LATINX POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE EFFECTS OF

EXECUTIVE LEVEL ACTION

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Latinx Political Engagement and the Effects of Executive Level Action

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Literature Review

This project will extend upon previous research stating that policies and governmental action cause the Latinx population to mobilize politically in the United States. It builds off of preestablished theories that mobilization is due to emotional reactions and the sense of linked fate across the Latinx community.

Thesis Statement

I argue that the Latinx population will mobilize in response to an external threat posed by executive level action on immigration. Additionally, I argue that the Latinx population will act cohesively in terms of political engagement.

Theoretical Framework

I expect that the Latinx population will mobilize as a result of their emotional response to threatening forms of executive level action. The population as a whole will mobilize due to a heightened sense of linked fate that emerges as policy becomes racialized; targeting the Latinx population as a whole.

Project Description

How have recent forms of executive level action in the United States affected political engagement across the Latinx community? This project will extend upon previous research stating that executive level action and policies influence political engagement (Barreto et al., 2009; Benjamin-Alvarado, 2009). More specifically, this research will focus on recent forms of executive level action on immigration from Donald Trump's presidency. I expect that these actions will serve as a mobilizing factor for the Latinx community because they negatively target all Latinos, regardless of immigration status. It is the cross-community threat that ultimately drives political participation.

This project will extend upon previous research regarding the mobilizing effects of various forms of executive level action. It will also take an in-depth look at more recent forms of executive level action, including DACA under the Obama administration as well as Trump's Zero Tolerance Policy. From there, I will look at the emotional responses of the Latinx community in response to these executive level actions. I rely on personal interviews with Latinx organizations that help account for the personal and emotional feelings associated with different types of executive level action. To buttress findings from my interviews, I will draw on The National Survey of Latinos. Using these data, I am able to assess whether responses to Trump's policies are seen as a collective threat to all Latinos and whether this heightened sense of linked fate is associated with increasing political activism. Ultimately, it is expected that the Latinx population will mobilize in response to forms of executive level action that are seen as threatening to all Latinos.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me throughout this process. Each time I explained my project and process to them, they always offered words of encouragement, support and kindness. Without the support of my peers, this project would not have been possible.

INTRODUCTION

This project will extend upon previous research on Latinx responses to executive level action. More specifically, these public responses will be examined to see if they contribute to Latinx mobilization. Past research suggests that the Latinx community tends to mobilize in response to executive level action when the action poses some type of external threat to the community. This in turn leads to increased political engagement to combat this threat. (Barreto et al., 2009). Given this, this project will look at previous forms of executive level action, the level of threat that they have posed to the Latinx community, and how this has contributed to mobilization, if at all.

Over the past few decades, several executive level actions have been implemented that affect the Latinx community in different ways. For example, the Reagan Administration granted amnesty to undocumented immigrants within the Latinx community (NPR Staff, 2010). In addition, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) under the Obama administration allowed children brought to the United States illegally the temporary right to attain an education and work in the U.S. (Waters, 2017). Both of these executive actions provided a level of encouragement to the Latinx community to stay in the U.S. rather than presenting the threat of deportation. Additionally, both of these forms of executive level action contributed to Latinx mobilization. In fact, DACA has been recognized as one of the most important factors in determining who would vote for Obama in 2012 among the Latinx community. DACA supporters were found to be more likely to vote for Obama (Barreto and Collingwood, 2015). Although both of these executive level actions presented a mobilizing effect, Donald Trump has taken a much different approach to immigration during his presidency.

Within the past few years, Donald Trump's presidency has reflected a shift in the type of executive level actions implemented. In fact, Trump's recent executive actions can be viewed as more restrictive compared to those of past administrations in the sense that they pose a larger external threat to the Latinx community. More specifically, undocumented Latinx individuals have been targeted by Trump's administration with the threat of deportation, and separation from their families and loved ones. As this external threat continues to grow for undocumented Latinx individuals, this influences political engagement across the Latinx community (Barreto et al., 2009). This project will look more into Trump's Zero Tolerance Policy, the level of threat that it poses to the Latinx community, and how this is currently contributing to Latinx mobilization.

In addition to looking at past and current executive level actions and their effect on mobilization, this project will uniquely look at the factors that cause this mobilization. Previous research has shown that emotions influence political participation, particularly emotions such as anger, fear, and enthusiasm (Valentino et al., 2011). When looking at these various forms of executive level action, this project will look at potential emotions that are associated with recent executive actions, and how these emotions have worked to mobilize the Latinx community as a whole. Regardless of the group that feels these emotions or is directly affected by the executive action, it is expected that these emotions will be felt somewhat consistently across the Latinx population due to the sense of linked fate that exists within this community.

Past research has shown that the Latinx community is fairly unified and exhibits a sense of linked fate when posed with a threat of some sort (Vargas et al., 2017). While recent executive level action on immigration has targeted undocumented individuals (Pierce et al., 2018) studies have shown that "immigration policy not only has unintended consequences, but has 'second-hand' effects on people who are not targeted by the policy" (White, 2015). To better understand

the emotions that the Latinx community experiences as a whole, this research will look at the "second-hand" effects of executive level action in the United States.

