

2015

Causes of Low Voter Turnout of the Hispanic Population in Southwest Texas

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Walden University

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Shawn Morrow

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Causes of Low Voter Turnout of the Hispanic Population in Southwest Texas

by

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MA, University of North Texas, 2008

BS, Angelo State University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

August 2015

Abstract

The Hispanic population in central Texas tends to have low levels of civic engagement as compared to other groups in the same area, which leads to disproportionate political marginalization. Prior research has focused on characteristics of voters and nonvoters, but has failed to explore the lack of political mobilization among Hispanic voters. The purpose of this study was twofold; first to better understand the nature of Hispanic voters' political marginalization, and second, explore why participation levels are so low among this group. This general qualitative study applied critical race theory to explore the barriers perceived by Hispanic voters related to political marginalization that may contribute to low voter participation. Data were collected through interviews with 20 randomly selected Hispanic people residing in central Texas. Interview data were transcribed, inductively coded, and then organized into themes. The key research findings identified 3 themes that potentially explain low civic engagement; a general distrust in government, a deficiency of civics education in the public school system, and specific cultural preferences that may contribute to low levels of participation in voting and politics. Findings also revealed that there is little understanding of the voting process, and few public initiatives to encourage the Hispanic voter community to vote or otherwise engage in participatory democracy. Recommendations to policy makers to promote positive social change include increasing funding for civic education, and creating voter outreach programs. Policy makers and politicians should also seek out ways to build trust in the political process throughout the Hispanic community.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate my dissertation to my family. I would like to thank my wife, Michelle, who not only stood beside me, but also helped me get through the long hours, days, and years. To my boys, Grant and Justice, who gave up days of playtime and fun so their dad could achieve this dream.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The marginalization of Hispanics is one the biggest challenges of Tom Green County, Texas, District 72. One of the most visible signs of marginalization is lack of civic engagement among the Hispanic population. During the presidential election of 2012, only 43.5% of all registered citizens participated in the vote (Texas Legislative Council, 2012). Hispanic voter turnout was extremely low at 16.9% even though they make up a significant portion of the population. This lack of participation is reflective of the national trend of low Hispanic voter turnout (Texas Legislative Council, 2012). The lack of voter participation by Hispanics keeps them from being a part of the polity and limits their access to the provision of government services. Marginalization affects state and federal benefits for business improvement, education, health maintenance, and public safety. These benefits are contingent on numbers of registered voters and voter participation.

When Hispanics do not vote in the scheduled local, state, and national elections, benefits are potentially denied or decreased. Thus, lack of voter participation affects educational and financial opportunities for members of the Hispanic community (Bonilla-Silva & Glover, 2006). Voting is not merely choosing a favorite candidate; voting gives the voter a voice in the issues, concerns, and needs of the community. Lack of civic engagement by Hispanic community members causes underrepresentation of their voice. Overrepresentation of non-Hispanic voters results in a lack of attention to the needs of

Hispanics in passing laws. Voters in elections determine allocation for benefits including which persons and entities receive benefits, and where the funds flow in society. Local, state, and federal governments listen to the voters to determine who will receive benefits and where to allocate funds. By voting, citizens can improve their own well-being and that of the community.

Lack of voter participation leads to a lop-sided allocation of benefits beginning a cycle of thinking that voting does not have benefits. Citizens who do not vote still have expectations that the government shall supply equal benefits to them, but politicians do not pay attention to their needs. Hispanics are being underserved, which puts them in a vicious circle. Lack of civic engagement also affects local, state, federal taxes, and supplemental funds creating a downward cycle that is impelled by lack of voter participation, thereby marginalizing Hispanics further. When federal and state funding to the county declines, citizens' employment opportunities or wage rates, educational levels, personal health and safety are endangered. Citizens ability to be prepared to vote and travel to the polls is further decreased, perpetuating the downward cycle (Dutwin et al., 2005).

Therefore, Tom Green County, Texas, District 72 faces serious problems arising from the lack of citizen participation. Lack of Hispanic citizen participation has worsened since the year 2000 (Texas Legislative Council, 2012). This trend shows the importance to Tom Green County of understanding the underlying causes of this reduced participation. Discovering the causes of nonparticipation can help the county remediate

the problem. To understand voting trends in the district, I examined census data and four types of election data—national, state, district, and county—to determine which groups of citizens are not voting.

Voting Demographics 2000-2012

State Population

Texas had a population of 26,403,743 citizens in 2012, which was a 26% increase from the 2000 U.S. Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). Texas has experienced steady population growth since the year 2000 and has faced changes in political representation for the state at the national level. Table 1 shows the relevant population data and its national political impact. Since the year 2000, total population of the state has grown by nearly 6 million people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). As a result, Texas gained a significant increase in representation of the State of Texas in federal politics. The state boosted its share in the House of Representatives by eight seats over the last two reapportionment cycles, resulting in significantly increased power in the House (2000 and 2010). As Electoral College representation is based largely on House of Representatives seats, this has led to a similar increase in the power of Texas in the election of the president (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

Table 1

Texas Number of Citizens With Percent of Change and Electoral College Votes

Year	Citizens	Citizen increase	% Change	Electoral College votes
2000	20,851,820	n/a	n/a	30
2010	25,145,561	4,293,741	17.0	32
2012	26,403,743	1,258,182	4.8	38

Note. Adapted from (U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2011). *Voting and registration in the election of November 2010: Tables* (p. 20).

Texas Demographics

Comparing official racial categories from the United States Census is challenging. Redefinition of the term *Hispanic* occurs commonly from census to census. The Hispanic ethnic/race group is treated differently than other groups (Dutwin et al., 2005). Census categories will be discussed further in Chapter 2. For the purpose of this study, all ethnicities and race categories are listed as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. These race categories are listed as follows: White, Black, African, Negro, American Indian, Alaska Indian, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Other Asian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian, Chamorro, Samoan, and Other Pacific Islander. After all of these, Hispanics are still only counted by origin/ethnicity, not race (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

In 2010, Texas had a total population of 25,145,561 in which Hispanic Americans were 37.6% or 9,460,921 of the population (Texas Legislative Council, 2010 Census, Red 600, p. 7). Texas had a voter age population (VAP) of about 18.28 million, of which Hispanics formed the largest minority group (33.6%; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

In the state midterm and gubernatorial 2012 elections, the lowest voter turnouts comparing VAP occurred in the western and southern districts of Texas along the border. The lower voter turnout compared to VAP districts included Districts 80 following the border to District 35 of Texas to Mexico. These districts include counties of El Paso, Pecos, Val Verde, Dimmit, Webb, Starr, Hidalgo, and Cameron (see Figure 1; Texas Legislative Council, 2012). I was particularly interested in District 72 in the southwest of the state. District 72 consists of counties of Coke, Concho, Glasscock, Howard, Irion, Reagan, Runnels, Sterling, and Tom Green (see Figure 2).

Texas District 72 Demographics

In 2010, the Texas District 72 had a population of 170,479 (Texas Legislative Council, 2010 Census, Red 119, p. 2). Total Hispanic VAP, based on the Spanish surname voter registration (SSVR), was 22,011 (24.1%) as listed with the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011). Therefore, if turnout (TO) /voter registration (VR) was only 59.4% of registered voters, one can estimate that the number of Hispanic TO/VAP would be decreased by 45.5%, and Hispanic TO/VR would decrease by 59.4% indicating a TO of only 13,075 registered Hispanic voters or 14% of the 24.1% who had registered, as shown in Table 2. The TO/VAP was only 41.5%, indicating a larger Hispanic population along with low voter turnout. Furthermore, if the estimated available Hispanic VAP was 28,698, but only an estimated 13,075 Hispanic persons voted, only an estimated 5% of the Hispanic VAP voted.

Table 2

Texas District 72 Population Totals With Hispanic Surname Voter Registration and Estimated Turnout

Ethnicity	Population 2010		VAP 2010		Total VR 2012		Total TO 2012	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Hispanic American	61,883	36.3	42,239	32.3	21,991	24.1	8,784	16.2
Total	170,479	100	130,771	76.7	91,253	69.8	54,277	59.4

Note. Ethnic groups other than Hispanic were not available on this census page. VAP = voter age population, VR = voter registration, TO = turnout. From Population, VR, and TO Analysis with County

Subtotals for District 72, Red 119, 2010 Census, County Population Analysis, House Districts – PlanH358, 2012 General Election, by Texas Legislative Council, June 27, 2013, p. 6.

In 2010, the Texas District 72 VAP was 130,771, and in 2012 registered voters consisted of 69.8% and voter turnout was 43.3% as listed with the U.S. Bureau of Census (2011). In this same election, Hispanic or Spanish Surname VAP was 32.3% or 42,239. Of those Spanish surnames, 24.1% or 21,991 registered and 16.2% or 8,784 turned out to vote (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). The Hispanic voter turnout was extremely low compared to other groups.

Tom Green County Demographics

In 2000, Tom Green County in the southwestern part of Texas had a population of 104,010 people of which 65,508 were White Americans (63%), 4,757 were Black Americans (4.6%), and 31,946 were Hispanic Americans (30.7%; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). In 2010, Tom Green County had a population of 110,994 people of which 63,820 were White Americans (57.9%), 5,290 were Black Americans (4.8%), and 39,349 were Hispanic Americans (35.7%; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). In 2012, Tom Green County had a population of 113,281 people of which 64,117 were White Americans (56.6%), 5,210 were Black Americans (4.6%), and 41,574 were Hispanic Americans (36.7%; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). See Table 3.

Table 3

Tom Green County Population by Ethnicity, 2000, 2010, and 2012

Ethnicity	Population 2000		Population 2010		Population 2012	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
White American	65,508	63.0	63,820	57.5	64,117	56.6
Black American	4,757	4.6	5,290	4.8	5,210	4.6
Hispanic American	31,946	30.7	39,349	35.5	41,574	36.7
Other ethnicities	1,799	1.7	2,535	2.3	2,378	2.1
Total	104,010	100	110,994	100	113,279	100

Note. From Population, VR, and TO Analysis with County Subtotals for District 72, Red 119, 2010 Census, County Population Analysis, House Districts – Plan H358, 2012 General Election, by Texas Legislative Council, June 27, 2013, p. 6.

County demographics--voting age population, registered voters, and turnout

In order to understand the lack of voter turnout, I looked at the voting age population, registered voters, and who turns out to vote. In accordance with Texas state law, the state only collects Spanish surnames of those who registered and turnout to vote. Of the 2010 census 110,224 people recorded in the population in Table 4; 84,290 were in the VAP (Texas Legislative Council, 2010 Census, Red 600, p. 7). Of the VAP, Hispanic Americans were 31.5% or 26,516. However, of the 59,909 total registered voters, only 36,720 (61.3%) turned out to vote in the 2012 general election, giving a TO/VAP of only 43.6% (Texas Legislative Council, 2010 census, Red 236, p. 6). Furthermore, of the

26,516 Hispanic VAP, only 14,378 (24%) registered to vote, and only 2,430 (16.9%) voted, as shown in Table 4. Hispanic voter turnout is far less of a turnout compared to Whites and Blacks (Lopez & Taylor, 2009).

Table 4

Tom Green County Population Voter Age Population, 2010, and Citizens of Voter Age Population and Voter Turnout, 2012, by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Population 2010		VAP 2010		Total VR 2012		Total VT 2012	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
White American	63,799	57.9	52,368	62.1	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Black American	5,300	4.8	3,710	4.4	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Hispanic American	39,315	35.7	26,516	31.5	14,378	24.0	2,430	16.9
Other ethnicities	2549	2.36	1,974	2.3	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Total	110,224	100	84,290	100	59,909	71.1	36,720	61.3

Note. VR (voter registration) statistics for ethnic groups other than Hispanic were not available on this census page by Texas law. Total population and VAP (voting age population) from Tom Green County, Red 600, 2010 Census, County Population Analysis, All Counties Sorted by County Name, by Texas Legislative Council, February 17, 2011, p. 7. Total VR (voter registration) and TO/VR (turnout/VR) from Tom Green County, Red 735, 2010 Census and 2012 General VTDs (voter turnout demographics), VTD Population, Voter Registration, Turnout, and SSTO (Spanish surname turnout) Analysis, Tom Green County, 2012 Election, by Texas Legislative Council, February 21, 2014, p. 1.

Hispanic Americans not voting

Of the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, only 16.9% (2,430) voted in 2012 elections out of the 26,516 of Hispanic voting age in Tom Green County, Texas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011). The Hispanic population lacks involvement and political mobilization in the communities in southwest Texas (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). The voting patterns and demographics on the Census Population Survey (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012) validate the low rate of participation of Hispanic Americans not only in Tom Green County but also across the country (Harrington & Liu, 2002). The data from the U.S. Census, redistricting office of Texas, Tom Green County Elections Office, and PEW Research all provide data comparing data of VAP, registered voters, and voter turnout comparing the lower turnout by Hispanics compared to those of Whites and Blacks (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

This lack of community involvement has become an increasingly critical issue in society. Pink (2009) demonstrated that declining levels of achievement and motivational characteristics in the population overall have become more serious issues in recent years and have remained unresolved. Policies by the federal government focus on welfare, immigration, and health care instead of assimilating the Hispanic population into the polity by promoting participation in civic life (Bonilla-Silva & Glover, 2006). Without assimilation into the polity, the Hispanic population fails to receive benefits that could improve its well being (e.g., education and infrastructure).

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the Hispanic population's involvement in the community to understand its voter mobilization characteristics that determine its level of participation in the political process (Dutwin et al., 2005). In analyzing the lack of political mobilization and its effects on the Hispanics of Tom Green County in southwest Texas, I wanted to discover motivations or lack thereof that have caused this very low rate of voter turnout.

The Hispanic community has played a significant role in the United States becoming a dominant power in the world (Lopez, 2008). However, Hispanics in Tom Green County participate at lower numbers than other groups in the electoral process. When Hispanics are not fully involved in the voting of their counties, they give up their voice in society. Without their voice, their needs are not articulated to political leaders. Without such articulation by voters, these needs are not addressed.

The United States has levels of governmental authority in which city, county, state, and federal governments share power in a complicated system of federalism. In this system, the dominance of one level of politics over the others has shifted over time. From the early 1900s until the 1930s and the Great Depression, Americans had a sense of government not being as involved in the everyday life of the individual as it is today. Today, Americans want government to regulate and provide social benefits such as welfare, food stamps, and healthcare (Arias, Schauman, Eschbach, Sorlie, & Backlund, 2008). Murray (2009) showed that from 2008 to 2009, welfare from the federal government increased over 25%. Welfare has increased since the New Deal government

regulation on individuals, including Hispanics; increasing government involvement in the lives of Americans into the entitlements the country has today (Arias et al., 2008).

Literature exists exhibiting marginalization and challenges for the Hispanics in the quantitative data collected in Chapter 2. However, an empirical study of Hispanic voting data fails to answer why they are participating in the voting process less than the other groups. Gaps and deficiencies exist in research on Hispanic lack of community engagement and assimilation into the polity, including low voter participation. Therefore, I was interested in the voting patterns regarding political process concerning Hispanics and the marginalization that prevents their representation in the polity. A literature review of Hispanic voting participation and mobilization shows Hispanics that their lack of voter participation results in severe harm in this community. If Hispanics are not participating by voting, politicians are ignoring them, and no one is looking out for their best interests. Hispanics need to articulate their desires and demands to their politicians via the ballot box.

Motivational characteristics (Dutwin et al., 2005) might also explain why the Hispanic population does not participate in the voting process. Not seeing the value in participating, low voter engagement exposes Hispanics to marginalization. The lack of voter participation in the Hispanic polity means that there is significantly less representation in the political realm than they deserve. Dutwin et al. (2005) and Pink (2009) discussed motivational topics in depth and explored why people become motivated. Two kinds of rewards contribute to motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic

rewards. Hispanics need to participate in voting to make their needs heard at the ballot box. Further research on analyzing the voting mobilization and participation of the Hispanic population could provide insight into and understanding of this phenomenon (Dutwin et al., 2005).

