"Disappearing Latinos:
Non-Ethnic Identification and the Implications for
Latino Political Participation in the United States"

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Abstract

This paper investigates the political consequences of non-identification with Latino ethnicity among individuals with ancestry from the Spanish-speaking nations of Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Research on Latino political behavior and opinion is largely based on surveys that begin with screener questions on race and ethnicity. Ethnic identity is typically established by voluntary identification with categories such as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican-American, or Chicano. Although scholars understand that racial-ethnic classifications are socially constructed, we rarely investigate the dynamic, generational element to such identifications. Recent work using CPS data (Duncan and Trejo 2011) finds economic attainment differences among individuals who do or do not identify as Mexican but have parents or grandparents from Mexico. Our paper extends this research by testing for differences in voter registration and turnout among such individuals. Our sequential logit models indicate that individuals with Latino heritage who do not so identify ("objective Latinos") are more likely than self-identified ("subjective") Latinos to register to vote and to vote if registered. The latter participate less than the national average, even after controlling for basic socioeconomic status factors. By contrast, the "objective Latino" variable becomes statistically insignificant with the inclusion of the control variables, which is consistent with past research that finds a relationship between SES and Latino identification. We explore the consequences of this dynamic for Latino political participation, the assimilation of Latino communities, and future understandings of race and ethnicity in America.

Introduction

The racial divisions so familiar to contemporary life are relatively new in human history. As Hanke (1975, ix) argued, "Generally speaking, there was no true racial prejudice before the fifteenth century, for mankind was divided not so much into antagonistic races as into 'Christians' and 'infidels.'" Omi and Winant (1984) discussed how thinking about race has changed in more recent times, moving from biological conceptions to social construction theories. Today, they note that "race is assumed to be a variable which is shaped by broader societal forces" (11) and that "racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed, and reformed" (12). Stated differently, "Race is a bizarre social invention, a public fiction masquerading as physical fact" (Guterl 2001, 3).

The most clear and consequential racial divide in American history has been between white and black, shaped by what Harris (1964, 56) termed "hypo-descent." Regardless of self-conceptions, societal perceptions, the preponderance of ancestry, or cultural background, a person was legally classified as black if he or she had any African ancestry – the "one-drop rule." The "problem of the color line" (DuBois 1903) shaped law, politics, employment, family life, and myriad other factors – and such historical understandings and impositions continue to reverberate. While scholars have long noted the phenomenon of "passing" (Haney Lopez 1998), which indicates the arbitrary nature of racial categories, for "most people, the pervasive social systems of meaning that attach to morphology ensure that passing is not an option" (14).

While the new century saw some signs that a more complex American racial reality was beginning to emerge – such as the election of Barack Obama and the Census multiracial option – other indicators suggest that race continues to play a key social role. From criminal justice to health care to education to employment, statistical differences are clear and persistent. Even if

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scholars see race as a social construction, they recognize that it has not disappeared from the "lived reality" of individuals. As Guterl (2001, 3) argued, "the heavily racialized stuff of life is impossible to escape. Almost everything we in America do, or think, or say, is informed by race."

Nevertheless, given the shifting historical nature of race, we might expect that how it matters will change in our own time by adapting to new realities. Popular understandings of race have expanded to include groups previously marginalized. The best-known example is how the Irish "became white" (Ignatiev 1995), but it also applies to many European immigrant groups (Alba 1990; Brodkin 1998; Jacobson 1998). The Germans were once seen as a distinct group that posed a threat to Anglo-Saxon America, and Benjamin Franklin worried that they would "Germanize us." Today, heritage from European nations has become a "thin" ethnicity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998) that is both voluntary and symbolic (Waters 1990).

The process of racial change is not limited to Europeans, however. According to Lee and Bean (2007, 566), "Asian ethnic immigrant groups such as the Chinese and the Japanese also changed their racial status from almost black to almost white" (see also Spickard 1989; Zhou 2004; Gans 2005). Asians were the subject of almost complete exclusion from immigration and naturalization in the 19th and well into the 20th centuries but are today widely considered the "model minority" (see Zhou and Gatewood 2000).

How race is defined at a particular time has much to say about the larger society. What is unique about our era? One of the key factors that "complicates" – to adopt a term from the humanities – the contemporary study of race today is the reemergence of ethnicity. This is largely due to the rapid growth of Latino populations over the last forty years. Although such definitions are contested, the Census states that Hispanic identity is an ethnicity, and that

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Hispanics can identify as members of any race (or as multiracial). Previously, the political relevance of ethnicity had been on the decline, as the fears and tensions that lad to the national-origin restrictions of the 1920s became decreasingly meaningful. Jacobson (1998, 8) noted that "whiteness was reconsolidated," as illustrated by the candidacy of John F. Kennedy, "a Celt whose 'Papist' allegiances were questioned, but whose racial character never was."

Officially "ethnics," Latinos occupy a somewhat liminal social position. Some have asked whether they will assimilate in a way reminiscent of previous generations of Europeans or become a racialized minority group like African Americans. This has considerable implications, as a multiracial future where no group is a majority would be different from the alternative possibilities – (1) a white/non-white future where African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and others find political common ground, and (2) a color line of black/non-black that recreates the "scar of race" but with an expansive white category that includes the new immigrant groups, just as it did in the 20th century.

How Latinos see themselves, and how they are seen, will be a critical piece of the puzzle. As Keefe and Padilla (1987, 1) observed, "While the special impact of the Mexican American population on the country is undeniable, less commonly agreed upon is the nature of sociological change within the Chicano population." Some see a future of acculturation, assimilation and incorporation, while "Others insist that ethnicity is not so simply dismissed" (1). In general, they found a complicated dynamic; rather than a simple story of assimilation, they found that some ties weakened but others strengthened across the generations.

In this paper, we contribute to the understanding of the Latino demographic future by examining those individuals who have Latino ancestry but do not identify as Latino. Others have asked similar questions, particularly because of the implications for understanding inter-

generational mobility. Immigration skeptics such as Samuel Huntington point to data suggesting that Latino educational and labor market gains appear to flatten after the second generation. This implies that recent Latino migration differs in crucial ways from that of the European waves in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, if the highest achieving Latinos no longer identify as Latino, then such analyses would be turned around. Latinos may be assimilating – so much so that they have "become white" (or some other race) and moved out of the Latino category.

Alba and Islam (2005, 1) noted that while "long-standing sociological tradition views racial and ethnic memberships as ascriptive, and therefore stable, life-long, traits, we know that the reports of membership in some ethnic populations have shifted over time, in some cases according to a consistent trend, in others according to idiosyncratic fluctuations." For instance, Native American numbers have increased considerably, perhaps due to more positive social views of indigenous ancestry (see Sturm 2011 for discussion), while European origins changed because of the examples listed in the Census. Their analysis of Census data from 1980 to 2000 found a 20 percent unexplained loss of Hispanic identification (among those with some reported Mexican ancestry) among the young adult cohort. They concluded that "the selective departures from the Mexican-American group are on a scale that could easily impact on the measurement of group characteristics over time" (10). In fact, these individuals are more likely than identified Hispanics and Mexican Americans to speak only English at home, identify racially as white, have higher levels of educational attainment, and to report some European ancestry.

