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IS THE SLEEPING GIANT AWAKENING?
LATINOS AND CALIFORNIA POLITICS IN THE 1990'S

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1 Introduction

During the 1990's, the population of Latinos in California has grown considerably. At the beginning of this decade, the statewide population of Latinos was 7.8 million — but by 1996, the number of Latinos in California had grown to over 9 million.¹ Thus, California currently contains at least one-third of the Latino population in the United States. According to the estimates of the California Department of Finance, this growth in the Latino population in California will continue for the foreseeable future.

Latinos will eventually become the largest racial or ethnic group in California. Contrary to popular beliefs about the citizenship status of the new Latinos in California, the vast majority of the increased Latino population in California comes from births, not immigration, thus implying that if these new residents stay in California, they will soon be eligible to register and vote.

These demographic trends have sparked a great deal of discussion in the press about the political impact of this enormous increase in California's Latino population. Many of the pundits and political elite have argued that with the demographic increases in Latino population will inevitably come increases in Latino political power. But the fact that many of the important issues debated in the state capital and passed by the electorate in the ballot box are not issues supported by a majority of the Latino population (Propositions 187, 209, and 227) seems to provide strong evidence to counter the claim that Latino political power has yet arrived.

In fact, the recent research literature has been much more pessimistic about how

¹In general we will use the terminology "Latino" whenever possible, meaning California citizens of Latino or Hispanic descent. Unfortunately there is a lack of uniformity in the use of these terms, both by government agencies which are entrusted with collecting statistics on racial and ethnic groups and by the various organizations who conduct public opinion or exit polling surveys of California citizens and voters. Whenever we deviate from our general terminology we will be specific in whether we are discussing self-identified Latino, Hispanic, or Latino-Hispanic voters or citizens.

quickly and easily Latino population growth will translate into political power for Latinos (Alvarez and Butterfield 1998, 1999; de la Garza 1996; de la Garza and DeSipio 1992; de la Garza, Menchaca and DeSipio 1994; de la Garza and DeSipio 1996; DeSipio 1996; Nelson 1993; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Uhlaner 1996). The emerging picture of Latino political behavior is one which documents an enormous amount of heterogeneity and complexity of opinions, attitudes and behavior, making clear generalizations about the future direction of Latino political power in California and the United States problematic.

First, Latinos tend to participate in politics at a much lower rate than whites and African-Americans. Early research, for example, showed that only 60% of eligible Latinos in California voted in 1984, compared to 76% of eligible white Californians (Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet 1989). Other more recent studies have come to similar conclusions (de la Garza 1996; Uhlaner 1996; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). But more current evidence from California seems to indicate that Latinos are narrowing the participation gap (Alvarez and Butterfield 1998, 1999).

Second, when we turn to attitudes and opinions of Latinos, the picture clouds considerably. Part of the problem with the cloudy picture is a methodological problem. Until quite recently, studies of Latino political attitudes and opinions were usually conducted using survey samples which were not very representative of Latino populations (for further discussion of this issue see de la Garza 1987; de la Garza et al. 1992; DeSipio 1996). But, on the other hand, some of the more recent survey studies of Latino political attitudes and opinions have relied upon oversampling of Latinos, which then make comparisons to other racial and ethnic groups difficult (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

But, there are some clear tendencies in Latino political attitudes and opinion which have become apparent from this convoluted literature. One tendency is that Latinos do strongly lean towards the Democratic party in their partisan attachments (DeSipio 1996).

While Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans have shown strong Democratic partisanship (Cain and Kiewiet 1987), Cuban Americans have shown strong Republican partisanship (Moreno and Rae 1992; Moreno and Warren 1992). A second tendency is to find in national samples of Latinos a tendency towards conservative ideological attitudes (de la Garza et al. 1992). A third tendency is for Latinos, despite these conservative leanings, to be strongly supportive of social policies (like fighting crime and stopping drug use) and of further governmental action in domestic policy (de la Garza et al. 1992). On the other hand, Latinos tend to take positions in line with their general ideological stands when it comes to issues like abortion and capital punishment. Thus, despite the general partisan and ideological tendencies of Latinos, the issue stands of Latinos are not consistent with standard partisan or ideological cleavages in the United States.

Our purpose in this paper is to trace the changes during the 1990's in Latino political behavior in California. Before we can claim to understand any changes in Latino political representation, whether in local or state politics, we need to document if the demographic changes in the Latino participation are translating into greater participation by Latinos in the political process and changes in Latino voter attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior. Despite the political rhetoric surrounding the discussions of Latino political behavior in the 1990's, it is surprising to find little in the recent academic literature about this important political question. We hope to provide some empirical evidence to document recent trends in Latino political behavior in California, and in future work discuss more completely what these behavioral changes might imply for Latino political representation in California.

Below, we produce three important findings about Latinos in recent California electoral politics. First, there are strong signs that Latinos are registering and participating in California politics in greater proportions, indicating that Latinos are mobilizing. What is unclear at this point is what the exact determinants of this Latino mobilization have been, and what factors might produce further Latino mobilization in coming elections. Second,

during the 1990's there was widespread support by Latinos for the Democratic party, both in terms of partisan affiliation and voting behavior in gubernatorial elections. Third, the issue opinions of Latino voters, though, are quite distinct from those of other racial and ethnic groups in California; Latino issue opinions are quite difficult to reconcile with the current issue platforms of both major political parties. That Latino voters have issue opinions which are different from other racial and ethnic groups, and which do not conform simply with the current partisan cleavages, makes simple predictions about the future of Latino political power in California quite difficult.

2 Latino Registration and Participation

We begin by examining the trends between 1990 and 1996 in Latino voter registration and turnout. The estimates we report in Table 1 come from a recent study conducted by Alvarez and Butterfield (1999), in which Latino and Anglo voter registration and participation trends during this periods in each of California's 58 counties were estimated and discussed. Briefly, in that study the authors used data on each county's Latino and Anglo voting age populations in each election year, along with data on overall registration and turnout in each county, to produce "ecological estimates" of each racial or ethnic group's political registration and participation in each year using the ecological inference techniques recently developed by King (1997). For a detailed discussion of these estimates or the estimation procedure, we refer interested readers to Alvarez and Butterfield (1998, 1999) and King (1997).

