

Race, Ethnicity, and Politics

Luis Ricardo Fraga and Paula D. McClain, *Editors*

# Diversity in Democracy

## *Minority Representation in the United States*

---

Edited by Gary M. Segura and Shaun Bowler

---

University of Virginia Press  
Charlottesville and London

© 2005 by the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia  
All rights reserved

ISBN 0-8139-2337-9

## Latino Voting Behavior in an Anti-Latino Political Context *The Case of Los Angeles County*

Matt A. Barreto and Nathan D. Woods

Is Latino registration and voting really on the rise, or are apparent increases merely artifacts of population growth or increased naturalization? If, in fact, Latinos are voting at higher rates, what might be the behavioral consequences of this rise? Some observers question whether Latinos are participating at higher rates currently than in previous elections and argue that any increases are driven by population growth, not actual increases in voter turnout (de la Garza, Haynes, and Ryu 2001; Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000).

Here we examine the issue of Latino turnout and its implications trends with respect to the biggest and richest state in the Union—California—which is also the state likely to see the first effects of Latino participation. Through detailed analysis of registered voters in Los Angeles County, we find that, in fact, Latino registration and voting is increasing, and the pattern of this increase favors the Democratic Party relative to the GOP.

Recent electoral results support the proposition that Latinos as a group are capable of deciding political outcomes. For example, in November 2000, an estimated 1.5 million Latinos voted in California, constituting about 14 percent of the state electorate. This is up from the 1998 figure of 13 percent, and from the 8 percent of the electorate Latinos composed in 1994. Not only did Latinos turn out with a larger share of the electorate than ever before, but also their support of Democratic candidates was well documented. For example, 68 percent supported the Gore candidacy relative to just 28 percent for GOP candidate George W. Bush (Field Poll 2000).

In historical perspective, the success Latino candidates have enjoyed in recent cycles is extraordinary. In 1998 Cruz Bustamante, the first-ever Latino speaker of the assembly, became the first Latino elected to statewide office (lieutenant governor) since the 1871 election of Romualdo Pacheco. In Los Angeles County, Lee Baca was the first Latino

elected sheriff since 1890. In 2000 Latinos won an additional four seats in the state assembly, bringing the total number of senators and assembly members to an all-time high of 27.

Population trends also underscore the importance of the Latino vote. By the year 2025, the California statewide Latino population is projected to grow to 20 million, and in the year 2020, Latinos should surpass the white non-Hispanic population in the state (California Department of Finance 2000). These estimates indicate, as one analyst noted, that with regard to politics, the terms “Latino” and “California” would soon become redundant (CCREG 2000). In no other county in California is this population growth more pervasive than in Los Angeles County, where the Latino population increased 20 percent between 1990 and 1998. Over the same period, the non-Latino population *decreased* by 6 percent. Currently, the Latino population in the county numbers over 4 million, or roughly 40 percent of the total California Latino population. This represents about 12.5 percent of the national Latino population (Census Reports 2000).

In addition to electoral history and population figures, it is also important to note the substantial reach of Los Angeles County politics. The county currently (as of the 1992 redistricting) includes 14 of 40 seats in the California State Senate and 25 of 80 seats in the state assembly. Possibly even more significant, with 17 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, Los Angeles County *alone* would rank as the seventh most powerful state in the United States in terms of congressional representation.<sup>1</sup> Given these numbers, it seems clear that Latino politics in Los Angeles County carries not only a strong state influence, but a strong influence in national politics as well.

To understand the Latino electoral presence in Los Angeles County, we examine the growth in the Latino vote, and its partisan implications, in Los Angeles County between 1994 and 1998. First, we discuss the political context present in California’s Los Angeles County in the 1994–98 period, with particular reference to the three highly divisive initiatives on the ballot during this period, all of which we argue, were anti-Latino in content. Second, we review the relevant literature and consider what previous authors have found with regard to Latino partisanship and voting behavior. Third, after briefly discussing the data employed in undertaking the analysis and our methodology, we show that Latino registration and voting (*as a percentage of registered Latinos*) did, in fact, increase during the period studied, and we compare this growth to the voting rates of non-Latinos over the same period. We also examine the partisan pattern of these increases

in the Latino vote during this period. Fourth, we model changes in both aggregated Latino turnout and partisanship among Latinos as a function of assembly district-level opposition to Propositions 187, 209, and 227. We conclude with some observations on what this analysis portends for Latino registrants and voters in Los Angeles County and the state of California as well as the political parties and elected officials who represent them.

### Setting the Stage: Propositions 187, 209, and 227

*"Every day they keep coming."* In combination with the grainy footage of Mexicans running across the border, the message was clear, at least to most Latinos in the state. This now well-known 1994 commercial, in support of Pete Wilson's reelection and the anti-illegal immigration initiative Proposition 187, set the stage for the increased registration and voting, and decreased levels of attachment with the GOP we argue occurred among Latinos between 1994 and 1998. Essentially, Proposition 187 proposed to ban illegal immigrants from public social services, nonemergency health care, and public education. The initiative called on state and local agencies to report anyone suspected of being an illegal immigrant, with the expressed intent of deporting anyone found to be in the United States illegally. Because of the anti-Latino rhetoric surrounding the initiative—such as one GOP state senator suggesting that all Latinos would be required to carry identification cards—Proposition 187 quickly galvanized Latinos in opposition.

