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Residential Mobility and Latino Political Mobilization

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Abstract:
Conventional wisdom views voter mobility as having a significant impact on whether a person will vote. Little has been done to disaggregate the effects of mobility on the need to re-register then voter turnout, or first and second stage of participation. Even less has been done to explore the effects of residential mobility on self-reported voter mobilization. In an analysis of Latino voter behavior in the 2003 municipal election in Houston, Texas, I examine the whether mobilization campaign strategies during the 2004 Presidential election, measured by self-reported mobilization, were influenced by the target voters "rootedness" in their community. Voters who have moved more often in the previous five years are less likely to report being contacted by a candidate, political party, or organization, even after overcoming the hurdle to re-registered to vote; this effect is independent of a person's educational attainment, marital status, or interest in the election. Thus, the lower participation rates among persons who are residentially mobile is not only attributable to institutional barriers or disinterest in participation by new arrivals to a locality, but is also affected by the campaigns who choose not reach out to less residentially stable segments of the electorate.

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The perceived political relevance of Latinos in the United States has increased dramatically since the 2000 presidential election. In that election, a record amount of money ($3.2 million) was spent by presidential campaigns on Spanish-language advertisements targeting messages to Latinos. During the midterm elections of 2002, the amount of money spent on Spanish-language advertisement grew by nearly five hundred percent ($16 million). This figure was likely surpassed again during the 2004 presidential campaign (Segal 2004). The significant increase in political advertisements targeting Latinos has led pundits, scholars and the national, state and local media to depict Latinos as an emerging major political force in American presidential elections that should be courted (Segal 2003; Marbut 2004).

There are three principal explanations for this increased attention. First, the mainstream media’s sudden realization that Latinos matter demographically is due largely to the fact that Latinos have concurrently become the nation’s largest minority population and the fastest growing segment of the citizen voting age population. Second, the political fascination with Latinos as the new “soccer moms” can be traced to the combination of geographic concentration in some the most populous states (as well as a few “battleground” states), their growth as a segment of the electorate, their increased partisan independence, and their recent variability of their voting behavior. Third, increased party competition at the national level further explains why the 2000 elections represented the first time both the Democrat and Republican candidates for president and their campaigns paid significant attention to Latinos. Not only did Al Gore and George W. Bush speak more Spanish in

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1 More than $320,000 was spent by Democratic candidates during the 2004 presidential primary season. The official figures have not been made public, but it is estimated that $5 million were be spent by the New Democratic Network alone.

2 There has been an increase in both the number of adult Latino immigrants who have attained U.S citizenship and native born youth who are reaching voting age.

3 Latino voters increased from 2.5 million voters nationally in 1980 to 6 million voters in 2000, a 136 percent increase. For more on Latino partisan and ideological independence see Hajnal & Lee (2006). The variability in voting behavior that I allude to refers to the increased willingness to vote for individual Republican candidates at higher rates than historic patters in states where Democrats have historically dominated among Latino voters (e.g. Gubernatorial elections of George W. Bush in Texas, Pataki in New York, Arnold Schwarzenegger in California, etc).
public, but each candidate’s campaign also organized major events in California and Texas, the two states with the largest numbers of Latino voters. These increased efforts to woo Latino voters apparently indicate a change in attitudes regarding Latino voters.

Growing media attention and campaign-related outreach to Latino voters, however, should not be confused with voter mobilization efforts. It is well established that Latinos are among the least targeted groups in the electorate (Leighley 2001; Wong 2001; Verba et al 1995; de la Garza et al., 1992). In fact, Latinos report being asked to participate at a lower rate (25 percent) than African Americans (40 percent) and Whites (56 percent) (Verba et al., 1995). Driving this disparity are both individual-level and contextual sources. The Latino population is younger and has lower levels of education and income, all characteristics that are negatively associated with partisan mobilization efforts (Gershtenson 2003; Leighley 2001; Verba et al 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Historically, political parties have helped to reduce the costs of participation, allowing for greater inclusion in the electorate of immigrants, and segments of the population with lower income, less education, and less politically-relevant resources. The declining rate of participation among all segments of the population, but especially those with lower socioeconomic status, can be partially attributed to the waning involvement of political parties in the direct mobilization of voters.

