Ni de Aquí ni de Allá: Transnationalism and Political Participation in Latino/a Communities

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NI DE AQUÍ NI DE ALLÁ: TRANSNATIONALISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATINO/A COMMUNITIES

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NI DE AQUÍ NI DE ALLÁ: TRANSNATIONALISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATINO/A COMMUNITIES

by

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at El Paso in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Introduction

Scholars working in the field of political participation have expressed a growing interest in the dynamics affecting political participation in Latino/a communities\(^1\). It is clear that Latino population continues to grow not only in numbers but also in political influence. Recent research shows that Latinos are the largest and fastest growing minority group at 46 million strong, which represents about 15% of the U.S. population (Taylor & Fry, 2007, p. i).

In light of the growth of Latino influence, different opinions have emerged. On the one hand, an important contemporary political question asks about the factors that mobilize Latino populations to participate in politics. Among other factors, assimilation has been broadly accepted as a strategy to increasing civic capacity. On the other hand, the presence of Latino/a communities and their growing sphere of influence has led scholars to question the extent to which such presence might put in jeopardy the core of “American values” based on the supposition that Latinos have failed to assimilate.

It is important to define and/or redefine what assimilation means for Latinos. While it is a fact that Latinos are the fastest growing community, at least in numbers, participation using conventional but narrow indicators appears to be lower than expected. Political scientists have argued that in order to increase political participation, policymakers have to provide channels that allow them to assimilate (see Nelson 1982, de la Garza et al 1996, Fraga et al, 2006). While assimilation and acculturation are usually

\[^1\] I use the term Latino because, as suggested by Hero (1984), it “recognizes the New World, that is, the non-European aspects of historical experience” along with the fact that it is the term used by early prominent groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) (3). Conversely, Hispano has been criticized for over emphasizing the Spanish or European aspects of the Latino political experience. (Hero, 1984)
used to mean the same thing, Gordon (1964) provided a systematic dissection of these terms warning that assimilation in fact covers a variety of sub-processes constituting a particular stage of the process of assimilation. In this thesis I use identificational assimilation which refers to the development of sense of peoplehood based on the host society as the last signal of the assimilation process as suggested by Gordon². Certainly assimilation does increase political participation. However, among Latinos and Latinas, maintaining a strong attachment to the country of origin by means of keeping a sense of peoplehood based on the home country does not result in a lack of political participation. In fact, in this thesis I propose that the larger the attachment to the country of origin, the more that people participate.

Although the size and the share of Latino/a populations are growing both nationally and in many states, there is no guarantee this will translate into greater political power. In fact, Latino voter turnout has often fallen short of expectations (Cabassa, 2003, De la Garza et al 1994, De la Garza & DeSipio 1999 and De la Garza & DeSipio 2005). In an effort to provide answers for such a lack of civic capacity, scholars have proposed that the lack of assimilation has translated into disengagement; Scholars have proposed that acculturated Latinos/as are better able to use resources such as education that could be later translated into civic capacity. Thus, as the socioeconomic status of assimilated Latinos changes, so does their ability to participate in politics. (see Montoya, 2002 Jackson 2003, Nelson 1982 and Waters & Jimenez 2005). Similarly, it has been proposed that as immigrants lose ties to their home countries --especially second and third

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² The different stages of assimilation are further explored in chapter 2
generations-- they are better able to acquire institutional membership that will provide the necessary tools to become more participant and that failure to lose those ties might actually hinder such process (Djajić, 2003). Thus, assimilation is seen almost as a necessary condition to achieve a more pluralistic democracy. Without assimilation, Latinos will remain invisible to policymakers.

On the other hand, some scholars see Latinos lack of assimilation as a threat. In his book *Who are We?* (2005), Samuel Huntington argues that Anglo-Protestant culture, traditions, and values and the principles of the North American creed--liberty, equality, law, individual rights--have made United States what it is. In recent decades he sees doctrines of multiculturalism and diversity elevating racial, ethnic, and gender over national identity, and an increased tendency of immigrants, especially Hispanics, to maintain dual identities rather than to assimilate. The result is an emerging bilingual, bicultural society fundamentally different from the one of the four previous centuries with its Anglo-Protestant, English-language core. Controversies over racial preferences, immigration, and an official language are, Huntington notes, battles in a single war over national identity, with substantial elements of the country's elites in academia, the professions, and the media on one side and the general public on the other.

It is in fact phenomena like immigration to the U.S. that Huntington is particularly suspicious about. Huntington sees that highly diverse America is a problem more than a virtue. He claims that differences in culture and religion create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration to trade and commerce to the environment. According to Huntington “The large and continuing influx of Hispanics threatens the preeminence of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture and the place of
English as the only national language.” He also affirms that: “[The] loss in power, status and numbers by any social, ethnic, racial, or economic group almost always leads to efforts by that group to stop or reverse those losses” (2004: 313). Therefore, if the Latino community is continuously growing, and bilingual education continues to develop, can we expect this conflict to emerge? In fact, as García et al. (2008) claim, Latino influence is growing and while the literature suggests that as minorities assimilate to the culture, the more participatory they become, Huntington’s greatest fear comes from the assumption that Latinos have failed to assimilate.

The process of assimilation has been perceived as being composed of a wide range of concepts: from being related to a simple bureaucratic procedure in which “[n]aturalization was an indication of assimilation” (Ngai, 2004 pp. 22) to comprising race requirements (see, Jacobson, 1998 and Ngai, 2004). However, for Huntington and others (see Ngai 2004 and Acuña, 1996) assimilation is more a matter of self identification in which immigrants were required to see themselves as Americans. Huntington (2004) claims that one of the most important aspects of assimilation is the desire to be American. He states that early European immigrants “came to America because they wanted to become American” (pp. 191). This, in fact, is a process in which the immigrant has a say. Therefore assimilation here is understood as a process of self-identification.

It is a fact that immigrants do hold ties to the country of origin even if only for a period of time for specific purposes. The study of the effect of such dynamics has been studied by transnationalists. Transnationalism broadly refers to “the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the border states” (Vertovec, 1999).
While transnationalists have explored a number of issues emerging from transnational activities, few have engaged in the task of linking transnationalism to political participation. Moreover, those who have studied the relationship between transnationalism and political participation have done so by analyzing the political activities that immigrants hold in their country of origin as well as the activities that international nongovernmental organizations (INGO’s) carry out across borders. (see Alger 1997, Castells 1997, Kriesberg 1997).

In this thesis, I endeavor to contribute to the debate on assimilation and political participation, putting some of the pieces together about the disagreement between those claiming that Latinos’ failure to assimilate will relegate them invisible to the policymaking process and those affirming that non-assimilation can foster threatening policies. Finally, this thesis attempts to fill the gap in the study of political participation and transnationalism by analyzing how transnationalism changes political attitudes among Latinos. Thus, this thesis attempts to challenge what the current literature has shown and argue that, in fact, the larger the attachments to the country of origin, the more that people participate in politics.

Outline of Chapters

The thesis begins by reviewing in chapter 2 earlier contributions in the field of political participation. I review literature assimilation, acculturation and group cohesion as well as transnationalism and diaspora consciousness. I also explore existing knowledge on political participation and its components as well as the way it relates to assimilation
and transnationalism. Employing the literature reviewed, I present the main hypotheses to be analyzed quantitatively.

In chapter 3 I explain the quantitative research design, introduce variables according to the component of political participation as well as assimilation and transnationalism. Using the 2006 Latino National Survey, I create two indexes of political participation; one for electoral participation and one for organizational participation. Additionally, I use proxy variables for assimilation and transnationalism as well as other control variables. Then I employ quantitative methods to show that the larger the attachment to the country of origin, the more that people participate in politics. While extant literature focuses on Latinos as if they were a homogenous group (see Stokes 2003), different countries of origin, and different regions of residency may account for differences in the way assimilation and transnationalism affect political participation. Therefore, I use interaction terms to account for different country of origin. Additionally, I apply an alternative model to Latinos residing along the U.S.-Mexico border. Individually and collectively the findings challenge classical accounts.