Table 1 appears here

Table 1 is organized with the Latino voter registration estimates in the top panel, with each row giving the estimated proportion of the Latino voting-age population in each

geographic region of California who were registered to vote. In the top panel, we see that there were striking increases in Latino voter registration from 1990 to 1996. In 1990, before the waves of anti-Latino ballot initiatives began, Latino voter registration was estimated to be 52% of the voting-age Latino citizens of California. It increases slightly in 1992 and 1994, but jumps to 67% in 1996, an increase statewide of 15%. When the Latino voter registration estimates are broken down for different regions of the state, two facts are apparent. First, the increases in Latino voter registration occurred throughout the state; in each region of California there were sharp increases in Latino voter registration. But, the second fact is that the increases did not occur at the same rate in the different regions of California. Some areas — like the Bay Area and the Central Coast — had estimated increases in Latino voter registration of over 20%, with most of the increases occurring in the 1996 election cycle. Most of the rest of the regions of the state, though, had Latino voter registration increases roughly identical to the statewide changes during this period.

In the bottom panel of Table 1 are the estimated proportions of eligible Latinos who turned out to participate in each of these four statewide elections in the 1990's. We see generally low levels of Latino participation in the 1990 election, ranging from around 25% to 30%. This is over 10% below statewide turnout of 41% in this election. The 1992 election, though, saw a rapid surge in Latino voter participation; this was most likely fueled by the Clinton presidential drive in California. In the 1992 election, statewide Latino voter participation increased by approximately 30% and was above the overall state turnout rate.

The 1994 election, of course, witnessed the reelection drives of both Governor Pete Wilson and Senator Dianne Feinstein, as well as the divisive campaign over Proposition 187. While Proposition 187 had no direct effect on citizens, it would have denied social services to illegal aliens. Many pundits have argued that the 1994 election campaigns of Pete Wilson, Michael Huffington, and surrounding Proposition 187, served to fuel sharp increases in Latino voter participation. But in Table 1 we see mixed support for this claim.

Relative to the 1990 midterm election, Latino voter participation was quite high statewide (43% relative to 29%). But most of the increase in participation appears to occur between 1990 and 1992. According to the estimates in Table 1, in 1992 Latino turnout was already equal to or greater than the overall turnout statewide. It is also between 1990 and 1992 that the estimates reveal the large increase in Latino registration rates. Thus, the bulk of the increases in registration and turnout of Latinos in California occurred before the 1994 election, which means that events in the 1994 election cannot explain most of the increases in turnout and registration in the early 1990's.

However, the 1996 election had yet another presidential campaign and also had another socially divisive ballot proposition, the anti-affirmative action initiative known as Proposition 209. In Table 1 we see evidence of substantial Latino voter mobilization from the 1994 election, with Latino voter participation up to 52% statewide. However, much of this rise can be attributed to the on-year versus off-year comparison. Latino turnout rose 9% from 1994 to 1996, but overall turnout was also up 7%. Yet again, even in the 1996 election cycle, the estimate for Latino voter participation in California is below the 1992 peak of 57%.

Last, unlike the estimates for Latino voter registration trends from 1990 to 1996, there seems to be a great deal of uniformity across the different regions of California in Latino voter participation. The dynamics of Latino voter participation from 1990 to 1996 in each of the regions of California is roughly the same, which indicates that the forces driving Latino voter participation are uniform across the state.

The parameters of the Latino voter mobilizations of the 1990's are quite clear from the analysis we have presented in this section of our paper. First, there were strong increases in Latino voter registration and participation in the 1990's. But second, we found that these increases are associated with mobilizations largely between 1990–1992 and 1994–1996, which occur during presidential election years. The timing of these mobilizations call into question

the role of Proposition 187 as the cause of Latino voter mobilization, thus leaving open the exact causes of this mobilization and making it difficult to predict whether this mobilization will continue in the next series of elections.

3 Latino Voters, Party Identification and Party Support

With this understanding of the trends in Latino voter registration and turnout in hand, we now turn our attention to the political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior of Latino voters in the statewide elections from 1990 through 1998. In this analysis we use a wide variety of exit polling data, conducted by a variety of media and political groups. Much of the exit poll data we use comes from the polls conducted by the Voter Research Service (VRS), a consortium of media groups. We also take advantage of the exit polling of the *Los Angeles Times* (LAT), which has made many of their recent exit poll results available to the public. Last, we have a unique exit poll which we conducted for the California Secretary of State, for our study of the blanket primary in the 1998 primary elections in California. One important difference between our 1998 primary exit poll (ANPRG) and the media exit polls is that our polling frame was five different Assembly districts across the state; the media exit polls were designed to be representative samples of the statewide electorate.²

However, while the ANPRG exit poll does not utilize a representative statewide sample of voters, it does have a unique aspect which we will exploit in this analysis. One of the Assembly districts (AD 49) is a heavily Latino district, primarily in eastern Los Angeles. Thus, we have a large sample of Latino voters which will give us the opportunity to examine the political preferences and attitudes of Latino voters in the June 1998 primary election in

²The five Assembly districts are AD 9, 49, 53, 61, and 75; a more detailed discussion of this exit poll can be found in Alvarez and Nagler 1999.

great detail.

We begin our study of California Latino political attitudes and behavior by examining Latino partisanship trends in this decade. Generally, California Latinos are and continue to be strongly Democratic in their partisanship, as is clearly revealed in Table 2. Here we provide the percentages of Latinos claiming to identify with the Democratic party in each of the exit polls we use from 1990 through 1998.