Moreover, the geographic concentration of Latinos in the most populous states is a double-edge sword. While political parties could maximize their efforts to mobilize Latino voters by focusing on the most populous states with sizable Latino populations (e.g. California, New York, Texas, and Florida) they do not have an incentive to do so because with the exception of Florida, they are rarely competitive (de la Garza and DeSipio 2004). Regardless of election cycle, it is not an overstatement to say that most Latinos live in states dominated by one party or another.4 While

4 Over two-thirds of all Latinos live in six non-competitive states: Arizona, California Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.
Latinos do live in highly competitive states like Florida and New Mexico, these are the exception to the rule. Even in these competitive states, political parties rely largely on “air war” campaigns consisting of television and radio advertising because they lack the organizational capacity to run the type of “ground war” campaigns\(^5\) that historically were used to motivate people to vote. This decreased capacity of parties has theoretical and normative implications on participation of all voters, and Latinos in particular. The future of participatory democracy and civic engagement in the United States will depend on partisan and non-partisan political elites to look beyond short-term electoral goals that neglect low-propensity voters, populations with low levels of politically relevant resources, and those who reside in non-competitive jurisdictions (ranging from precincts and electoral districts to states); and to do so through personalized mobilization efforts similar to those successfully utilized by political machines in the past.

It is a tall order to ask that political elites to move away from the “air war” campaigns, to expend resources on activities that do not have an immediate pay-off, and to do so in a cost-intensive, personalized manner. Despite this initial perceived hurdle, technological innovations now allow for the incorporation of consumer data to political data, so as to allow for more precise targeting of voters with more personalized direct voter mobilization that has been shown to be a more effective tool to motivate people to vote. Given this increased capability, there is growing sentiments that mobilization efforts on the “ground level” will gain more prominence in future political campaigns (Meyerson 2004)\(^6\). Clearly, this renewed interest and innovations in targeting voters has the potential to impact voter turnout, as well as existing theories of voter mobilization.

\(^5\) The reported increased ground efforts during the 2004 presidential election cycle, while significant, was largely, if not exclusively, confined to a handful of swing states with few Latino voters.

\(^6\) A related article in the NY Times Magazine refers to the increased precision of targeting subpopulations based on consumer data as “microtargeting” (Matt Bai, 2004).
In this chapter I revisit the mobilization literature and consider whether the conventional wisdom regarding the determinants of mobilization should be revisited given the changes mentioned above. Moreover, I emphasize the role of residential mobility and residential stability on the incidence of Latinos’ self-reported mobilization efforts and propose that existing and future studies of mobilization consider the significance of this variable in their analyses. This chapter is divided into five parts. First, I review the extant literature on mobilization generally, and as it pertain to Latinos in the United States. Second I consider why scholars of political mobilization have paid little attention to the role of residential mobility despite its likely relevance for partisan and non-partisan voter mobilization efforts. I then discuss the data used and the proposed measurements of residential mobility and stability. The fourth section presents the results and the final section concludes with a look at the possible implications of residential mobility for elite mobilization efforts of Latinos and non-Latinos in the United States.

The Personal and the Political

Who votes? This is the fundamental question in political participation research. The proliferation of surveys has allowed scholars to identify compelling explanations for differing levels of political participation based on the characteristics of voters such as their income, education, age, and partisanship (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Teixiera 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), however, suggest that a person’s resources and personal characteristics only explain half the story. The other half of the story is the political, or being asked to participate.

