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Media use, linguistic preference and social capital in the Hispanic community

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MEDIA USE, LINGUISTIC PREFERENCE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL
IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University and Agricultural
and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment
for the requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

In

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by:

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Abstract

While considerable research had been devoted to the study of social capital, limited information is available assessing the connection between linguistic preference and social capital among ethnic groups. Research indicated the American Latino community exhibits levels of social capital similar to the greater United States populous. Latinos who preferred English-language media, however, exhibited higher levels of social capital than those who used Spanish-language media. Finally, Latinos who held a linguistic preference for English held higher levels of social capital than individuals who preferred Spanish.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Latino community is the fastest growing segment of the United States population. In 2004, the Hispanic populace became the largest minority community in the country when its population surpassed 40 million (Cohn, 2005). This population faces a number of obstacles, such as poor socioeconomic conditions and discrimination, while assimilating into American society. The major barrier for social capital among Hispanics comes when they must face and deal with linguistic issues upon arrival in the United States – living in a society whose dominant language is not Spanish. As a result, this wave of Latino immigrants produced a bilingual need unparalleled in the country’s history. Federal, state, and local governments now face the task of how to effectively provide their services in two languages.

The democratic philosophy of a government that involves all citizens should be advantageous to the Latino community because of their status as the largest minority population (Cohn, 2005). Our democracy provides an open forum whereby individuals and groups may express their opinions through voting, contacting elected representatives, and active engagement in the political process. Government and elected officials generally seek to hear constituent and public opinion and often respond to stated concerns. The Latino community, however, has yet to organize into a powerful political faction. Hispanic participation in the political process in the United States has historically been quite limited. In fact, only 22 percent of the total Latino community residing in the United States is registered to vote, and only 18 percent of the population cast ballots in the last presidential election (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). This substantial ethnic populace has tremendous potential to impact legislative opinion; however, when ethnic voices are silent fewer people are involved in the democratic process. Thus the democracy is less likely to respond to the genuine needs and concerns of ethnic populations. Such is the situation with the Hispanic population in the United States.

Regardless of the limited political participation by Latinos, politicians court the new majority minority group. Presidential candidates Al Gore, John Kerry, and George W. Bush all broadcast Spanish-language television advertisements and radio commercials that targeted the Latino community in 2000 and 2004. This strategy of targeting potential Latino voters through Spanish-language media is a relatively new campaign option. Politicians are beginning to realize the voting potential that exists within the Latino communities.

As the Latino population has swelled, so has the need for ethnic-specific information, which has in turn impacted the media. In recent years, as overall circulation rates of English-language newspapers declined, the demand for Spanish-language publications increased (Hendricks, 2006). Overall newspaper circulation in the United States peaked in 1970 when readership reached 62 million (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). By 1990 English-language newspaper demand was declining at the rate of nearly one percent a year. During the next 12 years, overall circulation diminished 11 percent (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). Consumer demand, however, for Spanish-language newspapers increased. In 1970, the circulation for Hispanic newspaper in the United States was 140,000. Thirty-five years later, the publication rate had risen to 17.4 million (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). The increased demand for Spanish publications reflected the changing population in the United States.

Certainly, the power of Spanish-language media goes beyond newspaper circulation. The prominence of Spanish-language consumers in the media market became apparent in 2005. First, Clear Channel, one of the largest media conglomerates in the country, converted 32 English-language radio-broadcasting stations to Spanish-language programming (Downey, 2005). Second, Nielson National Television Index reported Univision, one of the largest Spanish-language networks, became the fifth most-watched television network (following ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox) during primetime in the 18-to-49 age demographic. In five major media markets –

Los Angeles, Miami, Dallas, San Antonio, and Phoenix – Univision was the most watched network in the same demographic (Taylor, 2006). The broadcasting industry was also responding to the growing Hispanic population.

What Do We Know about the Topic?

There is a burgeoning interest in the area of Hispanic studies. Currently, the main streams of research on Hispanics include media use (Galvaz, 2005; Gibson, Hudson & Melanson, 1999), stereotypes (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005), public health (Vargas & de Pyssler, 1999) and social capital (Rimmer & Foley, 2005). This thesis investigates previous sources of research on Spanish-language media and social capital and examines linguistic preference as a force in the development of social capital.

What Do We Want to Know about the Topic?

The purpose of this study is to examine the development of social capital, which will be defined as political participation and civic engagement, in the Hispanic community. Individual participation and development of social capital, however, may be hindered by one's inability to communicate with the community at-large. This study, therefore, will further examine the relationship between social capital and ethnic language-specific media and linguistic preference in minority communities – specifically the Latino community in the United States.

How Can We Know It?

The Pew Hispanic Center, a nonpartisan research organization supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, conducted a survey of 2,288 Latino adults residing in the United States in 2004. The mission of the Center is to improve understanding and assess the impact of the growing United States Hispanic population. The study, *2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, explored the views of Latinos regarding civic participation. The Pew Hispanic

Center made available the data set from its survey for public use to encourage further research regarding civic participation in the Latino community.

Why Is It Important and Relevant to Know?

According to 2004 census estimates, the Latino community is now the largest minority group in the United States (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). Its members display low levels of political engagement, as evident when only 18 percent of the Latino population voted in the most recent presidential election (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). As a result, the opinions and representation of a large segment of our American population are missing in the political and legislative sphere.

This study attempts to bridge gaps in existing knowledge by examining media use and linguistic preference in the American Latino community to determine how to best facilitate the development of social capital in minority communities in the United States. An understanding of the factors behind the development of social capital will stimulate thoughts about how to better engage all members of a citizenry. The results may be valuable to other fields of study, such as political science, economics and sociology, in their quest to understand the forces necessary to engage the Latino demographic in the democratic process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study will focus on how linguistic background impacts the development of social capital in Latino communities in the United States. It will reference previous research on social capital and linguistic preference, and assess the relationship between these two factors. Further, it will consider the connection between ethnic media and language preference. Researchers have examined Latino preference for media, however, there has been little research evaluating the relationship between media-language preference and the creation of social capital in ethnic communities.

To accurately investigate social capital and linguistic preference targeted in this study, the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” need to be defined. The words “Hispanic” and “Latino” encompass people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The former includes any member of a Spanish-speaking culture. The latter includes primarily individuals of North and South American origin and their descendents. Historically, studies have oversampled certain subgroups (Mexicans, Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans) of the Latino population. “Much communication research focuses on Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans which statistically dominate in the United States but do not encompass the diversity of those who claim or are captured by the Latino label” (Mayer, 2004, p.114). In the United States, the Hispanic population consists of Mexicans (66.9 percent), Puerto Rican (8.6 percent) and Cuban American (3.6 percent) (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003). In previous studies, the inadequate sampling of diversity led to generalizations about “Latino” and “Hispanic” populations (Mayer, 2004). Researchers did not diversify study samples to reflect overall Hispanic communities; rather they referenced the data to members of the most populous ethnic subgroups residing in the United States. Further, researchers generalized their results to represent Latinos as an entire community of people. As a result, “Hispanic” and “Latino” have become synonymous. Consequently, researchers tend to use the

terms with little regard to their ethnic-specific backgrounds (Mayer, 2004). Additionally, in 2003 the United States Office of Management and Budget directed the words “Latino” and “Hispanic” would be transposable in order to reflect a more diversified definition, thereby creating a new standard of terminology (Rameriz & de la Cruz, 2003).

