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THE EVOLUTION OF PARTISANSHIP AMONG IMMIGRANTS

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines evidence on the partisanship of immigrants and second generation citizens as a first step in assessing the impact of recent compositional changes in the electorate. Drawing upon a sample of 574 Latino- and 308 Asian-Americans, we find that the longer Latino immigrants have been in the United States, the more likely they are to identify as Democrats and the more intensely they hold their partisan attachments. Asian immigrants, in contrast, exhibited no such trends in the direction of their party choice or in their partisan identity. We also find strong age-related gains in Democratic support and in partisan intensity among subsequent generations of Latinos. We strongly suspect that these too are experience-related, but we are not able to discount equally plausible cohort-based scenarios.



## THE EVOLUTION OF PARTISANSHIP AMONG IMMIGRANTS

### I. INTRODUCTION

Successive waves of immigration into the United States have repeatedly altered the composition of the electorate and the patterns of party politics. The arrival of millions of Irish Catholics in the 1840s swelled the ranks of the Democratic party, but also catalyzed a nativist reaction. Traces of the resultant ethno-cultural cleavage in party support persist to this day. The electorate was transformed once again by the massive influx of Eastern and Southern Europeans which began in the last part of the 19th Century. These immigrants and their offspring formed the urban ethnic core of the New Deal coalition (Andersen, 1979, Petrocik, 1981). Major changes in policy enacted in the legislation of 1965 triggered another surge of immigration. The vast majority of recent immigrants come not from Europe, however, but rather from Asia, Mexico, and the rest of Latin America. As in the past, the addition of these new citizens could profoundly affect the partisan makeup of the U.S. electorate (Bean, Stephen and Opitz, 1985). The nature and magnitude of these political effects will depend upon several factors—the relative attractiveness of the two major parties to new citizens, the rate at which immigrants and their children develop partisan attachments, and the strength of these attachments. This paper examines evidence on the partisanship of immigrants and second generation citizens as a first step in assessing the impact upon American politics of the compositional changes in the electorate.

Although a large body of recent research has focused on the political behavior of Mexican-Americans, and, to a much lesser extent, of Asians-Americans, there is very little in the way of previous research on the evolution of partisanship among immigrants. This is largely due to the fact that earlier waves of immigration preceded the advent of modern survey research. Not surprisingly, the one major survey study of immigrants undertaken in recent years (Black, Niemi, and Powell, 1987) was done in Canada, which has a higher proportion of naturalized citizens than any other advanced industrial democracy. Contrary to standard expectations that older people are more resistant to learning in a new political environment, this study of recent (i.e., within the last 5 years) arrivals in Toronto found age to be positively related to the acquisition of partisanship and other indicators of political involvement. Because this survey was confined to recent arrivals, however, it did not examine hypotheses other than those relating to age and resistance.

But mass electorates are continuously infused with another set of new voters—young people who have just reached the legal voting age. There has been substantial research on the acquisition of partisanship by young people and on the relationship between partisanship and age. Most notably, for many years public opinion surveys showed that the age of respondents was positively correlated with a) support for the Republican party, and b) more intense partisanship whatever its direction (see Campbell et. al., 1960, pp. 161-7). It has been argued that older people are more likely to identify as

Republicans because as people advance in years they tend to become wealthier, more cautious about expenditures, and more conservative. Another possibility, however, is that Americans who entered the electorate prior to the New Deal, when the Republican party was ascendant, might be permanently "imprinted" by their formative experiences in the political world. The correlation between age and Republicanism would thus simply reflect the fact that members of those cohorts were among the older groups of respondents at the time the surveys were taken.

A positive association between age and the intensity of partisanship could similarly be accounted for as a cohort or generational effect. It is possible that older Americans entered the electorate during a time of greater partisan conflict, thus quickly became staunch partisans and remained that way over the course of their lifetime. Equally compelling are accounts based upon life-cycle experiential or learning effects; over time, people gather more information about the political parties, become increasingly aware of where their interests lie, and have spent more years reinforcing an initial attachment (a process possibly abetted by cognitive dissonance).

Most researchers have now concluded that the age–Republicanism correlation was in fact largely the product of generational cohort differences (Abramson, 1983). Indeed, the present electorate contains so few voters who entered the electorate prior to the New Deal that this correlation has largely disappeared. Research in this area also indicates that the current era in American politics has been so corrosive to partisan loyalties in general that the positive correlation between age and strength of partisanship was confined to the years prior to 1964 (Glenn, 1972; Glenn and Hefner, 1972; Converse, 1976; Abramson, 1976, 1978, 1983). Abramson's work indicates that the patterns of change in both the strength and direction of partisanship have varied dramatically between blacks and whites—primarily because political events and conditions during the past several years have affected blacks and whites in very different ways. In light of these findings it behooves us in our current study of Latino– and Asian–Americans to be sensitive to the possibility that the patterns of partisan acquisition in the two groups could diverge in important ways.

A major problem confronting research in this area is the observational equivalence of the two effects. In a single cross-section, age and cohort are identical; persons in their forties are not only at the same point in the life cycle, but also came of age politically at the same time. Age and cohort effects become increasingly decorrelated as additional observations are made, but examining a series of cross-sections introduces the additional problem of factoring out "period" effects, i.e. shocks which affect the entire distribution of the dependent variable at the time of a particular observation. Indeed, each one of the three effects—age, cohort, and period—is a linear combination of the other two, making the classic cohort analysis model under-identified and impossible to estimate unless some restrictions on parameters are imposed (Mason *et al.*, 1973). According to Glenn (1976) even this estimation strategy is in turn badly compromised by the presence of higher order interaction effects, e.g. between age and period. Both he and Converse (1976) argue that a strong theoretical basis and/or "side information" is required if one is to decide between competing age, cohort, and period explanations.<sup>1</sup>

So far we have discussed major hypotheses concerning the acquisition of partisanship primarily in terms of associations with age. But as Converse (1969) pointed out, "sheer time" or "the passage of years in chronological age" is really only a proxy for how much exposure an individual has had to the political environment. Because immigrants enter the United States at different ages, a major analytical advantage we enjoy in this study is that the amount of exposure they have had to American politics is distinct from their chronological age.<sup>2</sup> In our dataset there were respondents who were children when they arrived and others who were in their sixties. By studying the evolution of partisanship among immigrants we are thus able to use a far more direct indicator of exposure (years in the United States) than is otherwise the case. However, our data do not allow us to escape from the difficulties of disentangling effects due to intercohort differences from those due to differences in amount of experience and learning. Whenever our findings admit to both possibilities we will so indicate, and simply report reasons why we find one or the other more plausible.

We will proceed by first outlining a general model of partisan attachments developed by Fiorina (1981). Many of the hypotheses we derive from this model are analogous to those upon which the field of cohort analysis usually has focused. Do immigrants tend to gravitate toward one party and away from the other? Does the strength of their partisan attachments increase the longer they live in the United States? Are the partisan predilections of immigrants especially affected by the political climate in the United States at the time of their arrival? Do second generation Americans display different patterns in the direction and strength of their party ties? Throughout, we assess whether the factors that facilitate or retard the acquisition of partisanship among immigrants and their children are similar to those that affect partisanship in the electorate generally.