Ultimately, my research is of great importance because it dives deeper into the way that current executive orders are affecting the Latinx community, and what this could potentially mean for immigration policies in the future. Previously, politicians and politics in general were geared toward raising the low voter turnouts of Latinos (Barreto and Collingwood, 2015). Yet in 2016, the level of political involvement among the Latinx population shifted with the newly coined term called the "Trump Effect." The Trump Effect, "represents a form of resistance to the anti-Hispanic views and materializations of White supremacy that Trump advocates" (Anguiana, 2016). This effect arose in response to the negative rhetoric surrounding immigration, but more directly from the threatening executive level actions that inspired this negative rhetoric, including the proposal to build "The Wall," separating families at the border, and stricter security at the border (Pierce et al., 2018).

One way to better understand the Latinx community and their changed perspectives and involvement with the Trump administration can be seen through Latinx organizations. Currently, grassroots organizations are working to mobilize the Latinx community in response to varying levels of executive action, especially within Trump's administration (Gleeson and Sampat, 2017). With increased attempts to find and deport undocumented Latinx individuals through Trump's recent policies, organizations like UnidosUS are working to not only inform the Latinx community, but specifically mobilize their "affiliates at the grassroots level to work with city and state officials to oppose the draconian Trump agenda" (UnidosUS, 2019). Given this, my research will look into specific reactions through personal interviews with Latinx organizations like these to get a better understanding of Latinx emotional reactions.

Altogether, I assess how executive level action conditions political engagement within the Latinx community. My argument is that executive actions trigger emotional responses and this, in turn, has mobilizing effects on the Latinx community. This information could prove to be very important for the future of immigration policy, especially with the shifting polarization that we have witnessed under Trump's administration. For starters, growing political polarization gives rise to "negative partisanship" in which individuals vote in opposition to leaders and parties that they dislike rather than a candidate or party that they genuinely like (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2018). Additionally, a rise in Latinx voters could mean a change in the U.S. electorate in which different issues and policies are prioritized (DeSipio, 2006). Finally, this research project will acquire a more personal look at the effects of threatening executive level actions through interviews with Latinx organizations that witness first-hand these effects, as well as how their members respond.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Latinx population has historically had lower political participation than the rest of the general population. This includes both electoral and non-electoral forms of political participation (Hero et al., 2000). This gap has been attributed to the number of undocumented Latinx individuals that choose not to participate in American politics due to "feelings of distance and disinterest from the political life of the U.S." (Hero et al., 2000; Pantoja et al., 2001). Although with the recent election of Donald Trump, there has been a noticeable increase in Latinx political participation due to the anger that the Latinx community feels toward Donald Trump's anti-Latino rhetoric. This anger additionally stems from the threat that Donald Trump and his policies impose on the Latinx population (Gutierrez et al., 2019). Yet despite the more recent increase in political participation due to the increased threat under Trump's administration, the Latinx community has historically been discriminated against, and faced with multiple external threats (Pedraza and Osorio 2017; Santa Ana 2017).

Over the past several decades, the Latinx community has faced political threat at various governmental levels. This threat has in turn sparked increased political participation within the Latinx population. For example, in 2005, Latinos were faced with the national threat of Bill HR4437, which would have made it a felony to be undocumented in the United States. This threat resulted in an increased level of participation in protests among Latinx individuals, especially Mexican Americans and at-home Spanish speakers (Barreto et al., 2009). In addition to Bill HR4437, propositions 187, 209, and 227 resulted in increased political participation in the Latinx community as a direct result of political threat where undocumented individuals were

faced with a greater threat of being deported (Hajnal and Baldassare 2001; HoSang 2010). Ultimately, each of these cases shows that historically, when an external threat is placed on the Latinx community, it has led to increased political participation in the population as a whole.

Altogether, the previous research conducted on the Latinx community primarily focuses on threatening forms of *legislation* imposed on the population at various levels of government. In contrast, this project seeks to look specifically at forms of *executive level action* and how these actions have contributed to Latinx political participation. This executive level action will include both threatening, and non-threatening forms of executive level action in order to thoroughly compare the effect of threat on mobilization.

A prime example of a non-threatening form of executive level action can be seen under the Reagan administration. In 1986, Ronald Reagan attempted to address the rising levels of Mexican immigration to the United States by proposing to enforce stronger border security and enforcing higher punishments for employers that knowingly hired undocumented immigrants. In addition to these propositions, rather than deporting every undocumented immigrant in the United States, Reagan granted amnesty to any undocumented immigrant that had entered the United States before 1982 (NPR Staff, 2010).