Such a parsimonious theory, based on the personal and the political, is useful in that it helps to structure necessary questions about differences in political participation in the general population and among subgroups. The consensus is that “parties target individuals who are more predisposed to activity by their individual characteristics” (Gershtenson 2003: 294). Given the strong
relationship that has been identified between voting and mobilization, it makes sense that individual characteristics that have been shown to affect participation are also included in models predicting mobilization. As such, the dominant approach in the political mobilization literature focuses on the relationship between participation and mobilization.

The relevance of mobilization for participation

Perhaps the two most often-cited contemporary studies concerning the relationship between mobilization and participation are Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). Both observational studies of participation use public opinion surveys and reach similar conclusions. They agree that people are more likely to participate if recruited by elites. The specifics of their arguments differ in that Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) focus primarily on the role of political elites in “underwriting the costs of political participation” (27), whereas Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) emphasize the differing role of voluntary institutions (nonpolitical) and political institutions in directly mobilizing individuals, as well as by helping them acquire the necessary skills that facilitate all forms of participation, including political participation.

Despite the general agreement of these and other studies of voter mobilization regarding the correlation between voting and mobilization (Caldeira, Clausen, and Patterson 1990; Caldeira, Patterson, and Markko1985; Crotty 1971; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Kramer 1970), it is difficult to fully disentangle the relationship between mobilization and participation because the factors that predict one predict the other. “Hence, it is virtually impossible to estimate the effect of mobilization on participation while giving sufficient consideration to the extent to which they are interrelated. Individuals and institutions are likely to mobilize those who are likely to participate and mobilization always predicts participation successfully” (Leighley 2001, 161). As such, scholars concerned with

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*These studies simply ask respondents whether they were contacted, and determine whether self-reported contact is correlated with self-reported turnout. As described below, recent field experiments circumvent this hindrance by manipulating who is contacted and who is in the control group, then determining whether this has an effect on validated turnout.*
this endogenous relationship between mobilization and participation suggest that the best way to delineate the magnitude of the effect of mobilization is through randomized Get Out The Vote field experiments (Gerber and Green 2000; Green and Gerber 2004).

Efforts to determine whether direct mobilization is as relevant for Latino participation as it has been found among other populations have largely drawn on three methodologies: aggregate analyses of case studies, survey/public opinion, and field experiments. Pantoja and Woods (1999) utilize aggregate analysis to consider whether individual turnout increased among Latinos living in Los Angeles County cities where Southwest Voter conducted GOTV efforts in 1996 and 1998. They do not find a link between the cities where Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP) conducted GOTV efforts and increased turnout among individuals in those cities. The problem with this method is that the authors expect to find an increase in participation even among those living in SVREP-targeted precincts who may not have received contact. Simply living in an area where GOTV efforts were conducted does not mean that they actually were contacted. Other case studies of municipal elections largely focus on candidate campaigns and local mobilization efforts to determine how receptive the racial and ethnic groups are to mobilization (Hardy-Fanta 1993).

Utilizing post election surveys, Shaw, De La Garza and Lee (2001) and De la Garza, Abrajano, and Cortina (2002) find that self-reported contact by a Latino group can positively impact Latino turnout. While both studies utilize validated post election surveys, they are dependent on the accuracy of self-reported contact. Regardless of which of the above methodology was utilized (case studies vs. survey), the above studies share two commonalities: 1) they focus on the relevance of

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8 It is probable that voter mobilization efforts disproportionately target likely voters. Therefore, to the extent that there is a relation between contact and turnout, the apparent causal relation may be spurious if contact is endogenous. This is a widespread critique of public opinion surveys dealing with the topic of mobilization.

9 Given that contact rates are much lower than 100% for all phone and personal canvass efforts, it is very likely that many people in the random sample never received treatment. This is even more the case if only certain neighborhoods received treatment, but the analysis is on citywide turnout.
mobilization by co-ethnic groups for Latino participation and 2) they are unable to concretely
determine the size and scope of effect that particularized contact has on Latino turnout.

