From Naturalized Citizen to Voter: Context of Naturalization and Electoral Participation in Latino Communities

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Naturalization surged in the 1990s to levels unprecedented in the history of its federal regulation since 1907 (see Table One). The more than five million immigrants who naturalized as U.S. citizens in the 1990s exceeded the number of naturalizees in the previous three decades combined. Naturalization has since declined somewhat from the peak years of the late 1990s, but remains at levels twice as high as the early 1990s and before. The large number of newly naturalized citizens – most of whom are adults[2] – will likely have some impact on U.S. electoral politics for many years to come simply based on their numbers and concentration in a few states, but they also raise a dilemma for democratic institutions in the United States. Specifically, they test whether existing incorporative mechanisms are successful at making these new, voluntary citizens into regular participants in electoral politics.

[Table One Approximately Here]

Numbers alone, of course, do not guarantee regular electoral participation. For these newly naturalized citizens to have a distinct voice in politics, they need to participate regularly and, ideally, at higher levels than their U.S.-born co-ethnics who tend to participate at lower levels that non-Hispanic white and Black Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2005, DeSipio 1996a; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004). Naturalized citizens may be at a particular

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[1] I would like to express my appreciation to the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute for use of the data analyzed here.
[2] Although immigrant children can naturalize as part of their parents' naturalization, immigrants under the age of 18 do not need to naturalize. Instead, they can become citizens administratively after their parents' naturalization. Instead of formally applying for a Certificate of Citizenship for minor children after naturalization, a recently naturalized parent can apply for a passport in the name of the minor child and that child will have become a U.S. citizen for all intents and purposes. This is cheaper and is often recommended by the Immigration and Naturalization Service/Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. It does, however, create the potential that

disadvantage. A series of studies conducted in the 1990s demonstrate that the naturalized participate in elections, and other forms of community political activity, at rates lower than comparably situated U.S.-born citizens (Bass and Casper 1999; DeSipio 1996*c*, 2001; Levitt and Olson 1996; Minnite, Holdaway, and Hayduk 1999; Mollenkopf, Olson and Ross 2001).[3]

Several of these studies, however, note that the naturalized citizens that they are analyzing are naturalizees that include exclusively or primarily immigrants who became U.S. citizens before the surge in naturalization in the mid-1990s, a period in which some of the naturalizees arguably naturalized for political reasons. Thus, this previous scholarship would suggest that it might be valuable to disaggregate 1990s naturalizees and/or immigrants who naturalized for political reasons to see if there is a cohort effect that distinguishes them in terms of their political behavior from earlier naturalizees or from naturalizees who did not naturalize for political reasons.

The post-1992 naturalizees also include a second subgroup that may have a claim on electoral participation that is unique from other naturalizees. Specifically, one of the reasons for the surge in naturalization in the 1990s (a topic discussed in more depth later) are the large number of IRCA legalizees who became eligible to naturalize in the 1990s. These recipients of legalization had been required to be resident in the United States since at least 1981 – many had been resident for much longer – and to either demonstrate a facility in English and civics at the time of legalization (in other words in the late 1980s) or to be taking classes to gain this knowledge. Thus, IRCA recipients should on average have been ahead of other naturalizees in

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some immigrants who think that they naturalized as part of their parents' naturalization have not or cannot prove that they are U.S. citizens (Chardy 2006).

[3] Several other studies analyzing registered voters in Southern California find higher rates of participation among the naturalized that the native born. I discuss these studies – and my suspicions about why their findings differ from the national patterns – later in this paper.

gaining the formal civics skills necessary to participate in U.S. politics.

Finally, previous scholarship has not been able to assess whether the broader context of naturalization, regardless of when it took place, shapes the likelihood of electoral participation. More specifically, I am interested in whether immigrants who naturalized for political reasons – or at least recall that they naturalized for political reasons – are more likely to participate in politics than other naturalized citizens. Some of the historical literature on 1920s/1930s era naturalizees would suggest that this is the case, but it has not been tested rigorously.

In this paper, I test two sets of hypotheses using a survey of Latino[4] voting patterns in the 2000 presidential election. First, I examine whether period of naturalization matters. My null hypothesis is that the longer an immigrant is naturalized, the higher the likelihood that s/he will participate in politics. This assumes that political skills and interests are learned and that, controlling for factors known to shape political behavior in the population as a whole, longer periods of citizenship will increase the likelihood of voting. I counter this null hypothesis with the two cohort measures of specific periods of immigration and naturalization that might prove more important to determining political behaviors that simple duration of naturalized citizenship – IRCA beneficiaries and naturalizees from the period of political contestation of immigration, immigrant status, and naturalization in the mid- to late-1990s (between 1994 and 2000 in my analysis).

Second, I test a mobilization model in which the reasons for naturalization matters. I hypothesize that immigrants who naturalized for political reasons are more likely to participate than those who naturalized for other reasons and immigrants who naturalized in order to obtain

[4] I use the terms Latino and Hispanic interchangeably to identify individuals residing in the United States who trace their origin or ancestry to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America or the Caribbean.

or maintain access to government services would be less likely to vote. I should note at the outset that the evaluations of reasons for naturalizing are offered *retrospectively* and thus may be shaded by feelings about politics or political institutions in the period between naturalizations and the 2000 election. I discuss the specification of these models in greater depth later in the paper.