This thesis advances research regarding the Hispanic/Latino communities. As in previous research, this study utilized a national sampling of Latinos and, therefore, over represents certain subgroups since it relies upon the demographic makeup of the United States. The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably to reflect common terminology in the study.

The Growth of the Hispanic Population and Its Voting Strength

The growth of the Latino population in America is unprecedented in the country’s history. Between 1990 and 2000 the Hispanic population increased 57 percent nationwide (Chapa & Rosa, 2004). Individual states that previously had sparse Latino populations experienced massive influxes. During that time span, Arkansas, Georgia, and North Carolina underwent growth rates of more than 300 percent each (Chapa & Rosa, 2004). The Latino population in 2004 reached 41.3 million after increasing 5.7 million in the previous four years (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). This accounted for half the total population increase of the United States during the same time period, ultimately making Hispanics the largest minority community residing in the country.

Despite substantial increases in population during this ten-year period (1990-2000), Latino political participation remained relatively unchanged. The aforementioned 5.7 million population increase yielded only 2.1 million additional voters (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). It is estimated that only 39 percent of Latinos residing in the United States are legally eligible to vote (Cohn, 2005). In contrast, 76 percent of Caucasians and 65 percent of the African-American population are eligible to vote due to their American citizenship (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). Voter registration

rates are generally low in Hispanic communities. Of the 41.3 million Latino population living inside the United States, only 9.3 million people (22 percent) are registered to vote (Cohn, 2005).

In the 2004 national election 18 percent of the Latino population voted, compared to 51 percent of Caucasians and 39 percent of African-Americans (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2004). The Federal Registrar noted that of the 122.28 million ballots cast in the 2004 presidential election, Latinos accounted for only 7.6 million (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2005). By estimates, Hispanics constitute 14.3 percent of the total U. S. population but accounted for only 6.0 percent of the votes cast in the last election (Suro, Fry & Passel, 2004). Population growth usually equates an increase in political clout in a community, but this does not appear to be the case in the Latino community.

The increased Latino population is beginning to impact the political scene in the United States. While the political loyalties and voting behaviors of certain population segments are easily predicted (such as African-Americans and evangelical Christians); the same cannot be said for the Latino community. Previously, Hispanics were thought to favor Democrats, but recent election results suggest the group holds mixed political loyalties. Cuban-Americans tend to be politically conservative and vote Republican (Hero, 1992; Torres, 1988). This was evident when Democrat John Kerry won the majority of Hispanic votes in the 2004 presidential election (Johnson, 2004), but was not supported by a majority of Cuban-Americans. As a result, Republicans and Democrats are currently in combat to obtain the loyalties of this undecided subgroup. Adam Segal, Director of the Hispanic Voter Project at John Hopkins University, made the following observation,

The Democrats made a broad appeal to a Democratic base and not a specific appeal at all to religious Hispanic voters, or even specific segments of the Hispanic electorate. The Bush campaign used moral values, and specifically the national discussion over gay marriage and abortion rights, as wedge issues within the Hispanic community to try to break off a conservative religious segment (Johnson, 2004, p.A1).

In 2004, the Kerry and Bush presidential campaigns targeted the Hispanic population – the largest group of swing voters – in the United States. Every major presidential candidate in the last two cycles uttered Spanish sentences while on the campaign trail in an attempt to woo Latino voters and show their compassion for, and connection to, the Hispanic community-at-large (Johnson, 2004). In addition, campaigns included Spanish-language television advertisements as a way to reach Latino voters. Senator Kerry’s commercials focused on Hispanic voters with traditional Democratic rhetoric, such as immigration and economic opportunities (Johnson, 2004). While Spanish-language advertisements have traditionally been positive the Bush campaign aired the first negative political message, “Accountability,” that attacked Senator John Kerry’s voting record and his stance on public education (Johnson, 2004).

Una mejor educación requiere de mas responsabilidad. Eso, precisamente, nos ha hecho falta en las escuelas. Para cambiarlo, el presidente Bush firm las reformas educativas mas importantes en 35 años. John Kerry estuvo con Bush. Hasta votó por esas reformas. Ahora, por presión de los sindicatos, cambia de opinión. El plan de Kerry? Menos responsabilidad de las escuelas a los padres. John Kerry. No tiene palabra. (Appleman, n.d)

A better education requires more responsibility. That, indeed, has made our schools fail. For change, President Bush supported the most important educational reforms in 35 years. John Kerry was not with Bush. He voted for other reforms. Now, under pressure from the unions, his opinion changed. Kerry’s plan? Less school responsibility to the parents. John Kerry. He does not have a word. (Appleman, n.d)

It should be noted that the use of negative campaigning aimed at the Latino community has yet to be evaluated for effectiveness or responsiveness (Montopoli, 2004). Consequently, politicians have sought to use a linguistic strategy to communicate with Hispanic audiences with yet to-be-determined results.

Ethnic-Language Media

Although significant Latino population increases did not yield similar increases in voters, the power of Spanish-language media grew with the political and economic influence of the

population. Circulation of Spanish-language newspapers has tripled since 1990 (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). Univision, the largest Spanish television network, now has 50 stations and 43 affiliates. In a show of Hispanic economic power the Federal Communications Commission announced its support of Univision's \$3 billion takeover of Hispanic Broadcasting (Taylor, 2006).

Research has repeatedly shown the ability of the media to shape and frame social issues (Entman, 1990; Iyenger, 1991) and to set the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The power of ethnic media in minority communities was evident in the spring of 2006. The United States Congress opened debate on legislation aimed at controlling illegal immigration in the early spring of that year. The legislation would brand illegal immigrants – and those who assisted them – as felons, plus tighten borders and create a government-regulated “guest worker” program to allow non-residents “worker-only” status in the United States (McManis, 2006). The proposal outraged the Latino community and Spanish-language media encouraged listeners to convey their frustrations through public protest.

On March 30th, 2006, more than 500,000 protestors took to the streets of Los Angeles to rally support against the bill. The number overwhelmed government officials and mainstream media, who expected a significantly lower turnout. In addition to the Los Angeles rally, 100,000 people protested in Chicago (Flaccus, 2006), 10,000 in Milwaukee (Flaccus, 2006) and 3,000 even protested in New Orleans (McConnaughey, 2006). (In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, illegal immigration became a salient issue in New Orleans as the city struggled to find enough workers to start the rebuilding process) (Campo-Flores & Gegax, 2005).