The third methodology used to determine the relevance of mobilization for Latino
participation draws on the field experiment tradition of Gosnell (1927) and Eldersveld (1956), as
well as the more contemporary methods for more accurate measurement proposed by Gerber and
Green (2000). Both Michelson (2002) and Ramírez (2005) utilize randomized field experiments to
measure the impact of mobilization on Latino participation. In rural California, Michelson (2002)
finds that co-ethnic mobilization and mode of contact\textsuperscript{10} are important mobilizing forces in local
elections. The positive effect of Latino co-ethnic contact and the relevance of mode of contact are
validated in the analysis of the largest mobilization field experiment of Latinos to date, consisting of
over 400,000 Latinos nationally (Ramirez 2005).

\textit{Context as a mobilizing force}

In addition to the works on the effects of particularized mobilization and its effects on
political participation, there is a growing body of literature on the mobilizing effect of context.
Specifically, these studies consider the role of social and political context in structuring political
behavior.\textsuperscript{11} There are two competing hypotheses regarding the salience of context on participation.\textsuperscript{12}
The first, suggests that increased minority group size may negatively affect Anglo voter turnout
(Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Gay 2001). Conversely, the alternate hypothesis argues that as the size

\textsuperscript{10} Precinct walking and person-to-person calls have been shown to be more effective than direct mail or automated calls

\textsuperscript{11} Most empirical studies that consider the effects of context have emphasized the role racial and ethnic context has on
attitudes and voter policy preferences rather than levels of participation (Key 1949; Glaser 1994; Tolbert and Hero
1996; Cain, Citrin and Wong 2000; Ramírez 2000). In testing the validity of the group threat hypothesis, the goal of
these studies is to determine whether racial and ethnic context impacts white policy preferences. Depending on the
aggregate level used to measure context (i.e. precinct, city, assembly district, or county) different conclusions can be
reached as to the magnitude and direction of the effect.

\textsuperscript{12} This is different than the effect of context in structuring attitudes and/or preferences.
of the minority population increases, the dominant group will react to protect their interest, through higher participation (Giles and Evans 1985, Giles and Evans 1986).

Leighley’s (2001) empirical study further heightens the tension between the above hypotheses as she finds that actual increased minority group size does not affect Anglo participation, but that perception of an increasingly diverse environment negatively impacts Anglo participation. This finding also holds true for African Americans and Latinos, relative to perceived white presence. More recently Barreto, Segura, and Woods (2004) find that residing in a majority-Latino district has a positive effect on Latino turnout, when compared to non-Latinos. They find that residing in multiple overlapping majority-Latino districts further increases Latino turnout. Taken together, these findings suggest that perceived and real instances of individuals living in areas that are ‘more like them’ are simply more likely to vote.

Rather than conceptualizing the relevant contextual effects as driven by minority group size, Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura (2001) suggest that a more relevant measure of context is the nature of the political environment at the state level. Using a three-state validated survey, they find that the political context explains higher levels of electoral participation among Latinos who naturalized in the early 1990s in California but not Texas or Florida. Their results suggest that political context may act as a mobilizing force. The California sample of this data was later supplemented with a longitudinal validated measure of electoral turnout, from 1990 to 2000, to determine whether mobilization by political context is temporal in nature or long lasting. Utilizing the supplemented data, Ramírez (2002) identifies a cohort mobilization effect, where those who first registered to vote during the politically charged climate (1994-96) turned out at higher levels than did Latinos who first

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13 In their discussion of politicized climate, Pantoja et. al. (2001) and Ramirez (2002) refer to the passage of two statewide ballot initiatives. Proposition 187 limited the access that undocumented workers had to public education, social services, and health care. Proposition 209 outlawed the use of race and ethnicity in admissions to state colleges and universities, as well as in the awarding of contracts by state agencies and substate governments.
registered at any other time in every general election between 1996 and 2000. More importantly, among this mobilized Latino cohort, and contrary to the findings of previous empirical studies, naturalized Latinos had the highest levels of participation.