Data

My analysis will be based on a post-election telephone survey of Latino[5] registered voters in five states conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) after the 2000 presidential elections. This survey and the data that I analyze are unique for two reasons. First, this is a survey of *registered voters* (whose voter registration status was verified by the sample vendor—Aristotle of Washington, D.C.). As a result, I analyze the voting behavior among the registered, those who are most targeted by candidates and campaigns in the weeks leading up to the election. Second, the survey includes a battery of eight questions about the respondents' retrospective evaluations of why they naturalized for a subsample of respondents. The questions are asked of the more recent naturalizees, those who naturalized between 1992 and 2000. Although it would have allowed for a richer analysis to have these questions asked of all naturalized respondents, I would have serious concerns about the accuracy of naturalization-related memories for respondents who naturalized in earlier periods. These questions, and the

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[5] This analysis can only speak to the Latino experience. I am not aware of any data that would allow for a discussion of the political behaviors of non-Latino immigrants who naturalized in the mid- to late-1990s. Latinos make up about 40 percent of immigrants to permanent residence and approximately 35 percent of naturalizing citizens. Jasso and Rosenzweig (1990) find that immigrants from Mexico are less likely than average to naturalize than nationals of other large immigrant-sending countries, controlling for other immigration-related factors, to naturalize. Portes and Mozo (1985) find that immigrants from Canada and Mexico are less likely to naturalize than nationals of other countries, controlling for socio-demographic factors. Finally, controlling for socio-demographic, associational, and immigration-related factors, DeSipio (1996*a*) finds that among Latinos, Cubans and Dominicans are more likely than Mexicans to begin the naturalization process and, once they began the process, to become U.S. citizens.

frequencies of responses, appear in Table Two.

[Table Two Approximately Here]

The survey includes 2,132 registered Latino voter respondents in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois. The survey included a minimum of 400 respondents from each of these states. Of these respondents, 834 were naturalized U.S. citizens. The survey included an elaborate screen to exclude from the naturalized category individuals born abroad as U.S. citizens (usually because one or both parents were U.S. citizens). So, unlike other surveys that incorrectly specify some foreign born U.S. citizen respondents as naturalized, the naturalized respondents discussed here have made the voluntary transition to U.S. citizenship. Of the 834 naturalized respondents, 375 naturalized in 1992 or later and were asked for their assessments of why they naturalized.

As is the case with most surveys, a higher share of survey respondents reported having voted than do national data. There is no single authoritative source on the share of naturalized Latino voters who vote. The Current Population Survey is the most widely used source, even though it likely includes some misreporting of citizenship status, registration status, and voting (Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000; DeSipio and de la Garza 2005: 49-50). It reported that in 2000, 78.6 percent of Latino registered voters turned out to vote (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002: Table 2). In the five states in the TRPI survey, Latino turnout was approximately 81 percent of registered Latino voters (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002: Table 4a). Respondents to the TRPI survey reported turnout at the rate of 89 percent. This gap likely reflects over-reporting of voter turnout in the wake of the many controversies surrounding the 2000 presidential race. Unfortunately, the data do not allow for these over-reporters to be distinguished in the analysis. Thus, the dependent variable – voting in the 2000 election – must be understood as including

both voters (the vast majority) and some respondents who think they should have voted or who are offering the more socially acceptable answer.

Naturalization and Electoral Participation

Contrary to popular assumptions, many immigrants never naturalize. In 1990, for example, just 8 million of the 19.8 million foreign-born residents of the United States were U.S. citizens (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). By 2000, the number of foreign born residents of the United States increased to 31.1 million and the number naturalized to 12.5 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2003). The share of immigrants who were naturalized declined slightly during the 1990s.

Not all of the non-naturalized immigrants are eligible for citizenship. Approximately 4 million have immigrated in the previous five years and, thus, are not yet eligible to naturalize (and some of these immigrants have emigrated elsewhere, returned to their home countries, or died prior to achieving naturalization eligibility). In addition, the foreign-born population includes many unauthorized immigrants, although their exact number is somewhat disputed (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2003: Table Q; Bean, Van Hook, and Woodrow-Lafield 2001; Bean et al. 2001; Passel 2005). A 2004 estimate finds that 4.2 million Latino legal permanents residents were eligible for naturalization (as were 3.5 million non-Latino legal permanent residents) (NALEO Educational Fund 2004). They are supplemented by the between 600,000 and 700,000 legal permanent resident adults who achieve eligibility for naturalization each year. The overall pool is reduced by the 450,000-550,000 who naturalize each year. These numbers are imprecise, however, because there are no comprehensive data sources on emigration or death of immigrants to permanent residence in the United States.

The Naturalized and the Vote

There has also long been an assumption that the naturalized engage in politics at higher levels than comparably situated U.S.-born citizens. There is a logic behind this assumption as well as a specific historical circumstance that may explain its origin. Among contemporary immigrants, however, there is only limited and regionally specific data to support these claims and a wealth of data that contradicts them.

The historical origin of the claims of high levels of political activity and commensurate influence among the naturalized is the last period of higher-than-routine immigrant interest in naturalization—the 1910s through the early 1930s.[6] Scholarly work from this era speaks of the energetic involvement of naturalized citizens in politics, particularly in local politics, and of their influence in some elections. These claims are for the most part not empirically substantiated in the scholarly analysis of this era, but the assertion is made widely enough to be a truism (some more recent studies have attempted to look at the political behaviors of the naturalized and their children from this era with greater methodological rigor, see Tuckel and Maisel 1994; Andersen 1979; Gamm 1986). When the analysts from this period sought to examine the question of why naturalized citizens would be disproportionately active, they use the following logic, again without any proof: naturalizing citizens developed a more complete understanding of U.S. politics through the requirements of the naturalization process. With this greater knowledge, they took the responsibilities of democracy more seriously and they participated more. Their added participation was spurred by the ethnically charged nature of the 1928 presidential election with Democrat Al Smith's Catholicism and support for a repeal of Prohibition and by the Depression and the beginnings of the New Deal in the 1932 and 1936 elections. It is this period and its

[6] These experiences from the 1920s and early 1930s are not the only historical examples of the political influence of the naturalized. Thomas Jefferson's 1800 victory in New York State is attributed to the immigrant vote (Muller

experiences that generates the hypothesis that naturalization for political reasons might increase the likelihood of subsequent political participation. This unique historical period—the three national elections between 1928 and 1936—created an environment in which the naturalized (and their children) did have a particularly strong and cohesive political voice. The economic difficulties of the day were important to them and they were able to develop alliances with other disaffected groups to form the coalition that would later support President Roosevelt and the Democrats for a political generation.

