 favorability advantage over the Republican Party. In a 2002 Tomás Rivera Institute survey, Latinos answered by a 3 to 1 margin that the Democratic Party could best address Latino issues. Finally, an April 2006 Latino Policy Coalition survey found only 17 percent felt the Republican Party would do a good job handling immigration, with 50 percent stating the Democratic Party was best. Negative attitudes toward the Republican Party present GOP recruiters with a wall that can be assisted by Latino Republicans who provide coethnic conduits for communication, whereas the generally positive attitudes about the Democratic Party may provide sufficient trust to make Latino recruiters for the Democratic Party somewhat superfluous. In contrast, Republican messaging is greatly

benefited by reliance on a Latino Republican to deliver the message and greatly diminished when a non-Latino Republican delivers the message. While the Latino Republican may help establish trust and lessen fears that the Republican Party is “anti-Latino,” an Anglo Republican messenger may be viewed with suspicion, especially if the Republican Party continues to champion anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric.

In 2008, there was considerable discussion and debate about the significance of the Latino vote and that perhaps Republican presidential candidate John McCain could continue the inroads in Latino outreach started by President Bush. However, the campaign that unfolded represents a setback for Republican outreach. During the primaries, while Democratic candidates were clamoring to court Latino communities, Republican candidates were targeting undocumented immigrants as a source of many problems in America, à la Pete Wilson. Even one-time immigration reform supporter McCain changed his tune and called for border protection and not a pathway to citizenship. Our findings suggest that such a strategy will only alienate Latino voters and will further increase the level of trust and favorability for the Democratic Party, in turn making it increasingly difficult for Republicans to woo Latino voters in the future.

## Authors’ Note

Author names are presented in alphabetical order; authorship is equal. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2007 Western Political Science Association annual conference.

## Acknowledgments

We received valuable feedback on this article from Louis DeSipio, Gabriel Sanchez, Fernando Guerra, and Ricardo Ramírez. We thank the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute and the *Washington Post* for use of the 2004 national Latino survey.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Financial Disclosure/Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

## Notes

1. Although nonpartisan civic groups such as Southwest Voter Registration and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials are very active in Latino voter registration and voter mobilization drives.
2. Even among nonpartisan civic groups, the message to the voters is usually to remind them how important specific issues in the election are, not just that next Tuesday is election day.

3. The specific question that identified the “most important issue” in Model 2a was, “Of the following list, which one will be the single most important issue in your vote for president this year: [ROTATE: (The U.S. campaign against terrorism), (the situation in Iraq), (the economy), (education), (health care), (crime), (immigration issues with Latin America)] or something else?”