Hispanics participate in voting at much lower rates than their counterparts. Marginalization results in Hispanics being underserved in terms of access to government services. This marginalization is disparaging for Hispanics because it prevents assimilation into the political polity. Further discussion on this is in Chapter 2.

Statement of the Problem

Hispanic Americans in Tom Green County are being marginalized within the polity. Hispanic Americans of voting age in Tom Green County, Texas, District 72 participate at much lower numbers than projected in the political community. When Hispanics are left out of the polity, adverse impacts occur. For instance, Hispanics have less access to public services. The lack of Hispanic assimilation into the polity should be addressed because of failures in social, economic, and educational areas (Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, 2004). Previous research on Hispanic voter turnout has been quantitative and has identified trends in the population, but researchers have found little agreement on the motivations that drive such trends. Thus, I have conducted an ethnographic study to explore the motivations behind low Hispanic voter participation.

By exploring the motivations behind low voter turnout by the Hispanic American voting age population, my investigation provided insights into the underlying barriers to

participation. These insights can help design policies or programs to help remedy the situation. The United States is pluralist, and it is a fight to get any funding for any group or need. Battle and Pastrana (2007) have argued that the Hispanic population is growing, and their lack of participation will lead to marginalization of an increasing percentage of the population. This will affect federal funds if they do not fully participate in the election process. High birth rates and increasing population of Hispanics means that an entire generation will be underserved.

To address the lack of Hispanic voter participation, public administrators must know more about this phenomenon. The results of this critical ethnography will help public officials and researchers to understand why Hispanics are not fully participating in the community of Tom Green County. Based on this understanding, they will be able to design policies that can encourage greater Hispanic participation in the life of the polity.

Nature of the Study

Critical ethnographic methodology was employed using interviews as the primary data collection approach. I sought out the underlying evidence that explains why registered Hispanic American voters are not voting in the context of these competing empirical explanations. Hispanics in Tom Green County, Texas, District 72, are participating at lower numbers compared to other groups that vote. Interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder and notes were taken. Data from the interview consisted of open-ended questions. The interviews with each participant were limited in

time to 1 hour. I interviewed 20 Hispanic American participants who stated they are nonvoting.

In the interviews, I asked Hispanic Americans about voter participation in Tom Green County, District 72. Interview questions asked how the interviewees felt about civic engagement, and I attempted to draw out explanations that were relevant to existing empirical explanations for low Hispanic voter turnout. I selected this method to observe the phenomenon through the cultural lens of critical race theory (Patton, 2002). Critical race theory is defined by Crenshaw (1995) as a movement of scholars who focus their work challenging the way race and racial power are represented in American society.

Critical race theory has allowed researchers to study the role of race and inequality in society. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) wrote about research paradigms and how researchers working with human subjects respect the representative approaches of social groups and their reporting of participation levels. Research using the critical ethnographic approach depends on human participation and respect of their opinions. The critical ethnographic approach allowed me to ask the Hispanic participants interview questions to discover why participation in voting is lower than expected. While studying this phenomenon, Creswell (2007) stated that the ethnographic method could be used to explore why groups and individuals are politically motivated within the environment in which they live. Furthermore, Hatch (2002) argued that qualitative research can be used to understand behaviors and participation levels of people. Therefore, the qualitative ethnographic method allowed me to learn personal experiences of the group experiencing

the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Hatch (2002) stated that the researcher who uses qualitative research could create social or political change by providing the policy makers information by using the data collected to find the weaknesses in Hispanic voting patterns. Hence, the application of critical race theory would illuminate the marginalization of the Hispanics. The construction of specific theories in specific cases highlights the mechanisms of marginalization. I assembled theories supporting the critical race theory method in order to create possible change in marginalization for this group. Creating opportunities for social or political change led me to develop an approach that is grounded in critical race theory to help shape the polity's involvement in voting.

Participants from the local Hispanic community were nonvoters. This study is an ethnography based on a purposive sample of members of the Hispanic community. I conducted the data collection analysis in a manner consistent with professional standards for data security and the protection of participants, locking the data in a file cabinet and protecting the electronic media with a password. Collected data from the interviews were coded, classified, and scrutinized. I interpreted the views of the participants without adding or altering the data retrieved (Hatch 2002). Then, I offered suggestions for action to promote social change.

Research Questions

In this study, I explored causes for lack of voter participation by Hispanics in Tom Green County, Texas. The focus of this study was informed by the asking of open-ended questions during the interview process. The questions invited information about

societal or racial barriers to voter participation in San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas.

The following questions were used to address what is happening to Hispanics here in Tom Green County who lack voter participation:

Overarching question:

What barriers keep Hispanics from being fully involved in voter participation?

Subquestions:

- Does culture keep Hispanics from fully participating in the civic engagement?
- What are the barriers to community involvement faced by the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?
- What are the reasons behind low rates of registration and low voter turnout among the voting age Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?

Purpose Statement

Ethnography using critical race theory was used to determine the reasons that Hispanic Americans in Tom Green County, Texas, District 72 are voting in numbers that are low relative to other groups. Hatch (2002) stated, “Critical ethnography describes part of the culture from the point of view of cultural insider” (p. 21). Creswell (2007) defined critical ethnography as having the characteristics “where authors advocate the emancipation groups, politically minded individuals who seek, through their research, to speak out against inequality and domination” (p. 70). Through this critical ethnographic study, I analyzed the factors contributing to the lack of Hispanic American voter

participation and civic engagement in Tom Green County. I identified barriers that affect Hispanic American voting behavior. Furthermore, when I discovered the barriers to Hispanic American voting, the barriers were recorded in detail and analyzed in Chapter 4 with recommendations for remediation made in Chapter 5.

Possible causes of lack of voter mobilization are government regulations, culture, education, and the ability to speak and read the English language. Barriers might cause lack of Hispanic assimilation, increasing their failures in social, economic, and educational areas (Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, 2004). Researching the impact of the growing government regulation on the population in the United States, the issues for Hispanics were characteristics of voting, health care, public education, and immigration. Another possible barrier is voter motivation. Pink (2009), Maslow and Frager (1987), and Harrington and Liu (2002) conducted research on the topic of motivation. Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and incentives help to determine and describe the motivation (Harrington & Liu, 2002). Research on what motivates (or fails to motivate) the Hispanic population provided insight into the reasons for their lack of community and political participation.

Throughout the literature review, in Chapter 2, I have examined other authors' studies to determine whether they have already identified possible reasons why Hispanic Americans do not vote. I have incorporated this prior research into the design of the interview instrument in order to identify possible causes of the lack of voting. The survey of the literature in Chapter 2 demonstrates that there are multiple competing empirical

explanations in the existing quantitative research. In this study, I explored the actual conditions that contributed to the lack of participation and lack of civic engagement (Battle & Pastrana, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Ethnographic qualitative research needs a theoretical framework for the researcher to place the findings in the context. In this ethnographic study, the interview questions focused on culture, relationships, and societal views of the lack of Hispanic voter participation in Tom Green County. LeCompte and Priessle (1994) engaged in ethnographic qualitative research structured to include smaller groups of interviewees in naturalistic locations. Therefore, I completed these interviews in a natural location because it made the respondents more likely to respond truthfully. Moreover, research from Clarke (2010) demonstrated that determining disenfranchisement was complex. Clarke explained that research of marginalization requires participant observation or interviews to understand how the actions of individuals make up the marginalization of a group, in this case the Hispanics of Tom Green County. Due to the classification of Hispanics, the disenfranchisement was occurring in their identification and their position in the polity. Clarke stated that ethnography distinguishes the powerful and the powerless in an ethical manner; thus, ethnography studies are done in order to protect the disenfranchised. In order to engage in social action for the marginalized, I looked at the root of the issues while maintaining quality of the research.

The ethnographic approach was required to generate a more holistic picture of the position of the subject. Ethnography permits a study in much greater depth than other methods. Ethnographic qualitative research incorporates critical race theory because it is a study of individuals race, culture, and location. Price (2009) stated that legal scholars and practicing lawyers developed critical race theory. Developing critical race theory was a response to the eroding of concern of racial equality after the huge push in the 1960s. These scholars saw a need that needed to be filled legally in order to provide individuals legal equality and worked together to create the critical race theory.

Cresswell (2007) wrote that critical race theory was a theoretical lens through which the researcher could conduct a qualitative study of racism to determine whether a group has been disenfranchised. Price (2010) expanded on Creswell's theories by explaining critical race theory's main introduction to the United States was to "question the outcomes of Civil Rights era legislation" (p. 150). Price theorized that critical race theory was needed because of the erosion of racial equality that was gained in the 1960s. Critical race theory has been applied to the study of legislation or data to identify the problematic issues in Hispanic culture that contributed to low voter participation.

The ethnographic method provided the alternative in-depth perspective of phenomena through questioning participants within the culture. Ethnography was appropriate when the existing quantitative methods and theories did not fully explain the issue because the research emphasizes on the cause rather than testing therefore, the focus was directed at "why" the phenomenon of the underlying structure has occurred rather

than the numbers of lack of participation (Lecompte & Priessle, 1994). Qualitative data allowed the interview questions to ask why Hispanics participate in the polity less than others. Thus, an ethnographic study applying critical race theory was an appropriate approach in this case.

The phenomenon of nonvoting Hispanic Americans requires more than simple quantitative analysis. Using the ethnographic method grounded in critical race theory, I expected to obtain a complete and holistic view of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). I looked at the social construction while engaging the ethnographic method. Therefore, I chose an ethnographic method applying critical race theory as a theoretical lens with which to examine the phenomenon of nonvoting Hispanic Americans, describing the results of the study of the phenomenon to fill the gap in the literature.

Scope of Study

Interviews included in the study were Hispanic participants from Tom Green County, Texas District 72. Participants were selected from the Hispanic community and completed short interviews.

Interview questions were listed on a single page in both English and Spanish. The interview consisted of 12 questions. I recorded the interviews with an audio recording device. I interviewed until saturation was reached, the expected number of subjects required was 20. The participants were volunteers and were able to leave or stop the survey questionnaire at any time during the interview. I protected the anonymity of all of the participants by not publishing their names or their addresses.

One of the questions included in the interview was a question about the use of public services provided to the community (e.g., public schools, the U.S. Post Office, and emergency services), as the use of public services may have contributed to civic engagement. Hispanics need representation for how tax money is allocated for the use of services in the community or are remunerated for those services through government taxes. Barriers to Hispanic voting and community participation have been identified to increase their community involvement and voice.

Assumptions

Researchers are aware of the assumptions that may be true but cannot be verified. Researchers must not make postulations about an unbiased reality that exists apart from the individual when conducting phenomenological research (Mertens, 2005). Mertens (2005) explained the importance of understanding the phenomenological experience from the viewpoint of the participant. In order to investigate why Hispanics are not participating in civic engagement and have a low voter turnout, I asked the individuals who experience the phenomenon.

Creswell (2007) listed the five philosophical assumptions that provided guidance in qualitative research: axiological, epistemological, methodological, ontological, and rhetorical. Using ontology in ethnographic methodology provides realities that are defined and interpreted by the culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007). Keeping in mind that various realities may be true from an individual's perspective, I have also assumed that participants provided truthful responses during the interviews.

I have assumed that the interviewees were willing to cooperate in completing the interview. It is also assumed that gaining access to Hispanics who do not participate in civic activities or the voting process in Tom Green County would not be a problem. Furthermore, it was assumed that the nonvoting Hispanics were willing to allow me to interview them for my research.

Delimitations

Participants were selected only from Tom Green County, Texas, District 72. Only Hispanics were asked to participate (Texas Legislative Council, 2012). The results of the research could be generalizable to (a) registered Hispanic American voters residing in Texas District 72, (b) registered Hispanic American voters, and (c) and nonregistered Hispanic American citizens.

Limitations

Although the study was about Hispanic Americans, interviewing all Hispanic Americans living in Tom Green County in Texas District 72 was not possible; therefore, data were collected from a sample of participants from the Hispanic Americans living in Tom Green County in Texas District 72. Hispanics were self-identified.

Another limitation of this study was the process of completing the interview. Participants might generalize their views or might not understand the questions. Communication gaps involved in the study might create a problem for the participants and me.

Significance of the Study

Despite the increase in numbers of Hispanic Americans in Texas District 72, not all of them were voting (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). Hispanic Americans are negatively affected in Texas District 72 through lack of political representation. Voting patterns from elections and U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012) indicated voting must increase in order to provide representation commensurate with their proportion of the population in political life.

Past researchers using quantitative methods have identified two broad theoretical schools, rational public choice theory and cultural explanations. However, these broad theoretical schools and the research that go along with them did not allow viewing the problem in sufficient depth in order design effective policies. Lack of civic engagement has become an increasingly critical issue in education, and it affects all students and staff in local schools (Igalens & Roussel, 1999). Analyzing the factors that contribute to voter turnout and participation of Hispanic Americans might provide them a voice.

Government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and political candidates would benefit from research on the barriers to Hispanic community involvement. More civic engagement by the Hispanic population would bring greater ownership in their communities, increasing their political representation and voice. The present study on Hispanic civic engagement was important because of the current lack of Hispanic representation and voice. Hispanics could not be accurately represented if they did not participate fully in the community and political process. Hispanic community leaders

needed help informing and motivating the Hispanic people to be involved in the polity (Arias et al., 2008). Hispanic Americans are one of the fastest growing populations in America (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). Therefore, using critical ethnography, I explored the underlying causes of lower rates of voting among Hispanics.

Summary

Research for this study concerned Hispanic Americans in Tom Green County in Texas District 72. Hispanics in the county do not vote at rates comparable to other groups. This lack of participation is well documented from past elections (Tom Green County, 2011). The Hispanic population lacks involvement and political mobilization in Tom Green county. To understand this lack of participation in the polity, I wanted to discover the causes of the very low voter turnout. Lack of representation has had negative effects on the Hispanic population including marginalization, lack of representation in the political polity, and not being allowed to voice their identity. Therefore, Hispanics are receiving significantly less representation in the political realm than deserved.

To analyze the reasons behind this lack of participation, this study used an ethnographic approach. Interviews were used to collect data concerning individual perceptions of the lack of Hispanic voter participation. Interview questions asked the participants their feelings about civic engagement and attempted to draw out explanations for low Hispanic voter turnout. The qualitative ethnographic method allowed me to learn personal experiences from the participants experiencing the phenomenon in Tom Green County.

Research questions asked of the participants focused on information gathering pertaining to societal or racial barriers to voter participation in Tom Green County, Texas. Demographic information data were collected and included in the research results. In addition, questions asking to identify barriers or cultural distrust were asked.

Analyzing factors contributing to lack of Hispanic American voter participation and civic engagement in Tom Green County have provided me an in depth perspective of the phenomena of why Hispanics believe that their group participates in voting at such low rates. More civic engagement by the Hispanic population using the information analyzed could provide the group with opportunities to create social change in their own community.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature and show a gap in knowledge of why Hispanic Americans in Tom Green County in Texas District 72 participate in low voter turnout. In Chapter 2, I also review the literature on how the Hispanics are being disenfranchised in Tom Green County (Battle & Pastrana, 2007).

In Chapter 3, I describe the critical race theory methodology that was used to conduct the research (Patton, 2002). The process of collecting data through interviews of Hispanic Americans is also explained in Chapter 3. Critical ethnography provided insight on the phenomenon of the nonvoting behavior of Hispanic Americans in Tom Green County in Texas District 72.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Hispanics do not participate in political life in levels that are commensurate with their percentage of the population. I also observed this phenomenon in Tom Green County. In the following literature review, I discuss this lack of participation and competing explanations for it. The empirical literature points to multiple directions without agreeing on why Hispanics are not voting. With only statistical studies, it was not possible to determine which competing theory of rational public choice theory and cultural explanations was correct. In this dissertation, I sought to explain the causal mechanisms of what leaves Hispanics out of the political process. The stage was set for that discussion in this literature review.

