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***Race, Ethnicity and Political Resources:
Participation in the United States***SIDNEY VERBA, KAY LEHMAN SCHLOZMAN, HENRY
BRADY AND NORMAN H. NIE*

This article uses data from the Citizen Participation Study – a large-scale survey of the voluntary activity of the American public designed to oversample African-Americans and Latinos as well as political activists – to inquire about the extent and sources of differences in levels of political activity among African-Americans, Latinos and Anglo-Whites. Considering a variety of political acts, we find that, in the aggregate, African-Americans are slightly, and Latinos are substantially, less active than Anglo-Whites. However, the resources that facilitate participation – some of which, for example, education, are related to social class and others of which, for example, religious preference and activity are associated with race or ethnicity – are distributed very unevenly across the three groups, with Latinos at a particular disadvantage. After accounting for differences in politically relevant resources, there is no significant difference among the three groups in political participation.

In an era in which discord among groups defined by their ethnicity or race is claiming lives and redrawing maps around the globe and the links between class and political choices have become attenuated in many democracies, it is hardly novel to draw attention to the significance of racial and ethnic ties for politics. When political adversaries are defined by their race or ethnicity, the dilemmas of democratic governance are often posed most starkly: not only may the conflicts be of particularly extended duration and impermeability to compromise, but since they ordinarily engage groups that constitute minorities, they raise concerns about majority tyranny. One of the major tasks faced by democracies is the incorporation of previously excluded racial and ethnic minority groups – which may be internal groups, long the objects of discrimination by dominant groups on the basis of race or ethnicity, or external

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groups of recent immigrants – into full political, economic and social citizenship.

This article focuses on the political incorporation of two racial/ethnic minorities in the United States – African-Americans and Latinos, the former a disadvantaged internal group that has faced centuries of political, social and economic discrimination, the latter a newer immigrant group facing similar disadvantage.¹ The issue is not one of the extension of the rights of participation to these groups: full citizenship rights have been available to African-Americans since the passage of important civil rights legislation – in particular, the Voting Rights Act – during the 1960s, and similar rights accrue to Latinos once they become citizens, a difficult but not insuperable hurdle. Instead, the issue is the use of political rights once achieved, the extent to which these groups take full advantage of the opportunity to participate in political life.

It is sometimes argued that members of disadvantaged groups in America would be better off if they concentrated on individual efforts to achieve economic success rather than on collective political efforts to influence government policy. Our emphasis upon political participation is not an implicit endorsement of politics over markets in promoting the well-being of members of disadvantaged groups. Indeed, from the perspective of the central question posed here, the dichotomy is a false one. As we show, the social and economic position of group members matters critically for their ability to exercise political rights. In short, our concern is not to suggest a particular strategy for maximizing group welfare but to demonstrate how a group's level of political participation depends upon the availability of resources derived from economic and social institutions.

¹ We use the term 'race/ethnicity' in this article because African-Americans are usually referred to as a racial group and Latinos as an ethnic group. The racial/ethnic groups are defined on the basis of self-identification. Respondents were asked first whether they considered themselves to be Hispanic or Latino. Then all respondents – regardless of their answer to the first question – were asked their race. The small number who identified themselves both as Latino (or Hispanic or Chicano) and as African-American (or black) were asked which they considered themselves mostly, Hispanic or black.

There is no generally accepted nomenclature for the groups to which we refer, and what are the appropriate designations is often a politically volatile question. We use the terms 'African-Americans' or 'blacks' for one of the minority groups and 'Latinos' for the other. We use the term 'Anglo-Whites' to denote those who described themselves as white, but not as Latino or Hispanic. The locution is admittedly awkward. Since 'white' is usually juxtaposed to 'black' or 'African-American' and 'Anglo' to 'Latino' or 'Hispanic', however, the conglomerate term for the majority group seems appropriate.

The distinction between African-Americans and Latinos with respect to the date of immigration is not a hard and fast one. Many Latinos – particularly Mexican-Americans – have been in the United States for many generations.

PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Democracy rests on the fundamental ideal of the equal consideration of the needs and preferences of each citizen. Political participation is the mechanism by which those needs and preferences are communicated to political decision makers and by which pressure is brought to bear on them to respond. Thus, equality in political participation – embodied in the most obvious principle of equal consideration of citizen preferences, one-person, one-vote – would seem to be a necessary condition for democracy.

Of course, in no democracy, including the United States, are all citizens equally politically involved. The extent to which disparities in participation constitute a violation of the principle of equal protection of interests, however, rests upon two fundamental considerations: the extent to which those who are not involved differ in politically relevant ways from those who are and the extent to which their abstention is the result of free and voluntary choice. With respect to the former, if activists are representative of all citizens in terms of their preferences and needs for government action, it would matter little that some citizens take part and other do not; the participants could speak effectively for those who are more quiescent. When it comes to the groups in question here, however, it is well known that African-Americans, Latinos and Anglo-Whites do differ in their attitudes on political matters, partisan affiliations, vote choice and needs for government policy.² Hence, any divergences in their rates of activity are of potential concern.

² That African-Americans and Anglo-Whites differ in their party identification, candidate preferences and policy preferences is well documented in the literature. Black Americans are more liberal than Anglo-Whites on matters of economics as well as race. Although often similar in their circumstance of disadvantage, Latinos and African-Americans do not always agree on policy preferences. See, Angelo Falcon, 'Black and Latino Politics in New York City: Race and Ethnicity in a Changing Urban Context', in F. Chris Garcia, ed., *Latinos and the Political System* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 178–9.

When the politically salient differences between active and inactive citizens are less apparent than they are in the case of the groups under consideration here, the situation is more complicated. It is well known that political participants are drawn proportionately from the ranks of those of higher socio-economic status. This does not mean, however, that there are corresponding differences in policy preferences. Indeed, Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone have shown that unmistakable demographic differences between voters and non-voters are not matched by differences in attitudes on policy issues as expressed in responses to standard National Election Studies questions: *Who Votes?* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), chap. 6.

Nevertheless, in an analysis that includes consideration of many other participatory acts beyond voting and examination of citizens' actual needs with respect to government policy as well as their political attitudes, we have argued that it does matter whether or not particular groups of citizens are active. See Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady and Norman H. Nie, 'Citizen Activity: Who Participates? What Do They Say?' *American Political Science Review*, 87 (1993), 303–18.

The second consideration has to do with whether differences in participation reflect free choices. Failure to participate may be, but is not necessarily, evidence of voluntary abstention. American history is replete with examples of explicit denials of political rights. If equal participation is barred either by law or by informal political obstacles such as discriminatory literacy tests or all-white primaries, then inactivity is not the result of free choice and democracy is compromised. When such barriers are lifted – as they have been, by and large, in the United States – the situation becomes less clear. If some citizens opt not to take part in politics because they prefer to spend their time and money in other ways or because they do not care about public affairs, then there is less reason for concern if their views do not receive proportionate attention from political elites. But if they do not take part because they lack the resources that facilitate political activity, then these departures from the norm of political equality may pose a more serious challenge to democracy.

A RESOURCE APPROACH TO POLITICAL ACTIVITY

We apply a resource model to the analysis of racial and ethnic differences in political activity.³ By and large, the position of an individual in the economy generates resources available for political participation. However, we also consider other social institutions not associated with economic position – non-political voluntary associations and religious institutions – that may provide resources that facilitate political activity. As we shall see, religious institutions play a particularly important role in providing resources for political participation for otherwise disadvantaged groups. In addition, characteristics intimately associated with ethnicity also have a part in generating participatory resources.

We consider several types of resources: education, time, money, command of the English language and resources derived from involvement in non-political institutions – the workplace, non-political voluntary associations and churches. Some of these are fairly obvious in meaning. For example, without free time – time not committed to earning a living or to necessary family obligations – one cannot easily engage in political activity. Similarly, without money, it

³ For a full explication of the resource model including an explication of its statistical properties and an analysis of its causal status, see the Sidney Verba, Henry Brady, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Norman H. Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation', unpublished paper.

is impossible to make campaign contributions or give financial support to political causes. In addition, although the Voting Rights Act now includes some provisions with respect to language minorities, it is clear that command of the English language facilitates almost any form of political activity except, perhaps, taking part in a protest; moreover, it is probably a necessity for certain kinds of participation such as getting in touch with a public official or serving in a volunteer capacity on a local governing board.

Education functions in a more complicated way as a political resource: formal education itself fosters organizational and communication skills that are germane to political activity and imparts attitudes such as a sense of civic duty or political efficacy that are associated with political involvement. In addition, those with high levels of education are in a position to acquire further political resources: they are much more likely to have the kinds of jobs that pay high salaries and, as we shall see, to have opportunities in several arenas to develop skills that are relevant to politics.

Several kinds of resources derive from involvement in non-political secondary institutions – the workplace, church or voluntary association. Among these are skills relevant to political activity that can be learned or exercised in such secondary institutions. In addition, those who are involved at work, in church or in organizations are likely to be exposed to political messages and discussion that can stimulate political activity. Furthermore, these secondary institutions become the locus for attempts at political mobilization: not only do those who lead them make explicit attempts to get people involved in politics but at work, in church and in voluntary associations people develop interpersonal networks that serve to bring them into politics. It is, we believe, largely through the creation of these resources that the major non-political institutions of society influence the political involvement of citizens. Of particular interest to us, in this connection, is the extent to which these institutions provide resources for the disadvantaged. As we shall see, most social institutions – the job market, in particular – provide resources disproportionately to those who are already resource rich. Religious institutions, to which we shall pay special attention, are particularly important in terms of their ability to provide social resources to those otherwise not well endowed.

Our approach demands that we think in a somewhat new way about the relationship between ethnicity and political participation. A well-established line of analysis – one on which we build – places differences in political involvement among racial or ethnic groups in the context of their distinctive socio-economic positions: groups that are disadvantaged with respect to education or income are correspondingly less active politically. According to this argument, even though social class and ethnic or racial group membership are intimately related to one another, what drives the relationship to political participation is class. A second approach focuses upon the group itself rather than its group-related class position and emphasizes attitudes related to group membership *per se* that mediate the effects of socio-economic position on participation. A particular group subculture might be viewed as either encouraging

or discouraging to political participation; or those who have a sense of group identity or consciousness might be more active.⁴

We use the logic of the socio-economic approach and take it one step further by demonstrating that politically relevant resources inhere in the socially structured circumstances that define ethnicity. We, are of course, concerned with socio-economic status and the resources for political participation that derive from it. However, we show that aspects of ethnicity itself – in particular, language and patterns of religious affiliation – also confer resources that facilitate political action. These non-economic characteristics associated with ethnicity affect political activity, not through an impact on beliefs or cultural values, but through their effect on resources. This perspective does not pre-empt explanations based on either rational self-interest or shared group consciousness – and, in later work, we intend to pursue motivational issues. Incorporating motivations into the analysis would surely improve our ability to predict the level of participation for individuals. However, as we shall see, aggregate differences in political activity among African-Americans, Latinos and Anglo-Whites can be accounted for by differences in their resources without reference to differences in motivation or attitudes.

THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION STUDY

Our data come from a large-scale, two-stage survey of the voluntary activity of the American public. The study is unusual in focusing on voluntary activity not simply in politics but also in churches and organizations. In addition, we construed political participation quite broadly, including not only voting and other forms of electoral activity such as working in campaigns and making financial contributions, but also contacting public officials, attending protests, joining or otherwise supporting organizations that take stands in politics and getting involved either formally or informally on local issues.

Ordinary surveys have inadequate numbers of African-American or Latino respondents for analysis – especially the more active members of these groups. Our study was designed to yield a larger pool of African-American and Latino respondents. The first stage consisted of a 15,000-case random telephone survey

⁴ See, among others, Marvin Olsen, 'Social and Political Participation of Blacks', *American Sociological Review*, 35 (1970), 682–97; Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), chap. 10; Nicholas L. Danigelis, 'Black Political Participation in the United States: Some Recent Evidence', *American Sociological Review*, 43 (1978), 756–71; Susan Welch, John Comer and Michael Steinman, 'Ethnic Differences in Political and Social Participation: A Comparison of Some Anglo and Mexican-Americans', *Pacific Sociological Review*, 18 (1975), 361–82; Richard D. Shingles, 'Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link', *American Political Science Review*, 75 (1981), 76–91; Thomas M. Guterbock and Bruce London, 'Race, Political Orientation, and Participation: An Empirical Test of Four Competing Theories', *American Sociological Review*, 48 (1983), 439–53; Carole J. Uhlaner, Bruce E. Cain and D. Roderick Kiewiet, 'Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s', California Institute of Technology, Social Science Working Paper 647, June 1987; Lawrence Bobo and Franklin D. Gilliam Jr, 'Race, Socio-Political Participation, and Black Empowerment', *American Political Science Review*, 84 (1990), 379–92.

of the American public. These short screener interviews provided a profile of political and non-political activity as well as the basic demographic information. This survey produced 1,400 African-American and 894 Latino respondents. We then conducted longer, in-person interviews with 2,517 of the original 15,000 respondents, weighting the sample so as to produce a disproportionate number of both activists as well as members of the two minority groups. The follow-up survey included 478 African-Americans and 370 Latinos.⁵

PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA: AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND LATINO

The contrast between African-Americans and Latinos is an intriguing one from the point of view of participation. Among the most significant transformations of American politics in recent decades has been the mobilization of African-Americans. During the 1950s rates of activity for African-Americans were substantially lower than for whites. Several factors – the lowering of *de jure* and *de facto* barriers to activity, mobilization by the civil rights movement and the dramatic increase in the proportion of African-Americans with higher levels of education and higher-status occupations – operated together to narrow the gap during the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, studies showed that, controlling for socio-economic status, blacks participated as much as and perhaps more than whites.⁶ In addition, the period has witnessed a substantial increase in the number of African-Americans in political office and an enhanced role for African-Americans in other political decision-making arenas.

Americans of Hispanic or Latino origin are among the fastest growing segments of the American population. In some areas of the country, they constitute a major group within the citizenry. There have been significant attempts to mobilize Latinos to political activity, particularly voting turnout drives in the Southwest and California. However, we would expect Latinos to be somewhat behind African-Americans in terms of political mobilization. Like other immigrant groups, Latinos face special obstacles of language and legal status, and

⁵ Our data set provides access to other ethnic classifications though, unfortunately, with inadequate numbers for analysis even in our large sample. We would like to have been able to include Asian-Americans in the analysis. However, we were unable to do so because our screener included only 157 Asian-Americans and the follow-up even fewer.

