

How Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Shape the California Electorate

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Jack Citrin

Benjamin Highton

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Foreword

Much has been written recently about the national problem of low levels of civic and political participation. In California, one of the most worrisome aspects of that problem is low voter turnout among the state's Asian, black, and Latino populations. After studying the data carefully, Professors Citrin and Highton find that a relatively small set of background factors—age, educational attainment, income, and residential stability—account for most of the turnout differences observed across California's white, black, and Latino populations. They also estimate that if blacks and Latinos had the same socioeconomic profile as whites, their voting rates would be very similar. However, these background factors do not seem to account for the low participation among the state's Asian Americans. Indeed, when these factors are taken into account, Asian turnout lagged that of whites by more than 20 percentage points between 1990 and 2000. If recent trends continue through the year 2040, the authors estimate that whites, who demographers predict will constitute only 30 percent of the state's population, will continue to make up a majority of voters.

How troubling are these trends? If low incomes and low levels of educational attainment continue to affect the state's black and Latino families disproportionately, California is unlikely to narrow the demographic gap between its electorate and its population. Without higher naturalization rates, the necessary prelude to electoral participation, more immigration will only accentuate the problem. The authors suggest that a combination of programs—including English language instruction, assistance in applying for citizenship, and additional resources for implementing the naturalization processes—will be needed to overcome the barriers to political participation. These kinds of expenditures rarely seem urgent in the short run, but they may be necessary to bridge the gap between those who participate politically and those who do not. Without them, the already substantial public

mistrust of government is likely to grow, and the state's capacity to govern in the public interest will diminish. By calling our attention to this prospect and suggesting corrective measures, the authors perform an important service.

David W. Lyon
President and CEO
Public Policy Institute of California

Summary

Immigration has changed the ethnic composition of California, greatly increasing the state's Latino and Asian populations. This trend will continue into the foreseeable future. The shape of the electorate, however, has changed more slowly. As a result of differences in citizenship and turnout rates across the state's major ethnic groups, whites' share of the electorate has remained substantial despite demographic change. This study investigates such differences and the political incorporation of immigrants by examining the most fundamental civic activity in a democracy—voting. Political participation helps immigrants become accepted as members of the political community and provides representation for the racial and ethnic groups to which they belong. In California, where direct democracy through the use of initiatives and referenda has become an important feature of the policy process, the question of who votes carries particular significance. The participation of immigrants helps ensure responsive public policy and fosters loyalty to democratic institutions. Policies that boost immigrants' participation are therefore valuable.

The study focuses on the turnout gaps across California's largest racial and ethnic groups. In particular, it measures how much of this gap can be attributed to differences in citizenship rates and how much to differences in the mobilization of eligible voters. Its research approach also permits comparisons of native-born and foreign-born members within each ethnic group as well as comparisons of Latino and Asian subgroups' national origin. This novel approach is crucial for determining whether the factors that affect turnout are the same for all groups. If they are, turnout differences can be accounted for by differences in the distribution of these factors. If they are not, policies designed to boost participation must be tailored to the circumstances of specific groups.

This report’s findings are based largely on data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau as part of its Current Population Survey (CPS). The large size of the CPS sample makes it ideal for comparing the participation of particular groups in California with those in other states with high levels of immigration as well as with those in the rest of the United States. It also enables an investigation into distinctions among subgroups of Latinos (e.g., Mexicans and Central Americans) and Asians (e.g., Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Filipinos). The core of the study looks at how differences in citizenship and turnout contribute to group differences in voting. Specifically, we seek to determine how social background, country of origin, and immigrant generation influence these differences. We also use a statistical technique to estimate the turnout differences that would remain if whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians were, hypothetically, identical in age, education, income, and residential stability.

A striking finding is the persistent difference between Latinos and Asians in our analysis. The relatively low participation rates among Latinos are almost entirely a function of reduced citizenship and lower socioeconomic status. However, low participation among Asians is not explained by socioeconomic status, indicating a need for a more cultural or institutional analysis of voting among Asians and implying that a different set of policies would be required to foster more participation. Equally important are the significant differences within the Asian population. For example, Filipinos and Vietnamese naturalize and participate at greater rates than other Asian subgroups. For all groups, facilitating naturalization is the most important recommendation for policymakers interested in boosting the political incorporation of immigrants.

Ethnic Turnout Gaps

After reviewing the major factors shaping California’s population and electorate, the report focuses on the state’s four key ethnic groups—Latinos, Asians, blacks, and whites—and considers differences in citizenship, registration, and turnout. We then address whether group differences in turnout are explained by differences in key background factors, such as educational attainment, and whether the standard

turnout model applies to Latinos, Asians, blacks, and whites alike. We draw upon CPS data from the six November elections between 1990 and 2000.

There are significant differences between the composition of California's overall population and its voting population. Whites will lose their majority status among California adults relatively soon, but they made up fully 70 percent of the voting population in 2000. Because public policy is more responsive to the voting population than to the general population, this disjunction has important political implications. A high citizenship rate among whites, compared to Latinos and Asians, accounts for a significant portion of the overrepresentation of whites among the voting population and the underrepresentation of Latinos and Asians. The overall electoral gap is reduced considerably after taking into account the citizenship gap. Even among citizens, however, turnout differences are considerable. Between 1990 and 2000, white turnout was about 10 percentage points higher than that of blacks and 18 percentage points higher than that of Latinos and Asians. For blacks and Latinos, these gaps are largely accounted for by differences in background factors (age, education, income, and residential stability).

After taking these factors into account, we find only minimal differences in turnout between whites, blacks, and Latinos. Thus, the standard model of political participation, which stresses the importance of background factors, does a good job of accounting for the electoral deficit of both Latinos and blacks. The lower electoral participation of Latinos is due almost completely to three factors: their lower citizenship rate, their relative youth, and their lower socioeconomic status. These findings belie arguments that Latino residents are intrinsically less interested in elections or are more disengaged from the political process. However, this model does not appear to apply to Asian American citizens, who vote much less frequently than would be predicted on the basis of their socioeconomic status. When background factors are taken into account, their turnout lags that of whites by more than 20 percentage points over the 1990–2000 period.

These turnout differences are not unique to California. A similar pattern emerges in other states with high proportions of foreign-born residents, especially New York, Florida, and Texas. In all regions,

adjustment for socioeconomic differences sharply reduces the electoral surplus of whites vis-à-vis Latinos, but the anomaly of low Asian turnout persists.

Diversity Among Latinos and Asians

The report also examines patterns of electoral participation for Latino and Asian subgroups. One key factor in this regard is country of origin. Among California Latinos, we distinguish those of Mexican descent from other Latinos who are primarily from Central and South America. The Asian countries of origin that receive primary attention are China, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and India. Some of the main findings are as follows.

- Among all those of Mexican descent in California, a little more than half (55 percent) are citizens.
- A strong relationship exists between citizenship and how long the foreign-born have resided in the United States. This relationship suggests that the political incorporation of Mexican immigrants will grow steadily as their time in the United States increases.
- Some of the turnout differences associated with Latino ethnicity and nativity, that is, whether one was born in the United States or abroad, result from differences in background demographic characteristics. Once these factors are taken into account, turnout for Mexican Americans is only modestly lower than that of Latinos from other countries. In addition, there is little remaining difference in turnout between native-born Latinos and the foreign-born who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time. Thus, barriers to participation for foreign-born Latinos appear surmountable.
- Political context—the dominant climate of partisan and ideological opinion—measured at the regional level (Los Angeles, the rest of Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, and the rest of the state) appears to have little independent relationship to Latino turnout. Any turnout differences across regions are largely accounted for by

differences in the socioeconomic and demographic compositions of the Latino populations in each region.

- Like Latinos, Asians living in California have a relatively low citizenship rate (59 percent). Among foreign-born Asians, who make up about 80 percent of the Asian population, the figure is barely 50 percent.
- There are substantial differences in Asian citizenship and turnout rates associated with nationality. Among Asian immigrants in California, those born in the Philippines and Vietnam have the highest rates of citizenship (about 63 percent) and the highest voting rates. These gaps persist even after controlling for differences in socioeconomic status. The high citizenship and voting rates of foreign-born Filipinos produce the largest electoral gap—in this case a *positive* one—of any Asian subgroup in the state. Those born in the Philippines constitute 27 percent of the Asian immigrant population but 37 percent of the Asian immigrant voting population.

Continuity and Change in Immigrant Incorporation

The report examines the possibility that recent immigrants from Latin America and Asia are less likely than their European predecessors to become integrated into the American political system through electoral involvement. We also address generational differences in participation within each ethnic group to observe whether the “straight-line” pattern of assimilation, in which each successive generation is more engaged in politics, applies to voting in national elections. The key findings are as follows.

- Duration of residence in the United States of white immigrants in California is related to voting. The same is true of Latinos and Asians. Those who have lived in the United States longer have higher turnout. Some of the difference results from socioeconomic differences, but there remains a 12 percentage point difference between white immigrants who arrived in the United States before 1980 and those who arrived after. This

pattern suggests that for whites, just as for Latinos and Asians, political incorporation takes place over time.

- Among Latinos, length of residence in the United States appears to compensate completely for nativity. Turnout among Latino immigrants who have been in the country for longer periods of time cannot be distinguished from that of native-born (either second- or third-generation) Latinos. In contrast, duration in the United States of Asian and white immigrants only partially compensates for nativity. For both these groups, turnout among the native-born remains higher, even after taking into account background demographic factors.
- Among immigrants, electoral participation of those from Mexico matches that of whites, once background factors are accounted for. Being born in Mexico per se does not appear to influence turnout. The same is true for immigrants born in the Philippines and Vietnam. The findings indicate that turnout for these groups is similar to that of white immigrants after controlling for background variables. In contrast, voting rates of immigrants born in China and Korea are substantially lower than white immigrant turnout. Moreover, these rates remain lower after the introduction of socioeconomic controls.

Projections and Policies

Finally, the report addresses the interdependence of three variables: the projected ethnic composition of the California adult population, the citizenship gaps across ethnic groups, and the turnout gaps across ethnic groups. By 2040, whites are projected to be little more than one-third of the adult population in California. However, if the citizenship and turnout rates of Asians and Latinos remain at their 2000 levels, whites will still make up a majority (53 percent) of the voting population. Indeed, the electoral “surpluses” and “deficits” of all four major ethnic groups will remain relatively unchanged in the foreseeable future if citizenship rates and turnout rates remain at their 2000 levels. In 2040, for example, the surplus for whites would be 18 percentage points, and the deficit for Latinos would be 16 percentage points. If the citizenship

rate were to increase by 50 percent for each group, and turnout differences between whites and minority ethnic groups were to decrease by half, Latinos in 2040 would constitute 39 percent and Asians 18 percent of the electorate, as compared to current projections of 26 percent for Latinos and 12 percent for Asians.

Policies that seek to increase political incorporation must accommodate important group differences pertaining to citizenship and turnout. Many immigrants who have lived in the United States for more than ten years still have not become citizens. This tendency is particularly strong among immigrants from Mexico, the largest single group of newcomers. One reason that immigrants from Mexico may be reluctant to naturalize is the proximity to their “home” country. To the extent that this factor plays a role, liberalizing citizenship laws and facilitating the naturalization process will be relatively ineffective. However, poverty and low educational attainment account for some part of these low naturalization rates. Consequently, many immigrants would likely benefit from such policies as:

- English language instruction,
- Instruction for the civics test required for citizenship,
- Assistance with initiating and completing the application for citizenship, and
- Lobbying the federal government to greatly increase staff and other technical resources devoted to speeding up the process of naturalization.

The dynamics of turnout differ substantially between Latinos and Asians. Latino turnout appears to be hindered mainly by a lack of resources (i.e., age, education, and income), which shows no sign of abating. For Asian citizens, the challenge is different and may be rooted in cultural norms and beliefs about the value of voting.

Because there appears to be no common solution to the problem of low minority turnout among Latinos and Asians, policymakers should think in terms of multiple solutions. One such solution is election-day registration, which would likely benefit those with fewer personal resources. Thus, we would expect the turnout of blacks and Latinos to be enhanced more than that of whites and Asians. Another is civic

education through schools and community organizations, which can expand people's understanding of and interest in America's complex electoral system.

Yet another strategy is to mobilize voters during particular elections. Typically, political parties and candidates mobilize voters, but unions, churches, and other voluntary organizations are also available to connect voters to the electoral process. Targeted media events and community meetings directed at immigrant groups would be another approach that the state government should encourage. Attacking the puzzle of low Asian participation should also enlist ethnically based community organizations to mobilize voters. Nevertheless, low Asian turnout may prove a less-tractable problem that ultimately involves cultural change through a different pattern of political socialization and an altered balance of native- and foreign-born residents.

Contents

Foreword	iii
Summary	v
Figures	xv
Tables	xvii
Acknowledgments	xix
1. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN A CHANGING CALIFORNIA	1
Two Steps to Turnout: Citizenship and Mobilization	4
Demographic Change from 1990 to 2000	7
Data and Methodology	10
Outline of the Report	12
2. THE ETHNIC GAP IN TURNOUT	15
Population Trends versus Electoral Trends	15
Computing and Decomposing the Ethnic Gap in Voting	18
The Mobilization of Minorities	21
Differences in Social Background as an Explanation of Ethnic Gaps in Voting	23
The Residual Ethnic Gap in Voting	27
The Asian Anomaly Revisited	30
Summary	32
3. LATINO AND ASIAN DIVERSITY	35
Mexican versus Other Latino Participation	37
Regional Differences	41
The Asian Mosaic	44
Citizenship Patterns	45
Turnout Levels Across the Major Asian American Groups	48
Subgroup Electoral Gaps	52
Summary	54
4. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION	55
Citizenship Among California Immigrants	56

Turnout by Generation and Ethnicity	59
The Effect of National Origin	63
Summary	65
5. PROJECTIONS AND POLICIES	67
Simulating Alternative Electorates	68
Summary of Results	74
Policies for Affecting the Citizenship Gap	77
Policies to Boost Turnout	78
Appendix: Statistical Tables	83
Bibliography	91
About the Authors	97
Other PPIC Publications	99

Figures

5.1. Projected Ethnic Composition of California's Voting-Age Population	68
5.2. Projected Ethnic Composition of California's Voting Population	69
5.3. Projected Electoral Surplus and Deficits in California, with 2000 Citizenship and Turnout Rates	70
5.4. Simulations of Latino and Asian Voting Population in 2040, at Gradual Increases in Citizenship and Turnout Rates	71

Tables

1.1. Percentage Breakdown of Populations in California and the United States by Ethnicity, 1990 and 2000, All Ages	9
2.1. Percentage Breakdown of the Population and Electorate by Ethnicity, 2000	16
2.2a. Trends in the Percentage Breakdown of California’s Electorate by Ethnicity, 1990–2000	17
2.2b. Trends in the Percentage Breakdown of the Electorate Outside California by Ethnicity, 1990–2000	18
2.3. Ethnic Electoral Gaps in High-Immigration States, 2000	20
2.4. Voter Turnout by Ethnicity, 1990–2000	22
2.5. Social Composition of Eligible Voters by Ethnicity, 2000	25
2.6. The Effect of Controlling for Social Background on Ethnic Turnout Gaps by State, 1990–2000	29
3.1. Percentage of U.S. Residents of Mexican Origin That Are Citizens, 2000	36
3.2. Latino Turnout Gaps by Nativity and Year of Arrival in the United States	37
3.3. Percentage Breakdown of California’s Latino Citizens by Ethnicity, Nativity, and Socioeconomic Status	38
3.4. Turnout Gaps Among Subgroups of Latino Voters	40
3.5. Latino Turnout in California’s Regions	42
3.6. Percentage Breakdown of the Adult Asian Population by Country of Birth	46
3.7. Percentage Breakdown of the Citizenship Rates Among California Asian Subgroups	48
3.8. Asian Turnout Gaps by Nativity and Year of Arrival in the United States	49
3.9. Social Background of Eligible Asian Voters by Subgroup	50

3.10.	Turnout Gaps by Nativity and Year of Arrival Among Asian Americans	51
3.11.	Turnout Surplus and Deficits Among California's Foreign-Born Asian Voters	53
4.1.	Percentage Breakdown of Immigrant Generations in the California Electorate by Ethnicity, 1994–2000	60
4.2.	Turnout Gaps by Immigrant Generation within the California Electorate	61
4.3.	Turnout Gaps Among California Foreign-Born Adult Citizens by Country of Origin	64
5.1.	Projections of the California Electorate	73
A.1.	Parameter Estimates of Turnout in 2000 in California . . .	84
A.2.	Parameter Estimates of Latino Turnout	85
A.3.	Parameter Estimates of Asian Turnout	86
A.4.	Citizenship Among Foreign-Born Californians Living in the United States for At Least Ten Years	87
A.5.	Parameter Estimates of California Turnout Among All Adult Citizens: Ethnicity, Nativity, and Generation Effects	88
A.6.	Parameter Estimates of California Foreign-Born Citizens' Turnout: National Origin Effects	89

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1. Political Participation in a Changing California

Voting is at the heart of democratic self-governance. Political participation is empowering, giving citizens access to representation and influence. Political participation also is a unifying experience, creating a context for diverse groups to interact and to acquire a common civic culture. Who participates, when, and why thus have obvious policy relevance. A single vote usually does not alter an election outcome, but when large numbers of people are not incorporated into the political system, the substance and legitimacy of what government does will be affected.

Demography affects political destiny because the size and makeup of a polity's population shape its government's agenda and the resources available to address problems. Larger families mean a need for more schools. An aging population increases the pressure for spending on health care. The increased ethnic diversity created by immigration affects language policy and intergroup relations. But the ultimate effect of demographic change on public policy is mediated by patterns of political involvement.

Over the past 30 years, immigration and differences in the fertility rates of foreign- and native-born residents have transformed the ethnic profile of the United States, and nowhere has this change been more marked than in California. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 opened the door to immigrants from Latin America and Asia by abolishing the national origins system. Giving family reunification priority in issuing visa preferences then accelerated the influx of people from these regions. Put simply, the main current demographic trend in the United States is the growing number of residents of Latino and Asian origin, and the majority of adults with these backgrounds are foreign-born. A system of "chain migration" is in place, with immigrants

obtaining visas first for their spouses, parents, and children, and then for siblings who repeat the process. Continued immigration thus will continue to fuel the increase in Latino and Asian residents. But even if immigration were to slow dramatically or even come to a halt, the relative youth and fertility of recent immigrants would have similar, though less pronounced, effects on California's demographic profile.

Because participation in elections provides strength through numbers, the mobilization of immigrants and minorities allows them to communicate their needs and pursue collective goals. How the changing composition of the population in California is altering the shape of the electorate—and what policies are appropriate for modifying patterns of political engagement—is the subject of the research reported here. Several previous studies of California, Texas, and the United States have documented ethnic group differences in voter registration and participation (Uhlener, 2000; DeSipio, 1996; Cho, 1999; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001). The dominant findings are consistent: First, whites vote more often than blacks, Latinos, or Asians; and second, native-born residents are more likely than foreign-born citizens to vote, contributing to the voting rates in the Latino and Asian segments of the population.