In Tom Green County, Texas in the 2012 general election, only 2,430 of the 26,516 of the Hispanics of voting age turned out (Texas Legislative Council, 2014). Compared to other groups, Hispanics had a very low turnout (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). However, research on Hispanic voting did not portray a consensus why this occurs. The lack of civic engagement has become an increasingly critical issue. Bonilla-Silva and Glover (2006) asserted that the Hispanic's lack of civic engagement could be from a historical marginalization or not seeing the value of voter mobilization. In this study, I investigated the phenomenon of why Hispanics are not participating in the polity of Tom Green County.

Literature Search

In the literature review, I followed standard methodological practices for researching Hispanic voting literature. The literature investigation concentrated on autonomous Hispanic voter participation as well as Hispanic voting behavior patterns. My enquiry encompassed articles published in journals that ranged from the 1970s to the present. The empirical studies I found focused on the numerical data of what prevents the Hispanics from voting and the patterns that could be traced geographically, I wanted to find the why of what prevents the Hispanics from participating in the polity. Organized research has provided an understanding of barriers and the lack of Hispanic voter participation.

The main databases used were Walden University Library and Google Scholar. The keywords searched included Hispanics, Hispanic voting, voting, presidential elections, general election, voting rights, voting demographics, Hispanic behavior patterns, and voting research. In each search conducted, I looked for relevant articles that correlated to the lack of or barriers to Hispanic voting.

Past Theories and Empirical Studies

To understand the lack of Hispanic voter participation in Tom Green County, Texas, I synthesized research on this topic. The standard approach in researching voter participation or behavior is quantitative methodology. Quantitative research analyzes the relationship between and observed phenomenon such as voting and a range of explanatory variables. Quantitative research finds support for a hypothesis using

quantitative data and predictive models. This research offers explanations, but quantitative methodology does not allow for distinction between them to find if one of them is correct or if it is a combination of both that are correct (Creswell, 2007).

Quantitative method has tended to be a numerical research that is about correlation and helps to see the why behind the correlation.

In reviewing the literature, it was clear there are multiple competing explanations, as discussed in Chapter 1, which are supported by empirical research. While there has been research done in both the quantitative and qualitative methods, the gap remained in terms of why Hispanics vote at a much lower rate than expected. In this research, I illuminate the problems that are prohibiting the Hispanic participation from voting in Tom Green County. My research helps fill the gap in the literature that emerged from an inability to differentiate. My research also helps illustrate the experiences that quantitative research cannot illuminate because numerical data did not show why Hispanics vote less than others in Tom Green County, only that this lack of civil engagement has occurred.

Voter mobilization could be researched in a number of ways. The two main theories that are prominent now are the rational public choice theory and cultural explanations. Researchers who focused on rational choice conventionally measure participation in voting as a conditional cost theory that occurred through social networks (Rolfe, 2012). Teixeira (1987) explained that in the 1950s, researchers predominantly used voter participation theories using the quantitative, rational choice method. A classic

example was the “calculus of voting” to be considered one’s benefit costs associated with voting (Downs, 1957). Teixeira furthered the notion of the cost-benefit theory but added that it was a transaction with each step participating in the political process of voting. Teixeira stated, “Voting is not a zero-cost activity; the cost of registering, finding out where the polling place is and taking the time and effort to travel to it on Election Day are tangible nonzero ones” (p. 5).

Santoro and Segura (2011) used measures of classic assimilation collected through a national survey to analyze empirical data on the likelihood of Hispanics being marginalized in politics. Theories of political participation and assimilation are used by Sanchez (2006) to identify generational status among Mexican Americans participating in the polity. These studies go into great depth to explain how Hispanics should assimilate and mobilize into voter participation but fail to identify the problems or offer solutions. Santoro and Segura stated that there was little research on ethnic political activity that was more than descriptive.

Additional researchers have explored cultural explanations and have offered a variety of additional areas of concerns. Dutwin et al. (2005) stated that psychological theories in voting could be determined by the level of motivation to participate. Moreover, Pink (2009) argued that psychological motivation could be a determining factor in why people do not act. Again, these theories give quantitative calculations of characteristics of those who vote or not, they tell certain behaviors correlated with certain

principles, but they do not allow comparison of one group of factors against another such as rational choice theory.

Quantitative researchers used the United States Census data and the CPS to gather data to test hypotheses regarding the role of demographics in voter participation, but demographic data could not provide a full explanation (Logan, Darrah, & Oh, 2012). These demographics indicated low socioeconomic positions and lower citizenship rates among others to be a characteristic to low voter turnout, but researchers have been asked to clarify why turnout was low (Logan et al., 2012).

Empirical research has indicated that when researchers looked at the populations as a whole, two competing schools of theory were present. While limited to the single county, this has provided a depth that was not possible in the large N quantitative studies. Large-scale quantitative surveys have failed to clarify the gaps in research by not fully explaining the phenomena of lack of voter mobilization. Quantitative surveys have not answered why Hispanic voters are not participating in the polity. In this study, I seek to answer why Hispanics do not participate in the polity in Tom Green County and to interpret the additional research of other counties in Texas. Interviews might give insight into the causes of low voter participation in Tom Green County (Creswell, 2007). The interviews might also reflect what Hispanics in the county feel by asking the meaning, structure, and essence of their marginalization (Mertens, 2005). Interviewing individuals rather than collecting numerical data while applying critical rate theory allowed me to hear from the Hispanics who did not participate in voting.

Instituting a qualitative research design such as an ethnographic study involved going into the community and culture where the phenomenon has occurred. I went into the community where the phenomenon was occurring in order to find answers to why low voter participation occurs, and I collected data that could be used in larger demographical areas in future research.

An ethnographic study describes and interprets the patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life of the Hispanic community in Tom Green County (Creswell, 2007). The ethnographic method provided the alternative in-depth perspective of the phenomena through questioning the participants within the culture. Research working directly with the individuals involved in the phenomenon provided the best glimpse into their mindset. The use of critical race theory has provided a lens that focused on the phenomenon and the questions raised in the prior research such as low Hispanic voter turnout. Creswell (2007) stated critical theory could help explain this phenomenon that occurred in the world. The ethnography method was applicable when the existing quantitative methods and theories did not solve the drawback of low voter turnout among the Hispanics in Tom Green County in the western part of Texas.

Critical race theory has helped understand the lens in which people approached the issue. Price (2010) suggested that in order to find racial differences that have been normalized to the point of invisibility, these differences must be rendered visible. Making Hispanics aware of their own marginalization could lead to their participation in the voting process and therefore improve their levels of civic engagement. Understanding the

social structure and experience of marginalization while researching low voter turnout allowed my research to be more informative. When dealing with a population who has been historically marginalized and left out of membership of the polity, it was important to see the issues from their perspective. One of the key elements was understanding what it means to be Hispanic.

Defining Who Is Hispanic

It would be impossible to discuss Hispanic voter participation without addressing being Hispanic in the United States. Unlike being another race (i.e., Black), Hispanic is an identity that is sometimes considered racial and other times considered ethnic (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). Furthermore, the government has changed what Hispanic means over time. Talking about Hispanic voter identity has been fluid and not well defined, and this has led to obstacles for Hispanics who want to participate in the polity.

Before considering the concept of measuring the phenomenon of the Hispanic voter turnout, I asked, “Who qualifies as Hispanic?” In the decennial census, the Hispanic category became an ethnicity because of the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012) and politics of 1970s (Jones & Correa, 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau stated,

These standards generally reflect a social definition of race and ethnicity recognized in this country, and they do not conform to any biological, anthropological, or genetic criteria. There are two minimum categories for data on ethnicity: “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino.” The concept of race reflects self-identification by

people according to the race or races with which they most closely identify (U.S. Census, 2014).

This statement from the census demonstrated how Hispanic identity was confused when included in the census. Consequently, the vague and confusing options for self-identification given to Hispanics prevent them from properly completing the census. This marginalized the Hispanic population from polity because of the inability to properly self-identify due to the confusion between race and ethnicity (Harrington & Liu, 2002). As a result, Hispanics not completing the U.S. Census form properly led to underreported numbers. Therefore, Hispanics are cut out of the benefits that could be received from being part of the polity, adding to their marginalization.

In this historical context, the Hispanic item was not included in the census. A “color or race” item included in the 1970 census, which included the options of Indian (American), White, Negro or Black, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean, and Other (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). The identifier Hispanic was left out until the 1980 Census but only included as an ethnicity, not a race (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). Therefore, Hispanics were excluded from even checking a box on the census for their race, further marginalizing the Hispanic community.

The relevance and necessity of including race on the decennial census called into question in the 1960s led to the serious consideration of the removal of racial identifiers for the 1970 census. However, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, minorities (including Hispanics) gained leverage in public policy through such vehicles

as the Voting Rights Act (1965), which banned racially discriminatory impediments to voting (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011).

To be accurately counted, Mexican American advocacy groups demanded a self-identification item on the 1970 census and insisted that the surname method greatly underestimated the size of the Hispanic population. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012) rejected the inclusion of a direct Hispanic identifier because of the lack of time available for testing and printing of millions of surveys that had already occurred. The White House then intervened, leading to the appearance of a Hispanic ethnic identifier on the 5% long-form sample of the census (Battle & Pastrana, 2007).

The Passel-Word quantitative surname method was created and developed for the 1980 Census, using the premise that last names of Hispanic sounding origin identify persons as being Hispanic when they live in a similar geographic location as other Hispanics (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2012). The U.S. Bureau of Census (2012) stated that one approach comprises of matching the respondents' surnames to a list of common Hispanic surnames. The list was created using highly and nonhighly Hispanic geographical locations and using mathematical equations to project that might or might not be a Hispanic Census filer (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2012). Texas adopted a similar method of counting Spanish surnames into law in 1990 and is still used today (Texas Legislative Council, 2012).

In a society where racial options only include White, Black, Asian, and some form of Native American or Pacific Islander, many ethnic Hispanics find their race not

represented and subsequently identify as Other (Igalens & Roussel, 1999). When choosing, 40% of Hispanics have filled in “some other race” on surveys (Arias et al., 2008). Indeed, most would select a Hispanic race if given the opportunity to do so.

The struggle for recognition is also a problem for Hispanics in political participation. It reflects an ongoing struggle for identification as a distinct group with a clear identity comparable to that of other racial groups in the United States. Struggles that began during the Civil Rights movement caused them to not feel welcome in politics, thereby creating a generational shift of rejection. Marginalization that began then has continued for the Hispanics in the polity. The federal government’s denial of the Hispanic identity has marginalized them in such a way that defeats the Hispanics involvement in the polity.

The U.S. government did not provide Hispanics a clear identity on the census equivalent with other groups identified such as White, Black, Native American, or Asian (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). A combination of undercounting the Hispanics in the census and decisions by the officials in the government to marginalize the population leads to stripping Hispanics of proper voice.

Hispanic Becomes an Ethnicity (not a Race)

Hispanics continue to experience marginalization in the collection of census data. For 5% of the census survey long forms, the questionnaire included many items after the race item, “this person’s origin or descent,” with the options of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Other Spanish, and None. The 2000 census used

neither “origin” nor “descent” to gather data on the Hispanic population. It asked; “Is this person Spanish/Hispanic or Latino?” which differentiated the personal identity from familial ancestry (Bonilla-Silva & Glover, 2006).

The category of (Hispanic) ethnicity was amplified due to the increase in that population in the United States. National Council of La Raza maintains support of the identifiers that increase Hispanic assimilation (Stevens & Bishin, 2011). In the Hispanic population, the categories identifying race and ethnicity are unclear, leaving more questions than answers. Over 40% of the Hispanics who do not understand how to identify themselves on the census choose “other” (Arias et al., 2008). In a society where racial options include only White, Black, Asian, and some form of Native American or Pacific Islander, many ethnic Hispanics find their race not represented and subsequently identify as “other”.

Hispanic population cannot assimilate when they are not given an identity within the polity. The U.S. Census among other federal, state, and local administrations failed to properly categorize the Hispanics as their own group. Current data from the U.S. Census has listed Hispanics under whites when searching demographics within the state (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). Marginalization of the Hispanic population could be a barrier to voter mobilization. Research of low voter turnout investigates potential barriers causing the phenomenon by the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas.

Hispanic (Origin or Descent): The Political and Historical Context

History of the identification embedded in each generation of a Spanish-speaking population was inevitably tied to the political context (Valencia, 2005). At all times, political interests involved creating a non-White population identified (whether Mexican or Spanish surnames) and counted. Through the 1920s to current day, the American government has worked to identify other race and ethnicities on the census form while still marginalizing the Hispanics.

Historical context of the 1920s was particularly sensitive to foreigners and immigration, as the American government was undergoing adjustment in the wake of World War I. European migration was limited, prompting the need to reach out to Mexican workers (Jones & Correa, 2001). In 1930, the “Mexican” category made its (first and final) appearance as a race in the American census.

Mexican Americans and the Mexican government opposed having Mexican as a racial category, demanding it removed from the racial options on the census (Bonilla-Silva and Glover, 2006). The Great Depression and massive deportations shadowed this event. A major factor in eliminating the “Mexican” category stemmed from the many rights that were only available to “Whites,” not the least of which was the right to become a citizen.

Aside from the 1930 Mexican racial category, no items were included on the census that could directly measure any Hispanic population until 1970. Indirect measures of a Hispanic population were found in the 1940 “persons of Spanish mother tongue”

item as well as the 1950 and 1960 “persons of Spanish surname” item (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). Relevance and necessity of including race on the Decennial Census were called into question in the 1960s, leading to the serious consideration of the removal of racial identifiers for the 1970 census. However, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s, minorities gained flexibility in public policy through such vehicles as the Voting Rights Act (1965), which banned racial discriminatory impediments to voting. Now, proliferating forms of federal aid became contingent upon population size and proof of discrimination (Beaver and Chaviano, 2011).

A demonstration of past discrimination against the Hispanic population on the U.S. Census documents exists. Other groups were identified in the U.S. Census by race whereas Hispanics were counted by Spanish-surnames (U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012). Examining the data one could say the Hispanic population suffered discriminatory interactions dealing with race within the polity when identified as white. Patton states, what gave critical race theory its name was that it seeks not just to study and understand society but rather to critique and change society (2002).

Importance of Hispanic Voters and Hispanic Voter Turnout

Hispanics have become the fastest growing population of voters in America (Passel, D’Vera, & Lopez, 2012). In the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, George W. Bush, a Spanish-speaking candidate from Texas was able to split the votes more evenly resulting in a win. In the presidential election of 2012, Republican candidate Mitt Romney failed to reach the Hispanic population, whereas, the Barack Obama campaign

used an executive order to temporarily stop deportations of certain illegal immigrants. Hispanic population in the 2012 presidential-election voted 71% for Democratic incumbent candidate President Barack Obama, costing Mitt Romney the election (Hugo & Taylor, 2012).

If Hispanic political participation were to increase to full potential, would they vote one way or will their votes cause a more competitive electoral landscape of Texas? The potential of the Hispanic's mobilizing and the ramifications of that, it was impossible for us to predict. While Hispanic population was growing their rate of low voter turnout was continuing.

Hispanics have the potential of becoming the largest voting bloc in the United States (Hugo & Taylor, 2012). Political research has been conducted to look at the characteristics of registered nonvoters through quantitative methods, researching candidates' campaigns, but not discovering "why" Hispanics do not vote. If they vote at all—Hispanics vote typically for the Democratic candidates. (Battle & Pastrana, 2007) The Republican Party has not done enough to win over the Hispanic community on issues of healthcare, immigration, and voting rights (Hugo & Taylor, 2012). Political parties that attract the Hispanic vote would most likely be the winner of future elections. Clear information was unavailable about the effect on the political landscape if Hispanics change their voter turnout participation.

Political parties and candidates that campaign to the needs of the Hispanic vote could change the way Hispanics communicate their identity; while increasing the chances

of winning the election. Hispanics are underrepresented; however, assimilation into the polity could affect the elections. Hispanic's lack voter turnout compared to the population of those who are eligible to vote was low (Hugo & Taylor, 2012). Increasing the Hispanic group's civic engagement and lessening their marginalization would be a product of increased voter turnout.