The data on which our analyses are based are drawn from a statewide survey of Californians undertaken in late 1984. Although large numbers of Latin and Asian immigrants have settled in several states, their impact has been felt most dramatically in California. Indeed, the proportion of the state's population made up non-Hispanic whites is expected to fall from the 67 percent figure of 1980 to less than half by 2010. Additional details on the sampling design, which yielded completed interviews with 574 Latinos, 308 Asian-Americans, 335 blacks, and 317 non-Hispanic whites, are reported in Appendix A. The utility of these data for our inquiry derives in part from the large number of immigrants and children of immigrants. The Latino subsample contained 213 immigrants and 152 second generation citizens. The corresponding figures for the Asian subsample were 174 and 63. For ease of exposition we will henceforth refer to "Asians" when we mean Asian-Americans, "Mexicans" when we mean Mexican-Americans, "whites" when we mean non-Hispanic whites, and so forth.

## II. MODELING IMMIGRANT PARTISANSHIP

The evolution of partisanship among immigrants should be considered within the context of a more general model of party identification. While there are a number of such models, they differ

less in what they identify as the basic determinants of partisanship than they do in the relative weight assigned to each cause. The social psychological model of party identification tends to emphasize the importance of parental socialization, to downplay the role of short-term forces, and to regard partisanship as a cognitive filter (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960). Rational choice models tend to emphasize how ongoing information relevant to the performance of parties in office is incorporated into cumulative, running evaluations of the parties (Downs, 1957). As our intent is not to choose among models of partisanship but rather to use some reasonable model to guide our investigation, we find most useful for this purpose the synthetic formulation provided by Fiorina (1981). Fiorina posits that individual  $i$ 's evaluation of party  $q$  (or, if one prefers,  $i$ 's party identification) can be expressed as the comparison of past political experiences (PPE) that the individual has had with party  $q$  versus those he/she has had with party  $z$ , plus a vector  $G$ , composed of various inherited biases such as parental party identification. This he expresses as:

$$(1) \quad PID_i^q = PPE_i^q - PPE_i^z + G_i$$

where:  $PID_i^q$  is individual  $i$ 's evaluation of (or identification with) party  $q$ .

$PPE_i^q, PPE_i^z$  are the past political experiences of individual  $i$  with parties  $q$  and  $z$ , respectively.

$G_i$  is a vector of inherited biases inherited from one's family, etc.

A great deal of research has shown the importance of parental transmission of party identification (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954, p. 99; Butler and Stokes, 1974; Jennings and Niemi, 1974, pp. 37–62). Individuals whose parents were non-partisan are more likely, all else equal, to be non-partisan themselves as adults. Familial partisanship as captured in the model by the  $G$  vector corresponds to setting an initial value for the individual's party identification at the time of his or her entry into the electorate, which is then modified by the cumulated political experiences.

The retrospective PPEs can further be defined as the weighted, discounted sum of utilities the parties have provided the voter in the past. Fiorina expresses this term as:

$$(2) \quad PPE_i^q = \sum_{j=1}^n s_{ij} a_{ij} [u_{i,j+1}^q - u_{ij}^q]$$

where  $s_{ij}$  is the time discount for past experiences.

$a_{ij}$  is the importance assigned to each experience.

$u^q, u_{j+1}^q$  is the utility of the party  $q$ 's action or policy position at time  $j$  or  $j+1$ .



The PPE component thus reflects the impact of all previous pieces of information relevant to party choice that individuals have acquired after their entry into the electorate. Although much of this information may be picked up through direct personal experiences with such things as unemployment, inflation, crime, military service (see Downs, 1957), it also includes the impact of information acquired vicariously from the news media, friends and neighbors, trusted reference groups, etc. The amount of importance assigned to each piece of political information is no doubt highly idiosyncratic. We would expect, though, that as immigrants' economic and psychological stakes in the U.S. increase and their sense of attachment to the old country correspondingly decreases, more weight will be afforded to the information they accumulate.

The Fiorina model thus provides an explicit theoretical basis for the basic hypotheses which have been examined in cohort analyses of partisanship. Converse's (1976) hypothesis that the strength of partisanship increased with age (at least during the pre-1965 "steady state" period) can be derived from this framework by recognizing that over time an individual accumulates an increasing number of observations about how the parties behave in office and how those actions affect his or her welfare. In terms of the rules of Bayesian inference, these past political experiences come to shape a statistical prior and subsequent observations produce a posterior updating of that prior. If the parties act consistently over time and an individual's circumstances (and hence preferences) do not alter too drastically, then as the number of observations accumulate, new observations will be offset by past information and will be less likely to perturb a person's basic partisan orientation. Over time a person's partisan attachments thus become stronger and more resistant to change.

Cohort or generational effects can be derived similarly. As pointed out above, younger voters have fewer observations of the competing political parties, and so rely primarily on the inherited prejudices of their family and background—the elements of the vector  $G$  in the retrospective model. As a consequence, they will tend to have weaker priors and less stable party affiliations and will therefore be more susceptible to short-term influences. In other words, the events of the day will have a greater impact upon younger than upon older cohort groups, and they will be incorporated with a heavier weighting into the political memory of those younger voters. Because their retrospective experiences are shared, a particular cohort group may exhibit distinctive patterns of partisan preference throughout its political life cycle.<sup>3</sup>

How does the development of partisanship among immigrants differ from the case of native-born citizens? The first column in Table 1 summarizes our hypotheses about the relationship between generation (in this country) and family influence—a major component of the  $G$  vector of background characteristics and inherited predispositions. We expect that foreign-born Americans receive few relevant (i.e. U.S.) partisan cues from their parents and thus enter the electorate with virtually no inherited partisan bias. This is especially true of immigrants who do not arrive in this country until they are adults. Family political influence in the second generation, i.e., those born in the U.S. of foreign-born parents, will vary substantially, depending on whether and when an individual's parents became politically engaged in the new country. If the parents themselves developed partisan attachments early in the offspring's childhood, then the same kind of

socialization experienced by individuals with native-born parents might be expected. If the parents never made the transition into U.S. political life, or if they did not do so until late in the offspring's childhood, then little or no parental partisanship would be transmitted. By the third generation, i.e., those whose parents were born in the U.S., the usual patterns of intergenerational transmission would apply. We should observe that the strength of partisanship increases with each successive generation as parental socialization effects become stronger and more pervasive.

[Table 1 about here]

The second column of Table 1 summarizes our expectations concerning the effect of past political experiences (the PPE term) upon partisanship. Few immigrants enter the country with any experience relevant to the choice between the Democrats and the Republicans. The longer someone has been in this country, however, the greater will be their accumulation of politically relevant experiences and the more likely they will be to have developed partisan attachments. In this sense, the effect of years in the U.S. upon immigrants is analogous to the effect of aging upon native-born Americans.

It is also the case, as Table 2 makes clear, that over time immigrants come to have a greater stake in their new community: a good job, ownership of a home, and so forth. Important among these is a commitment to the new country, as indicated by, for example, taking out U.S. citizenship, or giving up the idea of returning to the home country to live. These stakes increase further in the case of second and third generations. Table 2 shows that immigrants and members of subsequent generations additionally acquire other material and intellectual resources which facilitate political attentiveness and political involvement, including more income, more education, and greater fluency with the English language.<sup>4</sup> As indicated earlier, an increasing economic and psychological stake in their new life in the United States should increase the weight immigrants assign to new political information and thus have the effect of strengthening partisanship.

[Table 2 about here]

According to the Fiorina model, cohort or generational differences in partisanship arise because of the relatively greater impact of political experiences upon partisan attachments in the period of initial political exposure. Although among native-born citizens some political learning occurs in childhood and adolescence, serious political exposure usually begins at the time of entry into the electorate. Thus the "New Deal generation" refers to the cohort of voters who began voting during the Thirties and early Forties. The relatively high degree of support these voters give to the Democrats is seen to be a consequence of the ascendancy of the Democratic party during this period. Assigning immigrants to a particular cohort is more problematic. If they arrived as adults they would presumably be strongly influenced by political conditions at the time of their arrival. Those who arrived as children, however, could be expected to be more like native Americans and pick up the imprint of the political state of affairs that obtained at the time of early adulthood. Our decision was thus to designate immigrants' cohorts in terms of the first presidential election in which they

would have been eligible to vote had they been citizens, whether they actually were citizens or not.