The political importance of this disjunction between the composition of society and the electorate is revealed by recent Public Policy Institute of California studies, which show significant ethnic group differences in party identification, political trust, and beliefs about the role of government (Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001). Ethnic divergence of opinion is particularly visible when it comes to issues such as immigration, language, and affirmative action, where the differential effect on specific groups is manifest (Hajnal and Louch, 2001). This study builds on past research on political participation in several significant and novel ways. By using the Current Population Surveys of the U.S. Census Bureau conducted biennially between 1990 and 2000, it benefits from large samples of respondents from every ethnic group and state. As a consequence, the following issues can be addressed in a systematic way:

- Are the antecedent causes of voter participation consistent across ethnic groups and across immigrants from different countries? If so, turnout differences can be accounted for by differences in the distribution of these factors. But if the forces underlying the decision to vote vary systematically across ethnic groups, any policies designed to boost participation would need to be more complex, tailored to the circumstances of specific groups. For example, although foreign-born citizens may be less likely to vote than the native-born, there may be additional differences between Asian and Latino immigrants.
- The broad categories “Latino” and “Asian” subsume a variety of groups with distinct national origins. Just as it may be misleading to apply evidence about white political participation to minority groups, it is possible that subgroups of Latinos (e.g., Mexicans and Central Americans) and Asians (e.g., Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Filipinos) behave differently. This study examines intragroup differences in voting among Latinos and Asians, focusing on the influences of national origin and immigrant generation.
- The bulk of immigrants to the United States reside in just a few states, but the composition of the foreign-born population in these states varies. Only California and New York have significant Asian communities, and the national origins of the large Latino populations in California and New York, Texas, and Florida differ. Our analysis compares ethnic patterns of participation in California, the other high immigration states, and the rest of the country to consider whether the gap between populations and electorates depends on the makeup of a specific state and, if so, why.
- By looking at trends in participation between 1990 and 2000, this study explores the effects of specific political events such as initiative campaigns and partisan efforts to get out the vote on ethnic differences in participation. Specifically, did the campaigns for Propositions 187, 209, and 227, three citizen

initiatives dealing with illegal immigration, affirmative action, and bilingual education, boost participation by the minority groups mainly affected?

Two Steps to Turnout: Citizenship and Mobilization

Because citizenship is a prerequisite for voting, the rules governing naturalization and the administrative resources devoted to processing applications for citizenship help determine the voting rates among recent immigrants. Naturalization can only begin after five years' residence in the United States, but it usually takes longer. Differences in the need, motivation, and ability to naturalize help explain variations in voting across ethnic groups and across particular groups of immigrants. Understanding why Vietnamese immigrants, for example, are more likely to become American citizens than their counterparts from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan is necessary to explain differences in the political participation of these distinct groups of Asians in California. Groups for whom the perceived benefits of American citizenship are relatively low are less likely to naturalize and therefore should have lower rates of turnout, other things being equal. Unless policies boost their citizenship rates, many will continue to remain outside the electoral arena.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, political parties, particularly in urban areas, needed the votes of immigrants and worked to get them (Schier, 2002). At the same time, patronage provided new voters with material incentives to participate; loyalty to the party machine could lead to a job as well as a Thanksgiving turkey. In the current era, civil service requirements, the expansion of government services for the needy and unemployed, and the increased availability of these services to noncitizen immigrants have diminished the benefits of both citizenship and voting. However, Proposition 187, the initiative denying illegal immigrants in California access to most state services, and changes in national law in 1996 that reduced certain benefits for legal immigrants caused a surge in naturalization and voter registration among California's Latinos, suggesting that one path to increased political incorporation is to increase the incentive to naturalize. Policymakers thus must decide whether to adopt this strategy for enhancing civic engagement.

No matter how easy it is to become naturalized and register to vote, the fact that voters must be citizens means that the ethnic composition of California's population and electorate will diverge. Recent immigrants, notably Latinos and Asians, are statistically underrepresented in the voting population. The political effect of this gap is felt most strongly in voting for statewide offices and ballot initiatives, where there is just one constituency and every vote counts equally. In legislative elections, by contrast, immigrants have political influence regardless of their citizenship because of the constitutional requirement to create legislative districts based on the size of the *overall* population. Combined with the residential concentration of immigrant groups, this principle has produced an increasing number of Latino representatives in the California legislature, despite the relatively small number of eligible voters in their districts.¹

Whites are more likely to vote than Latinos or Asians in California simply because they are more likely to be citizens. But even among citizens, whites have a higher rate of turnout than their black, Latino, or Asian counterparts (Uhlener, 2000; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001). To identify the reasons for these group differences and project potential future trends in turnout, we draw on the standard model of participation developed in previous literature (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). The model regards voting as the outcome of the interplay among the following sets of general factors:

1. *Personal resources* refer to background characteristics that supply knowledge about and experience with politics and therefore make people more interested in and capable of participating in elections. Education, age, income, and residential stability are the principal explanatory variables identified by prior research as indicators of these skills.

¹Even in this instance, though, higher turnout would mean that fewer Latinos, for example, would have to be "packed" into a legislative district to elect a Latino representative, thereby leaving more to be included in other districts to influence electoral outcomes in those districts, too.

2. *Motives* refer to the perceived benefits of voting and typically are assessed by attitudinal factors such as partisanship, feelings of civic duty and political efficacy, and campaign interest, and by personal circumstances that link one's own well-being to government policies and programs.
3. *Social integration* into organizational networks such as unions, churches, and neighborhood associations provide skills and knowledge that boost participation. This kind of civic engagement also is associated with a sense of civic duty, another important correlate of voting.
4. *Opportunities* refer to the institutional factors affecting the ease of registering and getting to the polls. Turnout is higher, particularly among groups with lower personal resources, when it is relatively easy to register.
5. *Political mobilization* refers to the efforts of political parties, candidates, and interest groups to contact voters and urge them to participate.
6. *Residential context* refers to features of a precinct, neighborhood, or country that potentially boost participation, particularly among minority groups. The central idea is that minorities are more likely to participate when they live in areas heavily populated by other minorities; in other words, the presence of co-ethnics helps motivate individuals to vote (Gay, 2001).

One important question is whether the explanatory power of these factors is the same across ethnic groups. A second question is whether they have the same influences among both foreign-born and native-born members of particular groups. If the causes of voting are largely similar, then changes in the distribution of resources, motives, and opportunities resulting from either demographic trends or public policy will alter the aggregate levels of voting among the diverse groups making up California, thereby altering how much the ethnic composition of California's population and its electorate diverges. For example, if age and formal education have the same influence over participation in every ethnic group, then as Latinos in California become older or more college-

educated, their participation will increase, diminishing the gap in voter turnout relative to whites.

Determining the causal bases of electoral participation has relevance for public policy. Some factors related to turnout are more responsive to political intervention than others. Citizenship services can be increased, registration rules eased, and get-out-the-vote drives enhanced more easily than the age of immigrants, their family size, or their residential stability can be modified. Previous research (Highton and Burris, 2002; Cho, 1999) indicates that immigrants are more likely to vote the longer they have resided in the United States, on the grounds that length of residence increases the likelihood of speaking English, experience with democratic institutions, and contact with groups seeking to mobilize voters.² Government policies can affect some of these experiences.

Demographic Change from 1990 to 2000

The demographics of the recent increase in ethnic diversity in the United States are undisputed. In the nineteenth century, the United States became pan-European as immigration, first from Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia, and then from Italy and Eastern Europe, reduced the British and Protestant share of the population. After 1965, the country began to become “pan-world.” Falling birthrates among the native-born and new patterns of immigration resulting from legal reforms rapidly increased the proportion of residents with Hispanic, Asian, Caribbean, African, and Middle Eastern origins.³

The latest Census Bureau figures show how the ethnic profile of the population has changed. In 1960, only 5.4 percent of the U.S. population (9.7 million) was foreign-born. Forty years later, the number of foreign-born residents had tripled; the 2000 Census found that 28.4 million immigrants now make up 10.4 percent of the country’s population. Because of their relative youth and higher fertility, new

²An important recent study that parallels our own is Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001).

³U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March 2001. The figures reported in the next two paragraphs also come from this most recent report on population trends.

immigrants and their offspring accounted for half the total growth in the U.S. population between 1990 and 2000. In California, this group was entirely responsible for the growth in the population. Immigrants now constitute 26.9 percent of California's population.

Changes in national origins also are clear. In 2000, people born in Mexico and East Asia together constituted 45.6 percent of the burgeoning foreign-born residents of the United States, whereas the proportion of those European- and Canadian-born made up only 17.7 percent—a drop of two-thirds in 30 years. Indeed, of the more than 19 million immigrants who arrived between 1970 and 2000, 37 percent came from Mexico and 17.8 percent from Central and South America. East Asia (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea) contributed 24 percent; an additional 11.5 percent came from the Caribbean; and just 14.7 percent came from Europe and Canada combined.

Latinos made up 12.5 percent of the U.S. population in 2000, compared to 9 percent ten years earlier. The comparable figures for California are 32.9 percent and 26.7 percent. In Los Angeles County, 44.6 percent of the population in 2000 was Latino. According to the Census, people of Mexican origin account for 58.5 percent of all Latinos in the United States and 67 percent of all Latinos in California. The true proportions are probably higher, because of the undercount of Latinos, including illegal immigrants, in the Census, and the likelihood that many of the self-identified Hispanics who failed to specify their specific national heritage are from Mexico. Although half of the nation's Latinos continue to live in either California or Texas, the rest are increasingly widely distributed.⁴

The nation's Asian population surged between 1990 and 2000, growing by 48 percent. The largest increase was among those from the Indian subcontinent, partly because of the influx of skilled professionals coming to work in high-tech companies. Only 27 percent of U.S. residents of Asian origin are native-born; in California, the proportion is even lower, just 20 percent. No single country is the dominant supplier of immigrants from Asia. According to the latest Census figures, 19.3

⁴Some Latino subgroups, in particular Cubans and Puerto Ricans, are more regionally concentrated, as we describe in Chapter 3.

percent of California residents from Asia were born in the Philippines; 19.2 percent in China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan; 10 percent in Vietnam; 9 percent in Korea; and 6.5 percent in India. Given the cultural and economic heterogeneity of Asian immigrants, their combined political influence may depend on the similarity of their political orientations and their capacity to form a broad coalition.

Table 1.1 summarizes the basic demographic context of this study. Drawing on the decennial U.S. Census, it breaks down the ethnic distribution of the populations of California and the United States as a whole. In the United States, the growth of both Latino and Asian populations is apparent. In California, the raw number of Latinos and Asians is much higher, as noted above, and the growth of these two minority groups has also been more rapid. Latinos were roughly one-fourth of the California population in 1990 (26.7 percent); they are now almost one-third of the population (32.9 percent). Similarly, the percentage of Asians in the population increased from 9.1 to 11.3. These trends occurred amid a small decline in black proportion of the population but were nevertheless sufficient to render whites less than a majority of the population (46.5 percent).

Table 1.1
Percentage Breakdown of Populations in California and the United States by Ethnicity, 1990 and 2000, All Ages

Race/Ethnicity	California		United States	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
White	57.2	46.7	75.6	69.1
Black	7.0	6.4	11.7	12.1
Latino	26.7	32.4	9.0	12.5
Asian	9.1	10.8	2.7	3.6
Other	<1	3.7	0.9	2.6

SOURCES: For California 1990, U.S. Census Summary Files 1, Table P10. For California 2000, Census Quick Table PL. For the United States, "Population by Race and Hispanic of Latino Origin for the United States: 1990 and 2000 (PHC-T-1)," Table 4.

NOTES: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. "Other" category includes people who indicated more than one race option. This option was available only in 2000. The United States figures include California.

Data and Methodology

The core of this report reviews trends in electoral participation in California and examines in particular the role of ethnicity, place of birth, country of origin, and immigrant generation. It also compares political participation in California with Texas, Florida, New York, and the rest of the United States to determine whether the same ethnic differences in voting prevail in all contexts. The data come from the Current Population Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Conducted monthly to obtain data for estimating unemployment levels, this survey includes questions about the background characteristics of respondents and a “supplement” about a particular topic, such as child care or smoking. During November of national election years, the Voting Supplement inquires about citizenship status, registration, and turnout.

The large size of the CPS sample makes it an ideal resource for analyzing electoral participation, particularly when focusing on ethnic groups or making comparisons across states. In most academic and media surveys, there are too few minority respondents for meaningful analysis. In addition, such polls typically do not sample noncitizens, so it is impossible to make projections by comparing the background of citizens and noncitizens in a particular ethnic group. Also, the CPS has an unusually high interview completion rate of 95 percent.

Beginning in 1994, the Census Bureau asked respondents to specify their country of birth and the origins of their parents. This increased precision in the measurement of ethnic background now makes possible the study of generational differences among immigrants and the comparison of Latinos and Asians with different national origins. In many of our analyses, we pool respondents from the 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000 surveys to obtain an adequate number of cases for each national subgroup.⁵

Despite these comparative advantages of the CPS, there is an important disadvantage that must be addressed. Like most other surveys, the CPS measures electoral participation based on *reported* turnout.

⁵In addition, by pooling across election years, we minimize the effect that any specific election (e.g., 1994, when Proposition 187 was on the ballot) has on the pattern of results.

Consequently, the issue of overreporting turnout needs to be addressed. If the propensity to overreport were not systematically related to the variables of interest in this report, then few potential problems would arise. However, there is some evidence that misreporting is associated with a number of variables considered here. Research on overreporting in general (Silver, Anderson, and Abramson, 1986) and Latino overreporting in particular (Shaw et al., 2000) shows that the same demographic factors associated with higher turnout are also associated with higher levels of misreporting. As a consequence, the true relationship between education, for example, and turnout is weaker than the one between education and reported turnout. In terms of ethnicity, previous research shows that blacks are more likely than whites to overreport having voted (Abramson and Claggett, 1991).⁶

Several considerations suggest that the implications of overreporting for the analyses we conduct in this report are modest. Most important is that the overall level of misreporting in the CPS data appears to be substantially lower than that found in other surveys. Aggregate turnout is overreported by about 12 percentage points in the CPS compared to more than 20 percentage points in a typical study conducted by the National Election Studies (see Brady, 1999).⁷ In addition, in all the studies of misreporting, the relationship between demographic variables is weakened, but not erased, when validated turnout is employed. Thus, when we report the “effects” of demographic variables, they should be considered upper-bound estimates.

The greatest difficulty posed by misreporting for our analyses concerns comparisons across ethnic groups. Because overreporting is associated with such demographic factors as education, which is also associated with being white (as opposed to black or Latino), one would expect that differences in reported turnout would overstate the true differences among these groups. In other words, there is less to “explain” than the reported turnout figures suggest. However, if the finding that

⁶No studies have compared the level of overreporting among Latinos or Asians to that of whites or blacks.

⁷The lower level of misreporting may result because the CPS completes its interviewing within two weeks of the election.

blacks are more likely to overreport voting applies to other minorities, then there is a countervailing bias with the overall and socioeconomic-status-controlled analyses, suggesting smaller differences than actually exist. Without a reliable vote validation study of the CPS data, precisely quantifying the magnitudes of these effects is impossible. We do believe, however, that the appropriate course of action is to view our findings as estimates, subject to some error, to be sure, but not so much that the dominant trends and conclusions are inaccurate.⁸

Outline of the Report

This chapter has described the demographic changes in the United States resulting primarily from immigration from Latin America and Asia. These trends have important economic and social consequences, furnishing a supply of low-wage labor, increasing the demand for certain categories of government services, and challenging schools with the problem of educating large numbers of non-English speakers. As the main destination of immigrants, California faces a critical and ongoing task of integrating newcomers. The political incorporation of these new residents will influence how the state manages the relations among ethnic groups and develops policies to cope with demographic diversity.

Chapter 2 provides detailed comparisons of the ethnic composition of the general population and the electorate, respectively, in both California and the nation. We decompose the variation in participation across the country's four main ethnic groups into three distinct components: a citizenship gap, registration gap, and turnout gap. This relatively simple calculation indicates how policies designed to increase participation among newly incorporated groups should be targeted—i.e., whether the government should focus on the citizenship gap or the turnout gap.

Chapter 2 also evaluates whether ethnic differences in turnout result from differences in the *personal resources* of these groups. We concentrate

⁸It is also worth noting that the CPS has become a common and accepted data source for scholarly studies of voter turnout. See, for example, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980), Leighley and Nagler (1992), Brians and Grofman (2001), and Highton and Wolfinger (2001).

on the role of resources because the CPS, regrettably, does not include direct indicators of motives or social integration. Previous research identified age, education, income, and residential stability as the main demographic predictors of voting. Chapter 2 compares whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians in terms of these background variables. We then employ the statistical technique of multivariate logit analysis to adjust for group differences in background factors and thus to determine whether there remain estimated differences in their level of turnout. At a minimum, this technique shows whether a residual gap remains in turnout that might indicate unmeasured political attitudes, cultural norms relating to politics, or mobilizing processes at work. Where background differences alone explain differences in the participation of, say, whites and Latinos, closing the gap is likely to be a long-term process involving greater education and upward mobility rather than institutional reforms.

Chapter 3 turns to differences in turnout *within* the Latino and Asian communities. Each of these groups is diverse, both culturally and sociologically, and prior survey data indicate that members prefer to identify themselves in terms of their home nation rather than as part of a single Latino (or Asian) minority (Etzioni, 2001). We therefore compare the participation of Latinos of Mexican and other origins and also consider whether Latino participation varies regionally within the state. We conduct a similar analysis for subgroups of Asian residents. After delineating the citizenship gap and turnout gap among groups from China, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines, we statistically “match” subgroups by social background to see how much differences in personal resources account for the variation in turnout.

Chapter 4 focuses on the trajectory of political incorporation among immigrant groups. Traditional theories posit a “straight-line” path to political assimilation, predicting steadily increasing turnout among successive generations of immigrants (Alba and Nee, 1999). Our analysis compares Latino, Asian, and European immigrants, distinguishing first among foreign-born and native-born residents and then among different immigrant generations.

Chapter 5 projects the composition of the California electorate in the future. Using Department of Finance estimates of the ethnic

makeup of California through 2040, we conduct a series of simulations using different citizenship and turnout rates to create hypothetical electorates for the next 40 years. We then summarize the main findings and outline several policies for speeding the political incorporations of immigrants in California.

