

ABSTRACT

This study addresses the scholarly debate between assimilation and transnationalism through analyses of public opinion data collected mainly in California and from residents of Chinese descent whose families originated from the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and elsewhere in Asia. It explores the empirical relationship between Chinese Americans' concern about the political condition of the ethnic homelands in Asia and their patterns of political participation in the United States. Not all transnational concerns are equal. This study distinguishes between the democratic-oriented and nationalist-oriented transnational political behavior. It also separates voting registration from other types of political participation. A main argument of this study is that the relationship between political assimilation and transnational linkages depends both on the nature of the transnational political concern and on the type of political participation. Transnational political concerns are found to influence the degree of participation in regime-influence (e.g. making campaign contributions) but not regime-support (e.g. voting registration) acts. Also, only those homeland concerns that are consistent with US foreign policy interests such as regarding the democratic future of Hong Kong after the 1997 transition are found to have a positive impact on participation.