### III. THE DIRECTION OF PARTISANSHIP

Although the Fiorina model portrays party identification as a continuum of evaluations ranging from extreme support for one party to extreme support for the other, in order to better position our analyses in the context of previous research we too will differentiate between the direction of partisanship and the strength of partisanship. Respondents in our survey were thus asked the standard NES party identification questions which allowed us to classify them into one of the seven categories of partisanship, i.e., strong and weak identifiers of either party, independents "leaning" toward a party, and pure independents.

Almost all national opinion polls that have isolated Latino respondents have found majorities preferring the Democratic party to the Republicans, but, because of the small number of Latino respondents contacted, the size of the Democrats' advantage varies considerably from one poll to the next. Surveys specifically targeted at Latinos, however, have generally revealed a large 3-1 to 5-1 advantage among the primarily Mexican-origin Latinos of Texas and California, while Cuban-Americans, concentrated in Florida and the Eastern seaboard, are overwhelmingly supportive of the Republicans (see several of the articles in de la Garza, 1987). More detailed analyses of Latino public opinion reveal that the appeal of the Democratic party is a function of its more congenial positions on immigration, language, and educational issues, and from its image as the party of disadvantaged minorities. Republicans' success among Cuban-Americans, on the other hand, arises primarily from the perception that they are more anti-communist and anti-Castro.

Evidence on the partisanship of Asians is harder to come by. National surveys never contact more than a handful of Asian respondents. As we reported in an earlier study, however, our data indicate that in California in 1984 the percentage of Asian respondents identifying as Republicans and the percentage identifying as Democrats were nearly identical (Cain and Kiewiet, 1987). Republican support among Asians was associated with a number of factors, including the relative conservatism of Asians on crime and other social issues, opposition to welfare spending, and support for defense spending. Also, as indicated previously in Table 2, Latinos have made steady economic progress in the United States but Asian immigrants and subsequent generations of Asians have done even better. As a result, the Democratic party, which for the past several decades has been relatively more supportive than the Republicans of policies favoring lower income, disadvantaged groups, would have less appeal to Asian-Americans.

Our concern here, however, is the dynamics of partisanship. Figures 1 and 2 report the percentages, by generation, of Latino and Asian respondents respectively who identified themselves as Democrats, Republicans, or as Independents. The percentages for immigrants were in turn broken down into three categories defined by how long the respondent had lived in the United States; i.e., 7 years or less, 8 to 15 years, or 16 years or more. If Latino immigrants come to acquire the

characteristics and preferences of native-born Latinos, then we would expect that the longer they are here (or, more precisely, as they gather more political information over time), the more they should come to resemble native-born Latino voters. Because Asians show no clear preference for one party as opposed to the other, there is no reason why Asian immigrants should with time increasingly favor one party or the other. Thus, as expected, the two figures present very different patterns. Asian immigrants who have been in the U.S. for a long time appear to be less supportive of the Republicans than new arrivals, but then the propensity to identify as a Republican (and not as an Independent) increases in the second and third generations. In contrast, Democratic identification among Latino immigrants increases rapidly with time spent in the United States, while the percentage of Republican identifiers falls. The propensity to choose the Democrats instead of the Republicans is in turn higher among second generation Latinos, and the third generation is more Democratic still.

[Figures 1 and 2 about here]

There is then, clear evidence of experience-related gains in Democratic identification among Latino immigrants, and some indication that these gains are amplified in subsequent generations—presumably by the effect of family socialization. These figures, however, provide no evidence on several other questions concerning the direction of party choice that we discussed earlier: (1) Do native-born Asians and Latinos exhibit age-related gains in Democratic or Republican identification? (2) Do either immigrant or native-born voters exhibit cohort effects due to the ascendancy of one of the parties at the time an individual enters the electorate, as in the case of New Deal Democrats? (3) How much of the relatively greater propensity of Asians to identify as Independents or Republicans is due to their more rapid rate of economic progress? To answer these questions we estimated the following equation:

$$PID = \alpha G + \beta G_i + \delta C + \gamma X + \varepsilon$$

where

$PID$  = the individual's reported identification as either a Democrat, Republican, or Independent.

Independents "leaning" toward a party were assigned to that party.

$G$  = a set of dummy variables indicating to which generation—first, second, third or later—the individual belonged.

$G_i$  = generation-specific effects of political experience. For immigrants this was measured by the number of years they had spent in the United States. For subsequent generations this variable was their reported age.

$C$  = a dummy variable indicating that the first presidential election in which a native-born individual was eligible to vote was won by the Republican candidate.

$C(1G)$  = a dummy variable indicating that the first U.S. election an immigrant experienced as an adult living in the United States was won by the Republican candidate.

$X$  = a set of dummy variables indicating that the individual was a member of a low income family (< \$15,000), a high income family (> \$50,000), that there was a union member in the household, or that the head of the household had been unemployed during the past year.

The nature of the dependent variable (Democrat, Independent, Republican) indicated that this equation be estimated as a trichotomous ordered probit. Results are reported in Table 3. The top number in each entry is the estimated probit coefficient, the bottom number the standard error. Estimates significant at the  $p < .05$  level are indicated by daggers.

[Table 3 about here]

Perhaps the most important finding in Table 3 is that income, experience with unemployment, and belonging to a union have little to do with the difference between Latino and Asian respondents' identification with the Republican versus the Democratic party. It is true that lower income Latinos and those in union households are more likely to be Democrats, but these effects are not present among the Asians. Nor is there any evidence among Asians of a learning effect, i.e., a tendency to move toward either of the parties over time. In fact, the only variable which accounts significantly for the party choice of Asians is being an immigrant. As indicated earlier, most of the Asian immigrants in our sample came from nations which have either been involved in a war against a communist country or experienced an internal communist insurrection. More precisely, 44 percent were from Korea, 18 percent were from the Philippines, 13 percent from Taiwan, and 10 percent from Indochina. The Asian immigrants overall split 43 to 30 percent in favor of the Republicans over the Democrats. By comparison, native-born Asians, of whom more than half claim Japanese ancestry, favor the Democrats over the Republicans by 43 percent to 37 percent.

The immigrant group is also more likely to favor increased military spending—40 percent in favor, 32 percent opposed—than the native-born, 57 percent of whom oppose increases (32 percent in favor). Moreover, position on military spending is strongly related to party choice for the immigrants, while it has virtually no effect for the native born. Of the immigrants who favor increased spending, 60 percent are Republican and 17 percent Democrats. Of those who oppose increases, 25 percent are Republican and 54 percent Democrats. The corresponding figures for the native born are 35 to 47 for those who favor and 38 to 43 for those who oppose. Thus we believe that the high degree of Republicanism among Asian immigrants is rooted in the same anti-communist, pro-defense stance that is present in the Cuban-American community.

Turning next to the Latinos, the constants for each generation indicate that the immigrants start out the least likely to identify with the Democrats, with young members of the third generation the most likely to do so. It is also the case that the greater the number of years immigrants have spent in the United States, the more likely they are to identify as Democrats. In addition to the hypothesized effects of the class-related variables, we see that older members of each of the second

and third generations are significantly more likely than the younger ones to call themselves Democrats. These age-related effects are consistent with those found by Brischetto (1987) for Mexican-Americans in Texas.