2. The Ethnic Gap in Turnout

On the surface, voter turnout appears easy to measure: It is the proportion of a given population who voted or, in the case of survey research, said they voted. But what is the appropriate denominator in this ratio? Should it be all residents above the legal voting age? All *citizens* above age 18? Or all *registered* voters? The comparative rates of turnout across countries or demographic groups vary substantially according to the population base chosen. The United States, an immigrant country with comparatively high institutional barriers for registration, lags most other countries when one compares the proportion of voters to the population as a whole. But this deficit in participation diminishes greatly if the basis of comparison is the turnout of registered voters. These same considerations apply to calculating the participation rates of the various ethnic groups in the United States. Ethnic group differences in citizenship, registration, and mobilization rates contribute separately to the differences in actual turnout.

Population Trends versus Electoral Trends

In 2000, when the Latino and Asian share of the adult population in California was 38 percent, these ethnic groups made up only 21 percent of California voters. Table 2.1 provides a fuller picture of the differences in the ethnic composition of the population and the electorate, respectively. This table enumerates the white, black, Latino, and Asian shares of the following four strata in California, three other states with large foreign-born populations (New York, Florida, and Texas), and the rest of the United States: the voting-age population (row 1); the citizen voting-age population (row 2); the registered population (row 3); and the voting population (row 4).

In every one of these contexts, whites make up a larger share of voters than of the overall voting-age population whereas the opposite is the case for Latinos and Asians. The extent of this discrepancy, which we

Table 2.1
Percentage Breakdown of the Population and Electorate by Ethnicity, 2000

	California	New York	Florida	Texas	Rest of the United States
White					
1) % of adult population	54	66	67	57	79
2) % of adult, citizen population	64	73	75	63	82
3) % of registered population	69	77	77	66	83
4) % of voting population	70	77	78	68	84
Black					
1) % of adult population	7	15	12	10	12
2) % of adult, citizen population	8	14	11	11	13
3) % of registered population	8	13	11	11	12
4) % of voting population	8	14	10	11	12
Latino					
1) % of adult population	26	12	19	30	5
2) % of adult, citizen population	18	9	13	25	3
3) % of registered population	15	8	11	21	3
4) % of voting population	14	7	11	19	2
Asian					
1) % of adult population	12	7	2	3	2
2) % of adult, citizen population	10	4	1	2	2
3) % of registered population	8	3	1	1	1
4) % of voting population	7	2	1	2	1

SOURCE: CPS Voter Supplement, 2000.

label the “electoral gap,” reflects the pattern of immigration across states. The ethnic composition of the population and the electorate does not differ much in the 46 states with a lower proportion of recent immigrants. California and New York are the only states with a large number of immigrants from Asia, and only in these two states is there a substantial gap between the Asian community’s relative share of the population and its share of voters. California and Texas are the main destinations of Mexican immigrants, so the “electoral gap” for Latinos is larger there than in either New York, where many Latinos are Puerto Ricans who have American citizenship at birth, or Florida, where the Latino population is predominantly Cuban and South American.

Tables 2.2a (California) and 2.2b (the remaining 49 states) summarize trends in the ethnic composition of the population and the

Table 2.2a
Trends in the Percentage Breakdown of California's Electorate by Ethnicity,
1990–2000

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
White						
1) % of adult population	63	60	60	57	55	54
2) % of adult, citizen population	74	74	72	69	66	64
3) % of registered population	78	78	77	73	70	69
4) % of voting population	80	79	78	74	72	70
Black						
1) % of adult population	6	6	5	6	7	7
2) % of adult, citizen population	7	7	7	7	8	8
3) % of registered population	6	6	6	7	8	8
4) % of voting population	5	6	5	7	7	8
Latino						
1) % of adult population	22	24	25	25	26	26
2) % of adult, citizen population	13	13	15	15	17	18
3) % of registered population	10	11	11	13	14	15
4) % of voting population	9	10	11	12	14	14
Asian						
1) % of adult population	9	9	8	12	11	12
2) % of adult, citizen population	6	6	6	8	9	10
3) % of registered population	5	4	4	7	7	8
4) % of voting population	4	4	4	6	6	7

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1990–2000.

electorate between 1990 and 2000. As reported in Chapter 1, the noncitizen population of California increased rapidly in the past decades. Because these immigrants do not have the right to vote, the white share of the *electorate* declined much less rapidly than its proportion of the overall population. In 1990, whites were 63 percent of all California residents age 18 or older but 80 percent of those voting; in 2000, the equivalent figures were 54 percent and 70 percent, indicating virtually no change in what we define as the electoral gap. Similarly, outside California, whites constituted 80 percent of the adult population in 1990 and 86 percent of the voters; in 2000, these figures were 76 percent and 82 percent (Table 2.2b).

More generally, the proportion of whites grows as one restricts the population base from all adult residents to citizen adults, then to registered voters, and finally to active voters. This was true in every year,

Table 2.2b
Trends in the Percentage Breakdown of the Electorate Outside California
by Ethnicity, 1990–2000

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
White						
1) % of adult population	80	80	78	78	77	76
2) % of adult, citizen population	83	83	82	80	80	79
3) % of registered population	85	84	84	83	82	81
4) % of voting population	86	85	86	83	83	82
Black						
1) % of adult population	12	12	12	12	12	12
2) % of adult, citizen population	12	12	12	12	12	13
3) % of registered population	11	11	11	11	12	12
4) % of voting population	10	10	10	11	11	12
Latino						
1) % of adult population	6	6	7	7	8	9
2) % of adult, citizen population	4	4	5	5	6	6
3) % of registered population	3	3	4	4	5	5
4) % of voting population	3	3	3	4	4	4
Asian						
1) % of adult population	2	2	2	2	3	3
2) % of adult, citizen population	1	1	1	1	2	2
3) % of registered population	1	1	1	1	1	1
4) % of voting population	1	1	1	1	1	1

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1990–2000.

but the pattern of change among ethnic minorities varied by group. The proportion of blacks in both the adult population and the voting population has remained constant. In California, blacks were 6 percent of the total adult population in 1990 and 5 percent of the voters; in 2000; they constituted 7 percent of adult residents and 8 percent of the voters. Both in California and in the rest of the nation, the black share of voters approximates their share of the overall population. Electoral underrepresentation is confined to Latinos and Asians.

Computing and Decomposing the Ethnic Gap in Voting

For each ethnic group, the “electoral gap” is the difference between its relative share of the total voting-age population in a locality and the voting population there. Accordingly, this gap is computed by

subtracting the proportion in row 1 in Tables 2.1, 2.2a, and 2.2b from the proportion in row 4. When the calculation results in a positive value, as in the case of whites, the group enjoys an electoral “surplus”; when it is negative, as in the case of Latinos and Asians, the group suffers an electoral “deficit.” The overall electoral gap has three separate components: a citizenship gap (row 2 minus row 1), a registration gap (row 3 minus row 2), and a turnout of the registered gap (row 4 minus row 3). One can then determine the contribution of each factor to a group’s surplus or deficit. This, in turn, has implications for what measures might boost Latino and Asian turnout. For example, if the citizenship gap is largely responsible for the electoral deficit, the government might devote more resources to speeding up the naturalization process. But if the registration gap is substantial or growing, procedures for getting more eligible voters on the rolls might be targeted.

Table 2.3 decomposes the relevant 2000 figures for California, the three other highest immigration states, and the rest of the nation. We describe just the most recent election year because, as shown in Tables 2.2a and 2.2b, these figures are remarkably consistent from 1990 to 2000. The overall electoral gap reported in the left-most column in the table refers to the group’s share of the overall adult population minus its share of those who reported voting in the 2000 election. The remaining three columns indicate the citizenship, registration, and turnout gaps. Their numerical values relative to the overall gap indicates whether factors connected to citizenship status or voter mobilization are primarily responsible for an ethnic group’s surplus or deficit.

In both the high immigration states and the rest of the country, whites enjoyed a substantial “surplus,” blacks were in an essentially neutral position, and Latinos and Asians suffered from an electoral “deficit.” It is significant to note that the citizenship gap is the principal component of the surplus for whites and the deficits for Latinos and Asians in every context. The role of ethnic differences in registration and turnout is smaller by comparison and also more variable. For example, in California about 70 percent of the electoral deficit for Latinos derives from the large proportion of Latino noncitizens. In Florida, the overall

Table 2.3
Ethnic Electoral Gaps in High-Immigration States, 2000
(in percent)

	Overall Electoral Gap	Citizenship Gap	Registration Gap	Turnout Gap
California				
White	16	10	5	1
Black	1	1	0	0
Latino	-12	-8	-3	-1
Asian	-5	-2	-2	-1
New York				
White	11	7	4	0
Black	-1	-1	-1	1
Latino	-5	-3	-1	-1
Asian	-4	-3	-1	-1
Florida				
White	11	8	2	1
Black	-2	-1	0	-1
Latino	-7	-6	-2	0
Asian ^a				
Texas				
White	11	6	3	2
Black	2	1	0	0
Latino	-12	-5	-4	-2
Asian ^a				
Rest of the United States				
White	5	3	1	1
Black	0	1	-1	0
Latino	-3	-2	0	-1
Asian	-1	0	1	0

SOURCE: CPS Voter Supplement, 2000.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

electoral deficit for Latinos is smaller (7 percentage points) than in California (12 percentage points), but the citizenship gap plays an even larger role there. In both California and New York, the citizenship gap also is mainly responsible for the electoral deficit of the Asian population.

The first avenue to higher Latino and Asian participation, therefore, is more widespread and rapid naturalization. The failure to naturalize doubtless has multiple causes. Some immigrants have yet to fulfill the residency requirement; others may be delayed by slow administrative procedures; others may lack any incentive to change; and some may even

experience asset losses in their country of origin should they become Americans. Studies of naturalization in California and the rest of the United States by Johnson et al. (1999) and DeSipio (1996) are instructive. They show that length of residence in the United States and proficiency in English are important predictors of naturalization; these factors, in turn, are correlated with age and education. In addition, if the immigrant's country of origin allows dual citizenship, the probability of naturalizing is much higher. Immigrants from Mexico naturalize at a lower rate than predicted, a fact with obvious implications for the level of Latino participation in California. One reason for the lower rate of naturalization among Mexican immigrants, DeSipio suggests, is that proximity sustains emotional and social attachments to their native country. Another possibility, though, is that administrative barriers to naturalization are greater for Latinos than for Asians, in part because more of them live and work in rural areas (DeSipio, 1996). Although government efforts and increasing the incentives for citizenship can boost naturalization rates, closing the citizenship gap also depends partly on the extent to which it is "voluntary."

The Mobilization of Minorities

Leaving aside the citizenship gap for a moment, and focusing only on the adult citizen population, are there remaining ethnic differences in turnout? As Table 2.4 demonstrates, whites in the adult *citizen* population were consistently more likely to go to the polls than were blacks, Latinos, or Asians—a fact evident in California, the other high-immigration states, and the rest of the country. In addition, blacks generally have a higher rate of electoral participation than either Latino or Asian citizens. A failure to register is the main cause of these ethnic differences in turnout. Among the registered population, ethnic differences in the level of turnout are more modest, although somewhat larger in off-year elections than in presidential elections. For example, in California in 2000, 81 percent of whites eligible to vote were registered, compared to 78 percent of blacks, 64 percent of Latinos, and 66 percent of Asians. Self-reported voting in the 2000 presidential election among *registered* whites was 90 percent, compared to 85 percent for blacks, 84 percent for Latinos, and 85 percent for Latinos. In the off-year 1998

Table 2.4
Voter Turnout by Ethnicity, 1990–2000

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
California						
White	61	77	66	71	60	73
Black	48	67	52	65	50	64
Latino	41	54	50	54	47	53
Asian	42	55	49	57	40	55
New York						
White	53	73	61	69	57	71
Black	45	63	50	60	51	66
Latino	38	54	34	50	45	55
Asian	39	53	28	39	26	44
Florida						
White	52	67	56	64	50	68
Black	46	58	39	55	43	66
Latino	45	60	39	55	41	57
Asian ^a						
Texas						
White	52	69	52	61	47	66
Black	43	55	38	53	42	65
Latino	32	50	29	44	24	45
Asian ^a						
Rest of the United States						
White	52	71	52	64	50	68
Black	45	63	42	60	48	66
Latino	36	55	33	48	33	49
Asian	45	57	43	50	38	49

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1990–2000.

NOTE: Cell entries are the percentage of adult citizens who self-reported voting.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

election, however, the equivalent figures were 81 percent for whites, 71 percent for blacks, 78 percent for Latinos, and 70 percent for Asians. The electoral context thus has an effect on turnout and registration rates. In all ethnic groups, voter registration tends to increase during presidential election years, reflecting the public's interest in these elections.

Levels of Latino and Asian American voting also vary across states. For example, Latino turnout is consistently lower in Texas than in

California, New York, or Florida. Asian voting is consistently higher in California than in New York, sometimes by as much as 20 percentage points. This variation reflects differences both in the socioeconomic characteristics and in the national origins of the Asian communities in these two states. As we will show, differences in age, education, income, and residential stability help explain the higher turnout among whites as well as the pattern of minority group voting across states (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

In addition, the salience of specific issues and mobilization efforts modify ethnic gaps in voting. Specific elections stimulate the participation of particular groups. At the time of the 1994 election in California featuring Proposition 187, the measure to reduce services for illegal immigrants, Latino activists and other immigrant rights groups mounted an effort to mobilize opposition in their communities. As shown in Table 2.4, Latino voting rose from 41 percent in 1990 to 50 percent in 1994. Turnout among Asians in California also increased slightly that year compared to other off-year elections. That these increases in participation did not occur among Latinos or Asians in the rest of the country (in fact, modest declines were seen outside California) suggests that Proposition 187 helped galvanize these two groups in California. Despite this evidence, it is also true that the trend in turnout from one election to the next usually is quite similar in every ethnic group. For example, although Latino turnout in 1994 was 9 percent higher than in 1990 in California, arguably because of Proposition 187, turnout among all three other main ethnic groups also increased over that time period.

Differences in Social Background as an Explanation of Ethnic Gaps in Voting

Once the citizenship gap is accounted for, what explains the higher level of electoral participation among whites? Their relative advantage in the personal resources that facilitate voting, something that government can affect only slowly and at the margins, is one important factor. *Formal education* boosts political participation, presumably by enhancing levels of political knowledge and interest, by making it easier to

understand the rules governing registration and the multiple issues confronting American voters, and by contributing to the development of civic duty and political efficacy. Indeed, in every country, education is a strong predictor of electoral participation. *Age* also increases the likelihood of voting, at least until one's seventies, in part by increasing political experience and in part by simply reinforcing the habit of voting. *Income* is another resource that fosters participation, partly because of its relationship to education and partly because certain higher-income occupations engender particular interest in governmental outcomes. Finally, the *length of residence* in a particular home or community increases the likelihood of voting. Residential stability eliminates the need to reregister to vote after moving and implies a degree of social integration that boosts political interest and concern with what government does.

Table 2.5 compares the four main ethnic groups in terms of these social background variables, as reported in the 2000 CPS. The data refer to the adult *citizen* population, since we are concerned here with the attributes of those eligible to vote, and we furnish evidence about California and the remaining 49 states separately. In both contexts, whites are more likely than Latinos or blacks to possess the background characteristics associated with voting. In California, whites eligible to vote are on average older: 49 percent of the white population in California is over age 46, compared to 32 percent of blacks and just 40 percent of Latinos. Similarly, whites are significantly more likely than Latinos to have a high school diploma and more likely than both blacks and Latinos to have a family income in the top quintile of the overall income distribution. However, ethnic differences in residential stability, defined as having lived at one's current address for three years or more, are very slight.¹ A virtually identical pattern of age, education, and income differences between whites on the one hand, and blacks and Latinos on the other, prevails in the rest of the country, with the former

¹These particular cutting points are chosen simply for illustrative purposes. A similar pattern would appear if one presented the mean values for these variables. In the multivariate analysis to follow, the full distributions of demographic background are used.

Table 2.5
Social Composition of Eligible Voters by Ethnicity, 2000

	California	Rest of the United States
% age 46 or older		
White	49	49
Black	38	38
Latino	32	37
Asian	42	40
% with high school diploma		
White	92	88
Black	89	79
Latino	71	67
Asian	92	88
% in top income quintile		
White	37	26
Black	20	11
Latino	18	12
Asian	40	34
% at residence more than 3 years		
White	69	72
Black	64	66
Latino	67	65
Asian	70	69

SOURCE: CPS Voter Supplement, 2000.

group more likely to possess the social background characteristics associated with voting.

The one anomaly concerns Asian Americans, who strongly resemble whites in terms of the personal resources that facilitate voting. Although Asians are somewhat younger than whites (both in California and elsewhere in the country), they are almost as likely to have graduated from high school and, if anything, are more likely to have a family income in the top quintile of the distribution. This creates an important puzzle, in that turnout among Asian Americans is much lower than among whites even though they possess similar resources. The standard

“resource” model of participation does not explain Asian turnout as well as it does the turnout of other ethnic groups. We will return to this “Asian anomaly” below.

There is an established statistical method for assessing whether these differences in social background actually account for ethnic group variation in electoral participation. The technique involves adjusting for group differences in the attributes related to turnout and then calculating the hypothetical rates of participation in ethnic groups matched in terms of social background. At a minimum, this analysis indicates whether ethnicity remains statistically associated with turnout after accounting for demographic variables. If a residual ethnic gap in turnout remains, other factors, such as cultural norms, patterns of organizational involvement, and mobilization processes, also appear to shape ethnic differences in turnout (see Cho, 1999, and Uhlaner, 2000, for a similar type of analysis).

The first step in this analysis involves estimating a model of turnout including both ethnicity and the various social background variables. Because the dependent variable in this analysis, turnout, is measured as a dichotomy, we employed a multivariate logit model to estimate the “adjusted” level of voting. For each of the six CPS studies conducted between 1990 and 2000 (for California, the other high immigration states, and the rest of the nation, separately), we estimated an equation with ethnicity, age, level of formal education, family income, and length of residence at the current address.² The logit coefficients for ethnic group membership can then be interpreted as measuring the difference in turnout between that group and the turnout of whites, controlling for differences in other variables.³ The full results of this complex analysis are reported in the appendix. Appendix Table A.1 reports the results for

²In more technical terms, we used our ethnicity indicators (black, Latino, and Asian) as dummy variables with whites serving as the excluded category, thus making them the baseline against which we compare the turnout of blacks and those having Latino or Asian backgrounds.

³To facilitate the interpretation of the logit coefficients for the ethnicity variables, we calculate their effects, in percentage points, by computing the effect, in probability, for a hypothetical individual who would otherwise vote with probability .50. This is one common method for interpreting logit coefficients.

the entire population in California in 2000 and also compares the role of background variables in explaining turnout among the four ethnic groups. The most striking result is the consistently lower level of participation among Asian Americans, as indicated in the first column of Table A.1 by the statistically significant negative figure for the Asian ethnicity dummy variable. Asian Americans in California (and in the rest of the country) vote at far lower rates than their social background characteristics would predict.⁴ After controlling for age, education, income, and residential stability, voting among Asian Americans is much lower than among comparable residents who are white, black, or Latino.