Most of the data analyses and displays in this article use data from the follow-up survey which contains most of our analytic variables. For some analyses we had to rely on the larger sample for adequate cases. When we use screener data it is indicated. Otherwise, the data are from the follow-up survey. For a table with the effective number of cases for various sub-divisions of our sample, see Appendix A.

⁶ See Olsen, 'Social and Political Participation', and Verba and Nie, *Participation in America*. Bobo and Gilliam, 'Race, Socio-Political Participation, and Black Empowerment' and Ellison and Gay argue that, while African-Americans participated at even higher rates than would have been predicted on the basis of their socio-economic characteristics during the late 1960s, there has been convergence since then (Christopher G. Ellison and David A. Gay, 'Black Political Participation Revisited: A Test of Compensatory, Ethnic Community, and Public Arena Models', *Social Science Quarterly*, 70 (1989), 101–19).

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political movements among Latinos are of more recent vintage than the civil rights movement.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: SOME DATA

Before proceeding to investigate how resources salient for political participation are distributed and the impact of those resources on activity, we begin with a straightforward description of the differences in level of activity among African-Americans, Latinos and Anglo-Whites. Figure 1, which shows the average number of political acts on an additive scale for the three racial/ethnic groups, indicates that African-Americans and Anglo-Whites are fairly similar though the latter are slightly more active.⁷ (We have not put the number of cases on our figures and tables to make the presentation easier to read. The relevant number of cases can be found in Appendix A.) Latinos, in contrast, evince lower levels of overall activity. The difference is fairly large, but these data may overstate the Latino participatory deficit. In our study, we interviewed respondents regardless of their citizenship status. Twenty-two per cent of the Latino respondents are not citizens. Since they are barred from voting – an activity that appears in our scale – it seems reasonable to look at the activity of Latino citizens separately.⁸ Considering citizens only, the mean score for Latinos rises from 1.17 to 1.41, but a substantial gap remains.⁹

⁷ The scale has a standard deviation of 1.63. The following activities are included in the scale (with proportions engaging in the acts in parentheses): voting in the 1988 presidential election (70 per cent); working in a campaign in the 1988 election cycle (8 per cent); making a campaign contribution in the 1988 election cycle (24 per cent); contacting a government official within the past year (34 per cent); attending a protest, march or demonstration within the past two years (6 per cent); being a member of, or a donor to, a voluntary organization that takes stands in politics (48 per cent); working informally with others in the community to deal with some community issue or problem within the past year (25 per cent); serving in a voluntary capacity on a local governing board or attending meetings of such a board on a regular basis within the past two years (4 per cent). The scale is a simple additive measure of the number of acts in which the respondent engaged. As with other studies, the percentage reporting voting is somewhat inflated.

⁸ Although it could be argued that, from the perspective of democratic theory, this should be a study of citizens only, we did make a deliberate choice to interview non-citizens. Non-citizens are affected by American laws, and many are permanent residents (legally or illegally). There are a number of philosophical questions as to whether they are appropriately part of the universe for a participation study. Since they may – and do – participate in many ways even though they cannot vote, we decided to include them since they can always be separated in analysis. Garcia and Arce note that ‘ineligibility from voting does not totally remove the Mexican-born from the electoral process’ (John A. Garcia and Carlos Arce, ‘Political Orientations and Behaviors of Chicanos: Trying to Make Sense Out of Attitudes and Participation’, in Garcia, ed., *Latinos and the Political System*, p. 147).

⁹ Our findings about Latino citizens and non-citizens are consistent with those from the National Latino Immigrant Survey as reported by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials in ‘Political Participation among Latino Immigrants’, *NLIS Research Notes*, 1 (October 1992).

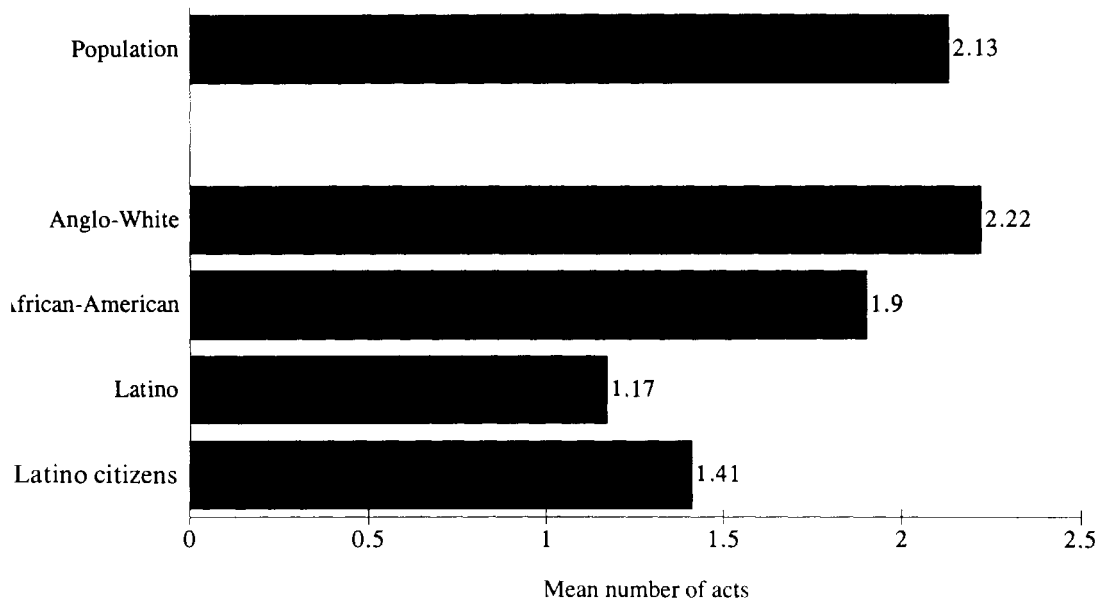


Fig. 1. Mean number of political acts by race/ethnicity

Latinos are, of course, a diverse group. Figure 2 compares average overall participation scores for the main Latino sub-groups – the majority, who are of Mexican origin, as well as those whose roots are in Puerto Rico, Cuba or other parts of Latin America (usually Central America). Americans of Cuban origin, on average, engage in about as many political acts as the national average. Those from Mexico, Puerto Rico or other parts of Latin America are well below the national average.¹⁰

With some interesting variations, the pattern in Figure 1 is replicated when we consider the various kinds of participation separately, as we do in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 compares the three racial/ethnic groups (plus Latino citizens) in terms of their involvement in electoral activity: voting, getting involved in campaigns and making campaign contributions. For the three activities, the

¹⁰ The differences among the Latino groups in terms of political activity are consistent with their different socio-economic profiles, with Cuban Americans more likely to have higher levels of education and higher status occupations. For an overview of social and political data among Latino groups, see Rodolfo O. de la Garza *et al.*, *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992). The number of cases of Latinos from the several groups is, in some cases, small (see Appendix A). The data are similar in our larger screener sample using a somewhat different activity scale since not all participation questions are on the screener survey.

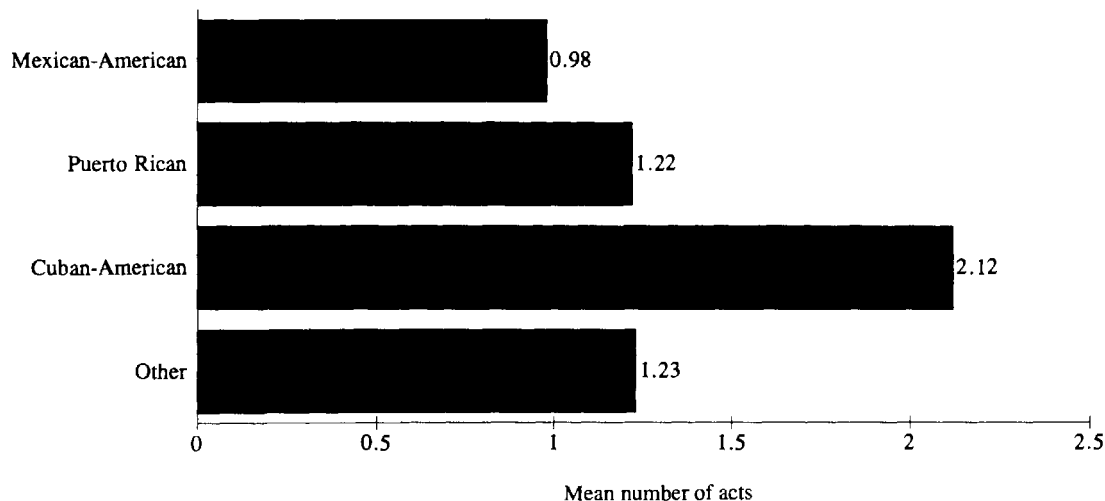


Fig. 2. Mean number of political acts by place of origin (among Latinos)

differences between African-Americans and Anglo-Whites are small in magnitude and inconsistent in direction. African-Americans are somewhat less likely than Anglo-Whites to report voting. When it comes to activity within a campaign African-Americans are more likely to say they have worked in a campaign but less likely to say they have given money.¹¹ In each case, however, Latinos – even Latino citizens – are less active.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of these three groups engaging in various

¹¹ Paul R. Abramson and William Claggett indicate that the gap between self-reported and validated turnout is especially wide for blacks. ('Race-Related Differences in Self-Reported and Validated Turnout', *Journal of Politics*, 46 (1984), 719–38). We are uncertain as to the applicability of their findings to self-reports of other kinds of political activity.

It is interesting to note how many of the African-American electoral activists were supporting black candidates. We asked those who had either worked in a campaign or made a contribution about the race of the candidate they supported. Seventy-four per cent of the forty-one African-American campaign activists reported supporting a black candidate. In contrast, only 31 per cent of the twenty-five Latino activists reported supporting a Latino candidate. (The numbers are estimated effective cases – see Appendix A. The sample contains more actual cases.) More than 90 per cent of the Anglo-Whites reported supporting a white candidate. Because African-Americans were somewhat more likely than other respondents to indicate having been involved in a primary rather than a general election, we suspect that many of the black campaigners were supporting Jesse Jackson in his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Because Anglo-Whites are the overwhelming majority of the population, if citizens supported candidates on a random basis we would expect a majority of Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos to support Anglo-White candidates. Clearly, the process is not random, however: patterns of residential segregation affect the distribution of candidates, and citizens are differentially attracted to candidates who share their race or ethnicity. The bottom line is that all three groups, but especially African-Americans, supported candidates from their own group more often than we would expect on the basis of sheer probability.

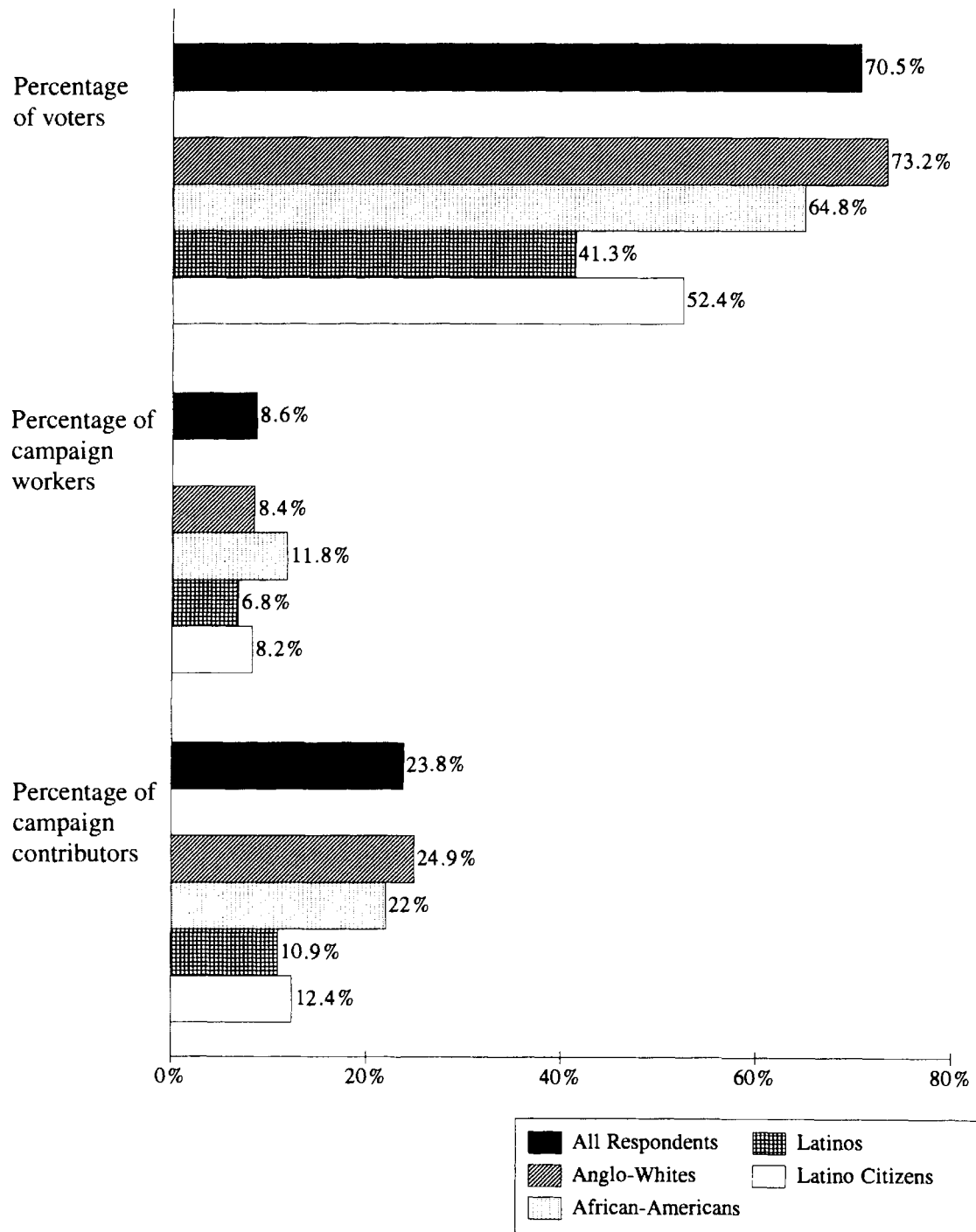


Fig. 3. Percentage active in electoral politics by race/ethnicity

non-electoral forms of participation: getting involved informally on local community issues; serving in an unpaid capacity on a local community governing board, for example, a school or zoning board or attending meetings of such a board; being affiliated with – that is, being a member of or a contributor

to – an organization that takes stands on political issues;¹² contacting public officials; attending protests, marches or demonstrations. The differences among the three groups with respect to a relatively common form of political participation, affiliation with an organization that takes stands in politics, are substantial: Anglo-Whites are considerably more likely than African-Americans and, especially, Latinos, regardless of citizenship, to be involved in a political organization. In contrast, African-Americans and Anglo-Whites are more or less equally active informally in their communities with Latinos lagging somewhat. Latinos, however, are slightly more likely to report membership on a local board.

