Latine Electorate: Impact of Political Representation, Political Salience, and Group Consciousness in Local Elections

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As the United States political landscape has evolved, so has the Latine population. The Latine population has grown in both size and political influence. Despite their growing size, Latine votes at some of the lowest rates in elections at every level. Many have attributed this lack of participation to the lack of political representation, group consciousness, and political salience. To address the disparities in political engagement, this thesis argues that political representation, group consciousness, and political salience will all have a positive effect on the mobilization of Latine students at Cal Poly Pomona. The findings show that each variable does positively impact voter turnout for Latine students.

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Introduction

In order to keep our democratic system of government in the United States, it is imperative for our citizens to exercise their right to vote. Political participation in the form of voting allows citizens to amplify their voices in government and ensures the government is doing its job to adequately serve the American people. However, in America, there are massive disparities among voters who are politically engaged. For example, the Latine population votes at the smallest rates when compared to other ethnic groups.

The term "Latine" is a gender-neutral term that aims to group and define a very diverse set of nationalities and ethnic groups. The development of the word "Latine " grew out of the problematic nature of the words Latino and Latinx. The term "Latino" is a masculine word that excludes groups of people who do not identify with a specific gender, and the term "Latinx" was given to the Latine community by white Americans. The term "Latinx" completely disregards the Spanish-speaking community attached to the Latine population. There has been a ton of discourse surrounding the categorization of the Latine community. Ultimately, it is up to each individual's discretion to decide what term to use. However, for the sake of inclusivity, this thesis will utilize the term "Latine."

The term Latine includes but is not limited to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Venezuelans, and Guatemalans just to name a few. The diverse makeup of the Latine community has made it difficult for researchers to appropriately investigate their voting patterns in the United States. However, this thesis aims to identify the factors that impact whether Latine can be mobilized to vote or not and the role of political representation, political salience, and group consciousness on Latine students' voter turnout in Local Los Angeles county elections.

Latine are both the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. As the next generation of citizens becomes eligible to vote, the Latine population will make up close to 40% of eligible voters in the year 2030 (Michelson, 2015). Researching Latine has never been more important to United States politics because Latine populations have electoral power to shape the political climate of our democratic system. Researching Latine will allow us to understand how and why Latine vote. In order to accurately understand the methods that can mobilize Latine student voters, we need to investigate the variables that can hinder engagement.

In the past, a majority of researchers have focused on the historical patterns of Latine voting in the United States. Looking at historical data is a great indicator of past specific patterns within the Latine community. However, the variables that were investigated and tested are outdated and are not always applicable to the current political climate. In the past three decades, the American political landscape has completely transformed and evolved. As a result of this evolution, a lot of these theories do not apply to the Latine community in the same way they once did.

Past research has failed to apply their theories to the current and future political climate of the United States. Along with outdated theories, much of the research done on the Latine community solely focuses on the factors that hinder engagement. There is very little research that actually aims to find a solution to this lack of political participation. This thesis aims to address the issues that limit Latine political participation while providing a possible solution to encourage political participation in the future.

1.1 Relevance to the subfield

Historically, the subfield of American politics has focused on a specific type of voter. Academics solely focused their research on White Americans, while completely excluding Americans of color from their research. The exclusion of Latine and other communities of color has disproportionately caused there to be little to no research on these communities. This has completely isolated a large number of the population from academic research. Even with the development of race and ethnic politics as a subfield of American politics, research on the Latine population specifically is still insufficient. This lack of inclusion and research has prompted me to investigate the Latine population in more detail.

1.2 Research Question

With the Latine population growing in large numbers, it is essential that we investigate the factors that can influence Latine decisions to vote and not vote as it can impact future elections across the United States. In this thesis, I will review and explore the methods that have helped influence and hinder political engagement in the Latine community using quantitative data. I will conduct a survey consisting of ten questions. In order to achieve this purpose my research will focus on the question of which factors influence Latine students to vote during local Los Angeles County elections. To address my hypothesis, I collected my data specifically from Latine students at Cal Poly Pomona who are residents of Los Angeles County. Collecting survey data from students at Cal Poly Pomona will allow us to test our hypothesis with a diverse group sample.

In order to properly understand the voting patterns of Latine in the United States my research will focus on three areas. I will identify the levels at which political representation, political salience, and group consciousness will impact Latine students' voter turnout during local Los Angeles County elections. Additionally, this thesis argues that political representation, political salience, and group consciousness will positively impact Latine students' voting engagement during local elections.

To explain, past research on voter participation has found that political representation and political salience can impact a person's desire to vote, thus this thesis will investigate if those theories can apply to Latine students in Los Angeles County. In addition, past research has found that group consciousness can exist within the Latine community, but much of this research is outdated and is not reflective of our contemporary society. Thus, this thesis will investigate whether group consciousness exists within the Latine community and if it can be used to mobilize the Latine population. The Latine community is the largest growing ethnic group in the U.S., yet they continue to be among the lowest politically active when compared to other ethnic groups. This massive disparity in voting behavior has led to political apathy and isolation of the Latine population from the American polity. Lack of political mobilization in the form of voting is dangerous for the Latine community because it can lead to an abundance of issues that negatively impact their community. It is important for us to ask ourselves, "How can we be a government that is "for the people, by the people " if the "people " do not vote?