**General theories of Mobilization and Latinos**

General theories of mobilization have implications for our understanding of Latino mobilization. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argue that political elites selectively determine whom to target because of efficiency and outcome-driven concerns. “Once political leaders decide to pursue a mobilization strategy, they want to get the most effective number involved with the least amount of effort” (30-31). While not directly addressed by the authors, self-reported mobilization by Latinos is positively related to the extent to which they fall into one or more of the four categories of citizens whom leaders are likely to target. Gershtenson (2003) considers the mobilization strategies of partisan elites between 1956 and 2000 and finds that the four categories identified by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) consistently predict the targets of mobilization by both Democrats and Republicans during the time period in question.

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), on the other hand, contend that the level and nature of institutional mobilization of individuals is contingent on the levels of politicization of the institution.

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14 See Barreto and Woods (2004) for an analysis on the effects of California’s political context on partisan registration patterns in Los Angeles County.

15 See Barreto (2004) for a more recent account of this California-specific phenomenon where naturalized Latino voters turn out at higher rates than native born Latinos.

16 These include 1) people they already know; 2) those centrally positioned in social networks; 3) influential individuals; 4) those likely to respond to mobilization.

17 One can also infer how other mainstream studies of mobilization and participation would explain differing levels of mobilization among racial and ethnic minorities. We can infer, for example, from Huckfeldt and Sprague’s (1992) work that level of minority mobilization is dependent on their previous voting patterns, their partisanship, and the extent to which the local political structure where they live is conducive to the partisan mobilization.

18 He, does not distinguish between Latinos and non-Latinos in terms of their propensity to be contacted. Instead he finds a significant relationship between race and mobilizations through the inclusion of a dichotomous race variable intended to capture the effects for African Americans. It is problematic to lump together Whites, Asians and Latinos because this likely dilutes the effects of race if Latinos and Asians are contacted at lower rates than both African Americans and Whites.
that conducts the mobilization (e.g. church, job, or other voluntary associations). It is notable that Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), unlike most mainstream studies of mass participation and mobilization, systematically consider how race structures who is asked to participate. Accordingly mobilization of Latinos depends not only on individual-level civic skills but more important it is contingent on the presence of politicized institutions with the necessary resources to engage in mobilizing activities.

Thus, according to general theories of mobilization only a small number of Latinos can be characterized as likely candidates of mobilization. This is particularly true of Latinos living in majority-Latino districts. In what is perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of the individual and institutional factors that affect mobilization of Latinos, Leighley (2001) finds that when Latinos in Texas “make up the largest proportion of the population, they tend to reside in counties in which party chairs engage in fewer mobilization activities—and especially those oriented toward reducing the cost of participation” (66). This leads to a vicious cycle that often excludes Latinos because mobilization increases turnout, and parties focus on likely voters, ignoring low propensity voters. It is unclear whether parties intentionally neglect Latinos. In order to ascertain whether or not parties intentionally neglect Latinos and other racial/ethnic minorities, Leighley utilizes an innovative approach. Using a survey of county party chairs in Texas and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s Citizen Participation Study (CPS) data, she concludes that color-blind considerations structure the patterns of mobilization efforts. She cites ideology, group size and prior voter turnout as “important factors in elites’ decisions about whom to mobilize, as well as perceptions among some minority leaders that, due to these factors, minorities may be overlooked in the mobilization process” (61).

Her study is unique in that she uses data of elite self-reports of mobilization efforts AND individual’s self-reported recruitment, she considers the ways in which the nature and level of political
mobilization of racial and ethnic minorities vary. Ultimately, Leighley’s findings in Texas concur with Verba et al.’s general observation that Latinos are mobilized significantly less than Anglos. One paradox in her findings is that for Latinos (in Texas) increase in Latino group size does not positively impact partisan mobilization efforts yet increasing Latino population is associated with increased party competition. One would expect that increased party competition would result in increased mobilization activities of the potentially swing vote, in this case Latinos.