In chapter four I present concluding reflections. The purpose of this thesis, unlike Huntington, is not to warn of a possible threat that Latinos pose to the U.S. culture but rather to invite to reflection on what true democracies are. While conflicts in diverse policy issues could emerge as Latino influence grows and attachment to countries of origin continue, those issues are not necessarily a threat, but as a possibility to achieve a truly pluralistic democratic America.
Chapter 2: From Ethnic Group Politics to Transnationalism and Civic Capacity

In this chapter, I review existing knowledge on assimilation, acculturation and group cohesion as well as transnationalism and diaspora consciousness. I also explore existing knowledge on political participation and its components as well as the way it relates to assimilation and transnationalism. At the end of the chapter I emphasize that, unlike the conclusions drawn decades ago, greater diaspora consciousness should increase political participation in the United States.

*Early assimilation theories: “Melting into the Pot”- Polish and Italian Assimilation.*

Assimilation of immigrant groups in the US is not a new phenomenon. In fact, scholars paid attention to assimilation processes since the turn of the twentieth century. Alba and Nee (1997) assert that conceptions of assimilation models are traceable to the Chicago School of the early twenty century and particularly to the work of Robert Park and W. I. Thomas. Park's assimilation cycle had two routes: least resistance - contact, accommodation, fusion; or resistance - conflict, competition, accommodation, fusion. "Whereas the latter route could take longer and could entail considerable resistance on the part of the immigrant, the end result would be the same - loss of a distinctive ethnic identity- and the new culture and values would emerge" (Driedger and Halli, 2000 p. 38). Park's idea was that regardless of origin, immigrants to America wished to participate in the new society, enjoying its freedoms and benefits and abandoning their old cultural practices and ideas. Sociologist E. Bogardus (1923) shares a similar thought when he...
notes that “[t]he value of English should be made so clear that all who do not know it should be stimulated to want to learn it” he suggests it after noting that “when you strike at the language of a person, you strike at his feelings, his mother tongue his childhood memories” (quoted in Rippberg and Staudt, 2003:9) Thus, the assimilation approach is dynamic and is often connected to the *melting-pot* theory (Driedger and Halli, 2000).

An alternative approach developed by other Chicago school theorists has been called immigrant reorganization developed by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. Studying the types of issues and problems faced by Polish families who came to America, Thomas and Znaniecki (1920) emphasized the importance of language and religion for these immigrants, the economic struggles they faced, and the networks of solidarity that they established in America (in Driedger, 1989). At the same time, change did have to occur in the lives of these immigrants, and the research documented the adjustments and changes that these Polish immigrants went through. Urban change eventually forced Polish immigrants to reorganize their attitudes, values, and ethnic organization to be more in tune with the new urban environment. Those immigrants who refused to change often lost contact with their children; those who adapted and reorganized retained some of their past tradition and adopted new elements selectively (Driedger, 1989: 24). Driedger describes Thomas's views as being similar to a modified pluralist approach, arguing that cultural differences should not be ignored or suppressed, and noting how some aspects of culture are important for ethnic solidarity and identity (p. 26).

Other groups such as the Italians have experienced their share of racism and were pressured to assimilate. Joel Perlmann (2005) notes that the immigration of the beginning
of the twentieth century involved a new set of origins – particularly Italians - who arrived poor, with few industrial skills and typically worked in low-skilled works such as construction and mining; they spoke languages new to the U.S and settled in immigrant neighborhoods with pronounced poverty and cultural distinctiveness. Perlmann notes that at the time, the influx of this “new immigrants” was seen as a “serious social challenge – to cities, class structure, mobility patterns, schools and the political system. It was not long before popular animosities and elite theorists arose to distinguish between old and new immigrants in racialized terms” (p. 2). Hostility toward the Italians lessened as time progressed, as more of the immigrants fought in World War II, and many gradually began to prosper, Perlmann notes. Furthermore, Portes and Zhou suggest that fifty years ago, the United States was the premier industrial power in the world, and its industrial labor requirements offered the second generation of immigrants the opportunity to move up gradually through better-paid occupations while remaining part of the working class (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Early assimilation theories, Alba and Nee (1997) suggest, “emerged at the highpoint of a previous era of immigration and by means of observation in a city where the first and the second generation then constituted the great majority of residents” (p. 828).

*From Assimilation to Acculturation: Beyond the blanket term*

The main criticism to the Chicago school assimilation theory comes from the fact that it portrays assimilation as an inevitable outcome in multiethnic societies (Lyman, 1973; Stone, 1985 quoted in Alba & Nee 1997). In fact Parker viewed as assimilation as "progressive and irreversible" (quoted in Alba & Nee, 1997: 828). In addition, scholars
proposed to use the term acculturation instead of assimilation; Teske and Nelson (1974) assert several characteristics of acculturation in relation existent literature. First they note that acculturation is a process, not an end result. Teske and Nelson also point to Thurnwald (1932) who defines acculturation as "a process of adaptation to new conditions of life" (quoted in Teske and Nelson, 1974: 351). Additionally they point to Gillin and Raimy (1940) who define acculturation as "those processes whereby the culture of a society is modified as the result of contact with the culture of one or more other societies," highlighting the fact that there are "degrees of acculturation." (quoted in Teske and Nelson, 1974: 351). Scholars have also shown that acculturation is a bidirectional process, with a reciprocal relationship. Redfield et al. illustrate this point by claiming that acculturation comprehends "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (quoted in Teske and Nelson, 1974: 354). Herskovits exhorts that "acculturation has to do with continuous contact and hence implies a more comprehensive interchange between two bodies of tradition" (1958:15, quoted in Teske and Nelson, 1974: 354).

Furthermore, scholars have emphasized values and identities as distinct features of acculturation. Specifically, the question raised is whether or not the acculturation process depends on the acceptance of value structures. At the group level of analysis, the evidence suggests that although acculturation may provide for a change in value orientation, and even adoption of values, this is not a necessary condition for acculturation to happen. Linton (1940), for example, in reference to enforced acculturation, suggests that although the adoption of certain cultural elements can be
accelerated by enforcement, accompanying values and attitudes cannot be forced. Furthermore, he suggests that even though cultural elements may be accepted into a dominated group, they frequently are adapted to fit the culture of this group, namely, their cultural meaning may be changed. Similarly, Thurnwald has argued that in the process of adoption selected objects, ideas, or institutions "may acquire a different meaning in the new culture" (quoted in Teske and Nelson, 1974: 356).

Milton Gordon (1964) warns that assimilation and acculturation “have been used to mean the same thing; in other usages their meanings, rather than being identical, have overlapped (p. 61). Milton Gordon claims that "assimilation" is a blanket term which in fact covers a variety of sub processes. Gordon provided a systematic dissection of the concepts proposing a multidimensional approach to assimilation. He proposes seven sub-processes and suggests that: “[e]ach of these steps or subprocesses may be thought of as constituting a particular stage or aspect of the assimilation processes” (Gordon, 1964: 70). These sub-processes include: “marital assimilation” characterized by large scale intermarriage, “attitude receptional assimilation” characterized by the absence of prejudice from the mainstream host culture “behavior receptional assimilation” characterized by the absence of discrimination from the mainstream host culture “civic assimilation” characterized by the fact that the demands rose by the immigrant group do not create any conflict of value and power. It can be noted that these four sub processes, for the most part, depend on the host culture acceptance of the immigrant group.