Interestingly, the mobilization of Latinos in response to the initiative was not particularly successful in terms of votes, and it's not clear that significantly more Latinos voted in the 1994 general election. In part, this stems from the procedural reality of California's then 29-day registration period.

Following just two years after the passage of Proposition 187, an anti-affirmative action initiative (209) seeking to repeal most such programs in the areas of public contracting, jobs, and education, passed the California electorate. In similar fashion to the illegal-immigration initiative, Governor Pete Wilson and the California Republican Party heavily backed this divisive proposal, and again Latinos came out decidedly in opposition. Exit polls indicated that not only did three of four Latinos turn out against Proposition 209, but three of four Latinos also voted for Democratic candidates (TRPI

1996). Once again, Wilson and the GOP were accused of playing racial and ethnic politics, to the detriment of Latinos and other minorities throughout the state.

In the 1998 primary election, Latinos were again the perceived targets of a conservative initiative (227), this time the proposal to end bilingual education in schools. The vocal support given by then incumbent governor Pete Wilson, (over the objections of 227's cosponsors), served to further cement the idea among Latinos that they were again under attack.

These measures had the effect of stirring what many had previously dubbed a "sleeping giant" in California politics. As Arteaga (2000) points out, 1994 served as a point of departure for Latino registration and voting. Oddly enough, in the fallout of the passage of Proposition 187, the state chairman of "Latinos for Wilson," had pointed out the need to confront the problems associated with the GOP attracting Latino votes. "I don't think we've done a very good job," he said, "we should try a little harder" (Lopez and Wahlgren 1994). In 1994 it was probably not clear to this prominent Latino conservative that, "trying a little harder" to attract Latino votes would be a secondary concern to ending affirmative action and bilingual education. We think that the effect was not only a raw increase in the number of Latinos registering to vote, but also a significant increase in the actual turnout of Latino voters—even as a percentage of registrants. Finally, we also believe that the GOP's registration rates among Latinos would be greatly diminished, further underscoring the implications of the increase in voting.

### Literature on Latino Registration, Voting, and Partisanship

It is well known that Latino registration and voting rates are much lower relative to non-Latino populations (among others, Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Until fairly recently, analyses of Latino registration and voting have focused primarily on the importance of socioeconomic and demographic variables in accounting for low incidence of electoral participation of this group. For example, the relatively young age of Latinos, lower levels of income, and education are all well known to have a significant, and diminishing, effect on the likelihood of Latino registration and voter turnout (DeSipio 1996). A number of analyses have accounted for some fac-

tors specific to groups with large immigrant populations. Bruce Cain, D. Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole J. Uhlaner (1991) find noncitizenship to be a key factor in limiting formal political participation such as registration and voting (see also Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; Garcia and Arce 1988), and Louis DeSipio (1996) finds that the newly naturalized are less likely to participate than native-born Latinos. Further, limited English proficiency is evidenced to have a negative effect on electoral participation as well (Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; DeSipio 1996; Cain, Kiewiet, and Ulaner 1991).

In addition to standard socioeconomic and demographic considerations, however, a number of more recent analyses account for several additional factors, including campaign and electoral context and mobilization efforts (de la Garza, Menchaca, and DeSipio 1994; Diaz 1996; Hritzuk and Park 2000; Pantoja and Woods 1999; Wrinkle, Stewart, Polinard, Meier, and Arvizu 1996). In most of these studies, variation in Latino participation is demonstrated to be in part a function of the electoral environment (i.e., salient issues specifically affecting Latinos, such as illegal immigration initiatives, etc.) and of the mobilization efforts of Latino organizations and political parties. Daron Shaw, Roldolfo de la Garza, and Jongho Lee (2000) find on the basis of survey data that contact on the part of a representative of a Latino organization positively affects individual-level turnout among those Latinos who are contacted. In other work, however, Adrian Pantoja and Nathan Woods (1999) found that in communities where organized Get Out the Vote (GOTV) and mobilization efforts took place, little if any positive effect on voter turnout was in evidence. William Diaz (1996) demonstrates that for those Latinos who are members of groups, such organizational affiliations have positive effects for turnout as well. Natasha Hritzuk and David Park (2000) account for a number of measures of what they call "social context," including components of social connectedness, organizational affiliation, and mobilization, and find them to increase the likelihood of Latinos participating.

While these analyses demonstrate a number of different relationships between various factors and Latino registration and voting, they are all alike in stating that Latinos are, on average, not expected to register and turn out at high rates. Whether as a result of noncitizenship and naturalization issues, or socioeconomic factors, barring salient Latino specific issues and enhanced mobilization efforts, Latinos are simply not expected to register and vote at high rates.

For years, significantly more Latinos have identified themselves as Democrats than as Republicans (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991; DeSipio and Rocha 1989; Hero 1992). This is particularly the case in California, where Latinos are primarily (80 percent) Mexican American in origin (Nicholson and Segura 2000; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2000; Pantoja and Woods 1999). Nonetheless, as Adrian Pantoja and colleagues (2000) point out, variation exists over time in the extent to which California Latinos identify with the Democratic Party. As recently as 1990, according to one study, only 44 percent of Latinos identified as Democrats (see Kosnin and Keysar 1995), whereas this proportion was closer to 70 percent as of October 2000 (TRPI 2000).