Table 2 goes here

But, we see in Table 2 that while most Latinos in California claim Democratic partisanship, the general patterns from 1990 through 1996 do not show any clear sign of either increases or decreases in Latino partisanship. The percentages of Latino voters who claim to be Democratic were 64% in 1990, 68% in 1992, 66% in 1994, and 62% in 1996. However, there does seem to be a jump in Latino voter Democratic affiliation in 1998, since in both the LAT and ANPRG exit polls we see these same proportions jump to around 70%.

A much more detailed analysis of Latino partisanship is contained in Table 3. Here we provide successive panels, each of which give the proportions of each racial and ethnic group in California, reporting Democratic, Republican, Independent, or other partisan affiliation, in each election for which we have exit poll data during the 1990's.

Table 3 goes here

For California Latino voters in these elections, we again see the relative stability of Democratic partisan identification from 1990-1996, with a jump in Democratic identification in 1998. Regarding the other racial and ethnic groups, it is clear that African-Americans are locked heavily into the Democratic coalition, with the proportion of African-American voters

who identify with the Democratic party a steady 15-20% higher than Latino identification. Asian-Americans, on the other hand, in 1990 were highly heterogeneous: 45% Democratic identification, 31% Republican identification, and 22% Independent. By the 1998 primary election, there appears to be a trend in which Asian-American Republicans are either not voting in statewide elections or they are changing their partisan affiliations to Independent. The ANPRG poll from 1998 has a 45% Democratic, 23% Republican and 30% Independent breakdown, while the 1998 LAT primary election exit poll has the Asian-American breakdown at 40% Democratic, 8% Republican and 42% Independent.

Thus, amongst the major racial and ethnic minority groups in California's electorate, we see a great deal of stability in African-American identification with the Democratic party during the 1990's. We also see that Latinos are predominantly Democratic in affiliation, with indications of a slightly increase in Democratic identification in the 1998 primary election. However, it is important to realize that there was also an increase in Democratic partisanship among whites in 1998. So it would be a mistake to infer that the Democratic party had done something to specifically attract Latinos, or that the Republican party had necessarily caused lastin g harm to itself among Latinos. But, Latinos are not as heavily Democratic as African-Americans. Last, a plurality of Asian-Americans are Democratic during most of this period, and we do see evidence of a trend of Asian-Americans away from the Republican party into Independent status.

Next, we shift focus to Latino voting behavior. In Table 4 we summarize the major patterns in Latino voting behavior for governor, in California since 1990. In this table we provide first the estimated proportion of the voting electorate which was made up by Latino voters; the second column then gives the proportions of Latino voters casting ballots for Democratic gubernatorial candidates.

Table 4 goes here

In the first column of Table 4 we again see some evidence of increasing Latino voter participation. Focusing on the midterm elections of 1990, 1994 and 1998, we find that in the general election exit polls from those years Latino voters made up 5%, 9%, and 14% of the electorate (focusing on either VRS or CNN exit polls). In the presidential election years of 1992 and 1996, we see Latino vote shares of 12% and 14% (focusing only on the VRS polls). Thus, we again find evidence of Latinos' increasing share of the state electorate.

The second column gives the percentages of Latino voters supporting Democratic gubernatorial candidates in each election. In 1990, the VRS general election exit poll reported 71% of Latino voter supporting the Democratic candidate (Dianne Feinstein). This is almost identical to the 70% (LAT) or 71% (CNN) Latino voter support for the Democratic candidate (Kathleen Brown) in the 1994 gubernatorial race. But we do see some sign that Latino support for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1998 could have been greater, with estimates of 71% (LAT) or 78% (CNN). However, comparing the Anglo and Latino voting the table again suggests that we do not see long-term Latino specific gains for the Democratic party. The ratio of Latino to Anglo support for the Democratic party in 1998 is not appreciably greater than it was in 1990.

We break down the gubernatorial vote in each of these elections for the other major racial and ethnic groups in Tables 5. Here we have successive panels in each table giving the proportions of each racial and ethnic group supporting the Republican and Democratic candidates.

Table 5 goes here

The patterns in general election partisan voting for each racial and ethnic group indicate shifting coalitions in each gubernatorial election. In the 1990 gubernatorial election, white voters split almost evenly between the Democratic and Republican candidates.

African-Americans were strongly Democratic (91%), with Latinos being less Democratic (71%), and with a majority of Asians casting Democratic ballots. But in 1994, white voters shift dramatically into the Republican column (62% in the CNN poll and 59% in the LAT poll), while a majority of Asian-American voters also move into the Republican column. African-American support for the Democratic candidate drops considerably to 76%, while Latino Democratic support is roughly the same as it was in 1990.

But in 1998, the landscape shifts again, with white voters returning to the Democratic candidate, giving the Democrats a thin majority amongst white voters in both of the exit polls. African-American voters remain strongly Democratic, but still not as strongly Democratic in their voting as in 1990. Latinos are also mainly supporting the Democratic candidate, with their Democratic voting either being the same as in the preceding elections or slightly greater, depending on which of the two exit polls one uses (78% in the CNN poll and 71% in the LAT poll). Asian-Americans, like white voters, though, also in 1998 return to the Democratic column.

We provide similar racial and minority group breakdowns in the 1994 and 1998 gubernatorial primary elections in Tables 6 and 7. These tables are organized as the preceding tables were presented.

Tables 6 and 7 go here

The 1994 gubernatorial primary was a “closed” primary, in which voters could only cast ballots for candidates running in the party’s primary for which they were registered to vote. In 1994, Latinos made up 12% of the Democratic primary electorate, and 61% of these Latino Democrats voted for Kathleen Brown, the eventual Democratic nominee. Majorities of all of the other major racial and ethnic groups in the Democratic primary in 1994 supported Brown as well, but for whites. In the 1994 Republican primary, Latinos

made up only 4% of the electorate. Interestingly, these Latino Republicans were closely divided between Ron Unz and Pete Wilson. Unz, who would go on in 1998 to sponsor the anti-bilingual education initiative Proposition 227, found strong support amongst white and latino Republicans, but not enough support to beat the incumbent Wilson. Wilson, who later in the 1994 election would become closely associated with Proposition 187, received a bare majority of Latino Republican support in 1994.