Spanish-language radio stations fueled the protests by promoting and encouraging the activity. In Los Angeles, radio host Eddie Sotelo (DJ El Piolin), an illegal immigrant until 1996, encouraged listeners to join the protest (Sterngold & Hendricks, 2006). In Sacramento, where

5,000 people marched, organizers attributed 60 to 70 percent of the turnout to Spanish-language radio station Ke Buena (KTTA, 97.9) (McManis, 2006). Jesse Diaz, a Sacramento rally organizer, also attributed the success of protests to the media. Diaz said, “When the Spanish-language media got involved, that’s when I realized that this thing had legs and was walking on its own” (Sterngold & Hendricks, 2006, p.A8). Clearly, Spanish-language media were reaching the ethnic masses.

Previous research is mixed regarding the preference of language-specific media in the Hispanic community. Individuals, families and organizations use minority media as a communication resource to meet crucial needs of communities, especially in the areas of health promotion and disease prevention (Vargas & de Pyssler, 1999). Galvaz (2005) determined Hispanics who speak predominantly Spanish are more likely to prefer media in their native language. Conversely, other researchers (Gibson, Hudson & Melanson, 1999) found that Hispanics do not always prefer Spanish-language media. Additionally, previous research indicates Latino consumers respond favorably to ethnic advertisements specifically designed for them (Dubish, Seaton & Laskey, 1998). Spanish-language television news is the most valued of all Spanish-language media forms by Latinos (DeSipio, 1998). Factors such as age, number of years residing in the United States and acculturation contribute in the linguistic preference for media (Galvez, 2005).

Stereotypes

In 1922, Walter Lippmann described the “pictures inside our head” as the public’s ability to construct an artificial social reality based on their interactions with other people and media. Lippmann’s idea was a precursor to “stereotypes.” Gorham (1999) defined stereotypes as “particular subset of social reality beliefs: they are understandings about particular social groups that we have learned from our social world” (Gorham, 1999, p.231).

Studies show that Latinos suffer from stereotyping in the United States. The American media have contributed substantially to stereotypical perceptions of Latinos. Hispanics are generally depicted as lazy, hot-tempered and aggressive, criminals, gang participants, or illegal immigrants (Barlow, 1998; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Mendez-Mendez & Alverio, 2001; Navarrete & Kamasaki, 1994; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1986). Negative public responses occur when individuals are overexposed to newspaper reports of crime. Research indicates they begin to perceive ethnic minorities as threatening (Vergeer, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000). The public thereby constructs negative caricatures of members of the ascribed ethnicity, especially when said people have limited contact with the stereotyped individuals (Severin & Tankard, 2000). Public distrust develops as a result of stereotyping.

Content analyses notes entertainment television characterizes Latinos into four general negative character categories (Berg, 2002).

- The Criminal – a male whose characteristics include a youthful and unkempt appearance, dishonest and aggressive nature
- The Latin Lover – a well-kempt and professionally attired male individual who is marked by a heavy accent, hot temper and sexual aggression
- The Harlot – a female also marked by heavy accent, hot temper and sexual aggressiveness, dressed in provocative attire.
- The Comic/Buffoon – noted for a heavy accent, laziness, and stupidity and secondary status on television shows (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

The visual media provide images through Latinos, and the general public, see their ethnic population reflected as a singular culture in a negative perspective (Kellner, 1995). Thus, Hispanics are victims of discrimination in the Caucasian-dominated media. Researchers (1987) documented that people who view television extensively demonstrated a higher awareness of stereotypes and “greater recognition of the poor status [minority] people received in television programs” (Faber, O’Guinn & Meyer, 1987, p.166). These observations may strengthen feelings of alienation for the Latino community and further encourage avoidance and withdrawal from the

surrounding community-at-large. Thus, stereotyping may impede the development of social capital in Latino communities.

Social Capital

The challenge facing the United States is to engage members of the Hispanic community in a proactive political framework. Involving as many citizens as possible benefits a democracy and the Latino community has a unique perspective that other ethnic groups do not provide. To encourage community diversity, Latinos should be encouraged to interact, engage and assimilate in their surrounding communities. This positive interaction increases the social ties and networks within a community and becomes a way to increase political participation of minority segments. These “ties” are known as “social capital” and for this study it will be defined as “political activities that engage members of a community.”

The origin of the study of social capital can be linked to a number of researchers. In 1916, L.J. Hanifan first discussed the concept of “social capital,” in his study of community involvement in schools. He broadly etched the idea as

tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy....and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit.... if he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community (Putnam, 2001 p.19).

The idea, however, remained unstructured and undefined for almost 50 years. The concept resurfaced in the 1960s when Jane Jacobs studied neighborliness in large cities, and again in the 1970s when Loury examined the social legacy of slavery. In the 1980s social theorist Pierre Bourdie and economist Ekkehart Schlidict analyzed the social and economic resources embodied in social networks (Putnam, 2001). James Coleman (1988) coined the term “social capital” to define the concept. He labeled social capital as “a social resource for getting things done” and

suggested that in social interaction “lies the foundation by which some future social action is initiated” (Segura, Pachon & Woods, 2001, p.86).

Sociologist Robert Putnam (2001) broached the term in his seminal book, *Bowling Alone*. He used the term “social capital” to describe the bonds that hold a community together and defined it as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2001, p. 19). Communities with higher levels of social capital, he argued, are happier and more prosperous and have higher interaction and engagement

Putnam suggested two dimensions to social capital: bonding (exclusive) and bridging (inclusive). The former group consisted of tightly knit conclaves with an inward focus, such as knitting groups, or country clubs. Said organizations tend to reinforce “exclusive identities” and “homogenous groups” (Putnam, 2000). Bridging organizations hold an outward focus and “encompass peoples across diverse social cleavages” (Putnam, 2000, p.22). Civil rights groups, service groups and ecumenical religious organizations are examples of bridging organizations. These organizations further the expectation that social engagements and interactions will benefit the community and not the individual. Bridging social capital groups, therefore, aided the growth of social capital. In contrast, bonding social capital groups promoted individual interactions and values and did little to foster community identity.

Putnam argued that social capital is declining in the United States because of decreasing membership in both bonding and bridging organizations. In the past, social activities and clubs provided a chance for people to interact and build connections. Because of the decreased outlets for such social interaction, individuals no longer have informal forums in which to conduct political discourse and interact on a personal level. Individuals, therefore, are interacting with each other less and less. Putnam advocated for people to attend town meetings, participate on political

committees, organize community events, volunteer at local organizations, and register to vote (Saguaro Seminar, n.d.) as ways to increase social capital.

There is a contradiction in Putnam's views on voting and registering to vote as stimuli for building social capital. Putnam (2001) stated, "Voting and following politics are relatively undemanding forms of participation. In fact, they are not, strictly speaking, forms of social capital at all, because they can be done utterly alone" (p.37). The Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement in America, a project of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and directed by Robert Putnam, however, lists a number of ways to develop social capital, including "Registering to vote and voting" (Saguaro Seminar, n.d.). These conflicting viewpoints may be significant and perhaps need further investigation.