One technical explanation for this “Asian anomaly” is that the background variables included in the predictive model do not explain turnout as well for Asians. For example, Table A.1 shows that the effects of age and education on voting are significantly smaller for Asian Americans in California than for the other ethnic groups. In addition, the coefficients for family income and residential stability are statistically insignificant among Asians. From a theoretical perspective, these results point to the need to modify the “resource” model to account for differences in experience among members of ethnic groups in seemingly identical social circumstances.

The Residual Ethnic Gap in Voting

The results of the logit models can be used to simulate electoral participation in a hypothetical world where whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians were, in the aggregate, demographic clones. Thus, we compare ethnic differences in participation before and after accounting for differences in age, education, income, and residency. Table 2.6 presents both the “simple” ethnic differences and the differences once socioeconomic status is controlled for (“with SES controls”). In California, the average rate of voting by blacks in elections between 1990 and 2000 was 10.3 percentage points lower than the voting rate of whites. The average deficit among California Latinos and Asians across these five elections was even higher—18.2 and 18.3 percentage points, respectively. The pattern elsewhere is generally similar, although in

⁴The same finding is reported in Chang (2001) and Lien (2001).

Florida the Latino deficit was only 10 percentage points and the Asian deficit in New York even larger than in California—25.8 percentage points.

The results are striking. Once the two groups are matched in the political resources captured by the four background characteristics, the electoral deficit of blacks relative to whites vanishes. In fact, outside California, between 1990 and 2000 blacks were *more* likely to vote than were whites with matched social backgrounds, and this margin grew after 1996. In California, blacks were on average just 1 percent less likely to vote than the matched group of whites, but in 1996, when the anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 was on the ballot, their estimated turnout was 6 percentage points *higher* after matching on demographic factors, another indication of how issues, events, and political organizing can mobilize voters.

Table 2.6 also indicates that differences in social background are a major cause of the differences in turnout between whites and Latinos. In California, the average electoral deficit of 18 percent for Latinos relative to whites between 1990 and 2000 is slashed to only 3.8 percent after adjusting for demographic differences. Indeed, between 1994 and 2000, Latinos in California had an average turnout rate only 1 percent less than that of demographically comparable whites. The results for the rest of the country are similar: Latino-white differences in turnout are dramatically slashed, but not eliminated as in the case of blacks, when one adjusts for differences in social background. In sum, the lower electoral participation of Latinos is due almost completely to three factors: their lower citizenship rates, their relative youth, and their lower socioeconomic status. These findings belie arguments that Latino residents are intrinsically less interested in elections or more disengaged from the political process than whites are. The standard “resource” model does a good job of accounting for the electoral deficit of both Latinos and blacks whose participation might be increased, even in the short-run, through the mobilizing activities of parties, churches, unions, and other civic organizations.

Table 2.6
The Effect of Controlling for Social Background on Ethnic Turnout Gaps
by State, 1990–2000

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	Average
California (simple differences)							
Black	-13	-10	-14	-6	-10	-9	-10.3
Latino	-20	-23	-16	-17	-13	-20	-18.2
Asian	-19	-22	-17	-14	-20	-18	-18.3
California (with SES controls)							
Black	-1	0	-5	+6	-2	-2	-0.7
Latino	-8	-11	-1	-2	+4	-5	-3.8
Asian	-22	-29	-22	-18	-22	-21	-22.3
New York (simple differences)							
Black	-8	-10	-11	-9	-6	-5	-8.2
Latino	-15	-19	-27	-19	-12	-16	-18.0
Asian	-14	-20	-33	-30	-31	-27	-25.8
New York (with SES controls)							
Black	0	+1	+3	+4	+6	+9	+3.8
Latino	-2	-3	-11	-4	+2	-3	-3.5
Asian	-17	-24	-34	-32	-30	-27	-27.3
Florida (simple differences)							
Black	-6	-9	-17	-9	-7	-2	-8.3
Latino	-7	-7	-17	-9	-9	-11	-10.0
Asian ^a							
Florida (with SES controls)							
Black	+9	+7	-2	+10	+10	+15	+8.2
Latino	+1	-1	-8	-1	-2	-4	-2.5
Asian ^a							
Texas (simple differences)							
Blacks	-9	-14	-14	-8	-5	-1	-8.5
Latino	-20	-19	-23	-17	-23	-21	-20.5
Asian ^a							
Texas (with SES controls)							
Black	+9	+3	+1	+9	+8	+10	+6.7
Latino	-5	-2	-5	-1	-12	-6	-5.2
Asian ^a							
Rest of the United States (simple differences)							
Black	-7	-8	-10	-4	-2	-2	-5.5
Latino	-16	-16	-19	-16	-17	-19	-17.2
Asian ^a	-7	-14	-16	-14	-12	-19	-13.7
Rest of the United States (with SES controls)							
Black	+4	+4	+2	+8	+9	+11	+6.3
Latino	-5	-3	-8	-1	-5	-6	-4.7
Asian	-11	-23	-14	-20	-15	-24	-17.8

SOURCE: CPS Voter Supplements, 1990–2000.

NOTE: Cell entries are the group's turnout subtracted from turnout among whites, reported in percentages (as reported in Table 2.4).

^aToo few cases for analysis.

The Asian Anomaly Revisited

The situation is quite different when we compute the ethnic gap in voting among Asian American citizens. As noted above, this group is quite similar to whites with respect to the background variables employed as predictors of participation. In addition, the standard demographic predictors of voting are less strongly associated with turnout among Asian Americans than among the other ethnic groups. For these reasons, imposing statistical controls for background variables should not substantially reduce the electoral deficit of Asian Americans relative to whites. In fact, Table 2.6 shows that this turnout gap actually *increases* in both California and the rest of the nation after one adjusts for background differences between Asians and whites. In California, the average deficit over the six elections between 1990 and 2000 rises from 18.3 percent to 22.3 percentage points after adjustment; in New York, it rises from 25.8 to 27.3 percentage points. Asian Americans vote much less frequently than would be predicted by their age, education, or family income. This pattern is all the more perplexing when one considers that the Latino population, although also predominantly foreign-born, is more likely to participate in electoral politics.

Asian Americans thus constitute a large and growing group available for political mobilization in California. The slow pace of political incorporation among immigrants from Asia remains to be explained, although there is no dearth of hypotheses. One argument is that the very diversity of Asian immigrants makes it difficult to mobilize and unify them for political activity (Chang, 2001). Language differences and organizational rivalries may mitigate any sense of collective fate that could stimulate participation. That many Asian Americans were socialized and educated abroad in countries lacking democratic traditions is another potential factor; we shall test this proposition in the next chapter by comparing foreign-born and native-born Asian Americans. Still another possibility is that the relative economic success of Asians in the United States reduces the motivation to look to government to improve group standing. Some political observers state that Asians, more than other groups, view economics and not politics as the most effective path to individual and collective achievement. This hypothesis could be

explored by comparing subgroups of Asian Americans with different levels of socioeconomic status. Recent studies suggest further that community organizations in Asian communities have not emphasized the need to register and vote (Wong, 2000; Chang, 2001).

Finally, it might be argued that the absence of a dramatic galvanizing event or issue has dampened Asian American participation. In theory, Propositions 187, 209, and 227 affected the interests of all immigrants and minorities in California; in practice, the reactions of Asian American activists and voters were more muted and ambivalent than those of Latinos and blacks. For example, in 1998, when voters in California determined bilingual education policy, one might have expected both Latino and Asian turnout to rise given their group interest in this policy. Latino turnout that year actually was 4.3 percent *higher* than that of a matched group of whites—a sharp deviation from the overall pattern between 1990 and 2000, which showed an average Latino turnout rate 4 percentage points *lower* than that of demographically matched whites. Moreover, this pattern of mobilization occurred among Latinos of all ages and all levels of education. By contrast, Asian Americans in California in 1998 turned out at a rate 20 percentage points lower than that of a matched group of whites, an outcome not much different from the 22 percentage point gap over the entire 1990–2000 period. Similarly, residential concentration, a well-developed network of civil rights and professional organizations, and the strong sense of group consciousness and self-protectiveness are factors that facilitate the mobilization of black voters, but these factors are less prevalent in the Asian American population.

The political consequences of the relatively low level of Asian American turnout are complex. Asian voters in California are, as a group, less-heavily pro-Democratic than are their black or Latino counterparts (Lien, 2001). Vietnamese and Korean immigrants have balanced or even pro-Republican partisan orientations, whereas Japanese and Filipino Americans are at least as strongly tied to the Democrats as Latinos are. The partisan leanings of Chinese voters fall somewhere in between, but overall the strength of party ties, or the tendency to define oneself politically in conventional partisan terms, seems weaker among

Asian Americans than among other ethnic groups.⁵ Indeed, this fact partly explains their lower level of voting, since strength of party identification is positively associated with turnout (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, 2002). Which party would gain from higher levels of Asian participation is thus uncertain and may depend on patterns of mobilization unique to particular subgroups. Under these circumstances, candidates and parties might rationally choose to focus their efforts elsewhere, reducing the effect of one possible basis for increasing Asian American turnout.

Summary

Largely because of immigration, the Latino and Asian segments of the American population grew rapidly between 1990 and 2000, but the makeup of the electorate shifted at a more glacial pace. These tendencies prevailed throughout the nation but were accentuated in California, the primary destination of Latino and Asian immigrants. There, whites were only 54 percent of the adult population in 2000, yet they constituted 70 percent of those who voted in the 2000 presidential election.

The ethnic gap in voting has several components. For Latinos and Asians, the principal explanation is the large number of noncitizens. This citizenship gap means that the Latino and Asian *shares* of the electorate inevitably will lag behind the white and black portions, even if the absolute numbers of voters of Hispanic and Asian origin increase.

Among citizens eligible to vote, the reasons for ethnic differences in participation are more complex. Blacks and Latinos are less likely than whites to vote mainly because of their relative youth and lower socioeconomic status; aging and upward mobility thus would boost turnout among these groups. However, these background differences do not explain the low level of voting among Asian Americans, who participate much less than a “resource” model of voting would predict.

For policymakers dedicated to boosting the political incorporation of new groups, these initial findings point in two distinct directions. First,

⁵These are the results of the 2000–2001 Multi-City Asian American survey. We are indebted to Professor Taeku Lee of the University of California, Berkeley, for providing the data.

measures to increase the naturalization rates of immigrants will engender higher levels of electoral participation. Such measures might include English language and civics classes as well additional administrative resources to speed up the naturalization process in highly affected areas such as California. Second, social and economic policies improving the education of immigrants and fostering their long-term integration into residential communities would increase the level of participation. Basic features of one's life circumstances such as education and income are difficult to change on a large-scale basis. Hence, boosting citizenship rates and mobilizing voters through organizational activity seem the most fruitful arenas for policy innovation.

3. Latino and Asian Diversity

The political incorporation of immigrants in California mainly concerns Latinos and Asians. In this chapter, we consider patterns of electoral participation among Latinos and Asians separately, looking at differences within rather than across groups. In the next chapter, we take up the question of whether the current wave of immigrants is following the path of its largely European predecessors.

Latinos in the United States are diverse. Whereas the largest proportion is of Mexican origin, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala also are prominent countries of origin. The national origins of Latinos have relevance for their electoral participation. As citizens by birth, Puerto Rican immigrants alone do not confront the hurdle of naturalization before they can vote. Cuban Americans live almost exclusively in Florida and many came to the United States before the heavy inflow of Mexican and Central American immigration after 1970.¹ Years of residence in the United States increase the likelihood of political participation. Moreover, the political outlook of Cuban Americans is more conservative, anti-Communist, and Republican than that of other Latinos (de la Garza, 1992). Because Cuban immigration has dwindled and the future influx of Latinos is likely to be heavily Mexican in origin, intragroup differences in participation will affect the partisan balance of Latino voting.

Mexico's dominance as the source of Latino immigrants is particularly evident in California. Current Population Survey data show that more than eight in ten Latinos in California are of Mexican descent as compared to 56 percent in the rest of the country. Whereas Puerto Ricans and Cubans make up 12 percent and 7 percent, respectively, of the Latino population in the rest of the United States, these groups are

¹According to the CPS, 77 percent of Cuban-origin U.S. residents live in Florida.

virtually absent in California, where each constitutes less than 1 percent of Latino residents. Virtually all non-Mexican Latinos in California come from Central America.

Citizenship rates, a critical source of group differences in voting, vary across subgroups of Latinos. According to the 2000 Census, only 55 percent of adults of Mexican origin living in California are citizens, compared to 61 percent in the rest of the country. The national rate of citizenship among adults of Cuban origin is 68 percent; for Latinos from Central American or other countries, it is 51 percent. These figures include both immigrants and those native-born. However, in 2000 only about one in four *foreign-born* residents originally from Mexico were citizens, both in California and in the rest of the country (Table 3.1). Among this group, there is a strong relationship between length of residence in the United States and the level of naturalization (Johnson et al., 1999). Among Mexican-born California residents who immigrated before 1970, 54 percent were citizens; by contrast, less than 10 percent of Mexican immigrants who arrived in the 1990s were citizens in 2000.

Many recent immigrants have not lived in the country for the requisite five years to apply for citizenship. However, many long-term residents have chosen not to naturalize and thus are precluded from voting. The pace of their political incorporation could be increased by policies in both the United States and the various countries of origin

Table 3.1
Percentage of U.S. Residents of Mexican Origin
That Are Citizens, 2000

	California	Rest of the United States
All adult residents	55	61
Foreign-born only	25	23
Foreign-born, entered the United States		
Before 1970	54	65
1970–1979	46	46
1980–1989	20	25
1990–present	9	7

SOURCE: CPS Voter Supplement, 2000.

encouraging and facilitating naturalization. Allowing dual citizenship, linking government benefits to citizenship, providing English instruction for immigrants, and embarking on public education campaigns could all enhance the electoral participation of Latinos.

Mexican versus Other Latino Participation

Turnout varies across Latino groups with different national origins and between immigrants and native-born Latinos. Table 3.2 shows that Mexican Americans are less likely to vote than are Latino citizens from other countries.² In California, turnout among Mexican Americans is 10 percentage points lower than among other Latinos; in the rest of the

Table 3.2
Latino Turnout Gaps by Nativity and Year of Arrival in the United States

	California	Rest of the United States
Country of birth		
Mexico	-10	-13
Puerto Rico	(a)	-9
Cuba	(a)	+10
Other Latin America (baseline)	—	—
Nativity		
Born in the United States (baseline)	—	—
Foreign-born (all)	+1	+6
Entered the United States		
Before 1970	+17	+18
1970–1979	0	+3
1980–present	-15	-7

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

NOTES: Cell entries report the difference in turnout, in percentage points, between the specified group and the baseline group. The baseline for ethnicity is “other Latin America.” The baseline for nativity is “born in the United States.” Respondents are citizens.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

²To conduct this part of the analysis, we pool the 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000 CPS Voter Supplement files to increase the sample size and estimate more precisely the parameters in the multivariate turnout model. In the pooled analysis, there are 3,328 California Latino citizens and 13,424 Latino citizens in the rest of the United States.

United States, it is 13 points lower. One reason for this difference is the lower level of personal “resources” possessed by the group of Mexican origin. The top panel of Table 3.3 shows that Mexican American citizens are, on average, less likely to possess the demographic characteristics positively associated with voting. They are slightly younger, have less formal education, are less wealthy, and are also less residentially stable than Latino residents from outside Mexico.

When we employ the standard multivariate model to control for these background differences and for year of entry into the United States, the electoral gap between Mexican Americans and other Latinos is cut by about half.³ It diminishes from 10 to 5 percent in California and from 13 to 7 percent in the rest of the country. Thus, additional factors beyond these background characteristics appear to be involved in the lower electoral participation of Mexicans. In political terms, however,

Table 3.3
Percentage Breakdown of California’s Latino Citizens by Ethnicity, Nativity, and Socioeconomic Status

	Age > 46	High School Diploma	Family Income in Top Quartile	Residentially Stable
Country of birth				
Mexico	31	68	20	64
Puerto Rico ^a				
Cuba ^a				
Other Latin America	34	79	23	68
Nativity				
Born in the United States	28	75	23	62
Foreign-born, entered the United States				
Before 1970	72	60	23	81
1970–1979	34	55	14	74
1980–present	17	55	11	54

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000 .

NOTES: Residential stability is defined as having lived at the same address for three years or more.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

³Table A.2 reports the results of the multivariate logit models of Latino turnout.

the difference in the rates of participation is not great, and the sheer numerical weight of the steadily growing population of Mexican origin is a source of electoral power.

From an early age, native-born Americans are socialized to believe that voting is essential to democratic government. After every election, politicians, media, and civic organizations alike bemoan the failure of so many to exercise the franchise (Frederickson, 1999). Immigrants socialized in countries without a steady experience of open and competitive elections are less likely to have been exposed to cultural norms emphasizing the importance of voting. On this reasoning, the native-born should be more likely to turn out than immigrants from the same country of origin. On the other hand, one might argue that immigrants chose to come to the United States in part to partake of its democratic freedoms and that they would be highly motivated to participate, if only as a symbolic expression of belonging to their new country.

In fact, the CPS data displayed in Table 3.2 show that native-born Latinos do not vote at higher rates than their foreign-born counterparts. In California, foreign-born Latinos actually report a 1 percent higher level of turnout. However, underlying this broad similarity in participation between native-born and foreign-born Latinos is significant variation associated with the year of entry of the immigrant cohorts. Among Latino immigrants who have lived in California since 1970, turnout is on average 17 percent *higher* than among Latinos born in the United States. By contrast, Latino immigrants to California after 1980 had a turnout rate 15 percent *lower* than the rate for native-born Latinos.

Social background factors also partly account for this pattern. The pre-1970 cohort of immigrants has lived in the United States for a longer period of time and is older than either more recent immigrants or the native-born, who frequently are second-generation immigrants. And, as shown above, the overlapping, though not identical, variables of age and length of residence in the United States are positively related to turnout.

The bottom panel of Table 3.3 presents the relationships between nativity and the four socioeconomic factors most strongly related to voter turnout—age, educational attainment, family income, and residential stability. As a group, the native-born are better educated and slightly

wealthier, but they also are substantially younger and less residentially stable. The multivariate model, which takes these background differences into account, confirms that the influence of one's place of birth on participation is moderated by the length of time one lives in the United States. The bottom panel of Table 3.4 shows the results. In California, Latino immigrants who came to the United States before 1970 have an estimated level of turnout approximately 5 percent higher than the matched group of those native-born. On the other, hand among these sociologically matched groups, post-1980 Latino immigrants in California had a voting rate 10 percentage points lower than that of native-born Latinos.