However, the most critical distinction suggested by Gordon is between “behavioral” assimilation or “acculturation” and what he termed "structural" assimilation, by which he meant “the entry of members of an ethnic minority into primary-group
relationships with the majority group” (Alba and Nee, 1997). Gordon defines behavioral assimilation as “the absorption of the cultural behavior patterns of the ‘host’ society. (At the same time, there is frequently some modification of the cultural patterns of the immigrant-receiving country, as well.)” Gordon further claims that “[t]here is a special term for this process of cultural modification or ‘behavioral assimilation’ namely, ‘acculturation’” (Gordon, 1961: 279) "Structural assimilation," on the other hand, refers to the entrance of the immigrants and their descendants into “the social cliques, organizations, institutional activities, and general civic life of the receiving society” (Gordon, 1961: 279).

Gordon’s discussion makes clear that these patterns extend beyond the acquisition of the English language, to dress and outward emotional expression, and to personal values (Gordon, 1964:79). He distinguished intrinsic cultural traits, those that are "vital ingredients of the group's cultural heritage," exemplified by religion and musical tastes, from extrinsic traits, which "tend to be products of the historical vicissitudes of the group's adjustment to the local environment" and thus are deemed less central to group identity (Gordon, 1964:79 quoted in Alba and Nee 1997: 829). The distinction would seem to imply that extrinsic traits are readily surrendered by the group in making more or less necessary accommodations to the host society, but its implications are less clear about intrinsic ones. Certainly, Gordon had no expectation that fundamental religious identities are given up as a result of acculturation. The last sub process suggested by Gordon is identification assimilation which refers to the development of sense of peoplehood based on the host society (Gordon, 1964). These last three sub-processes depend, by and large, on the immigrant.
Assimilation in a new era: Post WWII

Despite the fact that Gordon provided a useful dissection of assimilation, he falls into the same flaws of previous scholars claiming that acculturation, the minority group’s adoption of the "cultural patterns" of the host society, typically comes first and is inevitable. According to Gordon, cultural assimilation may take place even when none of the other sub processes have occurred and such condition of “acculturation only” may continue indefinitely. On the other hand Gorgon suggests that structural assimilation is the keystone of assimilation; once structural assimilation has occurred “all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow” which comes at the price of “the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values” (1964: 81). Since acculturation comes first and structural assimilation leads to all other types of assimilation, then identificational assimilation is the last signal of the assimilation process on the immigrant part.

While the experiences of the “new immigrants” fit well into the Chicago School assimilation theories and even Gordon’s assimilation sub-processes, subsequent scholars have criticized such theories. Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) note that the descendants of European immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries experienced a close link between social mobility and other forms of assimilation. But this may have reflected the opportunity structure available during a particular era in American history. Portes and Zhou propose that such opportunity structure included the availability of manufacturing jobs that required minimal education but still offered advancement opportunities. Additionally, Portes and Zhou claim that “descendants of European
immigrants who confronted the dilemmas of conflicting cultures were uniformly white. Even if of a some what darker hue than the natives, their skin color reduced a major barrier to entry into the American mainstream” (1993: 76). For this reason, Polish and Italian processes of assimilation depended mostly on individual decisions to leave the immigrant culture behind and embrace American ways. Such conditions, Portes and Zhou claim, do not exist for the Asian and Latino children of today's immigrants.

Conversely, Perlmann (2005) claims that the starting positions of the Southern, Eastern and Central Europeans (SCEN as referred to by Perlmann), particularly Polish and Italians, and the starting position of Mexicans, were not as different as it has been supposed. Perlman claims that the situation of SCEN grew progressively better because wage inequality in the US declined over the first half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, Perlmann claims, the situation of Mexicans has been deteriorating because wage inequality has been increasing over the last three decades. According to Perlmann the SCEN earned 63 to 72 percent of what native whites were earning and the Mexicans of 2000 earn about 51 percent of what native whites averaged that year. Furthermore, Perlmann notes that “[t]oday’s Mexican second generation, compared to yesterday’s SCEN, lags more in terms of years schooling completed and pays more in terms of earnings for each of those years” (2005: 117). Additionally, there is a significant lag in Mexican earning that cannot be attributed to education or language in which “discrimination is certainly one possible factor” (Perlmann, 2005: 117). Therefore, Perlmann notes that Mexican second and third generation are progressing but progressing more slowly than the SCEN did in their time.
Thus, Portes claims that fifty years ago, the dilemma of Italian-American youth consisted of assimilating into the US mainstream, sacrificing in the process their parents' cultural heritage as opposed to taking refuge in the ethnic community from the challenges of the outside world. Conversely, Portes (1993) claims that in the contemporary world, the transition from acculturation to structural assimilation is harder and no matter how acculturated they become, children of nonwhite immigrants may not even have the opportunity to gain access to middle-class white society. What is more, by joining those native circles to which they do have access may “prove a ticket to permanent subordination and disadvantage. Remaining securely ensconced in their co-ethnic community, under these circumstances, may be not a symptom of escapism but the best strategy for capitalizing on otherwise unavailable material and moral resources” (96). Both Portes and Perlamann see Mexican’s lack of assimilation as the product of a different era in which the economic and social circumstances have allowed for different assimilation processes. Finally, Rodney Hero (1992) points out that Europeans came to the eastern United States in a time when urban political machines were used to pursue their interest which facilitated structural assimilation. On the other hand, Mexicans were concentrated in the Southwest, where political machines were not as common.

Assimilation vs. Group Cohesion and the relationship with Political Participation

Whether Latinos in general and Mexicans in particular have assimilated or not and under what circumstances is still debatable and the final outcome has yet to be observed. The purpose of this paper, as I have pointed in chapter one, is not to join in such debate but to analyze to what extent the lack of assimilation affects political
participation and how. Scholars have suggested that as long as immigrants exhibit high levels of social cohesion, they will continue to possess distinctive cultures (values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes) and exhibit distinctive political behavioral patterns. The more socially cohesive an ethnic group, the more distinctive the cultural and behavioral patterns of its members. (Nelson, 1982). Therefore, when group cohesion begins to break down, group culture and political behavior become progressively more similar to mainstream culture until it becomes indistinguishable from the mainstream society.

Nelson (1982) notes that when individuals have more social contact with people of different ethnic characteristics, and especially when such contact is joined with upward socioeconomic mobility, “mainstream cultural and behavioral patterns are likely to prevail” (30). According to Nelson (1982) assimilation-mobility theory asserts that “[w]hen group cohesion begins to break down, group culture and behavior become progressively less distinctive until they become indistinguishable from those of the larger society” (29). Dahl (1961) introduces the concept of political assimilation, arguing that "ethnic politics... is clearly a transitional phenomenon." Ethnic groups, he claims, go through three stages en route to political oblivion. First the group exhibits a high degree of political homogeneity, shown by "similarity in political attitude, and ... a pronounced tendency toward voting alike." He attributes it to low levels of social assimilation and lack of economic mobility. "Political homogeneity," he says, "is a function of socioeconomic homogeneity. (quoted in Nelson 1982: 30). Conversely, Michael Parenti, adapting Gordon’s theories to ethnic politics, claims that the political acculturation of immigrants “proceeds hand in hand with general cultural adaptation to American life and that it is largely completed by the beginning of the second generation” (Nelson, 1982: 31)
Nelson (1982) proposes a fusion of the two theses and names it the standard assimilation model. His model shows political participation and acculturation as dependent on levels of social assimilation and socioeconomic mobility which, Nelson claims, “represents the major thrust of the assimilation-mobility thesis” (32). The model also presents the acculturationist view that exposure to American institutions produces greater political assimilation which, in turn, leads to increases in ethnic participation. In addition, pluralist assumptions show that openness of American politics works best when “individuals and groups assimilate to prevailing cultural and societal norms” (Fraga et al. 2006, p. 518).