Hispanic Demographics and Barriers to Vote

Immigration continues as a dominant issue for population growth in the United States (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011). Although, European immigrants dominated early population growth in America in the early 1900s, Central and South American Spanish-speaking immigrants are arriving in the United States at the highest rate today (Gerson, 2012). Mexican nationals comprised the bulk of the immigrants who entered into the United States (Valencia, 2005). The 2010 American census stated that the Hispanic population was the fastest growing demographic group in America; however, recent worldwide demographic shifts are caused by Hispanics moving away from their "traditional homelands" to opportunities in northern America (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011). In this portion of the literature review, I investigated the immigration patterns of the Hispanic population during the 20th century, which led to the present-day demographics of Hispanic populations (Gerson, 2012).

The United States Congress introduced firm visa policies for immigrants to enter the country in the 1924 National Origins Act. (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). Immigrants without a proper visa could be charged with a crime of a misdemeanor and deported. If

the immigrant were to repeat the crime, that immigrant would be charged with a felony and possibly imprisoned up to 2 years (Gerson, 2012). American lawmakers in Congress believed that Hispanics would have difficulties assimilating into American communities thereby treating them different and changing their path to acclimatization. Critical race theory turns on the idea there was something unique about how a racial group sees itself (Mertens, 2005). In this case it was not that Hispanics saw themselves as criminals, but that the larger society constructed a concept of the "illegal" that included anyone who appeared Hispanic. This occurred in the society, not just in politics. This label created an unjust name or classification for Hispanics that entered the country illegally as being a criminal act, pushing them out of the polity. The combination of an assumption of problematic assimilation with the criminal status creates a marginalized other that is outside of society both by virtue of culture/race and by virtue of being criminal. The resulting image could be perceived (and was by many Hispanics) as equating Hispanic identity with the "illegal" who was excluded from society for being criminal.

Hispanic populations with Spanish surnames are calculated separately in California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada. Gathering demographic data on Hispanics did not account for the fact that many of them did not have Spanish surnames. Many of the Hispanic population lived elsewhere in the United States (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011). However, the 1960 census used the same measures again to calculate the data for Hispanics as they had in 1950. Researchers of the census were provided comparisons for the Hispanic population for the first time in American history (Antunes

& Gaitz, 1975). Census techniques of calculating this population underestimated the numbers of Hispanic persons (Liang, 1994). Leaders from Hispanic organizations insisted on reforms in collecting data. Census data calculations are used to determine the funding given to federal, state, local agencies, and other programs benefit Hispanics. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012) still had issues regarding whether to classify Hispanics as a race and how to identify them (Erlach, 2000).

Mexico aided the majority of the Hispanic population who were Mexican Americans in the United States. Although disenfranchised, Mexican Americans did not want be categorized as a race. Census officials struggled with this issue, and then asked three questions (Antunes & Gaitz, 1975):

1. For all other nationalities apart from an ethnic self-identification, should the category of Hispanic be used to determine identification?
2. What would be the relationship between racial questions and ethnic if they fill in Hispanic?
3. What was the validity of the use of Hispanic as an identification item?

The 1970 census reformed its tactics toward Hispanics (Antunes & Gaitz, 1975). In contrast with the 1950 and 1960 censuses, the 1970 census surveyed the entire United States for Hispanics. The census questionnaire gave American citizens the option of self-identification (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). Categories on the census originated with persons of Spanish origin; citizens would decide from categories, including Mexican descent, Puerto Rican, Central and South American, Cuban, and other Spanish. However, as with

the 1950 and 1960 censuses, the census again simply counted the Spanish surnames in the same five states. After the 1970 census, Hispanics still had difficulties with being disenfranchised (Gerson, 2012).

Texas Congress passed a law in 1990, concerning collecting data on Hispanics, using Spanish surnames to determine voting age, a registered voter, and voter turnout populations. Monitoring voting patterns of people with Spanish surnames was the lawmaker's goal. Texas implemented this law to decrease the marginalization of Hispanics and their low voter turnout. Studies of Hispanic voting patterns could reveal the social structure of their polity and find ways to benefit their identity and race (Texas Legislative Council, 2012).

Legal Barriers

Discrimination hinders the Hispanic population, and that prevents participation in the American political process (Jones & Correa, 2001). However, the voting experience of Hispanics is often equated to that of the Black population (Gerson, 2012). Hispanics encountered obstacles such as White-only candidates or English-only ballots. Black and Hispanic populations are both disenfranchised politically by legal barriers (Dutwin et al., 2005). The 1965 Civil Rights Act was passed by United State Congress to make discrimination toward minorities against the law and reforming political discrimination at the polls (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). The U.S. Supreme Court and Congress both set the path of the passage of the laws against racial discrimination. In *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964),

the U.S. Supreme Court declared some state laws that discriminated against minorities and their capacity to vote were unconstitutional (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004).

Political Mobilization Efforts

The Voting Rights Act (1965) eradicated many legal barriers to Hispanic participation in the political process. However, voting participation rates among Hispanics continue to be marginalized. Hispanic coalition building in the grassroots level in the polity takes place at a lower frequency than that for other groups. Nonpartisanship by the two major political parties at federal and state levels weakens the coalition building for Hispanics. At the national level, the two-party system creates supremacy of special interest politics reinforcing to Hispanics that their votes did not matter (Harrington & Liu, 2002). Rodolfo and Cortina (2007) gave quantitative evidence that Hispanic Americans have high poverty rates, residential dislodgment, and higher educational dropout rates. Political theory showed that individuals with higher socioeconomic income status were more likely to participate in political activities than those of lower socioeconomic income status (Gerson, 2012). Jones and Correa (2001) attributed this correlation to numerous factors. Factors of correlation included: (a) greater political opportunities afforded to persons of high social status, (b) greater political resources of those same persons, (c) more thorough acculturation of such persons into the values and techniques of democratic participation, and (d) the tendency of both formal and informal rules of participation to favor the upper class lifestyle.

In general, Lopez (2011) argued that national political parties are being degraded by the acceptance of special interest groups and lobbyists working for their own agendas. Political factions have been created to further self-advantageous programs and policies, guided by the wealthy divisions of society marginalizing the Hispanic population. Battle and Pastrana (2007) suggested that the lower socioeconomic status of Hispanics made it difficult for them to compete with the wealthy when seeking representation in the political organization. Competition pushes national parties to try to attract as many factions as possible; to gain enough support to win national elections. Political parties candidates running for office tend to focus on long-term agendas and accomplishments in terms of office held by the politicians. Persons of lower socioeconomic status focused on short-term welfare goals such as food, shelter, and paying bills (Passel, D’Vera, & Lopez, 2012). Therefore, Hispanics are disenfranchised from the political realm, leading to their lack of political participation (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011). The fact that national political parties ignored the Hispanic population cannot be attributed only to special interest groups. As the fastest growing minority population, inadequately assimilating into the political process defeated their representation. Potential political power from the Hispanic voting bloc could be directly tied to its level of assimilation and the culture brought into their communities (Gerson, 2012).

Deardorff and Blumerman (2001) suggested that the lack of Hispanic political participation has been an opposition to White subjugation and supremacy (Dutwin et al., 2005). The Chicano Movement of the 1960s commanded young Hispanics to embrace

their family heritage, questioning the white authority that controls the wealth of America (Arias et al., 2008). The Hispanics have shown interests in the past of wanting to participate in the polity, but still did not participate wholly due to the marginalization that was occurring.

The Hispanic Community Is Not Monolithic

Generational Effects

Generations of Mexican Americans divided into first, second, and third generations are part of what makes the Hispanic community diverse. First subgroups that arrived directly from Mexico were labeled as first generation immigrants. The issue was immigrants who arrived directly from Mexico might not be legal residents of the United States. Many of these immigrants lived closer to their native countries bringing traditional views of politics from Mexican. Immigrants typically lived within communities in El Paso, Texas, and East Los Angeles, California. Immigrants in this group could not vote because of negative legal status and American's see them as criminals. Immigrants belonging to this group also find themselves pulled between their native countries and now living in America. These communities focus on the bottom and basic level of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (e.g., food, shelter, and clothing). Until basic needs have been met, communities are less active politically (Valencia, 2005). Characteristics from these communities show low socioeconomic status, first-generation, non-English-speaking, and less educated Hispanics, therefore, less likely to be mobilized to vote (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004).

Compared to other groups, second generation Mexican American communities are more active in political matters. Second generation Mexican Americans consisted of at least one parent naturally born. Individuals of this group were more likely to live further away from their native countries (Hugo & Taylor, 2012). This group represented 52% of the Hispanic population (Santoro, & Segura, 2011). The third generation of Hispanic Americans of Mexican origin remained attached to their Mexican heritage, but participate more in local communities (Santoro & Segura, 2011).

Comparing the characteristics and changes caused by assimilation, researchers still could not find why the three generations of Hispanic Americans were not voting (Valencia, 2005). Communities of Hispanic Americans were somewhat different in political tendencies and regional makeup (Jones & Correa, 2001). Mostly, Cubans were situated in the Miami area, and most Puerto Ricans located in the New York City area, including New Jersey. Other communities include the Nicaraguan community located in the area of Orlando, Florida. Comparison also reveals that Hispanic and Latino or subgroups tended to vote for the Democratic Party when participating in voting (*Dutwin et al., 2005*). Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican Americans share generational patterns of assimilation into America society (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012).

Age of Hispanics

Hispanics were the fastest growing ethnic group (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). In comparison with Blacks and Whites, however, Hispanic voters had an over

20% lower turnout in 2012. Blacks voters in 2012 voted at 66.6%, and White voters voted at 64.1%. (Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel, & Lopez, 2012)

Among total Hispanic population, more than one in five voters belonged to voting age group of 18–29 years and one half belong to voting age group of 45–59 years. Fewer Hispanic voters belong to age group of 60 years and older (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011). Hispanic's voter Age 65 and older increased in 2012 from 56% to 59%. The trend of older voters participating more is noticed in the general population. Hispanic's Ages 18 to 29 had an increase of 36.9% in 2012, but voted less often (Lopez & Taylor, 2012).

Education and Income

The more educated a person becomes, the more likely they were to participate to vote (Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel, & Lopez, 2012). More than 69% of the Hispanic populations were high school graduates, and 12% of the Hispanic voters have not completed high school. Voters with college degrees were the largest group at 70%. Hispanics with some college in 2012 election were 54.2 %. Hispanics who graduated high school voted at 39.4%. The lowest voter turnouts among Hispanics were those who had less than high school education at 35.5% (Lopez & Taylor, 2012).

The average level of family income of the Hispanic voting population is \$50,000 (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). The Hispanic median income in 2010 was \$37, 759. Hispanics who earned less than \$50,000 voted at a rate of 82% for candidate Obama in 2012 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

Motivation to Vote

Research on rational choice theory shows that in order to be motivated to vote, one must find the value to participate in civic engagement. Much of the literature focuses on whether or not to vote, based on the observed cost benefit of the vote. Characteristics of voters and non-voters of low economic status are more concerned about issues of meeting their fundamental needs such as health, food, and shelter, rather than who was running for political office. Persons who have met those basic needs and obtain a higher education are more likely to vote. Persons who have a college degree were prone to follow election information because of understanding the cost benefit gained by active voters. Higher educated people also have a superior idea of which candidates to vote for on Election Day because they have a higher level of civic engagement due to their perceived value of their vote (Harrington & Liu, 2002).

People who have college educations also have superior paying jobs, increasing their availability to vote. College education provides the skills that make people more likely to gain the civic skills leading to voting (Valencia, 2005). Attending college increases the person's knowledge of current issues and the candidate's standings to create possible solutions. Increased education and knowledge lead to the voter's assimilation in their communities (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011).

Rolfe (2012) quantified participation in voting as a conditional choice theory that occurs through social networks (Rolfe, 2012). The more educated a person was, and the larger a person's social network would be, therefore increasing a person's voter turnout.

Social ties through higher education are more important than social status within the community (Rolfe, 2012). Rolfe (2012) used this theory to test social structures of how people chose to participate in voting. Difficulty in this method was in documenting and capturing usable data to measure using the conditional choice theory.

Public community organizations and grass root networks can also be tied to ethnicities. The White population is chiefly more educated than the Black and Hispanic populations in the United States (Schneider et al., 2006). Igalens and Roussel (1999) challenged that when variables of socioeconomic status are equal, Blacks and Whites behavior in voting are equal, too. However, Del Pilar and Udasco (2004) stated that the Black population, when engaged politically, was more passionate than the White population in voting. *Dutwin et al.'s (2005) study showed* that clarifying one's ethnicity when running for political office was vital to increase votes from that ethnicity.

Valencia (2005) stated the ethnic voting theory showed that ethnic identity decreased over time, and the voting behavior increased the longer a person lived in the United States. In 2005, Barreto argued that immigrants in the second, or third generations, who are financially stable and educated, assimilate quickly and vote more. Education and money may seem to make the assimilation a quicker process for the Hispanics that have access to those things.

Hispanics have the lowest voter turnout rates among all the minority groups in part because of the educational gap (Hugo & Taylor, 2012). As Moyo (2009) explains, education provides empowerment and assimilation of all groups when implemented by

teachers who know they are working for social justice on behalf of their diverse students. Hispanics could suffer marginalization because their group faces cultural and linguistic barriers in education or even in community activities if not assimilating quickly in to local communities (Barreto, 2005).

Religion and Age

Characteristics of religion and age tended to affect people similarly. Researchers Santoro and Segura (2011) showed that individuals who participated in religious activities in the community also tended to vote.

American society, morals, values, and beliefs were developed through the practice of religion and helped institute assimilation for the Hispanics into the community and the polity (Jones & Correa, 2001). Bonilla-Silva and Glover (2006) went further in stating that religious institutions operated both to incubate civic engagements and to recruit congregants to politics through explicit requests for political action. Religious voters are inclined to vote more conservatively than those that did not practice a religion. During the 2012 presidential election, the Obama campaign reached out to African American churches to secure the Black vote to participate by voting for the Democratic Party (Passel, D’Vera, & Lopez, 2012).

Eligible voter means a person who is a U.S. citizen and 18 years old. The largest populations of Hispanic voters were between the age of 18-29 (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). In 2012, 75 million of the nation’s Hispanics were under 18 years of age, and another 83 million were between age 25 and 44 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

Among the 18–24 age group, 29% reported being registered to vote, compared to 21 % for the 50–64 year-old group (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012).

The continuous demographic shifts of the American population guided the last two presidential elections from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party. President Obama was able to maintain 67% of the Hispanic vote in 2008 to 71% in 2012 (Hugo & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). The 2012 Hugo and Gonzalez-Barrera (2012) polls showed among Hispanics aged 18 to 34 voted for President Obama at a higher percentage of age than conservative Hispanics (Passel, D’Vera, & Lopez, 2012) This election showed that the younger voters tended to be more liberal than their older counterparts. However, of the younger Hispanics born in the United States that participated in voting have (25%) higher graduation rates and assimilated better into society (Motel & Patten, 2012/2013).

Characteristics of religion and age played a role when researching who participated in the political process. Religion was similar to education whereas the more a person participated, the more informed they became about the polity. As voter age increased so did participation. The characteristics of religion and age demographics provided insight into the Hispanic voter culture but quantitative research failed to answer why Hispanics lacked participation in the polity.

Summary and Conclusion

This study proposed to examine the lack of participation among Hispanic populations and the characteristics that determined their level of representation in the polity. Quantitative research provided insight, but failed to show the underlying reasons

that explained why Hispanics remained unengaged in political life. A small-scale ethnographic study could explore the underlying motivations behind this lack of engagement. While limited in scope, this study could provide a fuller and more complete picture of why Hispanics participated at such low rates. The Hispanic population was one of the fastest growing populations in America. Federal, state, and local governments need to help the Hispanic population assimilate in their communities (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004). Accepting one's culture and learning how to acclimate to the polity would provide benefits for both Hispanics and the community as a whole (Valencia, 2005).

