

*Latino Politics:
Identity, Mobilization and Representation*

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University of Virginia Press
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The Role of Latino Candidates in Mobilizing Latino Voters

Revisiting Latino Vote Choice

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AT LEAST SINCE Robert Dahl's seminal theory of ethnic politics (1961), scholars of minority politics have wondered what effect ethnicity has on political behavior. Distinct from Dahl's research on "ethnic politics," research on race was prominent among political scientists interested in the African American political incorporation. Harold Gosnell (1935), Gunnar Myrdal (1944), and V. O. Key (1949) all investigated the extent to which African American political participation differed from whites and noted that race was an important variable to consider. While research on African American voting trends finds that race can matter, work on Latino voting has generally not found this to be the case. This essay seeks to provide an answer to the question of whether or not ethnic identification influences Latino voting behavior. Specifically, does the presence of Latino candidates mobilize the Latino electorate, resulting in strong support for the coethnic candidate?

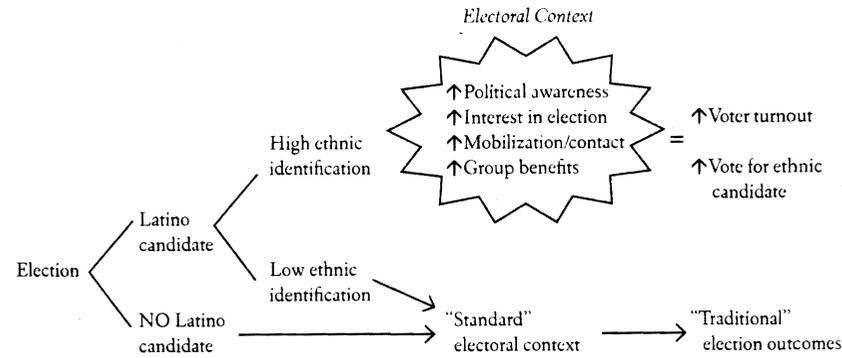
In 2001, 2003, and 2005 mayoral elections in several of the nation's largest cities witnessed Latino candidates running vigorous and competitive campaigns that seemed to generate political excitement among Latino voters. In New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, Denver, San Francisco, and San Antonio high-profile Latino candidates for mayor made headlines by running strong campaigns. In the fall of 2002, viable Latino candidates were garnering national media attention in the New Mexico and Texas governors' races. Elsewhere, Latino candidates surfaced in mayoral elections in Bloomington, Indiana, and Las Vegas, Nevada, and for the first time Latinos were elected to city councils in Georgia and others

to state legislatures in North Carolina and North Dakota. Nationwide, the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) reported that nearly one thousand more Latinos hold public office now than ten years ago. Simply stated, cities and states across the nation are witnessing both an increase in Latinos candidates and an increase in Latino electoral success. While the rise in Latino candidates might be seen as the inevitable consequence of gains in Latino population, Latino candidates allow a political environment to surface that may result in higher rates of voting and strong support for Latino candidates by Latino voters, a proposition that was previously untestable. The aim of this work is not to explain the success of Latino candidates for office,¹ but rather, to examine what influence these candidates have on the voting behavior of Latino voters.

As evidenced by Biliiana Ambrecht and Harry Pachón (1974) and John Garcia and Rodolfo de la Garza (1985), previous research on Latino political behavior has played down the role of shared ethnicity. Attempts to understand the comparatively lower rates of turnout among Latinos have often focused on lower levels of resources (DeSipio 1996), and lower levels of civic skills (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995) leaving much room for improvement in explaining the Latino vote. This essay presents two improvements in modeling Latino political behavior: (1) accounting for the presence of Latino candidates; and (2) introducing a measure of ethnic identification. I argue that the electoral context surrounding the campaigns of Latino candidates is a mobilizing factor that leads to strong levels of support for the coethnic candidate.² Further, this effect should hold after controlling for standard predictors of political participation as well as for election-specific issues.³ Thus, my basic argument rests on two theories: first, ethnic candidates increase the level of psychological engagement and interest in the election among ethnic voters (Tate 1993, 2003; Garcia and Arce 1988) and second, ethnic candidates direct more resources to mobilize voters in ethnic communities (Leighley 2001). While not all ethnic candidates are publicly running “ethnic campaigns,” for those who are, the argument is quite clear and for those who aren’t, it is still likely that their campaigns will reach out to minority voters and that their candidacy will resonate with some minority voters.

However, the effect may not be the same for all Latino voters, and therefore it is necessary to include a measure of the degree of ethnic identification. Building on theories of minority empowerment and racial incorporation, I make the case that for Latino voters with high levels of ethnic identification, coethnic candidates increase their level of political awareness and interest in the election, increase the opportunity to be contacted and asked to vote, generate a sense of psychological engagement with the political system, and strengthen feelings of shared group consciousness (e.g., Uhlaner 1989; Leighley 2001)

FIGURE 4.1
Shared ethnicity model of Latino political behavior



While a handful of studies have examined the connection between ethnicity and political participation, they have repeatedly concluded that no direct link exists for Latino voters. In articles published in *Social Science Quarterly*, Cain and Kiewiet (1984) and Graves and Lee (2000) both show that in explaining candidate preference, partisanship—not ethnicity—is the deciding factor for Latinos, and in his book, *Counting on the Latino Vote*, Louis DeSipio observes that, “ethnicity will come to play less of a role in [Latino] political decision-making than will other societal divisions” (1996). The project proposed here is important in that (1) it brings a variety of new, experimental evidence to bear on this question, and (2) it provides an alternative mechanism for measuring ethnic identification that better captures the effect of shared ethnicity.

Ethnic Identification and Latino Voting

Before undertaking this analysis, the case must be made why Latinos might have a sense of shared ethnic identity, and second, why ethnicity is more likely to matter in future elections. While an individual may have multiple identities, there often exists a group of people with whom an individual may share many identities, such as language, cultural practices, religion, and race. “Peoplehood” then is roughly “coterminous with a given rural land space; political government, no matter how rudimentary, a common culture in which a principal element was a set of religious beliefs and values shared more or less uniformly by all members of the group, and a common racial background ensuring an absence of wide differences in physical type” (Gordon 1964). This sense of peoplehood is best described as the

individual's ethnicity (from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning "people") that may encompass his or her race, religion, national origin, language, and more. Although ethnic identity is fluid, a society may develop seemingly fixed categories for identification that serve to reinforce each identity as separate and unique and that reinforce group members' attachment to their ethnic identity. As Will Herberg notes, "The way in which one identifies and locates oneself ('Who, what, am I?') is closely related to how one is identified and located in the larger community ('Who, what, is he?')" (1955). The social constructions of group identification, whether real or not, guide individuals to take their place in a group and act as a member of the group. The extent to which they act congruently on political issues is the question being considered here.

For Latinos, there are four characteristics that are common to all Hispanic Americans regardless of their background: Latin American heritage, the immigrant experience, Spanish language, and Spanish colonial influence. These four traits are stronger for some Latinos than others and may be altogether dormant at times, but their existence cannot be easily refuted. Building on these four components, an additional component, ethnic discrimination, augments the relationship of these characteristics and may bring Latinos together when one of these components of ethnic identity is culturally under attack. With this in mind, the shared ethnic identification argument can be made that provides the foundation for this essay, that is, ethnicity is an important component of Latino political behavior. Further, given the decline of party control over campaigns and candidate centered elections (Wattenberg 1994), a growing interest in candidate qualities over issues (Popkin 1991), and the reliance on ethnic-based outreach and mobilization by candidates of both major parties (Segal 2003), it may not be surprising that ethnic identification is now salient.