Indeed, voter participation is often not included in the social capital model. Researchers often view civic engagement — mass participation in private associations and organizations (Hill & Matsubayashi, 2005) — as a better measure of social capital. Civic engagement, on one hand, provides information about mass political behavior while political participation places pressure on elected officials. Verba and Nie (1972) argued civic engagement provided political elites with directional knowledge of constituent preferences. They noted political participation was influential because it put pressure on officials to respond to mass preferences without providing any indication of what those might be. Civic engagement and political participation, however, do affect each other. "Voting participation, which imposes pressure, interacts with civic engagement, which offers information on preferences, so that higher levels of both produce especially high and position representational outcomes" (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 215).

The term social capital has been adopted by several academic disciplines. This research focuses on the term as it applies to the field of mass communication. Brehm and Rahn (1999) posited a triangular, reciprocal model that consisted of three variables: confidence in government,

civic engagement and interpersonal trust. According to their research, when citizens actively participated in their communities they interacted more with people, which translates into higher levels of trust and a more politically engaged citizenry. Beaudoin and Thorsen (2004) operationalized social capital into three categories: 1) behavioral measures connoting social networks; 2) attitudinal measures representing social trust; and 3) prosocial behavior measures, such as voting and volunteering.

This thesis advocates political participation is a form of social capital. Voting is a free and relatively effortless activity in which legalized citizens may participate. Unlike other defined forms of social capital, such as donating money to local charities and candidates, voting holds no economic barrier to participation. Social activities and more traditional social capital activities, such as volunteering on a campaign or attending political party meetings, are included in the model used in this thesis.

Putnam's adaptation of social capital within marginalized communities (Hero, 2003) has created much debate since he did not include language as a factor. The Latino community has additional barriers, such as prejudice, stereotypes and generalizations, in addition to linguistic alienation that the previous model of social capital did not address (Schildkraut, 2005). Further, Hispanics must also overcome voter dilution and outright exclusion from the political process (Segura, 2001). Trust, normally a reliable indicator of social capital, may not be an accurate measure for the Latino community. "When Anglo respondents are asked about their general level of trust in others, they may be likely to envision others like themselves in considering this question. Minority respondents are likely to consider the larger society, whose majority is quite different from them" (Segura, 2001, p.87). Thus, Hispanics may feel isolated from the at-large community and view the world with an outsider perspective. This perception links to the issues of stereotypes addressed earlier. Previous research on Latino civic engagement found perceptions of

discrimination against oneself promoted behavioral and attitudinal alienation, which produces behaviors such as non-voting and lack of trust (Schildkraut, 2005). Lower socioeconomic status and social-connectedness also account for low voter registration and turnout (Jackson, 2003).

Few researchers expect major changes in Latino political participation rates without significant change regarding their socioeconomic status and educational level in the immediate future (DeSipio, 1996). These changes, however, take significant amounts of time, but increasing levels of social capital in the Latino community may be one way to expedite Latino political participation (Bedolla, 2004/2005). Spanish-language media could encourage increased social capital because it is widely and readily available in Latino-dominated communities, and relatively inexpensive.

Linguistic Preference and Social Identity

While Spanish-language media may facilitate the development of social capital, linguistic preference is an important variable to address in the model. In theory, within multi-ethnic communities, a common form of communication should facilitate the ability of members to interact and build social capital. Because first-generation Latinos historically maintain strong ties to their native language, they build social connections within their ethnic community but linguistic barriers impede their ability to interact with the community-at-large (Lamboy, 2003). Consequently, the development of their social capital is limited due to linguistic issues.

The process of adjusting to life in another country includes learning a new culture and generally a new language. The process of giving up traditional cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors while accepting new cultural traits has been called “acculturation” (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Sociologist Young Yun Kim (1988) believes acculturation “refers to the process of change over time that takes place within individuals who have completed their socialization process in one culture and then come into continuous, prolonged, first-hand contact

with a new and unfamiliar culture” (Kim, 1988, p. 37-38). The process of acculturation has been divided into four categories: 1) host language fluency and usage; 2) host society interaction frequency and depth vis-a-vis home society interaction; 3) culturally linked habits and customs; 4) host media utilization and preference (Laroche, Kim, Hui & Tomiuk, 1997). Communication in a new community facilitates acculturation. Shibutani and Kwan (1965) believe the degree “to which members of a minority group become acculturated to the way of life of the dominant group depends on the extent of their participation in the communication channels of their rules” (Kwan, 1965, p.573). Because Latinos with limited English skills lack the ability to communicate with the greater community, the acculturation process may be delayed.

Greater interaction within a community, however, may not necessarily aid acculturation. When cultural change occurs, individuals must not only construct an ethnic identity that incorporates their native behaviors into a new culture; they must comprehend the norms and expectations of the new culture in which they reside (Ruggiero & Yang, 2005). With the loss of traditional norms, plus adapting to the culture and language expected in a new country, the reaction to interacting with the broader community may affect the speed at which acculturation occurs. Individuals who become aware of stereotyping or experience discrimination may become more resistant to acculturation than those who do not. Studies show media stereotyping causes Latinos to perceive that the community-at-large views their population negatively (Kellner, 1995). The media unwittingly hinders acculturation through character stereotyping. Conversely, the mass media may also aid this acculturation function by “transmitting not only topical events but also societal values, norms of behavior, and traditional perspectives for interpreting the environment” (Kim, 1988, p.114). “In addition, the use of mass communication has been observed to promote the acculturation process of newcomers in many studies” (Yang, Wu & Ma, 2003, p.3).

The media provide societal cues about group behavior. Individuals develop ideas about society and its members by observing and modeling the behavior of others. Albert Bandura (1977)'s seminal work, in which he developed the social learning theory, stated

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p.22).

Individuals, therefore, replicate the behavior of a variety of subjects including, but not limited to, friends, family, and the mass media.

Groups are also affected by collective ideals. In some instances, groups bond together to form an intra-group identity that is used to discriminate against members of another groups. Tajfel and Turner (1986) outlined this concept, the Social Identity Theory, and suggested inter-group conflict must be understood with reference to the "subjective" dimensions of in-group membership. Therefore, it is possible that ethnic groups glean perceptions about their positions in society by drawing conclusions from inter-group relations and the mass media.

Researchers Operario and Fiske (2001) suggested, minorities "that are highly affiliated with and derive meaning from their group incorporate societal bias directed at the group into the self-concept" (p.554, as stated in Sizemore), which leads them to perceive personal vulnerability to prejudice and discrimination. In situations which minorities perceive racism, individuals may withdraw into the intra-group and shun the inter-group. Bedolla (2004/5) argued that a "sense of positive identity is a necessary, but not sufficient, precondition for the associational activity and membership of members of marginal groups" (p.43).

Operario and Fiske (2001) acknowledge the level of ethnic-group identification is related to perceptions of and responses to racial prejudice. Therefore, members of a group who are aware of discriminations and stereotypes are more likely to believe they will experience them personally.

“Studies of political engagement within marginal groups, particularly for women of color, have supported this idea that positive group identity can be a source of internal social capital that facilitates political incorporation” (Bedolla, 2004/5, p.46). Therefore, it could be theorized that as traditional language and culture dissipate, the level of linguistic acculturation increases.