Hispanic identity has changed over time; redefined multiple times by government through Census categories in ways that demonstrate the marginalization Hispanics. The broader political community is identifying the Hispanics through a system of identification that marginalizes them. Devaluation of their votes occurs because the political community does not want them (Logan, Darrah, & Oh, 2012).

The polity and who gets marginalized in the population defined critical social theory of participation. Empirical literature did not tell us what was the cause of low voter turnout among the Hispanic population. The reason I have undertaken this research was so I could find out the reasons why Hispanics were not participating in the polity, and remaining marginalized by the same polity that provides policies that affect their day-to-day lives.

Generational cultures tended to pass down both negative & positive experiences (Santoro & Segura, 2011). Through qualitative research, the phenomenon of barriers was investigated to find answers to these questions (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). Writing a qualitative ethnographic research proposal would give the reader only a glimpse of the total examination. Researching this topic of analyzing the level of representation of the Hispanic population of the Tom Green County, Texas would give insight, provide possible solutions, and promote social change. Being involved in the polity gives ownership, pride, and self-worth, and it might increase the level of Hispanic representation and identity (Bonilla-Silva, 2004).

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The Hispanic population's lack of civic engagement resulting in low voter turnout was investigated in this study. Hispanics participate at much lower rates than other ethnic groups according to the current quantitative evidence. In the Chapter 2 Literature Review, evidence evolved around issues of low voter participation using similar methodologies that conclude that eligible voters are deterred from the current electoral system. However, researchers have failed to answer why Hispanic voter turnout is low (Jacobson, 2001). I used critical race theory to describe and interpret the cultural or social group's patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life and found ways to change it for the better (Crenshaw, 1995, pp. xiii-xiv).

In this study, I examined whether the responses in open-ended qualitative interviews match the findings of inductive empirical studies. The attempt to clarify theories derived from empirical research has clear support from the data. Research has been developed using a cultural lens to understand the phenomenon and the gap of knowledge in the literature that could be explored using a deductive approach (Patton, 2002).

Many citizens in Tom Green County in District 72 do not register to vote, and many of those who have registered do not participate by voting. State and federal benefits for business improvement, education, health maintenance, and public safety are contingent on numbers of registered voters and voter participation for electoral votes and

the number of seats in both houses of Congress. When citizens do not vote in the scheduled local, state, and national elections, allocations of benefits are denied or decreased. Thus, lack of voter participation affects educational and financial opportunities. As noted in Chapter 1, Hispanics make up a significant portion of the population of voters, and their participation is much lower than their share of the population.

Not participating in the election process keeps the Hispanic population from being fully committed to and engaged in the political community. Lack of commitment to participating in the polity and voting correlates to policies and laws that affect the Hispanic population regarding personal liberties such as immigration, affordable healthcare, and education. When people or groups do not participate in voting, those not voting are letting other people and groups pass regulations and policies, and attention given to them because they spoke through voting.

Methodology

Ethnography methodology is qualitative in nature. Ethnography is the appropriate tool to observe people in their day-to-day life. The ethnographic approach aims to immediately create an accurate picture of the group studied and their culture where its specific objective is the new reality that emerges from the interaction of the constituent parts and the pursuit of that structure with its function and meaning (Clarke, 2010).

Ethnographic research includes strategies that are empirical and naturalistic. Nonparticipant and participant observations were conducted to collect data directly

related to the detected phenomena. Holistic ethnographic research aimed to construct descriptions of global phenomena in their various contexts and to determine from them the complex connections that affect the behavior and beliefs in relation to such phenomena (Creswell, 2007). Ethnographic qualitative research was a useful method in the identification, analysis, and solution of many problems of public policy (Clarke, 2010). Incorporated into this method of qualitative analysis was the behavior of individuals, their social relations, and interactions with the context in which they develop social relationships (Merten, 2005). These social relationships are important to understanding the importance of the civic engagements and exposure to the polity for the Hispanics. Creswell (2007) described *ethnography* as a term derived from anthropology, and etymologically it means the study of ethnicity and the livelihood analysis of one race or group of individuals. An ethnographic study was conducted by observing and describing (a) what people do; (b) how they behave; (c) how they interact to describe their beliefs, values, motivations, perspectives; and (d) how these can vary at different times and circumstances. Clarke (2010) observed, “To be engaged in documentation efforts that not only have explanatory power but also connect that power to praxis, we first must contend with the conception that the seeming absence of public action is far from neutral” (p. 10). Observable actions of people in their environment would explain their culture, behaviors, and motivations.

Ethnography was the tool used to observe Hispanics in their natural environment. Seeing how Hispanics interacted with others or me around them has shown how they

behaved in their environment. The subjects' responses to my interview questions have helped to explain their motivations, beliefs, and perspectives about low Hispanic voter turnout and civic engagement. I have used ethnographic methodology as the technique for observation, field notes, and data collection. This research was completed in the field with the Hispanic population. Research design for the ethnographic method, according to Moyo (2009), fits well with the relationships between the research questions and data collection.

I have been able to question their participation in the polity, cultural themes, and the Hispanic's political engagement through their eyes. I went into the field and completed interviews. The interview process allowed me to be in the environment with Hispanics who do not participate in civic engagement or have low voter turnout. I looked for the causes of why Hispanics vote at different rates than does other groups. According to Moyo (2009), observing the culture and patterns of individuals I researched was as important as the interview questions. These observations have influenced the conversations during the interviews with the Hispanic population, while looking for answers to why the voter participation is so low in Tom Green County.

Ethnography's purpose is to understand a particular way of life from the point of view of those who belong to it naturally as well as to construct a theory of culture that was distinct to the group (Moyo, 2009). Seeing how Hispanics see themselves has allowed me to discover how their perceptions impact civic engagement in their culture. The goal of using interviews was to capture the vision of the group, their perspective

about the world, and the meaning of actions and social situations related to people whom the researcher wants to understand using open ended survey questions (Collis & Hussey, 1997). Merten (2005) stated that in order to understand what the individual is experiencing it is necessary to investigate the impact of the phenomenon. In this context, I was interested not only in what appears to be, but also in what was behind the subject's point of view. Interview questions that allow open-ended responses are an effective means of eliciting responses that can illuminate this point of view. Bryman and Bell (2007) suggested that strategies used in ethnographic inquiry provide phenomenological data representing the worldview of the participants, and these constructs are used to structure research.

Social scientists focus on reality and explain it in different ways, depending on scientific assumptions about what a legitimate perspective was (Creswell, 2007). One way to conceptualize these assumptions was to frame them in four dimensions: the (a) inductive-deductive, (b) subjective-objective, (c) constructive, and (d) generative-enumerative dimensions. I interviewed the subjects while looking for the answers to why the Hispanics do not participate in voting in Tom Green County.

Research Questions

Examination of the Hispanic population of the Tom Green County, District 72 was the environment chosen to study the lack of participation in the polity. My chosen method was an interview questionnaire for participants who self-identified as Hispanic. Participants providing insight needed to understand the phenomenon to have been

interviewed in Tom Green County, Texas, District 72. The following interview questions have been used in the research:

Research question:

What barriers keep Hispanics from being fully involved in voter participation?

Subquestions:

1. Does the culture keep Hispanics from fully participating in the civic engagement?
2. What are the barriers to community involvement faced by the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?
3. What are the reasons behind low rates of registration and low voter turnout among the voting age Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?

Data Collections and Analysis Plan

During the interview process, I asked the participants questions in a public place and audio recorded the responses using the interview instrument in Appendix B. Consent forms in both English and Spanish were provided and completed prior to the interviews and are included in Appendices B and C. I allotted 1 hour for each interview, but none of the interviews took more than 30 minutes. Data collected from the participant's interviews were analyzed in an issue-focused manner focusing on a lack of voter participation. I conducted each interview in person. Each interview conversation was recorded with a digital recorder and lasted from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted on the public sidewalk in front of the grocery store located at 3301

Sherwood Way, San Angelo, TX as previously described in the settings section of Chapter 4. I used the interview questions to stay focused on finding the causes of the lack of voter participation and civic engagement. Implementing an issue-focused analysis gave me the ability to examine the lack of Hispanic voter participation and low voter turnout. I asked questions about their voting participation, barriers to voting, and whether use of public services influences the participation in the polity. Data collected were sorted, coded, and integrated using NVivo. I used the data to analyze the phenomenon of why the Hispanic population does not vote in Tom Green County (Janesick, 2011). Using the issue-focused analysis brought all examined data together so that I could focus on the issue of the study.

Participants and Setting

The ethnographic method was used to study a population of Hispanics not participating in the polity in Tom Green County. Ethnographic qualitative methods helped by evaluating the critical race theory explanation of why lack of voting and community involvement occurs in the Hispanic population Tom Green County (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Interviews were held in front of the main local grocery store. This site was chosen because it was a diverse heavily populated area, with many people coming and going at all hours of the day. The sample population consisted of Hispanic residents of Tom Green County. I conducted interviews using a standard interview protocol, asking questions of the participants (Janesick, 2011).

The sample population was selected by asking individuals who self-identify as Hispanic individuals to participate in an interview (Creswell, 2009). I asked participants to answer the questions listed in Appendix B. A qualified candidate for an interview was a Hispanic citizen resident of Tom Green County. There was no set number of participants for qualitative research predetermined, but studies that follow this qualitative method tended to reach saturation at approximately 20 people (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, I interviewed 20 people and reached saturation.

One challenge for qualitative research was how to pick the right sample method. Other sampling methods such as random or snowball were available but have ethical constraints to the marginalized Hispanic population. The challenge was that ethical and cultural challenges needed to be considered when dealing with particular ethnic or racial groups, in particular one who is subject to marginalization such as the Hispanic population (Creswell, 2007).

A convenient self-selection sampling method was chosen because I used the individuals available rather than selecting from the entire population of Tom Green County. A Participation Card required participants to self-identify before participating in the interview on the public sidewalk. Random sampling could not be used because the Institutional Review Board required that participants be able to self-identify as Hispanic to participate in the interviews using the Participation Card (Appendix A). Snowballing sampling is when the person initially asked refers a second person who has certain characteristics that may be similar, and this would continue down the sampling line

(Creswell, 2007). When looking at sample choices, a convenient self-selection nonprobability sample was the least problematic because participants could choose to participate of their own accord. The convenience sampling allowed for the inclusion and exploratory research to discover the details of causes of marginalization and disenfranchisement that exist in the Hispanic population of Tom Green County (Cresswell, 2007). I did not have ethical concerns when dealing with this marginalized population because no harm was expected from the study, and the Walden University Institutional Review Board approved my research proposal (IRB approval number 05-04-15-0173408).

Issues of Trustworthiness

I conducted interviews and coded the information collected myself. The interviews were conducted using conventional ethical standards. Participants for the sample were of Spanish speaking origin and some of the participants only spoke Spanish. I am proficient in Spanish and conducted the interview in both English and/or Spanish based on the language preferences of the participant. No level of participant risk was expected in completing the interview. The participants were informed along with instructions that withdrawal was allowed at any time. All participants, prior to signing, read the informed consent form listed in Appendix A, indicating they agreed to be interviewed for this study.

Role of the Researcher

I live in the community in which the phenomenon was occurring. I maintained an etic (outside observer) role in the phenomenon. Conducting this research inside the community provided a subjective analysis of the data I collected (Patton, 2002). Living and working in the Tom Green County, Texas, District 72 has allowed to me gain 28 years of experience with the Hispanic population in the community being studied.

In this study, I submerged myself completing the fieldwork in the Hispanic community by conducting one on one interviews with self-identifying Hispanics and collected data. I used a critical ethnographic method with an advocacy participatory worldview lens when conducting the research (Creswell, 2007, 2009). I created the questions for the interviews and have sole access to all recorded data that were asked of the participants. Questions asked of the interviewee were based in the methodology of qualitative ethnographic study describing and interpreting the cultural or social group's patterns of behaviors, customs, and ways of life (Creswell, 2007). I asked the questions listed in Appendix B to find the answers to these areas of interest in this study.

My role as researcher was to consider all ethical concerns in the study. I used a recording device to record all interviews and to codify all data collected. I have maintained the confidentiality of all participants. I have a background in investigation with training and experience in conducting interviews. I understand how to communicate, using skills from training and experience; therefore, I have communicated to the sample population the information needed to complete the interviews. The results of the research

will hopefully promote social change for the Hispanic population by providing the group access to the polity.

Summary

Ethnographic qualitative research method has been employed for attaining the authenticated data for the study. This approach gave insight using the research questions concerning the causes of the lack of Hispanic voter participation. Understanding the marginalization of Hispanics in the polity will enable positive social change by increasing awareness to policy makers, activists, and the Hispanic population. Hispanics' civic engagement should acknowledge their needs via understanding lack of voting participation of the population affecting assimilation into the polity. In Chapter 4, I describe how the data collection was implemented and show the results. Appendices A and B are the Informed Consent Form and the Study Survey.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Civic engagement is critical for ensuring that a citizen's voice is heard. Chapa and De La Rosa (2004) argued that participation in the polity by Hispanics is very low in general, and mobilization in the southwest Texas communities is particularly lacking. There are 41,574 Hispanics in Tom Green County, and of those, only 2,430 voted in the elections in 2012 (Tom Green County, 2011). Previous chapters have demonstrated the lack of civic engagement and the probable role of marginalization in this lack of participation in Tom Green County, Texas. While past researchers have looked at nationwide characteristics relating to the lack of Hispanic participation in voting, there are few who have sought to explore the underlying reasons why the lower voter turnout still exists. Large-scale, quantitative studies have focused on population trends and the answers to limited survey questions related to voting. Relatively little work has explored the individual level perception beyond simple surveys. Hugo and Taylor state the 2012 elections show an increase in Hispanic voting, however, Tom Green County Hispanics voter turnout was far below national average (2012). Hispanic voter turnout is well below their 36% of the population in Tom Green County. By not actively participating in the political process the Hispanic community is not being properly represented by their elected officials. This perpetuates the pattern of marginalization and disenfranchisement that occurs within the group in the local community. A lack of participation leads to a lack of representation, which in turn leads to a perception that representatives ignore

Hispanic interests, reinforcing the idea that politics does not matter to the potential Hispanic voter.

This research has explored the individual-level perceptions of Hispanic voters in Tom Green County. The goal has been to understand the perceptions of civic engagement and voting in order to explain the lack of participation. While limited, this study sheds light on how the larger quantitative trends are reflected in individual perceptions. While the impact of the study is limited by the relatively small number of participants, it does demonstrate that the simple relationships derived from large-scale quantitative research miss important issues that emerge from these interviews. This study shows the importance of a deeper understanding of individual motivations if we are to design public policies and grassroots efforts to promote greater participation among Hispanic voters.

Chapter 1 detailed the research questions that are the foundation of this study. I sought to understand why Hispanics are not participating in the polity in spite of the potential benefits to their community. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Beaver and Chaiviano (2011) stated voters assimilate in to their communities when they are both educated and knowledgeable.

The research question of this study was as follows:

What barriers keep Hispanics from being fully involved in voter participation?

There were three overarching questions:

- Does culture keep Hispanics from fully participating in the civic engagement?
- What are the barriers to community involvement faced by the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?
- What are the reasons behind low rates of registrations and low voter turnout among the voting age Hispanics population in Tom Green County, Texas?

To find the answers to these questions, I interviewed 20 participants who met the self-selection criteria for this study explained in Chapter 3. The interviews provided an opportunity for data collection related to individual perceptions of the conditions facing potential Hispanic voters in Tom Green County. Participants expressed their perceptions about the causes of low participation rates as well as the impact the lack of participation has on the Hispanic community in Tom Green County. Chapter 4 includes sections related to setting, demographics, data collection and data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary of the chapter.

Study Setting

Critical race theory interprets the cultural or social group patterns of behaviors (Crenshaw, 2005). Ethnographic studies require the researcher to conduct field interviews. The location selected for this particular study was the public sidewalk at 3301 Sherwood Way in San Angelo, Texas. The location is in front of the local grocery store where many people of diverse cultures shop for groceries. Many people traverse the

sidewalk going to and from the grocery store. I was in a position to select a location that kept me safe from nearby traffic but still allowed me to stand on the sidewalk. The springtime weather was very pleasant until the rain started on the first day of data collection. I stopped when the rain began and then collected data the next day.