Recent research has examined how Latino identity choices can affect our understanding of the success of Latino economic acculturation. Duncan and Trejo (2011a) point out that most research relies on self-reported race and ethnicity, particularly to identify Latinos beyond the first

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and second generation. While many surveys ask about respondent nativity, few include a question about the birthplace of parents and almost none ask about the nativity of grandparents. Researchers may therefore sometimes have indicators (albeit self-reported) of Latino descent for first and some second generation individuals, but most research relies on identification for the third generation and beyond. While some "ethnic attrition" is found among the second generation, we might expect that the effects of assimilation and intermarriage would be stronger by the third generation – which is the population most difficult to measure. If those who identify as Latino are systematically different from those who do not, this creates an endogeneity problem in understanding Latino assimilation over time.

Duncan and Trejo (2011b) therefore used Current Population Survey (CPS) data to examine the children of Mexican intermarriages and to create "objective" and "subjective" measures of Latino ethnicity based on the countries of birth of parents and grandparents of respondents. First, they found that the young people who were the result of Mexican intermarriages had higher levels of human capital than those with two Mexican-ancestry parents. Second, they show that ethnic attrition is not trivial – Mexican identification drops to 81 percent of second-generation children with one Mexican-born parent and 58 percent for third generation children with one such grandparent.

In addition, about thirty percent of third-generation Mexican-ancestry children do not identify as Latino, and when these individuals are included in data on Mexican-American educational attainment, the overall dropout rate declines by 25 percent. The dropout rate therefore converges to data comparable to non-Hispanic third generation youth when the subjective and objective Latinos are considered together. They also find that objective Latinos have parents with higher educational attainment than do subjective Latinos, although the

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difference is small and many of the factors associated with higher objective Latino educational attainment may be unobserved. Furthermore, Duncan and Trejo (2009) observe that objective Latinos have higher levels of educational attainment, income, and English proficiency than do subjective Latinos – even after controlling for age and region.

Our interest is the political implications of such identity choices. As is well known, socio-economic variables are strongly associated with political participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). If Latinos at the highest end of the education spectrum are systematically less likely to identity as Latino, then Latino-Anglo participation gaps might instead be attributed to measurement issues. The literature is not unanimous that Latinos participate at levels predicted by SES, and there is also the possibility that they participate at higher levels than SES would predict, as has been found at times for African Americans (Olsen 1970; Verba and Nie 1972; see also Miller et al. 198l and Shingles 1981).

Immigration and Race

The United States is in the midst of a vigorous and sustained demographic change that largely originated with the 1965 Hart-Celler Immigration Act. Elected officials, such as President Lyndon B. Johnson, predicted that the law would have minimal effects, although it is unclear to what degree this reflected conviction or spin. Regardless, the reality was quite different. The law abolished long-standing exclusions that effectively barred migration from much of the globe and ended the quota system that limited migration from most of Eastern and Southern Europe. The result, in combination with the abolition of racial qualifications for citizenship through the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, was large-scale migration from many

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nations that had sent few individuals for almost a century, particularly from the "ignominious Asiatic Barred Zone" (Tichenor 2002, 190). In addition, other laws and administrative actions, often with Cold War motivations, would further add to population diversity.

At the same time, World War II and the postwar economic boom would draw millions of migrants from the Americas. For the 19th and much of the 20th century, these immigrants were treated differently by both law and administrative rule. They were largely exempt from the limitations and restrictions placed on the developing world, provisions actively sought by business interests in the southwest. For instance, the Texas Proviso in the McCarran-Walter Act specifically exempted employment from the definition of harboring unauthorized immigrants.

The 1965 law also set into motion the large scale movement of unauthorized immigrants. By creating hemispheric population limits, Hart-Celler would for the first time set hard restrictions on legal immigration from Mexico and other Latin American nations (although Cuba would be an exception). The demand for labor was strong in the United States, however, and the result was unauthorized migration that replaced previously legal border crossings and the Bracero Program. The small "Hispanic" population (maybe 50,000 individuals) that found itself American at the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) that concluded the Mexican-American War would be transformed into a large and diverse group of over 50 million individuals by 2010.

Such changes are central to demographic projections that anticipate a majority-minority America. As the U.S. population diversified post-1965, demographers have noted that the non-Hispanic white (Anglo) share of the population has steadily dropped. Four states have already reached majority-minority status, and almost ten states saw their Anglo populations drop to below 60 percent. Some have predicted a future where no racial-ethnic group is the majority, but

this relies on several assumptions. As Yancey (2003) pointed out, a demographer in 1925 trying to forecast the racial future of America would have predicted a multiracial nation by 1975. Such analysis would have relied on faulty assumptions about which groups are white – faulty because "the definition of who is white is not static" (3). He argued that because "African Americans experience a degree of alienation unlike that of other racial groups" (4), their ability to integrate is limited (see also Bobo and Hutchings 1996). He predicted a black/non-black future with Latinos, Asians, and others becoming part of a more broadly defined white majority through a process not available to African Americans.

For Latinos, although officially defined by the government as an ethnic group, this process would reflect what Omi and Winant called "racialization," defined as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" (14). However, it is unclear how Latinos will identity in the future, so analyzing contemporary choices is one way to better understand the racial-ethnic future.

Intermarriage

One central factor is intermarriage. While the large and growing Latino population means that Latinos have many in-group marital options, a large number of out-group marriages may lead to a population with weaker ethnic bonds. Gordon (1964) identified intermarriage as a key step in the traditional assimilation process. For Latinos, a population already shaped by the mixing known as Mestizaje, new racial-ethnic elements could either (1) be easily incorporated into an already diverse Latino makeup or (2) serve to "thin" ethnic identity in addition to other assimilationist pressures. Jasso (2001, 3) noted that the children of intermarried Latinos and Anglos might see an advantage to identifying with "their more prestigious European ancestral

origins than with their Mexican ones" and to differentiating themselves from more recent

Mexican immigrants in the workplace.

Intermarriage in America increased 20-fold from 1960 to 2000 (Jacoby 2001). Mexican

Americans also report high rates of intermarriage with Anglos (Spickard 1989; Bean and Stevens

2003), figures that have increased considerably in recent decades (Rosenfeld 2002). Perlmann

and Waters (2004) found that Mexican Americans today intermarry at the same rate as did Italian

Americans of the same generation in the first half of the twentieth century.

Using Census data, Duncan and Trejo (2011a) found that one-third of native-born

Mexican Americans have non-Mexican spouses, and most of the latter are U.S. born Anglos.

These intermarrying Mexican Americans generally have higher levels of earnings and

educations, and many of their children are not identified as Mexican. The former is consistent

with Duncan and Trejo (2007), who found that men with Spanish surnames who do not identify

as Latino have higher levels of education and English proficiency than do individuals with

Spanish surnames who identify as Latino. This also reflects more general findings about the

intergenerational transmission of ethnicity, which is especially strong when both parents are

from the same nation (Phinney et al. 2001; Umaña-Taylor et al. 2006; Umaña-Taylor and Fine

2004).