Explaining this variation in Latino partisanship is at the heart of important work on this topic. Gary Segura, M. Denis Falcon, and Harry Pachon, for example, demonstrate that the Republican Party's stance on ballot initiatives concerning immigration, affirmative action, and welfare programs put the party at odds with the sentiments of most Latinos in the state and contributed to Latino attachment to the Democratic Party. Pantoja and colleagues (2000) find further that Latinos who naturalized during this particularly contentious period in California were more likely to vote than were their newly naturalized counterparts in states like Florida and Texas, which had no corresponding salient and divisive ballot measures in the same period. Finally, in this volume, Stephen Nicholson and Gary Segura use survey data from a 2000 preelection poll to indicate that, despite the GOP's overtures to the Latino community and the rhetoric of the Bush candidacy, a pro-Democratic shift is under way for Latinos in California, even after controlling for underlying partisanship.

For our purposes, a number of items are important to highlight. First, from our review of the California context, there is little doubt that the 1990s were particularly contentious for Latinos in California. Beginning in 1994 with the anti-immigrant and, arguably, with the anti-Latino initiative Proposition 187, and extending through the antibilingual education (Proposition 209) and anti-affirmative action (Proposition 227) initiatives of 1996 and 1998 respectively, Latino politics in California have largely been a response to perceived attacks by conservative and GOP-endorsed interests. Second, it is clear from the existing research that the positions of the Republican Party and its representatives had the effect of alienating the Latino community even further. Third, at a minimum, this was a period marked by increased

attempts to mobilize Latino noncitizens to naturalize and to register and turn out greater numbers of Latinos than ever before (Arteaga 2000; Pantoja and Woods 1999; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2000). The effect, as our data will show, was certainly to lead more Latinos to vote and fewer Latinos to identify with the Republican Party.

### Latino Registration, Voting and Partisan Consequences

The data employed in the subsequent analyses are based on the total population of registered voters in Los Angeles County as of August 1999.<sup>2</sup> The records of registration we used were the 1994 and 1998 elections data. All data were obtained from the Los Angeles County registrar of voters and are the complete record of registrants of all races and ethnicities and all partisan affiliations ( $n = 3.9$  million in 1998). Our data set includes the official voting record on *all* registrants in the included years (the universe, rather than a sample). Our analysis is thus not susceptible to confidence estimates (i.e.,  $\pm 4$  percent), which can undermine conclusions drawn from survey and exit poll results.

Latinos and non-Latinos were differentiated from each other in the data by way of the United States Census Bureau Spanish surname database.<sup>3</sup> This database flags those registrants with commonly occurring Spanish surnames. Subsequently, we refer to persons of white non-Hispanic, African American, Asian, and other racial and ethnic populations as “non-Latinos.” We should note here that in our registration data, place of birth was not available as a measure. Thus, we cannot determine whether or not Latinos in our analyses are born in the United States or are foreign born and naturalized. We return to this point in our conclusions below.

We present our data in two ways. The first section is drawn from individual-level data and shows that between 1994 and 1998, Latino registration and voting rates increased, as did partisan detachment from the Republican Party.

Our second cut at the data occurs at the aggregate level, using assembly districts ( $n = 25$ ).<sup>4</sup> We simply aggregate the same data into assembly districts in an attempt to estimate three models. The first estimates change in percentage of Latino turnout as a result of district opposition to Propositions 187, 209, and 227. We measure this change between two analogous elections—midterm elections in 1994 and 1998. Our second model has a measure of Latino GOP detach-

ment, which captures the extent to which new Latino registrants fail to register with the GOP at rates consistent with Latino GOP registration in 1992. For comparison purposes, we offer a third model, which estimates detachment from the Democratic Party as well among Latinos. Both detachment measures are constructed in the same way. For example, our GOP detachment variable is measured by subtracting the percentage of new Latino GOP registrants between 1992 and 1998 from the percentage of Latino GOP registrants that existed in 1992, and dividing this figure by the base 1992 number. We use the 1992 registration figures as a base, because they reflect our best approximation of Latino underlying registration prior to the contextual developments that spurred their increased turnout and detachment from the GOP.

We use this estimate to better measure the size of the change and to tie it with the base of registration in 1992. Moving from 10 percent GOP registration in one district to 2 percent is not the same thing as going from 80 percent to 72 percent in another district, even though the point change is identical. Thus, extending the previous example, our measure captures the distinction between an 80 percent and 10 percent drop relative to the base. For all three models, our expectation is simply that, *ceteris paribus*, district's opposition to Propositions 187, 209, and 227 is significantly and positively related to increases in Latino voter turn out and to Latino detachment from the GOP.

### Summary of Increases in Latino Registration and Turnout

We begin with increases in Latino registration. In terms of raw figures, the number of Latinos registered in 1992 in Los Angeles County was 567,938, while the number registered in 1998 was 841,442—a net increase of 273,504 new registrants.

In raw numbers, the number of Latinos who voted in 1998 was far larger than the number who voted in 1994. In this period, the Latino vote in Los Angeles County increased by 117,462 votes. This represents an increase in Latino voters of 48.7 percent. This figure is striking in and of itself, but is all the more significant relative to rates of turnout among non-Latinos. For example, while the Latino vote increased at a nearly 49 percent rate, turnout of non-Latinos increased at a rate of just over 10 percent. Clearly, at least as a percentage, growth in Latino voter turnout far outpaces growth in the non-Latino vote from 1994 to 1998 (at a rate of almost 5 to 1). The primary im-

plications underscored here are that Latino voters are turning out in greater numbers, and they are doing so at a rate that exceeds increases in turnout among non-Latinos between 1994 and 1998.