Table 3.4
Turnout Gaps Among Subgroups of Latino Voters

	California	Rest of the United States
Country of birth		
Mexico	-5*	-7**
Puerto Rico	(a)	-2
Cuba	(a)	+0.5
Other Latin America (baseline)	—	—
Nativity		
Born in the United States (baseline)	—	—
Foreign-born, entered the United States		
Before 1970	+5	+3*
1970–1979	-2	-2
1980–present	-10**	-6**

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, and logit estimates reported in Table A.2.

NOTES: Cell entries report the estimated difference in turnout, in percentage points, between the specified group and the baseline group from a multivariate logit model that includes age, educational attainment, family income, residential mobility, and election year. The baseline for ethnicity is “other Latin America.” The baseline for nativity is “born in the United States.”

^aToo few cases for analysis.

*p < .10 in the multivariate logit model.

**p < .05 in the multivariate logit model.

In the future, aging and longer residence in the United States should boost participation among the recent immigrants. Clearly, though, these data show that the overall Latino rate of participation will rise and fall with the sociological composition of this group. On the one hand, a continued influx of young, poorly educated immigrants from Mexico would depress the turnout rate even as over time more voters are added to the California electorate. On the other hand, a reduced flow of Mexican immigrants, or changes in their social background, might result in a higher rate of participation among a smaller group of Latinos. The political implications of these alternative patterns are complex, depending as they do on the degree of political competition among California's ethnic groups and also on the relative trends in population growth across these groups.

Regional Differences

California is a vast and diverse state, including deserts, beaches, mountains, powerful agricultural and technology sectors, an entertainment industry that is shaping the nation's popular culture, as well as an ethnic kaleidoscope of residents. Regional differences in the Golden State are economically and culturally significant. The bulk of the population growth in recent decades occurred in the Southland, a region full of people but short on water and clean air. Latino and Asian immigrants also tend to cluster in certain locales. Los Angeles is about 50 percent Latino, for example, whereas the Chinese are the largest single ethnic group in San Francisco. The size and composition of Latino and Asian communities shape voting patterns in local and regional elections. California has traditionally been divided into five main politico-economic regions: Los Angeles County, the rest of Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, and the rest of the state. We use this classification to investigate the pattern of Latino mobilization across these regions.⁴

⁴Before 1996, the CPS did not include county identifiers. Since then, it has included 24 county identifiers in California. Following the coding used by Hajnal and Baldassare (2001), we created five groups. One includes Los Angeles County only. Another includes other Southern California counties (Orange and San Diego). The third includes the counties in the San Francisco Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San

With the exception of Los Angeles, there are too few Latino respondents in each regional category to analyze turnout in specific years. To investigate regional differences, we therefore pooled the data from 1996, 1998, and 2000. There is some evidence of regional variation in Latino turnout. Latino turnout was highest in the San Francisco Bay Area (59 percent) and lowest in the Central Valley (46 percent). The first column of Table 3.5 reports turnout by region. To anticipate the multivariate analysis, the second column reports turnout differences using Los Angeles County as the baseline because there are far more Latinos there than in any of the other regions. Turnout in the San Francisco Bay Area was 5 percentage points higher than in Los Angeles County, whereas turnout in the Central Valley was 8 percentage points lower.

Before concluding that political context is responsible for the turnout levels reported in Table 3.5, one should first consider that Latinos living in different areas of the state have different personal resources. For

Table 3.5
Latino Turnout in California's Regions
(in percent)

Region	Turnout	Turnout Gaps	Turnout Gaps with SES Controls
Los Angeles (baseline)	54	–	–
Other Southern California	49	–5	–5**
San Francisco Bay Area	59	+5	–7**
Central Valley	46	–8	–8**
Rest of California	48	–6	–7**

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

NOTES: Cell entries reported in the last column are based on a multivariate logit model that includes region of residence and age, education, income, residential mobility, election year, and year of entry to the United States.

**p < .05 in multivariate analysis.

Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Sonoma). The fourth category denotes the Central Valley (Butte, Kern, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Yolo). Those living in all other counties are placed in a residual fifth category.

instance, some of the 13-point turnout gap between Latinos in San Francisco and those living in the Central Valley might be due to context, but an additional explanation could involve education: 17 percent of Latinos living in and around San Francisco have college degrees whereas only 6 percent in the Central Valley do. Thus, we need to control for background variables and see what, if any, turnout differences remain. The results (in the last column of Table 3.5) show that much of the turnout variation associated with region results from differences in the socioeconomic status of their Latino residents.⁵ The high turnout in the San Francisco Bay Area is no longer evident. In fact, turnout in Southern California (excepting Los Angeles), the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, and the rest of California is quite similar. The only distinctive region appears to be Los Angeles, where, accounting for differences in background, Latino turnout is higher than anywhere else in the state.

Because there are so many Latinos in Los Angeles County, we can observe Latino turnout in this area election by election and compare it to the rest of state.⁶ By doing this, we gain this additional insight into the apparently higher turnout in Los Angeles County: It is manifest only in the 2000 election. In the 1996 election, Latino turnout in Los Angeles was 53 percent, 1 percentage point lower than in the rest of California. In 1998, Los Angeles turnout was also 1 percentage point lower than in the rest of the state. In 2000, however, according to the CPS data, turnout among Latinos was fully 15 percentage points higher in Los Angeles than in the rest of the state.⁷ One possible explanation is that with legislative term limits forcing the retirement of incumbent legislators, an increase in the number of Latino candidates mobilized voters from this ethnic group (Gay, 2001). Moreover, in 2000 the Speaker of the Assembly, Antonio Villaraigosa, was beginning his

⁵The results are based on a multivariate logit model that includes socioeconomic factors, year of entry to the United States, and dummy variables indicating each of the four regions other than Los Angeles, thereby making it the baseline region.

⁶Distinguishing among the other four regions is not possible on a yearly basis so we combined them into a single group.

⁷These results are also evident in multivariate models with controls for background factors.

campaign to become the first Latino mayor of Los Angeles and his early organizing efforts may have boosted Latino registration and consequently turnout. Overall, though, with this one exception, the pattern of results is consistent. Regional political context appears to have no steady relationship to Latino voter turnout. The demographic factors underlying political engagement are the most potent source of regional differences.

The Asian Mosaic

The low level of turnout among Asian Americans, despite their personal political resources (education, income, residential stability), is a major finding of this study. Yet the Asian population in California is very heterogeneous, with streams of immigrants from different countries. This diversity suggests that analyses that do not differentiate Asian subgroups may miss important sources of variation within the Asian population. Moreover, the major countries of origin among Asians have varied over time.⁸ One reason for comparing the level of voting among Asian Americans with different national origins is that, unlike the case of Latino voters in California, their political outlooks are diverse. Recent studies show that Japanese and Filipino Americans are strongly Democratic in party affiliation, but that Vietnamese and Korean Americans lean, on balance, toward the Republicans, with Chinese Americans more evenly divided between the two parties.⁹

The first Asian immigrants to come to California were the Chinese, who began arriving during the Gold Rush. By the late 1860s, anti-coolie clubs were numerous and violence against Chinese immigrants increased. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act effectively halted Chinese immigration, and many Chinese laborers were deported. Because the Chinese population in California was so heavily male, after 1890 the number of Chinese residents fell dramatically.

⁸The following discussion is drawn from Citrin and Campbell (1997).

⁹See Lien (1997, 1999). We thank Professor Taeku Lee for providing the information regarding party affiliation from the Multi-City Survey of Asian Americans, conducted in 2000–2001.

Few Japanese came to the United States before the 1880s, but after the exclusion of the Chinese, Japanese were recruited to work as farm laborers in Hawaii and the West Coast. Hostility toward the increasingly successful Japanese farmers increased in California early in the 20th century, leading to the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement. This virtually halted the entry of Japanese laborers but allowed wives and "picture brides" to immigrate. Consequently, early Japanese residents could continue to build families and their community over time. But by the time the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act ended discrimination against Asian immigrants, Japan itself was a cohesive and prosperous society; thus, Japanese immigration after 1970 has been miniscule. So, unlike the other Asian ethnicities in California today, most Japanese Americans are native-born and come from families who have lived in the state since before World War II.

After 1920, Filipinos replaced the Japanese as an important source of agricultural labor in California. As noncitizen nationals of the United States since the Spanish American War, Filipinos were able to travel without regard to the immigration laws. However, anti-immigrant sentiment flared again during the economic turndown in the 1930s. After the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act accorded independence to the Philippines, Filipinos in California were redefined as aliens and many were deported. The annual quota for visas for new immigrants was restricted to 50 until 1946. Hence, the Filipino residents in California today combine families of those who came before 1935 and the wave of post-1965 immigrants. Californians of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, or South Asian origins, by contrast, are almost all immigrants or the offspring of post-1965 immigrants and were motivated to immigrate by political and economic crises in their native countries. These differences in nativity and the duration of residence in the United States are likely to figure in explaining differences in the political participation of the various Asian subgroups.

Citizenship Patterns

When investigating national differences within the broader Asian community, there is a limitation that was not present in the analysis of Latinos. Whereas the Current Population Survey distinguishes the

background of all Latinos (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, other), it does not do so for Asians. Information about the national origins of Asians is obtained through a question about country of birth. For those born in the United States, Asian subgroups can be distinguished only among those whose parents were born abroad. Rather than combine foreign-born Asians and first-generation Asians and risk conflating effects of nativity and national origin, we will generally limit our analysis of Asian subgroups to the foreign-born. Fortunately, this restriction is far from crippling, since about 80 percent of adult Asian residents of the United States are foreign-born.

Although the Asian populations in California and in the rest of the United States are broadly similar, there are some notable differences (see Table 3.6).¹⁰ Overall, the ratio of native-born to immigrants among Asian residents is roughly the same in California and the rest of the United States: about 20 percent born in the United States. But among foreign-born Asians in California, about one in four was born in the Philippines, compared to just 15 percent in the rest of the United States. In contrast, the proportion of those born in India (6 percent) who live in California is less than half as much as the proportion in the rest of the

Table 3.6
Percentage Breakdown of the Adult Asian Population by Country of Birth

Country of Birth	All Adult Asians		Foreign-Born Asians	
	California	Rest of the United States	California	Rest of the United States
United States	19	22	—	—
China	18	17	22	21
Japan	3	4	4	6
Philippines	22	12	27	15
Vietnam	11	8	13	10
Korea	8	7	10	9
India	5	11	6	14
Other	15	19	18	25

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

¹⁰To increase the sample size and make the estimates more reliable we pooled the 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000 CPS Voter Supplements for our analysis of Asians. In this pooled sample, there are 1,845 Asian citizens in the California subsample and 5,327 Asian citizen respondents from the rest of the United States.

country (14 percent). With regard to other nationalities, there are no substantial differences between the backgrounds of Asians in California and the rest of the United States. For example, 22 percent of California Asian immigrants are Chinese, as compared to 21 percent of Asians in the rest of the country.¹¹ In both California and the rest of the United States, the largest proportions come from China, the Philippines, and Vietnam. But these groups are more numerous in California, where together they constitute 62 percent of the foreign-born Asian population, compared to 46 percent in the rest of the United States.

Like Latinos, Asians living in the United States have relatively low citizenship rates: Just 59 percent of adults living in California and 57 percent residing in the rest of the United States in 2000 were citizens. These figures include both the native-born and the foreign-born. Among the large majority of Asians living in the United States that were born abroad, just 50 percent of those living in California and 45 percent of those living outside the state are citizens.

Citizenship rates, of course, help explain differences in the participation of subgroups of Asian Americans. Some groups vote more frequently because their members are more likely either to have been born in the United States, such as Japanese Americans, or to have chosen to become citizens. Table 3.7 shows that, among the foreign-born Asian population in California, Filipinos and Vietnamese are the only groups with citizenship rates above 50 percent. Those from India and the small number of immigrants from Japan have the lowest levels of citizenship, 34 percent and 32 percent, respectively. Because of the strong association between duration of residence in the United States and citizenship status, it seems plausible that differences in citizenship rates within the Asian population result from different historical patterns of immigration. However, this does not seem to be a complete answer. For each immigrant group, citizenship is strongly related to year of entry in the United States. But, among those who entered at roughly the same time, citizenship rates remain generally higher for immigrants from the

¹¹Here, and elsewhere, we consider those born in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as Chinese.

Table 3.7
Percentage Breakdown of the Citizenship Rates Among California Asian Subgroups

Country of Birth	Total	Year of Entry into the United States		
		Before 1980	1980–1989	1990–Present
China	49	84	50	10
Japan	27	(a)	(a)	(a)
Philippines	63	84	64	23
Vietnam	63	86	68	33
Korea	40	67	36	(a)
India	34	(a)	(a)	(a)
All foreign-born Asians	50	78	49	16

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

NOTES: Cell entries report the percentage of respondents with the given characteristics who are citizens. For example, 86 percent of those born in Vietnam who entered the United States before 1980 are U.S. citizens.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

Philippines and Vietnam, as Table 3.7 demonstrates. Previous research helps explain this relationship between country of origin and naturalization: English competence, service in the U.S. military, status as a refugee-sending country, and the poverty of one’s native country are related to citizenship status (Yang, 1994). Compared to Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam score “higher” on these causal factors. The implication for political participation across the major Asian American groups is that some will vote more frequently because they have more native-born residents and others because of a greater propensity to naturalize.

Turnout Levels Across the Major Asian American Groups

Overall, the turnout of foreign-born Asian Americans lags behind that of the native-born by 4 percentage points in California and nine points in the rest of the United States. However, there is considerable variability in turnout depending on how long one has lived in the United States, as shown in Table 3.8. The turnout of foreign-born Asians who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time (a minimum of

Table 3.8
Asian Turnout Gaps by Nativity and Year of Arrival
in the United States

	California	Rest of the United States
Nativity		
Born in the United States (baseline)	—	—
Foreign-born, entered the United States		
Before 1980	+2	-3
1980–present	-11	-15
Country of birth		
China	+8	+3
Japan	(a)	+13
Philippines	+14	+15
Vietnam	+11	+2
Korea	+3	-3
India	(a)	+17
Other Asian (baseline)	—	—

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

NOTE: Cell entries report the difference in turnout, in percentage points, between the specified group and the baseline group. The baseline for nativity is “born in the United States.”

^aToo few cases for analysis.

14 years for those who came to the United States before 1980) is quite close to that of native-born Asian Americans. (The same is true in the case of Latino immigrants.) However, among more recent arrivals from Asia, turnout is 11 percentage points lower than that of native-born Asian Americans in California and 15 percentage points lower than native-born Asian Americans in the rest of the United States.

The turnout pattern across the major Asian subgroups is similar to the citizenship pattern: Naturalization and voting, the two steps in the process of political incorporation of immigrants, largely are driven by the same social and attitudinal forces. In California, those born in the Philippines and Vietnam have the highest citizenship rates. They also

have the highest turnout rates among Asian immigrants. According to the CPS, their turnout approaches that of the native-born.

Social background factors partly explain the relationship between national origin, length of residence in the United States, and voting. As Table 3.9 shows, foreign-born Asians who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time are older, better educated, wealthier, and more residentially stable than foreign-born Asians who entered the United States more recently. Similarly, Asian American citizens born in the United States, whatever their particular country of origin, tend to be better educated, wealthier, and more residentially stable than their immigrant co-ethnics. Thus, we must move to the standard multivariate analysis to better understand the turnout differences across Asian American subgroups.

Table 3.9
Social Background of Eligible Asian Voters by Subgroup

	Age > 46	High School Diploma	Family Income in Top Quartile	Residentially Stable
Nativity				
Born in the United States	30	95	42	68
Foreign-born, entered the United States				
Before 1980	54	89	42	73
1980–present	31	82	27	52
Country of birth				
China	45	82	39	64
Japan ^a				
Philippines	44	91	33	66
Vietnam	32	82	30	60
Korea	39	90	26	52
India ^a				
Other Asian	27	74	22	47

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

NOTE: Residential stability is defined as having lived at the same current address for three years or more.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

The results of this analysis are reported in Table 3.10.¹² Focusing first on the effects of nativity, the results show that even after controlling for socioeconomic status and age, recent Asian immigrants, in both California and the rest of the United States, have substantially lower turnout rates than native-born Asians. Among Asian immigrants who have lived in the United States longer, turnout is higher, but it does not

Table 3.10
Turnout Gaps by Nativity and Year of Arrival
Among Asian Americans

	California	Rest of the United States
Nativity		
Born in the United States (baseline)	—	—
Foreign-born, entered the United States		
Before 1980	-4*	-13**
1980–present	-12**	-16**
Country of birth		
China	+1	-7**
Japan	(a)	+3
Philippines	+10**	+7**
Vietnam	+13**	+7*
Korea	-4	-7*
India	(a)	+5
Other Asian (baseline)	—	—

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, and logit estimates reported in Table A.3.

NOTES: Cell entries report the estimated difference in turnout, in percentage points, between the specified group and the baseline group from a multivariate logit model that includes age, educational attainment, family income, residential mobility, and election year. The baseline for country of birth is other (non-U.S.). The baseline for nativity is “born in the United States.” See the appendix for additional results and the complete set of logit results.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

*p < .10 in the multivariate logit model.

**p < .05 in the multivariate logit model.

¹²Table A.3 reports the results of the multivariate logit models of Asian turnout.

approach the turnout of the native-born with similar social backgrounds. Thus, it appears that citizenship is not the only hurdle to turnout among Asian immigrants. Socialization factors play a role too, more so than in the case of Latinos.

The distinctively high turnout among Filipinos and Vietnamese in California persists after taking into account social background factors. Compared to the baseline group of those born in other countries, their respective turnout rates are 10 and 13 percentage points higher. Within these two groups, then, the generally negative effects of being foreign-born, especially for recent immigrants, are counterbalanced by these subgroup-specific influences. As a result, the turnout of those born in the Philippines and Vietnam is not much different from the turnout of native-born Asians. In contrast, among Asians born in other countries, Table 3.10 reveals no countervailing effects, indicating that turnout among these Asians (excepting Indians) remains lower than that of native-born Asians.

Subgroup Electoral Gaps

The findings we have reported underscore the heterogeneous sources of electoral participation among immigrant groups. The multivariate analysis has helped explicate the nature of the subgroup differences among Asians. In this section, we return to the notion of “electoral gaps” to summarize the findings and highlight some of the important differences among the Asian subgroups. Recall that we consider the overall gap for a particular group to be the difference between its share of the adult and voting populations. Groups that constitute a larger share of the voting population have an electoral “surplus” whereas those with a smaller share have a “deficit.” In Chapter 2, we treated all Asians as a single group and found an electoral deficit resulting from lower citizenship and voting rates. Table 3.11 distinguishes Asian immigrants by country of birth and then reports their respective fractions of the adult, citizen, and voting populations.¹³

¹³For simplicity and because the gaps are small, we do not distinguish the “registration gap” in this section. To the extent that it exists, it is subsumed in the “turnout gap.”