Some earlier research suggests a different dynamic. Keefe and Padilla (1987) noted that

Mexican American "social interaction continues to be ethnically circumscribed and dominated

by kin ties" (10). They also cite earlier findings that Mexican Americans who intermarry

nevertheless maintain an ethnic identity and cultural ties (Salgado de Snyder and Padilla 1982).

However, they point out that in-group marriage adds in-group in-laws, such kinship leads to

geographic stability, and the combination "ensures the ethnic character of the Chicano

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community." We might infer that if intermarriage came to weaken such family relationships and geographic units, or at least removed individuals from such settings, it could lead to the types of acculturation predicted by Gordon.

Intermarriage is particularly important because of how it shapes the identities of children. Waters (2000) used Census data to examine the labels given to children by parents of different ancestries and to rank the popularity of various options. While the observations were too few to rank Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Spanish ethnicities, she did observe that these groups had the lowest rates of "correct" assignment. The implications of such "incomplete ethnic labels" (31) are somewhat unclear, but they may suggest unique problems in the intergenerational transmission of identification.

Lee and Bean (2007) examined Census data and conducted interviews to better understand multiracial identification and thereby whether the future will be characterized by a white/non-white, black/non-black, or new tri-racial divisions. They found that multiracial Latinos and Asians reported less social distance from whites than did multiracial African Americans; that racial-ethnic identifications are less seen as a choice for African Americans; and that whites are more willing to accept multiracial Latino and Asian claims to majority group membership. They suggest that "the country may simply be reinventing a color line that continues to separate blacks from other racial/ethnic groups" (579).

Similarly, Jiménez (2004) interviewed twenty multiethnic individuals of combined Mexican and Anglo heritage. They tended to identify with their Mexican heritage because of the California context, but they also encountered boundaries to their assertion of identity. These include surname, skin color, family pressure, the types of claims being made (box checking vs. more interactive), and peers who may "inauthenticate them as Mexican Americans" (84).

Identification is therefore not necessarily a decision that originates solely within the individual, and it is particularly complex for the multiracial.

In subsequent work, Jiménez (2008) posited that continued immigration also shapes Mexican identification. Not only are there indirect effects, such as nativism, but immigration creates "intragroup boundaries...that are animated by expectations about ethnic authenticity" (1527), especially speaking Spanish. In such ways, ethnic identifications are both voluntary as well as bounded choices.

Acculturation and Assimilation

Why might an individual choose or reject an ethnic identity? This question engages the large and long-standing literature on immigrant integration. Discussions of assimilation usually begin with Park (1950) and the Chicago School assimilation model and Gordon's (1964) theory of generational change, sometimes called "straight-line" assimilation. The first generation might not exhibit substantial acculturative change (such as language learning), but their children and grandchildren will increasingly move toward the American mainstream – and therefore toward identificational assimilation. The strongest evidence of such assimilation is intermarriage. Ethnicity is a response to the new American context, but the attitudes and institutions developed by immigrants decline in relevance over time.

Today, scholars believe that the unique context of Hispanic and Asian migration – for instance, the large and continuing migration from Latin American and Asia – will require additional conceptualizations. Segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 2003) suggests that some immigrants perceived as non-white may preserve their ethnic identities as a strategy to maximize economic gains. However, there may be educational drawbacks to this strategy as well as the risk of "downward assimilation." Others discuss "reactive ethnicity" (Rumbault

2005), which occurs when immigrants maintain their cultures when faced with hostile receptions. This concept is a response by critics of assimilationist models that assume ethnicity is imported from abroad rather than also constructed in the US in response to context (Alba and Nee 1997). This is sometimes called the "competition" model.

Emeka and Vallego (2011) noted that about 6 percent of American Community Survey respondents with Latin American ancestry did not identify as Hispanic. They found that such individuals were more likely to have some ancestry not from Latin America, were more likely to speak only English, and to identify racially as white, black, or Asian. They concluded that these findings support both the traditional "straight line" assimilation model as well as more recent theories of "racialized assimilation." The latter is where immigrants may find racial (as opposed to ethnic) categories the most meaningful in their lives, although for some this may constitute an imposed (and not a chosen) identity.

A related issue is the stability of Hispanic ethnic identification. Testing assimilationist and enclosure models, Eschbach and Gómez (1998) found that Hispanic high school students who do not speak Spanish and attend schools with few Hispanics have more inconsistent identifications across a two-year period. Ono (2002) examined why some Latinos choose an "American" identification instead of a "Mexican" identification. Finding that the latter declined in half by the third generation, the key correlates were skin color and the experience of discrimination. Their paper contributes both to the growing literature on race and phenotype (see, for instance, Stokes-Brown 2012) as well as the more general study of assimilation.

Today, a number of voices are claiming that the new (and largely non-Anglo) immigrant groups are no longer able or willing to assimilate (Huntington 2004). Reviewing the assimilation literature, Waters and Jiménez (2005, 121) examined multiple measures and concluded that "The

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United States continues to show remarkable progress in absorbing new immigrants. It may be that continual immigrant replenishment makes this assimilation less visible than it was for European immigrants and their descendants, but that makes it all the more important that these findings on immigrant incorporation be prominent in public and scholarly debates on this topic." We might therefore have reason to expect that some people of Hispanic ancestry might decide not to identify as such, but we also need to know if this has implications for electoral behavior.

Data

One difficulty in analyzing the relationship between voting behavior, racial/ethnic self-identification, and ethnic ancestry is the way survey data are typically collected. As noted previously, many researchers who study ethnicity and political participation rely on self-reported ethnic identification among survey respondents, typically found in early screener questions about race and ethnicity, or a single question with mutually exclusive answers. If a respondent does not identify as Latino, she will not be coded as Latino, and researchers will not know if such individuals have Latino ancestry.

As Duncan and Trejo (2010, 289) noted, "the ideal data set would include the family tree of each individual, enabling us to identify which individuals are descended from Mexican immigrants and how many generations have elapsed since that immigration took place." It would then be a possible to ascertain the connection between Hispanic ancestry and identity. This would ideally be a time series design so that we would know when any identity changes took place.

The closest such data are the Current Population Survey (CPS) in the Census Bureau, which uses a household sampling approach that allows us to analyze data across several generations. The interviews start with one (the "reference") person in the household, who

answers questions on behalf of the household. Some respondents therefore answer for themselves, and others have answers provided for them. Such questions include race/ethnicity, voter registration, voter turnout, and parental nativity.[1]

One question is whether the reference person knows the ethnic identity of individuals in the household, and if not, in which direction are errors occurring (over- or under-estimating Latino identification). Initial analysis suggests relatively small differences in the data depending on who answers the question. For the voting question, we see an 8.3 percentage point difference in self-reported turnout vs. turnout reported by the reference person (with turnout higher among the self-reporting; 60.26 vs. 51.94 percent). As we might expect, the "don't know" response is lower among the self-reporting (0.19 vs. 4.22 percent), and the figures for not voting are almost the same (34.32 among the self-reporting vs. 36.45 percent for the others).