Most individuals were very open to reading the participation card (Appendix A) and deciding whether to participate in the interview process. Only a few individuals declined to be interviewed once they had read the participation card. The participation card was provided in English and Spanish (Appendix A). I used a digital recorder and field notes to record the data as I interviewed each participant. I went over the consent form and the interview questions with each participant. Use of the recorder was efficient. A few participants expressed discomfort when I asked them for permission to record the interview. These participants were not aware of a scholarly interview process using a digital recorder. Only two people declined to be interviewed after I asked to audio record the interview. I was able to complete the interviews using a standard interview protocol asking questions of the participants as described in Chapter 3 (Janesick, 2011).

Demographics of the Data Collected

The participant population was the result of a convenience sampling process. The participants were selected from those persons who had come to shop at the grocery store that day. The sample population was asked to self-identify as Hispanic individuals to participate in the interview process, providing the study with a self-selected sample as described in Chapter 3. Participants were interviewed using a standard interview protocol

(Janesick, 2011). As mentioned in Chapter 3, other sample methods were available, but ethical restraints to the marginalized Hispanic population made the convenience self-selecting sampling process the best selection for this study (Creswell, 2007).

Demographics applied to this study included gender, age, occupation, and income. There were demographic limitations on the potential sample population. Interviewees needed to be over the age of 18 and eligible to vote in Tom Green County, Texas. I interviewed 20 individuals as they walked the sidewalk towards the store or returning from the store after making their purchases.

The participation card in Appendix A allowed individuals to self-select whether or not to participate in the study. Stated on the participation card was the following: “In order to participate, individuals need to be Hispanic adults, who are 18 years of age and are eligible to vote in Tom Green county and willing to conduct the interview here on this sidewalk.” Hispanics eligible to vote are citizens, males or females, over the age of 18, and registered to vote in Tom Green County. Only those who self-identified as meeting this requirement were interviewed.

The table below identifies the demographics of age range and participants. The first demographic variable considered for interview (Appendix D) was gender. I included both male and female participants in this study. Out of 20 participants, eight were female and 12 were male. The second demographic variable considered was the age of the participant. Ages of individuals interviewed consisted of two individuals between 18 to

30 years old, 10 individuals between 30 to 40 years old, three individuals between 40 to 50 years old, and one person between 50 to 65 years old.

Table 5

Age of Participants

<i>Age range</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
18-30 years old	4
30-40 years old	8
40-50 years old	2
50-65 years old	6

The third demographic question asked the occupation of the participant. The individuals interviewed included an electrician, a retired army veteran, a Texas State Trooper, two stay at home moms, a lawn maintenance company owner, a division director, a contractor, two caregivers, an executive assistant, an advisor, two cooks, a manager, a clinical therapist, a retiree, a hairdresser, a barista, and one unemployed individual. The last demographic question for the interview was regarding the level of income. Of the 20 participants, only two (both in the \$30,000 range) would acknowledge their income level.

Hispanics make up over 36% of the total population in Tom Green County; therefore, finding Hispanics entering the location to purchase groceries was not difficult. This location site was chosen because it is a diverse and heavily populated area. The sample population was selected by asking individuals who self-identify as Hispanic individuals to participate in an interview (Creswell, 2007). I was able to question their

participation in the polity, cultural themes, and the Hispanic's political engagement through their eyes. The interview process allowed me to be in the environment with Hispanics who do not participate in civic engagement or low voter turnout.

Data Collection

I collected data listed in the interview questions using the approach described in Chapter 3. During each interview, the following questions were asked:

- Are you registered to vote?
- Have you voted in the last 6 years?
- Do you belong to a political party?
- If so, what party?
- Could you explain if you do or do not participate in voting?
- In your experience, are there barriers to participating in voting?
- If so, what barriers do you see (family, distrust, disinterest)?
- Have you participated in campaign work?
- In Tom Green County, only one fourth of those eligible to vote have voted. How would you increase Hispanic voter turnout?
- Do you use public services such as emergency services, public schools, and or post office?
- Could you explain how participating in voting could improve those services you use?

I met with the participants on the public sidewalk. While we were out in the open, I was careful to provide the person a private conversation for the interview. I did not allow anyone to stand within hearing range of the person being interviewed. The duration of the interviews of the interviews ranged from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. The overall duration of the interview period was 3 days due to some inclement weather.

I used a digital recorder, the participation criteria card, and survey questions as data collection tools. I used face-to-face interviews with the participants. There were no deviations from the data collection plan.

I collected data concerning the perceptions Hispanics hold about voting in Tom Green County. I used the interview questions to understand their perceptions about voting in the polity and how that affects their community. I also asked about motivations to vote and the characteristics of those who participate in the polity as well as the perceived value of those votes, as discussed previously in Chapter 2 (Harrington & Liu, 2002).

Circumstances encountered in data collection included failure to interview two people who self-identified but then chose not to participate once I asked to record the interview. These subjects stated that they were nervous and responded that I looked like a cop. The data collection took longer than originally planned due to the unexpected amount of rain in our county during the planned interview period. I complied with the ethics standards related to this study by respecting the participants and adhering to the interview questions that had been approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis

In this study, the data centered around the issue of low voter participation from the Hispanic population in Tom Green County. Past researchers have failed to explore, in depth, individual perceptions of why Hispanics participate at low rates in voter turnout. Using an ethnographic study informed by critical race theory (Jacobson, 2001), I sought to interpret the views of the cultural or social group who self-identifies as Hispanic relating to participation in the polity. This approach sought to find barriers that prevent participation in public life (Crenshaw, 1995). This particular study is modeled on the relationships between the research questions and data collection as previously explained by Moyo (2009). The study, designed as described in Chapter 3, observes and respects the culture and patterns of the individuals interviewed.

Data analysis began with transcribing the open-ended interviews using the NVivo 10 software. The text of the interviews was imported into the package and the resulting information was used to explore the perceptions of the individual participants. As noted in Chapter 3, the interviews were structured to explore individual perceptions of the reasons for and impact of low Hispanic voter turnout. To contextualize the information, the interviews also sought to find out the level of participation in the policy of the participants.

To complete the analysis, I input the audio files and coded the transcripts as described below. I focused the analysis to identify barriers to Hispanics participation in voting in Tom Green County, Texas. The open-ended questions of the interviews yielded

a sizeable amount of information related to my topic which was coded to identify the themes raised by the participants. To understand the interviews, I coded the data into themes of similarities of responses from the participants including government distrust, lack of assimilation due to culture, and lack of knowledge and education concerning the voting process. I also included an analysis of discrepant data where individuals offered views that differed from the broader themes. The following explains the process of analysis that occurred.

Input Audio File and Code Transcripts

I have imported audio files to NVivo 10 software and listed and coded the transcripts. I have sorted the primary and secondary data by procedural questions included in the survey. Sorting the data for useful information was my first task. Then, I made verifications. The first verification was to ensure all interviews were complete. At this step, I did not include my viewpoint or opinions. The responses recorded were clear. The responses met the objectives in the research design of why Hispanics do not participate in voting in Tom Green County as discussed in Chapter 2 (Janesick, 2011). Interview audio files were extracted and saved in a secure file on a thumb drive in a locked filing cabinet for future research as prescribed by the Internal Review Board guidelines. Data collected will be protected to prevent any security breaches as described in Chapter 3.

Focusing the analysis

I focused the analysis using each research question and sub-questions to conduct the interviews. The main question was: What barriers keep Hispanics from being fully involved in voter participation?

Subquestions included:

- Does culture keep Hispanics from fully participating in the civic engagement?
- What are the barriers to community involvement faced by the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?
- What are the reasons behind low rates of registrations and low voter turnout among the voting age Hispanic population in Tom Green County, Texas?

As I worked to analyze the data, I began to look for the interconnection between the answers and a better understanding of the logic behind Hispanic voters not participating in the polity in Tom Green County, Texas. The objective was to improve the depth of understanding of the factors that prevent Hispanics from participating, and to improve that participation in Tom Green County, Texas.

Common answer themes such as discussed previously of government distrust, lack of assimilation due to culture, lack of knowledge and education concerning the voting process, and use of public services began to emerge in the course of data organization. The questions yielded information related to the education of Hispanics and

their ideas about the process of voting. Patterns began to emerge that included Hispanics feelings about voting and how voting should be promoted in the community.

Categorizing Information

The data from participant interviews identified several common issues raised by the participants related to voter participation. The responses yielded several common trends in the participants perceptions of voting and civic engagement. The issues raised by the participants fell into several general categories:

- Barriers within the culture or family.
- Barriers or marginalization of community involvement.
- Hispanics use of public services.
- Reasons behind lack of Hispanic voter participation.

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, there is reason to believe that demographic factors could influence the perceptions of the participants. To account for the potential demographic influences on participant responses the interview questions were analyzed using the following demographic criteria as potentially influential factors:

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Occupation

Interpreting Data

Interviewees discussed the need to participate in the polity, however, those interviewed stated lack of education concerning voting and voting procedures stopped them from participating. The examination of perceived impacts of lack of Hispanic voter participation occurred during the research study. The inquiry explored the interconnections within each question. Participants were open in their discussion of the barriers to voting participation and polity participation during the interviews. I found that education concerning the procedures for voting to be a major concern of the participants.

Using NVivo 10, following steps listed by NVivo 10:

- Importing my audio files.
- Transcribing the interviews.
- Examining the participant's responses.
- Running a query to determine references.
- Gathering query results and reviewing all material in one place.
- Evaluating the nodes through analysis.

Data interpretation included results to support my theoretical framework listed in Chapter 1. I reviewed past studies included in the literature review for this research. In response to the gap of literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, I developed this research to understand the factors contributing to the lack of Hispanic voter participation in Tom Green County. There is plenty of research data to prove the lack of voting exists by quantitative numbers, however, no one has asked why.

To ensure credibility and dependability of the approach of data consisted of the triangulation of data I reviewed for the literature review. I collected data from multiple resources. The resources included U.S. Bureau of Census, U.S. Federal spending, Texas redistricting, Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, and Pew Research. National, Texas, and Tom Green County election information were also collected. I made a triangulation of critical information in order to address the lack of Hispanic Voter participation in Tom Green County. I have kept all information gathered and made notes to offer useful recommendations to serve another researcher to conduct a similar study to address dependability (Cresswell, 2007).

Study Results

Data analysis produced a pattern of the analysis of the interview results themes emerge reflecting how the participants see the key issues this study focused on utilizing the interview process.

The following topics were presented as related to lack of participation included:

- Lack of awareness of the political process on the participant's part.
- Politicians' promises to change the community and does not.
- Not knowing or understanding the voting process.
- Participants suggested voter registration cards needed to include two languages (Spanish and English).
- No initiative in the Hispanic voter community to participate in voting.
- Feeling that votes do not matter.

- Lack of information to Hispanic voters from people seeking office during elections.
- Lack of interest in voting from family that breeds distrust or disinterest.
- Hispanics feel out-numbered, so vote won't count.
- Cultural barriers such as lack of assimilation and familial participation in the polity and civic engagement make Hispanic voters feel embarrassed to participate.

Of the twenty participants interviewed the following information was obtained.

- 18 consented to be interviewed, 2 declined to be recorded but still wanted to be interviewed.
- There were 12 males and 8 females.
- Individuals from age ranges were four individuals from 18-30 years old, eight individuals from 30 to 40 years old, two individuals from 40-50 years old, and six persons from 50-65 years old.
- The occupations listed by the participants were: Electrician, Retired Army Veteran, Texas State Trooper, two Stay at Home Moms, Lawn Maintenance Co. Owner, Division director, Contractor, two Care Givers, Executive Assistant, Advisor, two Cooks, Manager, Clinical Therapist, Retiree, Hairdresser, Barista, and a Unemployed Individual.
- Only 2 would tell list their income levels (both in the \$30,000 range) the others declined saying it was too personal.
- 12 individuals were registered to vote, 8 were not registered but were eligible.

- 10 of the individuals voted in the last 6 years
- None of the individuals associated with a political party.

Perceived Barriers to Voting

The participants interviewed on the public sidewalk revealed the use of at least some of the public services such as emergency services, post office, and public schools. One potential benefit of increased voter participation is an improved quality of life for the Hispanic population of Tom Green County. As discussed previously in Chapter 2, Hispanics participate in the lowest voter turnout among all the minority groups in part because of the educational gap according to Hugh and Taylor (2012). This study referred to the improved participation rates for Hispanics as the understanding of why to vote increases with education and removal of marginalization.

Participants were asked to name the barriers that prevent participation in the polity, and whether they make use of public services. In the quotes from the transcripts that have been incorporated into this chapter, participant refers to the individual that completed an interview with the researcher. Different issues and perceptions were discussed in relation to this study. The finding here is that the participants answered with mixed messages, stating no there are no barriers, and then explaining what the barriers were for Hispanics. Participants discussed barriers such as lack of education, lack of trust in the government, problems, disenfranchisement and cultural barriers. Also to note, some of the participants stated there were no barriers. With respect to barriers encountered by Hispanics the participants had the following comments. The participant's

answers are in no particular order and included to give insight into the participants answers to the interview questions.

Education as the Barrier

Informant A reported lack of education as a barrier.

“No, and if so it’s a lack of education. Don’t know how to vote.”

Informant B reported that lack of education of the voting process affects the process as well as reporting family culture causing disengagement.

“Main barrier is people don’t understand the votes does not make a difference, they don’t understand the process. So they think the process is flawed. So, if I vote for white not black or Hispanic instead of whatever they think one vote isn’t going to make a difference. It’s a learned thing, you learn it growing up, if you parents were voters, then you will vote. If they grow up voting for this person or that person, you will learn to vote. My wife is Caucasian and was raised completely differently than me. My family is completely opposite voting, how we raise children, etc. All that is a learned process from the parents and you usually follow in their footsteps unless you’ve had a bad experience with one of those process, then you go completely opposite.”

Informant C reported lack of education as well as family distrust and disinterest in the community.

“ Yes, some, lack of information, to the Hispanic people, no one to explain to them, family, distrust, disinterest –well probably don’t vote as well.”

Disenfranchisement or Barriers

Informant H reported feeling disenfranchised by the voting polity.

“ I feel they don’t give us a chance. Hispanics are out numbered, when we do vote they will never let us have a chance to become something better, don’t feel empowered.”

Informant I reported disenfranchisement of not fitting in with the polity.

“Yes, and thinking there is fear and family embarrassment due to lack of trust in government creating culture barriers. Folks just recently moved here, 2 years ago, with lack of self-confidence and no assimilation, seen as a second class citizen.”

No Barrier

Informant J reported no barriers.

“No, I don’t think there is.”

Informant K reported no barriers.

“ No, I like the process, it’s pretty fair not hindering me.”

Informants L-S reported no barriers.

“No.”

Barriers of family, distrust, and disinterest

Informant B reported the unknowns of politics make eligible voters skeptical.

“ Well, I mean what about citizenship, don’t their vote doesn’t count, loyalties aren’t here, so many what ifs in politics.”

Informant C reported that trust prevents Hispanics from increasing participation in voting.

“Don’t get involved cause no trust, so this doesn’t help family from Mexico, don’t have that experience in the past, so they don’t vote here in America.”

Use public services such as emergency services, public schools, and or post office

Informant A perception of vote devaluation has discouraged him/her from voting for issues at the local level.

“I have been affected growing up from race. This is what I’ve noticed. We grow up thinking they don't care about us, even if it's a Hispanic running for office. Why should I vote for local elections, they aren't going to help me out anyway, I already know these people. They won't know where or how to take a stand and they don't know me anyway. Information—why is it important, why should we feel we have a voice as Hispanics. It doesn't matter ‘cause they don't know where I am coming from ‘cause I am not from their part of town or church or their area or even class.”