Similar to amnesty under the Reagan administration, there have been several forms of executive level action that encourage the Latinx population to stay in the United States and give them the means that they need in order to stay legally without posing the threat of detention or deportation. For example, despite his high levels of deportations as president, Obama was known for one of his more encouraging immigration policies called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (Wallace, 2012). The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, also known as DACA, was implemented in 2012 to, "allow people who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children

the temporary right to live, study and work in America" (Waters, 2017). Unlike policies that threatened the Latinx community with deportation, DACA was seen as protecting certain undocumented Latinx youth. Rather than posing the external threat of deportation to the Latinx community, it encourages Latinx youth to stay in America to acquire an education and work.

Even though DACA did not pose a direct threat to the Latinx community, it still impacted Latinx electoral political participation. DACA has been recognized as one of the most important factors in determining who would vote for Obama in 2012 among the Latinx community. DACA supporters were found to be much more likely to vote for Obama during his re-election (Barreto and Collingwood, 2015). Collectively, it was policies like these that served as a source of encouragement for the Latinx population, because rather than potentially inciting fear through the use of threats, these actions encouraged Latinx immigrants to stay in the United States legally.

In contrast to these forms of encouraging executive level actions, Donald Trump has taken a much different approach to Latinx immigration. In fact, "through his 2016 presidential campaign and presidency to date, Donald Trump has prioritized an immigration reform platform that includes explicit and implicit anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx rhetoric" (Wray-Lake, 2018). Overall, this approach includes more threatening forms of executive level action, which includes one of Trump's initial announcements during his first year as president to try and rescind DACA. This action alone would have affected approximately 800,000 undocumented individuals in the United States, and directly threatened them with deportation (Waters, 2017). This decision by Trump highlights the difference and shift that has occurred between the two presidencies. Although Obama had high levels of deportation, Donald Trump's presidency has been unusually

polarizing for the American population, especially in terms of immigration policy and how it has threatened the Latinx community (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2018).

In addition to his initial plan to rescind DACA, "Trump issued three executive orders during his first week in office including plans to build a wall on the Mexico-U.S. border, increase deportations, punish sanctuary cities that refuse to cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security, and reduce refugee admissions" (Pierce et al., 2018). Looking at these executive orders, Trump has specifically targeted undocumented Latinx individuals by directing majority of his executive actions and policies toward immigrants between the Mexico and United States border. Additionally, Trump's presidency has altered the rhetoric surrounding immigration, and has given immigration a negative connotation (Heuman and Gonzalez, 2018). In the short years following Trump's election, immigration to the United States had already seen a fairly significant drop. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Travel and Tourism Office, "in the first three quarters of calendar year 2017, international arrivals to the United States dropped by 2.3 million compared to the same period the prior year" (Pierce et al., 2018).

Under Trump, undocumented immigrants have experienced additional types of threats that immigrants have not faced in the past. Before getting deported, undocumented immigrants are generally detained by ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Even though undocumented Latinx individuals are not getting deported at greater rates than they were under the Obama administration, individuals are getting held in detention centers much longer than in previous years. "Non-criminals are currently spending an average of 60 days in immigrant jails, nearly twice the length of the average stay 10 years ago, and 11 days longer than convicted criminals" (Hauslohner, 2019). Additionally, undocumented Latinx immigrants are criminalized

due to harsh cultural stereotypes that are perpetuated over time. These stereotypes include Donald Trump referring to Mexican immigrants as rapists and drug dealers in his 2016 campaign to emphasize the importance of border security (Schubert, 2017). These negative stereotypes have all depicted Latinos as criminals and led to their criminalization. A prime example of this criminalization being enforced through executive level action is Donald Trump's Zero Tolerance Policy. This policy came about due to a wave of Latinx immigrants and, "calls for blanket criminal prosecutions of all adults who enter the country illegally" (Pierce et. al, 2018). This can take the form of deportation, detainment, and family separation at the border. Overall, these policies racialized undocumented individuals entering the United States, which in turn led to the racialization of all Latinx individuals.

Altogether, it's important to note why threat has led to Latinx mobilization in the past. Often, when Latinx individuals are faced with a threat of some sort, they exhibit an emotional response such as fear, anger, or sadness. For example, the anti-Latino agenda that Trump has promoted has resulted in mass anger within the Latinx population (Gutierrez et al., 2019). Whether people realize it or not, feelings and emotions play a role in people's level of political participation. More specifically, anger, enthusiasm, and anxiety play some of the largest roles in influencing political participation with anger playing one of the largest roles (Valentino, 2011). In fact, "anger in politics can play a particularly vital role, motivating some people to participate in ways they might ordinarily not" (Valentino, 2011, pg. 156). This is especially relevant when looking at various forms of threatening executive level actions imposed on the Latinx community, and how this may affect their emotions, and in turn their political participation.

Along with the anger that certain members of the Latinx community may feel towards the executive level actions implemented over the years, a poll conducted in 2016 by Latino

Decisions found that voting against Trump served as a source of enthusiasm to vote for members of the Latinx community. Of the Latinx individuals that took the poll, 40% said that their enthusiasm to vote against Trump was due to Trump's anti-Latino rhetoric (Latino Decisions, 2016). Altogether, this information is important because it extends the research that emotions play a role in political engagement, but also that these emotions arise from the anti-Latino sentiment that Trump delivers through not only his words, but the policies that he implements as well.