Research consistently shows a person’s language greatly affects his or her ability to interact with the greater community. Individuals who do not speak the dominant language may experience forms of alienation (such as stereotypes) that prevent them from engaging the greater community. The media play an important role in informing and setting the public political agenda. Therefore, the media may extend or hinder the ability of Latinos to develop the bonds of social capital with the community-at-large.

Researchers have further documented the power of the media to positively or negatively influence behaviors and attitudes of the Latino population. Consequently, the media could play a significant role in developing social capital for Hispanics in the United States. Thus far, as the immigration protests of 2006 demonstrated, the major media influence on the Latino population has come from ethnic media. This study attempts to fill a research lacuna by examining linguistic preference and Spanish-language media in the creation of social capital in minority communities.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

This study investigates the role of linguistic preference as the force in building social capital in multiethnic communities. Since Spanish is the first language spoken by nearly all Latino immigrants, many face tremendous barriers in becoming attached to a wider community. Individuals with a limited range of English are less likely to build a social connection outside their ethnic networks. As a result, tight-knit immigrant communities may suffer self-imposed and cultural alienation in English-dominant environments.

In recent years organizations and governments began noting, and sometimes responding to, Latino community needs. In some states, voter registration and ballots, driver's license applications and health-care services are provided in both Spanish and English. This outreach is designed not only to improve services for Latinos but also encourage ethnic community involvement because bilingual services promote greater ethnic participation. It could be theorized that bilingual information for ethnic individuals allows them to interact more with their surrounding community and have higher levels of social capital. Hispanics who interact more with the at-large community will be exposed to and more aware of Latino stereotypes and generalizations proliferated by the mass media and society. Conversely, it could be predicted bilingual Hispanics will have lower levels of trust and volunteerism within the at-large community.

Quite possibly, individuals who speak only Spanish will be isolated from the greater community and disengage in social capital-building activities. Further, Latinos who prefer Spanish-language programming and do not interact with American news may be oblivious to the stereotypes proliferated by the mass media. Regardless, finding methods to build social capital and public trust in Hispanic communities is challenging for federal, state, and local governments.

Historical evidence and studies point to the role of social capital in burgeoning immigrant communities in the United States throughout the 1800s and 1900s. Between 1840 and 1890, five million Irish immigrants entered in the first massive migration to America. Shortly thereafter (1890 and 1920), a second wave of migration occurred. This time, individuals from Eastern European/Slavic nations flocked to the United States. The presence of the “old” immigrants (the Irish) impacted the “new” immigrants’ (East European/Slavs) ability to acculturate. Barrett and Roediger (2005) found that the first- and second-generation Irish immigrants developed both “bridged” and “bonded” social capital. The Irish built highly developed social networks in churches, unions, neighborhoods and parishes, which transferred social knowledge and authority. Immigrants arriving later encountered the strong Irish influence in the social settings and the workforce (for example, in labor movements, Democratic Party, theater and stage) (Barrett & Roediger, 2005). The next wave of immigrants was not welcomed by the Irish nor enveloped into their community.

Kelleher, Lynch, Harper, Tay, Nolan (2004) studied the influence of Irish’s high levels of bonded social capital and their impact on the health of the Irish and the community-at-large during the years 1850-1870. They determined the Irish interacted little with other immigrant groups in the United States. Consequently, undesirable health issues, such as cardiovascular disease and other malnutrition issues caused by poor diet habits incurred due to Potato Famine of 1847 carried forward for two generations in the Irish ethnic community. When subgroups avoid building social capital with the community-at-large detrimental factors may arise.

Current models of social capital include a variety of measurements and definitions. Brehm and Rahm (1997) modeled “social capital” as a three-dimensional relationship: “civic engagement”, “confidence in government” and “interpersonal trust.” They argued civic engagement and interpersonal trust held a tight reciprocal relationship. “The more that citizens

participate in their communities, the more that they learn to trust to others; the greater trust that citizens hold for others, the more likely they are to participate” (Brehm & Rahm, 1999, p.1001). Civic engagement was gauged on a respondent’s participation in civic groups (such as fraternal and service groups, labor unions and or hobby clubs). Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) operationalized social capital to be the reciprocal relationship of social networks, social trust and pro-social behaviors. Social networks were defined as association membership and neighborliness, while social trust was measured by interpersonal and community trust. Voting and volunteering were defined as pro-social behaviors.

These measures, however, did not fully explore the political engagement dimension of the social capital model. Citizens have a variety of participatory possibilities in a democracy – voting is only one conventional aspect. They voice opinions to elected officials in a number of ways – from contacting elected representatives to volunteering on campaigns. This engagement, in theory, allows officials to assess public opinion. Previous studies of social capital regarding Latinos, however, failed to examine the full range of political participation available in a democracy.

In the summer of 2004, the Pew Hispanic Center conducted a survey on politics and civic participation in the Latino community. The Center included a series of questions on political engagement, which provide a broader gauge of political engagement. The questions included the following:

- In the past year, have you contacted any elected official?
- In the past year, have you contributed money to a candidate seeking public office?
- In the past year, have you worked as a volunteer, or for pay, for a political candidate?
- In the past year, have you attended a public meeting or demonstration in the community where you live?
- In the past year, have you attended a political party meeting or function?

These questions provide a different dimension to social capital. Whereas previous models of social capital included a variation of “volunteering,” this model focuses upon individual political participation and its impact on social capital. The elements therein —free expression and right to vote — are explicitly expressed in the United States Constitution, unlike other aspects of social capital. The framers of the U.S. government believed political participation was a vital element of democracy and granted citizens the right to engage in the government. Therefore, political participation has importance in the context of social capital and the Latino community.

This slight modification in the measure of social capital provides a different result than previous measures. Since only American citizens have voting rights, political participation contains a barrier to interaction that civic engagement does not. Therefore, since a substantial number of Latino individuals are not eligible to vote, the community may show lower levels of social capital than in previous studies. The limitations of these data need further investigation and dialogue. Indicators used on previous social capital studies, such as frequency of voting and volunteering, were not studied by the Pew Center, therefore, it was difficult to compare and replicate previous research. These measures, however, indicate investigation of the connections between social capital and language preference are clearly important. Future research should include a wide range of measures so that the results are more directly comparable to the existing social capital literature.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the degree of social capital (that is, political participation and civic engagement) in the Hispanic community?

RQ2: What is the relationship between Spanish-language media and the creation of social capital?

RQ3: Do Latino individuals who prefer English have higher or lower levels of social capital?

Why This Issue?

While several studies examined Latino social capital as a variable in education (Ream, 2005; Antrop-González, Velez & Garrett, 2005) and health (Farquhar, Michael & Wiggins, 2005) and civic participation (Segura, 2001; Bedolla, 2005), few examined linguistic preference as a variable in building social capital. Segura (2001) determined respondents who spoke predominantly Spanish were less likely to volunteer in their communities than their bilingual counterparts. His study sample consisted of four predominantly Latino communities in California and New Mexico but does not include a national sampling. Rimmer and Foley (2005) examined social capital in the Santa Ana community of California. Therefore, this study utilizes a national survey (the Pew Center's *2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Participation*) in order to ascertain information about social capital in growing Latino communities.