How can we interpret these findings? For the second and third generation Latinos, we cannot immediately distinguish between a cohort and a life-cycle explanation. The older second and third generation respondents all came of age at the same time point, and may have been influenced by partisan events at the time. In fact, when we introduce a dummy variable for persons who came of age during the New Deal (in an estimation not reported here), we do find New Deal voters to be more strongly Democratic. However, the fact that our dummy variables for the party which won the first election in which the voter was eligible are so small and insignificant suggests that most of our respondents were not simply swept by the partisan tides of their first election. It was also suggested to us that since our sample is restricted to California, the age-related effect may reflect the fact that older Latinos are disproportionately transplanted Texans or Arizonans—states with a strong Democratic tradition among Latinos. Since we did ask U.S. born respondents about their state of birth, we were able to examine this hypothesis, and to reject it; native Californian Latinos appear to be as Democratic at a given age as those transplanted from Texas. Nonetheless, we cannot dismiss the possibility of a cohort effect, stemming from more subtle changes over time in the attractiveness of the two parties to new Latino voters. We can be confident that the effect is not simply due to changing economic circumstances for Latinos, as these effects have been specified in the equation we estimated.

If the increasing Democratic identification with age among second and third generation respondents were due to a life-cycle phenomenon, what form might it take? Referring back to Fiorina's model, what might make credible the notion that accumulated PPEs (past political experiences) would increasingly favor the choice of the Democratic Party by Latinos? Put another way, why would it be that as Latinos age their concerns and experiences make the Democrats increasingly attractive? One possibility is that as Latinos advance professionally their encounters with prejudice increase, so the protection of minority rights is more salient to someone middle-aged than to someone entering the electorate.<sup>5</sup> A second (not contradictory) possibility is that as Latinos age their concerns become more focused on those with which the Democratic Party is identified. Opinion surveys have repeatedly found Latinos to be particularly concerned about education as an issue. Such concerns become more salient to persons who are older, and have children old enough for school. Thus it is plausible that the increase in Democratic identification with age among the native born reflects a life-cycle process. Without further information it is equally as plausible that the effect reflects cohort differences, or some combination of the two effects. With the passage of several more years of time we will be able to make a more informed choice between these possibilities.

The immigrant generation presents a different type of puzzle, as here we do have substantial "side information." The immigrants entered the U.S. at different ages. We thus can dismiss any explanation that depends upon the actual age of the individual, such as those which posit age-related

resistance or openness to new information. We did estimate other forms of the model in which age, rather than years in the U.S., was the independent variable, and found mainly noise. When, on the other hand, it is assumed that immigrants achieve political consciousness when they arrived in the U.S., and thus that their political learning is proportional to the number of years which they have been in the country, we get the clear increases we reported in Table 3 in propensity to identify with the Democrats among those with more experience.

Again, a cohort explanation is also possible. All immigrants who have been in the U.S. for  $n$  years all entered the U.S. at the same time (in our case, 1984 –  $n$ ). They might all have been imprinted with the dominant political mood of their time of entry, in a process similar to that proposed for native-born new voters when they enter the electorate. What evidence we have argues against this interpretation; the dummy variable reflecting the party which won the Presidency in the first election the immigrant would have been eligible to vote (had they been citizens) is insignificant. As before, if there is a cohort effect it is of a more subtle variety.

For Latino immigrants, then, a learning process explanation seems much more compelling than the alternatives. When someone newly arrives in the U.S. their first choice of party may be virtually random. With time, and the accumulation of experience, the choice will be more likely to be "correct." One important source of experience for everyone are personal contacts. Personal interaction yields information. In particular, it has been argued (Johnston, 1985) that each encounter with someone of a different party has a certain probability of changing one's own identification, while encounters with persons of like party reinforce your own identification. Since Latino immigrants settle in large numbers in communities with other Latinos, they have substantial opportunity to learn over time that the Democrats are the "correct" choice. Thus, our data provide evidence for a learning model of party choice.

We hasten to add one last caveat. Our data do not permit us to predict the future direction of Latino partisanship with any confidence. If the higher degree of Republicanism among younger, native-born Latinos reflects a cohort effect, then two implications follow. First, these Latinos will remain more Republican as they age. Second, new arrivals will more likely see the Republican party as the "correct" party for persons like them. The net result would be a decline in support for the Democrats among Latinos. In any case, however, should either party shift its image sufficiently to attract or repel large numbers of Latinos (for example, on policy grounds), then one might expect a realignment, overriding the current patterns and in turn engendering a new set of cohort effect findings for party choice.

### III. STRENGTH OF PARTISANSHIP

The second characteristic of partisanship we consider is its strength or intensity. Strongly partisan voters are more likely to turn out to the polls and exhibit a greater degree of voter loyalty (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960). In our earlier discussion, two expectations about the pattern of partisan strength were derived from the Fiorina

framework. First, partisan attachments, regardless of their direction, should grow stronger the longer the time an immigrant has been in the U.S. This follows from the cumulative nature of the  $PPE^1$  and  $PPE^2$  terms. As more observations are acquired of the Democratic and Republican parties, uncertainty about what the parties stand for and how their positions affect the voter's utility lessens and the propensity to identify with one party rather than the other increases. Secondly, the model indicates that the effect of family socialization factors should be virtually zero in the immigrant generation, stronger in the second generation, and stronger still in the third and subsequent generations. If this model is correct, we should observe that the percentage of party identifiers, and the percentage of strong identifiers among the identifiers, also increases with each successive generation. Increases in politically relevant resources—fluency with English, citizenship, education, etc.—and in one's stake in the United States (owning a home, having a good job, deciding to stay in the United States for good) should also contribute to these trends by increasing the amount of weight afforded to political information.

Figure 3 plots the proportion of Independents (both leaners and pure independents) according to number of years spent in the U.S. for immigrants and also by subsequent generations. These data show that for both Asians and Latinos the percentage of those who fail to identify with a party decreases with time spent in this country, and decreases farther among second and third generation respondents. A similar pattern appeared when we looked at the relative percentages of strong and weak identifiers. Some side evidence concerning the amount of politically relevant information respondents have acquired is plotted in Figure 4. After completing an interview our interviewers were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt the respondent was politically well-informed or not. Figure 4, which indicates the percentage of respondents in each category who were deemed to be "well informed" or "extremely well informed," shows marked increases in subjectively gauged information levels with time in the country.

[Figures 3 and 4 about here]

There is, then, evidence of experience-related gains in partisan intensity among both Latino and Asian immigrants, as well as additional gains in mean intensity levels among subsequent generations. As before, we want to determine whether there are age-related gains in intensity among native-born Asians and Latinos. We also wanted to find out whether the greater intensity of subsequent generation individuals was due primarily to family socialization or to the increases in politically relevant resources that we had observed in Table 2. We therefore estimated the following equation:

$$PSTN = \alpha G + \beta G_t + \delta X + \gamma Y + \varepsilon$$

where

$PSTN$  = the individual's strength of partisanship. Strong identifiers make up one category, weak



identifiers and learners another category, and pure Independents a third.

$G$  = a set of dummy variables indicating to which generation—first, second, third or later—the individual belonged.

$G_i$  = generation-specific effects of political experience. For immigrants this was measured by the number of years they had spent in the United States. For subsequent generations this variable was their reported age.

$X$  = a pair of dummy variables indicating high and low levels of educational attainment, respectively.

$Y$  = a battery of dummy variables indicating greater perceived stake in the United States, including the acquisition of citizenship, whether or not English was used as a primary language, and whether or not the individual thought he or she might return to their country of origin.