This research builds on the theories advanced by Carole Uhlaner (1989), Jan Leighley (2001), and Lawrence Bobo and Frank Gilliam (1990), among others. Uhlaner refines a theory of group relations to demonstrate that political participation is rational, despite high costs, because in-group members receive additional benefits from a sense of shared group consciousness. She argues that groups with more unified support for a candidate or issue have a stronger sense of group identity, which they can use as a bargaining chip to collect additional in-group benefits. Leighley proposes a new model for examining Latino and African American political participation that takes into account the shared group consciousness, minority empowerment, and geographic racial context to improve on traditional socioeconomic models. In particular, she makes the argument that ethnic candidates direct more resources to mobilizing ethnic communities and deserve more attention in understanding Latino voting behavior.

According to Bobo and Gilliam, minority elected officials empower minority communities, resulting in higher levels of voting and block voting. In particular, African American mayors are found to empower African American voters through feelings of shared group consciousness and in-group benefits. I expand this to Latino voters and Latino mayors to test whether or not the effect is the same. More important, Bobo and Gilliam provide a framework that envisions minority candidates and office holders as instrumental in explaining minority participation. Finally, from a practical perspective, Lionel Sosa, a media consultant and presidential campaign adviser, notes that in his experience conducting focus groups and targeting Latino voters, positive ethnic identification with the candidate is an important factor. Specifically, Sosa argues that, "issues also work, but only *after* Hispanic voters like and trust the candidate" (emphasis in original, 2004).

Beyond the inclusion of two new and interesting data sets, I also propose an alternative mechanism for measuring shared ethnicity that may account for its lack of relevance in previous research. Earlier attempts to include ethnicity in a model of Latino political behavior considered it to be an all or nothing issue in which all Latinos are considered to have the same level of ethnic identification. Instead, this project proposes a sliding scale, similar to the measure of party identification, that place Latinos on a spectrum from low to high levels of ethnic identification. This scale should include both direct and indirect measures of ethnic identification. With a more accurate assessment of their degree of shared ethnicity, it becomes clear that for Latinos with higher levels of ethnic identification, ethnicity does play a central role in their political decision making.

The data employed here are from two recent public opinion surveys of Latino registered voters. The first is a survey conducted by the Latino Issues Forum (LIF) in 2000 regarding vote choice among hypothetical candidates (one Latino, one non-Latino) and the second is a Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) survey from 2002 for California and New York, which explores cross-over voting tendencies among Latinos. My argument is that after controlling for partisanship and issue preference, ethnic attachment will lead Latino voters to support an ethnic candidate, even across party lines.

The Argument

During the 1990s, the Latino electorate grew faster than any other segment of American voters. Increasing from 3.7 million in 1988 to 5.9 million in 2000, Latino voters received national media attention and were courted heavily by both parties in the 2000 presidential election. While Latinos have generally favored Demo-

cratic candidates, scholars and pundits have characterized the Latino community as heterogeneous and fluid as an electorate (Pachón 1999). As stated above, earlier efforts to test the connection between ethnicity and vote choice for Latinos have found partisanship to be an intervening variable of greater weight, leading scholars to conclude that ethnicity has only an indirect effect (Cain and Kiewiet 1984; Graves and Lee 2000). That is, ethnicity predicts party identification, which predicts vote choice, but no direct tie between ethnicity and candidate preference is said to exist. Recognizing areas of difference on policy issues among Latino voters, I nonetheless argue that ethnic identity unites them, both explicitly and implicitly.

I argue that three trends have made it possible for ethnicity to persist as a central component of Latino politics in the twenty-first century. First, the Latino community has witnessed an increase in ethnic-based discrimination, making it more likely that ethnicity will have a distinct influence on the political behavior of Latinos. Anti-immigrant ballot measures, the rollback of affirmative action, and attacks on bilingual education have alienated and angered Latino voters in many states (Ramírez 2002b; García-Bedolla 2000; Pachón 1998; Segura et al. 1997). What's more, public opinion data suggests that Latinos are increasingly feeling like targets of ethnic discrimination.⁴ Second, the number of viable Latino candidates for public office has increased dramatically over the past decade (Hero et al. 2000; Pachón and DeSipio 1991), creating the *opportunity* for ethnic identity to emerge in the political sphere. Third, rapid growth in naturalization, registration, and voter turnout among Latinos has given legitimacy to the size and significance of the Latino electorate (Sierra et al. 2000). The convergence of these three trends during the past ten years has produced an environment where ethnic attachment may remain a principal component of the Latino vote.

Because the survey data presented here is based on experimental design and not on a national sample, actual election results from across the country were gathered and examined that support the primary finding in this essay. This evidence comes from four large city mayoral elections in 2001. Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, and New York all had viable Latino candidates running for office in nonpartisan elections. The summary results presented in table 4.1 detail the percentage of the Latino vote won by the Latino candidates according to exit polls.

Los Angeles is interesting because Latino candidates of somewhat differing ideologies—liberal mayoral contender Antonio Villaraigosa and politically moderate city attorney candidate Rocky Delgado—both captured over 80 percent of the Latino vote. In Houston, the Cuban-born candidate Orlando Sanchez, a registered Republican, received over 70 percent of the Latino vote from the predominantly Mexican American community with ties to the Democratic Party. In Miami, second-generation Cuban American Manny Diaz emphasized his strong ties

TABLE 4.1

Latino candidate preference nationwide in 2001 mayoral elections

City →	Los Angeles	Houston	New York	Miami
Candidate →	Villaraigosa	Sanchez	Ferrer	Diaz
% Latino vote	82%	72%	84%	70%

Source: Los Angeles Times, Houston Chronicle, New York Times, Miami Herald exit polls, 2001

to the Cuban community and also won over 70 percent of the Latino vote despite being a registered Democrat in a community where most Latino voters are loyal Republicans. In New York City, Puerto Rican candidate Freddy Ferrer garnered over 80 percent of the diverse Latino vote, bringing together Puerto Rican, Dominican, Colombian, and Mexican American segments of the Latino community in New York in the Democratic primary. Each of these four elections represents an instance in which ethnic identity seemed to play a primary role in candidate preference.

Voting Preference Models

In an information-rich environment, voters are able to identify the policy platforms of all candidates and pick the one who best represents their own political interests. In the model, a set of candidates can be placed at various points along an ideological spectrum and people are expected to vote for the candidate who is closest to their personal views. The first modern application of this spectrum can be found in Harold Hotelling's 1929 economic analysis of business competition. Adapting this model to politics, Hotelling examined political parties to explain why Democrats and Republicans often align themselves near the center of the left-right spectrum to attract votes. Later, Anthony Downs, in his classic work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, expanded this model of one-dimensional political competition, arguing that voters have ordered and stable preferences that allow them to be placed on a one-dimensional issue spectrum. In fact, Downs conceptualizes a "linear scale running from zero to 100 in the usual left-right fashion," and "assume[s] that the political preferences can be ordered from left to right in a manner agreed upon by all voters" (1957, 115). These early attempts to describe voter preference characterize voters as rational decisionmakers, for whom issue positions served as the key determinant of their vote choice.