Several scales for acculturation have been developed through the years by various researchers (Marin, Sabogal & Marin, 1987; Marin & Marin, 1991; Arnold & Maldonado, 1995). Language is most often used as a measurement because it provides a “reliable shorthand measure” of acculturation accounting for the greatest portion of the variance in acculturation (Epstein, Botvin & Diaz, 2001). “Cultural-specific acculturation scales do not allow researchers to include several different ethnic groups of Hispanics in one study as linguistic acculturation scales do” (Epstein, Botvin & Diaz, 2001, p.478). Ruggiero and Yang (2005) used a 5-point scale measuring respondents' language preference in speaking, reading, and listening.

Chapter 4: Methods

This study will be an analysis of data collected by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Henry H. Kaiser Foundation. The Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation *2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Engagement* was conducted by telephone between April 21 and June 9, 2004, providing a randomly selected, nationally representative sample of 2,288 Latino adults, 18 years and older.. The sample design employed a highly stratified disproportionate random-digit-dial sample of the 48 contiguous states. The data set used in this study is available for download at the Pew Hispanic Center's website (www.pewhispanic.org).

Variables

Standard demographic variables are used as control variables because they were found to be important in existing literature. Education was measured on a seven-point scale ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.80$), indicating whether the respondent received a completed 1st through 8th grade, 9th-11th grade, high school, technical school, some college, college, or some graduate work. Income was measured on a three-point scale ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 2.47$), indicating whether the respondent's annual earned income was less than \$30,000, \$30,000 to \$50,000, or \$50,000 or more. Gender was coded 0 for male, 1 for female. Age was measured on a five-point scale, indicating assigning the respondent to the following categories: 18-29, 30-39, 40-54, 55-64, or 65 and older ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.61$) Party was coded 0 for Republicans, 1 for Independents, and 2 for Democrats.

Social Capital

Consistent with past literature (Putnam, 2001), social capital was modeled as a function of political participation and civic engagement. Respondents were asked if they had contacted any elected official, contributed money to a candidate, worked as a volunteer for a political candidate, attended a public meeting or demonstration, or attended a political party meeting. Each of these variables was coded as a dummy variable with one indicating the respondent had engaged in the

activity. A “social capital” variable was created by combining these five variables and creating a scale of 0 (low level of social capital) to 5 (high level of social capital). ($M = 0.58$, $SD = 1.06$) The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure is 0.69.

Follow-up responses were sought, depending upon responses to three questions: If respondents had volunteered for a political campaign, attended a public meeting or donated money to a candidate. If respondents engaged in the activity, they were asked if the candidate was Latino or addressed Latino issues. Each of these follow-up variables was coded as a dummy variable with one indicating the candidate or meeting was Latino or reflected Latino issues.

Media

Language preference in media use was measured by inquiring of respondents, “In what language are the news programs you usually watch on TV or listen to on the radio?” Answer choices were “Only Spanish, more Spanish than English, both equally, more English than Spanish, or only English?” (1=Spanish, 2= more Spanish than English, 3=both equally, 4= more English than Spanish, 5= only English). ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.46$)

Since the ordinal value of the data was in question, dummy variables were created. Media preference was grouped into three categories: “Prefer Spanish,” “Prefer Both” and “Prefer English.” A dummy variable, “Prefer Spanish” was created. Individuals who scored 1 or 2 on Media Preference were coded as “1”; all other respondents were coded as 0 ($n = 775$, 39.65 percent). A second dummy variable, “Prefer English Media”, was created. Individuals who scored 3 or 4 on Media Preference were coded as “1”; all other respondents were coded as 0. ($n = 735$, 32.1 percent)

The variable “How much attention would you say you pay to politics and government?” was measured on a four-point scale: (1 = none at all, 2 = Not much, 3 = A fair amount, 4 = a lot).

Linguistic Preference

Linguistic preference was measured by asking respondents their language preference not only at home, but at work and in media: “Only Spanish, more Spanish than English, both equally, more English than Spanish, or only English?” (1=Spanish, 2= more Spanish than English, 3=both equally, 4= more English than Spanish, 5= only English). A “linguistic preference” variable was created by combining these variables, which created a 3 (prefers Spanish) to 15 scale (English only). ($M = 9.29$, $SD = 4.11$) The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure is .85. The scale in this study is similar to Ruggiero and Young (2005) in that it combines preference for language at home and in media.

Since the ordinal value of the data was in question, dummy variables were created. Linguistic preference was recoded into a series indicating whether respondents preferred speaking Spanish, English, or no preference. A dummy variable, “Prefer Spanish” was created. Individuals who scored between 3 and 7 on the Linguistic Preference Scale were coded as “1”; all other respondents were coded as 0 ($n = 735$, 32.1 percent). A second dummy variable, “Prefer English” was created. Individuals who scored between 12 and 16 on the Linguistic Preference Scale were coded as “1”; all other respondents were coded as 0 ($n = 648$, 28.3 percent).

Chapter 5: Findings

This study sought to expand current research regarding the role of linguistic preference and media use in developing social capital in Latino communities. Recognizing the importance of linguistics for acculturation, this study was guided by the current need to extend Latino social capital in communities throughout the United States.

Research Question 1

With regard to Research Question 1 (“What is the degree of social capital in the Latino community?”) results indicated a low level of community involvement in the Latino community. Few Latino respondents reported any form of political engagement in the past twelve months.

Univariate analysis indicated:

- 13.9 percent ($n=319$, $M=.140$, $SD=.347$) of respondents said they had contacted an elected official in the past year.
- 9.4 percent ($n=215$, $M=.094$, $SD=.292$) admitted they had contributed money to a candidate.
- 5.5 percent ($n=125$, $M=.058$, $SD=.228$) volunteered on a campaign.
- 19.3 percent ($n=441$, $M=0.11$, $SD=.395$) attended a public meeting or demonstration in their community in the previous twelve months.
- 10.1 percent ($n=232$, $M=.102$, $SD=.302$) traveled to a political party function.

These variables were then combined. Univariate analysis on the new variable “social capital,” showed a mean of .058 and a standard deviation of 1.06. These statistics can be found in Table 1 (Univariate Statistics for Measures of Social Capital and Control Variable).

The interjection of Latino candidates and issues did not appear to influence participation rates. While 9.4 percent ($n=215$) of respondents admitted donating money to political candidates, 17.2 percent of the 215 respondents ($n=35$) gave to a Latino candidate. Only 5.5 percent ($n=125$) of respondents volunteered for a campaign, and 35 percent of said individuals worked exclusively for a Latino candidate. 19.2 percent ($n=441$) of respondents attended a public meeting, and 37.2

TABLE 1: Univariate Statistics for Measures of Social Capital and Control Variable

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Contacted Official	.14	.35
Contributed Money	.09	.29
Volunteered for Candidate	.05	.23
Attend Local Meeting	.19	.39
Attend Political Party Meeting	.11	.30
Social Capital	.58	1.06
Linguistic Preference	9.29	4.11
Interest in politics and government	2.72	.96
Media	3.10	1.46
Education	3.62	1.81
Income	2.79	2.48
Age	2.62	1.61

percent of those individuals (n=165) attended because it was specific to Latino concerns. The limited Latino participation may result from the lack of ethnic specific meetings and Latino candidates. These statistics referenced are located in Table 2 (Univariate Statistics on Effects of Latino Candidates and Issues).