While comprehensive on several levels, Leighley’s analysis of patterns of mobilization does not address the relevance of ethnicity of elites. In an effort to determine whether co-ethnic elected officials are more or less neglectful of Latinos in their mobilization efforts Barreto et al (2003) focus on the effect of descriptive representation on self-reported mobilization. In their analysis they account for the possibility of multiple levels of descriptive representation given the overlapping nature of state and federal legislative districts. Controlling for other individual and contextual factors, they find that there is an increase in the probability of Latino self-reported mobilization when the number of co-ethnic representatives increases from 0 to 1. However, there is no increased probability of particularized mobilization as the number of co-ethnic representatives increases to two or three.

**Residential Mobility, Participation and Mobilization Strategies**

Most of the literature on mobilization has been focused on the effects of moving on political participation. Political participation scholars concur that residential mobility depresses several forms of civic and political participation (Squire et al 1987; Jackson 1996; Brians 1997; Highton 2000; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Bowers 2004). Mobility-related factors that depress participation can be categorized as either institutional or social. First, the institutional provisions that require re-registration following a move pose an entry barrier to participation. Second, moving may disrupt
their “rootedness” in existing social networks that might help reduce the costs of participation. (Highton 2000)

Bowers (2004) further delineates the effects on social networks by considering the impositions of costs in three ways: “1) by disrupting the conduits for mobilization (knowing people), 2) by requiring individuals to gather new information and understandings about their new political environments, and 3) by imposing costs of time and money that are higher than normal due to the process of getting from one residence to another” (p 528). Highton (2000) suggests that it is not just the act of moving that matters, but type of movement. Interestingly, he finds that the negative effect of residential mobility (movement within a community) is comparable to the negative effect of community mobility (movement across communities). Rather than focus on the negative effects of mobility, Jackson (1996) finds that residential stability has positive effects on voter registration and turnout. The negative effects of residential mobility (or positive effects of residential stability) on participation are assumed to hold true for all segments of the population, yet there is only one existing exploration of such effects among Latinos (Johnson, Stein and Wrinkle 2003). They conclude that, among Spanish-speaking Latinos in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, residential stability helps overcome other individual level barriers to participation.

One problem with studies of mobilization and participation has to do with how mobility is measured and operationalized. When considering the determinants of participation the concepts of mobility and stability are used interchangeably without a clear standard for the conditions make someone residentially mobile or stable. Ordinarily, surveys will ask respondents how long they have lived at a particular address. Those who have lived at their current address for less than five years19 are considered to be more mobile than those who have been at their address longer. While Highton (2000) focuses on distance of movement, Bowers (2004) considers the immediate disruptive effects

19 At times, the cut-off measure of stability is ten years.
on participation by identifying whether moving in a particular year impacts different forms of participation during the same year. Jackson (1996) uses the square root of the number of years at current residence as a measure of stability. Still others will at times use homeownership as a proxy for stability. The lack of a clear standard for determining who is residentially stable or mobile hinders comparability across studies cited above.

Because residential mobility depresses participation, we might expect that residential mobility will also depress mobilization. One might expect parties, and other political groups, in an attempt to use their resources in the most effective manner target their resources toward mobilizing those with more social connections and the strongest ties to their communities. This includes those with stable community connections, as evidenced by living in the same community for a significant period of time and those with a deep community connection, as evidenced by owning one's home. It is assumed that homeowners and those who have lived in a community for a substantial period of time are not only easier to contact but are also more likely to yield indirect benefits through the mobilization within their denser web of community contacts (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 166-167). It is therefore unsurprising that Rosenstone and Hansen find that those who own their homes and have lived in a community for a number of years are more likely to be contacted by parties in presidential and midterm elections than non-homeowners or newcomers to the community (164-165). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) also found that those who have lived in the same residence most of their lives are more likely to be asked to participate than more recent arrivals. The following analysis builds on this past research to examine whether mobility affects mobilization among Latinos in particular.