Overall, investigating the impacts of political representation, political salience, and group consciousness is essential in understanding the voting patterns of Latine students in the United States. Understanding their voting patterns will showcase how Latine citizens engage in politics and what methods can be used to mobilize them. The Latine community has been longly referred to as the "Sleeping giant," because of their lack of participation but ability to impact elections and essentially determine the future of American democracy. As we become aware of the mobilization tactics that work for the Latine community, we can aim to implement them in our communities with the hope of creating a more politically engaged group.

1.3 Argument

Three arguments are formulated with the research question of this thesis. I argue that an increase in political representation will have a positive impact on Latine voter turnout in Los Angeles County. This essentially means that when people who identify as Latine are in positions of political power, Latine students in Los Angeles County will be more inclined to vote than when there is no Latine representation. Secondly, this thesis argues that Political Salience will have a positive impact on Latine voter turnout in Los Angeles County. This means that when issues that are important to or affect the Latine population are either on the ballot or addressed by politicians then the Latine population will be more inclined to vote. Additionally, this thesis argues that group consciousness will positively impact Latine voter turnout in Los Angeles County. Essentially, this argues that when Latine voters feel a close connection to their Latine identity they will be more inclined to vote on issues that affect their group which will increase their voting behavior.

Understanding these three factors is essential in understanding what methods can be used to mobilize Latine voters.

Literature Review

In this section of my thesis, I will review and evaluate existing literature pertaining to the study of the Latine community. Specifically focusing on the role political salience, political representation, and group consciousness have on voting behavior. Additionally, in this section, I also address the factors that hinder Latine voter turnout in order to highlight the methods that can have a positive impact on Latine student voter turnout. As I bring forth relevant and existing research about my hypothesis, I will also shed light on the lack of information about the Latine population. For example, I will address the effects of generalizing and grouping all Latine members under one umbrella. The grouping of such a diverse ethnic group has created limitations to past research.

2.1 Political Barriers in the American Electorate

Academics that focus their research on the political barriers of voting have largely focused their research on the factors that make it difficult for Americans to participate in the American electorate. The authors in "Beyond Ses: A Resource Model of Political Participation," identify political participation from a general perspective focusing on American citizens. They investigate the influence of "time, money, and civic skills" on the voter's participation (Brady et al., 1997). Their research showed that socioeconomic status and civic knowledge would directly impact whether or not a person votes (Brady et al., 1997). This article highlights the difficulty average Americans face that keeps them away from the ballot box. Understanding the barriers average Americans encounter that affect their political participation is important.

However, it is important to understand that the article focused on the American perspective and did not include how those factors impact Latine. The intersectionality of the Latine populations puts them in a position where all the barriers that apply to average Americans apply to them along with the key factors like group

consciousness, political salience, and political representation (Barreto, 2007). The Latine population is disproportionately affected by some of the lowest rates of education, income, and political participation (Alvarez and Bedolla, 2000). Latine are challenged in the name of their intersectionality which makes it difficult for them to become politically engaged. However, this does not mean Latine cannot be mobilized or encouraged to vote (de la Garza and Seung-Jin Jang, 2011). Understanding the key factors that encourage Latine to vote and mobilize politically is a crucial step in increasing their voting behavior.

2.2 Ethnic Identity and Group Consciousness

In order to understand what can encourage or deter the Latine population from voting we need to understand who the Latine population consists of. The Latine population is extremely diverse and as such, they can be identified as an ethnic group based on race, national origin, and pan-ethnic identity (Masuoka, 2008). According to scholar Natalie Musuoka in "Defining the Group: Latino Identity and Political Participation," finds that the diverse classification of each subcategory influences Latine group consciousness in different ways. In her journal, she found that Latine in the United States identify with racial group identity which is more likely to impact the rates at which Latine vote when compared to pan-ethnic and national origin political participation (Masuoka, 2008). The reason most Latine in the United States identify as a racial group is due to their unique views and experiences in the world that impact their political choices (Mausoka, 2008). Taking a closer look at Latine from a racialized perspective allows for the link between lived experiences and race that ultimately impacts political mobilization and preferences (Mausoka, 2008).

In connection to ethnic identity, group consciousness plays a pivotal role in Latine political engagement. Group consciousness is a phenomenon described by researchers as a group identification where people have a sense of belonging or attachment to a social group (Valdez, 2011). Group consciousness also rests on the idea that the group believes collective

actions are the best way for the group to improve its status or interest (Valdez, 2011). Group consciousness creates a sense of closeness to one's ethnic group. However, a key component of group consciousness is that it does not constantly exist and is not at the forefront of people's thoughts on a daily basis (Miller et al., 1981). Instead, group consciousness can be triggered; it can be triggered by a few things like a threat to your group or an issue that is politically salient to the group (Miller et al., 1981). Latine's complex ethnic identity is directly connected to the way group consciousness exists and how it plays out. Similar to the two, co-ethnic voting, substantive, and descriptive representation, are connected to not only Latine's ethnic identity but also impact the way Latine vote.