We should point out here as well that this pattern—where growth in Latino turnout outpaces growth in non-Latino turnout—indicates that increases in Latino voting are not tied to a set of competitive or particularly salient elections. If they were, it is more likely that all registrants in the affected area would behave in similar fashion. Then too, a close look at the elections that took place in the county during this period shows a remarkable lack of competition. Statewide, the gubernatorial election in 1998 between Gray Davis and Dan Lungren was a landslide victory for Davis by a margin of 20 percentage points. At the congressional level, only 2 elections out of 17 were decided by less than 5 percentage points, and the average margin of victory in Los Angeles County was 42 points. Further, among the districts with Latino elected officials and high Latino populations, the average margin of victory was more than 50 percentage points.

Growth in voter turnout is typically measured not only in raw increases, but also as a proportion of the eligible, registered population. Indeed, it is possible to argue that increases in raw numbers mask the possibility that, as a percentage of registered Latinos, no increase is evident. In this view, even if an additional 117,462 Latinos voted in 1998 relative to 1994, if the registered Latino population increased by a significantly larger number, the raw increase would be less meaningful and would overstate our case. Our results are presented in table 1. (For countywide results, see the last row.) In 1994, 241,364 Latinos voted out of the 600,127 registered to do so—a turnout rate of 40.2 percent. In 1998, 358,826 Latinos voted of the 841,442 registered to do so—a turnout rate of 42.6 percent. The increase in Latino turnout is represented in the 2.4-percentage-point difference, which is a 6.0 percent increase in turnout among registered Latinos. This indicates that even after accounting for increases in registration, more Latinos voted in 1998, as a percentage, than in 1994. Having established support for our initial expectation that the Latino vote has increased, we turn next to what, if any, partisan implications may stem from this increase.

### Summary of Partisan Implications

Recall that the existing evidence points to Latino attachment with the Democratic Party (Cain, Kieweit, and Uhlaner 1991; DeSipio and

Rocha 1989; Hero 1992). Interestingly, however, Pete Wilson's first gubernatorial run drew over 40 percent of Latino support in 1990, about the same as GOP candidates in the 1980s. (See also Kosnin and Keysar 1995.) This figure is almost double the Latino support any other GOP candidate at the top of the ticket has received since. It should be clear that we expect to find that the Democratic Party has a sizable advantage in attracting Latino registrants, particularly those who registered within the politically charged context present between 1992 and 1998. The partisan implications of the Latino vote are reflected in both registration and turnout figures among Latinos.

### Partisanship: By Registration Figures

In terms of registration, the advantage for Democrats is apparent throughout the period under study. In 1992 Democratic registrants stood at 68 percent relative to 20 percent for the GOP, and by 1998 the corresponding figures were 66 percent and 17 percent, respectively. Interestingly, in this overall measure, it is clear that independents and various third parties are gaining relative to both the Democratic and Republican parties. However, for our purposes, we are particularly interested in the Latinos who registered in the period between 1992 and 1998.<sup>5</sup> Using the GOP detachment measure we showed earlier, it is possible to understand the extent to which the GOP decreases its rate of registering Latinos. (See table 2.) In the last row of the table, our calculation for GOP detachment is minus 10.2 percentage points, or minus 49.7 percent from their base registration in 1992. The implication is that over the six-year period, the GOP was not as successful as before in attracting new Latino registrants, and in fact, did so at a rate of less than 50 percent of their base in 1992.

Interestingly, Democrats were also unable to maintain a rate of attraction among Latinos. Their rate of detachment was smaller—a minus 4.7 percentage points and 7.0 percent of their 1992 base of Latino registration. Independents and third parties gained throughout this period at the expense of both major parties. Combined, they actually gained 15 percentage points, about twice their 1992 base.

While the fact that a majority of Latinos are registered as Democrats is not surprising, two points are worth noting. First, as is clearly indicated in the figures, the Republican Party is at a large disadvantage among registered Latinos. In 1998, for every Latino Republican, there are almost five Latinos registered as Democrats or with a third party, and independent and third-party Latino registrants almost equal the

Table 1 Change in Latino voter turnout by assembly district,  
Los Angeles County, 1994-1998

AD	Assembly winner	Party	November 1994	
			Reg.	Voted
36	G. Runner	R	15,856	6,853
38	T. McClintock	R	8,459	4,571
39	T. Cardenas	D	30,910	11,703
40	R. Hertzberg	D	12,781	5,664
41	S. Kuehl	D	8,943	4,940
42	W. Knox	D	9,186	3,964
43	S. Wildman	D	17,855	7,320
44	J. Scott	D	17,529	7,637
45	A. Villaraigosa	D	35,824	13,285
46	G. Cedillo	D	21,293	7,001
47	H. Wesson	D	10,871	4,778
48	R. Wright	D	10,399	3,146
49	G. Romero	D	54,826	21,181
50	M. Firebaugh	D	42,890	14,742
51	E. Vincent	D	15,261	5,095
52	C. Washington	D	18,928	6,235
53	G. Nakano	D	14,521	6,808
54	A. Lowenthal	D	17,702	7,535
55	R. Floyd	D	24,502	7,909
56	S. Havice	D	26,430	11,663
57	M. Gallegos	D	49,089	19,637
58	T. Calderon	D	70,740	30,149
59	B. Margett	R	22,850	10,652
60	R. Pacheco	R	36,101	16,533
61	N. Soto	D	6,700	2,363
Totals			600,127	241,364