Despite immigration policy targeting non-citizens, there are other "unintended consequences" including "'second-hand' effects on people who are not targeted by the policy" (White, 2015, pg. 357). Regardless of their legal status, the Latinx community is quite cohesive. According to a 2017 study, Latinos exhibit increasing levels of linked fate as the number of punitive immigration laws in a state increase (Vargas et al., 2017). This linked fate can better explain the "second-hand effects" on people that are not targeted by the policy and can help to further explain why the Latinx community as a whole is affected by Trump's threatening policies, rather than solely undocumented Latinos.

Knowing that the Latinx community has a sense of linked fate when it comes to immigration policies can also help us to understand how linked fate can translate over into Latinx mobilization and political engagement. This can take the form of voting, participating in campaigns, participating in protests, and various forms of political activism (Wike and Castillo, 2018). Along with the effects on engagement, Latinos may also experience feelings of disapproval, anger, and fear which can further contribute to political engagement and action in social movements (Woods et al., 2012). According to Pew Research, "one in five Latino registered voters (20%) knew someone who had been deported or detained in the past year.

Further, a majority of Latino registered voters surveyed disapproved of the Obama administration's deportation policies" (Pew Research Center, 2011). This highlights not only the linked fate between Latinos, but also the fact that threatening forms of executive level action can lead to negative feelings from the larger Latinx population.

In a 2018 Latino Decisions poll, respondents were asked a series of questions centered around the effects of Trump's policy choices. One of these questions asked respondents about whether they felt it was more important to vote in 2018, or whether it was more important to vote in 2014. 64% of total responses said that it was more important for them to vote in 2018, but one of the more notable results was that Latinos had the highest percentage of people at 70% saying that they felt it was more important for them to vote during 2018, than it was for them to vote during 2016 (Latino Decisions, 2018). This is especially important to note given that the 2018 elections were during the presidency of Donald Trump, who has consistently imposed threatening executive level actions on members of the Latinx community.

Despite there being a number of studies on emotions influencing Latinx political participation, this participation is largely limited to voting in major elections. It's important to emphasize that Latinx political participation includes a myriad of behaviors such as participating in protests, donating to campaigns, and overall civic engagement. This is also especially relevant to the undocumented Latinx community, because non-citizenship can lead to an inability to participate in elections (Leal, 2002). As mentioned before, one main way that the Latinx community has chosen to participate politically when faced with threats is through taking part in protests (Barreto et al., 2009). Along with protests, the Latinx community turns to other forms of protest including marches and rallies (Zepeda-Millán 2017). Ultimately, all of these forms of

political engagement are important to take into consideration within the Latinx community in order to fully capture the result of threat on mobilization.

Overall, Latinx political engagement is not only important to better understand American politics and executive level action in the United States, but also to see how Latinx responses to these executive level actions could potentially change the nature of the U.S. electorate as more Latinx individuals become mobilized. Currently, the Latinx population in the United States is rapidly growing. In 2018, the Hispanic population reached 59.9 million, which is approximately a 1.2 million increase from 2017 (Flores et. al., 2019). Given these growing numbers, if more of the Latinx population in the United States were able to mobilize and organize, due to their size and strength as the largest minority group, they would have the power to at least change debates in American politics by matters of degree (DeSipio, 2006). Ultimately, with the mobilization of the Latinx population, we could see a change in issues that are discussed in American politics today, as well as a shift in politicians' platforms in order to better cater to the concerns of this different electorate.

Altogether, my theory is that as a result of threatening forms of executive level action, the Latinx population will mobilize due to an emotional response such as anger or fear. Additionally, this emotional response will be large scale among the Latinx community due to the sense of linked fate that is present among Latinos. For this reason, my hypotheses are as follows:

H1: I expect that Latinx political engagement will increase as Latinos feel increasingly threatened by various executive level actions.

H2: I expect that the Latinx population will feel similarly threatened by policies regardless of whether or not they are directly affected, and therefore engage politically as a whole.

CHAPTER II

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to test my hypothesis that threatening forms of executive level action lead to mobilization within the Latinx community, I took a multi-methodological approach by analyzing a pre-existing survey, as well as conducting my own interviews. The survey I chose to analyze was the "2018 National Survey of Latinos" from the Pew Research Center. The survey included a sample of 1,501 U.S. born and foreign-born Latino adults in the United States, and covered a variety of topics including immigration policy, economics, politics and discrimination. The survey took place over the phone and began by asking each respondent a series of demographic questions including financial situation, educational background, ethnicity and citizenship. These questions were then followed up by more political questions including how each individual felt about the current administration and its policies.