Table 3.11
Turnout Surplus and Deficits Among California's Foreign-Born Asian Voters
(in percent)

Country of Birth	Adults (A)	Citizens (B)	Voters (C)	Citizenship Gap (B-A)	Turnout Gap (C-B)	Overall Electoral Gap (C-A)
China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan	22.0	21.6	22.1	-0.4	+0.5	+0.1
Japan	4.3	2.3	2.3	-2.0	0	-2.0
Philippines	26.8	34.0	36.7	+7.2	+2.7	+9.9
Vietnam	13.3	16.9	16.7	+3.6	-0.2	+3.4
Korea	9.8	7.8	6.8	-2.0	-1.0	-3.0
India	5.5	3.8	5.0	-1.7	+1.2	-0.5
Other Asia	18.3	13.6	10.4	-4.7	-3.2	-7.9

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

The citizenship gaps in Table 3.11 report the difference between a group's proportion of citizen and adult populations. Positive numbers indicate a surplus resulting from higher overall citizenship rates, and negative values indicate a deficit. The only groups with surpluses are Asians born in the Philippines (+7.2) and Vietnam (+3.6), reflecting their comparatively high citizenship rates.

The turnout gaps report the differences between a group's proportion of the voting and citizen populations. In general, these gaps are smaller than the citizenship gaps, reflecting less variation in turnout rates than in citizenship rates. At the same time, the largest gap is among those from the Philippines, who have a turnout surplus of 2.7 percentage points.

Finally, the overall electoral gaps report the differences between a group's proportion of the voting and adult populations. This quantity is also equal to the sum of the citizenship and turnout gaps. Thus, the overall electoral gap indicates the combined effects of differences in citizenship and turnout rates across the Asian subgroups. As the results above suggest, Asians born in the Philippines are the most distinctive Asian subgroup; they have an electoral surplus of just about 10 percentage points. The consequence of this surplus is that Filipinos are

more than one-third of Asian immigrant voters despite being about one-fourth of the Asian immigrant population in California.

Summary

This chapter further delineates differences in the political behavior of the two growing minority groups in California—Latinos and Asians—by dividing them according to their country of origin. Doing so underscores the different role of social background factors in accounting for political participation in these ethnic groups. Among Latinos, “resource” factors not only explain most of the electoral gap relative to whites but also the lower level of voting among people of Mexican origin as compared to those from other parts of Latin America. Among Asian Americans, the paradox of ample resources and less voting persists when we compare subgroups with different national origins. This new finding should help direct future investigation of the causes of unexpectedly low turnout among Asian Americans. Although the Census data on which this study is based do not provide information about the attitudes or group involvements of respondents, previous studies suggest that different patterns of contacting and political mobilization, normative beliefs about the value of participation, and party identification are among the main explanations for the Asian anomaly. These same factors are worth exploring in attempting to explain the different levels of voting across subgroups of the Asian American community.

4. Continuity and Change in Immigrant Incorporation

Some commentators view with alarm the onward march of the U.S. population toward a majority made up of ethnic minorities, prophesying linguistic fragmentation and the crumbling of American values and traditions.¹ In the early twentieth century, they argue, the melting pot worked because of a self-conscious program of Americanization that facilitated cultural and political assimilation. Today, immigrants move easily back and forth to their countries of origin and maintain contact with their original cultures through videos and the Internet. In addition, the idea of Americanization has lost ground and in some circles is regarded as oppressive. As a result, the historical pattern of “straight-line” assimilation, with each immigrant generation becoming more similar, economically, culturally, and politically, to the mainstream of society may no longer occur. Michael Barone (2001) vigorously disputes this argument, pointing to a body of evidence indicating that Latino and Asian immigrants generally follow the path of their Irish, Italian, and East European predecessors, becoming monolingual in English by the third generation and intermarrying with white Americans more and more often.

Clearly, assimilation is a multidimensional process, involving occupational mobility, language acquisition, and new leisure habits. There also is a political dimension of assimilation that involves naturalization, the acquisition of knowledge of American history and political institutions, and participation in the political process. Indeed, electoral politics was an important avenue for improving the economic and living conditions of Irish, Italian, and other European immigrants,

¹This theme was sounded by Pat Buchanan’s presidential campaign and is given full voice in Brimelow (1995).

many of whom were recruited as party workers and candidates (Erie, 1988; Barone, 2001).

Political, economic, and legal developments have changed the costs and benefits for immigrants facing the decision to vote, so it is difficult to compare today's immigrants and their predecessors. Nevertheless, we can examine the distinctiveness of immigrants from Latin America and Asia in two ways. First, we can describe their pattern of political incorporation, determining whether participation increases from one immigrant generation to the next. Second, we can compare the Latino and Asian newcomers with recent European immigrants and in that way identify whether specific national origins lead to political assimilation.

The previous chapter showed that Latino and Asian immigrants do become politically incorporated over time. The longer they live in the United States, the more likely they are to become citizens, and the longer foreign-born citizens have been in the United States, the more likely they are to vote. Although native-born Latinos and Asians do vote more frequently than the foreign-born, these differences are partly a function of differences in socioeconomic status. There is no evidence that recent Latino and Asian immigrants are likely to be permanently disengaged from the electoral process, although the persistent finding that Asian Americans vote less than members of other ethnic groups with similar social backgrounds does set this group apart from other immigrant groups.

This chapter addresses the argument that Latino and Asian immigrants are less likely to become integrated into the American political system than their European counterparts, past and present. To do so, we compare the citizenship rates and turnout of foreign-born adult citizens in California with different national origins. In addition, we consider whether the "straight-line" pattern of assimilation applies to voting by comparing the political participation of different immigrant generations *within* each ethnic group.

Citizenship Among California Immigrants

Only citizens can vote. For immigrants, the legal requirement for citizenship is a minimum of five years of residence, but psychological factors and administrative delays typically prolong naturalization. For

this reason, in investigating the determinants of naturalization among the foreign-born in California, we confine attention to those who have lived in the United States at least ten years, assuming that most immigrants who have lived in the United States for at least a decade and have not become citizens remain alien residents by choice.²

Among all ethnic groups, age, formal education, and income are positively associated with the decision to acquire American citizenship (Johnson et al., 1999). Older, wealthier, and better-educated immigrants naturalize more quickly. There also are differences in the citizenship rates related to the national origin of immigrants, in part because of variation in the social background of immigrants from specific countries, as we will show. Among those in California who have lived in the United States for at least ten years, the citizenship rates are highest among those from Vietnam (79 percent), the Philippines (78 percent), China (76 percent), and the miscellaneous group of whites (75 percent). Among Asian immigrants with ten years of residence, the citizenship rates of those from Korea (57 percent) and India (60 percent) lag behind. Latinos are especially unlikely to become citizens; immigrants from Mexico who have lived in the United States for at least ten years have the lowest citizenship rate, 27 percent.

Undoubtedly some part of the variation in citizenship rates associated with country of origin is explained by differences in social background and length of residence in the United States. Table A.4 shows the results of three logit models. Each equation captures the “effect” of being born in a particular country on whether an immigrant has become a citizen after living in the United States for at least ten years.³ In Model 1, which includes no control variables, the national

²Even after ten years, some immigrants may not be noncitizens by choice. However, it is reasonable to believe that many are, certainly a larger proportion than had we used the legal requirement of five years for our cutoff.

³Hence, the dependent variable, citizenship status, is coded 1 for citizens and 0 for noncitizens. As noted, the models are estimated using all foreign-born respondents from California who have lived in the United States for a minimum of ten years (again, we employ the pooled 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000 CPS studies). The models include a set of dummy variables for country of origin, with foreign-born whites serving as the baseline category. A positively signed coefficient for a particular national origin indicates that those immigrants were more likely than foreign-born whites to become citizens.

origin coefficients simply replicate the pattern of citizenship rates reported in the first column of Table A.4. The second model controls for socioeconomic status, specifically age, education, income, and residential mobility. With the exception of residential mobility, these demographic characteristics all are strongly related to citizenship status. Adjusting for background differences among immigrants has only a minimal influence on the observed “effect” of being born in India, China, or the Philippines. Among immigrants from Korea, controlling for socioeconomic status reduces the citizenship gap relative to whites, whereas for those born in Vietnam, the “adjusted” citizenship rate becomes noticeably higher than that for foreign-born whites. The relative youth and low socioeconomic status of immigrants from Mexico means that controlling for background characteristics reduces the citizenship gap for this group by about one-third. Nevertheless, the citizenship rate of immigrants from Mexico remains substantially below that of white or Asian immigrants even after this adjustment.

The third model takes into account immigrants’ length of residence in the United States, distinguishing among those who have lived here from 10 to 20 years (the baseline category), those with 20 to 30 years residence, and those who have lived here more than 30 years. Once this variable is added as a predictor, the relationship between age and citizenship status largely disappears (see Wong, 2000, for a similar finding).⁴ This pattern suggests that age is merely serving as a proxy for how long a person has lived in the United States and that duration of residence is the critical factor. In terms of the racial and ethnic subgroups, the citizenship gap among those born in Korea and India largely disappears once duration of residence as well as social background is considered. In Model 3, the estimated citizenship rates among those born in China, the Philippines, and Vietnam are higher than that among white immigrants. The citizenship rate among those born in Vietnam is especially high. Finally, those of Mexican descent remain significantly less likely to become citizens, even after adjusting for the full set of control variables. In previous research, DeSipio (1996) speculated that

⁴The strong effect of education on citizenship status remains, however, as does the smaller effect of income.

the proximity of Mexico to California and the numerous ways immigrants can remain connected to their country of origin help explain this residual difference in naturalization rates. Overall, the findings are consistent with our argument that the turnout deficit among Mexican immigrants is more a function of their lower socioeconomic background and relative reluctance to become American citizens than a lack of interest in politics among those eligible to vote. By contrast, the citizenship gap is less important among Asian immigrants than the persistent reluctance of some subgroups to vote despite their legal eligibility and possession of relevant socioeconomic resources.

Turnout by Generation and Ethnicity

The CPS data enable us to divide respondents into three groups: the foreign-born (first generation), the native-born whose parents were born abroad (second generation), and the native-born with parents who also were born in the United States (third generation). This classification permits us to disentangle the influences of immigrant generation, nativity, and country of birth on voter turnout.

Table 4.1 presents a portrait of the California adult *citizen* population with each of the four main ethnic groups divided into these three generational categories.⁵ The white and black populations are each over 90 percent native-born, with overwhelming majorities being third-generation Americans. Although about 70 percent of Latino *citizens* are native-born, almost one in four are second generation—the first members of their family to be born in the United States. In comparison, the native-born make up a much smaller proportion of Asian American citizens; 68 percent of Asian citizens are foreign-born.

Chapter 3 showed that the year of entry into the United States of Latino and Asian American immigrants is associated with turnout, with

⁵We can determine the specific country among the native-born for Latinos but not for Asians. Thus, our analysis of the entire California population will rely primarily on the general ethnic categories (white, black, Latino, Asian). When we focus exclusively on the first-generation population, we will subdivide these groups on the basis of country of birth. In addition, to have reasonable sample sizes for the smaller populations, we pool the 1994–2000 CPS data for all the analyses in this section.

Table 4.1
Percentage Breakdown of Immigrant Generations in the
California Electorate by Ethnicity, 1994–2000

Nativity	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Born in the United States				
Third generation	89	97	46	16
Second generation	5	1	26	16
Foreign-born (first generation), entered the United States				
Before 1980	5	1	19	35
1980–present	1	1	9	33
Percentage of adult citizen population	68	7	16	8

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, respondents pooled.

NOTE: “Third generation” is defined as a native-born individual with at least one parent born in the United States. “Second-generation” is defined as a native-born individual with both parents foreign-born.

the earlier entrants being much more likely to vote. The small number of black immigrants (only 2 percent of the blacks residing in California) makes it impossible to replicate this analysis for African Americans.⁶ As the overall size of the white population in California is much larger, the small proportion of foreign-born citizens among them does not pose the same obstacle, and the analyses that follow estimate the effects of year of entry and generation for whites as well as Latinos and Asians.⁷

Table 4.2 reports the turnout for adult citizens in each ethnic group, with respondents subdivided according to nativity, generation, and, for the foreign-born, date of entry into the United States. The table also indicates the turnout surplus or deficit (in percentage points) for a particular group when compared to the baseline category of third-generation whites. The final column estimates the residual turnout gap

⁶Put another way, there are only 30 foreign-born adult black citizen respondents in the pooled dataset.

⁷In the pooled dataset, there are 967 foreign-born white citizens, which enables us to estimate the effect of year of entry for this group.

Table 4.2
Turnout Gaps by Immigrant Generation within the California Electorate

Race/Ethnicity	Generation	Foreign-Born Dates of Entry	% Turnout	Turnout Gap	Turnout Gap with SES Controls
White (baseline)	Third	—	67	—	—
White	Second	—	74	+7	-2
White	First	Before 1980	70	+3	-8**
White	First	1980–present	47	-20	-20**
Black	(All native/foreign-born combined)		58	-9	0
Latino	Third	—	52	-15	-2
Latino	Second	—	49	-18	-2
Latino	First	Before 1980	60	-7	+3
Latino	First	1980–present	36	-31	-9**
Asian	Third	—	59	-8	-12**
Asian	Second	—	47	-20	-20**
Asian	First	Before 1980	55	-12	-22**
Asian	First	1980–present	42	-25	-26**

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, respondents pooled.

NOTES: Cell entries in the “turnout gap with SES controls” column report the estimated difference in turnout, in percentage points, between the specified group and the baseline group (third-generation whites) from a multivariate logit model that includes age, educational attainment, family income, residential mobility, and election year. See Table A.4 for logit estimates and standard errors.

**p < .01 in the multivariate logit model.

after groups have been matched in the standard way by social background characteristics.⁸

Looking first at the turnout gap before adjusting for social background, an interesting finding is that second-generation whites (native-born with foreign-born parents) and white immigrants who arrived before 1980 are *more* likely to have voted than whites long established in the United States (with electoral surpluses of 7 and 3

⁸The results of this logit model are in Table A.4.

percentage points, respectively). Among whites, the most recent immigrants had the lowest level of turnout, but this curvilinear pattern deviates from the theory of straight-line assimilation predicting that each successive generation should be more likely to vote. All the other ethnic groups, however subdivided, voted less than the baseline group of third-generation whites. The turnout deficits were particularly large for recent Latino immigrants (31) and recent Asian immigrants (25).

Given the substantial differences in socioeconomic status across these ethnic groups and immigrant generations, the turnout gaps just reported do not isolate the unique influences of nativity and generation. To identify these, we once again estimate a multivariate model with the familiar controls for background factors (age, education, family income, residential mobility, and election year). This matching procedure substantially alters the previously observed pattern of gaps in turnout. Table 4.2 shows that among whites, the only significant residual turnout gaps are between foreign- and native-born citizens. First-generation whites who immigrated before 1980 are less likely to vote than their third-generation counterparts by an estimated 8 percentage points and the turnout deficit for the matched group of post-1980 white immigrants is 20 percentage points.

With social background differences taken into account, the deficit of Latinos relative to third-generation whites also is virtually eliminated. Only among relatively recent (post-1980) Latino immigrants does a statistically significant residual gap of 9 percentage points remain. Most of the generational differences between Latinos and third-generation whites appear largely a function of socioeconomic background. As the length of residence in the United States increases the likelihood of voting, this turnout gap should diminish over time. In any event, the political incorporation of Latinos into the California electorate appears as rapid as that of white immigrants. But rather than a continuing increase in participation from one generation to the next, as implied by a model of straight-line assimilation, there appears to be one major disjunction for both these ethnic groups—between recent first-generation immigrants and all other citizens.

Once again, the voting behavior of Asian Americans is somewhat different. Table 4.2 confirms the earlier finding of comparatively low

turnout among Asian Americans. Within this ethnic group, unlike either whites or Latinos, third-generation immigrants have the highest level of voting (59 percent) and the overall pattern of turnout across immigrant generations is a closer fit to the so-called straight-line model of political assimilation, yet even after adjusting for differences in social background, third-generation Asian Americans are less likely than the equivalent group of whites to vote by 12 percentage points. This deficit rises as one moves to more recent immigrant generations, reaching a maximum of 26 percentage points among post-1980 Asian immigrants. Ironically, when it comes to political assimilation, the ethnic group frequently labeled the “model minority” because of its economic and educational achievements lags behind Latinos, who are more frequently the object of concern for anti-immigrant interest groups.

The Effect of National Origin

Our earlier analyses of Latinos and Asians revealed some internal differences in participation related to country of origin. Table 4.3 therefore introduces country of origin into the present framework of analysis, focusing only on foreign-born citizens (as noted above, the CPS does not permit an effective classification of native-born Asians by country of origin). Again, the first column in Table 4.3 presents the level of turnout for first-generation immigrants with different national origins; the second column computes the turnout gap vis-à-vis white immigrants, and the third column estimates this gap after the introduction of the standard controls (age, income, formal education, and residential stability) in a multivariate logit model.

Compared to white immigrants, those from Latin America and Asia are less likely to vote, whatever their country of origin. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there are group differences related to national origin. Among the Latinos, the turnout deficit is greatest for immigrants from Mexico (17 percentage points). Among first-generation Asian Americans, the turnout deficit relative to white immigrants is largest for Korean immigrants (22 points) and smallest among those from the Philippines (10 points).

After adjusting for group differences in socioeconomic background and age, the differences across nationality groups found when we

Table 4.3
Turnout Gaps Among California Foreign-Born Adult Citizens,
by Country of Origin

	Turnout	Turnout gap (Foreign-Born Whites as Baseline)	Turnout Gap with SES Controls
White (baseline)	65	—	—
Mexican	48	-17	0
Other Latino	61	-4	+12**
Chinese	47	-18	-14**
Korean	43	-22	-15**
Filipino	55	-10	-4
Vietnamese	50	-15	1
Other Asian	44	-21	-12**

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, respondents pooled.

NOTES: Foreign-born whites include all non-Hispanic white immigrants. Cell entries in the “turnout gap with SES controls” column report the estimated difference in turnout, in percentage points, between the specified group and the baseline group (first-generation whites) from a multivariate logit model that includes age, educational attainment, family income, residential mobility, election year, and year of entry to the United States. See the appendix for additional information and the complete set of logit estimates.

**p < .01 in the multivariate logit model.

analyzed both native and foreign-born respondents reappear.⁹ Even after adjusting for background differences, immigrants from Mexico are less likely to vote than those from other Latin American countries. Chinese and Korean immigrants are less likely to vote than those from Vietnam or the Philippines.