As before, the nature of the dependent variable indicated that this equation be estimated as a trichotomous ordered probit. Results are reported in Table 4. The top number in each entry is the estimated probit coefficient, the bottom number the standard error. Estimates significant at the  $p < .05$  level are indicated, as before, by daggers. The first column reports the estimates in a model which pools Asian and Latino respondents. The second and third columns report the estimates for Asians and Latinos, respectively, when each variable was dummied by respondent's ethnicity, thus allowing each parameter to assume a different value for the two groups.

[Table 4 about here]

As with the party direction results, we see that the intensity of partisanship among Latinos increases with age in the second and third generations, and that there are similar, experience-related gains observed among first generation Latinos. There were no such gains among Asians of any generation. For whatever reason, the amount of politically relevant experiences acquired by Asians does not appear to increase their commitment to either of the major parties.

The findings in Table 4 also indicate that among Latinos it is an increase in intellectual resources (primarily more education) as well as a growth of one's commitment to the new country—measured by the attainment of citizenship and by giving up the idea of returning to the old country—that lead to more commitment to a political party. Retaining fluency in a foreign language, interestingly, was not important, *ceteris paribus*, in this respect. Once the effects of these variables were accounted for, there were no residual effects (presumably due to family socialization) associated with the generation dummies.

Our ability to account for partisan intensity among Asians was no greater than our ability to explain the direction of their choice. None of the many variables which were significant on the Latino side of the equation were significant for the Asian respondents. The large differences between Asians and Latinos in the acquisition of partisan intensity thus confirms the wisdom of

Abramson's (1983) recommendation not to conflate the political experiences of different ethnic groups. They are likely to be substantially different and to generate different patterns of partisan evolution.

As in the case of our results on the direction of party choice, we cannot at the present time clearly choose between the two, equally plausible *a priori* alternatives of experience versus cohort effects producing the observed variations in strength of partisanship. However, the side information that level of knowledge goes up substantially with time in the country, and that partisanship increases with years for immigrants who arrived in the U.S. at a variety of ages, leads us to suspect that experience is the more likely explanation, at least for the immigrant respondents.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The results of our analyses indicate that the longer Latino immigrants have been in the United States, the more likely they are to identify as Democrats and the more intensely they hold their partisan attachments. Asian immigrants, in contrast, exhibited no such trends in the direction of their party choice or in their partisan intensity. That they were somewhat more likely to be Republicans than native-born Asians appears to be primarily a function of differences associated with their countries of origin.

More intriguing were our findings of strong age-related gains in Democratic support and in partisan intensity among subsequent generations of Latinos. That they were similar in magnitude to the gains exhibited by Latino immigrants strongly suggests they they, too, are experience-related, but we are not able to discount equally plausible cohort-based scenarios, at least not until more time passes.

The party identification model upon which our analysis was based predicts generational and learning effects among immigrant groups for many of the same reasons that we have come to expect them among younger voters—i.e. immigrants will have few relevant inherited family prejudices and will tend to weigh the observations of contemporary events more heavily than those who have been in the country for a number of years. By examining immigrants, we were able to disentangle some of the intertwined factors which confound studies of the acquisition of partisanship. Our evidence lends support to the argument that strong learning effects influence both the direction and intensity of partisanship, but that these processes are not universal.

What can we predict about future political change among Asians and Latinos in the U.S.? Clearly, these two major immigrant groups may well follow different partisan paths as a result of their divergent interests. Latinos appear to be more likely to follow the more traditional route of immigrants into the Democratic party, but Asians are inclined to split their support more evenly between the parties. These predilections can be (and have been) influenced by short-run events and party strategies. If one party becomes strongly identified with the protection of nonwhite minorities

or becomes more strongly identified with prosperity, there could be important generational or cohort effects for the immigrants and shifts in the balance of preference between the parties. Should a strong alignment occur, learning processes will increase the numbers of partisans among those co-ethnics still to arrive.

## APPENDIX: SAMPLE DESIGN

The major problem we faced in designing the survey was that of efficiently reaching large numbers of Latinos and Asians, who, according to the 1980 Census, constituted 19% and 5% of the state population respectively. Because of their younger age structure the Latino percentage of adults is smaller than their percentages of the total population. Given a large enough budget we probably would have preferred an areal sampling framework and in-person interviews with respondents in their own homes. Most comparisons between in-person interviews and telephone interviews indicate that the former technique entails a lower refusal rate and less bias in the resultant sample of completed interviews. However, we worried that recent Asian and Latino arrivals, would be extremely suspicious of interviewers coming to their doors—especially if they were undocumented. Telephone interviews are less obtrusive and possibly preferable for that reason. The main reason we chose to do telephone interviews, however, was the extremely high cost of in-person interviews.

With telephone interviewing the most common sample selection technique is random digit dialing. RDD is not without problems. In many areas there still exists some bias resulting from incomplete saturation of telephone ownership. And, although we have seen no reference to this problem in the literature on polling, we suspect that an increasingly important source of bias is the growing use of telephone answering machines to screen incoming phone calls. More serious, of course, is the unavoidable selection bias in any opinion survey resulting from the fact that participation is voluntary. Sample biases resulting from the differential incidence of telephone ownership and differential refusal rates are likely to be more serious in surveys in which minority group members constitute a large portion of the target population. Whatever the case, the virtues of sampling via random digit dialing have made it the standard choice in telephone surveys.

However, RDD is an extremely inefficient method for contacting Latinos and Asians in California. Ideally one could draw a sample of telephone exchanges via probability weights which would yield the desired minority group proportions. If one were interested in oversampling blacks this technique would suffice. For Latinos and Asians, however, the high level of residential segregation and resultant strong correlation between telephone exchange areas and census units (the necessary demographic data are not available for telephone exchanges) which is needed for this technique to be effective simply do not exist. This problem is bad enough for contacting Latinos, but Asians are an extreme case in this regard. Of the 5050 census tracts in California in the 1980 Census, only 33 (0.6%) were 40% or more Asian. Even if telephone exchanges could be weighted in a skewed enough fashion to increase significantly the probability of contacting Asian respondents the resultant sample would be problematic. Most blacks live in neighborhoods which are predominately black. The vast majority of Asians, however, do not live in predominately Asian neighborhoods, and so a sample based primarily on those who do would likely be quite unrepresentative.

Given these problems, we decided that the best way to generate Latino and Asian subsamples would be on the basis of surnames. We therefore began by randomly selecting a list of 300 census tracts in California. DialAmerica Corporation of Cleveland, Ohio provided us with the

names, current phone numbers, and addresses of 80–100 individuals per tract for approximately 90% of the tracts, thus yielding a list of 24,523 names. We ran these through Hispanic and Asian surname dictionaries to derive our list of potential interviewees. In order to increase our sample of recent Asian immigrants we drew a supplemental sample of Korean surnames from the 1984 Korean Telephone Directory of Southern California. The creators of this directory believe that it contains the telephone numbers and addresses of over 75% of all Koreans in Southern California. We ultimately conducted interviews with 80 Korean–Americans via this supplemental sample.

According to Leuthold and Scheele (1971), samples which are derived from telephone directories will, relative to RDD, undersample blacks, individuals who are separated or divorced, and city dwellers. As indicated earlier, however, we were more worried about refusal rates than other potential sources of bias. Our expectations of relatively high refusal rates were borne out; only 44% of the individuals we contacted agreed to an interview. Asians were more likely to refuse than were Latinos.