Participants gave examples of involvement for increasing voting the Hispanic voting age population. Participants suggested a grassroots level involvement that would influence voters already of voting age and also introduce future voters to the process. Overall, the participants outline marginalization, disenfranchisement, and gender inequality as the root of the issues affecting the Hispanic voting age population and creating the lack of voter participation. Research in the literature review in Chapter 2, supported the findings of this study in that Hispanics find their votes devalued because the local governments weaken the coalition building for Hispanics (Harrington & Liu, 2002).

The quotes reveal a degree of contradiction in the perceptions of the participants regarding barriers to voter participation. Some reflect the perception that there are no barriers to participation and the those who wish to engage can do so. Others describe significant barriers to voting that prevent participation. To some extent these differences appear to reflect two strands of perception: one in which there are no barriers, but voting is not worth the effort due to its lack of impact and a second that sees significant barriers that make voting not worth the cost. This presents a potentially interesting avenue for future research: the exploration of whether the perception of barriers represents a significant cleavage in the Hispanic population.

Perceived Effectiveness Increasing Voting

Participation in voting is an effective way to be part of the polity. Santoro and Segura (2001) explained that both positive and negative experiences are passed down through generational cultures. Hispanics who are not involved in voting have felt the devaluation of their votes because the political community does not want them (Logan, Darrah, & Oh, 2012). As learned in the literature review, Hispanics continued lack of voter participation encourages marginalization from participation in the community because the Hispanics population is not having their voice heard them (Logan, Darrah, & Oh, 2012). Participants were asked how they would increase voter turnout rates. Informants are again listed in no particular order to further demonstrate the data collected during the interviews. Posing the interview questions to explore the responses of the participants, I observed the participants making the following comments:

Increase voter turn out

Informant A reported that language barriers prevent increasing participation in voting.

“ Offer translators, they worry they will vote for wrong person and didn’t understand, the young people who voted, you don’t have to be a party to vote, and add all social media sources, mostly more volunteers.”

Informant B reported increasing voter participation would be difficult because of the party lines in Tom Green County.

“That would a difficult thing, the way to increase the Hispanic vote with Tom Green County. Being mostly Republican based unless you go to the border down south, a lot of the Hispanic culture is Democratic. If there was democratic candidate the Hispanic vote would come out, they think and know that the Republican candidate will win, so their nature is Democratic Party so they will not vote. It depends on the individual candidate that wins if the services would change.”

Informant C reported that education about the voting process would help Hispanics to be more involved.

“ More education toward voting, more advertising, more time to work with Hispanics.”

Informant D reported that to increase voting, education would have to interest catching.

“ I don’t know how to increase, issues that affect me, something that grabs my interest.”

Informant E reported volunteers are needed to increase education and voting participation.

“ Get more people to volunteer take people who translate, and handicap votes, explain the ballot, in different languages.”

Informant C reported that informing eligible voters that voting could be done via the mail service increase participation.

“ I don't know, maybe being able to vote by mail.”

Informant G reported increasing education of voters and the voting system would increase voting participation.

“Well to increase participate you need to get the people to understand what they are voting for, the system now when you listen to politicians they are talking rhetoric not content, and order, the issues are not broken down for you to understand they are disillusioned and its a long term process, most people think it doesn't affect me, and most are full of hot air.”

Informant H reported increasing education and visiting with recent citizenship graduates would increase voter participation.

“Good question, they have bad numbers, need grassroots level involvement, more education, recent citizenship contacts and those who've been here while. Educating them how to vote, participant in civic things. Many are too busy, can't don't anything about it. I don't think it's a lack of knowing what to do, but getting them to think they can be heard.

Summary

Chapter 4 presents the results of perceptions found among the participants in this study. The study reveals that Hispanics in Tom Green County feel that political representation does not happen because their vote does not have value. Perceptions continue to show marginalization, disenfranchisement, and lack of voter participation. Gender inequality was also reported in the results. Participants named lack of awareness, broken political promises, language barriers, educational barriers, and cultural barriers as reasons for not taking part in civic engagement or the polity. Participants interviewed represented many different occupational backgrounds that varied in the socioeconomic scale, and although the participants did not wish to share their income, the levels of difference are apparent.

On one side of information participants stated “no, there are no barriers” and yet, the participants went on giving their statement on the barriers that continuously affect the Hispanic participation in the polity. The census of the interviews is that Hispanics don’t vote because of “my vote doesn’t count so why bother”. Bringing forth the information, that although culture is a barrier, Hispanics asked about barriers do not label the existing reasoning as barriers, necessarily. The study found the cooperation of actions is not yet effective between the Hispanic population and voting to have their voice heard (Battle & Pastrana, 2007). Continued lower socioeconomic status of Hispanics makes it difficult for them to compete within the local political organizations. The lack of voter participation

seems to stem from marginalization, lack of education, and feeling as if the vote will not matter.

Participants were invited to identify ways to increase voting. Recommendations were suggested that focused attention on education, addressing new citizens, de-marginalization of Hispanics, better civic engagement, advertising directly to Hispanics with Spanish language signs, and offering translators to voters. As discussed in Chapter 2 literature review, these barriers are often over-looked by politicians because of the political parties and candidates tending to focus on long-term party goals (Beaver & Chaviano, 2011). Gerson argued political parties potential power from the Hispanic voting bloc could be tied to the assimilation level and culture brought into the Hispanic communities (2012).

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this study, I explored the marginalization and lack of civic engagement of Hispanics in Tom Green County, Texas, District 72. As noted in Chapter 1, lack of civic engagement is one of the most visible signs of marginalization of the Hispanic population in Tom Green County. Compared to other groups, Hispanics participate in the polity at a much lower rate, resulting in a lack of representation in political life (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). Political leaders can afford to ignore or marginalize the Hispanic community so long as it does not hold elected leaders accountable.

I have chosen to explore the perceptions of voting and civic engagement among potential Hispanic voters to fill an important gap in the literature. While quantitative studies have explored general trends in voting and focused on general surveys related to Hispanic voting patterns, these studies have not attempted to understand, in depth, the relationship between perception and political engagement. This study seeks to remedy this through an in-depth exploration of how Hispanic marginalization is reflected in the perception of members of the Hispanic community. The research question at the heart of this study emphasized the perceived barriers impacting Hispanic participation in voting in Tom Green County.

Lack of voter participation in Tom Green County is reflective of the national trend of low Hispanic voter turnout (Texas Legislative Council, 2012). Prior empirical studies of Hispanic voting point to multiple potential explanations for low turnout

without agreeing on why Hispanics are not voting. Quantitative studies explore large scale trends and correlations, but do not explain the causal mechanisms of what leaves Hispanics out of the political process. These large scale studies also tend to miss local factors that may influence Hispanics in the communities in which they live. This study contributes to our understanding of Hispanic voting patterns by engaging in a deeper exploration of the perceptions of members of the Hispanic community in Tom Green County, Texas. This study seeks to provide a deeper explanation as to why we see the larger patterns in the quantitative studies.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was meant to remove barriers to voting for all marginalized groups, and Hispanics should have benefited from this change in policy. However, Hispanics continue to be marginalized, and many do not participate in civic engagement. Underrepresentation of the Hispanic voice denies the group representation proportionate with their population in Tom Green County, Texas, as explained in Chapter 1. Hispanics' lack of voter participation keeps them from being part of the polity and limits access to the provision of governmental services.

A detailed discussion of the evolution of Hispanic identity and its marginalization in the American polity appears in the literature review in Chapter 2. Several quantitative studies have demonstrated the pervasive pattern of low voter participation by Hispanics in the United States. These studies have offered several, general, explanations for a general lack of civic engagement. Multiple competing explanations for low voter turnout among Hispanics, all supported by empirical research, are discussed in Chapter 2.

Investigation for the literature review showed two main approaches are used to research voter mobilization--rational public choice theory and cultural explanations. However, neither of these approaches measured the perception of barriers among the members of the Hispanic community. My study has helped illustrate experiences for Hispanics that quantitative research could not illuminate because the numerical data available did not explain why Hispanics vote less than others in Tom Green County, only that this lack of civic engagement is occurring.

The theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 1 addressed ethnographic qualitative research as being structured to include small groups of interviewees in naturalistic locations. Chapter 3 described that the interview format used for ethnographic research explored perceptions of participants because it fits well with the relationship between data collection and research questions (Moyo, 2009). The study consisted of two phases of research: (a) investigation of Hispanics' voting patterns and participation in the polity of Tom Green County, and (b) interviews of participants in their naturalistic environment. I used multiple data resources including voting statistics, documents from the United States Census Bureau, literature review, participants' interviews, and observations of the participants to determine disenfranchisement and to protect the disenfranchised (Clarke, 2010). Conducting field interviews allowed me submerge myself in the environment with Hispanics who do not participate in civic engagement.

Data management went through revision, analysis, categorization, coding, and analysis. Through a triangulation of data, I could ensure credibility and trustworthiness of

data (Creswell, 2007). Each research question has been addressed through including relevant quotes from the interviews. Data included the participants saying no there are no barriers to participating in the polity and civic engagement, then explaining that there was indeed an issue. The majority of participants acknowledged the importance of being part of the polity in Tom Green County as well as the importance of voting. From the perspective of the participants, voting is important in order to have the Hispanics' group voice heard; however, culturally, it is not taught amongst the families or community gatherings. Participants perceived this lack of involvement as significant; however, when speaking about it, they did not believe their individual votes would impact the outcome of the elections.

Discussions about the effects of the lack of voter participation in the Hispanic community has led to other relevant issues that went beyond the primary issues identified in the interview questions. As examined in Chapter 1, Hatch (2002) stated that the researcher who uses qualitative research could create social or political change by providing policy makers with the information collected concerning nonvoting Hispanics. These issues are related to the marginalization of the Hispanic population and the steps needed to create social change within the Hispanic community. The key question was how to create more involvement for Hispanics of voting age population. In this chapter, I discuss the results from Chapter 4. The conclusion of the study and recommendations for social change and future research are included in this chapter.

Interpretation of Findings

The interviews established causalities behind lack of Hispanic voter participation based on that education for voting procedure is not clear to the participants. Participants do not know or understand the voting process, and there is no initiative in the Hispanic voter community to participate in voting or civic engagement.

Disenfranchisement and marginalization were clearly reflected in the responses of the participants. A general perception was that Hispanics were outnumbered by other groups, so their votes would not count. In part this was enhanced by a lack of accurate information about voting and voter registration. Participants were not aware of voter registration being available in the Spanish language or the ability to have the ballot by mail if there was a documented handicap. Participants highlighted evidence of marginalization by the candidates for office. Candidates did not attempt to engage the Hispanic community. Participants noted a lack of information from candidates being directed to the Hispanic population.

Barriers discussed by the participants included familial and cultural distrust of the government and the governmental process of voting. Participants identified politicians who make promises and do not change the community for the better. Cultural barriers contribute to embarrassment within the family and/or community of participation in the Hispanic population. Participants feel embarrassed to vote when they themselves are either not educated on the voting process or being the only one to vote within their group.

Participants identified lack of awareness of the issues concerning public services to be voted on. Participants' knowledge and understanding of politicians elected correlated to the public service and how that affects them. Participants do not believe in or trust the politician in office managing the public service agency to provide services to them or the Hispanic population as promised.

Potential to Improve Hispanic Involvement in Tom Green County

A number of participants acknowledged the ability of Hispanics to mobilize to participate in voting as listed in the results of Chapter 4. A large mobilization would have a significant impact not only on the Hispanic population but also on the outcome of an election in a district where the mobilization takes place. One potential mean for reducing the degree of marginalization of the Hispanic community is to promote engagement in political life through education. Education over civic engagement and teaching the benefits of participating could increase the number of Hispanic voters and assimilation among the community. While this will not end marginalization as a whole, it will improve access to public services and build public sector responsiveness to the needs of the community.

Community activities need to be implemented and structured in a way that produces a significant impact on the lives of the Hispanic population. One participant stated, "Hispanics are outnumbered, when we do vote they will never let us have a chance to become something better, don't feel empowered." The participants were seeking ways to feel empowered within their community. Educating the voting age

population through community activities about voting procedures, locations, and availability of Spanish language ballots would increase voter participation.

The participants responses focus on several important dimensions of Hispanic perception of voting and civic engagement that revolve around information. The general lack of good information about voter registration and voting procedures suggests that better information about the process may reduce the perceived barriers. This suggests that policies designed to improve voter knowledge may be an effective tool for increasing participation. Programs to promote education and recruitment and training of volunteers to educate the Hispanics of voting age could potentially have a significant impact at increasing the perception that voting can change outcomes. In response to the data I collected a model for volunteer training could include the following:

- Development of information for organizations focused on education about the voting process.
- Organization of training for participation in the Hispanic neighborhoods' community activities.
- Provision of additional training to volunteers in the communities.
- Implementation of initiatives focused on bringing Hispanics to the polls.
- Achievement of raising the numbers of Hispanics voting in Tom Green County.
- Learning from the participation within the community, what Hispanics need at a grass roots level to participate in the polity and vote.

Establishing a framework for measuring participation in voting would contribute to gaining participation from the Hispanic population of voting age and allow for adjustments in a time efficient manner.

Demographic changes are rapidly making Hispanics the largest voting block (Hugo & Taylor, 2012). New perspectives are important to finding why there is a lack of voting participation by the Hispanic population. The results of this study could raise awareness about going beyond the current political education provided to the Hispanic population. Perceptions of the participants of this study suggest that improved education could include improved access the benefits extended to the Hispanic population through civic engagement, participation in the polity, and voting at the polls. Key indicators of improvement of voting by the Hispanic population would be (a) more Hispanic population representation in elected offices, (b) reduced marginalization of the Hispanic population in Tom Green County, and (c) more overall votes by Hispanics at the polls. Assessment of each of these indicators could lead to future research activities.

Relevance of Hispanics Voting in Tom Green County

The purpose of these interviews was to assess the relevance of Hispanics voting in Tom Green County. In the discussion in Chapter 3, I explained the importance of participating in the polity for the Hispanic population. The Hispanic population fails to participate in voter turnout (Jacobson, 2001). However, voter turnout affects state and federal benefits for business improvement, education, health maintenance, and public safety. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Hispanics make up a significant portion of the

population of voters, yet their participation is much lower than their share of the population.

Also at stake are the issues of immigration, affordable health-care, and education within the Hispanic community. Lack of participation in the election process prevents the Hispanic population from expressing their voice and being fully committed to the political community. The lack of participation also leads to lack of civic engagement and feeling as if their votes will not count. Without education and social change, the much needed self-sustaining cycle of marginalization would feed a sense that participation was pointless. However, every vote counts, and the education of such should be discussed. Education in these areas could help with assimilating all citizens to the voting process in Tom Green County, Texas.

Major Challenge of Increasing Hispanic Votes

Effective implementation of education and continuing education is needed to improve Hispanic voter turnout. The findings of this study suggest that although public voter information was available to everyone in Tom Green County, the voting procedure is not being taught in a way that is resulting in Hispanic voters going to the polls. Changes are needed in public schools and colleges to keep updated with the political process. Avenues of continuing education are needed for individuals who either move to Tom Green, County from other countries or do not attend higher education past high school. The Hispanic population is not participating once they are of voting age. The voting process requires increased bilingual volunteers in the community to participate for

the good of the Hispanic population. Furthermore, the needed education, continued education, the importance of civic duty, community ownership, and how the connection of elections to public services are important in taking steps to de-marginalize Hispanics in Tom Green County. The key finding of this study expresses the lack of participation from the Hispanic population showing the need for education on the elections process. This information will be passed on to State of Texas Representative, Drew Darby for review and hopefully planning to implement changes at a statewide to help locally in improving Hispanic voter turnout.

Limitations of the Study

In Chapter 1, I identified limitations of the study including not being able to interview all Hispanic Americans in Tom Green County, relying on self-identification, and the process of completing interviews. Interviews were not difficult to conduct in the setting I chose. The weather did become a factor early on but cleared up in time to complete the process. I did encounter a few potential participants who declined either because I look like a police officer or because they did not want the interview recorded. Self-identification was not difficult due to the participation card being used. Also having the participation card read in both English and Spanish made the process more comfortable for Hispanics who could not read English.