2.3 Co-Ethnic Voting, Descriptive, and Substantive Representation

Political researchers have found that political representation can also have a positive impact on Latine voting behavior. Descriptive representation refers to the idea that constituents are more effectively represented by legislators who have similar descriptive characteristics. This can include but is not limited to race, sexuality, gender, etc. Researchers have found that an increase in descriptive representation leads to Latinos feeling less alienated in politics and can motivate Latine to vote and become more politically engaged (Pantoja and Segura, 2003). More specifically, the authors examine the impact of Latino representatives in the state assembly, Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives and the effect of political alienation.

Their findings affirm that when Latine are represented in political institutions, they do not feel alienated and feel included in American politics (Pantoja and Segura, 2003). The feeling of inclusion has a positive impact on Latine voting and can encourage Latine to vote at higher rates. Similarly, the authors found that when Latine are not descriptively represented, they are less likely to participate in politics if they are also not substantively represented (Pantoja and Segura, 2003).

Moreover, Lublin's article examines the impact of descriptive representation through the examination of majority-minority districts. The researchers found that when Politicians emulate and carry similar descriptive characteristics as their constituents there is an increase in voting and political participation (Lublin et al., 2009). When looking at the Latine community, there is an increase in political support of candidates who are or look "Latine " even if their policies are not directly aligned with their views. This feeling stems from the idea of descriptive representation and the belief that people will feel more represented if politicians descriptively represent them (Lublin et. al., 2009). This article showcases the impact of descriptive representation in voting and how it impacts the Latine community specifically. In theory, if politicians were more descriptively representative of Latine there would be increased support for Latine political candidates and increased political participation via voting.

A similar phenomenon that manifests from descriptive representation is Co-Ethnic Voting. Co-Ethnic voting is the idea that people are more likely to vote for a candidate if they believe that candidate is also of the same ethnicity (McConnaughy et al., 2010). When we take a closer look at how this manifests for Latine it is found that when Latine does not physically see the candidates to assume that they are of the same ethnic background, they are more likely to respond to ethnic cues and look at factors like a last name that could cue and tie candidates to a particular ethnic group (Barreto, 2010).

An example of this phenomenon can be seen when we look at the region of El Paso, Texas. El Paso, Texas is a conservative border town in the Southwest portion of Texas, but it typically supports more progressive policies on issues like immigration (Samuels, 2023). However, El Paso has constantly reelected Congressman Henry Cuellar despite being heavily anti-immigration, pro-gun, and fairly conservative (Samuels, 2023). What researchers have found is that he is a clear example of Co-ethnic voting. Despite not representing policies that a majority of his Constituents agree with, he is continuing to be reelected. His Last name serves as an ethnic cue to prime and encourage Latine voters to vote for

him; this is an example of co-ethnic voting.

However, a caveat to this theory is that Latine are not easily swayed or manipulated, instead, this phenomenon only works when a Latine candidate has existing legitimacy (McConnaughy et. al., 2010). If there is a random unknown candidate on the ballot with a "Latine" last name this theory will not apply and will not have a notable impact. Co-ethnic voting can be connected to descriptive representation in that they both focus on a type of group membership or identification that can lead to the mobilization of Latine.

To reiterate, author Masuoka's main argument focused on the racialization of Latine in politics; she found that this would increase Latine political participation (Masuoka, 2008). In connection to the findings in Masuoka's article, authors Ender and Scott build upon her argument and investigate further. They found that when politicians descriptively represent minority groups there is an increase in support for them (Ender and Scott, 2019). This highlights the importance of descriptive representation in politics and helps us understand how it can impact Latine. This strategy can be used to mobilize Latine to vote and become more politically engaged (Ender and Scott). Despite the potential for positive impact, lack of descriptive representation also holds the power to deter Latine from the ballot box.

Similar to descriptive representation, substantive representation also yields a large impact on Latine voting behavior. In practice, Substantive representation is when politicians' policies and actions are reflective of their policy preferences. Author Hoi Ok Jeong found that descriptive representation and substantive representation work hand in hand in that both work, in the same way, to positively impact Latine political engagement (Jeong, 2013). It was even found that when Latine felt that their representative substantively represented them, they were more likely to vote and become politically engaged not only when voting but Latine was also more likely to become politically engaged in other ways like donating to a campaign, attending a public meeting, etc. (Jeong, 2013). This highlights the importance of Substantive representation and its ability to mobilize Latine to not only vote but

also become more politically engaged (Bedolla and Hosam, 2021). Latine representation matters and can have a massive impact on whether Latine vote and become politically engaged. Increased political representation can increase the rates at which Latine vote. Alongside representation, political salience and racial threat theory serve as key markers for Latine's voting behavior.

2.4 Political Salience and Racial Threat Theory

Academics have shown that Political salience is a key factor that can positively impact Latine voters. Political Salience essentially means that people will become more interested in and engaged with policies that can impact them or their community. For instance, in the Latine community, Latine are more likely to become politically engaged when they are voting on policy issues that directly impact Latine (Pantoja et. al., 2001). In order to measure the impact of political salience on political mobilization, the authors focused on the issues of immigration. The authors found that rhetoric during ballot initiatives and elections that focused on immigration led to more naturalized citizens becoming involved with politics (Pantoja et. al., 2001). This supports the notion that increasing political salience on issues that impact the Latine community will increase the mobilization of Latine in elections Pantoja et. al., 2001).