These statements have not been fully challenged by existing literature. At best, some literature has shown that Latinos are in fact well assimilated and in some instances showing values of individualism and patriotism that exceed those of native-born whites (de la Garza et al., 1996). However, this statement does not explore the possibility that the larger the attachment to the country of origin, the more that people might participate in politics. In other words, the literature on Latino politics seems to be more concerned with accepting the fact that assimilation is necessary and that showing that Latinos are actually assimilating is also necessary. Thus, scholars have over-emphasized the role of assimilation among Latinos in order to achieve a sense of group cohesion/consciousness. Leighley (1996) analyzes the role of intentional and unintentional mobilization of the Latino community, explaining that “participation is sporadic when dictated by political elites and their mobilization efforts” (p 460). These patterns of mobilization may appear temporary, but as Latinos start to permeate local political offices, their expansion into
higher levels of government as Senators, House Representatives and other elected positions will soon follow.

The central claims that researchers have on group consciousness range from finding no consistent relationship between participation and group consciousness to finding a strong relationship between group consciousness and political participation (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Leighley 1996; Sánchez 2006; Stokes 2003). Relevant literature on the idea of group consciousness among other groups can also be applied. The idea of a ‘linked fate’ among African-Americans is posited to explain the political behavior of the African American community (Dawson 1994; McClain & Stewart. 2006). Dawson (1994) describes ‘linked fate’ as the perception that what happens to the group happens to the individual. Though group cohesion/consciousness is more broadly described than linked fate in much of the literature as it refers to the realization of commonality among groups than a perception of direct impact, the theoretical foundation is still relevant to understanding the role of group consciousness on the Latino community.

Millers et al. (1981) suggest that group consciousness is developed when members of a group recognize their status as being part of a deprived group (quoted in Stokes, 2003). It is this sense of commonality and collectivity that encourages groups to become more active in the political arena, thus explaining high rates of political participation among disadvantaged groups in American society (Verba & Nie, 1972). According to Stokes, however, much of the literature concentrating on group consciousness primarily focuses on African-American political behavior. Stokes points out that these studies have long established that group consciousness stimulates African-American participation. Furthermore, despite economic and social cleavages in the
African-American community, African-American political behavior has been largely homogeneous because individual self-interest stems from group interests, creating a sense of commonality and political unity (Stokes, 2003). Thus, when an individual identifies solely with a group, there is a “self-awareness of one’s objective membership in the group, as well as a psychological sense of attachment to the group” (Conover, 1984 quoted in Stokes 2003).

Therefore, through group consciousness, the individual experiences a sense of belonging to the group as well as a conscious commitment to the goals and betterment of the group which stimulates not only “individual awareness of the group’s status in society relative to other groups but also an overall commitment to act collectively to satisfy group interests” (Stokes 2003, 363).

*Transnationalism and political participation: group consciousness in a transnational context*

While Stokes (2003) contends that group cohesion is in fact statistically significant in predicting political participation among Latinos, the author does not address whether a lack of assimilation could increase civic efficacy. In fact Stokes relies in a pan-ethnic label (Latino or Hispanic) which is actually a form of assimilation since such labels show already the development of a sense of peoplehood. In my research I propose that such group consciousness is stronger among those that have not assimilated and identify themselves as Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Hondurans and so forth, that is, those who have not developed a sense of peoplehood.
Scholars now recognize that many contemporary migrants and their predecessors maintain a variety of ties to their home countries while they became incorporated into the countries where they settled. Levitt and Jaworsky claim that migration “has never been a one-way process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but one in which migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live” (2007: 130). More and more aspects of social life take place across borders, even as the political and cultural salience of nation-state boundaries remains clear. Keohane & Nye (1971) argued decades ago that international relations had to rethink its basic conceptual categories to capture cross-border relations between nonstate actors and subnational actors. Moreover, Vetovec (1999), suggest that new technologies, especially involving telecommunications, serve to connect such networks with increasing speed and efficiency. According to Glick Schiller et al. (1999) transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and despite the presence of international borders, certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified (Glick Schiller, Baschand Szanton-Blanc 1992). The technologies do not altogether create new social patterns but they certainly reinforce pre-existing ones.

During the 1990s, transnational migration scholars argued that some migrants continued to be active in their homelands at the same time that they became part of the countries that received them. They described how migrants and their descendants participate in familiar, social, economic, religious, political, and cultural processes that extend across borders while they become part of the places where they settle (Basch et al.1994, Faist 2000a,b, Glick Schiller et al. 1992). Still others, while acknowledging the salience of transnational ties for the first generation, predicted those ties might rapidly
decline among their children (Lucassen 2006, Portes et al. 1999). On the other hand, many scholars now accept that transnational practices and attachments have been and continue to be widespread among the first generation, but far fewer think these ties persist among subsequent generations. They cite both declining language fluency – specially in the third and fourth generation- and survey findings indicating that the children of immigrants have no intention of returning to live in their ancestral homes (de la Garza et al 1996, Alba & Nee 2003; Kasinitz et al. 2002; Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

However, conceptualizing generation as a lineal process, involving clear boundaries between one experience and the other, does not accurately capture the experience of living in a transnational field because it implies a separation between migrants and non-migrants. As Waters and Jimenez point out, in contrast to prior eras of migration, there is now an ongoing replenishment of new immigrants, forcing us to rethink the concept of generation altogether: “[A]t any point in time each generation is a mix of cohorts and each cohort has a mix of generations” (2005:121). Instead, socialization and social reproduction often occur across borders, in response to at least two social and cultural contexts (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). Clearly, transnational activities will not be central to the lives of most of the second or third generation, and they will not participate with the same frequency and intensity as their parents. But the same children who never go back to their ancestral homes are frequently raised in households where people, values, goods, and claims from somewhere else are present on a daily basis (Pries 2004). In fact, Basch et al. initially defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (1994: 6). More recent scholarship
understands transnational migration as taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004).

Vertovec (1999) notes that particularly in works concerning global diasporas there is considerable discussion surrounding a kind of ‘diaspora consciousness’ marked by dual or multiple identifications. Hence, there are “depictions of individuals’ awareness of decentred attachments, of being simultaneously ‘home away from home,’ ‘here and there” (3). Thus, the diaspora consciousness provides the immigrant with the individual sense of belonging to the group which Stokes makes reference to. James Clifford finds that “[T]he empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling here assumes a solidarity and connection there. But there is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation. ... [It is] the connection (elsewhere) that makes a difference (here)” (1994: 322).

Of course it is a common consciousness or bundle of experiences which bind many people into the social forms or networks noted in the section above. Robin Cohen observes that “transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination.’ (1996: 516). Vertovec notes that by compounding the awareness of multi-locality, “the ‘fractured memories’ of diaspora consciousness produce a multiplicity of histories, ‘communities’ and selves—a refusal of fixity often serving as a valuable resource for resisting repressive local or global situations” (1999: 3).

Therefore, the diaspora consciousness produces a desire to resist certain situations and provides an individual sense of belonging in transnational context. However, to my
knowledge, extant literature has not explored the relationship between transnationalism, that is, ‘identification there’, and political participation ‘here’. Extant literature in transnationalism and politics has focused mostly on political activities undertaken by a community or institution, even the government in the homeland to improve the social status in the host country, including attempts to improve access to services, fight discrimination, or recognition of certain rights (Besserer 2003, Fox & Rivera-Salgado 2004). Scholars have also focused on migrant political activism in the host country in relation to home country issues, and may include voting abroad or electoral campaigns for elections in the home country (Guarnizo et al. 2003). This thesis is an attempt to fill that gap and explore how transnational identities, that is, being attached to the country of origin, affects political participation in the host country.