The interview process of collecting demographic characteristics produced a limiting factor of individuals not wanting to discuss their incomes. In addition, almost every one of the interviewees stated that lack of education was the heart of the issue with

low voter turnout and low civic engagement. I did not encounter any communication gaps or time restraints that were discussed in Chapter 1 Limitations.

Recommendations

I recommend building a continuing education strategy within the community to create social change within the Hispanic population about the current political process, issues being voted upon, and to show the Hispanic community desires to participate in the polity. This organization could also provide current education to the Hispanic voting age population to explain the value of one's vote. The outcome of this organization would be Hispanics having their collective community voice heard by voting in elections be not only for education but to recruit the Hispanic population to volunteer giving back to the community.

Key recommendations for future research include the following:

- Assessing the effectiveness of the voting process taught in high school.
- Encouraging Hispanic community leaders to lead their community to the voting polls.
- Development of information for organizations to educate Hispanic communities about issues being voted on in the elections.

The assessment of effectiveness of the voting process taught in high school would give insight to the voting process education available through public schools. This assessment would provide useful information about the strengths and weaknesses of the government education classes, including the voting process. The findings would

contribute to improve education about voting to all citizens who are near the voting age of 18.

Lastly, research showing the Hispanic community leaders the gaps in their own community could encourage them to share their knowledge with their community. Community leaders might know that what they do is a reflection of what their community needs but may not realize that more of the community needs to participate in the polity and civic engagement. This education from the Hispanic leaders would be one way to build trust and credibility within the Hispanic community. The trust built through these activities could provide aid for the community through public services once the community understands what is available.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Hispanic Americans are negatively impacted in Texas District 72 and Tom Green County due to lack of political representation. Creating positive social change through increasing voting among Hispanic voter turnout is one way to combat lack of political representation. Civic engagement affects all students and staff in local schools by presenting the students with a positive learning environment (Ingalens & Roussel, 1999). More civic engagement increases ownership of the Hispanic communities and increase political participation and voice. Hispanic leaders can help with informing and motivating the Hispanic people to be involved in the polity through civic engagement and education (Arias et al., 2008).

At the national level, findings of this study may contribute to improving policies that affect the Hispanics and their voting patterns. This study would raise awareness about low Hispanic voter turnout and the implications of lack of civic engagement. The analysis of the Hispanic voter participation would strengthen the capacities of policy makers in setting clear expected improvements for Hispanic communities in Tom Green County and Texas.

At the state level, this study would reinforce information already known, while filling the gap of why Hispanics are not voting. Organizations can improve their models to better fit the educational needs of the Hispanic voting population in Texas. State organizations would be able to use a results-based approach to implement new voter encouragement policies. Organizations would also be able to implement information to build trust and reliability within the communities.

At the community level, the positive social change would be in the impact of changing the Hispanic voting patterns in Tom Green County, Texas. Creating access to information on voting poll accessibility and educating the Hispanic population would provide the county with significant changes in the Hispanic community. Hispanic voter turn out would increasingly show ownership over the entire community.

Theoretical Implications

The ethnographic qualitative theory was used for this research to see the why behind the correlations of lack of participation in voting by the Hispanics (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative theory asserts the researcher to place the findings in the context in

order to understand and create social change among the Hispanic population. Chapter 2 Literature review outlined the problems contributing to the prohibition of Hispanic participation in voting in Tom Green County. The ethnography focused on culture, relationships, and societal views of the lack of Hispanic voter participation in Tom Green County (LeCompte & Priessle, 1994). The interviews were completed in a natural location, which encouraged the respondents to respond truthfully. Logan, Darrah, and Oh (2012) identified low voter turnout to have characteristics of low socioeconomic positions, however, the results of this study showed lack of participation related to many types of jobs or careers levels. The data from the interviews confirmed the classification of Hispanics, and the disenfranchisement is occurring through their identification and their position in the polity. As discussed in Chapter 2, the interviews did reflect what Hispanics in the county feel (Mertens, 2005). The majority of the informants stated that barriers were not apparent then identified barriers being one of the issues among the polity. Informants believe the structure of the elections and politics are corrupt and their vote would not matter or help change the issues.

Conclusion

Marginalization of Hispanics is one of the biggest challenges of Tom Green County, Texas, District 72. The marginalization of Hispanics is also one of the largest challenges facing America as the Hispanic population continues to grow. The state population of Texas in 2010 was 25,145,561 in which 37.6 % or 9,460,921 are Hispanic (Texas Legislative Council, 2010). The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012) identified

18.28 million Hispanics as the largest minority group in Texas, making up 33.6% of the voting age population. In Texas District 72, the total voter age population of the Hispanic population makes up 24.1% or 22,011 Spanish surname registered voters. Tom Green County has a population of 104, 010 people. 84,290 of those residents are in the voting age population and 31% or 26,516 are Hispanic Americans (Texas Legislative Council, 2010). In the 2012 elections, the Hispanics voter age population only 2,430 or 16% turned out to vote (Texas Legislative Council, 2010 Census, Red 236, p. 6). Analyzing the Hispanic population's involvement in the community to understand voter mobilization characteristics determining the level of participation by the group in the political process is necessary (Dutwin et al., 2005).

In America's federal system, political participation takes place at the federal, state, and local level. Lack of participation in all three of these levels can lead to a lack of attention from political leaders and the marginalization of non-participating groups. Groups compete for scarce resources in the political space. Americans want government to provide social benefits such as welfare, food stamps, and health-care-- all of which can benefit the Hispanic population (Arias et al., 2008). Hispanics continue to be marginalized from participating in voting concerning these critical social benefits, leading to a situation in which Hispanics consistently get fewer resources than the groups with which they compete. To have a voice, Hispanics must increase rates of voter participation in order to provide representation commensurate the size of their population.

Hispanics need to articulate their desires and demands to their politicians via the ballot box.

This study sought to deepen our understanding of why Hispanics do not participate in political life in a local community--Tom Green County at the rates we would expect given their significant presence in the population. Explanations based on the concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards have been considered in past research on barriers Hispanics encounter when voting (Dutwin et al., 2005 & Pink, 2009). I selected the questions to observe this phenomenon through the cultural lens of critical race theory (Patton, 2002). Critical race theory allowed me to study the role of race and inequality in the Hispanics of Tom Green County's society and their participation in civic engagement levels (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

To explore the perceptions that underpin the lack of participation required participant interviews to understand how these perceptions contribute to the marginalization of the group (Clarke, 2010). The interviews in this study allowed a detailed exploration of the role of perception for a small number of participants. These responses contextualize and extend the findings from larger-scale studies into macro-trends in the national and state Hispanic populations.

Quantitative studies such as those by Santoro and Segura (2011) and others listed in Chapter 2, used measures of classic assimilation collected through a national survey to analyze empirical data on the likelihood of Hispanics being marginalized. However, these empirical studies fail to identify the barriers or offer solutions. I have chosen qualitative

research method to explore the “why” Hispanics lack participation in the polity.

Researchers have identified psychological theories as determining factors of why people do not act; however, the research had not been done to find the barriers (Pink, 2009). This study is qualitative and asks the participants the barriers affecting their voting participation instead of focusing on the large-scale quantitative surveys.

In Chapter 2, it is shown that critical race theory lens has helped to find the racial differences that have been normalized to the point of invisibility (Price, 2010). The barriers identified by the participants are so ingrained in their society, the participants would state that there were no barriers, then go on to list the barriers by name – education, disenfranchisement, culture barriers, family distrust and disinterest. Showing the Hispanic population of Tom Green County the marginalization could lead to their participation in the voting process as described in Chapter 2.

The methodology chosen in Chapter 3, the ethnographic approach created an accurate picture of the group studied. The behavior, social relations with family, and interactions in the community were considered when writing the interview questions asked in Chapter 4. I conducted the data collection in a public space as to provide a group of participants. Individuals were asked to self-identify using a participation card. Qualified interviewees were Hispanic citizens of Tom Green County of voting age. I used issue-focused analysis to bring all the examined data together to focus on issue and gain the results listed in Chapter 4. The study identified influences on the Hispanic population of Tom Green County as those of family, education, and cultural barriers.

Current T news, social media biases, and miss informed individuals create the need for factual continuing education Hispanics through civic organizations is of utmost importance. Participants suggested the following ideas, when asked how to increase voting in Tom Green County, increased translators, voting ballots in Spanish Language, advertising focused on the Hispanic community, informing the voters of issues at hand, and most important education. The community of Tom Green County could create social change through educating the Hispanic population with alliances with non-profits, along with government agencies local, state, and federal.

The research study was conducted to seek answers to the underlying reasons that explain lower voter turnout in Tom Green County. Using field interviews, the participants shared their perceptions of barriers and ways to increase voting in Tom Green County. I looked at the interconnection presented by the participants' answers concerning barriers within culture and family, lack of community involvement, and lack of education as reasons why Hispanics do not participate actively in the polity. The participants stated use of at least some of the public services and benefits from living in the community of Tom Green County. The results identified an educational gap as one reason of low voter turnout, confirming the discussion of Hugh and Taylor's findings in 2012. When investigating the gap in literature, and interviewing participants on the lack of voting by the Hispanic community the forgoing conclusion is education. Education of the Hispanic population of Tom Green County could give the pride of ownership and authority to civic groups and individuals in the community who share common beliefs, morals, values, and

thoughts through participation in the polity; providing the right to create social change in the environment in which they live in.

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Appendix A: Purpose of the Study

Purpose of the study:

I am looking for possible participants willing to complete an interview for the purpose of gathering data for a research to understand the participant's political mobilization particularly in Tom Green County. Through this study using interviews, I will analyze the factors contributing to the lack of Hispanic American voter participation and civic engagement in Tom Green County. I will identify barriers that affect Hispanic American voting behavior.

What kind of participants I need:

In order to participate, individuals need to be Hispanic adults, who are at least 18 years of age and are eligible to vote in Tom Green county and willing to conduct the interview here on this sidewalk.

If you do not meet the participation criteria or if you are uncomfortable with the study in any way, the manager of the study strongly suggest that you do not participate. It is important that participants meet the criteria for participation and are comfortable with participating in the study. Please ask the investigator if you have any questions related to the study. If you are in any way uncomfortable with the above goals or the selection criteria, I advise that you decline participation.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form: English

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study about voter participation.. Hispanics, who are at least 18 years of age and are eligible to vote in Tom Green County are invited to participate. Please read the following form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to take part in the interview.

I am Shawn Morrow, the researcher, and a doctoral student at Walden University and will be conducting the interview.

Background Information

The Purpose of this interview is to gather data for a research to understand the participant's political mobilization.

Procedures

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in a digital recorded interview, of a time of 20 to 30 minutes.

Voluntary Interview

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You can stop the interview at anytime. If you get upset or stressed stop the interview. You can skip a question if the question is too personal.

Benefits and Risks

The benefits will be to the larger community. This study seeks to understand what motivates members of the Hispanic population to vote and participate in the political life of the community. The results of this study will inform efforts to promote community engagement. There are no benefits to you from participating in this research interview. The interviewer will utilize the data gathered for use in the research study. There is a minimal risk of mental stress during the interview. You can stop the interview at any time if you feel stressed.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Data for the research: “Analyzing the Level of Participation by the Hispanic Population of Tom Green County”, is confidential and should not be disclosed outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by a locked filing cabinet. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts Information

The researcher’s name is Shawn Morrow. The researcher’s dissertation Chairperson is Dr. Greg Dixon. If you have any questions you can ask them now. If you have questions later, you can contact the researcher by phone XXX or Email XXX or contact the Chairperson. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you can contact the Walden representative via email at irb@waldenu.edu or call 612-312-1210. Walden University’s approval number for this study is 05-04-15-0173408 and it expires May 3, 2016. You do not have to choose to do so, but if you wish to receive the results via email, please provide that at this time:

Email address:

Statement of Consent

By signing below means I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time.

Printed Name of participant

Participant’s Signature

Researcher’s Signature_

The participant may keep a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form: Spanish

Informed Consent Form

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio sobre la participación de votantes .. hispanos, que tienen al menos 18 años de edad y son elegibles para votar en Tom Green County están invitados a participar . Por favor, lea el siguiente formulario y haga todas las preguntas que tenga antes de aceptar participar en la entrevista. Soy Shawn Morrow , el investigador , estudiante de doctorado en la Universidad de Walden y llevaré a cabo la entrevista.

Antecedentes

El propósito de esta entrevista es recopilar datos para una investigación para comprender la movilización política de los participantes.

Procedimientos

Si está de acuerdo, se le pedirá a participar en una entrevista grabada digital, de un tiempo de 20 a 30 minutos.

Entrevista Voluntario

Su participación en esta entrevista es voluntaria. Puede detener la entrevista en cualquier momento. Si te molesta o estresada detener la entrevista. Usted puede saltarse una pregunta si la pregunta es demasiado personal.

Beneficios y Riesgos

Los beneficios serán para la comunidad en general . Este estudio busca entender lo que motiva a los miembros de la población hispana a votar y participar en la vida política de la comunidad . Los

resultados de este estudio informarán esfuerzos para promover la participación de la comunidad . No hay beneficios para usted de participar en esta entrevista de investigación . El entrevistador utilizará los datos recogidos para su uso en el estudio de investigación . Hay un riesgo mínimo de estrés mental durante la entrevista. Puede detener la entrevista en cualquier momento si se siente estresado .

Compensación

No hay compensación por participar en esta entrevista.

Confidencialidad

Cualquier información que usted proporcione será confidencial . Los datos de la investigación: " Analizando el nivel de participación de la población hispana del Condado de Tom Green " , es confidencial y no será revelada fuera de este proyecto de investigación. Además , el investigador no incluirá su nombre o cualquier otra cosa que usted pueda identificar en los informes de los estudios . Los datos se mantienen seguros por un archivador cerrado con llave. Los datos se conservarán durante un período de al menos 5 años , como es requerido por la universidad.

Contactos Información

Nombre del investigador es Shawn Morrow . Tesis del investigador Presidente es el Dr. Greg Dixon . Si usted tiene alguna pregunta puede pedir ahora. Si usted tiene preguntas posteriores, puede ponerse en contacto con el investigador por teléfono) o correo electrónico o comuníquese con el Presidente.

Si usted tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante , puede ponerse en contacto con el representante de Walden por correo electrónico a irb@waldenu.edu o llame al 612-312-1210 . El numero de aprobacion por Walden University por este estudio es IRB will enter approval number here y esto expiro en el 3 de mayo de 2016. Usted no tiene que optar por hacerlo , pero si usted desea recibir los resultados por correo electrónico, por favor proporcione de que en este momento :

Email address: _____

Declaración de Consentimiento

Al firmar este documento significa que he leído la información anterior. He recibido respuestas a todas las preguntas que tengo en este momento.

Nombre impreso del participante _____

del Participante Signature _____

del Investigador _____

El participante podrá conservar una copia del formulario de consentimiento.

Appendix D: Study Survey

Study Survey

Demographics

1. _____ Male or _____ Female
2. Age _____ 18-30 _____ 30-40 _____ 50-60 _____ 50-65 _____ 65+
3. Occupation _____
4. Income _____

Interview Questions

5. A. Are you registered to vote? _____ Yes _____ No
 B. Have you voted in the last 6 years? Yes _____ No _____
6. Do you belong to a political party?
 a. If so what party?
7. Could you explain if you or do not participate in voting?
8. In your experience, are there barriers to participating in voting?
 a. If so what barriers do you see family, distrust, disinterest?
9. Have you participated in protests or campaign work?
10. In Tom Green County only $\frac{1}{4}$ of those eligible to vote have voted. How would you increase Hispanic voter turnout?
11. Do you use public services such as emergency services, public schools, and or post office?
12. Could you explain how participating in voting could improve those services you use?

Appendix E: Alignment Table