The figures for contacting and protesting bear closer scrutiny. Although these are both forms of political involvement that permit the communication of clear messages to policy makers, they differ in significant ways. While a larger proportion of the public engages in contacting than protesting, contacting requires a higher level of communications skills than does attending a demonstration, a form of activity that was important to the American civil rights movement and that has often been considered to be the weapon of the weak.¹³ Compared to protests, contacts with government officials permit the transmission of much more precise messages – including concerns about how policies affect an individual. In addition, while protests may be used as a device to promote minority group solidarity, getting in touch with a public official may require a minority group member to cross a racial or ethnic barrier: only 43 per cent of the African-American contactors ($N=82$) reported that the official they contacted was also African-American, and 29 per cent of the Latino contactors ($N=52$) reported that the official they contacted was also of Latino origin; in contrast, 94 per cent of the Anglo-Whites ($N=380$) indicated that the official they contacted was an Anglo-White.¹⁴

The data in Figure 4, which show a sharp contrast in the patterns for contacting and protesting, are consistent with these considerations, especially in

¹² Our measure of organizational affiliation and the definition of a political organization bear elaboration. Respondents were given a comprehensive list of twenty kinds of voluntary organizations – unions, professional associations, service organizations, fraternal groups, block clubs, recreational organizations, political issue organizations and the like. For each category we asked whether the respondent either is a member of or, in order to capture organizational affiliations and charitable donations that derive from responses to mass mailings, has made a contribution to such an organization within the past twelve months. In addition, we asked about contributions of either time or money to institutions like hospitals, museums or schools that are not membership groups but utilize voluntary labour and depend upon contributions from citizens. For each category for which the respondent indicated an organizational affiliation, we asked a series of follow-up questions about that organization (or, if more than one, about the one with which the respondent was most involved). Among those questions was whether the organization takes stands on public issues. We consider any organization that takes stands on public issues to be political and support, even passive support, of such an organization to be a form of political activity.

¹³ The theme of protest as the tactic of the powerless is explored in Michael Lipsky, *Protest in City Politics* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970), especially chaps 1, 6, and 7.

¹⁴ The numbers are estimated effective cases – see Appendix A. The sample contains more actual cases.

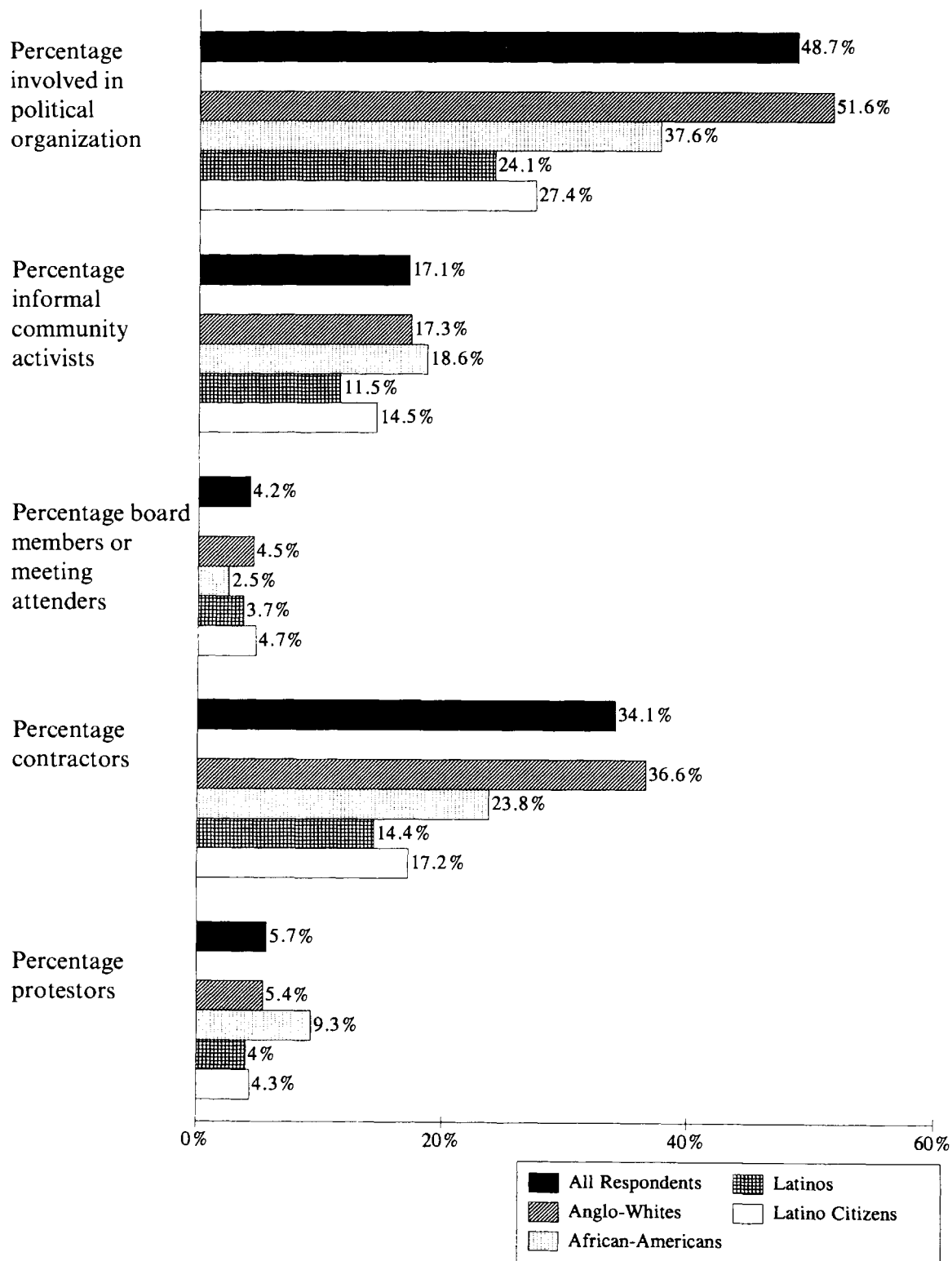


Fig. 4. Percentage active in non-electoral politics by race/ethnicity

relation to the comparison between African-Americans and Anglo-Whites. The former are less likely to contact an official and more likely to protest than are the latter. The differences are quite substantial – especially since overall levels of activity are quite similar between the two groups. The contrast in choice of activity may reflect the fact that African-Americans are as politically mobilized and involved as the Anglo-White portion of the population but have not received – or do not perceive themselves to have received – full acceptance. As usual, Latinos are the least active group. They are only slightly less likely than members of the majority to report having protested, but substantially less likely to report having made contact with a government official.¹⁵

What, then, does the American public look like in racial and ethnic terms if viewed through the lens of participation? Although activist publics vary in their composition from one kind of activity to another, in the aggregate, the participant population represents African-Americans roughly proportionally and underrepresents Latinos substantially. There are, however, significant variations among the various types of activity.

RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPATION

As mentioned, we focus on the resources that facilitate participation because our interpretation of the meaning for democracy of group differences in level of political participation rests upon whether those differences are rooted in disparities in resources or in differences in political interest and motivation. We consider several resources: education, money, time, command of English and a complex of resources deriving from involvement at work and in churches and non-political associations. Our central tasks are to understand the distribution of political resources among these three groups and to ascertain the extent to which differences in resources can be held responsible for disparities in participation.

Education

Investigations of citizen political participation in democracies around the world inevitably find a relationship between education and activity.¹⁶ Education enhances participation more or less directly by developing skills that are relevant to politics – the ability to speak and write, knowledge of how to cope in an organizational setting – by imparting information about government and poli-

¹⁵ Among Latinos, citizens are more likely than non-citizens to contact public officials. Consistent with the notion that protest is an outsider activity, however, Latino non-citizens are slightly more likely than citizens to protest.

¹⁶ Studies of political participation often put the three components of socio-economic status – education, income and occupation – together in a single scale. With respect to voting, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (*Who Votes?*, chap. 2) demonstrate that it is education rather than occupation or income that drives electoral turnout. When it comes to various other participatory acts, however, occupation and income play a complicated role. See Verba, Brady, Schlozman and Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Participation'.

tics, and by encouraging attitudes such as a sense of civic responsibility or political efficacy that predispose an individual to political involvement. In addition, education affects activity indirectly: those who have high levels of education are much more likely to command jobs that are lucrative and to have opportunities to exercise leadership and to develop politically relevant skills at work, in church and in voluntary associations.

Although minorities, especially blacks, have made strides in education since the 1960s, Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos do differ in their educational level. Figure 5, which presents data about the educational attainment of the three groups, indicates that Anglo-Whites are much less likely than African-Americans and, especially, Latinos to have dropped out of school before finishing high school and more likely to have graduated from college.¹⁷

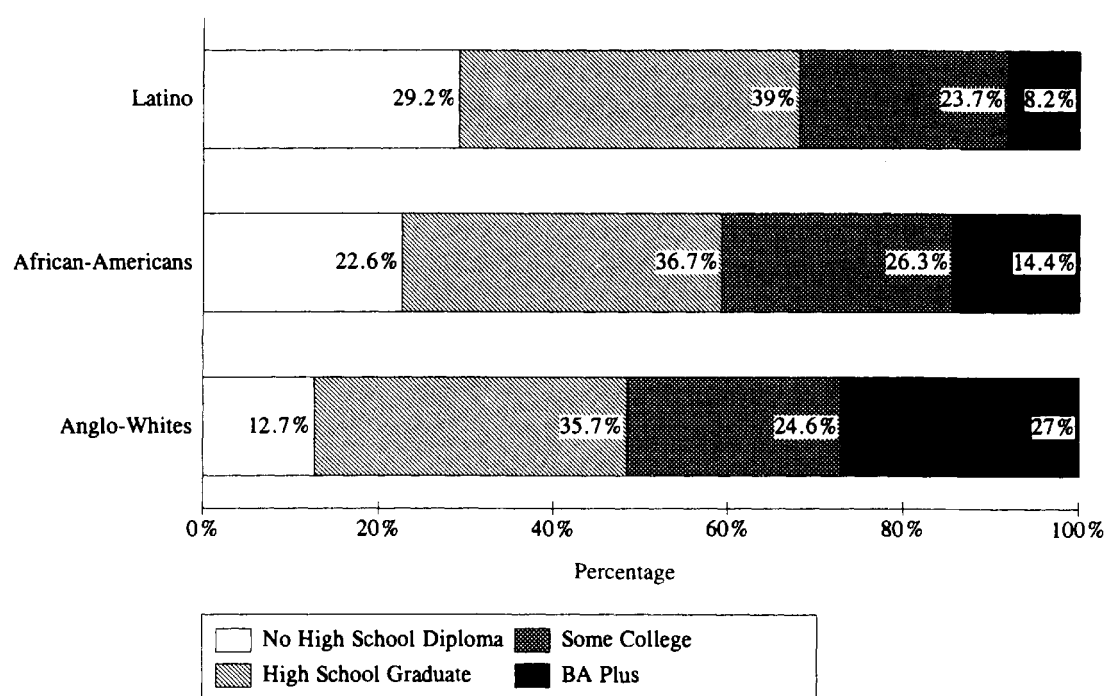


Fig. 5. Educational distribution by race/ethnicity

Money and Time

Money and time are the resources expended most directly in political activity. It is impossible to contribute to a campaign or other political cause without

¹⁷ In this context, it is interesting to note the differences among the three groups across the generations. Considering only those respondents who could report on the educational attainment of both their parents, 20 per cent of the Anglo-White respondents, as opposed to 28 per cent of the African-Americans and 40 per cent of the Latinos, indicated that neither of their parents had gone beyond eighth grade. In contrast, 24 per cent of the Anglo-Whites, 16 per cent of the African-Americans, and 13 per cent of the Latinos indicated that at least one of their parents had graduated from college.

at least some discretionary income. Similarly, it is impossible to write a letter to a public official, attend community meetings or work in a campaign without at least a scrap of leisure. We were able to measure both of these directly: we measured money in terms of family income¹⁸ and free time in terms of the residual time available after accounting for the hours spent doing necessary household tasks of all sorts, working (for those in the work-force), studying or going to school (for those taking courses towards a degree), and sleeping.¹⁹ These resources are distinguished from one another in terms of both their distribution in the population and their usefulness for political activity.

Figure 6 contains data on the average yearly family income and the average number of hours free each day for Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos. Not unexpectedly, minority families have substantially lower incomes than Anglo-White families. Interestingly, however, time as a resource is distributed more nearly equally across the three groups. African-Americans and Anglo-Whites have roughly equivalent amounts of free time. Latinos report somewhat less free time, but the difference is not nearly as substantial as the disparity in income.²⁰

We can understand this contrast more fully by considering the other variables associated with income or free time.²¹ Family income is wrapped into the socio-economic bundle: family income is strongly related to education, occupation as measured by the amount of on-the-job training and education needed for the job, and spouse's employment status. The pattern for free time is quite different. Initially, we had entertained opposite hypotheses as to the relationship

¹⁸ The question about family income referred to the 'total 1989 income before taxes of *all members of [the] family* living at home . . . includ[ing] salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income'. This is clearly only an approximation of the money available to an individual for use in making political contributions. A fuller account would require information about such matters as household expenses and debts, as well as control over household finances. Elsewhere we shall consider the relative importance of personal wages as opposed to family income.

¹⁹ The items about allocation of time asked respondents about a typical day. We would have been able to generate more precise data if we had asked respondents to keep time budgets. However, this would have been too complicated and costly in a survey designed to cover a wider range of concerns. In fact, the results based on our approximations accord very well with the results contained in the literature on time use.

Time has some properties that distinguish it from money as a resource. For example, it is finite in its upper limit and more equally distributed across individuals. In addition, it cannot be banked for future use. For a discussion of time as a resource for politics and relevant citations, see Verba, Brady, Schlozman and Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Participation'.

²⁰ There are differences between our Latino respondents and the remainder of the sample in terms of time use. Latinos spend more time on housework and slightly more time on working and studying. In sum, Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos respectively spent the following hours per day on average in each way: working, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6; household responsibilities, 3.9, 4.4, 5.2; studying, 0.4, 0.6, 0.7; sleeping, 6.8, 6.4, 6.7.