Table 4.3 also shows that the levels of turnout for Mexican and white immigrants, once one adjusts for background differences, are virtually the same. And Latino immigrants from countries other than Mexico are, other things being equal, *more* likely to vote than white immigrants in California by an estimated margin of 12 percentage points. Among Asian immigrants, after adjusting for background differences, the participation of Vietnamese and Filipino immigrants is

⁹The logit model on which these results are based appears in Table A.5.

indistinguishable from that of white immigrants. These two groups thus appear the exception to otherwise persistently low Asian American turnout. The turnout of Chinese and Korean immigrants is more than 10 percentage points lower than that of white immigrants, even after adjusting for the background differences most strongly related to voting.

Summary

Both early political socialization, as indexed by nativity, and adult experiences, as indexed by length of residence in the United States, affect the political incorporation of immigrants. With the exception of Asian Americans, significant generational differences among the native-born are not evident. The recent wave of Latino immigrants shows patterns of integration like those of its European counterparts. Among immigrants from Asia, participation lags behind that of new citizens from other regions. Indeed, among Asian Americans participation is, if anything, higher among the relatively less-educated and poorer Filipino and Vietnamese subgroups than among residents with a Chinese or Korean background. The “resources” factor never is the only source of differences in political participation; clearly, though, this set of attributes is less potent in stimulating turnout among Asian Americans than any other ethnic group.

With this one important caveat, the evidence shows that the process of political incorporation of the current wave of immigrants to California is similar whatever their national origins. As in the case of white immigrants, the offspring of newcomers from Latin America and Asia are more inclined to vote than first-generation immigrants. For all the foreign-born, time spent in the United States boosts the level of political participation. Moreover, as socioeconomic status improves, the participation of Latino and Asian Americans increases, regardless of where they were born, another familiar pattern. The one consistent deviation from the standard path of incorporation is, again, the low level of voting among Asian Americans. Whether this endures will help determine the shape of California’s electorate in the future.

Finally, we note an important similarity and difference between California’s largest Asian and Latino immigrant groups. Our analysis shows that California citizens born in the Philippines and Mexico vote at

roughly equal rates after taking into account differences in background characteristics. However, the earlier analysis of citizenship patterns revealed that whereas those born in the Philippines are more likely than whites to naturalize, Californians born in Mexico are substantially less likely to naturalize. If these differences continue, then compared to their respective shares of the California population, the influence of these two groups will diverge as well.

5. Projections and Policies

Prediction is a difficult business—especially about the future. Nowhere is this quip more appropriate than in regards to demographic projections. In this chapter, we delineate potential scenarios regarding the ethnic makeup of the California electorate in the years to come. The future ethnic composition of California certainly will depend on the magnitude and sources of new immigration and the fertility rates of these newcomers and those already here. But these factors are subject to the effect of domestic and international political and economic shocks, unforeseeable legal changes, and cultural and economic changes affecting individual decisions about family size. The further into the future one attempts to project, the less reliable the prediction. Any projection regarding the electorate of the future does require a starting point, however, and here we begin with the current projections of the state's ethnic composition by the California Department of Finance.¹ Given this assumed makeup of the population in a given year, the composition of the voting population depends on two additional factors—the citizenship rate among immigrants and the turnout rates among the different ethnic groups.

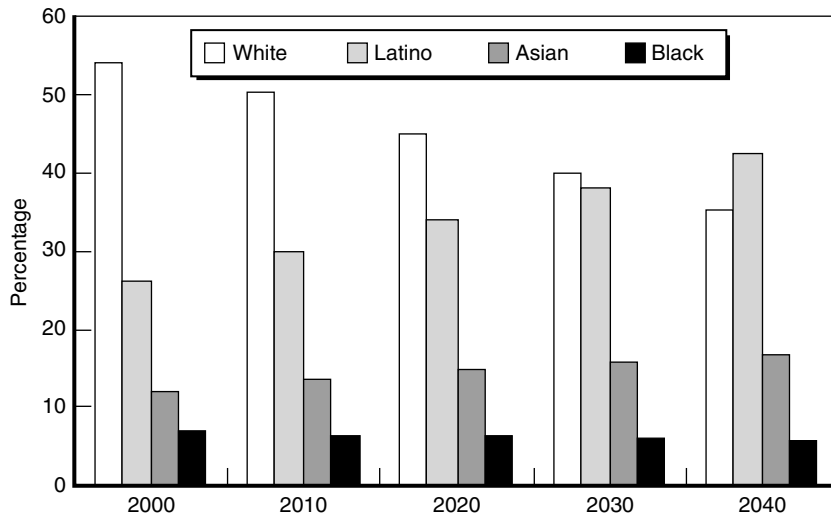
It would be a heroic task to predict the precise demographic contours of the California population 20 or 40 years from now, so our simulations of California's future electorate simply make quantitative assumptions regarding citizenship and turnout rates in California's main ethnic groups, using the 2000 rates as a baseline. This approach means that we do not speculate on why citizenship rates might change or how turnout rates would be affected by, say, the aging of the Latino population or the increasing proportion of native-born Asians. The citizenship and turnout rates presumed in the predictive model capture the effect of all such changes.

¹For comments on these projections, see Johnson, Hill, and Heim (2001).

Simulating Alternative Electorates

In projecting the future demography of the state, the California Department of Finance emphasizes the continuing growth of the Latino and Asian segments of the population. For example, as reported in Figure 5.1, the projection is that in 2020, California's adult population (above age 18) will be 45 percent white, 34 percent Latino, 15 percent Asian, and 6 percent black. By 2040, according to this projection, only 35 percent will be white, whereas 42 percent will be Latino, 16 percent Asian, and 6 percent black. Clearly, in simple numerical terms, nonwhite ethnic groups, and Latinos in particular, are expected to be numerically dominant.

The composition of the *voting population*, however, will depend on trends in the citizenship and turnout rates of particular groups. One initial question, then, is whether, if the status quo were to prevail, such that large numbers of Latinos and Asians remain noncitizens and Latino and Asian turnout continues to lag behind white turnout, whites would continue to constitute the majority of the electorate. So, the first



SOURCE: California Department of Finance.

Figure 5.1—Projected Ethnic Composition of California's Voting-Age Population

simulation assumes that citizenship and turnout rates of all ethnic groups remain constant at their 2000 levels.²

Figure 5.2 displays each ethnic group’s projected share of the *voting* population for 2010, 2020, 2030, and 2040, should the Department of Finance’s population estimates come to pass and citizenship and turnout rates remain constant at 2000 levels. Over time, whites will constitute a smaller and smaller fraction of the electorate, but the effects of the citizenship and turnout gaps will mitigate this decline. Under the status quo assumptions we use to give a baseline, whites are projected to constitute nearly two-thirds of the electorate in 2020 (63 percent) and a slim majority (53 percent) in 2040, despite constituting only 35 percent of the adult population. In 2020, Latinos will constitute only 19 percent of the voting population; by 2040, they are projected to constitute 26 percent of the voting population, whereas their share of the overall adult population will be over 40 percent. Clearly, the transformation of the voting population proceeds at a much slower pace than the change in the population as a whole.

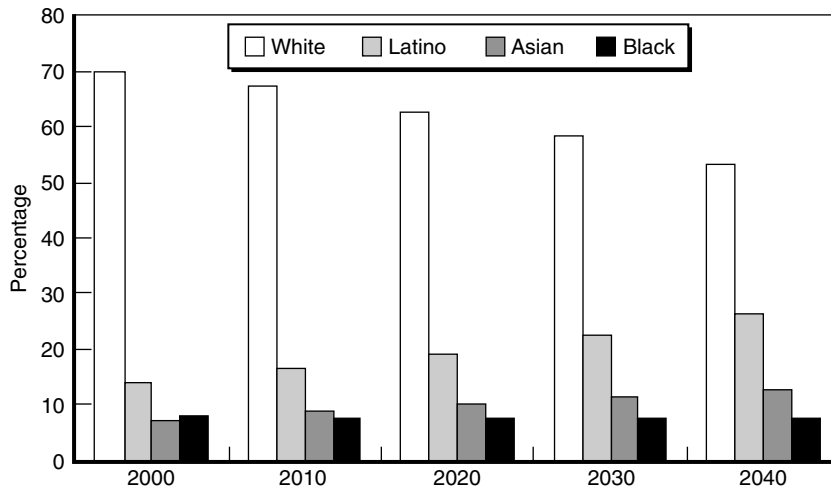


Figure 5.2—Projected Ethnic Composition of California’s Voting Population

²According to the 2000 CPS, the citizenship and turnout rates of each ethnic group are: whites (94.7, 73), blacks (96.3, 64), Latinos (53.6, 53), and Asians (62.8, 55).

Moreover, if one draws on Figures 5.1 and 5.2 to compute the electoral “surplus” or “deficit” of each group, the story is one of surprising stasis. Figure 5.3 subtracts each group’s fraction of the voting population from its fraction of the overall population and tracks that trend from 2010 until 2040. By and large, little changes. Whites continue to maintain an electoral surplus of approximately 18 percent. Blacks have a very small surplus (1 to 2 percent). Asians maintain a small deficit (4 percent). Latinos, because their burgeoning numbers include such a large proportion of noncitizens, are projected to experience slightly larger electoral deficits in the future; the estimated figure actually increases from 14 percent in 2010 to 16 percent in 2040. Demographic change is thus just part of the political story; citizenship and turnout rates will continue to diminish the electoral influence of Latinos and Asians.

Of course, citizenship and turnout rates are unlikely to remain entirely stable. What if Latinos and Asians naturalized and voted more

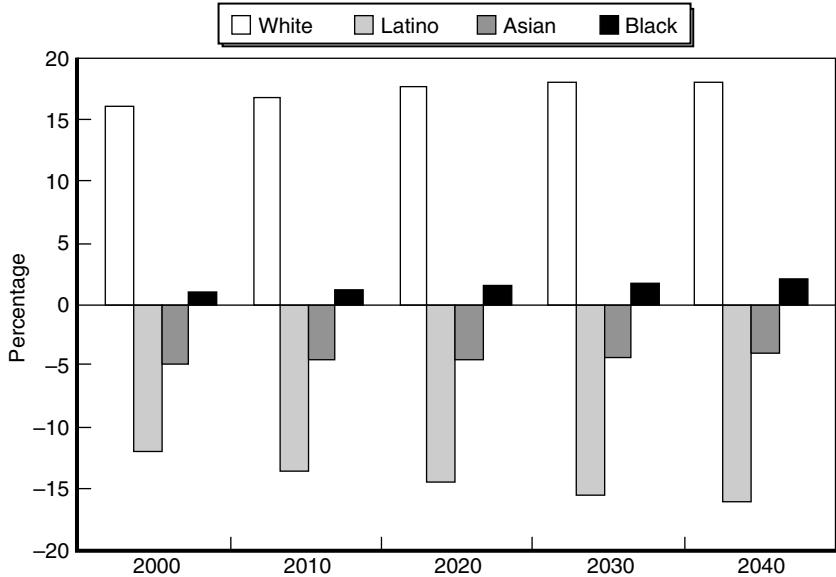


Figure 5.3—Projected Electoral Surplus and Deficits in California, with 2000 Citizenship and Turnout Rates

readily than in the past? What would the composition of California’s voting population look like then? Envisioning a few different possibilities, we simulated the Latino and Asian share of the 2040 voting population at citizenship and turnout rates ranging from 50 percent (somewhat below 2000 values) to 100 percent. The first simulation (which we will call “citizenship”) held turnout constant at 2000 levels and varied citizenship rates. The second simulation (“turnout”) did the opposite, holding citizenship constant at 2000 levels and varying turnout. The third simulation (“both”) allowed both to vary in tandem.³

Figure 5.4 presents the results of these simulations for the year 2040. For Asians, the effects of increased turnout and citizenship are notable. At 2000 levels, Asians should constitute somewhere around 12 percent of the voting population in 2040. But if every Asian were a citizen and actually voted (the “both” simulation), this fraction would increase to nearly 20 percent. Another way to summarize these effects is this: For each 1 percent increase in turnout or citizenship, the Asian fraction of

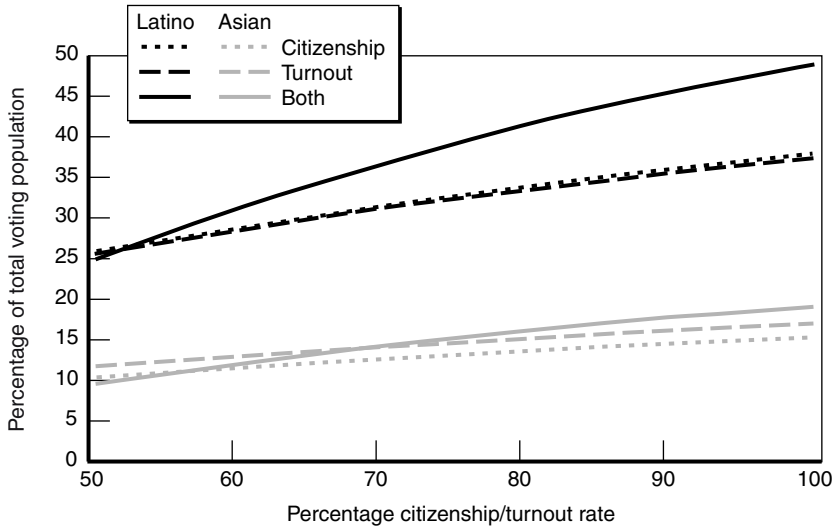


Figure 5.4—Simulations of Latino and Asian Voting Population in 2040, at Gradual Increases in Citizenship and Turnout Rates

³In each simulation, we hold white and black citizenship and turnout to its 2000 levels.

the voting population would increase by only one-tenth of a percent. If both turnout and citizenship increased simultaneously by 1 percent, the concomitant increase in the Asian share of voters would be about .19 percent.

The effects for Latinos are even more striking. Universal citizenship or universal turnout would increase the Latino fraction of the voting population from 25 percent to 37 percent.⁴ Each 1 percent increase in turnout or citizenship results in a .23 percentage point increase in this Latino fraction. However, when both citizenship and turnout vary simultaneously, the Latino fraction grows much more dramatically. Under the scenario of 100 percent citizenship and turnout, Latinos would be nearly half (49 percent) of the voting population. The comparable rate of growth for each percentage point increase in citizenship and turnout is .48 percent.

Of course, the 100 percent scenario is impossible, given that immigration means that not every resident is a citizen. It is much more plausible to assume that the citizenship and turnout rates of Latinos and Asians will increase slowly over time. Table 5.1 presents a sampling of less-drastic scenarios, projected at ten-year intervals until 2040:

- The status quo, where citizenship and turnout rates remain constant at 2000 levels;
- A scenario where turnout differences between whites and each minority group decline by 50 percent from 2000 levels, meaning that Latino, Asian, and black turnout will increase relative to white turnout. White turnout in 2000 was 73 percent, according to the CPS. Thus, in this scenario, Latino turnout goes from 53 percent to 63 percent; Asian turnout from 55 to 64 percent; and black turnout from 64 to 68.5 percent (citizenship rates remain constant);
- A scenario where the citizenship rate of Latinos and Asians increases by 50 percent relative to 2000 levels. (For Latinos, the increase is from 54 to 80 percent; for Asians, it is from 63 to 94

⁴That these two trend lines are nearly identical results from the coincidental similarity between the 2000 citizenship and turnout rates of Latinos, both of which were about 53 percent.

Table 5.1
Projections of the California Electorate

Simulation Scenario	Projected Percentage of Voting Population			
	2010	2020	2030	2040
Status quo (2000 rates)				
White	67	63	58	53
Latino	16	19	23	26
Asian	9	10	11	12
Black	8	8	8	8
Differences between white turnout and minority groups' turnout decline by 50 percent				
White	64	59	54	50
Latino	19	22	25	29
Asian	10	11	12	14
Black	8	8	8	7
Citizenship rates of Latinos and Asians increase by 50 percent				
White	59	55	50	45
Latino	22	25	29	33
Asian	12	13	15	16
Black	7	7	7	6
Turnout differences eliminated and citizenship rates increase by 50 percent				
White	53	48	43	38
Latino	27	31	35	39
Asian	14	15	17	18
Black	6	6	6	5

percent.) Citizenship rates among whites and blacks are constant, as are turnout rates among all groups; and

- A scenario combining this reduction in turnout differences and this increase in citizenship rates.

The status quo scenario essentially replicates Figure 5.2 and shows that demographic change alone would narrow white's share of the electorate to 53 percent by 2040. The turnout scenario produces a very similar result, given that the increases in turnout are not that large. By contrast, the citizenship scenario produces larger shifts. In 2020, whites would constitute 55 percent of the electorate, and by 2040, less than a majority of the electorate (45 percent). Latinos would constitute one-fourth of the electorate (25 percent) in 2020 and one-third (33 percent)

in 2040. Asians would constitute nearly one-sixth (16 percent) of the 2040 electorate. Naturally, the combination of these increases in the citizenship and turnout rates produces a much more diverse electorate, one in which whites and Latinos are virtually equally numerous by 2040 (38 and 39 percent, respectively). Of course, it is important to remember that more proximate forecasts, such as those in 2010 or 2020, show milder changes. The upshot of these scenarios is that it will take a long time before Latino and Asian voting power is truly commensurate with their numerical strength in the population as a whole.

Summary of Results

The California of the middle of the 21st century will look quite different from the California we know today. Its population will be much larger and more concentrated in the large suburban counties outside Los Angeles and in the Central Valley. Its Latino and Asian populations will also be more numerous. Indeed, if current immigration policies remain in place, Latinos, overwhelmingly of Mexican origin, will outnumber all other ethnic groups by 2040. Given the diversity of California's Asian population, it is harder to project the composition of the Asian American community, which will depend on political and economic events in the sending countries. Nevertheless, the priority of family reunification in issuing visas means that, in the short run, relatives of the most recent immigrants will dominate the influx of newcomers. In the 1990s, South Asians were a burgeoning group of immigrants to the United States and they, along with Chinese immigrants, will contribute relatively large shares in the near future.

Historically, rapid ethnic change has resulted in prejudice, conflict, and even violence. Economic competition and cultural clashes between the native-born and new immigrants have infused California politics since soon after the Gold Rush. State and local governments will thus confront the difficult task of fostering group harmony and cooperation. The political incorporation of immigrants is one mechanism for greater representation. In this regard, voting is especially important, although a group's electoral power depends on its size and rate of participation. However, the enhanced participation of newly enfranchised or mobilized groups does not always lead to a more benign political climate. If, for

example, the political goals of California's main ethnic groups are widely divergent, then more participation will more strongly challenge existing policies, possibly eliciting hostile reactions.

Other studies have shown that ethnic group differences in political attitudes are complex (e.g., Baldassare, 2000). On some issues, including affirmative action, whites and Asians join in opposition and Latinos and blacks join in support. On other issues, such as language policy, whites and blacks have similar views; they are more hostile to bilingual programs than are the largely foreign-born Latinos and Asians. The shifting patterns of racial and ethnic coalitions are an important subject in their own right. They are likely to be affected by the nature of the issues raised in the wake of ongoing immigration.