Additionally, authors Valenzuela and Michelson use California and Texas to test the susceptibility of Latine to be mobilized through politically salient issues. Their main finding found that Latine living in low-resource communities in California held stronger ties to their ethnic identity, allowing them to be mobilized through salient issues (Venezuela and Michelson, 2016). In contrast, they found that Latine living in Texas presented with stronger nationalistic ties which resulted from negative racialization in the region (Venezuela and Michelson, 2016). This highlights the diversity of Latine and how it impacts their voting behavior. Yet, it also serves to encourage Latine to vote when they are voting on politically salient issues.

Alongside political salience, the Racial Threat Theory can encourage Latine to vote during

elections. The racial threat theory is the belief of "Discriminatory actions based on the perceived threat which is rooted in political, economic, or social competition" (Neal et al., 2011). This theory typically begins with harmful rhetoric that creates the feeling of threat. For example, author Angela Gutierrez investigated the impact of President Donald Trump's anti-Latino rhetoric and how it impacted the 2016 election. Donald Trump used his bigotry rhetoric to create economic and social competition between White Americans and Latinos (Gutierrez, 2019). Trump's rhetoric not only created competition between racial groups but also caused Latine to feel threatened and fearful which resulted in some of the highest Latine voter turnout in a federal election (Gutierrez, 2019). The author ultimately found that group threats can mobilize Latine across the nation to vote (Gutierrez, 2019).

In addition to the findings of author Gutierrez, author White used immigration enforcement as a method to measure the impact of racial threats on Latine. They researched the proposed bill by Congress that called for undocumented immigrants to be subject to a felony sentence if they were found to be undocumented in the U.S. (White, 2016). This caused a massive movement of Latine protesting and becoming politically engaged, something that had previously never been seen in the United States (White, 2016). This movement showed us a couple of things. First, it showed that Latine has the potential to be a political powerhouse if they organize and mobilize. It also showed us the outcome of when a racial group feels threatened by policy. Lastly, it highlighted how group consciousness can be triggered by policies that directly impact Latine. Overall, this highlighted the impact of racial threat theory and how it can mobilize Latine at unprecedented rates.

As previously mentioned, group consciousness can be triggered by different political factors, one being the political salience of issues that directly affect Latine (Miller et al., 1981). Racial threat and group consciousness work in a similar way in that both deal with the threat of a policy or issues that can directly impact a specific group in this case Latine. Understanding the impact of threats

can be used in the future to encourage Latine to vote in elections.

Methodology

In order to address the research question of "How does political representation, political salience, and group consciousness impact Latine students' voting in local Los Angeles County elections this thesis uses a survey. In this section of my thesis I will explain and defend my research design choices. I also share the methods that were used to collect data. In addition, I go into detail regarding my sample demographics and their relevance to the topic, while also addressing the limitations of my sample population on my research. Lastly, I thoroughly explain my hypothesis and their null hypothesis.

3.1 Design

In an attempt to prove that group consciousness, political salience, and representation impact the voting behavior of Latine, this thesis will use a survey to reaffirm that group consciousness, political salience, and representation will have a positive impact on Latine voter turnout in Los Angeles County elections. This survey used a variety of questions to understand the degree to which these factors impacted the voter turnout of Latine Cal Poly Pomona students. This survey will also focus on the details behind what exactly can impact Latine's voting behavior. The survey will also serve to provide insight into whether or not there is something that can increase the levels at which Latine participates in elections.

Using a survey for this thesis is ideal because it will provide the opportunity to have a large sample while keeping the data collected accurate. Using a digital survey also allows for the survey to be more accessible. Which in turn means that I will have more data to analyze, but most importantly will allow for a more diverse sample. This study focuses on quantitative data so a survey is the best tool to gather and analyze the results. Quantitative data gives us tangible statistics to highlight the impact of each hypothesis. A survey will also allow participants from different cities in Los Angeles County to share their input and even offer suggestions. I chose Los Angeles County

for my research because Los Angeles County is home to one of the largest Latine populations in the United States. Yet, even in a county with a large Latine population, we still see a significant lack of participation among the Latine population. A massive majority of Los Angeles County is Latine, so it is ideal for us to survey the Latine in this geographical area. This is important to our study because it allows us to have data that will accurately showcase the current opinions of Latine in Los Angeles County.

Due to time and financial constraints, other forms of research like interviews and other qualitative data would not be the best method for this theory. Using other forms of data collection like interviews would significantly limit the number of participants that could be reached. For a theory that focuses on a very large and diverse ethnic group, it is essential that the sample be representative of that. This survey will allow us to have a large number of Latine from different backgrounds participate and give their input. Other forms of collecting data like analyzing case studies would also not be accurate for this research because research on Latine voting behavior is extremely outdated and not reflective of the diverse and large expansion of Latine in the United States. Conducting a survey is the best option to prove that group consciousness, political salience, and representation impact the voting behavior of Latine living in the United States.

Additionally, the Independent variables in this study are the impact of political representation, political salience, and group consciousness on Latine voting. These are the independent variables because we are testing how they will each impact Latine voter turnout in Los Angeles County elections. When looking at political representation, this variable will test whether the presence or absence of Latine candidates on or off a ballot will impact the dependent variable. Political salience will test the impact of making "Latine issues" relevant during elections and how that impacts Latine voting behavior. Testing Group consciousness will test how the respondents' solidarity or connection to the Latine collective will impact their voting behavior.