The data on housework are consistent with the family circumstances of the Latino respondents who are somewhat more likely to have children at home (65 per cent in comparison with 45 per cent for Anglo-Whites and 56 per cent for African-Americans).

²¹ The discussion in this paragraph is based on the analysis in Verba, Brady, Schlozman and Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Participation'.

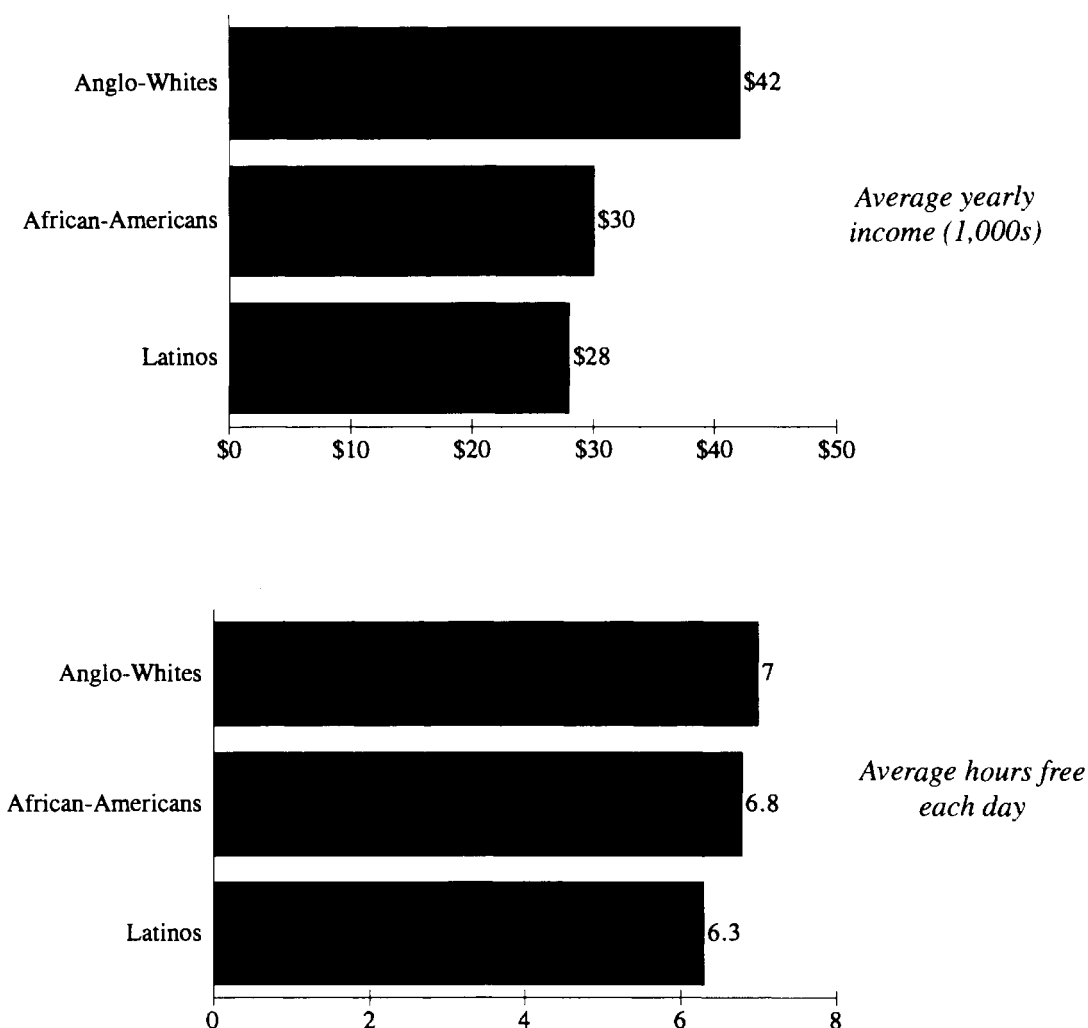


Fig. 6. Average family income and average free time by race/ethnicity

between income and leisure: on one hand, we guessed that the rich might have more leisure because they can afford to hire others to do for them what the less well-heeled must do for themselves; on the other, they might have less spare time because their affluence reflects the large number of hours they put in at the office. In fact, neither hunch is borne out by the data. Socio-economic variables have no independent relationship to free time. Instead, it is life circumstances – having a full-time job, a spouse who works, and children, especially young ones – that dictate the amount of free time available.²²

In short, time, in sharp contrast to money, is a resource relatively equally

²² The regressions shown in Appendix B, in which the dependent variables are income and free time respectively, demonstrate that income is related to the stratification variables that distinguish in various ways the advantaged from the disadvantaged. These variables include education and job level (as measured by how many people the respondent supervises), race/ethnicity and gender. Free time is a function of such life circumstances as having a job, a working spouse, or small children at home. Note that for income, the level of the job is significant but not whether one is working or not; for free time what counts is whether one is working but the level of the job does not seem to affect the amount of time one has outside of work.

available regardless of income, education and (with a slight exception for Latinos) race or ethnicity. The implications for politics are significant. If the dominant political resource is money, political participation will be more stratified than if the dominant political resource is time. And, if minorities have less money, they will be able to participate less effectively.

Language

Proficiency in English is, quite obviously, useful for political action. Foreign-language newspapers and radio to the contrary, English speakers have ready access to many more sources of political information than do those with limited capabilities in English. While certain political activities – in particular, attending protests – do not depend upon knowledge of English, for others – for example, contacting public officials – mastery of English is almost essential.

In comparison with African-Americans and Anglo-Whites, Latinos are at an aggregate disadvantage when it comes to language. About one-fifth of the Latino respondents opted to be interviewed in Spanish when offered the choice.²³ Only 27 per cent of the Latino respondents originally spoke English as their first language at home; 66 per cent spoke Spanish at home as children and the remainder spoke a mixture of the two. While the overwhelming majority of African-Americans and Anglo-Whites – 96 per cent of the former and 97 per cent of the latter – currently speak only English at home, only 42 per cent of Latinos do so. Twenty-six per cent of the Latino respondents currently speak something else (in the vast majority of cases Spanish) and 32 per cent speak a mixture of languages at home.²⁴

INSTITUTIONALLY-BASED RESOURCES

Individuals and groups gain politically relevant resources through their involvements in non-political institutions – at work, in church or in non-political

²³ Because we translated the English interview only into Spanish, we have clearly undersampled those whose English is poor but who speak a language other than Spanish.

²⁴ A majority of Latinos operate in a bilingual environment. Sixty per cent of those whose *first* language at home was Spanish *now* use at least some English at home, divided among those who use a mixture of languages (40 per cent) and those who use English exclusively (20 per cent). In addition, a quarter of the Latinos whose *first* home language was English *now* use at least some Spanish at home: most of them (22 per cent) speak a mixture of English and Spanish, and a few (3 per cent) only Spanish.

There are interesting differences with respect to language among the Latino nationality groups. The Mexican-Americans were considerably more likely to have been born in the United States than members of the other Latino groups and are somewhat more proficient in English. It is, in fact, the Cuban-Americans – who are in terms of their level of income and education the most advantaged Latino group – who are most likely to have been born abroad and least likely to be comfortable in English. Although they are more likely to be citizens of the United States than are the Mexican-Americans and Latinos who hail from other parts of the hemisphere, the Cuban-Americans are least likely to speak only English at home and least likely to have been interviewed in English. Indeed, 59 per cent of the Cuban-Americans speak only Spanish at home, in comparison with no more than a quarter of the other Latino groups.

voluntary associations. They do so in two quite dissimilar ways. First, in a workplace, church or voluntary organization, individuals have opportunities to develop organizational and communications skills that are pertinent to political participation. This aspect of non-political institutional affiliation has received very little attention from scholars.²⁵ The second politicizing mechanism is more frequently discussed: these non-political settings provide exposure to political stimuli. People engage in informal political discussions in these settings. In addition, the agenda at a meeting of even a non-political organization may include consideration of political issues. The weekly sermon at church may cover a political topic. Moreover, these settings are frequently the locus of political mobilization. On the job, in church or in organizations, individuals develop networks of friends and acquaintances that become the source of requests for political involvement. Moreover, leaders and staff in these settings often make deliberate attempts to mobilize the ranks to political action.

Academic students of politics have long been aware of the links between political activity and affiliation with organizations – even explicitly non-political organizations.²⁶ In addition, they have recognized that, although America has

²⁵ Discussing ‘Religion as a Political Resource’, Kenneth D. Wald mentions the extent to which ‘congregational organizations may serve as leadership training institutes for people who lack other means of exposure to organizational skills’, in *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 2nd edn (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1992), p. 35. The studies he cites find (as we do) a strong relationship between attendance at church services and electoral turnout, but not between religious attendance and other forms of political activity. In his study of parish-connected, non-Latino Catholics, David C. Leege finds a relationship between parish activity and political activity and discusses the potential of parish activity for developing the kinds of skills we measure here (‘Catholics and the Civic Order: Parish Participation, Politics, and Civic Participation’, *Review of Politics*, 50 (1988), 704–36).

In their study of voting turnout, Strate, Parrish, Elder and Ford demonstrate the importance of ‘civic competence’. The components of their measure of civic competence (for example, attentiveness to politics and level of political information) are more directly connected to political activity than the skills we discuss here (John M. Strate, Charles J. Parrish, Charles D. Elder and Coit Ford III, ‘Life Span Civic Development and Voting Participation’, *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1989), 445–63).

²⁶ For a review of relevant literature, see David Knoke, ‘Associations and Interest Groups’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12 (1986), 8–9. See also, Verba and Nie, *Participation in America*, chap. 11; Frank R. Baumgartner and Jack L. Walker, ‘Survey Research and Membership in Voluntary Associations’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 32 (1988), 908–28; and Bonnie H. Erickson and T. A. Nosanchuk, ‘How an Apolitical Association Politicizes’, *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 27 (1990), 206–19.

There are many studies of minority, especially African-American, affiliation with voluntary associations and a long-standing debate within sociology as to whether high levels of African-American organizational activity represent ‘overcompensation’. See, for example, Nicholas Babchuk and Ralph V. Thompson, ‘The Voluntary Associations of Negroes’, *American Sociological Review*, 27 (1962), 647–55; Anthony M. Orum, ‘A Reappraisal of the Social and Political Participation of Negroes’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 72 (1966), 32–46; J. Allen Williams Jr, Nicholas Babchuk and David R. Johnson, ‘Voluntary Associations and Minority Status: A Comparative Analysis of Anglo, Black, and Mexican Americans’, *American Sociological Review*, 38 (1973), 637–46; and J. Miller McPherson, ‘Correlates of Social Participation: A Comparison of the Ethnic Community and Compensatory Theories’, *Sociological Quarterly*, 18 (1977), 197–208.

no established church, religious institutions have traditionally been involved in politics, particularly on cultural issues. The centrality of the black churches to black politics has received special note.²⁷ From the earliest days the church was the only institution available to nurture leadership and develop politically relevant organizational and speaking skills.²⁸ It is striking how many black political leaders have been drawn from the ranks of the ministry.

The chance that someone gains resources in a non-political context depends upon several factors. First, an individual must be connected to the institution – must have a job or be affiliated with a secular voluntary association or a church. In addition, it depends upon the particular kind of institution: a job in a public relations firm rather than a hairdressing salon or membership in a fraternal association rather than a softball league is more likely to yield opportunities to acquire resources relevant to political participation. Finally, there is variation within institutions. Therefore, as we consider any racial or ethnic differences in the resources developed in non-political institutions, we shall seek to find where in the process the selection occurs – in differences in institutional affiliations, in the kinds of institutions with which different groups are involved, or in the way that opportunities to practise skills are apportioned within institutions.

The first step is to understand the extent to which there are racial and ethnic differences in involvement in these institutions and, if so, the extent to which these differences are related to the educational disparities we have already discussed. Overall, 66 per cent of our respondents reported being currently employed; 68 per cent being affiliated with a non-political voluntary association;²⁹ and 69 per cent being members of a local church congregation.³⁰ Figure

²⁷ There is extensive literature on the history of the black churches. For a discussion and bibliographical references, see David W. Wills, 'Beyond Commonality and Plurality: Persistent Racial Polarity in American Religion and Politics', in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chap. 9. Although some dispute the role of the black churches, arguing that their otherworldliness reduces political engagement, most agree that they are a powerful political force among blacks. See Hart M. Nelsen and Anne Kusener Nelsen, *Black Church in the Sixties* (Lexington, Ky: University of Kentucky Press, 1975), p. 1.

²⁸ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd edn (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 199, 310, 404–5.

²⁹ Earlier we outlined the way we used a list of twenty organizational categories used to measure organizational ties. As indicated, we consider membership in or contribution to an organization to constitute affiliation. A non-political organization is one that, according to the report of the respondent, does not take stands on any public issues either locally or nationally. Because this question was asked for each of the twenty categories for which organizational affiliation was indicated, we have independent measures of involvement in political and non-political organizations.

³⁰ The group of church members is a composite of two categories. Sixty-two per cent of all respondents indicated that they belong to or are members of a church, synagogue or other religious institution in their own or a nearby community. Those who reported attending religious services more than once a month, but who did not indicate membership in a local church, were asked whether they usually attend services at the same congregation or parish. The overwhelming majority, 84 per cent – or 7 per cent of all respondents – said that they usually go to services at the same church.

7 presents the data for Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos and shows distinctive patterns for each of the three institutional arenas: there are small differences among the three groups with respect to employment; substantial differences in affiliation with non-political organizations with Anglo-Whites much more likely to be involved than African-Americans, and, especially, Latinos; and relatively small differences in church membership with African-Americans the most likely to be members of a local church. Interestingly, although Latinos are slightly less likely than Anglo-Whites to be members of a church, they are more likely to attend religious services regularly. Forty-eight per cent of the Anglo-Whites attend religious services more than once a month – in comparison to 54 per cent of the Latinos and 61 per cent of the African-Americans.