The 1998 primary, though, was run under a different set of electoral rules following the passage of Proposition 198. The 1998 primary was a “blanket” primary, in which voters could cast one vote for any candidate, irregardless of the voter’s or candidate’s party affiliation. Focusing on the CNN and LAT exit polls, we see that Latino voters primarily cast ballots in the Democratic primary; only 17% cast ballots for Lungren, the frontrunning Republican candidate. Thirty-six percent of Latino voters in these two polls cast ballots for Davis, and 30% voted for Checchi. Checchi’s strong showing in the primary amongst Latino voters is consistent with his strong campaigning for the Latino vote.

The ANPRG exit poll, reported in Table 7, actually shows slightly stronger Checchi support than Davis support, in each of the possible categories of Latino, Hispanic, and Hispanic-Latino identification. This is no doubt due to the fact that the ANPRG poll was conducted in one area (Eastern Los Angeles), where Checchi heavily courted the Latino vote with Spanish language advertising.

In the end, what can we conclude from the evidence presented in this section of this paper? First, we have presented clear evidence that Latino voters are reasonably strong in their Democratic partisan affiliation and in their willingness to support Democratic gubernatorial candidates in California. But second, we did find that generally Latino voters are not as strong in neither their Democratic affiliations or gubernatorial voting as African-American voters. Third, there is not strong evidence of a heavy surge of Latino Democratic

partisanship nor candidate support; for most of the 1990's Latino voters were relatively stable in both identification and gubernatorial voting, with some signs of a slightly increase in both in the 1998 election. Last, looking only at the 1998 primary election, there is evidence that direct targeting of Latino voters through explicit campaign appeals might be a successful strategy for future Democratic primary candidates.

4 Latino Issue Priorities, 1998

What issues are important to California's Latino voters? Are they interested or concerned with issues that are also the focus of white voters? To probe this question further, we present in Table 8 the issue priorities for white and Latino voters from the 1998 primary election. The ANPRG exit poll included a list of eleven possible important issues, and allowed each voter to check up to three of these issues as important. The issues are: improving education; jobs and the economy; reducing crime; electing experienced leaders; abortion; bilingual education; stopping special interests; health care; the environment; cutting taxes and electing new leadership.

Table 8 goes here

The first two columns of the table give the proportion of white and Latino voters declaring an issue to be important. The next two columns give the ordinal ranking of each issue by each group based on the proportion within the group declaring it to be an important issue. Close examination of Table 8 demonstrates that there is a great deal of similarity and difference between white and Latino voters in their issue priorities. Generally, white voters are quite broad in their issue priorities. At least 25% or more of the white electorate thought that improving education, jobs and the economy, reducing crime, bilingual

education, stopping special interests, health care, and cutting taxes were important issues to them. Of these important issues, white voters were more inclined to see improving education and stopping special interests as important than were Latino voters.

On the other hand, Latino voters are also broad in their issue priorities. At least 25% or more of the Latino electorate saw improving education, jobs and the economy, reducing crime, bilingual education, health care and cutting taxes as issues of importance to themselves. But on four of these issues, Latino voters seemed stronger in their prioritizations of the issues than white voters: jobs and the economy (40% of Latino voters saw this as an important issue), reducing crime (46% of Latino voters saw this as an important issue), bilingual education (39% of Latino voters thought this was an important issue), and health care (40% of Latino voters saw this as an important issue).

Perhaps the clearest difference revealed in Table 8 is the relative weight placed on crime versus education by white and Latino voters. More Latino voters claimed crime to be an important issue than said improving education was an important issue; whereas for whites 12% more whites said improving education was important than said reducing crime was important. Also apparent is that whereas jobs and the economy was only the fifth most important issue for whites, a full 22% below whites' top issue; jobs and the economy was the third most important issue for Latinos, only 6% below their top issue of reducing crime.

In Table 8 we also provide the proportions of white and Latino voters in the ANPRG sample who reported voting for or against three of the ballot propositions in the June 1988 primary election: Proposition 223 (“Schools spending limits on administration”), Proposition 226 (“Political contributions by employees, union members, and foreign entities”), and Proposition 227 (“English language in the public schools”).³ On these three ballot issues we

³The names in parentheses in the text are the official ballot titles. The ballot summaries of each proposition follow. Proposition 223: “Prohibits school districts from spending more than five percent of funds from all sources for administrative costs. Authorizes fines for failure to comply. Fiscal Impact: Requires school districts to reduce administrative costs (as defined by the measure) by up to \$700 million. To comply with

do see some significant differences in preferences between white and Latino voters. First, white voters were seven percent more likely to support the school administrative spending limit proposition (223) than were Latino voters, with a majority of Latinos casting “no” votes on this ballot item. The differences between whites and Latinos were even more vast on Proposition 226 — which would have sharply limited the ability of unions to solicit and utilize political contributions from their members. 49% of white voters in the ANPRG sample supported this initiative while only 27% of the Latino voters supported the initiative, a difference of 22%.

Last, Proposition 227 targeted bilingual education programs in California’s public schools. This was seen by many in the Latino community as yet another in a long string of ballot initiatives attacking Latino interests, stretching back to Propositions 187 and 209. Here the gap between whites and Latinos was wide, with an overwhelming majority of whites (69%) supporting Proposition 227 while a strong majority of Latinos (61%) opposed Proposition 227. Thus, while we see differences in preferences on these three ballot issues, the differences are especially profound on Proposition 225 and 227.