For Latino identity, self-reporters are somewhat less likely to be coded as Latino than are the other respondents in the household. We see that 7.8 percent of self-identifiers chose the Latino ethnic option, while 10.06 percent of individuals in the household were listed as Latino. This is a 2.22 percentage point difference, or just over a one-quarter increase. Whether this is large or small may be in the eye of the beholder, but the difference could have been anywhere from zero to multiple factors. In fact, a one-quarter increase is much closer to zero than one, let alone to two, three, or four. In addition, an overestimation of Latino identity should not pose a problem for our subsequent analysis, as we are primarily concerned with individuals who do not identify as Latino but have Latino ancestry. An overestimation of the Latino population is therefore preferable to an underestimation – for instance, if the reference person was underestimating the Latino identification of other people in the household. If this were the case, it could account for individuals who might "objectively" be classified as Latino but do not

"subjectively" do so. The opposite situation, which we see in the data – that somewhat more people are coded as Latino than who would likely identify this way – does not pose a similar analytical difficulty.

We are then able to compare ethnic identification with family ancestry across two and three generations. Conventional wisdom suggests that those two variables – identity and ancestry – will be closely related. However, as noted above, Duncan and Trejo (2011) and others have found that some CPS respondents identify as non-Hispanic despite family heritage from Mexico.

Similar to the Census, the CPS does not include Hispanic as a category in the race question (PTDTRACE). Instead, it separately asks respondents whether or not they recognize themselves as Hispanic or non-Hispanic (PEHSPNON). As a result, the race variable and the Hispanic variable can overlap. To create mutually exclusive race and Hispanic ethnicity variables, we first created a Hispanic variable based on the PEHSPNON variable; if the respondent identifies as Hispanic, we coded PTPNRACE as zero. Second, we created an "objective" Hispanic variable that is coded 1 if at least one parent or grandparent was born in a Latino-origin country (Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean).[2]

[Table 1 Here]

Table 1 shows an example of the data structure in the CPS. Suppose household A includes five members: a reference person, spouse, child, child's spouse, and two grandchildren. The reference person and his parents' native country is Mexico. His spouse, child, and

grandchildren are U.S. born. In this case, his child and two grandchildren might be of Hispanic origin. However, there could be a conflict between identity and ancestry if grandchild B classified herself (or is classified by the reference person) as non-Hispanic. In a conventional survey, we rely solely on the Hispanic self-identification question to code a respondent as Hispanic. However, as we note above, the CPS uses a nested structure for the Hispanic origin question, which allows us to distinguish between identified ("subjective") Latinos and Latino-origin ("objective") individuals.

We then use CPS voter registration and voting data from 1994 to 2010 to examine whether electoral participation differs for "objective" and "subjective" Latinos. Because the CPS includes non-U.S. citizens as well as respondents less than 18 years of age, we only analyze those who are 18 years or older and U.S. citizens. We use the surveys for November 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010. The total number of respondents is 95,921; 84,534; 84,484; 82,759; 99,093; 96,958; 94,562; 92,809; and 94,620, respectively. This combined dataset provides a total sample of 825,740.

Table 2 shows the number of "subjective" and "objective" Latino respondents. 51,791, or 6.27% of respondents, are in the former category and 54,791 respondents, or 6.64%, are in the latter. When we subtract the former from the later, we find 2,898 respondents with at least one parent or grandparent born in a Hispanic-origin nation but who do not identify as Hispanic.

[Table 2 Here]

Furthermore, we consider these estimates of the subjective Latino population to be a floor. The actual figure, which we cannot estimate with existing data, is likely much higher.

Consider that these 2,898 individuals are those who do not identify as Latinos *despite living in a multigenerational household with at minimum one parent or grandparent who was born in Mexico or the Spanish-speaking nations of Latino America and the Caribbean*. The everyday presence of such a relative would likely serve to reinforce a Latino identity. In addition, those who do not identify as Latino may be more likely to live away from home. As noted above, Alba and Islam (2005) estimated a 20 percent unexplained loss in Latino population over a twenty-year period, which suggests more changes in identification than our data can detect. If someone lives alone, with their own partner and children but without the presence of parents or grandparents, or in an institutionalized setting, the CPS data cannot identify them as objective Latinos. The large majority of individuals in contemporary America do not live in multigenerational households, including most Latinos.[3]

Variables and Models

The unit of analysis is the individual respondent, and our sample consists of the biennial voter surveys from 1994-2010. The pooled sample should not pose an estimation problem, as the CPS recruits the new sample on a rolling basis, and a two-year interval means there should be no repeat respondents in the sample.

A. Dependent Variables

The dependent variables are the two sequential decisions to (1) register to vote and (2) vote. Although some states allow voters to register on Election Day, we consider registration and voting as a two-step process.

There are different approaches to this type of dependent variable. The most common is to model the two decisions, registration and voting, as separate processes. In other words, registration and voting among the registered are modeled separately. The second approach is to

consider the decision to vote as nested in the registration decision. Since most states require registration prior to voting, we consider registration and voting as a sequentially nested process.

The dependent variable is created by combining registration and voting in the original CPS data. In this analysis, it is assumed that a voter makes two sequential decisions: registration and voting. Any eligible voter has two decisions to make, but the second decision is constrained by the first choice because she must register to cast a ballot. The dependent variable therefore has three levels: 1: Not Registered, 2: Registered, but not voted, and 3: Registered and voted.

B. Explanatory Variables

Our explanatory variables are composed of four groups of variables: race, socio-economic status, election (presidential or midterm), and Hispanic proportion in the state.

As we noted in the previous section, the CPS has five racial categories: White, Black, Native American, Asian American, and Other. Hispanic is not a considered a racial category but an ethnicity, following Census guidelines. We therefore combined and recoded the race and Hispanic variables. The "new" race variable has seven categories: White, Black, Native, Asian, Other, subjective Hispanic, and objective Hispanic. Unlike the racial groups and Hispanics in the CPS data, these seven racial categories are mutually exclusive. For example, the new "white" variable indicates the non-Hispanic (either subjective or objective) white population (often called Anglos). Subjective Hispanic includes only the population that identify as Hispanic in the CPS questionnaire, and objective Hispanic indicates the population did not identify as Hispanic but had some parental or grandparent nativity in a Hispanic-origin nation. For this reason, subjective Hispanics and objective Hispanics can be any racial group in the original CPS data. In the following pages, unless otherwise noted, "Hispanic" indicates those respondents who identified as Hispanic (subjective Hispanics).