Whether or not the naturalized participated in politics at high levels in the 1920s and the 1930s, the same assertions are made about today's immigrants. Again, however, there is little substantiation for these claims. What is offered is anecdotal evidence from specific elections. Often, however, these anecdotal examples do not distinguish between the political behaviors of the naturalized and their U.S.-born co-ethnics. Further, they do not measure the combined impact of the immigrant-ethnic vote.

An example of this sort of claim is the 1996 Orange County, CA Congressional race between Loretta Sánchez and Bob Dornan. Many commentators attributed Sánchez's victory to the votes of Latino immigrants. Implicitly, Dornan made this claim with his charge that Sánchez (and a Latino community-based organization, Hermandad Mexicana) "stole" the election by manipulating the votes of naturalizing (but not yet naturalized) Latinos. Undeniably, many people in the district are Latino (it was drawn under the provisions of the Voting Rights Act to create a majority-minority district). Equally certainly, many of these Latino residents of the district were not U.S. citizens. The claim of Latino influence on the outcome of this race has two gaps, however. First, Latinos—regardless of nativity—made up no more than 30 percent of the

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1993: 21). Erie finds that the urban machines relied on naturalization to swell voter roles and win several elections:

voters in the district (and probably closer to 25 percent). Thus, while they may well have overwhelmingly supported Sánchez, they alone are not responsible for her victory. Second, at least 60 percent of these Latino voters had voted in previous congressional elections. So, if they were naturalized voters, they were not recent entrants into electoral politics. In sum, these anecdotal claims often collapse upon even the simplest investigation.

Several recent studies have tapped survey data (often collected for other purposes) to compare the political behaviors of the U.S.-born and the foreign-born. I, for example, measured four forms of political activity—involvement in community organizations, parental involvement in the schools, voter registration, and voting—to compare the political behavior of naturalized and native-born Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans (DeSipio 1996*c*). Across each of these four types of political activity, bivariate comparisons indicated that the U.S.-born and the naturalized had comparable levels of activity. When variations did appear, the U.S.-born usually had higher levels of participation.

When I examined these differences using multivariate models that looked not just at the source of citizenship, but also at standard socio-demographic predictors of participation, I found that when naturalization status proved to be statistically significant, it was a *negative* predictor of political activity. The two political activities for which naturalization proved to be a significant, negative predictor of political activity in the multivariate models were the two that related to voting—voter registration and voting in one of the four elections prior to the survey (including both presidential and local elections). In both of these models, the standard socio-demographic measures that predict political activity broadly among American adults had a greater impact on the dependent variable than did source of citizenship. The socio-demographic measures included

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the 1868 New York gubernatorial race and mayoral races in the 1870s and early 1880s (1988: 51-53).

in the models were: years of education and degrees earned, income, labor force participation, and age. I also included two variables unique to immigrant-ethnic populations—national origin and language used at home (neither of which proved to be significant). Source of citizenship proved not to be significant for two other types of political activity—membership in community-based organizations and parental involvement in the schools.

Analysis of the Current Population Survey of registration and voting in the 1996 elections largely tells the same story (Bass and Casper 1999).[7] Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, foreign-born citizens were one-third less likely register and one-quarter less likely to vote than the U.S.-born. Interestingly, naturalized citizens from Latin America were somewhat more likely to report registration or voting than immigrants from other parts of the world, though these national-origin differences were not statistically significant.

There is no similar multivariate analyses of 2000 or 2004 CPS election data. The bivariate results look quite similar to those from 1996. Overall, the naturalized were less likely to register or vote in both 2000 and 2004. Naturalized Latinos, however, were more likely to register and vote than native born Latinos in both years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002: Table 13, 2005: Table 13). It is my expectation that these results for the Latino community would disappear in multivariate analysis as they did for the 1996 CPS data.

These national findings are largely reinforced by four studies of immigrant-ethnic populations in specific cities—New York, Los Angeles, and Miami—that rely on both survey data and ecological inference. The first of these city-level studies measures voting among six immigrant-ethnic populations in New York City elections (Levitt and Olson 1996). This study

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[7] While the Current Population Survey is always subject to over-reporting (as, for that matter, are all surveys that rely on self-reporting of registration and voting), the 1996 election might have triggered higher than average rates of over-reporting, particularly among Latino respondents (Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000).

examines electoral districts with high concentrations of Dominicans, Jamaicans, Chinese, Italian, Soviet, and Ecuadorian immigrants in five elections in the early 1990s. The authors find that the high concentration districts for five of the ethnic populations (all but Soviets) turnout at rates lower than the citywide average. Chinese-dominated electoral districts turn out at the lowest rates, just 73 percent of the average for the city. While this study does not adequately account for the interaction between socio-demographic characteristics and nationality characteristics, it reinforces the finding that the naturalized participate at lower rates than the U.S. born.

Mollenkopf, Ross, and Olson (2001) extend this study to look at immigrant neighborhoods in New York and Los Angeles. These neighborhoods are home to both first- and second-generation immigrants. Though they indicate that structural/electoral factors explain some of the variation within each city, their consistent finding is that immigrant concentration neighborhoods are *less* likely to turn out than are non-immigrant-concentration neighborhoods.