However, while these bivariate results indicate that Latinos do have distinctive issue preferences, it remains to be determined if these distinctive issue preferences hold constant when we control for other possible reasons that Latinos might hold different issue preferences than whites and other minority groups. To see if Latinos have distinctive issue preferences from Anglos, conditioned on their demographic traits, we estimated a series of multivariate

this requirement, districts could more accurately account for administrative costs, move operations from central locations to school sites, and reduce administrative spending.” Proposition 226: “Requires employee’s or union member’s permission to withhold wages or union dues for political contributions. Prohibits foreign contributions to state and local candidates. Fiscal Impact: Unknown, probably not major, state enforcement costs. Additional state costs (up to \$2 million annually, one-time costs of \$2 million to \$5 million), offset by fees, and unknown local government costs for administrative activities, probably offset by fees.” Proposition 227: “Requires all public school instruction be in English, unless parents request otherwise and show certain circumstances. Provides short-term English immersion programs for children learning English. Funds community English instruction. Fiscal Impact: Impacts on individual school districts would depend on how schools, parents, and the state respond to the proposition’s changes. These impacts could vary significantly by district. Total state spending on education, however, probably would not change.”

models in which we predicted whether Latino voters in the ANPRG sample were more likely to rank different issues as important relative to whites controlling for education, age, and gender. We estimated this multivariate predictive model for each of the issue priority questions in the ANPRG sample. We report the important results from these predictive models in Table 9, where we give the difference in probability that a representative Latino, Asian, or black voter would have relative to an anglo voter of listing each of the respective issue priorities, controlling for the demographic characteristics listed above.

Table 9 goes here

Table 9 is organized so that each row presents the results from the predictive multivariate model for each issue priority in the ANPRG 1998 sample; each column gives the predicted probability effect that self-identification with one of these racial or ethnic minority groups has on whether a representative voter from each group held each issue priority relative to anglos.⁴

Examination of Table 9 for Latino voters (first column of numbers) shows a number of statistically significant results (indicated by the starred entries). First, Latino voters were significantly less likely to believe that improving education was an important issue priority, with blacks also being significantly likely to less likely to find this an important issue. Latino voters, like blacks again, were more likely than whites to find that jobs and the economy was an important issue in early 1998. Next, Latino voters were also significantly less likely to find that stopping special interests was an important issue priority (Asians were even less likely to find that stopping special interests was an important issue priority).

The multivariate results for bilingual education show that Latino voters were much

⁴Complete results from these multivariate models are available from the authors upon request. Technically these results are from a binary probit model.

more likely than whites to find it an issue priority — but both blacks and Asians were less likely to see bilingual education as an important issue, highlighting one important issue cleavage between these three racial or ethnic groups. Latinos were also less likely than anglos to see the environment as a significant issue.

Last, some of the other issues are worth discussing since we find that Latinos did not statistically significantly differ from whites and often from the other racial and ethnic groups. One of these issues is abortion, where neither Latinos nor blacks were significantly more or less likely than whites to find it an important issue; Asians, though, were less likely than whites to see abortion as an important issue in the spring of 1998. Also, none of these racial or ethnic groups were distinguishable from whites on the issues of health care and reducing crime.

We can take a different look at the differences Latino issue preferences by examining the survey marginals from the PPIC Statewide Survey, conducted in May 1998.⁵ The responses in Table 10 are broken down by all respondents and Latino respondents to each issue.

Table 10 goes here

The first four questions in Table 10 focus on issue priorities for crime, education, transportation and traffice, and population growth. In the PPIC sample, both Latinos and all adults see crime as a “big problem”, but the differences between Latinos and all respondents are slight. Latinos are somewhat less likely to see education as a “big problem” than all respondents in this survey sample, which is also true for transportation and traffic issues and population growth. On each of these three issues, the distribution of Latino opinion is shifted more to the “not much of a problem” end than the sample of adults.

⁵This is a telephone survey of 2008 California adult residents, interviewed from May 1 to May 6, 1998. We use this telephone poll due to the fact that it was conducted close to the June 1998 primary, that it contains a large sample of Latinos, and since it has excellent issue questions.

The next set of issue questions in the PPIC survey cover a range of education, government finance and regulation, and social issues. First, while Latinos are not as likely to see education as an important issue relative to adults, Latinos are slightly more in favor of tax-funded school vouchers than all adults. Latinos are also much more in favor of more government expenditures and regulation, but not necessarily for environmental causes. When we turn to the two social or moral issues included in the PPIC survey — homosexuality and abortion — we see there that Latinos are less accepting of homosexuality and are more likely than the general sample of adults to support limits on abortion, and even making abortion illegal.

What can we take from these issue priority figures? In the ANPRG results, two conclusions can be reached. First, the relative emphases of white and Latino voters are similar, but not identical. Latino voters are less likely to be concerned about improving education and the power of special interest groups than whites, more likely to be concerned about jobs and the economy, reducing crime, health care, and bilingual education than whites. Whites and Latinos are equally concerned about cutting taxes. Second, the issues which concern Latino voters are generally economic or family issues; their highest concerns are with education and bilingual education, jobs and the economy, health care, and reducing crime.

The PPIC survey results reinforce this portrait of Latino issue preferences. We saw in the PPIC survey results that Latinos are not as focused on education, but that many Latinos do find it an important problem. Specifically, Latinos support tax-funded school vouchers, by a large majority. Latinos are in favor of greater government spending and regulation, but are more likely to find homosexuality unacceptable and willing to place stricter limits on abortion policy. The greater emphasis on crime relative to education by Latinos is striking. This may simply be a function of increased exposure to crime because of income and region.

These issue priorities and preferences for Latinos in California point to interesting political dilemmas for the development of a distinct Latino political coalition. For California Latinos in the late 1990's defy standard simple categorization into ideological or partisan groupings; the issue priorities and preferences of Latinos in California also do not mesh well into standard theories of racial or ethnic politics in the United States (DeSipio 1996). Additionally, with this clustering of issue priorities, it is not at all clear that the Democratic party in California can maintain a strong grip on the growing Latino vote, nor on Latino partisanship. In some respects, Latino voters in California are concerned by issues which either are or could easily become Republican-dominated issues, such as cutting taxes, reducing crime, or jobs and the economy. On the other hand, Latino voters are worried about some issues which the Democratic party could easily take a strong lead on, especially improving education, fixing bilingual education, and health care. Last, neither white nor Latino voters are concerned greatly about two issues which are closely associated with the Democratic party — abortion and the environment.