November 1998		Turnout change	
Reg.	Voted	Point	% Change
23,805	9,535	-3.2%	-7.3%
14,246	6,095	-11.3%	-20.8%
50,357	20,522	2.9%	7.6%
23,082	10,025	-0.9%	-2.0%
14,606	6,642	-9.8%	-17.7%
13,969	5,651	-2.7%	-6.3%
25,545	10,928	1.8%	4.3%
25,148	11,010	0.2%	0.5%
47,508	20,644	6.4%	17.2%
28,899	12,553	10.6%	32.1%
18,839	8,532	1.3%	3.0%
20,905	9,165	13.6%	44.9%
61,216	27,544	6.4%	16.5%
61,711	25,930	7.6%	22.2%
25,709	11,068	9.7%	29.0%
32,077	12,867	7.2%	21.8%
519,558	8,652	-2.6%	-5.6%
24,124	9,726	-2.2%	-5.3%
34,265	13,521	7.2%	22.2%
37,986	16,179	-1.5%	-3.5%
63,404	27,046	2.7%	6.6%
84,934	36,407	0.2%	0.6%
32,619	14,397	-2.5%	-5.3%
47,068	20,218	-2.8%	-6.2%
9,862	3,969	5.0%	14.1%
841,442	358,826	2.4%	6.0%

Table 2 Comparison of partisan detachment among new Latino registrants  
between 1992-1996 & 1996-1998

County totals	District profile 1992			% of new registrants		
	DEM	REP	IND	DEM	REP	IND
1992-1996	67.5	20.4	12.0	63.2	11.9	24.9
1996-1998	67.5	20.4	12.0	61.9	6.5	31.7
1992-1998	67.5	20.4	12.0	62.8	10.3	26.9

GOP detachment		Dem. Party detachment	
Loss	% Loss	Loss	% Loss
-8.5	-41.7	-4.3	-6.4
-14.0	-68.4	-5.6	-8.4
-10.2	-49.7	-4.7	-7.0

total number registered with the GOP. While the GOP attracts 32 percent of non-Latinos, it only draws 17 percent of Latinos. This 1998 difference of 15 percent is a direct addition to Democratic Party numbers in which Latinos (66 percent) are affiliated at exactly 15 percentage points higher than non-Latinos (51 percent). Second, our detachment measure indicates that the Republican Party has suffered more *among new registrants* than did the Democratic Party, and certainly more than independents and third parties.

### Partisanship: By Turnout Figures

We noted earlier in our review of the literature that Latinos are known to turn out at lesser rates than non-Latinos (Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). We find that, at least in Los Angeles County, this is not the case. Overall, just 41.7 percent of the county's total registered population (Latino and non-Latino) turned out to vote in 1998. Once this registered population is disaggregated by party registration and Latino/non-Latino ethnicity however, some interesting patterns emerge. We disaggregated all registrants into one of six groups—(1) Latino Democrats, (2) Latino Republicans, (3) Latino third party, (4) non-Latino Democrats, (5) non-Latino Republicans, and (6) non-Latino third party—and calculated turnout percentages for each group in 1998. Latinos registered as Democrats are the most likely of the six groups to turn out, at 45.8 percent. The second most likely groups of voters are non-Latino Republicans and non-Latino Democrats, at 44.3 percent and 43.6 percent, respectively. Latino Republicans had relatively low turnout in 1998, at just 41 percent. The lowest turnout in evidence was among third-party Latinos (32.5 percent) and third-party non-Latinos at 29.6 percent (see also Barreto and Woods 2000).

It should be noted that non-Latino Republicans, while including many races and ethnicities, are still expected to vote at higher rates than Democrats, Latinos, or otherwise (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). While the Republican Party typically attracts white non-Hispanic persons, some number of non-Hispanic minorities are members of the GOP as well. We would expect that African Americans and other minorities registered with the GOP would be as likely, if not more likely, than white non-Hispanic Republicans to vote in any given election. Thus, our broad category of non-Latino Republicans does not diminish the relevance of these findings.

The turnout percentages reflected here are extraordinary, in that they run against two well-established and primary phenomena in American politics—namely that (a) Republicans vote at higher rates than Democrats, and (b) non-Latinos vote at higher rates than Latinos. In the 1998 general election, as indicated here, Latino Democrats are actually the most likely to vote, more so even than non-Latino Republicans, who are generally expected to turn out in the greatest numbers.<sup>6</sup> These findings run directly against conventional wisdom regarding the Latino vote.

The 41 percent rate of voting among Latinos registered as Republicans, which is the lowest rate of any group in Los Angeles County, is interesting as well. It is reasonable to speculate that the state GOP's unfavorable image among Latinos in previous election cycles, perhaps fueled by former governor Pete Wilson's stand on immigration and affirmative action, may have contributed to this result. For example, a Tomás Rivera Policy Institute survey (TRPI 2000) demonstrated that 73 percent of Latinos continued to have a negative attitude toward Wilson in the summer of 2000, while 53 percent of Latinos felt the Republican Party had still not recovered from Wilson's divisive policy positions—this almost two years after Wilson left office. In this view, Latino Republicans, discouraged from voting for candidates of their party, and not willing to vote for opposing-party candidates, may simply have stayed home on election day.