I chose to focus on two questions in the political section to use as my independent and dependent variables. For my independent variable, I chose the question, "Overall, do you think that the Trump administration's policies have been helpful to (HISPANICS/LATINOS), harmful to (HISPANICS/LATINOS), or have they had no particular effect on (HISPANICS/LATINOS)?" I chose this as the independent variable because my research looks at various forms of threatening executive level actions for my independent variable, and this question specifically asks how respondents feel about the Trump administration's policies and whether or not they are helpful or harmful. The harmful answer choice similarly fits in with my proposed threatening forms of executive level action and further taps into the collective effect of these policies. This question is not about individual harm, but harm to the larger Latinx group,

which somewhat gets at my linked fate theory. For my dependent variable, I chose the question, "(And) In the United States since Trump became president have you participated in any protests or demonstrations to support immigrants' rights, or not?" in which respondents were given the choice of yes or no. While this question only gets at one dimension of participation, it is an area where we would expect the most immediate effects of threatening immigration-related executive actions. Unlike voting, both citizen and non-citizen Latinos can participate in this form of activism.

In order to analyze the survey data, I chose to run a logistic regression model in Stata to see the relationship between perceived harmful executive level actions and participation in political protests. Additionally, I accounted for several controls including education level, income, ethnicity, party identification, and citizenship. To best analyze my hypotheses, I began by recoding the independent variable, dependent variable, and controls that I wanted to look at. I also chose to drop any responses from the original Pew Research survey that were coded as "Don't Know" or "Refused" to focus more on the data that I was interested in.

For my independent variable where respondents were asked how they felt about Trump's policies and how they affect the Latinx community as a whole, I coded the responses as -1 for "helpful," 0 for "no particular effect," and 1 for "harmful." In addition, for my dependent variable where respondents were asked if they've participated in any protests or demonstrations for immigrants' rights since Trump's election, I coded the responses as 0 for "no" and 1 for "yes."

For my controls, due to the variety in responses, I chose to create a few dummy variables and recode several responses to break down the information that I was most interested in looking at. For example, for party identification (party), I recoded the responses "Democrat" as 1 and

"other" as 0. For education (educ), I coded anything less than high school graduation as 1, some or all of a bachelor's degree as 2, and some or all of a postgraduate degree as 3. For income (qn12a), I left the original code for financial situation where "excellent shape" is 1, "good shape" is 2, "only fair shape" is 3, and "poor shape" is 4. For ethnicity (qn3), because I focused on several executive level actions that applied to the U.S.-Mexico border, I chose to focus on respondents of Mexican ethnicity. For this reason, I coded ethnicity as 1 for "Mexican" and 0 for "other." Finally, for citizenship (qn9), because I expected that non-citizens would be more receptive to harmful executive level actions that target the undocumented community, I recoded 1 as "yes" and 0 as "no" when individuals were asked whether or not they are a citizen.

After recoding all of the questions that I chose to use from the Pew Research survey, I proceeded to run a logistic regression model to test my hypotheses and graph my results. Before looking at the controls, I looked at the relationship between my independent and dependent variable. The results can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Relationship Between "Harmful" Policies and Protest Participation

qn19	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[Confidence	Interval]
qn17	4.146129	0.9266606	6.36	0	2.675464	6.425198
_cons	0.0644313	0.0138464	-12.76	0	0.0422837	0.0981796

For starters, Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between my independent variable (qn17) and my dependent variable (qn19). Additionally, Table 1 supports my H1 by showing that there is a relationship between Latinx respondents viewing Trump's