Whatever the degree of cleavage among California's main ethnic groups, electoral behavior will affect political outcomes. One important reason for this effect is the continuing importance of the initiative process in deciding major political policies. This study documents the ethnic gaps in the California electorate relative to the adult population, illustrating that in the statewide electorate, whites constitute a larger share of the overall voting population than they do in the population as a whole. This numerical advantage can be translated into political power when there are statewide votes on issues where ethnic differences in opinion are meaningful.

In comparing turnout among California's main ethnic groups, we distinguished two key factors: the citizenship gap and the turnout gap. Latinos and Asians vote less than whites in part because more of them are noncitizens and in part because among those who are citizens, a smaller proportion actually votes. In explaining differences in turnout rates, we focused on the role of background or "resource" factors, treating other potential causes such as subcultural norms or mobilization by parties, candidates, and community organizations as group-specific components of electoral participation. Our major findings:

- Latinos participate at lower levels primarily because they are less likely to be citizens and secondarily because many of them lack the socioeconomic resources that boost political interest and participation. However, among Latino citizens with the same

social background as whites, turnout levels are only slightly lower.

- Compared to the citizenship gap of Latinos, that among Asians in California is smaller. However, there is a persistent turnout gap among Asians. Even after accounting for social background factors, Asians participate much less than whites. Personal background is less strongly associated with voting among Asian Americans than among any other ethnic group.
- Among both Latinos and Asians, nativity and duration of residence in the United States are important correlates of voting. Overall, native-born Latinos and Asians vote more than the foreign-born generally and much more than recent immigrants. Immigrants who have lived in the United States at least 30 years vote as frequently or more frequently than native-born Americans.
- There are no significant differences in the pattern of political incorporation of white, Latino, and Asian immigrants. The different cultural origins of the latter groups have not mitigated their political incorporation. The critical difference is between immigrants and their offspring. The first generation born in the United States is more likely to vote than recently naturalized immigrants, regardless of their country of origin. In this sense, the new immigrants are like those who immigrated a century ago.
- There are differences in the behavior of Latino and Asian immigrants associated with their country of origin. Mexican immigrants to California are less likely to become citizens and less likely to vote than are those from Central and South America. Among Asians, immigrants from Vietnam and the Philippines have higher rates of citizenship and turnout than immigrants from China and Korea, despite their lower socioeconomic status. Further research is needed to disentangle the reasons for this pattern, but variation in English language ability and in dependence on government benefits or employment may be part of the explanation.

- Although the numbers of Latino and Asian voters will increase in the future, their relative shares of the electorate will not substantially grow unless there are major changes in either their citizenship or turnout rates.

Policies for Affecting the Citizenship Gap

Policies to increase the political participation of minority ethnic groups must address not only their level of turnout but also the rate at which they become citizens. This effort is particularly relevant for Latinos and Asians in California. Clearly, immigration policy is a matter of federal jurisdiction, but benefits for immigrants are a shared responsibility of all levels of government, so state and local policy can help attract or deter immigrants. Similarly, federal government controls the administration of the naturalization process. However, states, local governments, and voluntary organizations can help expedite the preparation of immigrants for the process of becoming citizens. At the most general level, policies that create incentives for legal alien residents to become citizens ultimately will increase the level of voting among Latinos and Asians in both California and the rest of the nation. This prescription can be two-edged, for it can be realized by making citizenship a requirement for public employment, such as in airport security, and government benefits. This approach is both normatively suspect and would be politically controversial.

In fact, in the past decade, policymakers have experimented with tying access to government services more closely to citizenship status. This was the thrust of Proposition 187 and part of the 1996 federal welfare law, which restricted legal immigrants' eligibility for food stamps. More recently, this approach has lost favor. In the 1998 California gubernatorial election, Republican Dan Lungren shied away from the legacy of Proposition 187 and immigration politics generally. Moreover, President Bush recently proposed restoring legal immigrants' access to food stamps. Whether linking government benefits to naturalization would boost citizenship is an open question; however, it does not appear to be the current emphasis among policymakers.

A more fruitful approach to boosting the citizenship rate, then, is a kind of outreach program that stresses the value of full membership in the political community while facilitating the naturalization process for those who are eligible and interested.

Many immigrants who have lived in the United States for more than ten years still have not become citizens. This tendency is particularly strong among immigrants from Mexico, the largest single group of newcomers. Part of the reason is that these immigrants tend to be poor and relatively uneducated; they therefore lack the personal resources and skills associated with the decision to naturalize. Thus, any sort of immigration law that favors the skilled and well-educated—e.g., visas geared toward bringing mostly South Asian workers into technology industries—would not affect most of the immigrant population already in California.

Immigrants with fewer personal resources would benefit more from the following services, whether offered by state and local governments, foundation programs, or immigrant aid societies:

- English language instruction;
- Instruction for the civics test required for citizenship, a test that also emphasizes the importance of voting;
- Assistance with initiating and completing the application for citizenship. Just as there can be voter registration drives and blood drives, there can be citizenship drives; and
- Lobbying the federal government to greatly increase staff and other technical resources devoted to speeding up the process of naturalization.

Policies to Boost Turnout

Latinos and Asians both face the citizenship barrier. However, the dynamics of turnout differ substantially between these two groups. Latino turnout appears hindered mainly by a lack of resources (i.e., age, education, and income) that shows no sign of abating. For Asian citizens, the challenge is different. On the whole, their resources are similar to those of whites, yet they vote much less. Because resources cannot account for the difference, our findings suggest that the barrier

may be cultural in that Asian Americans are less likely to regard electoral participation as valuable for achieving group or individual goals. Indeed, the variation in voting between Asian subgroups lends support to this notion. Whether cultural barriers are easier or more difficult to address than socioeconomic obstacles is an interesting question—one that is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, the key insight is that there appears to be *no common solution* to the problem of low minority turnout. Instead, given the differences among groups that we have shown, we must think in terms of multiple solutions.

Consider the likely turnout effects if California adopts election-day registration.⁵ In general, one would expect that allowing election-day registration would lead to increased turnout for two reasons. First, it would reduce the cost of voting by eliminating the need to register to vote before the election. Second, election day registration should boost turnout because citizens who become engaged and interested during a campaign can translate this motivation into action more readily. If the registration books close in advance of election day, then unregistered citizens who become interested during the campaign may not be able to register because the deadline has passed. Previous scholarly research shows that making registration easier, in general, and implementing election-day registration, in particular, leads to higher turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Fenster, 1994; Highton and Wolfinger, 1998; Brians and Grofman, 2001).

Would election-day registration affect whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians differently? Probably so, as there is reason to believe it would help blacks and Latinos the most. Making registration easier through such policies as election-day registration gives a particular boost for those who have fewer personal resources. Those with relatively little formal education are less likely to remember to register to vote, or to know where that can be done. By contrast, registration barriers are less costly for those with ample education. Thus, we would expect blacks and Latinos to benefit more than whites and Asians if election-day registration were implemented in California.

⁵California voters will decide whether to adopt this policy in the November 2002 general election. The issue of election-day registration appears as Proposition 52.

Beyond election-day registration, there are other ways to engage low-resource groups in the political process. Civic education through schools and community organizations is one way, since expanding people's understanding of and interest in America's complex electoral system should boost popular engagement and participation. Another strategy is to mobilize voters during particular elections. Typically, political parties and candidates mobilize voters, but unions, churches, and other voluntary organizations also are available to connect voters to the electoral process. Targeted media events and town hall meetings directed at immigrant groups would be another approach the state government should encourage.

For Asians, the problem is less tractable. Their resource levels imply that they should have higher rates of voting than Latinos or blacks, but the opposite is true, particularly among Asian Americans from China and Korea. As noted, political socialization and increased English fluency through adult education classes are measures that state and local governments can sponsor. However, part of the explanation for the "puzzle" of low Asian participation seems to be the widespread belief among this group that its collective interests are better pursued through private economic activity than through government policy (Lien, 2001). The higher level of citizenship and voting among Philippine and Vietnamese immigrants is consistent with this argument: Government employment and American foreign policy seem to be more salient for these groups than for Chinese or Koreans in California.

Historically, an important event for mobilizing immigrants to vote is the candidacy of a member of their ethnic group. These campaigns serve as a vehicle for the expression of group pride and loyalty; indeed, the first party to nominate someone from a particular ethnic group to high office can win its enduring electoral loyalty. However, the incentive to attract voters from a particular group varies with its size and residential concentration in a given electoral jurisdiction. Compared to Latinos, the Asian residents of California are a smaller, more dispersed, and more politically divided community. Thus, increasing their turnout seemingly involves a two-pronged approach: mobilization through ethnic organizations for the low resource population, and the gradual re-socialization of those with the usual personal resources associated with

participation through education and longer residence in the United States.

Voting is only one facet of the political incorporation of immigrants. Moreover, the collective goals of immigrant groups can be advanced in a variety of other ways as well—through the activities of co-ethnics, judicial decisions, and efforts in the private sector. Nevertheless, full membership in the political community and improved intergroup relations seem likely to result from the decision to become citizens and to engage in the central institution of democratic government—the electoral process. For this reason, policies that facilitate these steps are in the public interest.

Appendix

Statistical Tables

Table A.1
Parameter Estimates of Turnout in 2000 in California
(Logit Parameter Estimates)

Variable	All	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Race					
White	—	—	—	—	—
Black	-.09 (.12)	—	—	—	—
Latino	-.20 (.09)	—	—	—	—
Asian	-.90 (.11)	—	—	—	—
Age					
18–29	-.38 (.09)	-.27 (.12)	.05 (.30)	-.77 (.18)	-.27 (.27)
30–45	—	—	—	—	—
46–55	.45 (.10)	.71 (.13)	.17 (.34)	.43 (.23)	-.46 (.28)
56–65	.76 (.13)	1.10 (.17)	.07 (.38)	.52 (.31)	-.09 (.35)
Over 65	1.19 (.12)	1.43 (.16)	.91 (.48)	.83 (.27)	.51 (.37)
Education					
Less than high school	-.66 (.11)	-.94 (.17)	-.28 (.42)	-.46 (.19)	.07 (.39)
High school diploma	—	—	—	—	—
Some college	.61 (.08)	.60 (.11)	.91 (.28)	.67 (.19)	.10 (.28)
College degree	1.35 (.10)	1.43 (.13)	1.32 (.37)	1.39 (.32)	1.02 (.27)
Income					
Lowest quartile	-.44 (.11)	-.46 (.15)	-.70 (.37)	-.47 (.22)	.02 (.34)
Second quartile	—	—	—	—	—
Third quartile	.14 (.10)	.21 (.14)	-.11 (.37)	.22 (.21)	-.16 (.31)
Top quartile	.36 (.11)	.45 (.14)	-.09 (.41)	.36 (.26)	.27 (.28)
Years at residence					
< 1 year	-.98 (.09)	-.98 (.12)	-1.23 (.31)	-.99 (.21)	-.79 (.30)
1–2 years	-.25 (.09)	-.23 (.13)	-.53 (.31)	-.46 (.20)	.11 (.29)
3 years or more	—	—	—	—	—
No. of observations	5,095	3,213	405	942	484
-2×log-likelihood (initial)	6,477	3,770	528	1,289	666
-2×log-likelihood (final)	5,452	3,144	454	1,114	619
% correctly predicted	73	77	72	68	61

SOURCE: CPS Voter Supplement, 2000.

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses.

Table A.2
Parameter Estimates of Latino Turnout

	California		Rest of the United States	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Country of birth				
Mexico	-.20	.12	-.29	.05
Puerto Rico	(a)	(a)	-.10	.06
Cuba	(a)	(a)	.02	.09
Other Latin America	—	—	—	—
Nativity				
Born in the United States	—	—	—	—
Foreign-born, entered the United States				
Before 1970	.21	.14	.12	.07
1970–1979	-.07	.14	-.07	.07
1980–present	-.40	.15	-.23	.07
Age				
18–29	-.53	.10	-.61	.05
30–45	—	—	—	—
46–55	.54	.12	.41	.06
56–65	.80	.16	.90	.07
Over 65	1.09	.16	1.15	.08
Education				
Less than high school	-.28	.10	-.58	.05
High school diploma	—	—	—	—
Some college	.76	.10	.58	.05
College degree	1.39	.16	1.05	.07
Income				
Lowest quartile	-.42	.11	-.22	.05
Second quartile	—	—	—	—
Third quartile	.05	.11	.01	.06
Top quartile	.49	.12	.36	.07
Years at residence				
< 1 year	-.85	.11	-.85	.06
1–2 years	-.35	.11	-.59	.06
3 years or more	—	—	—	—
Year				
1994	-.01	.18	-.47	.08
1996	.34	.18	.27	.08
1998	-.05	.17	-.55	.08
2000	.26	.18	.29	.08
No. of observations		3,328		13,424
-2×log-likelihood (initial)		4,613		18,610
-2×log-likelihood (final)		3,945		15,333
% correctly predicted		69		70

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

Table A.3
Parameter Estimates of Asian Turnout

	California		Rest of the United States	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Nativity				
Born in the United States	—	—	—	—
Foreign-born, entered the United States				
Before 1980	-.38	.20	-.58	.11
1980–present	-.78	.21	-.72	.11
Country of birth				
China	.03	.22	-.26	.12
Japan	(a)	(a)	.12	.20
Philippines	.40	.20	.30	.12
Vietnam	.55	.23	.27	.15
Korea	-.14	.28	-.28	.16
India	(a)	(a)	.20	.14
Other	—	—	—	—
Age				
18–29	-.28	.14	-.65	.08
30–45	—	—	—	—
46–55	.18	.14	.38	.09
56–65	.56	.18	.94	.11
Over 65	.91	.19	1.03	.12
Education				
Less than high school	-.33	.21	-.64	.12
High school diploma	—	—	—	—
Some college	.22	.15	.35	.09
College degree	.83	.14	.80	.08
Income				
Lowest quartile	-.11	.18	-.14	.11
Second quartile	—	—	—	—
Third quartile	-.01	.15	-.05	.10
Top quartile	.29	.14	.28	.09
Years at residence				
< 1 year	-.50	.15	-.49	.10
1–2 years	.10	.14	-.31	.09
3 years or more	—	—	—	—
Year				
1994	-.45	.21	-.49	.12
1996	.01	.21	-.03	.12
1998	-.78	.20	-.75	.12
2000	-.05	.20	-.02	.12
No. of observations		1,845		5,327
–2×log-likelihood (initial)		2,558		7,385
–2×log-likelihood (final)		2,344		6,421
% correctly predicted		64		67

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

Table A.4
Citizenship Among Foreign-Born Californians Living in the United States
for At Least Ten Years

Country of Birth/Race	% Citizens (No.)	Logit Models of Citizenship (Control Variables)		
		Model 1 (None)	Model 2 (SES)	Model 3 (SES + Years)
Other/white	75 (1,261)	—	—	—
Other/black ^a	(62)			
India	60 (121)	-.70 (.20)	-.69 (.21)	-.24 (.21)
China	76 (386)	.06 (.14)	.18 (.15)	.63 (.14)
Korea	57 (231)	-.84 (.16)	-.65 (.17)	-.22 (.16)
Philippines	78 (556)	.16 (.12)	.22 (.13)	.61 (.12)
Vietnam	79 (249)	.22 (.17)	.59 (.18)	1.06 (.12)
Other/Asian	48 (397)	-1.19 (.12)	-.77 (.13)	-.50 (.12)
Mexico	27 (2,528)	-2.08 (.08)	-1.15 (.09)	-1.20 (.08)
Other/Latino	40 (386)	-1.50 (.10)	-.94 (.10)	-.74 (.10)
Other/other ^a	(22)			
No. of observations		6,649	6,649	6,649
-2×log-likelihood (initial)		9,216	9,216	9,216
-2×log-likelihood (final)		7,609	7,446	7,012
% correctly predicted		70	73	75

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

NOTES: Cell entries in the % citizens column show the numbers, in parentheses, of respondents in the designated categories on which the percentage is calculated. For the three logit models, standard errors are in parentheses.

^aToo few cases for analysis.

Table A.5
Parameter Estimates of California Turnout Among All Adult Citizens:
Ethnicity, Nativity, and Generation Effects

Race/Ethnicity	Generation	Foreign-Born Dates of Entry	Coefficient	Std. Error
White	Third	—	—	—
White	Second	—	-.06	.10
White	First	Before 1980	-.34	.09
White	First	1980–present	-.87	.17
Black	(All native/foreign-born combined)		-.01	.06
Latino	Third	—	-.07	.06
Latino	Second	—	-.09	.08
Latino	First	Before 1980	.10	.09
Latino	First	1980–present	-.37	.14
Asian	Third	—	-.51	.14
Asian	Second	—	-.83	.14
Asian	First	Before 1980	-.94	.09
Asian	First	1980–present	-1.15	.10
No. of observations				21,486
-2×log-likelihood (initial)				29,786
-2×log-likelihood (final)				23,708
% correctly predicted				72

SOURCES: CPS Voter Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, respondents pooled.

NOTES: In addition to the variables listed above, the turnout model included variables measuring election year, age, education, family income, and residential mobility. Figures are logit coefficients with third-generation whites as the excluded baseline category.

Table A.6
Parameter Estimates of California Foreign-Born
Citizens' Turnout: National Origin Effects

Country of Birth/Race	Coefficient	Std. Error
China	-.58	.15
Korea	-.64	.24
Philippines	-.16	.13
Vietnam	.03	.17
Other Asian	-.49	.16
Mexico	.02	.13
Other Latino	.47	.15
Whites	—	—
No. of observations	3,200	
-2×log-likelihood (initial)	4,436	
-2×log-likelihood (final)	3,924	
% correctly predicted	66	

SOURCES: CPS Survey Supplements, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, respondents pooled.

NOTES: In addition to the variables listed above, the turnout model included variables measuring election year, age, education, family income, residential mobility, and year of entry to the United States. Figures are logit coefficients with non-Hispanic white immigrants as the excluded baseline category.

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About the Authors

JACK CITRIN

Jack Citrin is professor of political science at the University of California, Berkeley. He received his B.A. from McGill University and his Ph.D. from Berkeley. His research interests are American national politics, comparative politics in advanced industrial societies, and California politics, with a focus on public opinion, political trust, and ethnic conflict. He is the author of *The Politics of Disaffection among British and American Youth* (1975), *Tax Revolt: Something for Nothing in California* (1982), and numerous articles and book chapters. His co-authored book with Professor David Sears of UCLA, *American Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism*, will be published next year by Cambridge University Press.

BENJAMIN HIGHTON

Benjamin Highton is an assistant professor of political science at the University of California, Davis, where he has taught since 1999. Before that he was an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow working on education and welfare policy for Senator Paul Wellstone. His research interests include American national politics, campaigns and elections, and public opinion. He is currently working on a variety of research projects related to the representation of African Americans in Congress.

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