Scholars also contend that partisanship is a critical predictor of vote choice (Campbell et al. 1960). Similar to issue position, this theory suggests that voters

will sometimes overlook misaligned issues and support the candidate of their same party. At least since the *American Voter*, this theory has been accepted, and party identification continues to be one of the best indicators of vote preference today. However, some research suggests that a voter's partisanship may not be as "stable" as previously thought and that the role of the party is on the decline. Kent Tedin and Richard Murray (1981) argue that voters can be persuaded by campaign appeals and that the media's focus on *candidate characteristics* does matter. Additional support for candidate-centered elections comes from Martin Wattenberg (1994) and Alan Abramowitz (1989), who argue that voters pay attention to candidates, not parties. Despite differences in conclusions, both scholars reveal that voters are paying more attention to candidates these days, providing an opportunity for the race and ethnicity of the candidate to play a central role. With regard to minority voters, Abramowitz finds such strong support for Jesse Jackson among African Americans (as does Tate 1993) that they do not conform to his other theories of vote preference. The same may be true for Latino voters.

Candidates seek to capitalize on voter calculations of personality and symbolism. Popkin (1991) has argued that savvy candidates know the importance of symbolic politics and will often make religious, racial, and ethnic appeals during campaigns. Popkin extends Dahl's theory of "ethnic politics," which found immigrant communities beleaguered by home-country campaign appeals in Italian and Irish boroughs as far back as 1900. Popkin was writing in the 1990s when he noted that campaign strategists will have their candidate photographed eating tamales in Mexican American communities to gain support of Latino voters, then Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore must have read his book before the 2000 presidential election, because both candidates spent millions of dollars on Spanish-language advertising and tried to one-up each other in wooing Latino voters. Al Gore, for example, boldly stated, "My first grandson was born on the Fourth of July, and I hope that my next is born on *Cinco de Mayo*," before a crowd of Latinos in Denver.⁵

The reason non-Hispanic candidates take such actions is because voters may rely on such demographic characteristics of candidates as their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or social origin as "information shortcuts" in estimating the policy stands of competing candidates. Similarly, Tate draws our attention to the power of shared ethnicity between office holders and voters in her analysis of the evaluations African Americans provide of their representatives in the U.S. Congress. Comparing politics to athletics Tate asks, "is the race of the players salient and important to the many Black spectators in the stands?" (2003, 20). She finds the racial group membership of the legislators matters and that it is one of the most important factors in candidate evaluations along with party identification. As Popkin aptly notes,

voters may be more likely to head to the polls wondering, "How does he look to me lately?" rather than "What has he done for me lately?" (1991).

Latino Political Behavior

While there has been some growth in the number of articles investigating Latino political behavior, relatively few have dealt directly with candidate preference. Most studies of Latino politics continue to focus on the perceived low levels of participation among Latinos vis-à-vis non-Latino voters (Garcia and Arce 1988; Hero 1992; de la Garza, Menchaca, and DeSipio 1994; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; DeSipio 1996; Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000; Pantoja et al. 2001; Cassel 2002;). However, a handful of studies do exist that specifically address theories of Latino vote choice and candidate preference that are important in guiding this argument. First, DeSipio (1996) contends that while ethnicity was found to have no statistically significant effect in his model of vote choice, there is the chance that it could emerge under "unique circumstances" or in response to "ethnic-based discrimination." Based on the findings of existing data sets at the time, he concludes that such a scenario is unlikely as Latinos achieve greater assimilation into society.

More recently, Graves and Lee (2000) tackle this question in their examination of voting preference in the 1996 Senate election in Texas. Previously, Cain and Kiewiet (1984) examined the relationship between ethnicity, issue positions, and candidate evaluations in a 1982 congressional election in Los Angeles. Despite evidence of distinct patterns of voting behavior by Latinos in the voting rights literature (Engstrom and Brischetto 1997; Engstrom 1992; Grofman and Handley 1989; Grofman 1993), aside from these two studies, little empirical attention has been directed toward theories of ethnic voting among Latinos in academic journal articles.

Graves and Lee find that ethnicity did play a key role in the Morales-Gramm 1996 Senate election in Texas, but that its influence was mediated by partisanship. Building on the theories advanced by Donald Kinder and David Sears (1985), they argue that ethnicity influences the primary determinants of vote choice such as partisanship, issue positions, and candidate evaluations, but not vote choice outright. Latino identity may influence the "manner in which individuals are brought into and engage the political system," because it places them in a particular social and cultural milieu that shapes their worldview (Graves and Lee 2000, 229). Their findings go far to support these claims. While being Latino is not a significant predictor of candidate evaluation, it is significant in models accounting for partisan-

ship and issue position. In the final model predicting vote choice, Latinos do not behave significantly different from Anglos, but partisanship is the best predictor of vote preference for Morales, and being Latino is the best predictor of Democratic partisanship. Thus, Graves and Lee conclude that "ethnicity exerts a substantial *indirect* influence on voting preference," for Latinos (2000, 234).

Much of what Graves and Lee posit and find is based on a similar analysis conducted by Cain and Kiewiet (1984). In their earlier study of Mexican American voting preference, Cain and Kiewiet find that ethnicity is associated with party identification and perceptions about the candidates, but not directly with vote choice. Controlling for party identification, they found no statistical support that ethnicity affects vote choice. While both of these analyses point to a role for ethnicity in the political behavior of Latinos, they ultimately rely on traditional models of vote choice, where partisanship, issue position, and candidate evaluation take center stage (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989).

This is consistent then with DeSipio's (1996) argument that conventional predictors of participation and behavior are important in understanding Latino voting and that ethnicity may play only a minor role. However, both previous studies examined voting preference in a general election that pitted a Latino Democrat against an Anglo Republican. Because of this scenario and historic ties to the Democratic Party among Latinos, it is natural to expect Latino voters to prefer a Latino Democratic candidate in a general election of this nature. However, the stakes might be different in nonpartisan or primary elections where partisanship is less relevant, or in an election where the Latino candidate is a Republican.

While previous studies have speculated that ethnicity is "all or nothing," it more likely has varying degrees of salience for voters (similar to partisan strength). Thus, while all Latinos may not share a strong attachment to their ethnicity, for those who do, ethnicity is likely to be the guiding force in their political behavior, equal to or possibly surpassing traditional factors, such as issue position and party identification, that may explain vote preference. More specifically, in an election with a Latino candidate of an opposing party or with some inconsistent policy positions, shared ethnicity may propel some Latinos to choose ethnicity over party or policy.

Measuring Shared Ethnic Identity

With a total of more than 35 million people, Latinos surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States in 2000. However, many political analysts argue that they do not have the same strength in numbers that the African

American community has. They say they lack an equally strong collective sense of ethnic identity because their ancestry is rooted in more than twenty countries. While national origin may remain important, there are two reasons why shared group or pan-Latino identity might play a significant role in the political behavior of Latinos. First, overlapping ethnic and cultural bonds exist that unite Latinos and allow for a shared ethnic identity to emerge. Second, national origin groups tend to be geographically segregated in the United States, making the pan-Latino identity less politically vital in elections where, for example, a Mexican American candidate is running for office. With respect to California, Pachón concludes in a series of articles that ethnic identity has increased, emerging as a mobilizing force in the political participation of Latinos (Pachón 1998, 1999; Pachón, Barreto, Marquez 2004).