If the increase in turnout is tied to partisanship, the results are striking. By comparing 1994 and 1998 records of turnout for every Latino registrant, it is possible to isolate in the data the voting records for those Latinos who registered between 1994 and 1998. These are the 117,462 new Latino voters who turned out in 1998. Among only new Latino voters, 88,000 were registered Democratic, 8,221 were registered Republican, and 21,241 were registered as independents or with other third parties. This amounts to 75 percent of new registrants who voted aligning with the Democratic Party, just 7 percent of new registrants who voted were Republican, and 18 percent of new registrants were with third parties or independents. As indicated, the Democratic Party enjoys a better than a 10 to 1 advantage over the GOP among new Latino voters—the voters who registered during the 1994–98 period.

Taken as a whole, our results thus far provide a number of insights into the period between 1994 and 1998 and suggest that patterns of Latino registration and partisanship were influenced as a result.



### Modeling Increases in Latino Turnout and Partisan Detachment

We present three estimates that we believe complement and refine the descriptive data presented above. As we discussed earlier, our first estimate looks at changes in Latino voter turnout, and the second and third look respectively at GOP and Democratic detachment. While the evidence we've already marshaled is convincing in making the case that real increases in rates of Latino voting occurred, and that more Latinos are registering as Democrats and independents than as Republicans, we have another avenue available to us to solidify the notion that these increases are related to the anti-Latino rhetoric surrounding the divisive propositions reviewed earlier. Together, based on the totality of the results we provide, it should be clear that Latino turnout and detachment from the Republican Party have both increased between 1994 and 1998 and are in part a function of the anti-Latino sentiment couched in Propositions 187, 209, and 227.

The data are drawn from the same record of registered voters in Los Angeles County and are supplemented with a number of measures for relevant control variables taken from the Institute for Governmental Studies at U.C. Berkeley. All data are aggregate, at the level of the assembly district, and our sample results in 25 districts for both estimates. As noted earlier, our dependent variables are measured in two different ways. The first, *Change in Latino turnout*, is measured as the percentage change in Latino voting from 1994 to 1998. For example, in each district, we simply subtract the rate of Latino turnout in 1994 from the rate of Latino turnout in 1998 and divide that figure by the base turnout in 1994, to determine a measure of change in Latino turnout (i.e., increase or decrease) over the four-year period. We estimate our two detachment measures differently, in a manner that reflects registration rates relative to the 1992 base.<sup>7</sup>

Our key independent variable of concern in each model is a measure of the opposition to Propositions 187, 209, and 227. We summed the three no votes together and took the mean to create our *Opposition to propositions* variable.<sup>8</sup> The remaining independent variables are primarily controls, and include *Age*, *Education*, *Income*, and *Latino Population*.<sup>9</sup>

Given what we have presented thus far, our expectations should be fairly clear. First, we expect that the level of opposition to divisive propositions should profoundly affect increases in Latino voter turnout. In similar fashion, if our expectations are correct, the same op-

position should result in a lower proportion of Latinos registering with the Republican Party between 1992 and 1998. For comparison purposes, we present a model of Democratic detachment as well. We are largely interested in how the opposition to propositions affects the Democratic detachment measure, if at all. Our expectation, given the positions of the two parties, is that opposition should negatively affect Democratic detachment. Table 3 summarizes our results, which are straightforward.

As indicated in the first model, after controlling for a number of potentially important indicators influencing the change in the Latino vote, we find that an assembly district's opposition to the three divisive propositions is significant, and positive, as expected. For a unit change in the percentage of oppositions to propositions, we find a positive .978 unit increase in the change in Latino turnout. This indicates a roughly 1:1 ratio between the two measures, which underscores our expectation that it was opposition to these initiatives that fueled the change.

In the second model, we use the same combination of independent variables to predict increases in GOP detachment—a measure of how

Table 3 Multivariate estimates of change in Latino turnout and Latino partisan detachment

Variable	Model 1: Latino turnout	Model 2: GOP detachment	Model 2: Demo Party detachment
Age	-.385 (.495)	1.398 (1.147)	.204 (1.005)
Education	-.310 (.421)	-.901 (.926)	-.218 (.811)
Income	-.001** (.000)	-.001 (.000)	.0004 (.0004)
Latino population	-.507*** (.130)	.004 (.301)	.298 (.263)
Opposition to propositions	.978*** (.175)	.896* (.362)	-.228 (.317)
Constant	28.55* (15.47)	11.236 (31.058)	-16.121 (27.215)
n	25	25	25
F	17.70	10.22	0.73
F Sig.	.000	.000	.607
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.777	.450	.017

\*\*\*Significant at  $p \leq .001$ , \*\*Significant at  $p \leq .01$ , \*Significant at  $p \leq .05$ , †Significant at .10 (two tailed tests)

well the GOP is doing from 1992 to 1998 relative to the base year of 1992. Again, our key variable is significant and positively related, as expected. Here, a unit increase in opposition to propositions results in a .896 unit increase in GOP detachment. The implication here is that opposition to the three initiatives results in less success in registering Latinos as Republicans, as we anticipated.