TABLE 2: Univariate Statistics on Effects of Latino Candidates and Issues

	Latino/Latino Concerns	Non-Latino/Non-Latino Concerns	Both
Contributed money	17.2% (n=35)	48% (n=98)	34.8% (n=71)
Volunteered	35% (n=43)	28.5% (n=35)	36.6% (n=45)
Attended Meeting	37.2% (n=165)	62.3% (n=273)	N/A

While the levels of social capital for Latinos are relatively low, Putnam’s research (2001) showed low levels of social capital throughout the United States. Overall, his research showed that less than 6 percent of Americans had attended a political rally, less than 4 percent volunteered for a political party and less than 6 percent served on a local committee. In addition, less than 15

percent had attended a public meeting on town or school affairs, and less than 13 percent had contacted their congressional representative or senator.

Therefore, while Hispanics have a low level of social capital it is not greatly different from the United States population as a whole. While language and stereotypes may be barriers to Hispanic civic engagement it does not necessarily prevent Hispanic population from participating as these barriers do not exist for the general American population. Although overall engagement is low, it appears Latinos place the same value on building social capital as other American citizens

Research Question 2

The second research question (What is the relationship between media preference and the creation of social capital?) was examined. To test the relationship between language preferences and social capital, we first consider the bivariate relationship between social capital and media use. The results are presented in Table 1. Analysis showed respondents preferred English- and Spanish-language media equally (Mean = 3.10). Multivariate analysis determined a positive correlation between media use and social capital. A crosstabulation of media use and social capital resulted in a statistically significant Chi-square ($p < .001$).

To see if this relationship holds, a multiple regression model was constructed to measure the influence of language-specific media in building social capital. The dependent variable was social capital. The independent variable was media use. The amount of attention paid to politics and government was added as an independent variable. Consistent with previous literature (Galvez, 2005), standard control variables (age, education, income, gender and political party preference) were also included in the model. The Adjusted R square value for this model was .16.

Media use was significant ($p < .001$, $B = .08$), as was interest in politics and government ($p < .001$, $B = .328$), which indicates that individuals who prefer English-language media have a

higher level of interest in politics and social capital. In addition, education ($p < .001$, $B = .83$) and age ($p < .001$, $B = .067$) showed significance, indicating older respondents and those with higher levels of education preferred English-language publications.

Dummy variables were introduced into the model. A regression analysis showed that individuals who preferred Spanish media held lower levels of social capital ($p < .001$, $B = -.294$). These statistics can be found in Table 3 (“Regression of Social Capital on Media and Linguistic Preferences”).

TABLE 3: Regression of Social Capital on Media and Linguistic Preferences

	Model 1: Media Language Preference	Model 2: Linguistic Preference
Education	.075***	..082***
Age	.063***	.065***
Interest	.30***	.328***
Preference		
Prefers Spanish	-.226***	-.294***
Prefers English	.194**	.136

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

*standardized coefficients

Research Question 3

With regard to Research Question 3 (Do Latino individuals who prefer English hold higher or lower levels of social capital?), a univariate analysis showed respondents preferred English to Spanish in the measure of social capital (the combination of home, work, and in the media variables) ($M = 9.29$, $SD = 4.11$). Multivariate analysis determined a positive correlation between linguistic acculturation and social capital. A crosstabulation of media use and social capital resulted in a statistically significant Chi-square ($p < .001$).

To see if this relationship holds, a multiple regression model was constructed to measure the influence of linguistic acculturation in building social capital. The dependent variable was social capital. The independent variable was linguistic preference. Standard control variables were also included in the model. The Adjusted R square value for this model was .16 (Table 3)

Linguistic acculturation was significant ($p < .001$, $B = .038$), which indicates that individuals who are more linguistically acculturated have higher levels of social capital. Age ($p < .001$, $B = .068$), and education ($p < .001$, $B = .062$) were also significant.

Dummy variables were introduced into the model. A regression analysis showed that individuals who preferred English held higher levels of social capital ($p < .001$, $B = .194$).

Individuals who preferred Spanish displayed lower levels of social capital ($p < .001$, $B = -.226$).

Chapter 6: Discussions and Conclusions

The focus of this study was the acquisition of information regarding the potential development of social capital in the Hispanic community – the largest minority population in the United States. In order to better understand the ability of Latinos to fully integrate into the greater community, linguistic preference and media use were examined as important factors.

Research Question 1

With regard to Research Question 1 (What is the degree of social capital in the Hispanic community?), results indicate that social capital is latent in the Hispanic community; therefore, few Latinos engage in political activities, which supports previous research (Foley & Rimmer, 2005; Segura, 2001). While Latino social capital is low, however, research indicates it is generally the same as that of the overall United States population (See Table 4: Degree of Political Engagement of the Overall Population and Latino Community).

TABLE 4: Degree of Political Engagement of the Overall Population and Latino Community

	Overall Population	Latino Community
Attended meeting	15 percent	19.2
Contacted elected official	13 percent	13.9
Contributed money	Not Applicable	9.4 percent
Attended a political party function	< 6 percent	10.1
Volunteered for political party/candidate	< 4 percent	5.5

Few respondents of the overall or ethnic population interacted with their elected officials, attended political events or local meetings. This detachment is detrimental to the Latino community. As Verba and Nie's (1972) research suggests, elected officials gauge constituent preferences by the levels of civic engagement. Because of Latino disengagement in the community-at-large, the political elites receive limited information regarding Hispanic inclinations or needs.

A limitation of this study should be noted. The Pew Center conducted the survey in the summer of 2004, nearly twenty-two months before the 2006 protests over immigration reform in the United States. It is not known if these protests were isolated events or a sign of increasing Latino political engagement. Therefore, it is not possible to make generalizations regarding current levels of social capital in the Latino community.

Research Question 2

With regard to Research Question 2 (What is the relationship between Spanish-language media and the creation of social capital?), findings indicate a relationship does exist between language preference and social capital. First, Latino individuals who prefer English-language news programs show an increased level of interest in politics and government ($p < .001$, $B = .328$). This presents an interesting question about the uses of media by Spanish-language consumers. Media are used for a variety of purposes — such as acquiring information about current events, sporting activities, and television listings. In addition, the mass media provide information regarding local events, elections and upcoming community activities.

English-language and minority-language media provide different forums of information. Spanish-language media probably provide information on local ethnic issues, plus information from the home countries. In the case of the immigration protests, Spanish-language radio advocated activism and encouraged listeners to demonstrate their displeasure. Conversely, English-language broadcasts did not inform their listening public of the upcoming protests (Flaccus, 2006).