However, we should not proceed from the assumption that ethnic identification is equally strong among all Latinos. In fact, the main objective of this essay is to provide a range of ethnic identification for Latinos and to determine if those with high degrees of ethnic attachment are more likely to vote along ethnic lines. With this in mind, it is possible to identify the roots of a shared ethnic experience among Latinos.

Shared group identity for Latinos is strongest at the national origin and generation level, but this does not preclude a shared identity across these boundaries (García-Bedolla 2000). There are four characteristics that are common to all Hispanic Americans regardless of their background: Latin American heritage, the immigrant experience, Spanish language, and Spanish colonial influence.⁶ While some Latinos are more strongly connected to these traits than others, they do provide a common background for Latinos of all ancestry.

While there are distinct differences between Latinos of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, and Colombian ancestry, they do share a common Latin American heritage that brings them together (Padilla 1985b). First and foremost, all Latinos (minus the small percentage from Spain), can trace their ancestry to Spanish America. The North, Central, and South American territories occupied by Spain provide a shared homeland for all Latinos living in the United States. With this, comes a common cultural heritage. Setting aside linguistic ties, important cultural, religious, and social similarities exist throughout Latin America that provide Latinos of different national origins with a common point of reference. The strong role of the family, in particular as it relates to holiday and family traditions, is shared throughout Latin America (Moore and Pachón 1985; Williams 1990; Santiago and Davidow 1998). Catholicism and its practices are still overwhelmingly supported and followed (by a two-to-one margin), and the community is often embraced ahead of the individual. While differences exist from country to county, in

the United States the shared aspects of Latin American heritage are highlighted for Latinos living as a minority in an Anglo-Protestant environment.

Building on Latin American heritage, the immigrant experience is a second characteristic common across different Hispanic national origin groups (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). According to the 2000 Census, 44 percent of all Latinos were born in Latin America and migrated north to the United States, and an additional 30 percent have parents who were foreign born. Thus, three-quarters of the Latino population closely share this immigrant experience and the social and cultural issues that accompany it. Of the remaining segment of the Latino population, about 15 percent have immigrant grandparents, leaving only about 10 percent of Latinos without an immediate family connection to the immigrant experience.

As Michael Jones-Correa (1998) notes, immigrant families confront unique challenges in their interaction with the public sphere and rely on immigrant-based networks within their community for assistance. Whether facing challenges related to naturalization, visa status, employment, housing, access to health care, or public education, the common experiences and struggles of immigrants provide bridges for Latinos of different nationalities (Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

A strong part of the immigrant experience that also unites Latinos is language. Regardless of the country of ancestry, Spanish provides a collective communication resource for the Latino community. While not all Latinos are completely fluent in Spanish, a recent nationwide survey by the Kaiser Foundation (2000) found that only 5 percent of Latinos speak no Spanish at all, and nearly nine of ten Latinos speak and understand Spanish well. With the numeric growth of the Latino community, Spanish media outlets have become important advertising venues for Latino and non-Latino candidates for public office.

The final pan-Latino characteristic is perhaps the most difficult to identify because it is the least tangible. The Spanish colonial experience is important nonetheless because it represents an underlying psychological attitude within the Latino community. While Spanish colonial occupation has a history of almost two centuries (one century for Puerto Rico and Cuba), it left a lasting legacy of domination, oppression, struggle, and liberation. For two hundred years, Spanish occupation led to constant conflict between the colonizer and the colonized. Descendants of Spain's empire in Latin America, the Southwest, and the Caribbean have been victim to savage conquest and domination and had to fight for freedom and respect. While hard to pinpoint, shared historical traits are considered important components of shared identity among minority groups (Linz and Stepan 1996; Robinson 1999).⁷ Just as there is an enduring "American spirit" 225 years after the Revolutionary War, the Spanish colonial influence is still present, to some degree, among Latinos.

While these four characteristics provide a basis for a shared ethnic identity,

perceived discrimination against the group can strengthen and solidify the group identity (Dawson 1994; Tate 1993). Discrimination against the Latino community has come in both structural and attitudinal varieties. While the legal discrimination is not as widespread or severe as against African Americans during the post-construction and pre-civil rights eras, discrimination has and does exist based on language and immigration rights (e.g., Propositions 187, 227 in California). In addition, attitudinal discrimination against Latinos has existed for many years. Latin American immigrants have been blamed for job loss and economic problems and considered a drain on social welfare programs. Latinos are often associated with drug trafficking, crime, gangs, and the general deterioration of inner cities. With these stereotypes has come discrimination in the workplace, in public schools, and in the political arena (e.g., gerrymandering and polarized voting).

As anticipated, Latinos perceive group-based discrimination. In the National Survey on Latinos in America, 82 percent of Latinos responded that discrimination against "Latinos" is a problem in society (Kaiser Foundation 2000). Further, when asked if they or their family had personally experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, a large plurality Latinos reported that they had. While the 40 percent figure for Latinos is lower than the 54 percent of African Americans who have felt discrimination, it is considerably higher than the 14 percent of whites who claim to have experienced discrimination. Thus, based on the four characteristics described here and coupled with perceptions of ethnic-based discrimination, we can say that the ingredients for pan-Latino identity exist. Evidence of this can be found again in the National Survey of Latinos in America, where 84 percent of respondents reported that all Latinos would be better off if various Latino groups worked together politically (Kaiser 2000).

Michael Dawson has called this connection between race and identity "linked fate" and argues that it is an important heuristic for the political participation of African Americans (1994). The main contention of the "black utility heuristic" is that the more one believes one's own life chances are linked to those of blacks as a group, the more one will consider racial group interests in evaluating alternative policy choice . . . [and] evaluating candidates and parties" (1994, 75). Similarly, studies of Latino politics can be improved by borrowing Dawson's notion of linked fate as it relates to decision-making shortcuts in the political arena. Latinos who tie their self-interest to ethnic group interests should be expected to use ethnicity as a heuristic device when they find themselves in the polling booth deciding between Hernandez and Smith. Dawson concurs that a strong sense of ethnic identity goes far to influence political behavior of minorities, calling this group consciousness the "political building blocks for analyzing perceptions of racial group interests," such as party and candidate preference (1994, 84).

Based on these underlying beliefs, contextual factors, campaign tactics, and issue salience are the key forces behind a collective Latino identity and, hence, a central component in the vote choice of Latinos. Coupled with a high sense of ethnic attachment, notions of political underrepresentation may drive Latinos to follow ethnic cues when voting, rather than issue alignment. DeSipio maintains that for ethnicity to become a salient mobilizing force, a link beyond just culture must exist to unite Latinos politically (1996). While he points to a distinct perspective on policy issues, the presence of a viable Latino candidate may also be one such condition. Given the preceding discussion on vote choice and the role of ethnicity in elections, there are competing theories of candidate preference: the influence of issues/partisanship vs. the influence of ethnic identity. Thus, we can test the following hypothesis:

H₁: Controlling for party identification and issue preference, the level of ethnic attachment of Latino voters will increase the probability of supporting a Latino candidate

Data and Methodology

Using registered voters as the unit of analysis, I test whether or not Latino identity is an important predictor of vote choice. Survey data collected in California⁸ by the Latino Issues Forum (LIF) in 2000 and in California and New York by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) in 2002 permit the examination of whether or not Latino voters having a strong "ethnic identity" prefer coethnic candidates or whether issue position and partisanship dictate candidate preference.