## References

- Alvarez, R. Michael, and Lisa Garcia-Bedolla. 2003. The foundations of Latino voter partisanship: Evidence from the 2000 election. *The Journal of Politics* 65 (1): 31-49.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Shanto Iyengar. 1995. *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*. New York: Free Press.
- Barnes, James. 2004. Inside Washington: Not your father's election. *National Journal*, October 9, 3036-39.
- Barreto, Matt A. 2007. Si se puede: Latino candidates and the mobilization of Latino voters. *American Political Science Review* 101:425-41.
- Barreto, Matt A., Mario Villarreal, and Nathan Woods. 2005. Metropolitan Latino voting behavior: Turnout and candidate preference in Los Angeles. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27:71-91.
- Cassel, Carol A. 2002. Hispanic turnout: Estimates from validated voting data. *Political Research Quarterly* 55:391-408.
- Dawson, Michael. 1994. *Behind the mule: Race and class in African-American politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O. 2004. Latino politics. *Annual Review of Political Science* 7(1): 91-123.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O., and Jeronimo Cortina. 2007. Are Latinos Republicans but just don't know it? The Latino vote in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. *American Politics Research* 35:202-23.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O., Martha Menchaca, and Louis DeSipio, eds. 1994. *Barrio ballots: Latino politics in the 1990 elections*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- DeSipio, Louis, Rodolfo O. de la Garza, and David Leal. 2009. *Beyond the barrio: Latinos and the 2004 elections*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Fournier, Patrick, Richard Nadeau, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. 2001. Validation of time-of-voting-decision recall. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65:95-107.
- Fraga, Luis R., and Ricardo Ramírez. 2003. Latino political incorporation in California, 1990–2000. In *Latinos and public policy in California*, ed. David Lopez and Andres Jimenez, 301-36. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Public Policy Press.
- Fraga, Luis R., Ricardo Ramírez, and Gary Segura. 2004. Unquestioned influence: Latinos and the 2000 election in California. In *Muted voices: Latinos and the 2000 elections*, ed. Rodolfo de la Garza and Louis DeSipio, 173-93. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hero, Rodney, et al. 2007. Latino participation, partisanship, and office holding. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33:529-34.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, and Robert Sprague. 1992. Political parties and electoral mobilization: Political structure, social structure, and the party canvass. *American Political Science Review* 86 (1): 70-86.
- Latino Policy Coalition. 2006. *Latino perspectives: Immigration, the 2006 elections, and other prominent issues*. Sacramento, CA: Latino Policy Coalition.
- Leal, David, Matt A. Barreto, Rodolfo O. de la Garza, and Jongho Lee. 2005. The Latino vote in the 2004 election. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 38 (1): 41-49.
- Leighley, Jan E. 2001. *Strength in numbers? The political mobilization of racial and ethnic minorities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- National Survey on Latinos in America. 1999. *Kaiser/Washington Post*.
- Michelson, Melissa. 2001. Governance and minority representation: Political trust among Chicago Latinos. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 23:323-34.
- Michelson, Melissa. 2003. The corrosive effect of acculturation: How Mexican Americans lose political trust. *Social Science Quarterly* 84 (4): 918-33.
- Michelson, Melissa. 2005. Meeting the challenge of Latino voter mobilization. *Annals of Political and Social Science* 601:85-101.
- Nuño, Stephen. 2007. Latino mobilization and vote choice in the 2000 presidential election. *American Politics Research* 35:273-93.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramírez, and Gary M. Segura. 2001. Citizens by choice, voters by necessity: Patterns in political mobilization by naturalized Latinos. *Political Research Quarterly* 54:729-50.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., and Gary M. Segura. 2007. Fear and loathing in California: Contextual threat and political sophistication among Latino voters. *Political Behavior* 25 (3): 265-86.
- Pedraza, Francisco. 2009. The two-way street of Latino political integration: Accounting for discrimination and acculturation. Paper presented at the Politics of Race, Immigration, Ethnicity Colloquium, Berkeley, CA; Spring.
- Ramírez, Ricardo. 2005. Giving voice to Latino voters: A field experiment on the effectiveness of a national non-partisan mobilization effort. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 601:66-84.
- Ramírez, Ricardo. 2007. Segmented mobilization: Latino non-partisan get out the vote efforts in the 2000 general election. *American Politics Research* 35:155-75.
- Rosenstone, Steven J., and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sanchez, Garbiel, and Sylvia Manzano. 2009. Take one for the team? Limits of shared ethnicity and candidate preferences. *Political Research Quarterly*. OnlineFirst, March 18, 2009.
- Segal, Adam. 2004. *Bikini politics*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Segal, Adam. 2003. *The Hispanic priority. The Spanish language television battle for the Hispanic vote in the 2000 U.S. presidential election*. Hispanic Voter Project report. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Segura, Gary M., Denis Falcon, and Harry Pachon. 1997. Dynamic of Latino partisanship in California: Immigration, issue salience, and their implications. *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Politics* 10:62-80.
- Shaw, Daron, Rodolfo O. de la Garza, and Jongho Lee. 2000. Examining Latino turnout in 1996: A three-state, validated survey approach (California, Florida, Texas). *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2): 338-46.
- Sosa, Lionel. 2004. Communicating to the Latino voter: What works, what doesn't. Paper presented at From Rhetoric to Reality: Latino Politics in 2004, Los Angeles, CA.
- Stokes-Brown, Atiya Kai. 2006. Racial identity and Latino vote choice. *American Politics Research* 34:627-52.
- Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. 2002. *Pre-election survey of registered voters in California and New York*. Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California, School of Policy, Planning, and Development.
- Uhlener, Carole. 1989. Relational goods and participation: Incorporating sociability into a theory of rational action. *Public Choice* 62:253-85.
- Valentino, Nicholas, Vincent Hutchings, and Ismail White. 2002. Cues that matter: How political ads prime racial attitudes during campaigns. *American Political Science Review* 96:75-90.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and equality: Civic volunteerism in American politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wolfinger, Raymond E. 1965. Development and persistence of ethnic voting. *American Political Science Review* 59: 896-908.