In New York, they find that (for the 1996 presidential election), predicted turnout declines by about one percent for each ten percentage point increase in foreign-born population. In Los Angeles, a ten percentage point increase in foreign-born population decreases turnout by two percent. Mollenkopf et al. find some variation among ethnic groups. In New York, West Indians and Dominicans are more likely to vote than native-born citizens. Chinese, Italians, and Russians, on the other hand, are less likely to vote. In Los Angeles, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and Filipinos were less likely than native-born neighborhoods to turn out.

These findings are reinforced by a second New York-based study. Minnite, Holdaway, and Hayduk (1999) report on a 1997 telephone survey of 1,662 adults. They find that self-reported voting varies based on nativity in a statistically significant manner in the 1994 and 1996 elections, controlling for socio-demographic and institutional factors. As with the other studies,

they find that the U.S.-born are more likely to participate than the foreign-born. Their contribution comes from their examination of both a presidential and non-presidential election. The gap between the U.S.- and foreign-born is greater in the non-presidential election year under study.

Hill and Moreno (1996) analyze the Cuban respondents to the Latino National Political Survey, most of whom reside in Florida. They examine three subsets of this population—immigrants who migrated before they were ten years of age, immigrants who migrated after they had turned ten, and U.S.-born Cubans (who are almost all second generation). They test which of these three subsets of the Cuban American population are most likely to participate in seven political non-electoral political activities. Overall, the second generation are less likely to undertake these activities than are the migrants who arrived after the age of 10. In a regression model, however, percentage of life spent in the United States proves a significant and positive predictor of undertaking these activities, suggesting that the relative youth of the second generation may be dampening their political activity relative to their immigrant parents.

There is an exception to this pattern of lower levels of registration and voting among naturalized citizens documented in several studies of Latino voter turnout among registered voters in Southern California (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Barreto and Muñoz 2003; Barreto 2005). Clearly, this work – which relies primarily on lists of registered voters – can only tell half the story. Like the survey data analyzed in this paper, it begins with pool of registered voters and cannot speak to whether there are nativity differences in propensity to register, but it raises the question of whether the political environment of California in the late 1990s/early 2000s created different incentives from the rest of the country for immigrants, or more specifically Latino immigrants, to vote (Fraga, Ramírez, and Segura 2005; Pachon, Barreto, and

Marquez 2005). In this paper, I analyze both period and state-specific effects to see if there is a distinctly Californian experience that would predict higher levels of turnout among naturalized Latinos or among Latinos who naturalized in the 1990s.

Without a national immigrant voting survey that is broadly inclusive in terms of immigrant-ethnic populations and verifies self-reported registration and voting, the results of these disparate studies must suffice in terms of answering the question of the likelihood of voting among immigrants. To the extent that these populations are representative of the naturalized citizen population broadly, however, the data indicate that the naturalized will not have a disproportionate political voice. In fact, they will have *less* of a voice than comparably situated U.S.-born citizens.

Changing Incentives to Naturalize in the 1990s

Beginning in 1993, the costs of denizenship began to increase and the psychic costs of naturalization for immigrants from some countries began to decline (for a more detailed discussion of these factors, see DeSipio 1996*b*). The consequence was a dramatic increase in immigrant interest in naturalization (see Table One). I trace this surge in interest to 1993. While it may appear not to have occurred until 1995 or even 1996, this lag reflects more about INS processing delays than to the patterns of applications. Instead, beginning in 1993 demand for naturalization began to increase (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2006: Table 31). By 1996, the number of naturalizations roughly tripled the average levels prior to the surge in demand. Naturalizations at this level are unprecedented in the nearly one hundred year history of federal administration of naturalization.

Why did immigrants suddenly seek naturalization at such high levels? First, the United States and at least one of the states—California—began to change a long-standing pattern in the

treatment of denizens (DeSipio 1996*b*). Before 1994, permanent residents, and particularly permanent residents with the five years of residence to make them eligible for U.S. citizenship, had most of the rights and eligibility for programmatic benefits as did citizens. Beginning with California's Proposition 187 and then with the 1996 Welfare Reform Bill, legislatures began to deny immigrants and their households social welfare benefits (DeSipio and de la Garza 1998: chapter 4). While relatively few immigrants use these benefit programs (at least relative to their economic status), many heard the anti-immigrant message of these legislative changes and more actively pursued naturalization.

A second change also altered the incentive structure of naturalization. Several immigrant-sending countries have sought to reduce the psychic costs of émigrés seeking to become U.S. citizens (Aleinikoff 2000; Jones-Correa 2000). This new approach takes a variety of forms, but all seek to reshape the relationship between the sending country and the émigré. Colombia, for example, encourages dual-citizenship and seeks to maintain an ongoing relationship with the U.S.-born children of its U.S.-naturalized émigrés. Mexico has not gone as far as Colombia in establishing a new relationship with its émigrés, but instead promotes a dual-nationality that allows for full economic, but not political rights (González-Gutiérrez 1999). Mexico has also promised its émigrés an easy re-naturalization for Mexican nationals who become U.S. citizens but later decide to return to Mexico to live permanently. Finally, in 2005, Mexico added voting from abroad in presidential elections to the pallet of rights available to its citizens abroad. The Mexican case is particularly important both because of the numbers of its émigrés in the United States and because its attitude was traditionally one of disdain when its émigrés sought U.S. citizenship (de la Garza 1997). The goal of these policies is to create an interest group in the United States that is sensitive to the needs of the sending country.

A third change in the incentive structure is less instrumental. Beginning in 1993, the INS required that immigrants with aging immigrant identification cards ("green cards") replace the card. For many long-term residents (who had developed English-language skills), the procedure and cost of replacing the aging cards was not significantly less complicated or expensive than naturalizing. Because these new green cards would have to be replaced every ten years, the utility of naturalization increased (Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2001).