Given the potential problems we faced, we were understandably interested in how well the characteristics of the people we interviewed matched up with data from the 1980 Census. The figures reported in Table 1 indicate that in some respects the individuals in our two subsamples were quite representative, while in other respects they were somewhat unrepresentative. In all four subsamples the reported figures for family income and country of birth were quite consistent with figures derived from the 1980 Census. There are, however, some discrepancies. The percentages of blacks and Latinos in our sample who reported being homeowners were higher than the Census figures. We also tended to oversample Asian men and black women. Reported education, though, was the source of the largest discrepancies. Individuals in all four subsamples were considerably more likely to report having attended college than the 1980 Census figures indicate should be the case. However, we are inclined to blame very little of the education bias we observed on our use of a telephone directory sample versus RDD. Warren Miller indicates that the sample of individuals interviewed in the 1984 Michigan Rolling Cross–section (which was a telephone survey) had a considerably higher average education than those interviewed in person in the traditional post–election survey.

Because participation in opinion surveys is voluntary we believe that regardless of the sampling framework employed there is an irreducible element of self–selection bias generated by the differential propensity of different types of people to submit to the interview. In political polls this self–selection bias is naturally related to the extent to which the potential respondent is intellectually involved with political matters; people are more likely to talk to strangers about subjects they care about and know something about. This bias will yield us samples which are, compared to the population at large, more educated, more literate, more interested, and more knowledgeable about ongoing political issues. Any incidental bias deriving from telephone directory versus RDD sampling was at least for us, apparently minimal.

TABLE A.1  
COMPARISON OF SAMPLE AND CENSUS CHARACTERISTICS

	Latino	Asian
Percent Male		
Sample 1984	49%	60%
Census 1980	51	48
Percent Owner Occupiers		
Sample 1984	52	64
Census 1980	44	62
Family Income 10K		
Sample 1984	21	9
Census 1980	27	14
Family Income 10-25K		
Sample 1984	47	35
Census 1980	48	37
Family Income over 25K		
Sample 1984	32	56
Census 1980	25	49
Percent Native Born		
Sample 1984	60	38
Census 1980	63	42
Percent Some College or Greater		
Sample 1984	34	77
Census 1980	20	54

**Table 1: Partisanship and Generations**

	Family Political Influence ( <i>G</i> )	Past Political Experiences (PPE)
1st Generation	Absent	Increases with Time Spent in the U.S. Initial Experiences Especially Influential
2nd Generation	Depends Upon Parental Political Involvement During Childhood	Increases with Age
3rd Generation	Normal Pattern of Socialization	Increases with Age

**Table 2: Socioeconomic and Demographic Attributes of Latinos and Asians, by Generation**

	<i>Latinos</i>				
	Years in U.S.			Second Generation	Third Generation
	0-7	8-15	16+		
% Citizens	11	22	48	-	-
% Foreign Language	89	85	78	51	22
% < High School	48	40	35	28	15
% Low Income	78	64	53	45	38
% Renters	80	63	49	35	46
<i>n</i>	46	88	89	152	162

	<i>Asians</i>				
	Years in U.S.			Second Generation	Third Generation
	0-7	8-15	16+		
% Citizens	12	64	86	-	-
% Foreign Language	88	78	58	14	2
% < High School	12	4	10	3	2
% Low Income	48	22	20	25	19
% Renters	71	30	32	19	33
<i>n</i>	58	69	50	63	42



**Table 3: Party Choice Among Asian and Latino Respondents: The Effects of Cohort, Experience, and Economic Status**

	Asians	Latinos
Immigrant Generation	.93† (.27)	.80† (.22)
Years in US, Immigrants	-.009 (.009)	-.027† (.006)
Second Generation	-.09 (.53)	.54† (.32)
Age, Second Generation	.008 (.009)	-.018† (.006)
Third Generation	-.26 (.71)	.50 (.35)
Age, Third Generation	.014 (.019)	-.023† (.009)
Republicans Won, Natives	.28 (.28)	.03 (.17)
Republicans Won, Immigrants	-.22 (.23)	-.13 (.18)
Low Income Family	-.05 (.17)	-.19† (.11)
High Income Family	-.03 (.18)	.15 (.19)
Union Household	-.22 (.17)	-.24† (.12)
Unemployed Head	-.31 (.23)	.17 (.14)

† = p < .05

Log Likelihood Initial	-829.6
Log Likelihood at Convergence	-773.3
Number of Observations	782

**Table 4: Partisan Intensity: The Effects of Political Experience and Increased Resources**

	Pooled	Asians	Latinos
Immigrant Generation	.30 (.15)	.39 (.25)	.38† (.19)
Years in U.S., Immigrants	.011† (.005)	.009 (.010)	.012† (.005)
Second Generation	.45† (.19)	.46 (.38)	.37† (.23)
Age, Second Generation	.006 (.004)	.001 (.008)	.011 (.005)
Third Generation	.04 (.23)	.56 (.61)	-.07 (.26)
Age, Third Generation	.026† (.007)	-.001 (.018)	.032† (.007)
Citizen	.26† (.13)	.09 (.21)	.36† (.19)
Foreign Language	.02 (.10)	-.21 (.20)	.03 (.12)
Might Return	-.17 (.14)	.11 (.22)	-.36† (.18)
Low Education	-.10 (.10)	.28 (.32)	-.18 (.12)
High Education	.16 (.10)	.19 (.15)	.24 (.17)
Owner	.04 (.08)	.23 (.16)	-.02 (.11)
Log Likelihood Initial	-967.3		-967.3
Log Likelihood at Convergence	-796.1		-788.48
Number of Observations	782		782