Specifically, the LIF 2000 survey offered respondents the chance to "vote" in a hypothetical election between "Smith" and "Hernandez." Respondents were informed of each candidate's stance on the issues, with Smith portrayed as a traditional Democrat and Hernandez as a traditional Republican, without party labels being given.⁹ The absence of party labels corresponds to nonpartisan local elections typical in most states. In addition, because issue positions were given for each candidate, it provides an optimal environment to test the classic Downsian model that voters prefer the candidate who is spatially closest to their preferences (Downs 1957). The TRPI 2002 data asked partisan identifiers how they would vote in an election that pitted a non-Latino partisan versus a Latino nonpartisan to assess the probability of cross-over voting when Latino candidates are present. While no information about the candidates was given, more than a quarter of all respondents immediately picked the Latino nonpartisan over a non-Latino party member.

The LIF survey was conducted in February 2000 before California's presiden-

tial primary election on March 2, 2000, and interviewed 750 Latino registered voters (Arteaga 2000). The TRPI survey was conducted in October 2002, before the November 2002 midterm elections in California and New York. Although many surveys have recently been conducted of Latino voters, these data are unique, because they asked registered voters to decide in a hypothetical election between a Latino and non-Latino candidate.

Rather than giving party cues, the LIF survey described the platforms of each candidate, allowing voters to decide based on the issues. Given that most Latinos are registered with the Democratic Party (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlener 1991), LIF offered the challenge of a Latino-surname candidate with a Republican-oriented platform versus an Anglo-surname candidate with a Democratic-oriented platform. This method provided an optimal environment to test whether issues and partisanship or ethnic identity influenced Latino candidate preference. The anti-immigrant, anti-Latino ballot measures in California endorsed by the Republican Party drove Latino voters away from the GOP and into the waiting arms of the Democrats. What's more, because the issue platforms of each candidate were provided, it meets Downs's hypothetical example of perfect information. If Downs's thesis is correct, voters will align themselves with the candidate with which they share common issue positions, regardless of race or ethnicity.

The TRPI survey asked each registered voter which party they were registered with and, among independents, which party they were closer to. Then, after determining the partisanship of each voter, it asked them a follow-up question to get to the heart of the debate on partisanship versus ethnicity. For Democrats, it asked, "In an election between a non-Latino Democrat and a Latino Republican, which candidate would you prefer?" and vice versa for Republicans. While the LIF survey purposely does not cue partisanship, the TRPI survey does, and together, the data provide a complete portrait of Latino vote choice and the role of ethnic candidates.

Ordered-probit and probit regression techniques are employed to accurately predict the trichotomous and dichotomous dependent variables. Postestimation analysis is offered to assess the changes in predicted probability of a vote for the coethnic candidate (Long 1997; Long and Freese 2001).

Dependent Variables

This research seeks to uncover the reasons why Latino voters might prefer one candidate over another, given that one of the candidates is Latino. The LIF survey specifically asked respondents to pick which statement about two candidates for public office came closer to their views:

- A. Smith says state and local governments can do a great deal to improve the quality of life for Latinos in California. Smith believes in HMO reforms, improving public education and providing more affordable housing.
- B. Hernandez says state and local governments have too much power to regulate individuals and community life for Latinos in California. Hernandez believes in traditional family values, reducing taxes and increasing job opportunities and reducing crime.

Respondents gave a range of five answers to this question: Smith, Hernandez, neither, combination, and don't know.¹⁰ The answers were sorted in two ways, yielding the two dependent variables analyzed here. First, those voters who said "neither," "combination," or "don't know" were grouped together as an "undecided" category (representing about 28 percent of the sample). Second, voters who did not state a preference for either Smith or Hernandez were dropped, and only those with a clear preference for one candidate or the other were analyzed.

Because a large number of respondents — more than a quarter — fall into a category without clearly stated preferences, I kept them in the analysis. Before an election, it is not surprising to find a segment of the electorate still undecided or torn between two candidates. Thus, these undecided respondents represent a real portion of the electorate common to American elections.¹¹ However, because the undecided respondents have not articulated a clear preference, they may be blurring the results. Since we are interested in candidate preference, and ultimately voters will have to choose between only two options (or abstain), the second dependent variable includes only those who indicated a preference for Smith (0) or Hernandez (1). In short, both models produce the same results with regard to the key independent variables of policy preferences and ethnic attachment.

The TRPI data yield almost the same dependent variables, with respondents being asked to choose between a Latino nonpartisan and a non-Latino copartisan.¹² Republicans were asked who they would prefer in an election between a Latino Democrat and a non-Latino Republican, while Democrats were asked the inverse: who would they prefer in an election between a Latino Republican and a non-Latino Democrat. As with the LIF survey, many voters responded that they were unsure, and two variables were created similar to above, with a trichotomous measure leaving undecided voters in the model (at the midpoint) and a second dichotomous variable that only examines voters with a stated preference.

The Findings

Three general themes are apparent after examining the results of the data analysis. First, policy preferences do matter in determining candidate preferences. Second, ethnic attachment is an important determinant of vote choice among Latinos. And third, a latent predisposition for the coethnic candidate exists among Latino voters that cannot be explained by self-reported ethnic attachment or policy preferences. Before exploring the first two themes in the multivariate probit analysis, I briefly review the survey results with respect to the underlying preference for the Latino candidate.

Generally, there was modest support for cross-over voting in the TRPI survey, as evidenced in table 4.2. Overall, 26 percent of the sample indicated that they would vote for a Latino of the opposing party instead of a non-Latino party member. Given that no information was provided about the potential candidates, this estimate seems high and lends support for the hypothesis that Latino candidates can attract Latino votes independent of their partisanship. As a point of comparison, the TRPI survey also asked respondents how they planned to vote in their coming congressional elections. By matching the voter's party ID to their stated vote preference in the congressional election, we can examine what effect the Latino candidate has on changing vote preference. Table 4.2 reports the results for both the congressional election and the hypothetical cross-over election and tabulates the differences. For the congressional election, 84 percent of respondents picked the candidate of their party, 8 percent were undecided, and 8 percent crossed over. In the example featuring a Latino candidate, only 40 percent chose the candidate of their same party, 34 percent were undecided, and 26 percent favored the cross-over Latino candidate. Not only does the presence of a Latino candidate immediately command cross-over appeal, but it also creates more uncertainty in the electorate, suggesting that even more voters might vote for the Latino candidate if more infor-

TABLE 4.2
Impact of Latino candidate on cross-over voting

	Partisan	Undecided	Crossover
How vote for Congress	84	8	8
Vote w/ Latino candidate	40	34	26
Difference	-44	26	18
Percent difference	-52%	325%	225%

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute survey of Latino voters in CA and NY, 2002

TABLE 4.3
Issue preference and candidate preference

Issue variables	Candidate preference			(n)
	Smith	Undecided	Hernandez	
Overall sample	25	28	48	750
Reduce crime	25	28	47	678
Family values	22	28	50	638
Public education	26	28	47	687
Affordable housing	25	29	46	516
Democratic voter	28	23	48	333
Republican voter	27	22	52	155

Source: Latino Issues Forum survey of Latino voters in California, 2000

mation was provided. No immediate party difference was recognizable with both Democrats and Republicans willing to cross over at the same rate (26 percent).