In light of our concern with political participation, it is important to understand how involvement in these non-political institutions relates to educational attainment. As shown in Figure 8, the pattern, once again, varies for the three institutional realms. In terms of employment, there is little stratification by either race or education – except that the least well-educated respondents, a group that is disproportionately elderly and retired, are significantly less likely to be working. There is more stratification when it comes to involvement in non-political organizations. It is well-known that labour unions, the institutions that organize members of the working class and bring them into politics in so many democracies, are quite weak in the United States and that the voluntary association system in America has a strong socio-economic tilt. This regularity shows up in Figure 8, which shows, in addition, differences along racial and ethnic lines. At all levels of education, Anglo-Whites are more likely to be affiliated with a non-political organization than are African-Americans or, especially, Latinos.³¹ Finally, there seems to be no consistent relationship between education and membership in a local church. However, within educational groups, African-Americans are – at three of the four educational levels – the most likely to be associated with a local congregation. These findings do not imply, however, that affiliation automatically begets politicization. As we shall soon see, jobs differ and churches differ in ways having implications for the distribution of resources relevant to politics among racial and ethnic groups.

CIVIC SKILLS

Each of these non-political contexts provides opportunities for the development of civic skills, skills relevant for political competence. Making formal presentations at meetings on the job, co-ordinating the Parent Teacher Association membership drive, arranging the myriad details for the church fund-raising carnival – all of these potentially develop skills that can be brought to political activity. Although effective political participation requires substantive

³¹ On the low level of organizational involvement among Mexican-Americans, see Garcia and Arce, 'Political Orientations and Behaviors of Chicanos'.

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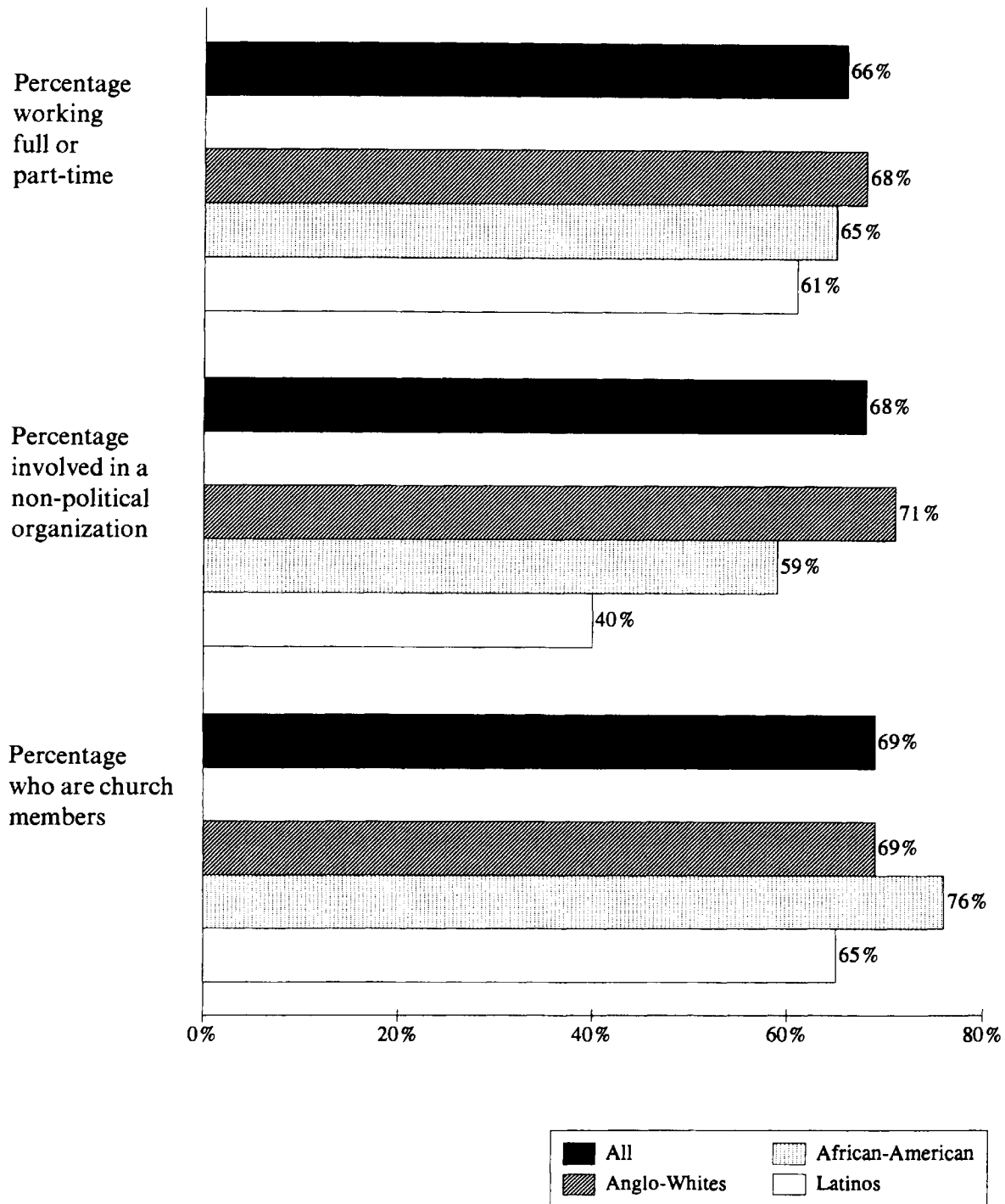


Fig. 7. Involvement in institutions by race/ethnicity

knowledge about the issues, the actors and the processes, those who have much experience speaking in public, writing, working with others, finding information and managing tasks and people – even in non-political contexts – will probably find it easier to undertake these tasks in a political setting and to be effective when they do. In short, those who develop skills in an environment removed from politics are likely to become politically competent. Indeed, those who

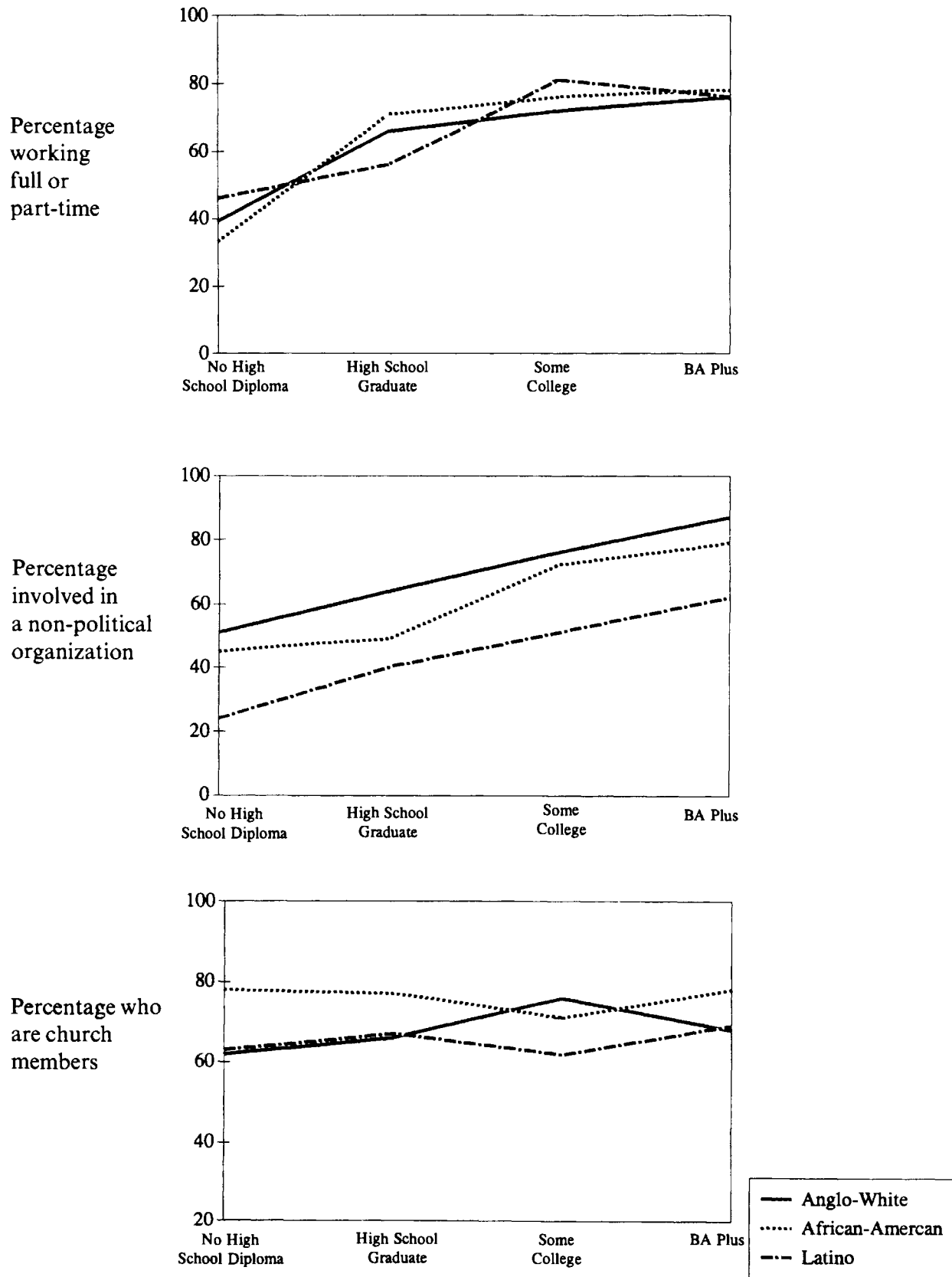


Fig. 8. Institutional involvement by race/ethnicity and education.

enter the higher levels of politics – who for example, run for office – have almost always developed civic skills at work, in non-political organizations or in church, regardless of their previous political experience.³² Our construction of political competence refers to relatively concrete skills that are germane to political participation, not to a subjective feeling of competence. However, those who exercise these skills are likely also to feel more efficacious. Those who routinely write letters, give speeches or organize meetings are more likely to feel confident about undertaking these activities in politics.

In order to learn about the development of these skills we asked those respondents who are employed, who give time to a non-political organization or who give time to educational, charitable or social activities in their churches beyond simple attendance at service whether, in the relevant context, they had within the past six months:

Written a letter.

Gone to a meeting where they took part in a decision.

Planned or chaired a meeting.

Given a presentation or speech.

Table 1 shows the proportion of people who exercise at least one of these skills on the job, in a non-political voluntary association or in church.³³ The data make clear that these non-political settings provide many opportunities to practise skills relevant to politics, especially considering only those who are in a position to exercise these skills – those who are working, who are involved in a non-political association or who belong to a church. The data indicate that the workplace is especially rich in opportunities for the exercise of skills: over three-quarters of the respondents with jobs practise at least one skill on the job. Nevertheless, 39 per cent of those affiliated with a non-political organization and 28 per cent of church members do so as well.

Table 1 also reports the proportions exercising such skills in each of the three race/ethnicity groups and makes clear that there is stratification on this dimension that is different from the stratification with respect to affiliation with these institutions. These data contain several puzzles. Although, as we have seen, Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos are equally likely

³² In our emphasis upon the cultivation of skills in non-political settings, we do not mean to imply that these skills are not also developed in the course of political activity. Those who take part in politics usually receive on-the-job training for future participation. We emphasize the skills acquired outside politics because of our concern with the consequences of inequalities of extra-political resources for equality of political participation.

³³ The data are presented for all members of each of the three groups and, then, for those who might be in a position to obtain the skill – i.e., those who are working, affiliated with a non-political organization or members of a local church. Considering only those who are involved focuses on the opportunities for skill development available within an institution. Looking at all respondents reflects, in addition, the effect on skill development of differences among groups in institutional involvements. The questions about skills learned in an organization were asked about the individual's 'main' organization – based on the one to which he or she gave the most time and money. Thus the skills are for 'members' in a non-political organization that they consider their main organization.

TABLE 1 *Percentage Practising a Skill on Job, in Non-Political Organization and in Church, by Race/Ethnicity*

	On the job		In non-political org.		In church	
	All	Working	All	Members	All	Members
All	55	78	33	39	21	28
Race/ethnicity						
Latino	43	62	18	31	14	20
Af-Am.	50	71	34	39	31	38
White	57	80	35	40	20	28

to have jobs, they are not equally likely to develop skills at work. Instead, Anglo-Whites are considerably more likely than are African-Americans and, especially Latinos to practise skills on the job. The pattern is different for non-political organizations. While African-Americans and Latinos are less likely than Anglo-Whites to be involved, there is no difference between African-Americans and Anglo-Whites who are organizationally affiliated in terms of the proportion exercising skills. Latinos, in contrast, are less likely to practise skills in non-political organizations, even if they are involved. The data for religious institutions also pose an enigma. For African-Americans, the pattern magnifies what we have already seen: not only are African-Americans more likely to be church members, but they are more likely to exercise skills when they are. However, Latinos – who, although they are slightly less likely to be members of a local church, are more likely to attend church than Anglos – are also less likely than Anglo-Whites to practise skills in church, a finding to which we shall return shortly. In short, then, Latinos are disadvantaged with respect to the acquisition of skills in all three spheres.

These findings bear further elaboration. Clearly, the occupational world is a highly diverse and stratified one in which opportunities to do demanding and rewarding work and to acquire politically salient skills are apportioned unevenly across groups distinguished not only by their education but also by their race and ethnicity. Although there have been significant changes over the past few decades in the kinds of jobs available to minorities, disparities remain with minorities concentrated disproportionately in occupations requiring fewer skills and paying lower wages.³⁴ We categorized respondents' occupations in terms of the amount of formal education and on-the-job training they demand. In the top category where jobs require a high level of skill and training, we find 33 per cent of the Anglo-Whites, 21 per cent of the African-Americans, and 11 per cent of the Latinos.

Figure 9 shows the proportion of those who are 'institutionally affiliated' who report that they exercise at least one skill (within educational levels as well as racial/ethnic categories). The data refine our understanding of how

³⁴ See Reynolds Farley, *Blacks and Whites: Narrowing the Gap?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 46–50.

these three domains operate to make opportunities to acquire skills differentially available. With respect to the workplace, Figure 9 shows that the chance to gain politically relevant skills increases sharply with rising levels of education. Although there are ethnic differences within education groups – with Latinos, most notably, having fewer opportunities to practise skills on the job at all educational levels except the lowest – the differences across educational levels are more pronounced than are the differences among race/ethnic groups within educational levels.