*Political Participation: The resource model*

Political scientists have extensively researched various dimensions of voter turnout, party identification and non electoral participation. According to Verba, Schlozman and Brady, political participation refers to the activity that has the intent of influencing government action “either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people” (1995: 38). Furthermore, Macedo et al. (2005) define civic engagement as “any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity.” Therefore, political participation has been assessed by scholars a being composed of two broad categories, electoral participation or organizational participation. Nevertheless, Verba et al. (1995)
argue that studies of political participation traditionally look only at the voting aspect of political participation. Without a doubt, Verba et al is one of the most comprehensive studies of political participation. They move well beyond the realm of voting “to consider a wider range of political acts” (1995: 42). Unfortunately, while their study attempts to include most ethnic and social groups in the United States, the comprehensive nature of their work allows them to ignore certain characteristics unique to Latinos as it has been noted by Fraga et al (2006) who claim that the socioeconomic status (SES) model (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995) has usually been used as if it had universal applicability but “it seems to work somewhat differently for Latinos” (pp. 517). Hence, further research is needed specific to Latinos, particularly Montoya (2002) shows that the resource model applies differently to citizens and non citizens claiming that factors such as language and education levels become important predictors among non-citizens once income rises. However, Montoya claims that “the only predictors of participation among low-income non citizens are political efficacy and organizational participation” (p. 422, 2002)

Latino participation and the way in which the socioeconomic status model has failed to interpret Latino political participation has been explored to some extent (see Arvisu & García, 1996; Bass & Casper 2001, Calvo et al 1989, Shirley 1995 and Verba et al. 1995), but these attempts focus on electoral participation and/or lack quantitative support. Others have pointed to the fact that education more than income is the key factor to explain political participation among Latinos (see Fraga et al., 2006). Similarly, other aspects such as “higher proportions of foreign-born, and higher percentages of bilingualism” have been identified as “group attributes that complicate the process of
Latino political incorporation” (Fraga et al, 2006). Montoya et al. suggest that the explanations for these different outcomes lie in a better understanding of “processes of political and social incorporation and the structure of political opportunities available to Latinos” (2000: 557). Montoya and her colleagues claim that Latinos are less likely to be asked to participate in politics because of socioeconomic status, language barriers, and gender. However, they suggest that it is important to note that Latinos are neither monolithic nor are their differences static. Montoya, suggest that language is not a significant predictor of participation for Latino men but it is for women (Montoya 2000, 2002). The predictors of participation, suggest Montoya et al., for Latinas are financial status, civic skills, and involvement in associations, particularly schools. These characteristics are indicators of a gendered affluence because they reflect the roles that women often perform at work and in the family. Therefore, Montoya and her colleagues note that in fact that Latinos in general and Latinas in particular are less likely to be asked to participate in politics but their social and political incorporation and the structure of their political opportunities usually comes from “organizations which socialize and prepare Latinos for political action” (2000: 559). Moreover, Montoya (2002) claims that an approach to increase political participation among Latinos would be to encourage “activities in schools and other fundamental institutions as a training ground for continued and increased civic participation and to promote learning English” (424). Thus, there seems to be a disagreement on the components of political participation. Extant literature argues that well-educated citizens are more likely to have the knowledge of the peculiarities of the political process, and they are more likely to possess the cognitive skills that make it easier to absorb and process complex political information (Rosenberg,
Others argue that education provides the intellectual and cognitive skills that reduce the costs of participation (see, Downs, 1957). Others have argued that gender plays an important effect on political participation (see Cole et al, 1998, Montoya 2000). Conversely, Verba et al. argue that political participation is affected by the resources of the individual, the level of psychological engagement with politics and whether they are within the realms of recruitment network as well as religious affiliation. Macedo et al. (2005) claim that civic activity includes public service and any collective or individual action to improve our society.

Political Scientists have explored political engagement with schools and education policy change. Although scholars have not always used an ethnic and/or Latino Politics framework (see Stone 1998) others have explored education and policy change within an ethnic and/or Latino framework. For instance, Clarke et al. (2006) analyze educational reform agendas in four major urban areas and the multiple interests and institutional challenges facing Latinos and African-Americans in the post-segregation era with its new challenges and need for coalition building. Similarly, Jeannie Oakes and John Rogers (2006) discuss Latino parental organizing in Los Angeles schools. Moreover, literature on community-based organizations (CBO’s) also reveals the rich, complexity of Latino political involvement. Dennis Shirley (1997) focuses on the Alinsky-style Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), especially statewide leadership under Ernesto Cortez, and the CBO’s in San Antonio, Houston, El Paso, and South Texas. In addition, Marion Orr et al. (2007) analyze Latino politics in border, faith-based, and challenges to school-based organizing in the high-stakes standardized testing regimes of the early twenty-first century (see Kathleen Staudt and Clarence N. Stone,
“Division and Fragmentation: The El Paso Experience in Global-Local Perspective,” pp 84-109). Similarly, Kathleen Staudt analyzes some local successes among the border-based Latino, IAF, and immigrant activists in border CBO’s (Brotherton and Philip Kretsedemas, 2008). Thus political scientists have started to emphasize the fact that organizational and civic activities can help increase political participation among minorities; this includes activities outside the political institutions for example running PTA meetings or Church activities, such activities help develop organizational skills that can be transferable to politics (Macedo et al., 2005, Montoya et al. 2000, Verba et al 1995).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed extant knowledge on assimilation, acculturation and the way these concepts have been created within different historical contexts. I have additionally explored the assimilation experience of the Southern, Eastern and Central Europeans and compared them to recent waves of immigration. Furthermore, I have reviewed extant literature on group cohesion as well as transnationalism and diaspora consciousness. I also explored existing knowledge on political participation and its components as well as the way it relates to assimilation and transnationalism.

While scholars continue to debate whether Latinos are assimilating, the reality is that technology has played an important part in providing opportunities to remain transnational, that is, continue to identify oneself with country of origin. This possibility has also opened the door to developing a sense of peoplehood while being away. If group consciousness, through diaspora consciousness, provides the immigrant with the individual sense of belonging to the group, then it should also provide a conscious
commitment to the goals and betterment of the group. As I have noted above in this chapter, Gordon affirms that cultural assimilation may take place even when none of the other sub-processes have occurred and that a condition of “acculturation only” may continue indefinitely. He also notes that once structural assimilation has occurred “all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow” which comes at the price of “the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values” (1964: 81). However, a greater availability of resources to develop diaspora consciousness and the possibility to develop organizational skills through activities outside the political institutions makes it possible to retain a transnational identity while being assimilated structurally, that is, participating politically. In fact, a greater diaspora consciousness should increase political participation in host countries. In other words, the more one identifies with his or her country of origin, the more the desire to participate politically. In the next chapter, I test this theory in a quantitative fashion.
Chapter 3: A quantitative approach to assimilation, transnationalism and political participation

Introduction

In this chapter I present two main hypotheses as well as three alternative hypotheses. The main hypotheses address political participation in Latino communities and assimilation. I expect to find that assimilation increases political participation but that among Latinos a lack of assimilation does not result in a lack of political participation but rather the more one identifies with his or her country of origin the more that people may participate. Additionally, due to the fact that Latinos, especially at the border, tend to develop a hybrid personality that maintains strong ties to the country of origin and since a continuous influence from the country of origin is greater along the US-Mexican as Staudt and Coronado (2002) note, I also present two alternative hypothesis to account only for people living along the US-Mexican border and to account only for non-Mexican Latinos since it could be argued that Mexicans are more likely to receive a continuous influence from the country of origin.

Theory and Hypotheses

As I have discussed in chapter 2, extant literature suggests that political participation can be either electoral or non-electoral and that the variables affecting political participation revolve around economic resources, education, gender and psychological engagements. Concerning Latinos, Staudt and Coronado (2002) argue that Latinos, especially at the border, tend to develop a hybrid personality that maintains strong ties to the country of origin. The authors argue that this hybrid personality is
explained by “political and civic dimensions” (pp. 38). Therefore, it can be expected that as the psychological engagement to the country of origin diminishes, the level of participation should increase. My theory, however, is that the larger the attachment to the country of origin, the more that people participate in politics.