5 Latinos and Democratic Partisanship

While we have covered extensively the overall dimensions of Latino political behavior and attitudes during the 1990's in California, what still remains an open question is the exact relationship between specific issues and political behavior and attitudes. In this section we provide some answers to this open question by using a multivariate model to analyze Latino voter partisanship in the June 1998 primary election.

The motivation for this multivariate modeling analysis is to pin down exactly which issues are motivating Latino voters to enter into Democratic partisanship. A comparison of the factors motivating Latino voter Democratic partisanship, with white voter Democratic partisanship, will then shed considerable light on what issues may be motivating Latinos to

enter, or to possibly exit, from the California Democratic party coalition.

Our analysis is relatively simple. We estimate a simple probit model, with a binary dependent variable coded 1 for Democratic partisanship, 0 otherwise (Republican, Independent, or Other party). As predictive variables, we include measures of ideology and the voter's perception of the status of the California state economy. We include dummy variables to indicate whether the voter noted up to three of the following as important issues: improving education, jobs and the economy, reducing crime, electing experienced leaders, abortion, bilingual education, stopping special interests, health care, and the environment (cutting taxes is the excluded or baseline category). We include binary indicators for support of Propositions 223, 226, and 227, as well as measures for female voters, age, and educational attainment.

We present the results from our multivariate model in a form easy to understand in Table 11. Instead of presenting the probit model coefficients, we instead present here the estimated marginal effects and their standard errors.⁶ We present in the first column of Table 11 the independent variable names, while in the next three columns we give the estimated effects of each independent variable for the full sample of voters, for only white voters, and for Latino voters.

Table 11 goes here

First, for the full sample of voters in the June 1998 exit poll conducted by ANPRG, we see a number of factors emerge as statistically significant predictors of Democratic partisanship. First, ideology (with liberal identifiers more likely to be Democrats), is an important predictor of Democratic partisanship. Among the issue priorities, jobs and the economy, abortion, stopping special interests and health care each emerge as significant predictors of

⁶The actual probit estimates and other information about the model fit are available from the authors.

Democratic identification for the full sample of voters: a voter who saw jobs and the economy, and health care, as important issues is more likely to be Democratic, while a voter who saw abortion and stopping special interests as important was less likely to be a Democrat. Support for Propositions 226 and 227 worked to make voters less Democratic, while women and less educated voters were more likely to be Democratic identifiers.

In the second column of probit marginal effect estimates are the predicted effects of each independent variable for white voters. The results are similar to those for the full sample of voters, with three exceptions. First, for white voters, jobs and the economy, and stopping special interests, drop out of statistical significance in predicting their Democratic identification. Second, the estimated impact of abortion on Democratic partisanship roughly doubles for whites relative to the full sample of voters.

The last column of Table 11 contains the marginal effects for the Latino voters in this primary election exit poll sample. There we see a number of differences relative to white voters and the full sample of voters. First, the impact of ideological leanings drops about in half for Latino voters; while ideology is still a statistically significant predictor of Latino Democratic partisanship, it is roughly half the magnitude as for white voters. Second, we see that perception of the state of the California state economy is an important predictor of Latino Democratic partisanship, with Latino voters who perceived the California state economy to be improving as being more likely to be Democratic. This factor does not play an important role in white voter Democratic partisanship. Third, the only issue priority which factors heavily into Latino Democratic partisanship is the jobs and the economy, with Latino voters who saw this to be an important problem more likely to be Democratic. This is in sharp contrast to white voter Democratic partisanship, where abortion and health care were important predictors of Democratic leanings. Fourth, not a single of the important ballot propositions in the June 1998 election significantly predicted Latino Democratic partisanship, not even Proposition 227, the anti-bilingual education proposition.

Thus, the factors which determined Latino voter Democratic partisanship are clearly distinct from those determining white Democratic partisanship in early 1998. Latino voters were identifying with the Democratic party much less for ideological reasons, much less for positions on divisive ballot propositions, and generally much less for non-economic issue reasons. Instead, Latino voters were identifying with the Democratic party primarily because of economic reasons.

6 Has The “Sleeping Giant” Awakened?

In the final analysis the politically important question about Latinos in California politics during the 1990’s concerns whether they are mobilizing and voting in ways which are becoming increasingly relevant. In our analysis above, we have discussed three important features of Latino political behavior in the 1990’s in California. First, we have found evidence of widespread Latino voter mobilization in the 1990’s, both in terms of increases in Latino voter registration and turnout. But while these increases are clear, they are not immediately traceable to the salient political events of this decade which pundits assert to be the causes of Latino political mobilization in California — Propositions 187, 209 and 227. We find no clear sign that any of these proposition campaigns played a direct role in Latino voter mobilization during the 1990’s.

Second, while this mobilization has occurred, there has been a striking amount of stability in Latino partisan identification and voting behavior. We have shown that there has been stable and widespread identification and voting support for the Democratic party and it’s candidates by Latinos during the 1990’s. The only signs we can spot of any deviations in the relative stability of Latino affiliations and behavior during this period come in the 1998 election, where we see slight increases in both Latino Democratic partisanship and support for Democratic gubernatorial candidates.

Third, when we examined Latino issue priorities in the 1998 election we found a great deal of support for a variety of issues by Latino voters, but especially for issues which focus on economics and the family. The relative prioritization by Latinos of these issues is stronger than for white voters in California; also, there are some issues which whites find important which Latino voters do not. This shows that the Latino electorate has different issue priorities than the larger white electorate, which points to inherent difficulties for any political actor striving to construct a coalition from Latino and white voters in future California elections.

Last, when we examined Latino voters in contrast not only with white voters, but also with African-American and Asian-American voters, we found that there are interesting differences in the political affiliations and behaviors of each racial or ethnic group. While African-American voters are still strongly wedded to the Democratic party in California, we saw that Asian-American voters are much less oriented towards the Democrats and much less likely to support Democratic candidates than African-Americans. Latinos, interestingly, fall in between these other two racial and ethnic groups in their propensity to support the Democratic party in terms of both affiliation and voting behavior.