A fourth change in the mid-1990s affected the pool of eligible immigrants. One of the three components of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was the program to legalize long-term undocumented residents of the United States. Approximately two million immigrants who had resided in the United States in an undocumented status since before 1982 earned permanent resident status through this program. Another one million agricultural laborers who had shorter periods of undocumented residence also earned legalized status. They began to be eligible for naturalization in late 1993. Thus, at the same time that the incentive structure of naturalization was changing and the INS created a bureaucratic incentive to naturalize, the pool of eligible immigrants was growing quite dramatically, by as many as 3 million.

This increase was notable for two reasons. First, it was much larger than any comparable annual increase. In the average year, between 550,000 and 750,000 immigrants attain naturalization eligibility (some of these are children and can only naturalize if their parents do). Second, the legalization recipients have long periods of U.S. residence; all had resided in the United States since at least 1982. Further, in order to obtain legalized status, they had to demonstrate that they knew English, U.S. history, and civics comparable to what is asked of naturalizing citizens, or they needed to take classes to meet these objectives. Thus, they are further along in the process of adapting to U.S. life and better prepared than most newly

naturalization-eligible immigrants. They, of course, join the 550,000 to 750,000 immigrants from five years before who begin to become eligible for naturalization each year.

A fifth change in the incentive structure to naturalize was a byproduct of the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. Among other provisions, this federal crime bill raised the likelihood that permanent residents who had committed crimes in the United States would be deported and, for those not deported, would not be able to reenter the United States after a voluntary departure. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some permanent resident parents fearing for the possible application of these provisions against their minor children naturalized to protect their children who they fear might become involved in gang activity. Both before and after the passage of the law, permanent residents convicted of felonies were ineligible to naturalize.

Finally, INS periodically spurred a surge in demand by raising or threatening to raise the fee for naturalization. Finally achieving its longer-term goal in January 1999, the fee increased from $95 to $225 (and is now $390, plus photographs). Prior to this increase and several prior efforts, applications increased dramatically in the months preceding the increase or proposed increase.

It is important to note, though, that even with higher numbers of immigrants becoming U.S. citizens in the late 1990s, no more than half of the eligible pool of long-term immigrants had become citizens since 1993. Their numbers are reinforced by the 550,000 to 750,000 immigrants who reach their fifth year of permanent residence each year. Immigrant naturalizations in the early 21st Century are well below these levels. In other words, there remains a large untapped pool of citizenship-eligible immigrants who have not yet pursued naturalization and that number grows each year.

Models and Analysis

I test a series of logistic regression models that substitute period measures or retrospective evaluations for time elapsed since naturalization in a standard model of electoral participation in Latino communities. The models control for factors that have long been shown to shape the likelihood of voting in the U.S. electorate as a whole – sociodemographic characteristics of individuals and mobilization during the campaign – and in the Latino community more specifically – a measure of acculturation.

The analysis begins with two preliminary steps. First, I analyze *all* respondents to the TRPI survey, regardless of nativity, to assess whether these data follow the general pattern identified above: lower levels of participation among naturalized citizens than U.S.-born citizens, controlling for other predictors of voting (see Table Three). In the analysis that follows this discussion of all respondents, I limit my analysis to naturalized respondents to the TRPI survey. First, I present a model that tests my null hypothesis that controlling for other factors, naturalized citizen registered voters who naturalized earlier will be more likely to vote than those who naturalized later (see Table Four). I then compare three models testing period of naturalization (see Table Five) and reasons for naturalizing (see Table Six) to this model in which duration of U.S. citizenship is the key naturalization-related factor explaining what differentiates Latino naturalized registered voters who turn out from those who don't.

Each of the these models controls for several factors that reliably predict turnout in Latino and Latino immigrant communities (and, in many cases, in the population as a whole). In each of the models, I include as independent control variables five standard demographic characteristics—age, education, household income, gender, and state of residence. Generally older citizens are more likely to vote as are more educated citizens. I would expect that these

patterns would also appear in these data. The impact of income is more erratic in Latino communities than in the population as a whole, though generally higher income respondents are more likely to participate. As with many surveys, a sizeable share of the respondents to the TRPI survey (slightly less than one-quarter) did not report their incomes. In order not to have these respondents excluded from the analysis, I report income categorically and treat "refused" as a category. I have no expectations for the likelihood of political behavior for the refused category. In the population as a whole, women are somewhat more likely to vote than men, but this pattern does not repeat itself among Latinos. Again, I do have a prediction as to whether Latina or Latino naturalized citizens will be more likely to participate. Finally among demographic predictors, I include state of residence as a control. The impact of state varies from election to election. In 2000, the election in Texas, New York, and Illinois was of a lower intensity than in Florida (de la Garza and DeSipio 2005). Because of the more intense scholarly focus on political behaviors of Latinos in California in recent elections, however, I use it as the excluded category and compare voting patterns in each of the other four states to those of Latinos in California. I would expect Florida Latinos to have higher turnout rates and Texas Latinos to have lower turnout rates than those of their California co-ethics.

I also include a political measure and an acculturation measure as controls. I expect respondents who have been contacted to vote to be more likely to turn out than those who have not (Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000). Likelihood of such contacts varies by state, so this variable may capture some of the variation in turnout by state. Finally, I include home language use (Spanish, English, or both) as a proxy for acculturation.[8] I should note that past study of

[8] The TRPI survey does not offer other measures that could be used to measure acculturation. Traditionally, a gap such as this can be overcome by using years of U.S. residence or share of life spent in the United States as controls.