The standard set of SES variables is included in the models: age, gender, education, and household income. As much previous research attests, age and education are particularly associated with electoral participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Lastly, we add two political and demographic factors. Because turnout rates are higher for presidential elections than midterm elections (Campbell 1997; Bafumi, Erikson, and Wlezien 2010), we include a dummy variable for presidential election year. We also take into account the Latino context through a three-level categorical variable according to the proportion of the Latino population in a state. The first level (low) is the states where the Latino population consists of a small fraction of the overall population (0% to 7%). The second (medium) encompasses those states with a larger proportion of Latinos (7.1% to 20%), and the third category (high) includes the states where the Latino proportion is between 20.1% and 46%. [4]

C. Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for all variables. Note that the variable of primary interest, objective Hispanics, contains 0.35 percent of the sample, while subjective Hispanics comprise 6.27 percent. Because of the very large sample, the former nevertheless consists of almost three thousand individuals.

[Table 3 about here]

Table 4 shows the number of the eligible voters, registered voters, and those who cast votes. The far right column shows voter turnout for each racial-ethnic group. Subjective

Hispanics have the lowest turnout of all the racial-ethnic groups, while objective Hispanics have the third highest.

[Table 4 about here]

D. Models

We used sequential logit for the data analysis.[5] The estimation process is similar to standard binary logistic regression, where registration and voting (for the registered only) are two separate dependent variables. However, with the help of sequential logit, the two dependent variables can be incorporated into the same model as a single dependent variable.

Results

Each table first show a model with the racial-ethnic variables, which is then extended by adding the control variables. Our main interest is the subjective and objective Hispanic variables, and the baseline category is Anglo (non-Hispanic whites). We also report coefficient odds ratios instead of coefficients for ease of interpretation. An odds ratio of 0 indicates no substantive effect, while a larger number than 0 indicates a positive association, and a number less than 0 indicates a negative association. For example, an odds ratio of 1.10 indicates that a one-category increase in the independent variable is associated with a ten percent change in the dependent variable. Similarly, an odds ratio of 4 indicates that a one-unit change in the independent variable is associated with a four-fold increase in the dependent variable.

As we indicated, Model 1 contains only the racial variables and Hispanic identification measures. All variables are statistically significant, and the results are consistent with the

aggregate data presented above. The turnout for subjective Hispanics is the second lowest in registration and the lowest in voting among the registered. The turnout for objective Hispanic is much higher in both registration and voting (0.69 vs. 0.46 and 0.72 vs. 0.61, respectively).

Model 2 adds standard SES variables to the model: age, gender, education, and household income. The turnout of all racial groups increases, except for that of Asian Americans. Notable is that the objective Hispanic variable is no longer statistically significant for both voter registration and voting.

Model 3 adds the election year and Latino contextual variables to the model. After controlling for these factors, the odds ratios for all racial-ethnic groups again increase. We also see, as expected, that turnout in presidential election years is higher than in midterm years. The contextual variable indicates that voters in states with higher Latino population shares tend to vote less than do voters in states with lower Latino shares. Notable in the results is that the odds ratios for objective Hispanics are higher than those for subjective Hispanics both in registration and in voting, and are identical to or slightly higher than those of whites.

[Table 5 about here]

Predicted Probabilities

Figure 1 shows the changing probabilities of registration and voting for the racial groups of interest – white, black, subjective Hispanic, and objective Hispanic – as household income increases. For the calculation of the probabilities, age and education are also set to their mean, gender to male, election to presidential election year, and Latino context to middle level.

[Figure 1 about here]

We see that African Americans clearly participate at the highest level, *ceteris paribus*. At the other end are subjective Hispanics, who participate the least. In the middle, although somewhat more toward the subjective Hispanic than African American lines, are Anglos and objective Latinos, who participate at approximately similar levels, even after taking into account numerous controls.

Figure 2 includes the registration and voting probabilities according to changes across education level. We see a similar pattern, with African Americans participating at the highest levels *ceteris paribus*, followed by Anglos and objective Hispanics, and with subjective Hispanics participating the least.

[Figure 2 about here]

Discussion

The statistical analysis shows that the subjective Hispanic population participates at statistically significant lower rates in the six models. In Model 1, the objective Hispanic population participates at higher levels than does the subjective Hispanic population, but both groups participate less than do whites. In Models 2 and 3, the subjective Hispanic variable continues to be statistically significant, and while its substantive significance rises, these individuals consistently participate less than do whites (although the differences decline across models, with final odds ratios of .95 for registration and .94 for voting). These are also the substantive differences between objective and subjective Latinos, which we interpret as neither small nor large but rather a middle level – odds ratios differences of .05 and .06, respectively.

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The objective Hispanic variable is not statistically significant in Models 2 and 3, which include SES and other controls. This is consistent with the Duncan and Trejo findings about this population. They note that such individuals are primarily found at the higher end of the SES spectrum. When we control for SES, we are apparently controlling for much of what makes this population unique.

In addition, according to Duncan and Trejo (2011), what is important is the direction of the change, not the magnitude. This is because the objective Hispanic population should significantly increase, and the landscape for Hispanic political participation might therefore experience change. While we do not have clear information about generational change because of the nature of survey data, we know from past research that the objective Latino group is growing across the generations and perhaps even within generations.

What if the objective Hispanic variable was statistically significant but positive or negative? If negative, it would have indicated participatory similarities with subjective Hispanics. Even if individuals do not identify as Hispanic, the statistical results would have suggested that the factors that structure their vote do not necessarily change. In that case, we might conclude that simply changing one's racial-ethnic self-conception may not have an electoral effect. The same factors that may restrain overall Latino electoral participation beyond SES – ranging from a legacy of discrimination to lack of mobilization – apply to all Latinos regardless of self-identification.

If the objective Hispanic variable were positive, it would suggest parallels with the African-American vote. Instead of voting less, they would be voting more than their socio-economic status would suggest. What might explain this is unclear, as there are specific historical reasons for the relatively high levels of post-CRA and VRA black participation.

Scholars might have hypothesized an intersectional effect – such Latinos might have shared in the privileges that can accrue from whiteness, but they might have remained interested in, and motivated to help, the community that was once theirs.

Instead, we find no significant differences between objective Hispanics and Anglos. This suggests that these Hispanics are indeed blending into the white mainstream, at least in terms of the political behaviors we can test. As this is a group that will only grow in number, and has disproportionately high levels of education and economic attainment, we might conclude that the Hispanic community is losing a politically consequential slice of its community. Rather than augmenting Latino voter numbers and electoral influence, they may now be politically white.

Racial and Ethnic Future(s)

Understanding the future trajectory of racial and ethnic groups in American politics and society is no simple task. As the earlier discussion indicates, these are shifting concepts based on biological fictions, and different eras have different concepts of which populations are considered part of the mainstream. This is not due to chance; as Ignatiev (1995, 2) noted about the Irish transformation, "The outcome was not the inevitable consequences of blind historical forces, still less of biology, but the result of choices made, by the Irish and others, from among available alternatives."