policies as "harmful" and participating in protests for immigrants' rights. As I stated in my H1, it appears that respondents that view Trump's policies as harmful and therefore more threatening to the Latinx community, are more likely to engage politically, which in this case is participating in a protest or demonstration for immigrants' rights. This relationship can also be seen in Figure 1 below.
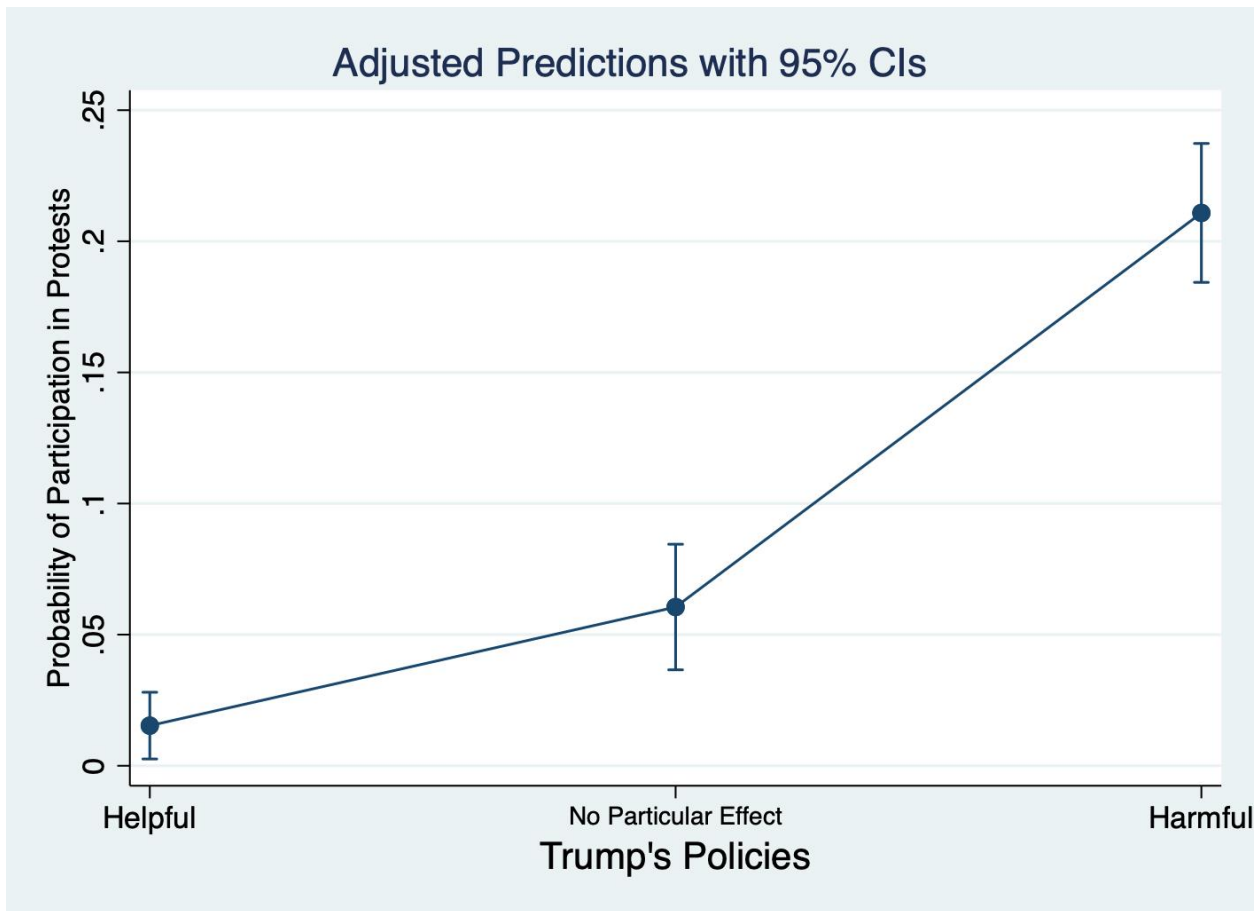

Figure 1: Probability of Protest Participation Based on "Harmful" Policies

After looking at the relationship between my independent and dependent variables, I examined my controls to see if any of them played a role in whether or not a Latinx individual chose to politically engage. The results can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Controls for Political Participation

qn19	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[Confidence	Interval]
qn17	1.402594	0.22373302	6.27	0.00	0.9640905	1.841097
educ	0.5638414	0.1228393	4.59	0.00	0.3230808	0.8046021
qn12a	0.0061099	0.1012794	0.06	0.952	-0.192394	0.2046138
qn3	0.1621424	0.1649167	0.98	0.326	-0.1610884	0.4853732
party	0.2384487	0.1630091	1.46	0.144	-0.0810433	0.5579407
qn9	-0.3733548	0.2077211	-1.8	0.072	-0.7804807	0.033771
_cons	-3.414918	0.5412226	-6.31	0.00	-4.475695	-2.354141

Based on the data, education and citizenship played a role in whether or not Latinx individuals chose to participate in protests or demonstrations for immigrants' rights. It appears that citizens are more likely to participate in protests compared to non-citizens. Additionally, it appears that individuals with higher levels of education are similarly more likely to engage in protests and demonstrations for immigrants' rights. When looking at the education variable in my model, the data aligns with previous research that states that more educated individuals are more likely to engage in political engagement. This is because individuals are more likely to become socially aware and get taught about civic engagement through increased levels of education (Hillygus, 2005).

The citizenship findings from the data supports my H2 in the sense that citizens are more likely to politically engage after perceiving an executive level action as harmful compared to

non-citizens even though undocumented individuals are generally the target of Trump's immigration policies (Pierce et al., 2018). As stated in my H2, I believe that this is a result of the linked fate that the Latinx community exhibits. Regardless of what group is targeted, the Latinx community is likely to act similarly and act in a way that supports the community as a whole (Vargas et al., 2017). In this case, it appears that citizens are likely to mobilize even though non-citizens are generally the target of more harmful and threatening policies.

Looking at the citizenship control variable more in depth, I am led to believe that with the large number of respondents that viewed Trump's policies as "harmful" to the Latinx community along with the higher number of citizens that chose to participate in protests for immigrants' rights, this data may be a result of group cohesion in the Latinx community. Group cohesion can come about in a variety of ways, but a large contributing factor is discrimination (Sanchez and Masuoka, 2010). Based on the number of respondents that claimed that Trump's policies are harmful, it's possible to conclude that these individuals may feel threatened in some way, and are therefore exhibiting group cohesion by choosing to engage politically regardless of citizenship status.