Hypotheses

I present two main hypotheses designed to contribute to the understanding of political participation in Latino communities.

Hypothesis 1. Latinos with higher levels of assimilation are more likely to participate in politics.

Hypothesis 2. The larger the attachment to the country of origin, the more that Latinos/as participate in politics.

Alternative Hypotheses

In order to run the model under the different conditionants mentioned above I use the following variables and test the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3. Non-Mexican Latinos/as with higher levels of assimilation are more likely to participate in politics.

Hypothesis 4. The larger the attachment to the country of origin, the more that Non-Mexican Latinos/as participate in politics.
Null Hypothesis. Neither assimilation nor attachment to the country of origin affect the levels of political participation of Latinos living along the US-Mexico border.

*Research Design and Methods*

In order to test the hypotheses I use the Latino National Survey, 2006 (LNS) and ordinary least square regressions. While the main purpose of the hypotheses is to find whether assimilation or a lack thereof affects the level of political participation, there are other demographic, ethnic and even situational factors that might affect any possible statistical relationship between political participation and assimilation or a lack thereof. One possible factor affecting such relationship is the country from which Latinos trace their identity. Because of the continuous immigration influx and geographic proximity, Latinos tracing their origin to Mexico could be an outlier affecting the overall validity of the model. This continuous influence is greater along the US-Mexican border in which *hybrid* personalities are more common as Staudt and Coronado (2002) note. Therefore, I run separate regressions, first including the whole Latino sample, and then excluding those who trace their Latino origins to Mexico. I also ran a separate regression including only those respondents residing in the border area. Finally, because the LNS was conducted in the year 2006 in which millions of Latinos went out to the streets during the months of March and April but mostly on May first to protest the harsh anti-immigrant

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3 A regression is the analysis of variables that are dependent on other variables. OLS analysis shows the value of a dependent variable as a function of an independent variable, for example: \( y = a + bx \) where \( y \) is the dependent variable and \( x \) is the independent variable. When plotted on a graph, \( y \) is changes (increases or decreases) depending on the value of \( x \).
measures, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives under HB 4437, authored by Wisconsin Congressman James Sensenbrenner, I ran a separate regression excluding those who responded the survey on April 2006 or May 2006, that is one month before and month after the marches.

I also control for other variables such as income, education, age and gender. These control variables attempt to show that political participation increases as the economic (income) resources increases. It similarly shows that older people tend to be more participatory and that gender will affect their level of participation.

to create a political participation index

Data

The Latino National Survey, 2006 (LNS) is a major "national" telephone survey of 8,634 cases of Latinos residing in United States, which is the unit of analysis. This includes legal residents, citizens and undocumented Latinos. The study seeks a broad understanding of the quantitative nature of Latino political and social life in America. There are other surveys available, such as the 1989 Latino National Political Survey (LNPS), the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) surveys 1996 – 2004, the Pew Hispanic Center surveys 2000 – 2006, and the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS). Of all the available data, the LNS is the most recent and the most comprehensive in size and scope. Conducted in 2006, the LNS interviewed a total of 8,634 Latino adults in 16 states and asked more than 100 substantive questions (averaging 45 minutes in length). The survey was conducted by telephone using bilingual interviewers. Forty one percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish and 59 percent were conducted in English.
The LNS is especially an appropriate data set to study identity and political participation among Latinos for several reasons. Not only does it include voting turnout data, but it also includes questions that directly deal with whether people participate in particular non-electoral political activities. For instance, “When an issue or problem needs to be addressed, would you work through existing groups or organizations to bring people together, would you get together informally, or would you do nothing to deal with this matter?” Moreover, the study provides variables that not only account for frequency of political participation, but also attempt to account for reasons as to why political participation of Latinos occurs as it does, based on how they perceive the world around them. These features will enable me to measure the psychological attachment to country of origin and the level of assimilation.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable is political participation. As it has been discussed above, a comprehensive study of political participation is needed, namely one that looks at both electoral participation and organizational participation. Therefore political participation is defined in this work as “any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity” (Macedo et al, 2005 pp. 6). In the process of choosing the appropriate variables to measure political participation, I realized that those questions on political participation are issue specific and are clearly divided by electoral participation and organizational participation. Since one single variable will not be able to fully express levels of participation, I have decided to create two indexes of political participation: one for electoral participation and one for organizational participation.
The variables used to create the index are shown in Appendix 1. These variables have been added together to create the index. The changes applied to those variables are the following: For every variable the answer of “don’t know” (DK) or “refused” has been recoded as missing values. Moreover, for every affirmative answer provided by the respondent, I have assigned a value of ten (10) points to the maximum of one hundred (100). However, some variables have more than one answer in which I have assigned points. For example, WORKPROB which asks the question “When an issue or problem needs to be addressed, would you work through existing groups or organizations to bring people together, would you get together informally, or would you do nothing to deal with this matter?” (LNS 2006 codebook), I have assigned ten points to answers: one (Use existing organizations), (Get together informally) and only answer three (Do nothing) has been assigned zero points. Similarly in PARTISAN which asks the question “Are you registered as …? (Democrat, Republican, Independent, some other party, none” (LNS 2006 codebook), I applied a value of ten points uniformly without discriminating on the type of partisanship and zero points if the answer was “none”. Nevertheless, in the variable COMPARP which asks the question “Do you participate in the activities of one social, cultural, civic or political group, more than one such group, or do you not participate in the activities of any such groups?” (LNS 2006 codebook), I have applied a value of ten (10) if the respondent belongs to one group and twenty (20) if the respondent belongs to more than one because this clearly denotes a greater civic capacity. Conversely, I have applied a value of zero (0) if the respondent does not belong to any. However, as we have stated above, the purpose of this paper is to provide a
comprehensive account of participation. Therefore, I have added VOTEPART and NONVOTEPART, to create a comprehensive index for political participation.

Independent Variables

In accordance with my hypotheses and in order to measure the level of “identificational assimilation”, I use the variable AMERICAN, which asks the question “[In general,] how strongly or not do you think of yourself as American?” This variable is used as a proxy for the level of assimilation. This variable has also been recoded to account for missing values of those who refused to provide answer and which were originally coded with the value of 99. Also, in order to measure the attachment to the country of origin I employ RGIDENT which asks the question “how strongly or not do you think of yourself as (national origin descriptor)?” (LNS 2006 codebook), which will serve as a proxy for the level of attachment to the country of origin.

Control Variables

Age is measured with BIRDATE which specifically measure age of the respondent. The only modification that has been made to this variable was to recode the respondents who refused to provide an answer who were coded as 9999 and recode it as missing values.

Income is measured with variable HHINC which asks the question “which of the following best describes the total income earned by all members of your household during 2004?” The problem with this variable is that it has been grouped in ranges of $10,000; however, this is the only variable accounting for household income. Therefore,
this variable has been recoded to account for missing values of those who refused to provide answer and which were originally coded with the value of 8.

In order to account for gender, I use the variable GENDER. I have converted this variable into a dummy variable\(^4\). Similarly, I use the variable LANGPREF to account for language. This variable has been dichotomized applying the value of 1 to those respondents who chose to answer the survey in English and 0 to those who chose Spanish. Moreover, I use a variable to account for education, which is REDUC. This variable asks the question “What is your highest level of formal education completed?” (LNS 2006 codebook). This variable presents several problems; the options offered to answer this question (either in English or Spanish) do not offer a realistic alternative for the educational parameters of Latin America\(^5\). Taking just Mexico as an instance we can spot several problems. First, there is no such thing as a GED. Second, in the Spanish surveycollege has been translated as secundaria. Secundaria is in fact similar to middle school, Mexican children normally start secundaria when they are twelve and start the following level, preparatoria, when they are fifteen years old. Despite the problems of

\(^4\) Since the GENDER variable was a nominal variable, that is it only provided a male/female answer it was necessary to turn it into a 0,1 dummy-coded variable which allows me to treat it as statistically like an interval-level variable which can be plugged in into a regression.