These descriptive results are consistent with the LIF survey, where Latino voters preferred Hernandez over Smith by a two-to-one margin. Overall, 48 percent of voters picked Hernandez, 25 percent picked Smith, and 28 percent were undecided between the two. Democrats and Republicans alike preferred the more conservative Latino over the more liberal non-Latino. Table 4.3 provides a number of detailed breakdowns of vote choice by issue position and partisanship. In addition to these characteristics, the survey directly asked Latinos if they would vote for various ethnic and partisan candidates. Respondents who said they would vote for a white Democrat in an election actually preferred Hernandez, not Smith, 50 to 25 percent, and respondents who said they *would not* vote for a Latino Republican also preferred Hernandez over Smith, 52 to 25 percent. While party labels were not given in the hypothetical candidate matchup, policy platforms were attributed to each candidate, giving voters an opportunity to learn more about each. Thus, it is noteworthy that such high percentages of Latino voters preferred the described "Republican" Hernandez even as they stated previously in the survey they would not.

While the descriptive results presented above are informative and interesting, they do not fully test the mobilizing influence of Latino candidates. For this analysis, multivariate probit and ordered-probit regression were employed to derive two sets of estimates presented here (found in table 4.4). While the variables in the models remain constant, there are two versions of the dependent variable tested. First, where it takes on a trichotomous distribution, ordered probit estimates are presented, and second, when the "undecided" voters are removed and the dependent variable is dichotomous, standard probit measures are presented. In addition,

TABLE 4.4
Determinants of Latino vote choice (LIF)

Independent variables	O-probit	Pr chg.	Probit	Pr chg.
Smith issues	-.1664 ** (.0660)	-.2071	-.2174 ** (.0925)	-.2921
Hernandez issues	.1807 ** (.0786)	.1765	.2757 ** (.1066)	.4184
Democratic voter	-.0599 (.1157)	-.0159	-.1944 (.1625)	-.0706
Republican voter	-.0183 (.1386)	.0049	-.1596 (.1878)	-.0588
Ethnic mobilization	.0509 ** (.0254)	.1322	.0753 ** (.0356)	.2824
Ethnic attachment	.0418 * (.0222)	.1730	.0636 ** (.0312)	.3721
White Democrat	-.0931 * (.0555)	-.0985	-.1171 (.0733)	-.1644
Latino Republican	-.0302 (.0484)	-.0321	-.0395 (.0662)	-.0572
Low sophistication	.1035 (.1101)	.0275	.1377 (.1501)	.0493
Female	-.0108 (.0976)	-.0029	-.0375 (.1334)	-.0136
Mexican origin	.1424 (.1157)	.0377	.1600 (.1634)	.0591
Foreign born	.1344 (.1173)	.0357	.1937 (.1592)	.0690
Age	.0201 (.0180)	.0534	.0443 * (.0248)	.1568
Education proxy	-.0489 (.0326)	-.0518	-.0574 (.0437)	-.0839
Less than \$20,000	-.0279 (.1521)	-.0074	-.1915 (.2133)	-.0711
\$20,000-\$39,999	.2102 (.1393)	.0558	.1592 (.1963)	.0567
\$40,000-\$69,000	-.0960 (.1440)	-.0254	-.2349 (.2029)	-.0872
More than \$70,000	.2330 (.1877)	.0618	.1810 (.2550)	.0634
Registered 1995-98	.0769 (.1057)	.0204	.1724 (.1436)	.0628
Spanish at home	-.0553 (.0685)	-.0293	-.0828 (.0912)	-.0605
LA County	-.0872 (.1048)	-.0231	-.1096 (.1434)	-.0401
Constant	n/a		-1.4296 (1.012)	
N	587		429	
Chi ²	38.20 **		42.59 **	
Log likelihood	-598.54		-254.46	
PPC			68.76%	
PRE (Lambda-p)			52.48%	
*** p < 0.01 ** p < 0.05 * p < 0.10				

for both models, postestimation analysis is used to present the changes in predicted probability.

Table 4.4 reports the full results for the ordered probit and probit models predicting vote choice for Hernandez. The analysis results confirm both the "issue position" and the "ethnic attachment" hypotheses, suggesting that for Latino voters a more complicated (nuanced) theory that incorporates both may be appropriate. As the issue preference hypothesis speculates, those respondents who have the same stance on the issues as a candidate are more likely to prefer that candidate. In this example, the variable *Smith Issues* has a significant and negative relationship with a vote for Hernandez, while *Hernandez Issues* is significant and positive as expected.¹⁵ Interestingly, there is no support for the partisanship theory, because neither the registered *Democrat* nor registered *Republican* variables have a significant effect on vote choice. Although there has been a strong issue-based attachment to the Democratic Party in California among Latino voters in the 1990s, this attachment does not influence vote choice for Smith, the more liberal candidate. This suggests that despite previously stated preference for candidates of a given party, this does not carry over into an election when a Latino candidate is present. This finding fits nicely with Martin Wattenberg's work (1987, 1994), which finds that campaigns are becoming candidate centered and political parties are losing their stronghold on voter decisions.

Further, when a coethnic candidate is present, the candidate focus of the campaign may be augmented for Latino voters. Studies of the 2001 Los Angeles mayoral campaign, a nonpartisan election, revealed that Latino voters were eager to elect a Latino candidate mayor, and exit polls found overwhelming support for the Latino candidate among Latino voters (Sonenshein and Pinkus 2002; Sonenshein 2003). Indeed, the results in Table 4.4 seem to confirm the ethnic attachment hypothesis. Both variables *ethnic mobilization*¹⁴ and *ethnic attachment*¹⁵ demonstrate a significant and positive effect on voting for the Latino candidate. This indicates that Latinos who identify with ethnic themes in mobilization and candidate characteristics are in fact more likely to vote for a coethnic candidate, regardless of partisanship. This finding is consistent with the empowerment theory, because it suggests that those voters who view ethnicity as an important mobilizing force, are likely to prefer a coethnic or coracial candidate (e.g., Lublin and Tate 1992).¹⁶

In addition, individual voter characteristics have no statistically significant effect in the multivariate analysis. Foreign born, Spanish household, and Mexican origin respondents are no more likely to prefer Hernandez over Smith, all other things being equal. Income, which is generally associated with voting Republican, also has no effect. Interestingly, registration date is also not significant. Because of the three seemingly anti-Latino propositions passed in 1994, 1996, and 1998, Ricardo

Ramírez (2002b) has noted that Latinos who first registered during these years are more likely to be sensitive to "Latino issues." However on its own, registration date has no influence on candidate preference in this hypothetical election.

On their own, the probit coefficients reveal little other than which variables are significant and their directional effect. Using postestimation analysis developed by Scott Long (1997, Long and Freese 2001), we can more precisely determine the specific contribution that each independent variable has on vote choice. The "Pr Chg" columns in table 4.4 report changes in predicted probability for the dependent variable, when the independent variable is moved from its minimum to its maximum value. Generally, issue preferences and ethnicity carry similar predictive capacity in explaining vote choice.

By dropping undecided voters, it is easier to assess the influence an independent variable has on changing one's vote from Smith to Hernandez. Voters who rate both *Hernandez Issues* "very important" are 41.8 percent more likely to prefer Hernandez than those who rate both issues "not important at all." Likewise, those who rate *Smith Issues* positively are 29.2 percent less likely to prefer Hernandez than those who do not resonate with Smith's issues. Because of the potential latent predisposition in favor of Latino candidates, it is not hard to imagine that Hernandez Issue voters find it easier to prefer him, while issue salience may have less of a draw for Smith.