In contrast, the pattern evinced by the data for organizations is somewhat less clear. Education seems to play a role within voluntary associations. However, there also appear to be ethnic differences that do not operate consistently across the educational categories and, thus, do not clearly favour one ethnic group over another. It is interesting to note that, at the lowest level of education, 41 per cent of the African-Americans reported an opportunity to practise a skill, more than twice the proportion among their Anglo-White counterparts.³⁵

In comparison with the occupational and organizational domains, religious institutions seem to apportion skill opportunities more democratically. The bottom portion of Figure 9 makes clear that, with respect to opportunities to practise skills, the disparities among educational groups are much smaller for church activists. The data for African-Americans are especially striking. At each educational level, African-Americans are the most likely to exercise politically relevant skills in church. Furthermore, among African-Americans the educational gradient for the exercise of skills is least pronounced. Thus, although, in the aggregate, 78 per cent of the employed and 28 per cent of church members practise at least one skill, among African-Americans who never finished high school, only 21 per cent exercise a skill on the job and 30 per cent do so in church.³⁶ The data for Latinos also bear mention. At each educational level, Latinos are less likely than African-Americans to

³⁵ Considering only those organizations – for example, the United Negro College Fund or Jack and Jill – that have some kind of racial focus, we find an even higher level of skill opportunities for African-Americans. Although the number of cases (17) is small, 75 per cent of the blacks who belong to a race-related organization and who do not have a high school diploma report an opportunity to practise a skill. The data on the role of organizations in connection with the development of skills within the African-American population is consistent with earlier findings of Matthews and Prothro. See Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, *Negroes and the New Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966).

³⁶ Considering separately some of the specific skill opportunities about which we asked amplifies our understanding of the role that black churches can play in providing skills. Among African-Americans having no high school diploma, 30 per cent reported planning a meeting in church, in contrast to 1 per cent who indicated doing so on the job; 27 per cent reported making a public presentation in church, as opposed to 4 per cent who indicated doing so at work. The exception is writing a letter: only 4 per cent said that they had written a letter in church in comparison with 9 per cent who reported writing a letter on the job.

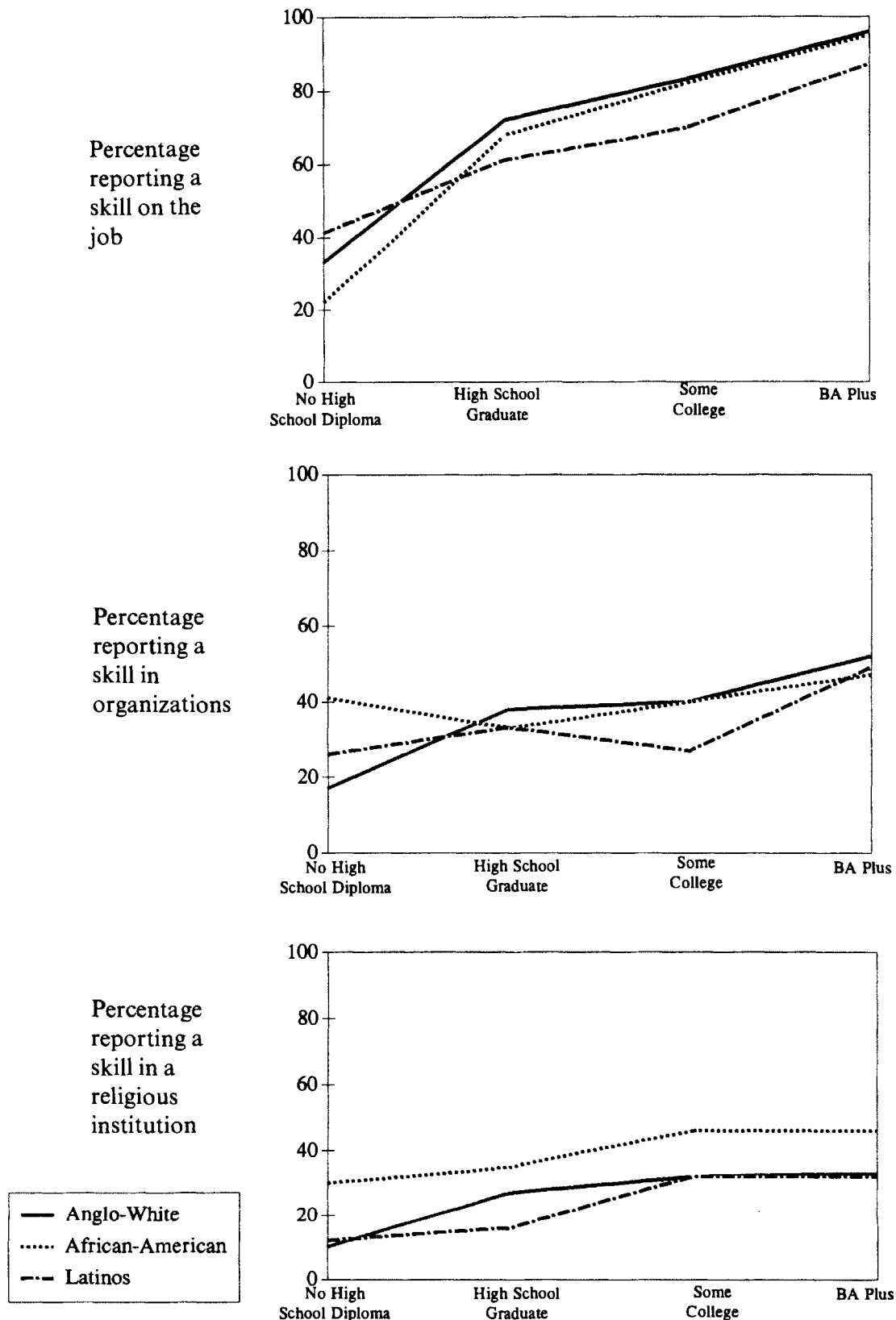


Fig. 9. Civic skills acquired on the job, in non-political organizations and in churches, by race/ethnicity and education (among workers, organizationally involved and church members)

practise skills in church, a gap that is especially wide in the lower two educational categories.

Skills Developed in Church: A Closer Look

Although Latinos are disadvantaged with respect to opportunities to develop skills in the three domains of work, organizations and religious institutions, the anomaly is the religious domain. Earlier we saw that Latinos are not as well educated as African-Americans and, especially, Anglo-Whites, a resource deficit with consequences for their ability to practise politically relevant skills in non-political contexts. While Latinos are as likely to have jobs as African-Americans or Anglo-Whites, by dint of both education and ethnicity, they are less likely than members of the other two groups to be involved in a non-political voluntary association. Furthermore, at work and in organizations, opportunities to practise skills are structured by education; hence, among those with jobs or organizational affiliations, Latinos are less likely to practise skills than are Anglo-Whites or African-Americans. When it comes to the religious domain, however, the Latino disadvantage is more puzzling and deserves further scrutiny.

In order to investigate these patterns, we need to differentiate denominational as well as racial/ethnic groups. Of the three groups Latinos are, by far, the most likely to be Roman Catholic rather than Protestant.³⁷ The irregularity we noted earlier – that Latinos are slightly more likely than Anglo-Whites to attend church services frequently but slightly less likely than Anglo-Whites to be a member of a local church (or to attend services in the same congregation or parish) – is true for Latino Catholics only. Among Latinos, 74 per cent of the Protestants, as opposed to 67 per cent of the Catholics, belong to a local church. For Anglo-Whites, this slight relationship is reversed: 73 per cent of the Protestants and 77 per cent of the Catholics are members of a local church. Church membership for the small number of African-American Catholics is similar to that for Anglo-White Catholics; 76 per cent belong. African-American Protestants, 82 per cent of whom belong to a local church, have the highest levels of church membership. These data suggest that there may be some substance to the stereotype that the Catholic Church in America relates less well to the most recent Catholic immigrants than it does to more established Catholic groups.

The denominational distinction is germane to the exercise of civic skills in

³⁷ In our sample, 25 per cent of the Latino respondents are Protestant, and 66 per cent are Catholic; 85 per cent of the African-American are Protestant, and 7 per cent are Catholic; 62 per cent of the Anglo-White respondents are Protestant, and 26 per cent are Catholic.

church. Protestant and Catholic churches differ – and Protestant denominations differ among themselves – along several dimensions that would seem to be relevant for the extent of lay participation in church matters: Protestant congregations tend, on average, to be smaller; most Protestant denominations allow for greater lay participation in the liturgy; and most Protestant denominations are organized on a congregational rather than a hierarchical basis. Our data show that the average Protestant churchgoer devotes nearly two hours more each week to charitable, social or educational activities in church than does the average Catholic churchgoer.³⁸

Table 2 shows a dramatic difference between Catholic and Protestant respondents in terms of the opportunities to exercise politically relevant skills in church. Protestants were nearly three times more likely than Catholics to report a skill opportunity, a finding that holds both for all members of the denomination as well as for members of local churches. The Protestant–Catholic difference is relevant to the important role that the Protestant churches have played in the political mobilization of African-Americans, a role that the Catholic Church does not seem to play for Latinos.

Considering Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos separately, we see that the disparity between Protestants and Catholics in opportunities to exercise skills in church holds up across the three groups. The proportion of Latino Protestant church members reporting a skill opportunity is slightly lower than the proportion among African-American and Anglo-White Protestants. It is, however, well above the proportion reporting such opportunities among Latino Catholics. Since there are relatively few Catholic blacks in our follow-up sample (21), we also report data from our screener, which had a much larger data base of African-American Catholics, about the number of hours spent each week – beyond attendance at religious services – on educational, social or charitable activities in the church.³⁹ In all three groups, Protestants are much more active in their churches than are Catholics. In short, the Latino disadvantage with respect to opportunities to learn politically relevant skills in church seems to derive from the fact that they are disproportionately

³⁸ The differences between Protestant and Catholic congregations were probably even more pronounced a generation ago. Although Catholic parishes remain, on average, substantially larger than Protestant congregations, among the important consequences of Vatican II has been increased lay participation both in the liturgy and in parish governance through parish councils. The effects of Vatican II have, presumably, been reinforced by enhanced educational levels among Catholic parishioners and the decrease in priestly vocations. See Joseph Gremillion and David C. Leege, 'Post-Vatican II Parish Life in the United States: Review and Preview', *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*, Report No. 15, 1989. Whether the unambiguous distinction between church-going Protestants and Catholics with respect to the number of hours they spend on other activities associated with their churches will disappear in the future we cannot speculate.

³⁹ On our short screener, we asked about neither opportunities to exercise skills nor membership in a local church. Hence, we report the data for regular church attenders (those who attend more than once a month).

TABLE 2 *Civic Skills Exercised by Denomination and Race/Ethnicity*

	Percentage practising a skill		Mean hours church work†	
	All	Members	All	Attendees*
<i>All</i>				
Protestants	26	35	1.5	2.3
Catholics	10	13	0.6	0.8
<i>Anglo-Whites</i>				
Protestants	26	35	1.4	2.1
Catholics	9	12	0.6	0.8
<i>African-Americans</i>				
Protestants	33	40	2.1	2.5
Catholics	12	[16]‡	0.7	1.1
<i>Latinos</i>				
Protestants	20	25	1.8	2.5
Catholics	11	16	0.8	1.1

*Attend church once a month or more.

†Screener data.

‡N = 15.

Catholic.⁴⁰ Since many Latinos have been leaving the Catholic Church for various Protestant sects in recent years, it will be interesting to see whether they have enhanced opportunities to develop civic skills in the future.

The disparity between Protestants and Catholics in terms of the opportunities for developing civic skills in church seems to be related to the characteristics of the two religions rather than to differential socio-economic characteristics of the congregants. We have seen that in each domain – especially at work or in organizations but in church as well – those with high levels of education are more likely to exercise civic skills. Table 3, however, makes clear that the difference between Catholics and Protestants in terms of skill opportunities is not a function of a difference in overall educational level between the two

⁴⁰ Our findings about the absence of church-based skill opportunities for Latino Catholics have met with scepticism from some readers who consider Latino Catholic churches in America to be important centres of political activity. They have suggested that the explanation for the apparent contradiction between their impression and our data lies in the fact that many Latinos report themselves as Catholics, but are only nominally Catholic and rarely attend church. However, data taken from our screener survey suggest that Latino Catholics are not less likely to attend church than are African-American or Anglo-White Catholics. The percentage of Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos respectively attending church more than once a month were 53 per cent, 68 per cent and 68 per cent for Protestants; and 59 per cent, 54 per cent and 63 per cent for Catholics.

religious groups. The difference in skill opportunities shows up quite strongly at all educational levels.⁴¹

TABLE 3 *Mean Number of Civic Skills Practised in Church by Religion and Education Level (Among Church Members)*

	Protestants	Catholics
Below High School diploma	0.27	0.16
High School diploma	0.72	0.15
Some college	1.03	0.22
BA or more	1.03	0.44

EXPOSURE TO POLITICAL STIMULI

Beyond furnishing opportunities to develop skills, social institutions operate in other ways to enhance political activity. In particular, they function to provide exposure to several kinds of political stimuli. For example, at work, in non-political organizations, and in church, people develop networks of acquaintances with whom they may chat about politics and from whom they may receive requests to get involved politically. In addition, the leaders and staff of these institutions may make explicit attempts to mobilize the troops for political activity.

Often, political activity is not the result of a spontaneous decision to take part. Instead, it may be the consequence of a request for involvement from a relative, friend or acquaintance. Thus, it matters for political participation

⁴¹ It has been suggested to us that the distribution between Catholics and Protestants is too crude and that we should distinguish conservative from mainline Protestants. However, this distinction – a useful one for many purposes – does not capture the dimension critical for our concerns. Mainline denominations differ substantially in the extent to which they provide opportunities to learn civic skills in church with, for example, Episcopal churches providing relatively few and Congregational churches providing many more.

Unfortunately, the dictates of space prevent us from engaging in the extended analysis of the specific institutional difference between Catholic and Protestant churches that leads to the difference in skill opportunities. The main factor, however, appears to be, not the characteristics of church members, but the nature of church governance, in particular, the control over local church affairs that exists in many Protestant denominations. Comparing Protestant denominations that differ in terms of their internal governance – the degree to which congregants rather than a denominational hierarchy have control over the congregation – we find that hierarchical denominations provide fewer skill opportunities than do denominations with more congregational self rule. The fact that it is the nature of church governance that affects skill opportunities provides another way in which African-Americans are advantaged by their church involvement. Not only are African-Americans more likely than Anglo-Whites or, especially, Latinos to be Protestant, but they are also more likely to belong to the particular Protestant denominations in which church members have opportunities to exercise civic skills.