The dependent variable for all three hypotheses is Latine political behavior because the behavior will be determined by each of the variables.

As a result of the large number of responses to the survey, the external validity of this study will be high. The large sample will allow for this phenomenon to be generalized to a larger population. However, because of its size, it will have a low internal validity because it will not be able to provide specific details about each participant and their feelings about the hypothesis. Overall, the high external validity of this study will provide data to prove that group consciousness, political salience, and representation impact the voting behavior of Latines.

3.2 Data Collection

To prove that group consciousness, political salience, and representation impact the voting behavior of Latine living in the United States. I will survey Latine students living in Los Angeles County. The survey will have a diverse pool of questions for each argument and hypothesis. This will allow us to see the degree to which each hypothesis will impact their voting behavior. This will also allow for the levels at which each hypothesis will impact their voting behavior. This is important because it can show us what factors have the highest impact and the least amount of impact. It is also important to note that our hypothesis also aims to find if there are any other factors that can increase Latine voting behavior that have not been listed. The survey will be conducted on Cal Poly Pomona's Qualtrics survey software and as previously mentioned will allow participants to scale their responses. This survey will be sent out to an array of Los Angeles County student residents through email. Specifically, Upon receiving the data, the numbers will be input into an Excel sheet to create bar graphs. These graphs will provide a visual aid to determine which factors were impactful on the voting behavior of Latine.

Additionally, this study will only ask questions regarding voting behavior at the local and county level. Most local and county-level elections are not partisan, so this will allow us to eliminate the bias of having political candidates who are

part of a specific political party. Research has shown that people in general are more likely to vote if their political party is on the ballot because it is easier to make decisions regarding vote choice. By limiting our survey to local and county-level elections we are removing the bias of partisanship, to focus on the impact of other hypotheses like group consciousness, political salience, and representation. This will give us a clear picture of the impact of these hypotheses on Latine voting behavior.

3.3 Survey Demographics

In order to participate in this study, participants were required to meet the following criteria: Must be over the age of 18, must be a resident of Los Angeles County, self-identify as Latine, and be a student at Cal Poly Pomona. This survey was taken as a convenience sample so it was open to anyone who met the requirements. Over 55 Latine students from Cal Poly Pomona participated in the survey and gave responses. As previously mentioned, their responses were collected through Cal Poly Pomona's Qualtrics survey program. The participants reflect a diverse group of Latine students from Los Angeles County.

3.4 Hypothesis

Past research from political scholars on Latine voters has found significant proof that an increase in political representation, political salience, and group consciousness will have a positive impact on Latine voter turnout. After reading the literature on these topics, the following hypothesis can be made:

H1: *An increase in political representation will positively impact Latine voter turnout among Cal Poly Pomona students in Los Angeles County in local elections.*

In contrast, the null hypothesis for this hypothesis would be that an increase in Political representation will not have a positive effect on Latine voter turnout among Cal Poly Pomona students in Los Angeles County elections.

H2: *An increase in political salience will positively*

impact Latine voter turnout among Cal Poly Pomona students in Los Angeles County elections. In contrast, the null hypothesis for this hypothesis would find that an increase in political salience will not have an impact on Latine voter turnout among Cal Poly Pomona students in Los Angeles County elections.

H3: *An increase in group consciousness will positively impact Latine voter turnout among Cal Poly Pomona students in Los Angeles County elections.*

In contrast, the null hypothesis for this hypothesis would find that an increase in group consciousness will not have a positive impact on Latine voter turnout among Cal Poly Pomona students in Los Angeles County elections.

3.5 Limitations

It is important to note that time and finances are a limitation to this study. Time was limited, so the amount of time Latine citizens had to participate in the survey was low. This meant that there was a limitation to the number of people who were able to participate in this survey. Additionally, the survey focused on one region in the United States, so it will limit our sample group to Los Angeles County. It is important to remember that there are regional differences between Latine groups in the United States. Latine citizens in California will behave completely differently than Latine voters in Texas. In this survey, I found that most of the students from Cal Poly who responded to the survey self-identified from similar regions. A majority of the respondents stated that their country of origin was Mexico or Central American countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. This could skew our results in a particular way. With regards to the survey, the sample group was confined to students attending one university in Los Angeles County.

It is also important to note that this survey was specifically sent via email to every political science major student at Cal Poly Pomona. This did not exclude other students from different majors from participating, but a majority of the respondents were either a political science major or minor. This highlights a limitation to the study because most of the students study politics so

there might be a bias regarding the frequency of their electoral participation.

However, these limitations will not change the expectations or outcome of this study. Although this study will only focus on one region in the United States, it will focus on the country's largest county and Latine population. The diversity of this region will allow this study to yield accurate results and highlight the factors that impact Latine voting behavior in local elections. It will also confirm or deny the role each hypothesis plays in the mobilization of Latine students from Cal Poly Pomona.

Results

After sending the survey out to a large pool of Cal Poly Pomona students I was able to collect 57 responses. These respondents answered questions pertaining to political representation, political salience, and group consciousness. All of the surveys were collected anonymously in order for respondents to respond truthfully and without fear of judgment. The survey responses served as a way to collect quantitative data to review and analyze. In this section, I will review and analyze the effects of political representation, political salience, and group consciousness on Latine students from Cal Poly Pomona and how it impacts their voting 22 behavior in local Los Angeles County elections. This section will also draw conclusions for the impact of political representation, political salience, and group consciousness and it will also highlight the connection between each variable. Additionally, I will address how the limitations of the survey can have an impact on the data we are investigating.