Jacobson (1998, 2) observed that "entire races have disappeared from view, from public discussion, and from modern memory, though their flesh-and-blood members still walk the earth. What has become of the nineteenth century's Celts and Slavs, for instance? Its Hebrews, Iberics, Mediterraneans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons? This book tells the story of how these races – these public fictions – rose and fell in American social consciousness, and how the twentieth century's Caucasians emerged to take their place." For European immigrants, the story of race

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was complicated, consisting of "glacial, nonlinear cultural movements" (7). Whiteness was narrowly defined in the early republic, fractured in the 19th century, and then reconsolidated in the 20th. He found that race – defined by politics and culture – is central to this story, and that ethnicity is an inadequate concept.

Much research suggests that race and ethnicity are ascribed concepts that limit the choices of minority groups. Waters (1990, 156) observed that "the ways in which ethnicity is flexible and symbolic and voluntary for white middle-class Americans are the very ways in which it is not so for non-white and Hispanic Americans." She later noted that comparisons between previous European immigrants and contemporary Asian and Latino immigrant groups are difficult. For the former, social mobility took place in an environment where immigration was largely ended by both law and war. While some Latinos have engaged in social mobility and intermarriage, and thereby might be able to experience some of the symbolic aspects of ethnicity, she noted that continued discrimination and the presence of new immigrants "would probably impose constraints on such upwardly mobile third-generation Mexican-Americans that it would not on Italian-Americans" (166).

Such identifications are consequential. Espinoza found that "race and gender are the categories that correlate to power. A person's race and gender correlate to the likelihood that one will have educational opportunity, be in a particular income class, be in prison, or be the victim of a violent crime" (4).

A central contemporary debate is whether Latinos will gradually assimilate into the white majority, as did previous waves of Europeans, became a racialized minority, or perhaps occupy a middle position with other racial-ethnic minority groups. Such predications are beyond the scope of this paper, but the research discussed above, and the data in our paper, suggest that

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some portion of Latinos is shifting away from this ethnic category, and such individuals are systematically different from self-identified Hispanics.

As Hernández-Truyol (1998, 29) noted, "Yet another angle to Latinas/os as 'others' is that some appear 'white' in the 'Anglo' sense," and Stavans (1998, 33) wrote that "Many Latinos already have a Yankee look." Toro (1998, 55) pointed out that not a few famous people in the United States have had unacknowledged Latino ancestry, ranging from Ted Williams[6] to Vanna White.[7] But this is also fluid – Toro included Raquel Welch in this group, but she (born Jo Raquel Tejada) has recently publicly embraced her Latino heritage.

Another concern is that the end result will be a new black/non-black color line. Derrick Bell once suggested that "there is every reason to believe that Spanish-speaking...immigrants, like their European predecessors, will move beyond the bottom of the society and leave blacks in the role society has designated for them."[8] While it may be too early to reach clear conclusions, some research suggests that black/non-black is more likely, although how phenotype will affect Latino identities and ascriptions is still unclear.

In future iterations, we would like to know more about the voting patterns of objective Latinos, not just their registration and voter turnout levels. Do they have distinctive partisan attachments compared to the racial groups with which they currently identify? For instance, while they may not see themselves as Latinos, they may have some sympathy for this ancestral group and may be less amenable to politics that use Latino immigrants or Latinos more broadly as political footballs. They might also be more likely to respond positively to "compassionate conservative" appeals, such as those of George W. Bush, who made Latino outreach a central part of his presidential and gubernatorial campaigns (Fraga and Leal 2004).

For instance, Jiménez (2008) noted that Mexican-ancestry individuals who are perceived as white will sometimes hear nativist talk from people unaware of their background. As one respondent said, "Just because they're speaking about a Mexican family or a Mexican person and I know that, though my family is not in that position, that I know somewhere along down before me, somebody in my family, I'm sure, has been in that position." Perhaps such individuals will be less receptive to this talk and react in the voting booth against candidates that countenance nativism.

Today, while much political and academic commentary focuses on the "Latino vote," this is essentially the "subjective Latino" vote. Public opinion surveys and exit polls are examined to see which candidates and parties are supported by self-identified Latinos, but this overlooks those voters who do not identify as Latino but have Latino heritage. We might be interested not only in the size of this population but how its voting patterns track over time. For instance, did Romney or Obama win the "objectively Latino" vote?   Do "subjective" and "objective" Latino votes track each other, so that a decline in the "subjective" vote for the Republican candidate (as we saw in 2012) is also matched (in direction, if not necessarily in size) by a decline in the "objective" vote? We cannot now answer such questions, but as the Latino vote grows, scholars may become more interested in understanding these emerging dimensions of the Latino electorate.

To end with a caveat, Emeka and Vallejo (2011) noted that responses to questions about race and ethnicity "tend to be fluid and situational (Harris and Sim, 2002; Nagel, 1994, Omi, 2001). This is no less true among Hispanic peoples (Eschbach and Gomez, 1998; Oboler, 1995; Rodriguez, 2000) who are often confused by race and ethnicity questions (Hirschman et al.,

2000l Rumbaut, 2006) that treat their Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc., identities as *ethnic but not racial* (Grieco and Cassidy, 2001)" [italics in original].

When scholars analyze data about the changing identities of Hispanic-ancestry individuals, this does not indicate to what degree they are deliberately deciding to move away from ancestral backgrounds vs. taking part in a process that results from living everyday lives (Alba and Nee 2003). Similarly, Hitlin, Brown, and Elder (2007) draw on social identity theory to argue that the scholarly divisions of race and ethnicity do not reflect "the lived understandings of the people we study." For instance, Roth (2010) studied Dominican and Puerto Rican migrants in New York City and found that they had varying interpretations of race. She noted differences between self-identification and appearance, reflecting the "lived experience of race" (1307), and concluded that scholars need to take into account such complexities as they study the workings of race. In other words, despite many years of research and a growing literature, social scientists have much to learn about the operation of race and ethnicity in the US.

Table 1
Data Structure of the Current Population Survey

HH id	Reference	Age	Gender	Father	Mother	Citizenship	Hispanic (subjective)	Vote	Registration
1	Reference	80	M	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Yes	No	No
1	Spouse	75	F	US	US	US	No	Yes	Yes
1	Child	55	M	Mexico	US	US	Yes	No	No
1	Other	50	F	US	US	US	No	Yes	Yes
1	Grandchild A	20	M	US	US	US	Yes	Yes	Yes
1	Grandchild B	19	F	US	US	US	No	No	Yes

Table 2
"Subjective" and "Objective" Latino Respondents

Ethnic background		N
Subjective	Latino (A)	51,791
	Non-Latino	773,949
Objective	Latino (B)	54,791
	Non-Latino	770,949
	(B) – (A)	2,898
	Total	825,740

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variables	Total Obs.	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Registered	746,274	Registered: 582,976 (78.12)			
Voted | Registered	582,976	Voted: 449,914 (77.18)			
Anglo	825,470	Anglo: 654, 518 (79.26)			
African American	825,470	African American: 78,565 (9.51)			
Native American	825,470	Native American: 8,483 (1.03)			
Asian American	825,470	Asian American: 22,587 (2.74)			
Subjective Hispanic	825,470	Subjective Hispanic: 51,791 (6.27)			
Objective Hispanic	825,470	Objective Hispanic: 2,898 (0.35)			
Age	825,470	46.63	17.56	18	90
Female	825,470	Female: 435,243 (52.71)			
Education	825,470	10.07	2.61	1	16
Household Income	713,260	10.05	3.92	1	16
Election	825,740	Presidential: 357,060, Mid-term: 468,680			
Hispanic Proportion	825,740	Low: 336,857, Middle: 315,096, High: 173,787			