Figure 1:  
Party Identification Among Asians

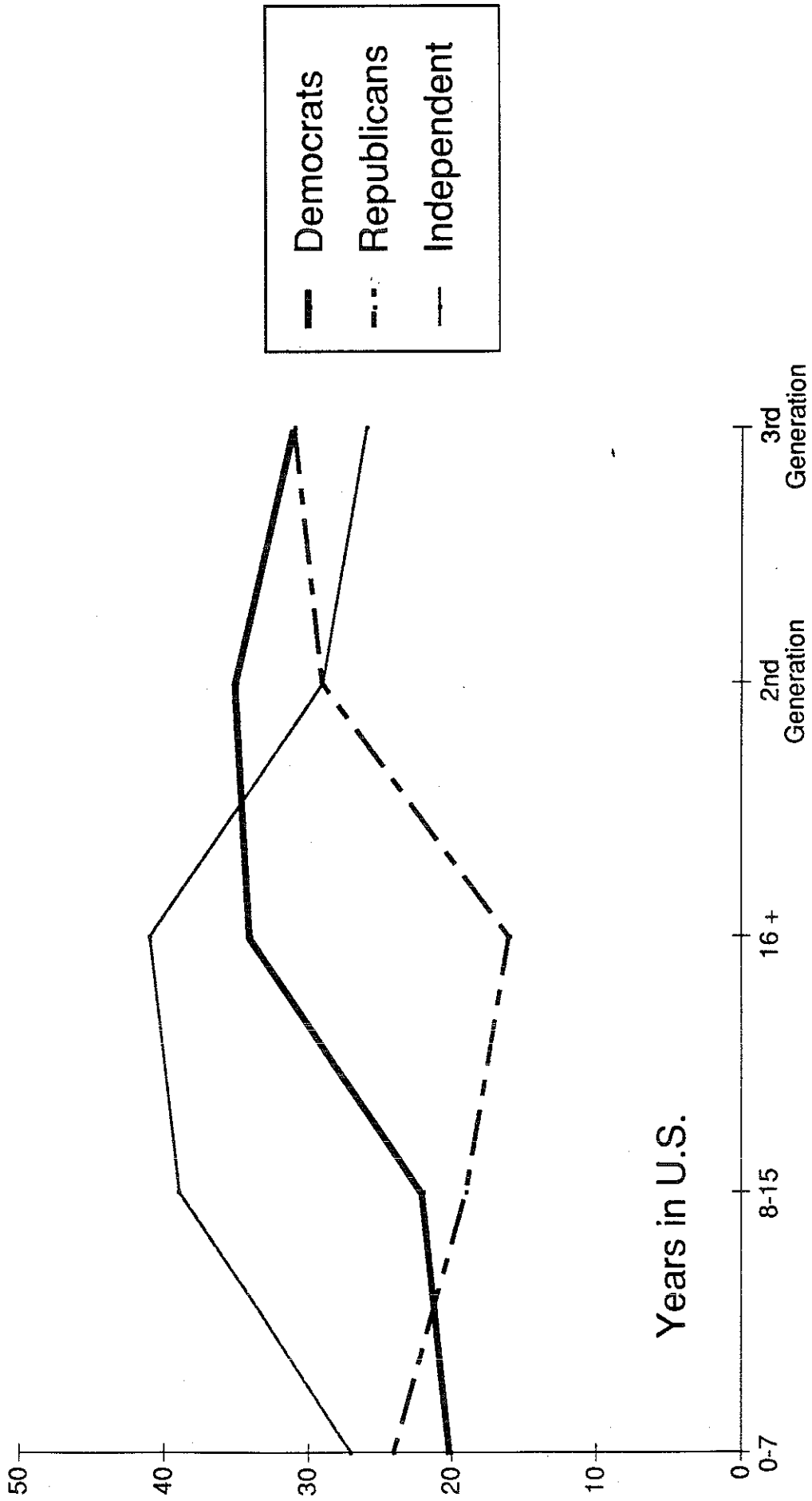


Figure 2  
Party Identification Among Latinos

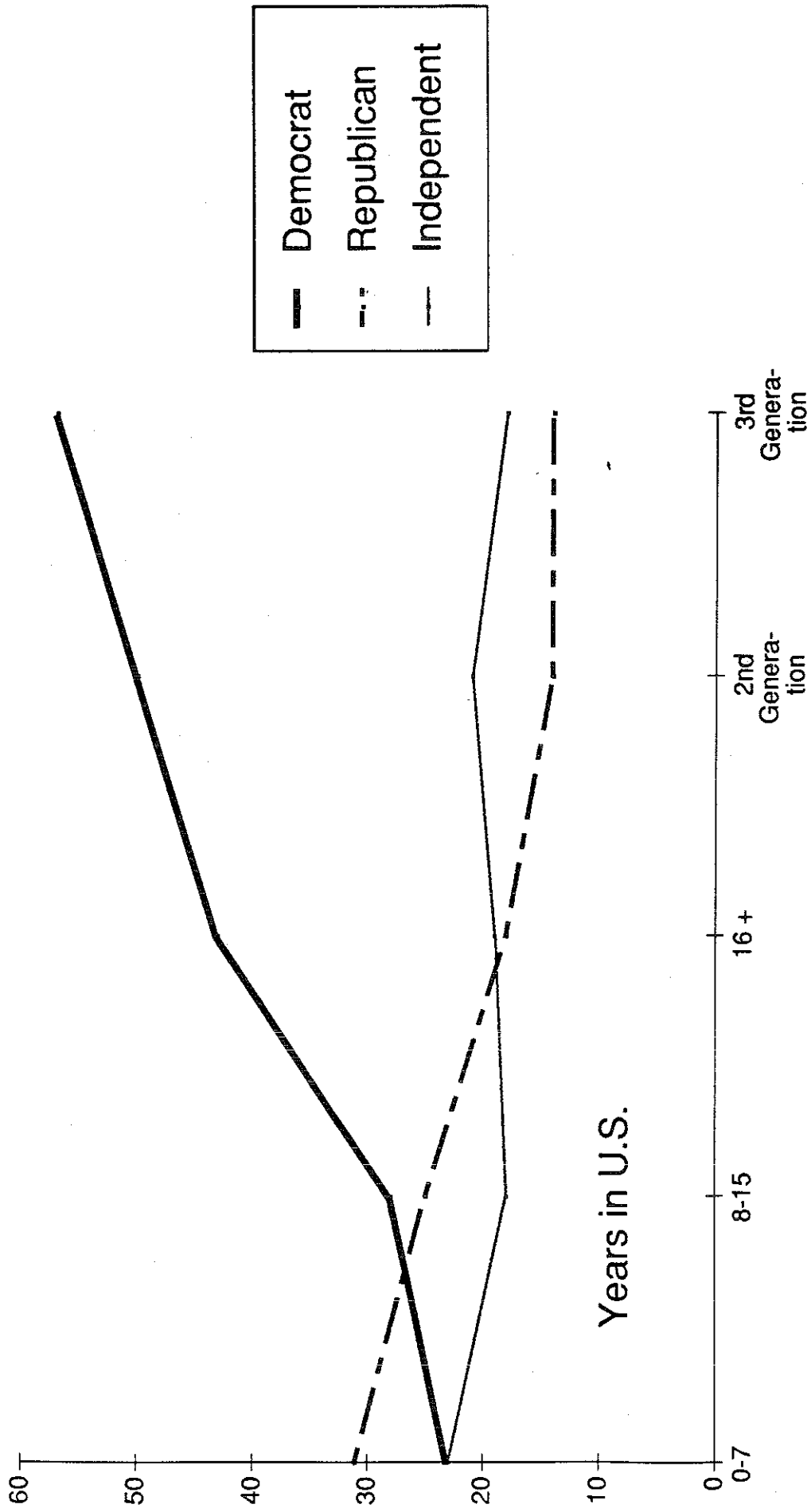
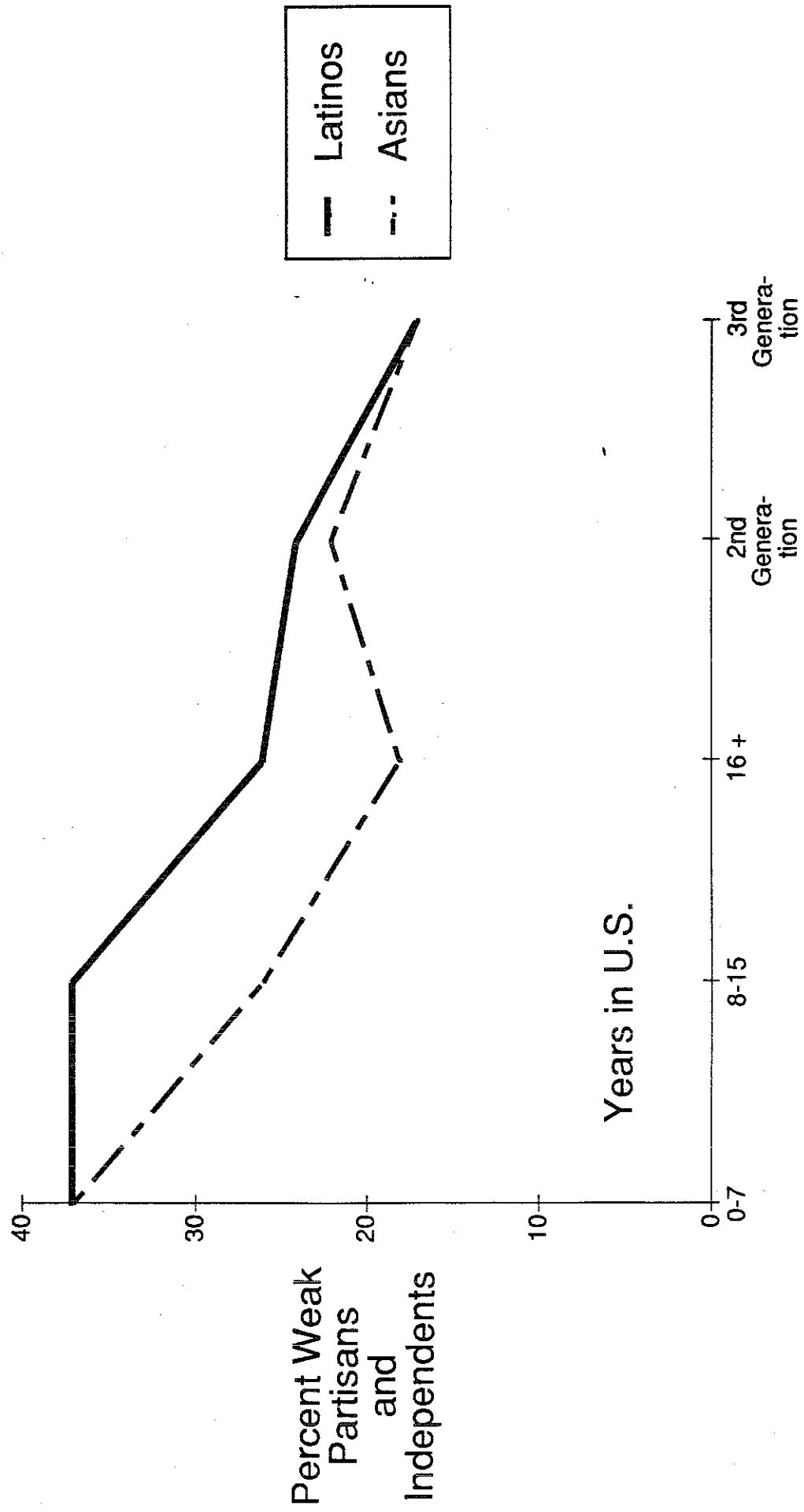