4.1 Political Representation

In order to gauge the effect of political representation, I asked specific questions to address this hypothesis. In the survey, I asked, "Does seeing Latine in positions of political power encourage you to vote or become politically engaged?" When asking this question, 74% of my respondents shared that seeing politicians in positions of power would encourage them to vote. This shows us that when Latine students see other Latine members in positions of power they are more inclined to vote than when there are no Latine in positions of power. This finding reaffirms the theory that past researchers found. It shows us that when Latine voters have political representation they will be more inclined to vote than when there are not any Latine members in positions of political power.

Moreover, the reason this sentiment exists is because when Latine see other members of their community in positions of power the community feels like their voices will be heard in government. Historically and contemporary, Latine have shared that their lack of participation from American politics stems from a feeling of isolation. Through the question, we are able to confirm that when Latine are descriptively represented, there is an encouragement to vote and to become more politically engaged in politics.

As I began analyzing the responses, I compared the results of this specific question to other questions I asked to see if there were any patterns or connections. Surprisingly, I found that among those who stated they would not be encouraged to vote if there was a politician who was Latine in a position of power were

Does seeing Latinos in positions of political power encourage you to vote or become political engaged? 54 ⓘ

Q10 - Does seeing Latinos in positions of political power encourage you to vote or become political engaged?	Percentage
Yes	74%
No	26%

also the same individuals who reported having a disconnected relationship to their ethnic identity. Twenty percent of the initial twenty-six percent who reported "No" to this question, reported having less than a "Somewhat close" relationship and connection to their ethnic group. This shows us that there is a relationship between group consciousness and political representation.

Moreover, this highlights that not all Latine student voters will respond to political representation in the same way. Instead, this highlights that students who have a "close" relationship to their ethnic group will respond better to having increased Latine representation during local Los Angeles County elections. It is important to note that in order for Latine to be mobilized through descriptive representation, Latine would need to have a "closer" connection to their ethnic identity or ethnic group. If Latine students do not have that close connection to their ethnic identity then Latine students will not respond well to having descriptive representation in politics. This shows us that Latine students are extremely complex voters and cannot be mobilized by simply utilizing one political tactic. The diversity and complexity of the Latine community require researchers and politicians to utilize diverse and complex strategies in order to adequately mobilize them to vote during elections. This reaffirms the notion that the Latine community is not one-dimensional and needs to be researched further.

Despite the large percentage of Latine voters that responded positively to seeing Latine representation, there are some caveats we need to consider. For one, the respondents to this survey all came from Cal Poly Pomona, which is a Hispanic Serving Institute (HSI). Students who attend a Hispanic Serving Institute (HSI) could have a different connection to their ethnic identity because they are exposed to a student body that is more diverse than other university campuses. For example, more than half of Cal

Poly Pomona's student body identifies as Latine. This could mean that the students here, when compared to other universities, could have different perspectives on whether seeing Latines in positions of power would have a positive impact on their voting behavior.

Additionally, to look at political representation from a different lens, I asked respondents ``On a scale of 1-5, How likely are you to vote for someone who is Latino over someone who is not during Local County Elections?'' Respondents were given the option to choose one meaning "Extremely unlikely," two "Somewhat unlikely," three "Neither likely nor unlikely," four "Somewhat Likely," and five "Extremely likely." On average, the respondents voted their likeness to vote a Latine politician into office over a politician from another ethnic group 3.69. This rated within the lines of "Neither likely nor Unlikely" and "Somewhat likely." This shows us that this group of Latine voters would not vote for other Latine politicians on the sole basis of their ethnic identity.

This further affirms the notion that Latine are not a one-dimensional group and instead prioritize other political election tactics. Something important to note about this question is that group consciousness did not affect the way student voters felt about a politician. Respondents who had reported high levels of group consciousness were also less likely to vote for Latine politicians solely based on race. There is a clear distinction between being encouraged to vote by someone who is Latine over voting for someone specifically because they are Latine.

In addition, a phenomenon I noted was that respondents' current voting frequency impacted their willingness to vote for politicians solely based on their Latine identity. Respondents who reported voting "Every election" were more likely to choose option three "neither likely nor unlikely." This shows us that politically active Latine student voters are far less likely to take

On a scale of 1-5, How likely are you to vote for someone who is Latino over someone who is not during Local County elections?

On a scale of 1-5, How likely are you to vote for someone who is Latino ove...	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Click to write Choice 1	3.69	2.00	5.00

a politician's Latine identity as their only factor when choosing to vote for them. In contrast, respondents who reported "Never" voting, were more likely to pick either four "Somewhat likely" to five "Extremely likely." Latine student voters who have never voted during an election were more likely to vote for politicians based on their racial identity.

There can be an array of factors why this phenomenon occurs. It is possible that Latine students who do vote are exposed to the policies a politician is presenting over just their identity. It could be that voters in the past have experienced or seen that there is a distinct difference between descriptive and substantive representation, especially in the Latine community. As previously stated, the Latine community is extremely diverse and there are distinct differences between a Latine's country of origin along with their regional location in the United States. This can impact the way a Latine politician runs their campaign, so Latine students who are already active voters could be aware of these patterns; it is possible that frequent Latine student voters are more likely to take policies over identity into account.