Both ethnicity variables also show considerable influence on vote choice. While Latinos who respond to ethnic-based mobilization are 28.2 percent more likely to prefer Hernandez over Smith, voters who react favorably to Latin candidate characteristics and who have a high degree of *ethnic attachment* are 37.2 percent more likely to prefer the coethnic candidate. Taken further, if the predictive powers of these two ethnic identification variables are combined, a voter who holds both viewpoints is over 60 percent more likely to prefer Hernandez,¹⁷ resulting in ethnic identification as the key determinant of vote choice.

The results from the TRPI survey for cross-over voting show many similarities. This is important, because the TRPI data is from California and New York and for the 2002 election, suggesting that the findings above are not an artifact of the data set alone. Given the consistency in the findings, I will review the results briefly rather than detail each independent variable. Overall, issues (coded similarly as above) did not seem to drive or hinder cross-over voting, however partisanship did play a role. Latinos who had stated a preference for voting Democrat in their congressional race (*Democratic Voter*) were significantly less likely to side with a Latino Republican in both the ordered probit and probit models. Registrants who identified as strong partisans were also far less likely to prefer the ethnic cross-over candidate. These results are straightforward and are what we might expect.

TABLE 4.5
Determinants of Latino cross-over voting (TRPI)

Independent variables	O-probit	Pr chg.	Probit	Pr chg.
Democratic issues	-0.151 (0.112)	-0.106	-0.098 (0.160)	-0.037
GOP issues	-0.006 (0.156)	-0.004	-0.034 (0.228)	-0.013
Democratic voter	-0.269 * (0.148)	-0.190	-0.444 * (0.264)	-0.173
GOP voter	-0.008 (0.176)	-0.006	-0.035 (0.291)	-0.013
Strong partisan	-0.168 ** (0.069)	-0.237	-0.240 ** (0.104)	-0.186
Ethnic commonality	0.116 ** (0.053)	0.242	0.198 ** (0.079)	0.217
Latino representation	-0.047 (0.082)	-0.067	-0.112 (0.113)	-0.087
Ethnic attachment	0.041 (0.078)	0.086	0.066 (0.108)	0.077
Discrimination	-0.015 (0.047)	-0.031	-0.019 (0.066)	-0.022
Female	-0.001 (0.099)	-0.001	0.023 (0.142)	0.009
Mexican origin	0.084 (0.146)	0.059	0.132 (0.206)	0.050
Puerto Rican origin	0.053 (0.143)	0.037	0.065 (0.206)	0.025
Foreign born	0.092 (0.126)	0.065	0.178 (0.172)	0.068
Third generation	-0.131 (0.161)	-0.091	-0.189 (0.240)	-0.070
Age	0.002 (0.004)	0.074	0.000 (0.005)	-0.003
Education	-0.080 ** (0.039)	-0.280	-0.139 ** (0.056)	-0.256
\$25,001-\$34,999	0.195 (0.151)	0.138	0.267 (0.198)	0.104
\$35,000-\$49,999	0.136 (0.159)	0.096	0.204 (0.224)	0.079
\$50,000-\$79,999	0.167 (0.158)	0.119	0.213 (0.229)	0.083
Over \$80,000	0.283 (0.211)	0.202	0.390 (0.342)	0.153
Income missing	0.149 (0.149)	0.106	0.213 (0.221)	0.083
Married	0.065 (0.109)	0.045	0.120 (0.149)	0.046
Church attendance	0.002 (0.031)	0.007	-0.009 (0.044)	-0.018
Influence	0.031 (0.059)	0.066	0.055 (0.083)	0.062
Interest	0.017	0.036	0.003	0.004

TABLE 4.5
(continued)

Independent variables	O-probit	Pr chg.	Probit	Pr chg.
	(0.063)		(0.088)	
Language (Spanish)	-0.008 (0.079)	-0.012	0.016 (0.110)	0.012
California	0.025 (0.149)	0.017	0.042 (0.205)	0.016
Constant	n/a		-0.019 (0.681)	
N	594		396	
Chi ²	44.12 **		41.58 *	
Log likelihood	-621.10		-244.28	

*** p < 0.01 ** p < 0.05 * p < 0.10

Even controlling for issues and partisanship, there is also support for ethnicity as an important predictor of vote choice. The *ethnic commonality*¹⁸ variable (how much in common) demonstrated a positive and significant relationship with voting for the Latino cross-over candidate. In fact, among the variables discussed, ethnicity had a substantive effect equal to that of strong party identification. Latinos who had a high degree of ethnic commonality were 24.2 percent more likely to prefer the Latino cross-over candidate, all other things being equal, while strong party identifiers were 23.7 percent less likely to go against their party and pick the cross-over Latino candidate. However, there was a difference from the LIF data presented above. The *ethnic attachment* scale (which combined four similar "ethnic" variables to LIF) did not have a significant relationship with vote choice. We might expect that when partisanship is cued (as in the TRPI survey) that ethnicity may play less of a role. However, the ethnic commonality variable does suggest that when voters know both the partisanship and ethnicity of the candidates, ethnicity and ethnic identification can influence vote choice. Finally, the results indicate that education has an inverse relationship with cross-over voting, which may also be a result of level of political information. While candidate ethnicity might serve as an important information shortcut or heuristic device, the most educated voters may rely more on issue position, partisanship, and campaign promises in making their decision.

While these results are limiting because the two elections were hypothetical, some real evidence for support of Latino Republican candidates was found in the 2002 election. In the California State Assembly, four Latino Republicans were reelected to office with strong support from Latino voters in their districts, while Republican Gary Mendoza, a statewide candidate for insurance commissioner,

received the highest level of support of any Republican candidate for statewide office among Latinos and even outpolled the Anglo Democratic challenger in some heavily Latino precincts (California Secretary of State 2002; Los Angeles County Registrar 2002). In addition, in nonpartisan contests, Latinos have shown strong support for Latino candidates despite differences in ideology as in the 2001 Los Angeles mayoral and city attorney elections (*Los Angeles Times* exit poll, 2001).

Discussion

To this point, previous scholarship has failed to find that ethnicity is politically salient among Latino voters. While it has been considered an indirect influence by some (Graves and Lee 2000), other studies using the LNPS found no statistical evidence of a direct effect. In the conclusion to his book, *Counting on the Latino Vote*, DeSipio suggests that, "while there is currently no politically salient basis for Latino ethnicity, the roots are there among a sufficient share of the population. Given the right circumstances, Latinos regardless of ancestry, can shape a common political space" (1996, 178). While DeSipio finds no evidence that ethnicity is politically important, this research has suggested that the presence of a viable Latino candidate may represent a circumstance in which shared ethnicity becomes a salient factor in Latino political behavior.