Figure 3:  
Strength of Partisanship

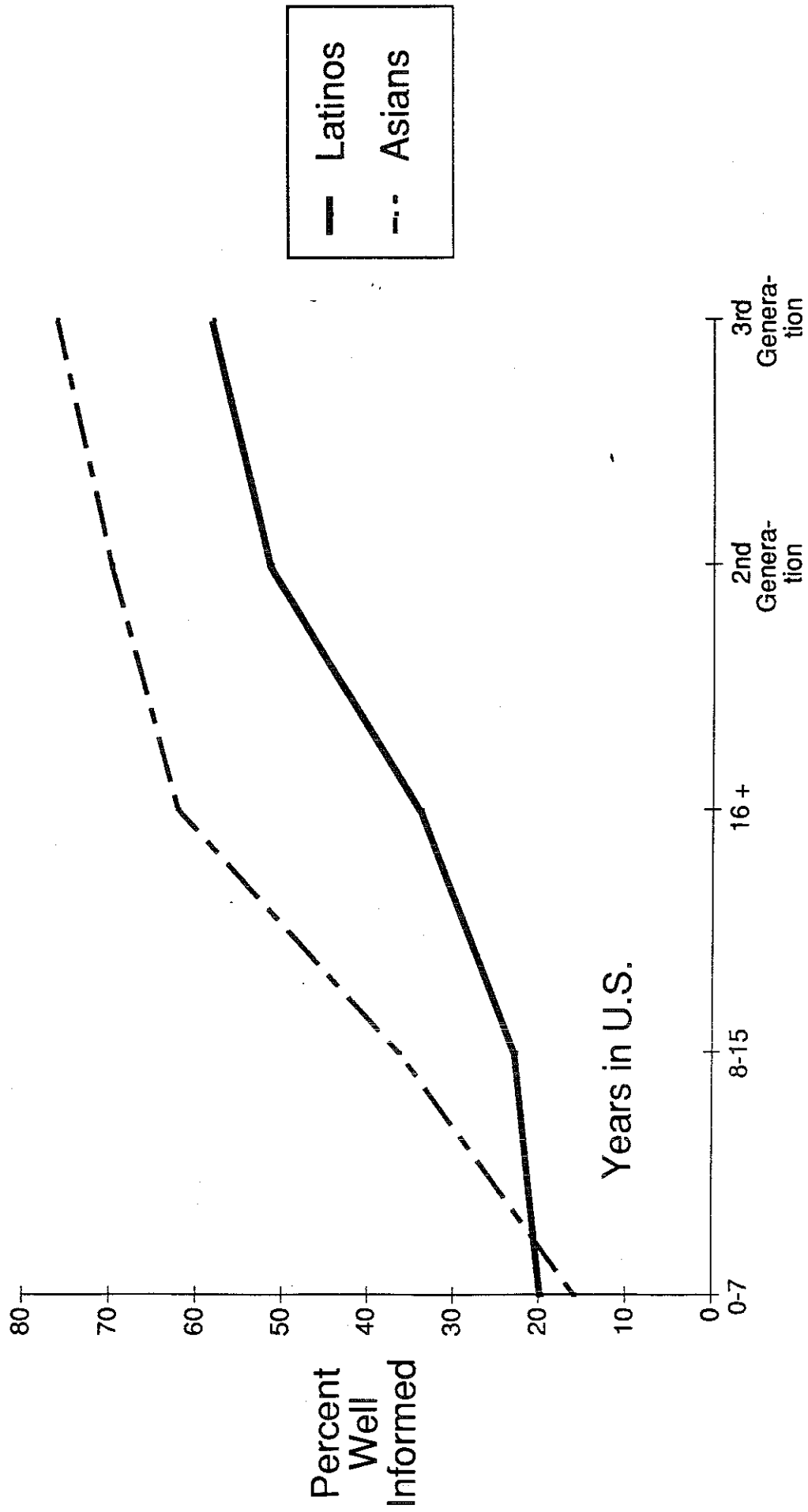


Percent Weak Partisans and Independents

Years in U.S.

— Latinos  
- - Asians

Figure 4:  
Political Information



## FOOTNOTES

1. Converse (1969) recognized that one could cut cleanly through this analytical Gordian knot with data in which life-cycle or experience effects were not entangled with cohort effects. He reasoned that in the case of a new democracy holding elections for the first time citizens of all ages would have received equal (in this case, equally small) amounts of exposure to the political system. In other words, cohort effects would be held constant because everyone would be in the same cohort. After the passage of several decades age and cohort would once again be tightly intertwined. Barnes, McDonough, and Pina (1985) exploited just such a fortuity in examining the evolution of partisanship among voters in Spain just after the enactment of free democratic elections. A similar approach was followed in studies which examined the attitudes and behavior of groups who had been newly enfranchised in established electoral democracies (Niemi, Stanley and Evans, 1984; Niemi, Powell, Stanley and Evans, 1985). In both cases individuals of all ages exhibited increases in partisan intensity as a function of the length of time they had been enfranchised. In the case of the United States, however, elections were instituted a very long time ago, and the major group of recently enfranchised voters (Southern blacks) are not the subject of our study.
2. We require only the assumption that immigrants have had no real exposure to U.S. party politics prior to their arrival. As salient as the United States is internationally, of course, it is possible that some immigrants will have rudimentary knowledge about American political parties at the time they enter the country. Doubtless this assumption would hold more strongly in the case of American emigres to other countries.
3. This is what cohort analysts mean when they characterize generational effects as actually the interaction of period and life-cycle (Glenn, 1976).
4. In Table 2 and throughout the remainder of the paper we use "third generation" as a shorthand for third, fourth, and all subsequent generations.
5. For example, Hispanic FBI agents recently claimed (and were upheld) that they had been discriminated against in job assignments as they attempted to move into supervisory positions. Of course, for this explanation to hold, the Democrats would have to be perceived as the party which was more protective of minority rights.

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