Latino communities has found that language spoken at home does not distinguish the behaviors of registered Latinos who vote from those who do not (DeSipio 1996*a*: Chapter 4). It does prove to a significant predictor distinguishing Latino adult citizens who do not register from those who vote, but once this barrier is overcome has less predictive value.

Depending on the specification, I include one of five measures of period or context of naturalization. The simplest is years since naturalization. The second and third are one of two periods of immigration or naturalization – recipients of legalization under the Immigration Reform and Control Act or respondents who naturalized in 1994 or after. These categories overlap somewhat since most IRCA recipients who have naturalized did so in 1994 or after, but they measure different aspects of the immigration/naturalization experience. Finally, I create two scales to measure retrospective evaluations for reasons for naturalizing, one of the five questions related to retrospective evaluations of naturalizing in order to establish or maintain political access and a second of the three questions relating to the desire to obtain government services (these questions are listed in Table Two). For each question, I assign a value of -2 to "not at all important" answers, -1 to "somewhat unimportant," 0 to no answer/refused, +1 to "somewhat important" and +2 "very important" and sum the answers. This creates a scale of -10 to +10 for the political access scale and -6 to +6 for the government services scale. The mean respondent scored a +4 on the political access scale (with respondents at both –10 and +10) and a 0 on the government services scale (again, with some respondents at both extremes).

Results

In 2000, naturalized Latino registered voters were less likely to vote than were U.S.-born citizens (see Table Three). Controlling for the other factors associated with Latino political

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Unfortunately, both of these measures are highly correlated with years since naturalization and the two period

participation, the naturalized were approximately 29 percent less likely to vote than the U.S.-born. Source of citizenship was not the only variable that proved to be significant in predicting voting likelihood. Older and more educated respondents had higher likelihoods of voting, as did some of the higher income categories relative to the lowest. Only Texas proved to have different voting patterns than California and they were in the predicted direction (lower). Gender and language(s) spoken at home were insignificant. In sum, these data offer confirmation of the relatively consistent finding that the naturalized participate at lower rates than the U.S.-born and raise some doubt about the possibility of a California exceptionalism to this pattern.[9]

[Tables Three Approximately Here]

Among naturalized respondents to the TRPI survey, year of naturalization proved to be a statistically significant negative predictor of voting (meaning that immigrants who naturalized more recently were less likely to vote than those who naturalized earlier) (see Table Four). Each additional year since naturalization reduced the likelihood of voting by approximately 4 percent. Neither naturalization during the period of more intense interest in immigration and naturalization after 1994 nor naturalization after receiving legalization under IRCA proved to have a positive effect on the likelihood of voting substantial enough to overcome the general pattern of longer periods of naturalization leading to higher levels of voting (see Table Five). Immigrants who naturalized in 1994 or after were approximately 40 percent less likely to vote than those who naturalized earlier, controlling for the other variables in the model. IRCA recipients who could not naturalize before 1993 and, in most cases, did so several years later

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measure I test. As a result, I include language spoken at home as my primary acculturation measure.

[9] To further test this question, I ran a specification of the model with state/source of citizenship interaction terms, so that naturalized respondents in California (and in each of the other states) were compared to all other respondents. This model offer substantively similar results to the model presented here with Texas naturalized citizens less likely to vote, but none of the other states' naturalized citizens achieving statistical significance.

were approximately 43 percent less likely than non-IRCA recipients who had naturalized to vote, again controlling for the other variables in the model. Thus, these data do not offer evidence that these cohort effects overcame the more general need for political learning and political socialization among naturalized citizens. Without more focused political education for naturalized citizens in the United States, time is the factor offers the richest likelihood of gaining the skills, knowledge, and confidence to vote, even among the naturalized.

[Tables Four and Five Approximately Here]

In each of these models testing length of naturalized citizenship or cohort effects, age also proved to be a positive predictor of voting as did a couple of the higher income categories (though most did not). Naturalized Tejanos were less likely to turn out than were naturalized California Latinos. The other states did not prove to be statistically different from the California Latinos. Gender, contact to vote, and education proved not to be significant predictors of voting among naturalized Latinos registered to vote. In both the basic model (the one testing duration of citizenship) and the model testing the "post-1994" cohort effect, language spoken at home proved to be significant. Respondents who spoke English at home were *less* likely than respondents who spoke Spanish at home. While somewhat counterintuitive, I interpret this to mean that immigrant households that are able to maintain Spanish dominance, controlling for each of the other characteristics in the model, particularly education and income, can use linguistic difference as a resource compared to more acculturated naturalized Latinos. I am cautious in this interpretation and would note that the bilingual respondents, who at some level would seem to have the best of both worlds, do not prove to be different than the respondents who speak Spanish at home.

Finally, one's memory of why one naturalized does have predictive power over the

likelihood of voting, at least for respondents who remember naturalizing for political reasons (see Table Six). Controlling for the other variables in the model, each increment along the 20-point scale of political reasons for naturalizing increases the likelihood of voting by about 9 percent. Retrospective evaluation of naturalizing to gain or maintain access to government services, on the other hand, does not have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of voting. These effects are found over and above, the expected positive effects of age and higher income categories and the negative effects of residence in Texas (relative to residence in California). In this specification, education, gender, contact, and language spoken at home do not prove to be significant predictors of voting. The positive impact on voting of recalling having naturalized for political reasons remains even if year of naturalization is added to the model. In the specification where it is added, year of naturalization does not achieve significance.