Data and Measures of Residential Mobility and Stability

I use data from municipal post-election survey of registered voters conducted between November 11 and November 26, 2003 using a listed sample of registered voters in Houston, Texas.
A total sample consists of 555 registered voters with an oversample of 269 Latinos. Measures of residential mobility and stability were later added using a combination of consumer data, voter registration rolls, and trust deed data.

Why restrict the study to registered voters? Most parties and other organizations focus their mobilization efforts on those who are most likely to vote—people who are already registered. The rationale for targeting existing voters consists of two factors. First, it is less costly to remind those who have voted in the past to vote in an upcoming election than to convince someone who has never voted to participate for the first time in the electoral process. The second factor has to do with the use of registered party affiliation as a cue for potential supporters of candidates or ballot initiatives. Partisan and non-partisan elites are more likely to target someone if she is registered, and they have registered party preferences. Thus, as was the case with participation, the presence of electoral mobilization is contingent on overcoming the institutional barrier (i.e. voter registration) to electoral participation.20 Residential mobility therefore needs to be more explicitly considered as a key determinant not only of successful voter registration and participation and mobilization, but also of mobilization. Figure 1 incorporates this logic into Jan Leighley’s (2001) model of Latino participation.

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20 There are several scholars that do take the need to register to vote as vital to understanding participation. However, most of these works have focused on institutional mechanisms that reduce the costs of registration such as later closing dates, same-day registration, and the presence of motor voter. Less has been done to understand why voters facing similar institutional barriers still behave register or re-register at different rates.
This revised model of Latino political participation highlights the direct and indirect effects of residential mobility on participation. The primary and more direct effect, as discussed earlier, has to do with the institutional barrier to participation that arises when someone moves and needs to register or re-register to vote. The indirect effect of mobility on participation has to do with the impact on propensity to be targeted for mobilization. Bowers (2004) and Brians (1996) make reference to the negative effects on social networks and an implied effect on propensity to be mobilized, yet they do not test for this directly. I test for this explicitly by considering the role of residential mobility and stability on levels of self-reported mobilization.

The analysis highlights two forms of residential mobility, recency and frequency, and two forms of stability, homeownership and household electoral engagement. Recency is captured by focusing on the last on a five-year stability period. Frequency focuses on the number of addresses where the respondent has resided within this five year span. These measures are interrelated in that those with only one address during this period could be coded as having lived at their address five years or more, whereas those with more than one address will have lived at their current address for less than five years. Residential Mobility focuses on the number of addresses where respondents have lived during
the past five years. In effect, I capture both frequency and recency of mobility using only one variable because of the number of moves that took place during the five year stability period designation. 

The two measures of social and political stability are very straightforward, as are the expectations for their contribution to participation and mobilization outcomes. The homeowner variable is drawn from validated trust deed information and the household electoral engagement consists of a count of the number of household members who are registered to vote. Granted that being registered to vote does not mean that the household is fully engaged in the electoral process, but at the very least it allows for the opportunity be engaged. Again, the expectation in the literature is that homeowners participate at higher levels and are targets of mobilization, as are households with multiple registered voters.

Among the general population, it is assumed that homeowners are more likely to be residentially stable than renters and are more likely to vote. However, it is unclear whether this disparity persists among registered voters who have overcome the institutional barrier to participation by registering to vote.

| Table 1: Number of Addresses by Home Ownership Status among Latino Registered Voters, 1998-2003 |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Renter                         | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|                                | 66.70% | 22.60% | 10.70% |
| Homeowner                      | 73.30% | 21.40% | 5.30% |

Source: Houston 2003 Post-Election Survey, University of Southern California

As demonstrated in table 1, two-thirds of renters and nearly three-quarters of homeowners were in the same address over the five year span. While renters were more likely than homeowners to have moved three times within the previous five years, the difference is not as large as one would expect. It is important to note that these are mobility patterns of Latino registered voters in

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21 I was able to match consumer data information to the survey respondents (all of whom were drawn from registered voter lists). The consumer database allowed me to code for number of addresses held during the last five years.
Houston, which are very distinct from the general Latino population in Houston. Empirical models interested in the determinants of mobilization could be critically misspecified if the data used is drawn from the general population, as opposed to registered voters. This is even more likely when considering the effects of homeownership or residential mobility because of the differences are likely greater when comparing renters and homeowners who are not registered to vote.