Data on this point and further analyses of these religious differences will appear in later publications from this research project.

if individuals are situated in the social networks from which such requests emanate. In our survey we asked in two different ways about requests for political activity. First, we inquired of respondents whether anyone had asked them to become active with respect to particular kinds of activity – giving time or money to a political campaign, taking part on a local issue in the community, contacting a public official, or attending a protest. Fifty-six per cent of the Anglo-Whites – as opposed to 30 per cent of the African-Americans and 23 per cent of the Latinos – reported having been the target of a request for political activity.

We also questioned those who were employed or active in a non-political organization or church whether they had been asked by the institution or one of its leaders to take political action: whether, as part of their job or their activities within their voluntary associations or churches, they had to contact a government official; and whether the organization or anyone in an official position (a superior at work, an organization or church official, or a member of the clergy) had asked them to vote for or against a certain candidate or take other political action.⁴² The data presented in Table 4 demonstrate that there are differences across the three race/ethnic groups in the likelihood of being asked to engage in a politically relevant act in an institutional context. Considering the summary figures for each domain, we see that among those with jobs or organizational or religious affiliations, Latinos are substantially less likely than African-Americans or Anglo-Whites to have been the target of an institutional request for political activity. In an echo of a pattern we have seen before, Anglo-Whites are more likely than African-Americans to have been asked in the workplace. In non-political organizations, the difference between the two groups is much smaller, while, in church, African-Americans are a bit more likely to be asked. In all three settings, however, Latinos are least likely to have received a request to participate.

Hearing Political Messages

Lastly, we can consider the extent to which these non-political settings provide opportunities for exposure to political discussion and messages. On the job, in non-political organizations and in church an individual can take part in informal political discussions and sometimes even hear formal discussions of political issues. We asked various questions about exposure to political matters in these contexts.

Unfortunately, the measures differ somewhat across the domains, and we do not have a measure of political discussion for the workplace. For each category of organization for which the respondent had attended a meeting within the past six months, we asked whether there are sometimes political discussions on the agenda and whether people sometimes chat informally about

⁴² We should note that we do not know how many of these contacts were about routine matters pertaining to the workplace or the administration of an organization or church. The requests to vote or take other political action are more unambiguous as acts of political mobilization.

TABLE 4 *Percentage of Those Institutionally Involved Who Had Been Asked to Take a Politically Relevant Act on the Job, in an Organization or in a Religious Institution by Race/Ethnicity**

	All	Anglo-Whites	African-Americans	Latinos
Asked on the job				
To contact	19	21	11	7
To vote	10	10	10	8
To act politically	18	19	14	10
Any of the above	33	35	22	16
Asked in a non-political organization				
To contact	12	13	7	8
To vote	12	12	9	8
To act politically	24	25	20	16
Any of the above	28	29	23	19
Asked in a religious institution				
To contact	5	5	8	2
To vote	12	12	20	4
To act politically	31	32	31	14
Any of the above	34	35	38	16

*'Institutionally involved' means working, affiliated to a non-political organization or being a church member.

politics at meetings. For churches, we inquired whether, over the past five years, the respondent had attended a meeting in the church about some national or local political issue and how often the clergy discuss political matters from the pulpit.

Table 5 shows the responses to these questions for the institutionally affiliated. In organizations, Anglo-Whites are similar to African-Americans in their frequency of exposure to political messages. Latinos lag behind both groups. Since Latinos are less likely to be involved in organizations, the pattern would be even more pronounced if we were to consider all respondents. In churches, however, it is African-Americans who are more likely to be exposed to discussion of political matters with very little difference between Latinos and Anglo-Whites – they are, indeed, about twice as likely to be so exposed. Interestingly, this is the single dimension for which we have not seen a Latino disadvantage, at least compared with Anglo-Whites.⁴³

⁴³ The absence of a Latino deficit when it comes to exposure to political stimuli in church may provide a clue to the source of the impression that the Catholic churches attended by Latinos are highly politicized. We should also note we did not ask about the subject matter of the political communications from the pulpit or the political meetings attended in churches. Another possible explanation for the impression that the Latino Catholic churches are politicized is that the political cues arising in them may be distinctive in terms of their substantive content.

TABLE 5 *Exposure to Political Messages in a Non-Political Organization or in Church by Race/Ethnicity**

	All	Anglo-White	African-American	Latino
<i>Non-political organization</i>				
Political matters on agenda	12	12	14	7
Informal political discussion at meetings	30	30	27	17
<i>Church</i>				
Attend a meeting about a political issue at church	12	10	25	13
Clergy discuss political issues from the pulpit	25	23	42	21

*Among those institutionally involved.

The Skill Producing Church versus the Politically Mobilizing Church

We have seen that involvement in a religious institution can augment the individual's potential for political activity in two ways: by providing opportunities to practise civic skills and by providing exposure to political stimuli, either explicit political messages or requests to become politically active. The aspects of a religious institution that might foster the acquisition of skills are not, however, necessarily those that would foster exposure to political stimuli. We have no reason to expect that political mobilization or political messages are more common in congregationally organized churches than in hierarchical churches, in small rather than large congregations, or in denominations in which lay members take a larger part in religious rites.

These expectations are borne out by the data in Figure 10, which presents data reported earlier on the likelihood of acquiring skills in Catholic and Protestant churches as well as figures on the likelihood of being exposed to political stimuli in these churches. There is a striking contrast between the data on practising skills and the data on being exposed to political stimuli. As we have seen, the chance to practise civic skills is related to being Protestant or Catholic rather than to race or ethnicity within these religious groups. In contrast, when it comes to being asked to be active in one's religious institution or exposure to political messages, there is little systematic difference between Catholics and Protestants.⁴⁴ In relation to being asked to be active in politics, there is little difference between white Protestant and white Catholic congregants in this regard, while among African-Americans, Catholics report more such requests and, among Latinos, Protestants report more.⁴⁵ In relation to exposure

⁴⁴ The measure of being asked to be active is whether the respondent was asked to engage in any one of the activities listed in Table 4. The measure of exposure to political messages is whether the respondent was exposed to either of the stimuli listed on Table 5.

⁴⁵ The number of African-American Catholics is relatively small – twenty-one effective cases – making the estimate uncertain.

to political messages, Protestants, in general, report somewhat more exposure – with the exception of African-Americans. The differences, however, are small compared to those for the practice of skills. The biggest difference is between African-Americans and the other two groups. African-Americans, regardless of religious preference, are substantially more likely to report exposure to such political stimuli.

The data indicate that, for two quite different reasons, African-Americans get a bigger boost towards political activity from their religious affiliations than do Anglo-Whites or Latinos. First, they belong to churches whose internal structure fosters opportunities to exercise politically relevant skills. This process need not, in itself, be political. When a member of the congregation runs a rummage sale to benefit the church day-care centre or sits on a committee to hire a new minister, skills relevant to politics are practised even though the content is expressly non-political. In addition, African-Americans also seem to belong to more *politicized* churches where, independent of the internal church structure, they are exposed to political stimuli, requests for political participation and messages from the pulpit about political matters. Certainly this is consistent with the important role churches – Catholic and Protestant, especially those congregations with black members – have played in issues of civil rights.⁴⁶

CHURCHES, UNIONS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

The relative equality with which opportunities for skill development and politically relevant stimuli are distributed in churches is a finding of potential significance for the understanding of American politics. Among the ways in which American politics is alleged to be exceptional among the world's democracies is the weakness of the institutions that, in other nations, bring disadvantaged groups to full participation in political life. American labour unions are relatively weak and enrol only a small proportion of the work-force. In addition, the political parties are fragmented, and there are no working-class or peasant parties.⁴⁷ An aspect of American exceptionalism that receives less attention

⁴⁶ We had considered the possibility that the extent of exposure to political stimuli in church would be related to the racial composition of the congregation. In fact, the relationship between the congregational segregation and the likelihood of being exposed to political stimuli is not monotonic. In each case, the mostly black congregations are the most politicizing (see Appendix C). That the all-black churches are somewhat less politicized was surprising to us. The explanation, however, may lie in the fact that the more racially segregated the congregation, the lower the average level of the education of African-American members.

⁴⁷ For a comparative analysis showing the consequences of this particular institutional configuration for political activity, see Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie and Jae-On Kim, *Participation and Political Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), chaps 6–8.

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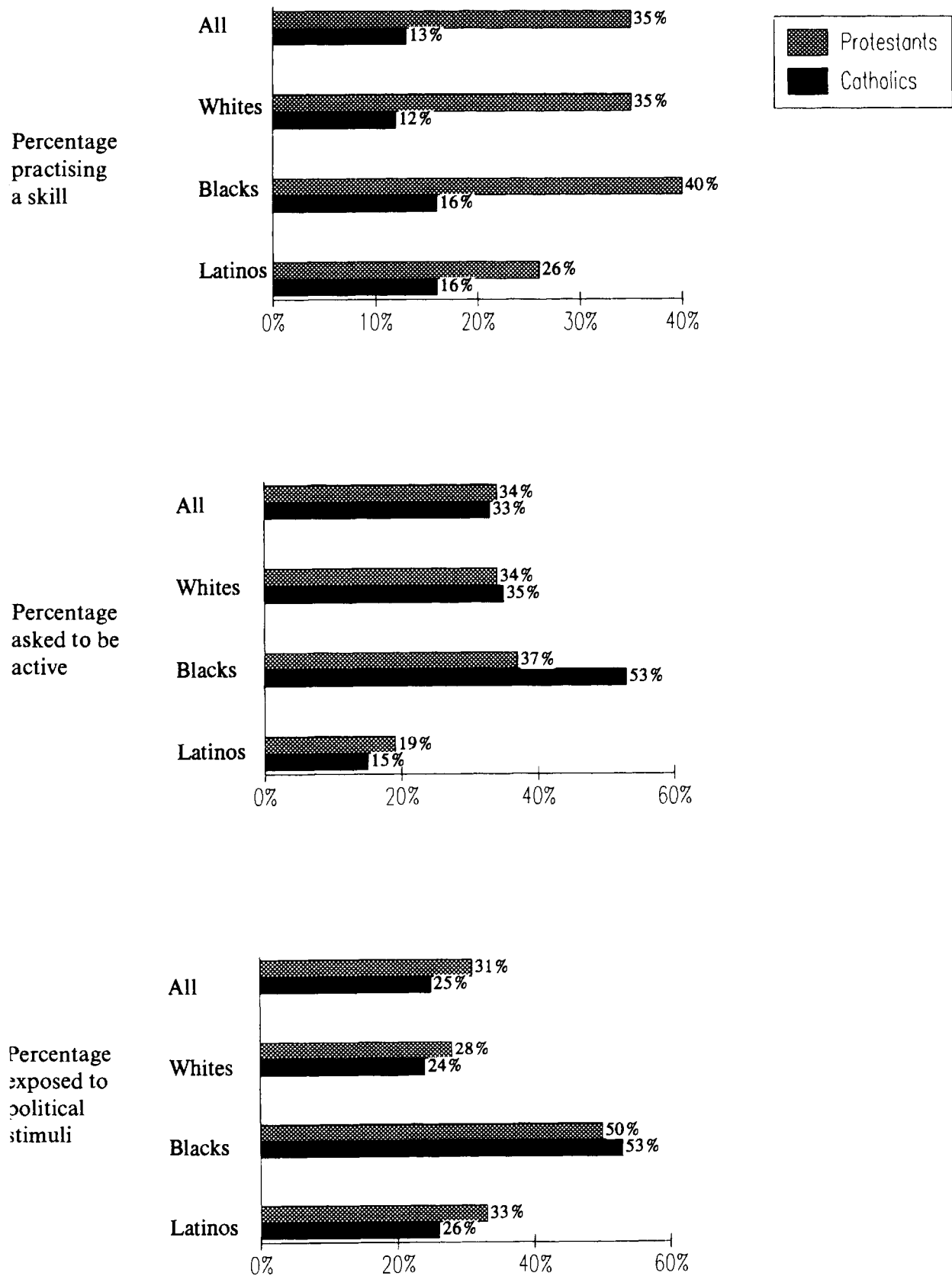


Fig. 10. Political impact of church: percent practising a civic skill or exposed to political stimuli in church by denomination and race/ethnicity (institutionally affiliated only)

in discussions of politics is the depth of religious commitment of American citizens and the relative frequency of their religious attendance.

The data in Tables 6 and 7 permit us to compare churches and unions in terms of their potential impact on political activity in the United States. As shown in Table 6, the members of all three race/ethnic groups are substantially more likely to belong to a local church than to a labour union. This generalization holds even if we restrict our view to potential union members, those with jobs.⁴⁸ In short, many more of those in the work-force are institutionally positioned to develop civic skills or to be exposed to political stimuli in churches and synagogues than in unions.

TABLE 6 *Churches and Unions as Sources of Politically Relevant Resources*

	Percentage church members	Percentage union members	Percentage union members (working)
Latino	54	7	10
African-Americans	70	16	21
Anglo-Whites	62	11	13

Corresponding to the distribution of membership, Americans – regardless of race or ethnicity – are more likely to exercise civic skills or to be exposed to political messages in church than in a union. Table 7 compares religious institutions and unions in terms of the opportunities they provide for institutional involvement (the proportion who have been active within the past year and the proportion who have served on the board or as an officer in the past five years), the development of civic skills (the proportion reporting that they exercised a civic skill) and exposure to political messages (discussion of political

⁴⁸ We had considered adding a final column to the table including only those in occupations that are likely to be unionized, but realized that – in an era of unionization of public employees and professionals like nurses – the appropriate pool is no longer restricted to blue-collar workers. There is a range across occupational groupings in the proportion of union members. In our data, 25 per cent of the workers in the machinist/operative category are unionized compared with 12 per cent of the clerical workers. However, 16 per cent of the workers in the professional and technical work category are unionized.

issues from the pulpit and political issues on the agenda at union meetings).⁴⁹ In all three race/ethnic groups, church members are more likely than union members to be active and to have been an officer or member of a board. Anglo-White and African-American church members, in addition, are more likely than Anglo-White or African-American union members to report exercising a civic skill. Latino church members are somewhat less likely to report a skill in church than are Latino union members – reflecting the somewhat fewer opportunities in churches that Latinos attend.⁵⁰ Church membership is, as we have seen, much higher than union membership. Thus, when we consider all members of these groups – whether or not they belong to a church or union – these differences are even more pronounced. In all three groups – including Latinos – an individual is many times more likely to have acquired a politically relevant resource in a church than in a union. And, consistent with what we have seen before, African-Americans receive the most from church involvement.