[Table Six Approximately Here]

Conclusions

At the beginning of the paper, I asked the question of whether incorporative mechanisms are ensuring that today's Latino U.S. citizens by choice are moving toward electoral participation. Many are, but this movement is far from universal, and the naturalized see many of the same barriers that the U.S. born do. I come to this conclusion for two reasons. First, the demographic barriers that exclude all Americans from electoral participation appear to explain non-participation among Latino naturalized citizens as well. This finding should not be much of a surprise, but it suggests that naturalized citizens do not have a political socialization experience that differentiates their preparation for politics from the U.S. born. Although many naturalized citizens are older and, hence, benefit from the advantage of age in predicting voting, they tend to

be younger and less educated which works to their disadvantage. The composition of the Latino naturalized population will, then, be a continuing barrier to the political empowerment of the Latino community. Naturalization does not overcome these compositional effects.

Perhaps of more concern is the second broad finding of this paper, which speaks more directly to the question of incorporative mechanisms that reach out to immigrants and naturalized citizens. Duration of naturalization, rather than unique immigration/naturalization experiences, explains a great deal about the likelihood of voting in U.S. elections. The shared experiences and training of IRCA legalizees (moving from unauthorized to legal status and having to prepare for some of naturalization requirements well before naturalization) did not move these citizens by choice closer to electoral participation. Nor did naturalization in an era where the political rights of immigrants were in the national debate. Instead, the evidence presented here would suggest that some key element of political learning begins with naturalization and takes a while to have its effect. Thus, the somewhat atrophied mechanisms of political socialization that have slowly ebbed participation in the electorate as a whole would seem to also be present, or absent, among naturalized citizens. Instead, political knowledge is learned slowly and the confidence to participate in electoral (and other) politics only comes with time. Since many of the naturalized begin this process later than U.S.-born citizens, they will have fewer years of political engagement and their political voice will be more muted.

Only one exception to this pattern appears and that is among the Latino naturalized citizen registered voters who recall that they naturalized for political reasons. I am somewhat cautious about this finding because the retrospective evaluations may well reflect more about survey respondents' current feeling about politics rather than what they were thinking at the time of naturalization. Nevertheless, the political access scale does suggest that the evaluations of the

importance of the series of political connections does distinguish some naturalized citizens from others in terms of the likelihood of voting. To the extent that this funding does actually reflect characteristics that were true at the time of naturalization, it would suggest the appropriate target for efforts to incorporate immigrants into U.S. politics. These efforts should focus on immigrants who have not yet naturalized and they should, in addition to offering them assistance with the bureaucracy of the naturalization application, ensure that immigrants clearly see their connections to U.S. politics, to the rights of citizenship, and to their own roles in ensuring that they and their families can exercise these rights. To the extent that naturalizing citizens understand that naturalization confers not only protections, but also rights, it would appear that they are more likely to exercise the right to vote.

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Table One. Naturalizations by Decade

Decade		Naturalizations
1907-1910		111,738
1911-1920		1,128,972
1921-1930		1,773,185
1931-1940		1,518,464
1941-1950		1,987,028
1951-1960		1,189,949
1961-1970		1,120,263
1971-1980		1,464,772
1981-1990		2,214,265
1991-2000		5,619,892
1991	308,058	
1992	240,252	
1993	314,681	
1994	434,107	
1995	488,088	
1996	1,044,689	
1997	598,225	
1998	463,060	
1999	839,944	
2000	888,788	
2001-2004		2,182,268
2001	608,205	
2002	573,708	
2003	463,204	
2004	537,151	
2001-2010	(est. from 2001-04)	5,455,670

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 2006. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2004*. Washington, D.C.:U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table Two. Importance of Reasons for Naturalizing Among Latinos who Naturalized in 1992 or Later

Government Services

"I wanted to ensure that my family and I would continue to have access to U.S. government programs and services in the future."

Very important	54.5%
Somewhat important	16.8%
Somewhat unimportant	7.2%
Not at all important	21.4%

"I wanted to immigrate my relatives living abroad more rapidly."

Very important	37.5%
Somewhat important	9.0%
Somewhat unimportant	9.0%
Not at all important	44.5%

"I needed to replace my Green Card which was going to expire."

Very important	28.0%
Somewhat important	9.0%
Somewhat unimportant	7.2%
Not at all important	55.8%

Civic and Political Attitudes and Connections to the United States

"I realized that I had more ties to the U.S. than to my country of origin."

Very important	64.2%
Somewhat important	19.4%
Somewhat unimportant	5.8%
Not at all important	10.7%

"I wanted to vote."

Very important	85.6%
Somewhat important	10.7%
Somewhat unimportant	0.6%
Not at all important	3.2%

"I wanted to protect my children's rights in the United States."

Very important	69.3%
Somewhat important	9.6%
Somewhat unimportant	2.6%
Not at all important	18.6%

"I feared for my status in the United States."

Very important	32.6%
Somewhat important	11.7%
Somewhat unimportant	10.3%
Not at all important	45.5%

"I was concerned that the United States was turning against immigrants."

Very important	41.7%
Somewhat important	17.8%
Somewhat unimportant	6.2%
Not at all important	34.3%

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Post-Election Survey, 2001.

Table Three. Predictors of Voter Turnout Among Latino Registered Voters, 2000 (Sample drawn from California, Texas New York, Florida, and Illinois)

Independent Variable	B	*SE*
Demographic Characteristics		
Age	0.039***	0.005
Education	0.064***	0.021
Household Income ($15,000 or less)		
$15,000-$24,999	0.323	0.284
$25,000-$34,999	0.301	0.299
$35,000-$49,999	0.111	0.286
$50,000-$64,999	0.613*	0.352
$65,000-$74,999	1.066**	0.453
$80,000-$99,999	2.049***	0.754
$100,000+	0.933*	0.486
Don’t know/refused	-0.128	0.245
Gender (Men)		
Women	-0.126	0.150
State of Residence (California)		
Florida	-0.035	0.249
Illinois	0.342	0.241
New York	0.154	0.236
Texas	-0.453**	0.222
Political Characteristics		
Contacted to register or vote (No)		
Yes	0.347**	0.174
Immigration and Acculturation Characteristics		
Language spoken at home (Spanish)		
Both equally	0.011	0.186
English	-0.180	0.215
Nativity (U.S. Born/Born to a U.S. Citizen Abroad)		
Naturalized	-0.343**	0.174
Constant	-0.499	0.467
-2 log likelihood	1306.767	
Total cases	2,107	
Predicted correctly	89.5%	

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2000 election Post-Election Survey, 2001.