In contrast, Latine students who have never voted could potentially be unaware of the difference between a politician's ethnic identity and their policies. Latine students who are not active voters might not be knowledgeable on specific policy issues or simply are not interested in them. It is important to understand that Latine students who do not vote are the main demographic of voters whom we should aim to mobilize. In addition, the current students who report voting in every election to continue their political engagement.

It is important to note that when observing our sample, a large chunk of respondents came from the Political Science department. This could mean that Latine students who reported voting frequently or during every election will have a more vested interest and knowledge of elections. It is a fair argument to say that students who study politics are more likely to vote or engage in politics somehow. If this survey were to be shared with a more diverse sample of students from other departments then results could look different. This does not make our results invalid, but it is important to understand the type of sample that was collected.

Nonetheless, the Latine students in the study were likely to be motivated and encouraged to vote if Latine politicians were on the ballot but would not vote for a politician simply because they identify as Latine. What this tells us is that Latine politicians cannot bank on their ethnic group to vote for them only based on race but instead would need to appeal to Latine student voters in other ways like using political salience for example. This also highlights the importance of researching Latine student voters in order to develop customized solutions for the community to engage in elections.

4.2 Political Salience

After investigating the impact of political representation I knew it would be equally as important to research the role of political salience in vote choice for the Latine community. In order to address the importance of political salience I asked respondents "When Latino political issues" appear on a ballot, are you more likely to vote than not." This was asked in order to gauge the importance of "Latine issues" on a ballot and their connection to Latine voters. An overwhelming 83% of Latine student voters would be more willing to vote during an election when there are "Latino issues" on the ballot. This means that 83% of my respondents find "Latino issues" to be a driving factor in their voting behavior. This shows us that Latine voters care about policies that affect their community

When "Latino political issues" appear on a ballot, are you more likely to vote than not?

Q11 - When "Latino political issues" appear on a ballot, are you more likely to vote than not?	Percentage
Yes	83%
No	17%

being represented and can be mobilized through Substantive representation.
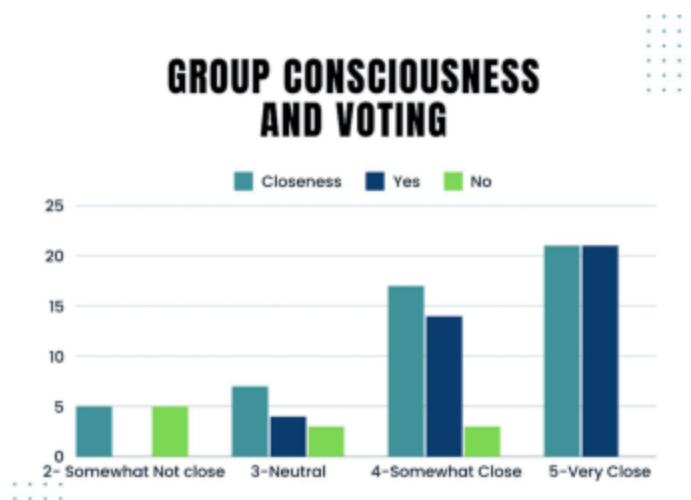
In contrast to descriptive representation, substantive representation will have a positive impact on Latine student voter turnout. This shows us that priming voters is an essential part of getting Latine to mobilize. If Latine student voters are primed to believe political issues will directly impact them then there is a higher chance that the Latine community will vote. This goes into the importance of priming voters during elections. "Latine issues" can really be categorized into many areas. In the past, "Latine issues" were simplified and confined into one category: immigration. However, in contemporary politics, "Latine issues" encompass a variety of policies like education, economy, healthcare, etc. Priming voters to believe and understand that these issues play a significant role in their lives can mobilize Latine student voters to vote during elections.

It is important to note that Latine's ability to mobilize through Substantive representation is not reliant on group consciousness like descriptive representation is. Respondents who shared that they do not have a close connection to their ethnic identity and community still stated that they would be more likely to vote if issues that affect their community were on the ballot. This completely contrasts the patterns we saw for political representation.

4.3 Group Consciousness

In order to test the impact of group consciousness on Latine student voters, I asked two questions on my survey. The first question asked was "How close do you feel to your ethnic group?" This question aimed to get an understanding of the relationship each Latine student had with their ethnic identity. The second question I asked in my survey was "Does your ethnic identity drive your political engagement?" This question was a continuation of the first question that was asked right before. This question was asked to get a better understanding of the role Latine students' ethnic identity plays when deciding to participate during elections. Both of these questions allowed us to test the role of group consciousness on Latine students' electoral behavior. Our sample of students reported relatively high levels of group consciousness. Over 75% of all respondents reported have some type of connection to their ethnic identity and group consciousness. Even further, 37.04% reported having a "very close" connection to their identity. In contrast, less than 24% of respondents shared that their connection to their ethnic identity fell under option three "Neutral," two "Somewhat unclose," and one "Not close at all." These results show us that our sample of Latine students from Cal Poly Pomona presented with relatively high levels of group consciousness.