Table 4
Political Participation by Race and Ethnicity

	Eligible Voters	Not Registered	Not Voted | Registered	Voted | Registered
Anglo	597,836 (100)	120,578 (20.17)	104,215 (17.43)	373,043 (62.40)
African American	67,815 (100)	15,073 (22.23)	13,140 (19.38)	39.602(58.40)
Subjective Hispanic	45,302 (100)	16,058 (35.45)	9,219(20.35)	20,025(44.20)
Objective Hispanic	2,593 (100)	696(26.84)	529 (20.40)	1,368 (52.76)
Native American	7,665 (100)	2,370 (30.92)	1,661(21.67)	3,634 (47.41)
Asian American	18,964 (100)	6,820 (35.96)	3,169 (16.71)	8,975 (47.33)
Other	6,099 (100)	1,703 (27.92)	1,129 (18.51)	3,267 (53.57)
Total	746,274 (100)	163,298 (21.88)	133,062 (17.83)	449,914 (60.29)

Note: Numbers in the parentheses are the row percentages.

Table 5
Models of Political Participation

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Registration	Constant	3.96*** (0.13)	0.03*** (0.00)	0.03*** (0.00)
	African American	0.88*** (0.01)	1.45*** (0.02)	1.47*** (0.02)
	Subjective Hispanic	0.46*** (0.01)	0.84*** (0.05)	0.95*** (0.01)
	Objective Hispanic	0.69*** (0.03)	0.95 (0.03)	1.02 (0.05)
	Native American	0.56*** (0.14)	1.06 (0.01)	1.07*** (0.03)
	Asian American	0.45*** (0.00)	0.36*** (0.03)	0.39*** (0.01)
	Other	0.65*** (0.02)	0.80 *** (0.01)	0.81*** (0.03)
	Age		1.04*** (0.00)	1.04*** (0.00)
	Gender		1.15*** (0.01)	1.16*** (0.01)
	Education		1.26*** (0.00)	1.27*** (0.00)
	Household Income		1.08*** (0.00)	1.08*** (0.00)
	Election			1.32*** (0.01)
	Hispanic Prop.			0.86*** (0.00)
Voting (Registered Only)	Constant	3.58*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
	African American	0.84*** (0.01)	1.25*** (0.02)	1.25*** (0.02)
	Subjective Hispanic	0.61*** (0.01)	0.95*** (0.01)	0.94*** (0.01)
	Objective Hispanic	0.72*** (0.04)	0.92 (0.05)	0.99 (0.06)
	Native American	0.61*** (0.02)	1.01 (0.03)	1.00 (0.03)
	Asian American	0.79*** (0.02)	0.69*** (0.02)	0.69*** (0.02)
	Other	0.81*** (0.03)	0.96 (0.04)	0.89*** (0.03)
	Age		1.03*** (0.00)	1.03*** (0.00)
	Gender		1.02*** (0.00)	1.02** (0.01)
	Education		1.18*** (0.00)	1.19*** (0.00)
	Household Income		1.07*** (0.00)	1.07*** (0.00)
	Election			2.94*** (0.02)
	Hispanic Prop.			0.98*** (0.00)
	Log Likelihood	-700386.62	-565500.91	-553188.78
	LR χ^2	9711.98***	129109.61***	153733.87***
	N	746274	664830	664830