Table Four. Predictors of Voter Turnout Among Naturalized Latino Registered Voters, 2000 – ***Basic Model***

Independent Variable	B	*SE*
Demographic Characteristics		
Age	0.023**	0.010
Education	0.028	0.030
Household Income ($15,000 or less)		
$15,000-$24,999	0.521	0.466
$25,000-$34,999	0.985	0.575
$35,000-$49,999	0.182	0.483
$50,000-$64,999	1.048	0.678
$65,000-$74,999	0.792	0.675
$80,000-$99,999	1.751	1.128
$100,000+	1.664*	1.115
Don't know/refused	0.017	0.403
Gender (Men)		
Women	-0.038	0.250
State of Residence (California)		
Florida	-0.178	0.390
Illinois	-0.020	0.387
New York	0.903*	0.491
Texas	-0.967**	0.389
Political Characteristics		
Contacted to register or vote (No)		
Yes	0.126	0.305
Immigration and Acculturation Characteristics		
Language spoken at home (Spanish)		
Both equally	-0.281	0.274
English	-0.839**	0.411
Year of naturalization	-0.049***	0.016
Constant	97.503***	32.357
-2 log likelihood	479.594	
Total cases	772	
Predicted correctly	89.1%	

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2000 election Post-Election Survey, 2001. Sample drawn from California, Texas New York, Florida, and Illinois.

Table Five. Predictors of Voter Turnout Among Naturalized Latino Registered Voters, 2000 – ***Period and Cohort Effects***

Independent Variable	Post-1994 Naturalizees B	*SE*	IRCA Recipients B	*SE*
Demographic Characteristics				
Age	0.028***	0.010	0.031***	0.009
Education	0.032	0.030	0.016	0.028
Household Income ($15,000 or less)				
$15,000-$24,999	0.487	0.465	0.154	0.438
$25,000-$34,999	0.985	0.574	0.942*	0.564
$35,000-$49,999	0.151	0.481	-0.089	0.462
$50,000-$64,999	1.072	0.674	0.975	0.659
$65,000-$74,999	0.791	0.672	0.794	0.657
$80,000-$99,999	1.790	1.123	1.894*	1.118
$100,000+	1.673	1.109	1.646	1.101
Don’t know/refused	0.020	0.401	-0.322	0.380
Gender (Men)				
Women	-0.015	0.250	-0.135	0.232
State of Residence (California)				
Florida	-0.089	0.390	0.001	0.370
Illinois	-0.019	0.387	-0.026	0.367
New York	0.893*	0.491	0.630	0.437
Texas	-0.885**	0.388	-0.946***	0.361
Political Characteristics				
Contacted to register or vote (No)				
Yes	0.135	0.303	0.224	0.282
Immigration and Acculturation Characteristics				
Language spoken at home (Spanish)				
Both equally	-0.256	0.274	-0.005	0.255
English	-0.675*	0.405	-0.475	0.370
Naturalized in 1994 or after	-0.525*	0.271		
Legalized under IRCA			-0.568*	0.321
Constant	0.438	0.860	0.358	0.757
-2 log likelihood	486.446		558.579	
Total cases	771		841	
Predicted correctly	89.1%		88.1%	

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2000 election Post-Election Survey, 2001. Sample drawn from California, Texas New York, Florida, and Illinois.

Table Six. Predictors of Voter Turnout Among Naturalized Latino Registered Voters, 2000 – ***Retrospective Evaluations of Reasons for Naturalizing Among Latinos who Naturalized 1992 or After***

Independent Variable	With*out* Year of Naturalization B	*SE*	With Year of Naturalization B	*SE*
Demographic Characteristics				
Age	0.024*	0.014	0.025*	0.014
Education	-0.033	0.044	-0.032	0.045
Household Income ($15,000 or less)				
$15,000-$24,999	1.158**	0.587	1.134*	0.594
$25,000-$34,999	1.736**	0.787	1.747**	0.788
$35,000-$49,999	0.707	0.643	0.692	0.606
$50,000 or above	1.930**	0.795	1.906**	0.799
Don’t know/refused	0.445	0.507	0.438	0.508
Gender (Men)				
Women	0.165	0.341	0.156	0.343
State of Residence (California)				
Florida	-0.590	0.518	-0.582	0.519
Illinois	-0.503	0.517	-0.489	0.520
New York	0.948	0.662	0.942	0.662
Texas	-0.923*	0.577	-0.932	0.579
Political Characteristics				
Contacted to register or vote (No)				
Yes	0.190	0.443	0.205	0.446
Immigration and Acculturation Characteristics				
Language spoken at home (Spanish)				
Both equally	-0.065	0.374	-0.051	0.378
English	-0.799	0.696	-0.794	0.697
Retrospective evaluations of reasons for naturalizing				
To receive government services	-0.052	0.059	-0.054	0.060
To establish or maintain political Access	0.088**	0.042	0.090**	0.042
Years since naturalization			0.023	0.088
Constant	0.067	1.099	-46.746	176.150
-2 log likelihood	253.269		253.198	
Total cases	347		347	
Predicted correctly	85.6%		85.6%	

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2000 election Post-Election Survey, 2001. Sample drawn from California, Texas New York, Florida, and Illinois.