**Residential mobility and future efforts to mobilize Latinos**

The results of the analysis of predictors of Latino mobilization are presented in table 2. Model 1 incorporates variables found to increase electoral participation and propensity to be mobilized by existing research. Education, marital status, and attentiveness to politics are positively associated with self-reported mobilization. Also consistent with previous research, Latinos living in areas with high concentration of Latinos are less likely to be targets of voter mobilization (Leighley 2001). Model 2 is the full model that includes measures of residential mobility and stability. Once these variables are included, the role of marital status on reported mobilization is no longer statistically significant, while the other variables remain statistically significant. Not surprisingly, homeowners are more likely to be targeted by mobilization efforts. Also, those who are more residentially mobile are less likely to report being contacted.

[Table 2 here]

Clearly, mobility and homeownership represent key factors in determining whether or not parties and other groups outreach directly to Latinos. It is also important to note two key variables whose effects on mobilization were not statistically significant: marital status and the number of registered voters in the household. Being married is often seen as a significant life-cycle event that can help to encourage participation. While this may still be true, it did not increase the likelihood of being contacted for Latinos in Houston, once residential mobility and stability were considered. It is surprising to find that controlling for other factors, an increase in the number of registered
voters in the household does not appear to have an effect on likelihood of being contacted. Candidates for political office may not be utilizing one of the key efficiency tools at their disposal -- identifying active Latino households. If this is the case, they may be missing an opportunity to maximize their efforts to mobilize Latino voters by focusing on households with the greatest number of voters.

The direction of these effects conforms to what we would expect given the prior research on the effects of residential mobility and stability on participation. Clearly, the innovation in the findings and analysis is not in identifying that there are similarities between the determinants of participation and mobilization. Instead, the unique contribution lies in my ability to test whether existing assumptions regarding the effects of residential mobility are applicable to Latino voters and delineating the indirect effects of mobility on participation through the conduit of elite mobilization.

**Conclusion**

I began this chapter with a discussion about the perception that Latinos are becoming a powerful force in American politics. Despite the hype, Latinos are not often the targets of mobilization because they do not fit the demographic profile of likely voters. Unfortunately, Latinos depend upon mobilization to help overcome barriers to participation. If we are to understand the changing dynamics of contemporary elite mobilization strategies we must pay attention to factors not directly related to politics can influence Latino recruitment to politics – including mobility and homeownership. Theories that take these factors into account have direct implications for better and more efficient recruitment efforts that can lead to more participation for Latinos, and potentially greater political incorporation.

There are also other policy implications related to the low rates of Latino homeownership and their patterns residential mobility. The findings from this study suggest that programs to increase homeownership among Latinos will not only improve Latino economic well-being, but also
increase their political mobilization and participation. It is also the case that those who move frequently are less likely to be mobilized. If an inclusive democracy is the goal, both partisan and non-partisan elites should revise their mobilization strategies. One possibility is simply to expand existing mobilization efforts at non-residential places in Latino neighborhoods like supermarkets and community centers. These, and other changes would be a first step to more fully acknowledge that the strategic decisions of elite can have very real consequences on the decision of voters to make it to the polls.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Logistic Regression Results for Predicting Latino Mobilization</th>
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<td><strong>Political Attentiveness</strong></td>
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<td><strong># Registered in Household</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Residential Mobility</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Homeowner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PPC</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sample size</strong></td>
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*** p ≤ 0.01   ** p ≤ 0.05   * p ≤ 0.10 (one tailed tests)
Source: Houston 2003 Post-Election Survey, University of Southern California
Bibliography