The results presented here have shown that traditional theories of candidate preference need to be augmented for Latino voters when a coethnic candidate is present. That is to say, issue position, partisanship, and candidate evaluation may not tell the full story for why Latinos vote as they do. Instead, we can refine our understanding of vote choice by including measures of ethnic attachment in the model. Specifically, I have found that Latinos with a high degree of ethnic attachment are more likely to prefer a Latino candidate, absent party labels. Even when controlling for issue positions and party preference, ethnicity matters to vote choice. While previous scholars have found evidence of an indirect influence of ethnicity on voting (Cain and Kiewiet 1984; Graves and Lee 2000), here a direct influence is found. This is in part because of a more sophisticated measure of ethnicity. While previous research looked to a two-stage, indirect model after not finding evidence of a direct influence, this research has established no need to pursue the indirect model. Rather than conceptualizing ethnicity as an "all or nothing" factor, variable scales of ethnic identification are introduced that account for the relative strength of ethnicity to an individual. It is possible still that ethnicity holds *both* a direct and an indirect influence on vote choice. That is, not only does ethnic attachment directly influence which candidate a Latino voter may choose, but ethnic attachment may

also influence their partisanship and policy preferences, which, in turn, influence vote choice. This research has tested the former of these propositions and found it to be the case. Had the two ethnicity variables introduced here not achieved statistical significance, we would have rejected the direct link hypothesis and likely sided with the existing literature. However, this was not the case.

Pan-Latino ethnic identity is rooted in four shared characteristics common to all Hispanic Americans. These are Latin American heritage, the immigrant experience, Spanish language, and the colonial influence of Spain's empire. Coupled with these shared cultural characteristics, ethnic-based discrimination continues to exist (and perhaps grow in areas of new Latino population growth such as Iowa and North Carolina), which strengthens the connection with ethnicity. Further, there is a relatively moderate-to-high level of ethnic attachment among all Latinos, and more research is needed to explore what characteristics might influence ethnic attachment.

With more Latinos running for office than ever before, a new paradigm is emerging that challenges traditional notions of political behavior. This research is important, because it has demonstrated that shared ethnic identity does exist among Latinos and that beyond partisanship and issues, ethnicity constitutes an important determinant of vote choice when a Latino candidate is on the ballot.

Notes

I would like to thank Luis Arteaga of the Latino Issues Forum, and Harry Pachón of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute for kindly granting me access to their data for this project. In addition, I received considerable feedback and input from Gary Segura, Katherine Tate, Bernard Grofman, and Leo Chavez on an earlier draft of this essay. Finally, I am indebted to Rodolfo Espino, David Leal, and Ken Meier for the opportunity to be involved in the *Latino Politics* conference and this larger project.

1. An implicit argument though is that Latino candidate can win public office. If every Latino who ran for office lost, there would be no reason to suspect that their candidacy would "energize" the Latino community.

2. This electoral context may include endorsements by prominent Latino leaders, more in-depth coverage of the election by Spanish-language media, increased registration and mobilization drives by Latino civic organizations, and numerous campaign appearances by the Latino candidate at Latino churches, union halls, and schools.

3. Rather than replace existing models of voter turnout and candidate preference, I use them as a base and introduce additional explanatory variables. Standard predictors will remain in the models: age, education, income, gender, marital status, political efficacy/interest, partisanship, mobilization, and more.

4. A 2003 survey of Latinos in California by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute found that

a majority of Latino registered voters picked Latinos as the most discriminated-against group, ahead of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans.

5. Gore undoubtedly learned this tactic from his boss, President Bill Clinton, who declared before a crowd of African Americans in Atlanta, "I may be white on the outside, but I'm black on the inside," in 1996.

6. Hispanics or Latinos are typically considered to be people who can trace their ancestry to Spanish-speaking Latin America, thus excluding Brazil and parts of the Caribbean. In this study, I rely on a self-reported measure of ethnicity that was used as a screening question on the LIF survey instrument: "Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino?" (Arteaga 2000).

7. Robinson argues that one hundred and fifty to two hundred years after slavery was abolished, African Americans are still haunted by the socialpsychological implications that the institution of slavery had on African American-white power relations.

8. It should be emphasized that the survey data are for California Latinos only, which are predominantly of Mexican origin. Among survey respondents, 77 percent self-identified as being of Mexican ancestry. To determine the differences among Latino subgroups I include a dummy variable for Mexican origin in the models below.

9. Unfortunately, the survey did not follow a strict experimental design. A better approach would have been to switch the names "Smith" and "Hernandez" for half of the respondents to more accurately determine the effects of ethnic attachment on vote choice. However, because Hernandez is portrayed as the Republican candidate and California Latinos have strong ties to the Democratic Party, it provides considerable insight into the role of ethnicity in Latino vote choice.

10. The full results for question 13 were: Smith 25 percent; Hernandez 48 percent; neither 5 percent; combination 16 percent; don't know 7 percent (Arteaga 2000).

11. The trichotomous dependent variable takes a value of 0 when Smith is preferred, 1 when voters are undecided, and 2 when Hernandez is preferred. The neither, combination, and don't know voters can all be considered to be undecided between the two candidates and placed in between the options on the three-point index, as opposed to taking a value of zero.

12. The combined results for Democrats and Republicans to this question were: 26 percent Latino; 40 percent partisan; 29 percent depends on the candidates; 5 percent don't know.

13. Elsewhere in the LIF survey, respondents were asked a series of issues questions and the salience of each issue was determined. On each issue, respondents were asked if it was very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important. The salience indicators for, "improving public education," and "increasing affordable housing" were combined and recoded as *Smith issues*. Similarly, "preserving family values," and "reducing crime" were combined and recoded as *Hernandez issues*. Each variable ranges from 2 to 8.

14. The variable *ethnic mobilization* is based on a set of three questions asking respondents whether certain electoral circumstances would increase or decrease the likelihood that they might cast a ballot. Latino registered voters were asked, "Would you be more or less likely to vote in an election where . . . (1) there was a viable Latino candidate; (2) issues important to Latinos had been discussed in depth over the course of the election; and (3) Latino organizations and community leaders were urging Latinos to vote." Although the variable specifically addresses mobilization, it also taps the underlying importance of ethnicity with regard to political behavior (Lien 1994; Pantoja and Woods 1999). Using Cronbach's alpha, we can determine the internal consistency of the scale, based on the average inter-item correlation. The variable

ranges from a low of 3 to a high of 15. Overall, the test produces an alpha reading of .7799, which is quite high for a four-item scale.

15. The variable *ethnic attachment* combines the responses to four questions about candidate characteristics. Respondents were asked a series of questions to determine whether different ethnic-based characteristics would attract support among Latino voters. For example, the survey asked, "would you vote for a candidate who _____, or would the information make no impact on your decision to vote?" I combined the following four characteristics in compiling the *ethnic attachment* variable: (1) is bilingual in English and Spanish; (2) has a Latino surname; (3) is endorsed by a Latino organization or group; (4) is Latino and speaks Spanish as his/her native language. The variable ranges from 4 to 20. Unlike the previous variable, this measure directly addresses the role of ethnic identity in candidate preference. If the ethnic association hypothesis is correct, both variables should reveal a significant and positive relationship with voting for the coethnic candidate, Hernandez. For this measure, the Cronbach Alpha is .7758, again a high degree of reliability.

16. The specific candidate attributes in this hypothetical election are not as important. Voters who stated a preference for a white Democrat are less likely to prefer Hernandez in the ordered probit analysis, but this relationship, which is only marginally significant, dissolves in the probit analysis.

17. In fact, when the two variables are combined into one broad "ethnicity" scale and the models are reestimated, the predictive capacity of the new ethnicity variable in forecasting a vote for Hernandez is 62.3 percent. Additional results are available from the author upon request.

18. Respondents in the TRPI survey were asked, "Just thinking about groups living in the United States, how much do you think you have in common with other Latinos? Is it a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or do you think you have nothing in common?" The *ethnic commonality* variable ranges from a low of 1 to a high of 4.