Our final model considers Democratic detachment. Clearly, this model does not perform nearly as well as the others.<sup>4</sup> The model's lack-luster performance is interesting in that we can clearly see that a factor crucial to Latinos leaving the GOP is unrelated to Latinos leaving the Democratic Party. We take this to suggest that the Republican Party is bearing the brunt of more-generalized decreases in major party registration, and that this is directly influenced by the anti-Latino context present in the early and mid-1990s. It is also interesting however, that the variable did not attain significance in the Democratic detachment model. This underscores our earlier findings, which pointed to independent and third parties as being the beneficiaries of major party detachment.

Taken together, these models offer further evidence to support our notion that the context present in the 1994–98 period had a profound effect on the registration and voting behavior of Latinos.

### Concluding Thoughts

We have isolated a number of important patterns, which document both the increases in the Latino vote and the partisan implications of these increases. Rather than restate our earlier points, we conclude by noting a number of normative issues raised by our findings and some avenues for future research. First, more Latinos participating in politics should be viewed favorably. Long dubbed the “sleeping giant,” the increased participation of Latinos, particularly in a state in which the Latino population is growing at such an accelerated pace, suggests that democracy is more meaningful and consequently more responsive to this community (Gonzalez-Baker 1996).

Second, the partisan patterns uncovered here raise some additional questions, the resolution of which is beyond the scope of this article: How long will Latinos fail to align themselves to such an extent behind the Republican Party? More specifically, how long will newly registered Latinos register Democratic to such a large degree, and with such significant effects? If Latinos become a voting bloc similar to African Americans, where their votes are assured to the Democratic

Party, the increased Latino vote may, in the end, be similarly marginalized. The dynamic growth of the Latino population, however, may counteract this effect. Latinos are likely not to be marginalized within the California Democratic Party, but may well define it.

Finally, an important consideration that we are not able to take up in the present analysis concerns the extent to which the naturalized Latino population contributes to the growth in the Latino vote. During this same time period in the 1990s, organizations such as NALEO were conducting citizenship and naturalization drives, and many of these “new citizens” were registering to vote. Understanding the relationship between naturalization and voting has important normative implications, and we hope to take up this issue in subsequent work.

Our analysis indicates that Latinos should play an important role in determining electoral outcomes. Latino participation and partisanship will determine the level and scope of political influence wielded by Latinos in the future. Los Angeles County is an opportune point of departure for this analysis, because it couples the largest Latino population in the nation with the extraordinary electoral presence of California politics. Further research in this area is under way that compares these results with corresponding figures in other major metropolitan areas. We believe that the documented increase in Latino voting is not unique to Los Angeles County, but that it is replicated in other areas of the nation heavily populated with Latinos.

### Notes

The authors' names are presented alphabetically. We would like to thank Harry P. Pachon and the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute for the use of the data, and AMAC Information & Graphics for use of the Spanish surname database. We are indebted to Gary Segura, Stacy Gordon, Yishaiya Abosch, and the Claremont/Riverside Conference on Minority Representation participants for their comments and suggestions, and Luci Ibarra for her much-needed assistance. Remaining errors are our own.

1. Aside from California, Los Angeles County would rank behind New York, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio. Michigan would rank next, with 16 representatives.

2. The data set includes only registered voters who resided in Los Angeles County as of August 1999. Thus, registrants who had left the county in the period between the November 1998 election and August of 1999 are not included.

3. The Spanish surname list is based on the 1990 census and is constructed by tabulating the responses to the Hispanic origin question. Each surname is

categorized by the percentage of individuals who identified themselves as "Hispanic." Each surname is then given a numeric value for the probability that persons with the surname are Hispanic. The list contains over 25,000 surnames and is reliable at 94 percent confidence.

4. Two of the assembly districts are only partially within Los Angeles County (38 and 61). While this does not directly affect the descriptive results, it could alter our results in the multivariate setting. We ran the estimates with the two districts included and excluded, and seeing no statistical or substantive difference in the estimates, decided to include them to preserve the sample size and the ability to give general results as much as possible.

5. The date of registration reported may not necessarily reflect the original date of registration. For example, if an individual moved to a new address within the county, and reregistered, they would have a new registration date. However, this represents a very small percentage of the cases (fewer than 10 percent countywide).

6. Again, given that we are dealing with a universe, not a sample, this difference is significant by definition.

7. We use 1992 as the base year for registration because it immediately precedes the divisive period in which the propositions were placed on the ballot.