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

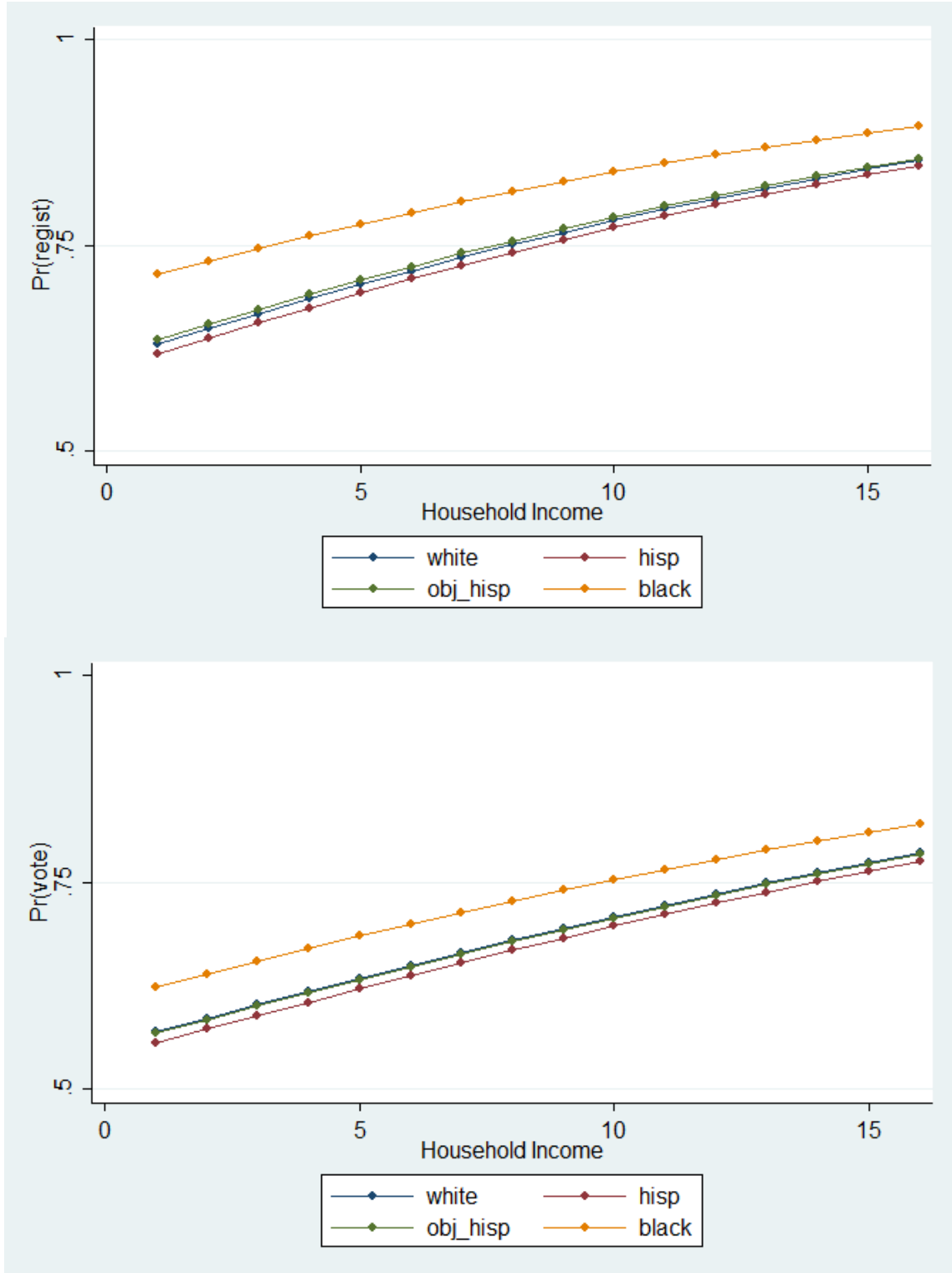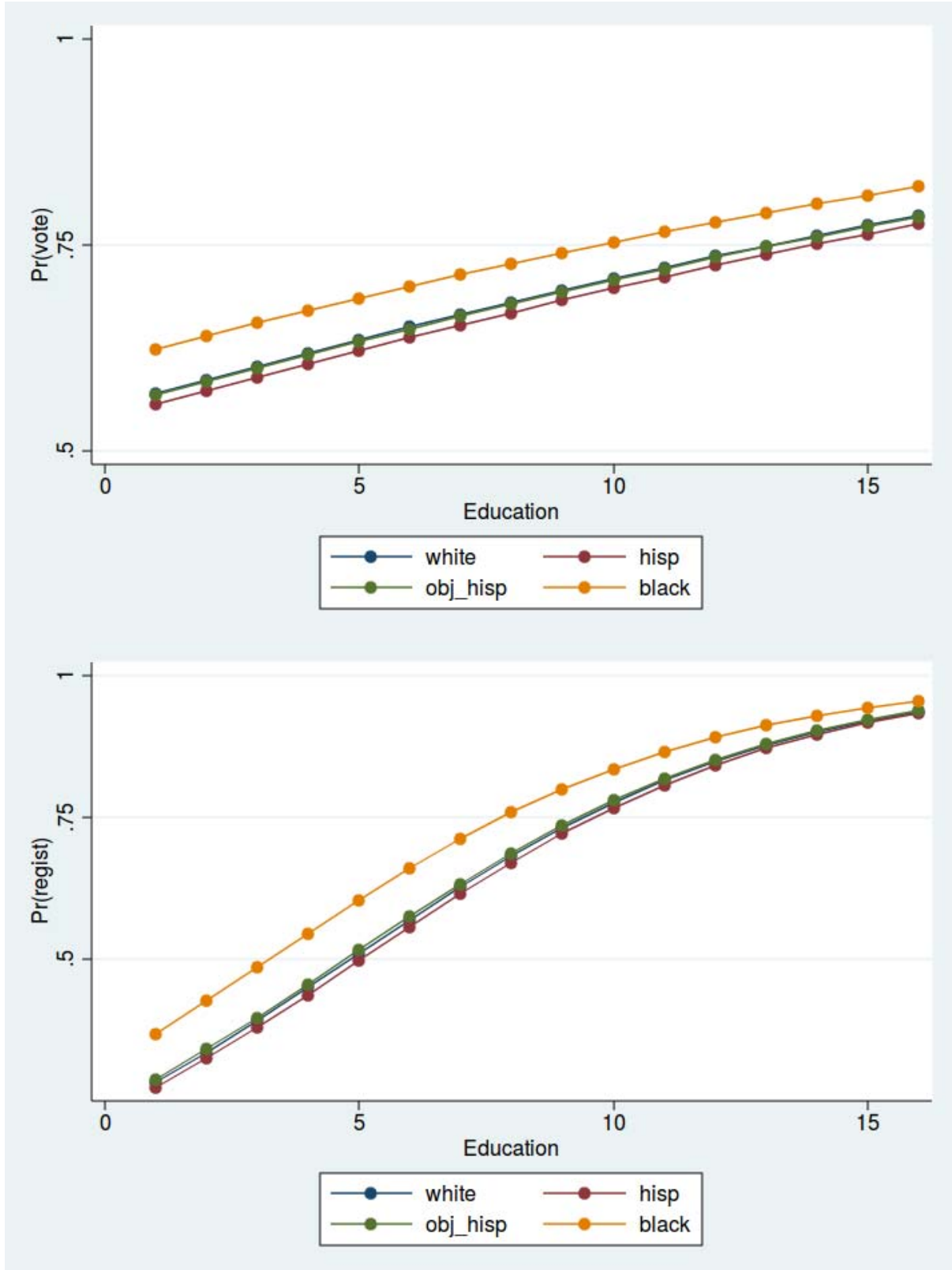**Figure 1: Changing Probabilities of Registration and Voting as Income Increases**

Figure 2: Changing Probabilities of Registration and Voting as Education Increases

Appendix

Variables in Current Population Survey (CPS), November 2010

PEFNTVTY   native country of father
PEMNTVTY   native country of mother
PENATVTY   native country of sample respondent
PEHSPNON   Hispanic or Non-Hispanic origin
PRCITSHP   Citizenship group
      1) Native, Born in US
      2) Native, Born in PR or US Outlying Area
      3) Native Born Abroad of US Parent(s)
      4) Foreign Born, US Citizen by Naturalization
      5) Foreign Born, Not a US Citizen
PRTAGE   Sample person's age as of the end of the survey week
Relationship to reference person
      1) Reference person with other relationship in Household
      2) Reference person with no other relatives in Household
      3) Spouse
      4) Child
      5) Grandchild
      6) Parent
      7) Brother / Sister
      8) Other relative
      9) Foster child

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Endpoints

[1] Personal communication, U.S. Census Bureau. However, we cannot trace Hispanic ancestry if the migration took place in an earlier generation.

[2] 311 Costa Rica
312 El Salvador
313 Guatemala
314 Honduras
315 Mexico
316 Nicaragua
317 Panama
337 Cuba
339 Dominican Republic
375 Argentina
376 Bolivia
378 Chile
379 Colombia
380 Ecuador
385 Peru
387 Uruguay
388 Venezuela
72 Puerto Rico

[3] According to Fry and Passell (2014), about a quarter of Latinos and African Americans live in a multi-generational household, while the figure for non-Hispanic whites is 14 percent. In general, the share of such living arrangements is increasing, with the main explanations being the financial crisis as well as the growing immigrant population.

[4] The high category includes NM, CA, TX, AZ, NV, FL, and CO. The medium category consists of NJ, NY, IL, CT, UT, RI, OR, WA, ID, KS, MA, NE, OK, WY, HI, GA, NC, MD, DE, and VA. The rest are in the low category.

[5] Sequential logit is referred to by other names: sequential response model, continuation ratio model, model for nested dichotomies, and the Mare model (Agresti 2002; Agresti 2010; Hilbe 2009). Here, we used the term sequential model to emphasize the sequential nature of the vote's decision process. For estimation, we used seqlogit, a Stata module, developed by Maarten L. Buis (2010).

[6] His mother, May Venzor, was Mexican American and originally from El Paso, Texas.

[7] Her father, Miguel Angel Rosich, was Puerto Rican.

[8] Cited in Hernandez-Truyol (1998, 28).