To us, this indicates that the increasing role of Latino voters in California politics will not necessarily continue to help the Democratic party. Currently, Latinos are identifying with the Democratic party and voting for Democratic candidates, but unless the Democratic party begins to develop much more explicit reasons for Latinos to continue their Democratic support, it is by no means clear that Latinos will stay with the Democratic party in future election cycles. Since the issue preferences of Latino voters are distinct from the issue preferences of other racial and ethnic voter groups in California, and since the issue preferences of Latino voters do not fit neatly within the current issue stances of the Democratic or Republican party, it is difficult to predict which party (if any) will capture the Latino electorate in future California elections.

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Table 1: Latino Voter Registration and Turnout, 1990–1996

Latino Voter Registration				
Region	1990	1992	1994	1996
California	.52	.61	.60	.67
Southern	.54	.62	.60	.66
Bay Area	.53	.65	.61	.87
Central Coast	.55	.69	.65	.74
Central Valley	.50	.55	.59	.63
Mountains	.52	.60	.61	.66
Northern	.50	.58	.58	.65
Los Angeles Co.	.60	.65	.63	.68
Overall Statewide Voter Registration				
California	.70	.72	.78	.80
Latino Voter Turnout				
Region	1990	1992	1994	1996
California	.29	.57	.43	.52
Southern	.25	.57	.43	.50
Bay Area	.23	.56	.40	.51
Central Coast	.34	.60	.46	.54
Central Valley	.24	.54	.40	.50
Mountains	.32	.58	.45	.53
Northern	.33	.57	.45	.52
Los Angeles Co.	.29	.61	.44	.54
Overall Statewide Voter Turnout				
California	.41	.55	.47	.53

Note: Source for the entries on Latinos in this table is Alvarez and Butterfield 1999. Entries in the first part of the table are proportion of Latino persons of voting age who are registered; entries in the second part of the table are the proportion of voting age Latinos who voted in each election. The overall statewide voter registration rates and turnout rates are from the *Statement of Vote* prepared by the office of the Secretary of State, California.

Table 2: Latinos and Partisanship, 1990-1998

Ethnic Identification	Democratic Identification					
	1990 General (VRS)	1992 General (VRS)	1994 General (VRS)	1996 General (VRS)	1998 Primary (ANPRG)	1998 Primary (LAT)
Hispanic-Latino	64	68	66	62	70	
Latino					75	74
Hispanic					68	

Table 3: Race, Ethnicity and Partisanship, 1990-1998
 Partisan Identification

Ethnic Identification	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Total
1990 General Election, VRS					
White	39	39	18	4	76
Black	81	8	7	4	15
Hispanic-Latino	64	20	13	3	5
Asian	45	31	22	2	3
Other	50	16	18	16	1
1992 General Election, VRS					
White	40	36	19	6	72
Black	83	5	9	2	11
Hispanic-Latino	68	15	12	5	12
Asian	40	33	18	10	3
Other	53	18	18	13	2
1994 General Election, VRS					
White	36	44	15	5	76
Black	80	9	8	4	9
Hispanic-Latino	66	17	13	4	10
Asian	44	37	17	2	4
Other	48	20	24	8	2
1996 General Election, VRS					
White	40	38	16	6	70
Black	73	11	9	6	10
Hispanic-Latino	62	21	11	6	14
Asian	35	46	14	6	4
Other	48	23	16	13	2
1998 Primary Election, ANPRG					
White	38	30	29	3	62
Black	82	7	5	6	5
Latino	75	12	11	2	9
Hispanic	68	13	16	3	15
Hispanic-Latino	70	13	14	3	23
Asian	45	23	30	2	8
Other	46	19	24	10	2
1998 Primary Election, LAT					
White	45	5	44	6	76
Black	80	8	5	6	7
Latino	74	5	16	4	10
Asian	40	8	42	10	4
Other	53	14	23	10	3

Table 4: Latino Vote Share and Democratic Support, 1990-1998

Election and Poll	Hispanic-Latino Vote Share	Hispanic-Latino Democratic Governor Support	Anglo Democratic Governor Support
1990 General, VRS	5	71	51
1992 General, VRS	12		
1994 Dem. Primary, LAT	12		
1994 Rep. Primary, LAT	4		
1994 General, LAT	9	70	36
1994 General, CNN	9	71	33
1996 General, VRS	14		
1998 Primary, LAT	12	83	
1998 Primary, CNN	12	83	
1998 Primary, ANPRG ^a	27	85	
1998 General, LAT	13	71	51
1998 General, CNN	14	78	50

^aThe ANPRG poll is not a statewide random sample; so the vote share is not a relevant number; however the proportion voting Democratic is relevant.

Table 5: Race, Ethnicity, and Gubernatorial Voting 1990-1998
Race and Ethnicity Democratic Vote Republican Vote Vote Share

1990 General Election, VRS			
White	51	49	75
Black	91	9	16
Hispanic-Latino	71	29	5
Asian	56	44	3
Other	54	46	1
1994 General Election, CNN			
White	33	62	77
Black	76	20	8
Hispanic-Latino	71	27	9
Asian	45	54	4
Other			2
1994 General Election, LAT			
White	36	59	81
Black	76	22	6
Latino	70	25	9
Asian	44	52	4
Other	42	50	1
1998 General Election, CNN			
White	50	46	74
Black	83	11	7
Hispanic-Latino	78	17	14
Asian	67	29	4
Other			2
1998 General Election, LAT			
White	51	45	64
Black	76	22	13
Latino	71	23	13
Asian	65	35	8

Table 6: Race, Ethnicity and the 1994 Gubernatorial Primary
Race and Ethnicity

	Democratic Primary			
	Brown	Garamendi	Hayden	Vote Share
White	48	34	18	72
Black	76	19	5	8
Latino	61	32	7	12
Asian	52	36	11	4
Native American	57	33	10	1
	Republican Primary			
	Unz	Wilson	Total	
White	41	59	89	
Black	31	69	1	
Latino	49	51	4	
Asian	27	73	4	
Native American	33	67	1	

Note: Data from Los Angeles Times Exit Poll.