8. The summary statistics of the variables used in the analysis are found in table 4.

9. The operationalization of the variables is found in table 5.

Table 4 Summary statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Age	26.45%	5.49%	17.83%	36.79%
Education	18.18%	9.984%	3.4%	39.1%
Income	\$40,456.7	\$13,264.5	\$18,751.5	\$73,621.7
Latino pop	43.67%	23.08%	11.96%	94.32%
Opposition to props	50.30%	11.72%	29.59%	69.67%

Table 5 Variable operationalization

Age	Percentage of persons in the district 45 years and older
Latino Population	Latino population as percent of total population of district
Education	Percentage of persons in the district with Associates degree or higher
Income	Median family income of district, 1989
Opposition to proposition	Percent of "no" votes on propositions 187, 209, and 227 added together and divided by three to yield a single mean percentage

Table 5 (continued)

Change in voter turnout	Increase in Latino voter turnout between 1994 and 1998 as a percentage of turnout in 1994
GOP detachment	Percentage decrease in Latino registration with GOP between 1992 and 1998 compared to the 1992 level of GOP registration within the district
Dem. Party detachment	Percentage decrease in Latino registration with Democrats between 1992 and 1998 compared to the 1992 level of Democratic registration within the district

## Bibliography

- Arteaga, Luis. 2000. "Are Latinos Pro-Democrat or Anti-Republican? An Examination of Party Registration and Allegiance in the 2000 Election and Beyond." October. [http://www.lif.org/civic/vote\\_2000.html](http://www.lif.org/civic/vote_2000.html)
- Arvizu, John R., and F. Chris Garcia. 1996. "Latino Voting Participation: Explaining and Differentiating Latino Voting Turnout." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18 (February): 104-28.
- Barreto, Matt A., and Nathan D. Woods. 2000. "Voting Patterns and the Dramatic Growth of the Latino Vote in Los Angeles County, 1994-1998." Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. Claremont, CA.
- Cain, Bruce, D. Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole J. Uhlaner. 1991. "The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(2) (May): 390-422.
- California Center for Research and Education in Government (CCREG). 2000. "Election 2000: Primary Rush, Congressional Districts." *California Journal* 31(2) (February): 14-24.
- California Department of Finance. 2000. "Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity for California in Its Counties 1990-2050." Sacramento, CA.
- Calvo, M. A., and S. J. Rosenstone. 1989. *Hispanic Political Participation*. San Antonio, TX: Southwest Voter Research and Education Project.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O., Charles Haynes, and Jaesung Ryu. 2001. "Voting Frequency: An Analysis of Latino Voting Patterns in the 1992-1998 General Elections in Harris County, Texas." Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. University of Texas, Austin. Working Paper.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O., Martha Menchaca, and Louis DeSipio, eds. 1994. *Barrio Ballots: Latino Politics in the 1990 Elections*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- DeSipio, Louis. 1996. "Making Citizens or Good Citizens? Naturalization as a Predictor of Organizational and Electoral Behavior among Latino Immigrants." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18(2) (February): 194-213.

- DeSipio, Louis, and Gregory Rocha. 1989. "Latino Influence on National Elections: The Case of 1988." In *From Rhetoric to Reality: Latino Politics in the 1988 Elections*, eds. Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Louis DeSipio, pp. 3–22. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Diaz, William. 1996. "Latino Participation in America: Associational and Political Roles." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18(2) (May): 154–175.
- Field (California) Polls, <http://field.com/fieldpoll>
- Garcia, John. 1997. "Political Participation: Resources and Involvement among Latinos in the American System." In *Pursuing Power: Latinos and the Political System*, ed. F. Chris Garcia, pp. 44–71. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.
- Garcia, John A., and Carolos H. Arce. 1988. "Political Orientations and Behaviors of Chicanos: Trying to Make Sense Out of Attitudes and Participation." In *Pursuing Power: Latinos and the Political System*, ed. F. Chris Garcia, pp. 125–51. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University.
- Gonzalez-Baker, Susan. 1996. "Su Voto Es Su Voz: Latino Political Empowerment and the Immigration Challenge." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29(3) (September): 465–68.
- Hero, Rodney. 1992. *Latinos and the U.S. Political System: Two-Tiered Pluralism*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Hritzuk, Natasha, and David K. Park. 2000. "The Question of Latino Participation: From an SES to a Social Structural Explanation." *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1) (March): 151–66.
- Kosnin, Barry, and Ariela Keysar. 1995. "Party Political Preferences of U.S. Hispanics: The Varying Impact of Demographic Factors." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18(2) (March): 336–47.
- Lopez, Elizabeth, and Eric Wahlgren. 1994. "The Latino Vote." *California Journal* (November 1): 24–26.
- Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters. 1999. Database of Registered Voters in Los Angeles County (CD-ROM). August 1999.
- Nicholson, Stephen P., and Gary M. Segura. 2000. "Agenda Change and the Politics of Latino Partisan Identification." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, November 17–19.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., and Nathan D. Woods. 1999. "Turning Out the Latino Vote in Los Angeles County: Did Interest Group Efforts Matter?" *American Review of Politics* 20 (Summer): 141–62.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2000. "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos." *Political Research Quarterly* 54(4) (December): 729–50.
- 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." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2) (April): 332–40.
- Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI). 1996. "Three-State Survey of Latino Voters, 1996." Claremont, CA.
- . 2000. "California Latino Voter Survey." *La Opinion*. <http://www.trpi.org/pollresults.html>
- United States Census Bureau. 1998. "November 1996 Voting and Registration in the Election of 1996. Detailed Tables: Reported Voting and Registration, by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age, for States." Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C.
- United States Census Bureau. 2001. "The Hispanic Population." Census 2000 Brief. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>. U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wolfinger, Raymond E., and Steven J. Rosenstone. 1980. *Who Votes?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Wrinkle, Robert D., Joseph Stewart Jr., J. L. Polinard, Kenneth J. Meier, and John Arvizu. 1996. "Ethnicity and Non-Electoral Political Participation," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18 (May): 142–53.