\(^5\) The options to answers REDUC are:
0 None
1 Eighth grade or below
2 Some high school
3 GED
4 High school graduate
5 Some college
6 4 year college degree
7 Graduate or professional degree
this variable I have been forced to use it as it is the only variable accounting for the educational level. Descriptive statistics for the indices created as well as the independent variables used are shown in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

*Findings*

According to my hypotheses, I will run a regression analysis expecting to find the following algebraic model:

\[
\text{Political Participation} = a + b \text{ Assimilation} + b \text{ Attachment to the Country of Origin} + b \text{ Economic resources} + b \text{ Age} + b \text{ Education} + \text{Gender} + \text{Language} + e
\]

The results of the first regression model are reported in Table 3. The value of R-square = .219 which indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (political participation) which can be predicted from the independent variables. This value indicates that 22% of the variance in political participation can be predicted from the variables economic resources, age, level of assimilation, education, gender and the level of attachment to the country of origin. This is an overall measure of the strength of collective explanatory power, and does not reflect the extent to which any particular independent variable is associated with the dependent variable.

By looking at the results of the regression model (shown in Table 3), we see that most of the coefficients are significant at the .05 level, in other words we can be at least 95% confident that these results have not been produced by chance, therefore they are statistically significant. Additionally, by looking at the pair-wise correlation shown in
Table 4 we can see that none of the independent variables are highly correlated. The variance inflation factor test (shown in Table 5)\textsuperscript{6} also shows that there are no problems of multicollinearity\textsuperscript{7}. As shown in table 5, the highest value is only 1.35. We can thus, assert that there are no problems with multicollinearity in the model.

Furthermore, in order to test for homoskedasticity\textsuperscript{8} I begin by generating a scatter plot which is shown in Figure 1. The plot itself shows that the model is in fact homoskedastic since the variance seems to be constant. By running the Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey\textsuperscript{9} test, we see a probability of .7167, which is well above .05 and lead us to accept the null hypothesis that the model is homoskedastic. In addition, by running the Cameron and Triviedi test we can confirm that there is no heteroskedasticity and also that there is neither skewness nor kurtosis in the model as shown in tables 6 and 7.\textsuperscript{10}.

The results show that, in fact, as the level of assimilation increases, the civic capacity also increases. However this variable is also statistically insignificant according to this model. Conversely, the model shows that that the larger the attachment to the

\textsuperscript{6} The variance inflation factor test is designed to show us how much of the variance of the coefficient estimate is being caused by multicollinearity

\textsuperscript{7} If one of the variables is perfectly correlated with the other independent variables, the standard error will equal infinity. This is referred to as the problem of multicollinearity. The problem is that, as the variable become more correlated, it becomes more and more difficult to determine which variable is producing the effect on the dependent variable

\textsuperscript{8} The variance of the error term in a model is expected to be constant (Homoskedasticity). If the error terms do not have constant variance, they are said to be heteroskedastic

\textsuperscript{9} The Breusch-Pagan test is designed to detect any linear form of heteroskedasticity

\textsuperscript{10} Although the tests indicate that the model is homoskedastic, I have added the “robust” command in order be more stringent. Using robust standard errors does not change the results.
country of origin the more that people participate in politics. Additionally, the model shows that political participation increases as the economic (income) resources increase. It similarly shows that older people and that men tend to be more participant than younger people or females and that the ability to speak English also increase the ability to participate in politics. However, in Table 3 we see that the gender variable is not significant which leads me to assert that among Latinos, according to the data, gender is not a significant source of change in the levels of civic capacity.

*Alternative Regression Model 1: Accounting for country of origin*

In order to account for different country origins, I use the variable ANCESTRY, this variable asks the question “From which country do you trace your Latino heritage?” I use this question to create a dummy variable to account only for those who answered anything other than “Mexican”\(^\text{11}\). The dummy variable was used to run the regression on a “non-Mexican” sub-sample without adding a new variable. The results of the regression are shown in Table 8. It can be noted that the results are consistent even when Mexicans are omitted showing that the larger the attachment to the country of origin the more that people participate in politics.

*Alternative Regression Model 2: Accounting for Latinos on the border region.*

Alternative regression 2 accounts only for those respondents residing in the border. I use the variable RGEOG which records the region in which the survey was answered. The survey only accounts for two border regions: El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley

\(^{11}\) For this dummy variable 1 = non-Mexican
with a total of 90 and 132 respondents respectively. I use this variable to run the model on a sub-sample of Latinos residing on the border. The results are shown in Table 9. It can be seen that the results change drastically. Particularly it can be observed that neither assimilation nor attachments to the country of origin are statistically significant. This can reflect the hybrid nature noted by Staudt and Coronado (2002) of borderlands. However, the small number of observation diminishes the explanatory power of this model. Yet, the drastic change in the results begs for further research focused on the border.

*Alternative Regression 3: Accounting for external events.*

Finally alternative regression 3 accounts only for those answering the survey before April 01 2006 and after June 01 2006. This allows me to omit those who responded the survey during a period in which political participation and pan ethnic feelings were triggered by the current events mentioned above that may jeopardize external validity. In order to do so, I use the variable DOI which records the date in which the survey was conducted. This was a string variable and had to be converted into a numerical variable and finally dichotomized to exclude those who responded the survey during this period. The new variable has been called DATEMAY. The results of alternative regression 3 are shown in Table 10. It can be seen that most results are similar from those shown in the main regression which shows that political and pan-ethnic enthusiasm triggered by external events do not affect the overall fitness of the model. However, it can be seen that the education variable switched sign direction which indicates that more educated people participated less during the months preceding and following May 2006. This fact alone beg further research.
Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have tested the two main hypotheses and three alternative hypotheses. I claim that assimilation does increase political participation. Additionally, I claim that among Latinos a lack of assimilation does not result in a lack of political participation but in fact, the larger the attachment to the country of origin the more that people may participate which also true for non-Mexican Latinos. Additionally, I have made the case that neither assimilation nor attachments to the country of origin increase political participation among borderlanders. This can reflect the hybrid nature of border people. However the small number of observations requires further study. In chapter 4 a discussion of the results is presented. The quantitative results show that in fact, the larger the attachment to the country of origin the more that people participate in politics. Additionally, the models presented show that political participation increases as the economic (income) resources and age increase. It similarly shows that the ability to speak English also increase the ability to participate in politics. Additionally, I have shown that even when the model is applied to a subgroup consisting of non Mexicans the results are still consistent showing that attachment to the country of origin fosters greater levels of political participation. Similarly, it has been shown that political and pan-ethnic enthusiasm triggered by external events do not affect the overall fitness of the model.
Conclusion

The United States has long been considered a nation of immigrants. Assimilation is not a new topic but it is likely that scholars will continue to debate whether Latinos and Latinas are assimilating. Despite the hardening of the US border and the toughness of laws being enacted in states like Arizona, the reality is that assimilation and its implications will continue to be an essential part of race and ethnic politics. The department of homeland security reports, in its 2007 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, that from 2000 to 2007 more than three million Latino immigrants obtained legal permanent resident status. That is, 3 million Latinos whose children will most likely be U.S. citizens with the right to vote. Even if the immigration influx is reduced, technology will play an important part in providing opportunities to remain transnational. This possibility opens the door to develop a sense of peoplehood while being away. Political scientists have shown concerns about the fact that failure to cut such ties might depress political participation.