Table 7: Race, Ethnicity and the 1998 Gubernatorial Primary
Race and Ethnicity Checchi Davis Harman Lungren Vote Share

CNN					
White	9	30	11	43	69
Black	17	53	17	9	14
Hispanic-Latino	30	36	11	17	12
Asian	14	36	10	39	3
LAT					
White	9	30	11	43	69
Black	17	53	17	9	14
Latino	30	36	11	17	12
Asian	14	36	10	39	3
ANPRG					
White	12	30	13	41	62
Black	19	51	18	5	5
Latino	40	36	12	7	9
Hispanic	36	34	12	12	15
Hispanic-Latino	38	35	12	10	27
Asian	17	37	11	28	8
Native American	16	28	10	39	2
Other	22	31	9	18	2

Table 8: Issue Priorities and Preferences for Whites and Latinos, ANPRG June 1998

Issue Priority	Proportion of Respondents Listing Issue as Important		Ordinal Ranking of Issue	
	White	Latino	White	Latino
Improving Education	52	45	1	2
Jobs and the Economy	30	40	5	3
Reducing Crime	40	46	2	1
Electing Experienced Leaders	18	13	9	9
Abortion	11	11	11	11
Bilingual Education	28	39	7	5
Stopping Special Interests	29	19	6	7
Health Care	31	40	4	3
Environment	16	13	10	9
Cutting Taxes	34	34	3	6
New Leadership	20	19	8	7
<hr/> Issue Preferences <hr/>				
Prop. 223 – Yes	52	45		
Prop. 223 – No	48	55		
Prop. 226 – Yes	49	27		
Prop. 226 – No	51	73		
Prop. 227 – Yes	69	39		
Prop. 227 – No	31	61		

Note: Source, ANPRG 1998

Column entries in the top of the table are the proportion of White and Latino voters indicating they consider an issue important, when asked to identify up to three issues as important from the entire list.

Table 9: Multivariate Analysis: Race, Ethnicity, and Issue Preferences

Issue Priority	Latinos	Blacks	Asians
Improving Education	-.04*	-.15**	-.07*
Jobs and the Economy	.07**	.18**	-.04
Reducing Crime	.01	.01	-.01
Electing Experienced Leaders	-.02	-.01	-.03
Abortion	-.01	-.01	-.05**
Bilingual Education	.15**	-.09**	-.05
Stopping Special Interests	-.07**	-.08	-.08**
Health Care	.05**	.08**	.09**
Environment	-.04**	.05	-.03
Cutting Taxes	-.04*	.00	.00
Electing New Leaders	-.00	.02	-.02

Each table entry is the estimated impact of respondent's ethnicity on the probability of listing the entry listed on each row as one of the most important issues. Estimates come from a probit model controlling for respondent's age, education, and gender (impact computed with other variables set to their mean).

* indicates estimate significant at .10 level.

** indicates estimate significant at .05 level.

Table 10: Issue Priorities for Latinos, PPIC May 1998

Issue Priority	Racial or Ethnic Group	
	Adults	Latino
Crime		
Big Problem	66	62
Somewhat of a Problem	28	24
Not Much of a Problem	4	5
Don't Know	2	9
Quality of K-12 Education		
Big Problem	46	36
Somewhat of a Problem	33	34
Not Much of a Problem	14	26
Don't Know	7	4
Transportation-Traffic		
Big Problem	33	27
Somewhat of a Problem	35	33
Not a Problem	31	38
Don't Know	1	2
Population Growth-Development		
Big Problem	27	21
Somewhat of a Problem	38	38
Not a Problem	34	39
Don't Know	1	2
Tax-funded School Vouchers		
Favor	58	63
Oppose	37	31
Don't Know	5	6
Reduce Taxes, Spend More	44	38
Spend More, Raise Taxes	51	58
Gov't Regulation Needed	54	63
Gov't Regulation Harmful	43	33
Stricter Env. Regulation Needed	58	52
Stricter Env. Regulation Costly	37	41
Homosexuality Acceptable	55	58
Homosexuality Unacceptable	40	37
Abortion left to woman and doctor	61	42
Abortion Should be Limited	26	37
Abortion Should be Illegal	12	21

Note: Source, PPIC May 1998

Table 11: Determinants of Democratic Partisanship, June 1998

Independent Variable	All Voters	Whites	Latinos
Ideology	-.18**	-.19**	-.09**
	.01	.02	.02
Cal. Economy	-.009	.02	-.06**
	.01	.02	.03
Improving Education	.02	.03	.01
	.03	.03	.05
Jobs and the Economy	.09**	.03	.10**
	.03	.03	.05
Reducing Crime	.008	-.007	.02
	.03	.03	.05
Electing Experienced Leaders	.01	.05	.02
	.03	.04	.07
Abortion	-.07*	-.13**	-.02
	.04	.04	.08
Bilingual Education	.03	.03	.04
	.03	.03	.05
Stopping Special Interests	-.05*	-.02	-.09
	.03	.03	.06
Health Care	.10**	.11**	.08
	.03	.03	.05
Environment	-.003	.02	-.02
	.04	.04	.07
Proposition 223	.02	.03	-.04
	.03	.03	.05
Proposition 226	-.13**	-.13**	-.04
	.03	.04	.08
Proposition 227	-.18**	-.17**	-.09
	.03	.04	.06
Female	.05*	.08**	.04
	.03	.03	.05
Age	.01	.004	.04
	.01	.02	.02
Education	-.06**	-.04**	-.06**
	.01	.01	.02
Sample size	1935	1246	404

Note: Entries are estimates of the magnitudes of the impact of each variable on the probability of Democratic partisanship.