On the other hand, Spanish-language media may hold the same focus as English media to their targeted audience. A few newspapers, such as the Miami Herald (El Nuevo Herald), the Chicago Tribune (Hoy), and the Dallas Morning News (Al Dia), now publish a Spanish version, which are merely translations of the English-counterpart (Porter, 2003). In other instances,

Spanish-language newspapers are independent and are not merely translations of English publications. El Manana, in Cicero, Illinois, as well as the Los Angeles based La Opinion, are both independent Spanish-language daily newspapers (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). An independent Spanish-language newspaper may be able to target and direct stories at the specific needs and interests Latino community, plus provide information on current issues in Latin and South America. Stories in independent Spanish-language newspapers may hold more interest to Latino immigrants. As the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2004) described

Ethnic media provide a certain kind of news that is not available from the mainstream media, most importantly news of home countries, and also more detailed local coverage of geographically discrete ethnic communities. If foreign-born Spanish speakers want to know what is happening today in a Dominican economic crisis, a governor's election in Puerto Rico or a Nicaraguan corruption scandal, Univision or Telemundo is the only practical choice (p.15).

Findings also suggest social capital increases in a community when the consumers utilize English-language media. This suggests the mass media may not hinder the creation of social capital in a community; in fact, it may aid its growth.

Spanish-language media are a growing political and economic force in mass communication. Minority media play a unique role in our society. While mainstream media focus on the overall community, ethnic media deal with specific issues affecting a targeted audience. With rapidly changing demographics in the United States, mass media could play an important role in building social capital in ethnic communities. By including Latino issues, the mass media could encourage this subgroup to become more political involved, thereby increasing their levels of social capital.

Research Question 3

With regards to Research Question 3 (Do Latino individuals who prefer English have higher or lower levels of social capital?), results indicate a significant relationship between

English-language proficiency and social capital. This suggests that linguistic acculturation is occurring in the Latino community, and bilingual individuals will become more engaged in their greater community. This finding upholds Segura (2001), who suggested that individuals “lacking sufficient English-language skills are extremely unlikely to form social and organizational bonds outside of their own community” (p.91).

Demographics

Standard control variables (age, education, income, gender and political party preference) were analyzed in order to better understand the demographic factors that affect the growth of social capital in the Hispanic community. Similar to Foley and Rimmer’s study (2005), education was significant, suggesting highly-educated Latinos are more likely to be consumers of media. In addition, these individuals were also more likely to be active in their communities. Age was significant, indicating that older individuals are more likely to be active in their communities. Age, therefore, is a significant factor in the process of acculturation

Income, however, was not significant in any of the three models. This finding does not uphold Segura, Pachon & Woods (2001), who noted socioeconomic barriers prevent development of social capital. Rather, this suggests differences in socioeconomic status and occupational prestige are not barriers to developing social capital

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Much can be gleaned to aid future research. The limitations of the study are related to the survey instrument. Data allowed for a certain number of conclusions, but adding a variety of variables and expanding the survey population would have provided for a richer analysis. For example, the Pew Hispanic Center did not survey Caucasians and other minority groups, making comparisons to other subgroups difficult. The inclusion of additional subgroups in future surveys will allow for better comparison of Latino social capital to other minorities.

The Pew Survey did not include media use questions such as preference (radio, television, Internet, newspapers) and frequencies of exposure (once a day, three or four times a week, once or twice a week). This should be included in a future survey of the Latino population in order to better understand the interaction of media use, linguistic skills and the development of social capital in a community. While this study furthered current research on Spanish-language media, it is recommended that future research address the issues of media exposure.

In addition, the lack of income as a significant variable could be attributed to the limited scope of categories. This study was limited by the use of a three-category response instead of more highly defined category choices. Traditional survey research uses a more developed scale to define income. Future studies should examine the issue of income to determine if socioeconomic factors do, in fact, play a role in the development of social capital in marginalized communities.

This study also generalized “Hispanics” as one category. Latinos have a wide and diversified cultural background, and results may be generalized to the entire community. The term encompasses Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban, Dominicans, Salvadorans, in addition to individuals from Jamaica, Trinidad and other Caribbean Islands, and Spain. In addition, this study also included all Hispanics, regardless of generational background. A study of first-generation vs. long-term generation residents of the United States would provide more insight about the acculturation process in the Latino community.

Recommendations

This study found linguistic preference and media use both influence social capital development in the Latino community. To facilitate the development of social capital and to encourage the growth of political participation of Latinos, efforts should be made to embrace and support this growing population.

As the results of this study indicate, Latino individuals who prefer English-language media and hold higher levels of linguistic acculturation are more engaged in their communities. Therefore, greater community efforts should be made to provide English-language skills to Latino immigrants with limited bilingual ability. Outreach in the form of English-as-a-second-language classes (ESL) would increase the ability of Latinos to communicate and interact with their greater communities. This is not to say that language-specific outreach efforts should be discontinued; rather studies uphold the vital role language-specific institutions play in the distribution of information to members of a minority community (Vargas & dePylsler, 1999).

Since the mass media are a positive force in building social capital, journalists should make an effort to cover events in marginalized communities. This is a tenement of civic journalism (Perry, 2003). In addition, English-language newspapers should provide, when possible, Spanish-versions of their newspapers in order to engage all community members. This would attract more readers and, therefore, improve profitability, and also facilitate the growth of social capital within ethnic populations.

In addition, creating community organizations that bond social capital would increase Latino civic participation. As previous research shows (Hill & Matsubayashi, 2005), bonding social capital facilitates the growth of community ties. Therefore, organizations that work to include members from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, such as service learning and ecumenical groups, would aid the growth of social capital in diverse communities.

Regarding civic engagement, a possible way to increase political participation is through the educational system. Bedolla (2004/5) suggests targeting schools to 1) increase peer-to-peer discussion, 2) increase political exchanges at home, and 3) increase the overall political socialization of Latinos. By educating young Latinos regarding civic duties, Bedolla (2004) suggests children will discuss current events with their parents and friends (increasing social

interaction) and become familiar with the importance of civic engagement. In the absence of major social and economic changes, and a major economic investment in the community, this may be the most economical and readily available method to increase Latino voter participation.

Conclusions

Robert Putnam espoused the collapse of American communities due to declining trust and decreasing organizational membership in America. Researchers are focused on how to increase social capital in a world divided by language. The rapid growth of the Hispanic community presents an unusual situation for the building of social capital in the United States. The opportunity for social capital to grow remains slim unless the linguistic barrier faced by the Latino community is addressed.

This study sought to understand the development of social capital in the largest minority group in the United States. By understanding the forces behind social capital, future efforts could focus on how to extend and nurture development of community bonds in multi-cultural communities. When social capital increases, civic engagement and voter participation also increases. Democracy and public discourse benefit from the increased number of participants, and a community grows politically, economically and socially. In a time of increased outreach to the Latino community, this study adds to the existing body of knowledge by showing that media usage and linguistic skills are two additional options for increasing awareness in the Latino community and bridging social capital.

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