For our second question that asked, "Does your

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ethnic identity drive your political engagement?" Again, a vast majority of students shared that their identity impacted their voter turnout. Specifically, 34.55% of respondents shared that "Yes" their ethnic identity drives their political engagement, while 52.73% of respondents shared that their identity was not the only factor that drove their engagement, but it was a factor that drove them to vote during a local election. Only 12.73% of respondents shared that their ethnic identity did not have an impact on their political engagement at all.

However, there is a distinct relationship between a respondent's connection to identity and their participation. While a majority of our students presented with group consciousness to a certain degree, we did have a few respondents who reported very low to no group consciousness at all. I found that it was the same students who rated their connection to their ethnic group as one, "somewhat not close" and three as "Neutral" who also shared that their ethnic identity did not impact their political engagement. In contrast, respondents who appeared with high levels of group consciousness were also the respondents who reported that their ethnic identity did indeed have an impact on their political engagement. These findings confirm that group consciousness can have a positive impact on Latine students at Cal Poly Pomona to a certain degree. Group consciousness can have a positive impact on Latine students' voter turnout, but the absence of group consciousness will not have any impact on voter turnout.

4.4 Analysis

The main conclusion I drew from my survey was not only the role each variable plays in impacting Latine student turnout individually but, the effect each variable had on each other. Each variable in this experiment cannot exist alone. To a certain degree, each variable relies on one another in order to work. The three variables we tested in this experiment were political representation, political salience, and group consciousness. For example, when we closely examined the impact of political representation on Latine student voters, we saw that group consciousness played

a role. If Latine students do not have that connection to their ethnic identity, then seeing politicians who descriptively represent them will not have a positive impact on their voter turnout. The absence of group consciousness when investigating political representation will yield no positive impact on the voter turnout of Latine students.

Similarly, political salience relies on the role of Latine students' connection to their Latine identity. In order for students to be mobilized to vote on specific "Latine issues," they need to have a connection to the Latine group as a whole. Without a connection to their group then Latine students will not have a vested interest in policies that might affect their group. In short, both descriptive representation and substantive representation rely on the presence of group consciousness. When Latine students present with a connection to their ethnic group then they can be mobilized to vote using both political representation and political salience.

It is important to note that in our sample a vast majority of students presented with high levels of group consciousness. This shows us that the Latine students at Cal Poly Pomona feel a close connection to their ethnic identity. Their connection to their identity reaffirms the hypothesis that political representation, salience, and group consciousness can have a positive effect on their mobilization to vote. The results and analysis from this survey have confirmed the theories we presented while focusing on a specific group. Now that we know that the population of Latine students can be mobilized, it is important to begin applying these principles to elections in order to increase the number of Latine students who participate in politics.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to address the gaps in literature about the Latine community. I aimed to understand what factors can have a positive effect on the political engagement of the Latine population. Specifically testing to see if political representation, political salience, and group consciousness will have a positive impact in encouraging Latine students from Cal Poly

Pomona to vote during local Los Angeles County elections.

In the past, academic research in the American politics subfield did not include any communities of color. Most historical research focused on White American voters with the notion that groups like the Latine population were too difficult to study. This is why it is beyond important to study the Latine population. The Latine population is continuing to grow and becoming a political powerhouse, but if the Latine community does not vote then there will be a government that is not reflective of the communities it serves. Understanding the variables that can encourage Latine students to vote can help create a community that is more politically engaged and connected to the American polity.

In conclusion, the results of this experiment provide us with a clear understanding that Latine student voters can be mobilized to vote. The use of political salience, political representation, and group consciousness can have a positive effect on Latine students from Cal Poly Pomona and their voter turnout. For example, Latine students shared that seeing other Latine individuals in positions of power would encourage them to vote. This shows us that Latine students respond well to having descriptive representation in politics. I also found that political salience plays a prominent role in mobilizing the community. When policies that affect the Latine community are addressed in politics, there will be a positive impact on the mobilization of Latine students in the form of voting. This highlights the fact that Latine students care about policies that impact their community. Lastly, the most important factor discovered in my research was that group consciousness is the driving force behind Latine student voter turnout. Without group consciousness, mobilization tactics like political representation and political salience will yield no impact. Each of our hypotheses cannot exist alone, they each rely on each other in order to have a significant impact on the voter turnout of Latine students.

Ultimately, this thesis has found methods that can impact Latine students' voter turnout. After researching the Latine Students from Cal Poly Pomona, we are able to see strategies that can mobilize the community. It is imperative for us to use this knowledge and apply it to current and future elections in order to encourage the Latine population to participate in politics.

5.1 Moving Forward

After researching Latine students from Cal Poly Pomona, I was able to see the lack of research of the Latine community as a whole. One of the most problematic issues when researching the Latine community is that the term "Latine" encompasses such a diverse group of people. A diverse group of people who can be identified by race, national origin, language, etc. It would be interesting for future research to focus on investigating the Latine community without using an umbrella term to group everyone together. Individualistic research would allow us to understand the political behavior of the community in order to adequately mobilize all Latine individuals. My research focused on Cal Poly Pomona students who were made up of four Latine nationalities. It would be beneficial to apply the findings of my research to other distinct Latine groups. For example, testing the impact of political representation, political salience, and group consciousness on Latine students from the East Coast, Midwest, conservative states, etc. This would elaborate and provide needed research on the Latine community and their voting patterns.

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