The pattern is less unambiguous when it comes to exposure to more specifically political stimuli: discussions of political issues from the pulpit in church or inclusion of political issues on the agenda at union meetings. Among Latinos and Anglo-Whites, exposure to political messages is more likely among union members than among church members. African-American church members, in contrast, are more likely to be exposed to overt political stimuli in church than are African-American union members in a union. Once again, when we consider all respondents – thereby taking into account that church membership

⁴⁹ The measures of civic skills exercised in churches and unions are not completely comparable. All active church members were asked the civic skill questions. However, because we could not ask a detailed battery of items about every one of twenty categories of organizations, we asked the civic skill questions about a single organization only. Therefore, only union activists who are members of a single organization or (if involved in more than one organization) who designated the union as their most important organization were asked the skill questions about their union activity.

Fortunately, we have good reason to surmise that the number of skills reported by such members is not different from the number that would have been reported by those union members who are involved in other organizations beside the union and did not choose the union as their most important organization. We compared the two groups of union members – those for whom we have skill measures and those for whom we do not – in terms of three measures of organizational activity that together are good predictors of the exercise of skills (whether they attended union meetings, were active in the union or had held an official union position). We found no difference in the union activity of the two groups. That those who say a union is their most important organization are not more active in their unions than those for whom some other organization is more important would seem to be an anomaly. However, it is important to recognize that many of the union members for whom we have skill measures are members of no other organization, while union members for whom we do not have civic skill measures are members of some other organization (that is, the one they named as most important to them instead of naming their union). Hence the union members for whom the union is not their most important organization are, on average, more active than those union members citing their union as most important.

⁵⁰ It is interesting that, even though Latinos are less likely than the other two groups to report being active or being on a board in their churches, they are still more likely to report such activity than are Latino union members.

TABLE 7 *Civic Resources and Political Stimuli in Church and Union*

	Church		Union	
	Percentage active last year		Percentage active last year	
	All resps.	Church members	All resps.	Union members
Latinos	19	30	2	21
African-Amers.	32	43	5	29
Anglo-Whites	25	37	2	21
	Percentage who were on board or officer in church in last 5 years		Percentage who were on board or officer in union in last 5 years	
	All resps.	Church members	All resps.	Union members
Latinos	9	13	1	9
African-Amers.	25	33	2	14
Anglo-Whites	15	22	2	13
	Percentage reporting a church skill		Percentage reporting a union skill	
	All resps.	Church members	All resps.	Union members
Latinos	13	21	2	34
African-Amers.	29	40	4	32
Anglo-Whites	19	30	2	27
	Percentage saying clergy discusses politics from pulpit		Percentage saying politics on union meeting agenda	
	All resps.	Church members	All resps.	Union members
Latinos	13	21	3	38
African-Amers.	31	42	6	34
Anglo-Whites	15	24	4	35

is higher than union membership – we find that, in all three race/ethnic groups, exposure to political messages is more likely in church than in a union.

In summary, by providing opportunities for the practice of politically relevant skills, American churches – especially Protestant churches – may compensate partially for the weakness of institutions that elsewhere function to mobilize the disadvantaged. They do this, of course, differentially across the three racial/ethnic groups. For several reasons, African-Americans derive more participatory benefit from their churches. For one thing, they are more likely to belong to a church. In addition, they are more likely to be affiliated with churches that provide opportunities to practise civic skills – Protestant churches usually

of denominations organized on a congregational basis. Finally, they are more likely to be exposed to more political stimuli in church.

PREDICTING POLITICAL ACTIVITY

We have reviewed extensively the distribution among African-Americans, Latinos and Anglo-Whites of resources that might enhance political activity. We have considered such individually-based resources as education, time, money and command of English as well as several resources – in particular, politically relevant skills – that are developed through institutional involvements. All the data point towards an aggregate Latino disadvantage: in no category do Latinos command a disproportionate share of the resources; when it comes to proficiency in English, they are distinctly handicapped. Because so many attend Catholic rather than Protestant churches, even their church activity has a reduced pay-off in terms of skills. The distribution of politically relevant resources between African-Americans and Anglo-Whites is more complex. With respect to certain resources – for example, time – there is parity between the two groups. In terms of others – education, income and the civic skills derived from the workplace – Anglo-Whites predominate. With respect to church-based resources, however, African-Americans command the largest share.

We must now inquire how the resources we have been describing relate to political activity and how large a participation gap between Anglo-Whites, African-Americans and Latinos remains after these resources have been taken into account. To do so, we turn to a regression analysis in which political activity – measured by an additive scale of the various political acts covered in our survey – is the dependent variable and the various resources are the independent variables.⁵¹ Table 8, which contains this analysis, underscores the role of the social institutions of civil society in creating a competent and active citizenry and provides an important elaboration to our understanding of roots of political participation.

In the first version of the regression, we show the impact of the various resources without adding controls for race and ethnicity. Note that education and income are strongly related to political activity, so are the civic skills acquired on the job, in an organization and in church. The regression illuminates the way these non-political involvements are related to political activity. In each case, it is institutionally-derived civic skills that have a substantial impact.

⁵¹ We use ordinary least square (OLS) for this analysis. Elsewhere, we develop a model of how resources affect political participation, consider a number of reasons why OLS might not be the appropriate estimator for this model and develop arguments for a set of instruments that can be used in two-stage least squares estimation of the resource model. This analysis provides a firmer understanding of how people develop skills through institutional involvements. It also demonstrates that the general pattern of results obtained using OLS is similar to that obtained with much more sophisticated estimation methods. Rather than provide a reprise of our efforts to build a suitable model and to obtain acceptable instruments for two-stage least squares estimation, we simply use OLS here. See Verba, Brady, Schlozman and Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation'.

TABLE 8 *Predicting Political Activity by Resources and by Resources and Race/Ethnicity*

Variable	Resources			Resources and race/ethnicity		
	B	SE(B)	Beta	B	SE(B)	Beta
<i>Educational variables</i>						
Years school	0.15**	0.02	0.15	0.14**	0.02	0.15
HS gov't	0.19**	0.03	0.13	0.19**	0.03	0.13
Vocabulary	0.07**	0.01	0.11	0.07**	0.01	0.11
English at home	0.02	0.09	0.00	-0.01	0.10	0.00
<i>Other resources</i>						
Family income	0.06**	0.01	0.12	0.06**	0.01	0.12
Free time	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
<i>Job-based variables</i>						
Working	-0.06	0.04	-0.04	-0.06	0.04	-0.04
Retired	0.46**	0.10	0.10	0.47**	0.10	0.10
Job level	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.04
Job skills	0.09**	0.02	0.10	0.09**	0.02	0.10
<i>Organizational variables</i>						
Org. affil.	0.09**	0.04	0.05	0.09**	0.04	0.05
Org. skills	0.14**	0.03	0.10	0.14**	0.03	0.10
<i>Church variables</i>						
Freq. church attn	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.03
Church skills	0.16**	0.03	0.11	0.16**	0.03	0.11
<i>Citizen</i>	0.94**	0.18	0.10	0.95**	0.18	0.10
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>						
African-American				0.07	0.09	0.01
Latino				-0.06	0.13	-0.01
(Constant)	-2.43	0.33		-2.39	0.35	
R ²		0.29			0.29	

*Significant at 0.05. **Significant at 0.01.

Indeed, of the measures of institutional involvement, only affiliation with a non-political organization is itself significantly related to activity – apart, that is, from the skills that are practised in the institution. When opportunities for the development of skills are controlled, neither working nor the level of one's job has a statistically significant impact on political participation. Neither does attending religious services. It is, then, not simply involvement in a non-political institution, but what happens there that matters for political activity.

Two of the resource variables are not significant in the equation. One of these is free time. One reason is that it is closely related to another variable in the equation, whether the respondent is working or not. Furthermore, as we show elsewhere, free time has little impact on whether or not an individual chooses to become active; but, given the choice to be active, free time has

an impact on how much time the person gives.⁵² Language skill is also not significant in this specification. In this case it is because of its overlap with citizenship. If one re-runs the equation for citizens only or if one re-runs the equation taking voting out of the measure of activity (since voting is so heavily dependent on citizenship), the language variable becomes significant.

The second version of the regression on Table 8 includes dummy variables for race/ethnicity. With the array of political resources in the equation, neither being African-American nor being Latino has an independent impact on political participation. In short, it is resources, not race or ethnicity, that determine who takes part in American political life.⁵³

CONCLUSION: RACE, ETHNICITY AND PARTICIPATION

We began this inquiry by positing that the inequalities of citizen participation characteristic of every democracy become a source of concern to the extent that the politically inactive both differ from participant groups in ways that are germane to politics and do not freely choose their political quiescence. Clearly, Latinos, African-Americans and Anglo-Whites are politically relevant groups. Ample evidence demonstrates the distinctiveness of their political concerns, needs, attitudes and behaviours. Hence, by the first criterion, disparities in political activity potentially compromise democratic equality.

This article has shown that by the standards of the second criterion – that our understanding of the meaning of gaps in participation hinges upon whether the inactive don't want to or can't participate – we have cause for concern as well. We have seen that differences among the three groups with respect to participation can be attributed almost entirely to the unequal political resources at their disposal rather than to rational abstention.

Having located the source of differences in political activity among Latinos, African-Americans and Anglo-Whites in disparities in their politically relevant resources, we might be tempted to conclude that race and ethnicity do not matter when it comes to participation. This conclusion is unwarranted, however. Race and ethnicity matter fundamentally for participation in two different ways. First, some of the resources that we have found to be associated with political activity – most obviously, language and religious denomination and practice – are intimately connected to group identity. Differences in education, income and occupation associated with race and ethnicity that help to account for participatory differences do not define an ethnic group. Religion and language, however, are social attributes that go to the heart of the meaning of ethnicity.

⁵² See Verba, Brady, Schlozman and Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Participation'.

⁵³ Because the causal ordering is less unambiguous than for the skills measures, we omitted from the analysis the other measures of resources derived from non-political institutions: the measures of requests for political activity and exposure to political stimuli. When included in the equation, these measures are also significant and the R^2 is higher. None of the other relationships is disturbed, however, and the skills measures retain their impact. For further discussion see Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie, 'Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Participation'.

Moreover, race and ethnicity are surely germane to the content of messages communicated to public officials through the medium of citizen activity. Members of minority groups who participate less are disproportionately poor, face discrimination in jobs and housing, or have difficulty communicating in English. Whether the disparities in participatory resources result from social class differences associated with race and ethnicity or from attributes more fundamental to group identity does not change the fact that policy makers are hearing less from groups with distinctive needs and concerns arising from their social class and group status.

APPENDIX A: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION SAMPLE

Our data come from a two-stage survey of the voluntary activity of the American public. The first stage consisted of over 15,000 telephone interviews with adult Americans conducted by the Public Opinion Laboratory of Northern Illinois University and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) during the last six months of 1989. At this stage respondents were selected randomly from telephone exchanges matched to the primary sampling units of the NORC national, in-person sampling frame. This clustered telephone sample was designed to be representative of the American population. Within each household, adults were chosen at random using a Kish table. To select respondents for a second stage of in-person interviews, the sample of 15,000 was first reweighted to adjust for the fact that the screener had yielded a disproportionate share of women. The sample was then stratified by race and ethnicity (black, Latino and all other) and by levels and type of political participation. Blacks, Latinos and political activists were oversampled with weights ranging from one for inactive Anglo-Whites to sixteen for highly active Latinos. In the spring of 1990, NORC conducted in-person interviews of an average length of almost two hours each with 2,517 of the original 15,000 respondents. Most data reported in this article come from the longer re-interview. We have followed the standard procedure of re-weighting our sample to make it representative (using the reciprocal of the sampling weights) and setting the effective sample size to 2,517. The proportion of each subgroup, say blacks, in the reweighted file is, therefore, equivalent to their proportion in a representative sample of the population.

The estimate of the effective number of cases for the calculation of sampling errors in any subgroup of the sample is complex because of the variable weights used. Table A1 contains our estimates of the effective sample size for the various subcategorizations used in this article. A full analysis of the method of estimation is available from the authors and will be included in future publications from this research project.

TABLE A1 *Number of Cases*

	Latinos	African-Americans	Anglo-Whites
<i>Tables 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8</i>			
<i>Figures 1, 4, 5, and 6</i>			
All	341	330	1,047
Working	215	219	699
Affiliated non-political org.	130	190	717
Church members	217	249	744
<i>Table 2; Figure 9</i>			
<i>Follow-up sample</i>			
Protestants	79	270	650
Church members	54	220	474
Catholics	227	21	274
Church members	155	15	211
<i>Screener sample</i>			
Protestants	200	1,144	7,503
Regular church attenders	136	781	3,952
Catholic	605	87	3,006
Regular church attenders	378	47	1,773
<i>Table 3; Figures 7 and 8</i>			
No High School diploma	110	67	133
High School diploma	118	123	373
Some college	83	89	258
BA and above	31	51	283
<i>Figure 2</i>			
Mexican-Americans	192		
Puerto-Rican	43		
Cuban-American	22		
Other	79		
<i>Figure 3</i>			
Latino citizens	270		
Latino non-citizens	70		

APPENDIX B

TABLE A2 *Predicting Family Income and Free Time by Stratification and Life Cycle Variables*

Variables	Family income		Free time	
	B	SE(B)	B	SE(B)
Education	0.56**	0.05	-0.06	0.05
Working	0.07	0.08	-2.71**	0.09
Job level	0.15**	0.05	0.06	0.06
Black	-0.14	0.19	0.04	0.23
Latino	-0.46*	0.24	-0.41	0.28
Gender	-0.27*	0.12	-1.20**	0.14
Spouse working	0.96**	0.12	-1.04**	0.15
Pre-schoolers	-0.14	0.12	-1.18**	0.14
School age children	0.13	0.16	-0.74**	0.19
Age 25-34	-1.13**	0.22	0.44	0.26
Age 35-44	-0.83**	0.23	0.95**	0.27
Age 45-54	-0.08	0.25	1.48**	0.29
Age 55-64	-0.64*	0.25	1.59**	0.30
Age 64+	-1.19**	0.25	3.38**	0.29
(Constant)	(2.33**)	(0.31)	(11.39)	(0.36)
R^2	0.19		0.53	

*Significant 0.05 level. **Significant 0.01 level.

Note: Dummy variables for various age categories are added to the equation to take into account the confounding effects of age on income and free time.

APPENDIX C

TABLE A3 *Percentage of Black Protestant Church Attenders Reporting that They Had Been Asked to be Politically Active*

Nature of congregation	By practising a skill	By being asked to take political action	By being exposed to a political message	Total number of effective cases*
Mixed	51	36	59	73
Mostly black	60	63	62	61
All black	42	35	52	109

*See Appendix A.