Race and the Media

Are African-Americans informed?

Are Latinos informed?

Who are the most politically informed? Cubans? Who are the least informed? Mexican-Americans?

Why is this important? - electoral accountability is often weak in historically black districts because of inadequate information.

Explaining variation in political knowledge

Knowledge = ability, opportunity, motive

ability = education
opportunity = news consumption, church
motive = political interest, vote
control variables: gender, age, homeowner.

Findings

BLACKS
- television doesn't help
- Newspapers do
- political church doesn't help
• voting does (a lot)
• gender matters
• age matters

MEXICAN
• television does matter but newspaper doesn't
• English media matters

PUERTO RICAN
TV doesn't matter
Newspaper reading does

CUBAN
media doesn't seem to matter

What effect does the media have on race relations?

Does it affect our perception of crime and minorities?

Does segregation interact with media messages to influence opinions?

Yes, in a good way: integrated friendships, churches, workplaces reduces prejudice and increases tolerance.

No: often groups are in competition with one another which can create hostility. Or unequal levels of resources and
power cause resentment. Group threat theories suggest racial proximity increases prejudice, heightens fears.

Yes: even if interaction is competitive and negative, contact erodes monolithic stereotyping, creates multiple subcategories for members of a particular group.


How does the media influence attitudes? "Lacking such firsthand information, whites must base their responses on whatever information they may have at their disposal"

Media: Local News relies heavily on crime reporting.

Media message: crime is violent and perpetrators are nonwhite, victims are white

This is consistent across states, cities and media markets

Hypothesis: individuals from heterogeneous neighborhoods will be more likely to possess non-violent crime schemas for blacks and therefore be less susceptible to the negative influence of local news
Methodology:
2 Experiments - 289 whites shown 12 minute news selection. News clip was manipulated to change type of crime and race of suspect.

second study: gang or non-gang crime; race of suspect. 98 white respondents

Findings:
context matters. white respondents that live in more homogeneous areas are more likely to be affected by the black cue.