To supplement the Pew Research center survey, I chose to conduct in-depth, IRB approved interviews. I interviewed five Latinx individuals either in-person or over the phone for approximately 45 minutes each. The original goal was to interview at least 10 members from both Latinx organizations at Texas A&M and members of grassroots organizations in Texas, but the interview process got cut short due to the closure of many establishments as a result of COVID-19. Looking at the interviews conducted, each individual was a member of a Latinx organization on campus at Texas A&M University, and was contacted through their organizational email at Texas A&M. The organizations that were included were the Council for

Minority Student Affairs (CMSA), MSC CAMAC, Latino Logradores, the Latinx Graduate

Student Association (LGSA), and the Latinx Community and Advocacy Association (LCAA). I

chose to interview individuals from Latinx organizations on campus because they are surrounded

by fellow Latinx peers, and generally discuss Latinx topics of concern at various levels including

both the campus and national level. Each individual interviewed was from a different Latinx

organization in order to better account for variance in feelings and experiences across groups.

The interviews all began by asking several background questions including age and the

individual's organizational affiliation. From there, the interview went on to ask each respondent

about their current political engagement, their feelings toward various executive level actions

between the Trump and Obama administration, and beliefs about the degree of unity within the

Latinx community. Each of these questions were used in order to test my hypotheses. For the full

set of interview questions, see the Appendix.

To capture my independent variable, I asked questions about how each individual felt

regarding different forms of executive level action. Some of these executive level actions

included the U.S.-Mexico Wall and separation of families at the border under the Trump

administration, as well as DACA under the Obama administration. In contrast, to capture my

dependent variable, I asked questions regarding each individual's political engagement and

whether or not it's changed or stayed the same during the given presidential administrations.

Additionally, each interviewee was asked about their political engagement in different forms

including voting, donating to campaigns, participating in protests, and keeping up with current

events.

Although each respondent delivered a unique perspective, there were several common

themes in the interview responses. For example, all five of the respondents claimed to be

currently politically engaged through voting and keeping up with current events. None of the respondents reported donating to campaigns, and only three actively engage in protests. Uniquely, without being asked, three of the respondents also mentioned social media and how they use it to keep politically engaged with current events and posts from politicians. The following is a quote from an LGSA member recalling how she uses social media to engage politically.

> *LGSA Member:* "Honestly, because school and life can get so busy, I'll usually go on Twitter to look up current events and see what politicians are tweeting about."

Additionally, when asked about the Wall and the separation of families at the border under the Trump administration, all five of the interview respondents claimed that they were angry with, and fearful of this action. Additionally, all five respondents reported that they supported DACA under the Obama administration, and would be fearful for their friends and acquaintances who would be affected if it was rescinded. All five respondents also claimed that they view Donald Trump's executive actions and policies as harmful rather than helpful. The following quote is from a member of Latino Logradores.

> *Latino Logradores Member:* "I personally wouldn't be affected if DACA was rescinded, but I know a lot of good friends that would be. It makes me so sad."

Given that all of the respondents agreed that Trump's executive level actions were harmful and perceived some type of threat from them, whether it was toward themselves or

people they may know, I expected that each respondent would agree that they were more politically engaged during the Trump administration compared to the Obama administration due to their anger or fear. Instead, only one respondent claimed that they are more active under the Trump administration due to their anger or fear. Separately, three other respondents claimed that they are more active under the Trump administration because they are now older, and issues are more salient through social media. Only one respondent reported that their level of political engagement stayed fairly consistent between the Obama and Trump administrations.

Lastly, I expected that due to linked fate, the Latinx community would feel more unified during times of anger or fear. For this reason, I asked each respondent how unified they felt that the Latinx community is as a whole and if the members within their organization feel the same way that they do. All five respondents stated that they think the members of their organization feel the same way that they do about Trump's executive level actions and mobilize accordingly, but four out of those five members also stated that they do not feel the Latinx community is unified in their feelings toward Trump's executive level actions. In fact, all four stated that they believe there is a large portion of Latinx individuals that like Donald Trump and his executive level actions and view them as more helpful than harmful. I found this rather surprising given that I expected the Latinx community to exhibit more of a sense of linked fate. The following quote is from a CMSA member.

> *CMSA Member:* "I would say that Latinos are 50/50. There's some that want to help immigrants and fight for their rights, and then there's some that you'll randomly see wearing a 'Make America Great' hat."

Overall, I found that the interviews that I conducted served as an important supplement to the surveys to get a better sense of how unified the Latinx community feels, as well as their specific emotions on the more recent forms of executive level action. Although the linked fate portion of my personal interviews did not support my hypothesis, the constant theme of social media as a form of political engagement was interesting. I believe that this may be another important question to address in the future for Latinx political engagement.

CONCLUSION

This research is especially relevant in today's political climate given that many recent executive level actions have targeted the Latinx community directly (Pierce et al., 2018). Some of the more salient issues that have been addressed under the Trump administration pose a level of threat to the Latinx community, specifically undocumented individuals. In turn, this level of threat has been met with a range of emotions including anger and fear. This anger and fear have led the Latinx population to act in a variety of ways, one of which is increasing their level of political engagement (Valentino et al., 2011). Additionally, even though the undocumented community is the primary target of recent executive level actions, the Latinx community exhibits a sense of linked fate that leads them to act cohesively (Vargas et al., 2017).