However, in this thesis, challenging previous scholarly assertions, I have shown that among Latinos attachment to the country of origin can actually increase civic capacity. By being “there” while being “here” it is possible to develop a diaspora consciousness which provides the individual sense of belonging to the group and develops group consciousness. Thus, through group consciousness the individual acquires a conscious commitment to the goals and betterment of the group. Additionally, I argue that a greater availability of resources to develop diaspora consciousness coupled with the possibility to participate in activities outside the political institutions makes it possible to retain a transnational identity while developing organizational skills.
Moreover, the quantitative results support these theories. Using the 2006 Latino National Survey, I created two indexes of political participation; one for electoral participation and the other for organizational participation as well as proxy indexes for assimilation and attachment to country of origin to examine how attachment to one's country can increase political participation. I showed that among Latinos a lack of assimilation does not result in a lack of political participation but in fact, the larger the attachment to the country of origin the more that people may participate which is also true for non-Mexican Latinos. Additionally, I showed that neither assimilation nor attachments to the country of origin increase political participation among borderlanders which shows the hybrid nature of border people, albeit the limited observations of this model obstructs claiming a useful influence and invites further data gathering.

As I have stated in chapter 1, phenomena like migration are of particular concern to Huntington; he worries that assimilation has not taken place yet. While Huntington sees that highly diverse America is a problem more than a virtue, scholars hope that a process of integration will take place. Here, I have shown that the growing sphere of Latino influence is in fact fostered by greater levels of attachment to Latinos country of origin. In light of the results, showing that greater levels of attachment to the country of origin foster higher levels of political participation several research question arise begging further research. First, transnational Latinos will likely pursue policies rather different from those pursued by assimilated Latinos. While the LNS provides a very comprehensive study of political participation among Latinos, it does not allow us to measure political attitudes and to what extent assimilation or a lack thereof might affect such attitudes. Similarly, while the quantitative results are not statistically significant the
fact that men and women have different political participation patterns deserves a deeper analysis. Furthermore, given the importance of organizational participation more indicators are needed; the LNS provides variables that show whether Latinos participate in the activities of social, cultural, civic or political groups, but it does not ask questions that lead to learn more about the processes in which Latinos develop organizational skills in these groups and how these skills might be transferred to politics. Additionally, there is no information about the nature of these groups, in particular whether these groups are religious in nature. Another flaw in the LNS is the fact that the LNS does not account for generational differences. Future research would require the inclusion of these variables.

Finally, the nature of LNS is to provide a comprehensive, nation-wide account of Latinos in the U.S. It is because of its nation-wide nature that there are not enough cases to concentrate on a single region, in particular the border with Mexico. A priority in my own research agenda would be the creation of a border political survey which could provide not only enough cases to be analyzed but to include questions that better reflect the hybrid nature of the border.

Whether Latinos are assimilating or not will continue to be an important question to be answered. While scholars fear that the lack of assimilation will depress political participation, my contribution in this thesis is to show that transnational (unassimilated) Latinos create a group consciousness which allows them to acquire a conscious commitment to the goals and betterment of the group, fostering political participation. Hence, the purpose of this paper, unlike Huntington’s, is not to warn of a possible threat that Latinos pose to the US culture but rather an invitation to reflect on what true democracies are. While conflicts in diverse policy issues could emerge as Latino
influence grows and attachment to countries of origin continues, those issues do not have to be seen as a threat but as a possibility to achieve a truly pluralistic America.
List of References


Latino National Survey 2006 Data Set

Latino National Survey 2006 Code Book


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Perlmann, J. (2005). Italians Then, Mexicans Now: Immigrant origins and Second-

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Non- Electoral Political Participation Index

D1. **COMPARP** Do you participate in the activities of one social, cultural, civic or political group, more than one such group, or do you not participate in the activities of any such groups?

1 Yes, one (CONTINUE)
2 Yes more than one (CONTINUE)
3 None (SKIP TO D3)
4 DK (SKIP TO D3)
5 Refused (SKIP TO D3)

D3. **WORKPROB** When an issue or problem needs to be addressed, would you work through existing groups or organizations to bring people together, would you get together informally, or would you do nothing to deal with this matter?

1 Use existing organizations
2 Get together informally
3 Both
4 Do nothing
5 Don’t know
6 Refused
D4. **CONTOFF** Have you ever tried to get government officials to pay attention to something that concerned you, either by calling, writing a letter, or going to a meeting?

1 Yes (Continue)

2 No (SKIP TO D7)

3 DK/NA (SKIP TO D7)

D5. **NUMCONT** Have you done this more than once?

2 Yes, more than once

3 No (Skip next)

4 Don’t know (Skip next)

5 Refused (Skip next)

E7.B **ATTMEET** Attended a PTA meeting

Appendix 2: Electoral Political Participation Index.

I1. **REGVOTE** Are you currently registered to vote in the U.S.?

1 Yes

2 No (**SKIP TO, GO TO I3**) 

3 Don’t know

4 NA
17. **VOTE04** In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren’t registered, they were sick, or they just didn’t have time. How about you—did you vote in the presidential election last November?

1 Yes

2 No

3 DK/Refuse

19. **PARTISAN** Are you registered as …? *rotate order*

1 Democrat

2 Republican

3 Independent

4 Some other party

5 No state requirement

6 DK

M14. **TRVOTEUS** Have you ever voted in (Answer to B4) elections since you’ve been in the US?

1 Yes

2 No (SKIP TO M15)

3 Don’t know (SKIP TO M16)

4 NA (SKIP TO M16)
Tables

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics For Electoral and Non-Electoral Participation Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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Table 2 Descriptive Statistics For Independent Variables

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<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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<th>Max</th>
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</thead>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</table>

Source. Latino National Survey, 2006
Table 3. Political Participation, Assimilation and Attachment to the Country of Origin

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<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Estimates</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic resources</td>
<td>1.61***</td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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Note: The dependent variable is political participation.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01
### Table 4. Pair Wise Correlation

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<td>0.28</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
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Source: Latino National Survey, 2006

### Table 5. Variance Inflation Factor Test

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<td>americanr</td>
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<td>gender</td>
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<td>countorigid</td>
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<td>Mean VIF</td>
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Table 6. Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey Test

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<td>chi2(1)</td>
<td>=</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob</td>
<td>&gt; chi2</td>
<td>0.7167</td>
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</table>

Table 7. Cameron & Trivedi’s decomposition of IM-test

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Heteroskedasticity</td>
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<td>0.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
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<td>Kurtosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table 8. Participation, Assimilation and Attachment to the Country Of Origin for Non-Mexicans sub-sample

<table>
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<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Estimates</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic resources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.165***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.468</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.687***</td>
<td>0.381</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>0.765</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment to the Country of Origin</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0.481</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>$F$</td>
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<td>Prob &gt; $F$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
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</table>

Note: The dependent variable is political participation.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01
Table 9. Participation, Assimilation and Attachment to the Country Of Origin for Borderlanders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Estimates</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>1.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
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<td>2.793</td>
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<td>4.10</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>20.968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0.894</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Adjusted R</td>
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</tr>
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<td>$F$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
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Note: The dependent variable is political participation.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01
Table 10. Participation, Assimilation and Attachment to the Country Of Origin for Months Prior and Post May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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Note: The dependent variable is political participation.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01
Figure 1: Scatter Plot for Political Participation Assimilation and Attachment to the Country of Origin Model
Curriculum Vita

Sergio I. García Ríos was born and raised Durango, México. He is a lecturer and research assistant in the Political Science Department at the University of Texas at El Paso. He earned his B.B.A. in Economics and a B.S. in Philosophy from UTEP and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Political Science. His area of research is Latino/a politics with an interest in political participation, assimilation and empowerment, border issues, and the politics of Mexico.