Ultimately, my findings build off of previous literature by focusing in on *executive level* action rather than *legislation*. This is especially relevant given the numerous executive level actions that we have witnessed within Trump's administration (Pierce et al., 2018). Overall, my findings lead me to conclude that both of my hypotheses are correct. In my analysis of the Pew Research survey, I found that more threatening executive level actions lead to increased levels of political engagement from the Latinx community. Additionally, I found that the Latinx community does exhibit a sense of linked fate in which members of the Latinx population act cohesively regardless of whether or not they are directly targeted by certain actions.

When looking at the immigration policy under the Trump administration, it's important to recognize its racialized nature and how this impacts the quality of life for all Latinos. In the media, undocumented Latinos are portrayed through negative stereotypes and are accused of being economic burdens on the United States (Anguiana et al., 2017). For this reason, we have

noticed a rise in anti-immigrant policies such as discussion of U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, the separation of families at the border, and the proposition to rescind DACA. As a response, we have also seen an increase in the number of protests and demonstrations combating these anti-immigrant policies (Vargas et al., 2017). I attribute this sense of linked fate and increased political engagement to the group cohesion that takes place among individuals that feel discriminated against (Sanchez and Masuoka, 2010). The negative rhetoric surrounding immigration in the media combined with the large numbers of Latinos that reported that Trump's policies were "harmful" to the Latinx community as a whole lead me to believe that Latinos may feel discriminated against, and therefore act cohesively. This cohesiveness then translates into increased levels of political engagement from the Latinx community across the board.

Overall, my research is of great importance given the salience of immigration policy in today's politics, but also in the way that it may impact the U.S. Electorate in the future. As mentioned previously, the Latinx community is the largest minority in the U.S. and its continuing to grow (Flores et al. 2019). With that being said, as more Latinos continue to mobilize, we may notice a shift in things that the Latinx community prefer to address including social issues and healthcare (DeSipio, 2006). This in turn could lead to a shift in the way that we see and experience policies today. With a different electorate, our politicians, policies, and debates all have the potential to change accordingly.

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APPENDIX

Interviewee Name:
Interviewee Age:
Affiliation with Grassroot Organization (if any):

Brief research overview:
I am currently writing a senior thesis at Texas A&M University regarding how executive level action in the United States affects Latinx political engagement. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your specific feelings towards executive level action in the U.S., and if you feel your political engagement has been affected in any way as a result.

Questions:
1. How politically engaged would you consider yourself over the past 4 years?
   a. Probe: Do you vote?
   b. Probe: Do you currently participate in or donate to any campaigns?
   c. Probe: Do you watch the news and keep up with current events? What news sources do you generally rely on?
   d. Probe: Do you participate in political protests of any kind?

2. Has your level of political engagement stayed the same during this time?
   a. Probe: Do you think you are more engaged now than you were previously?
   b. Probe: Why or why not?

3. How do you feel about Donald Trump and his administration?
   a. Probes: Happy with, scared of, angry towards, content with, indifferent towards, etc.?

4. Do you think Donald Trump's recent executive actions are helping, or harming the Latinx community as a whole?
   a. Probe: Why?

5. Who do you think is responsible for the proposal to build a wall along the United States and Mexico border?
   a. Probe: Do you think Donald Trump is responsible?
   b. Probe: How does this make you feel? Content with, unhappy (scared/angry) with, indifferent towards, etc.

6. Who do you think is responsible for the separation of children from their families at the border under the Trump administration?
   a. Probes: Do you think Donald Trump is responsible?
   b. Probe: How does this make you feel? Content with, unhappy (scared/angry) with, indifferent towards, etc.

7. What is your stance on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)?
    a. Probe: Is it helpful? Harmful?
    b. Probe: How would you feel if it was rescinded?

8. Have these or other presidential policies ever inspired you to engage politically?
    a. Probe: How so?
    b. Probe: If other policies, what were they?

9. Have the ways that you participate politically changed over time at all?
    a. Probe: How?
    b. Probe: How has your political participation changed between the Trump and Obama Administration?

10. Do you think that other members of the Latinx community feel the same way that you do about the Trump administration?
    a. Probe: Why or why not?
    b. Probe: Do you think the members within your organization feel the same way?

11. How united do you think the Latinx population is in terms of political engagement?
    a. Probe: Do you think that if one group of the Latinx community is unhappy, the rest will be similarly unhappy?

12. Do you feel that the members of your organization have become more or less politically engaged within the current Administration?
    a. Probe: Why do you think that is?

13. Do the members within your organization usually exhibit similar feelings in regard to executive actions and policies?
    a. Probe: How so?
    b. Probe: Why do you think that is?

14. Do you think that your level of political engagement will change in the future?
    a. Probe: How?
    b. Probe: Do you think other members of your organization will be affected in the same way?

15. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?