

The Effects of Ethnic Courses on Latino Civic Engagement

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Acknowledgements

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To Professor Phoenix, thank you for accepting to be my advisor the time I reached out to you. Thank you for making time to get to know a little about me and the purpose behind this paper. Thank you for your patience from the start to the end.

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Please keep in mind that everyday since our first interaction I think of the times you have agreed to support me. Anywhere I go, I will always cherish your kind decision to help me. I am deeply in debt to you Professor. I will make sure I live my life to the fullest with purpose and make sure I give it back to those who need it the most.

Contents

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Introduction.....	4
Literature Review.....	6
A. Education is not enough	
B. How did we get here?	
C. Encourage civic engagement through extracurriculars.	
D. Introduction to ethnic courses and civic engagement initiatives and why it matters.	
Hypothesis.....	11
Research Methods.....	12
Results.....	13
Discussion.....	21
Conclusion.....	25
References.....	26

Introduction

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The history of Latinos in the United States is complex and runs for hundreds of years before the founding of the US. Throughout history events have taught us the United States has done everything possible to prevent the Latino community from enjoying what this country has to offer. For decades, the United States has neglected the Latino community in every aspect imaginable, from education, political presentation, essentially denying Latinos the tools to improve their socioeconomic status (Blakemore, 2018).

History shows us that Latinos get politically involved at large scale when there are policies that target them. We saw it with proposition 187 here in California. Proposition 187 targeted undocumented immigrants and aimed to strip them from basic services. Though it targeted undocumented immigrants, it propelled many Latinos, many US citizens to fight against this unconstitutional proposition. In fact, in California alone, Latinos started running for public office at higher rates never seen before (Pantoja, Ramirez, Segura, 2001). Prop. 187 was a painful reminder to the Latino community of the importance of being civically engaged. Teaching the contributions and struggles of the Latino community in higher education is essential to remind Latino community in the US why it is important to be civically engaged.

For Latinos, U.S. discrimination began in 1848 when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, marking the end of the Mexican-American War. After the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed citizenship, the right to keep their property (land) and culture to Mexicans who wished to stay. However, Mexicans who decided to stay and many who immigrated and settled faced discrimination and lived as second-class citizens (Carillo, 2020, Blakemore, 2018).

Decades later, in the 1960's a revolutionary Mexican American movement pressing for change emerged. Known as the Chicano Movement, or El Movimiento, it advocated for social and political empowerment through cultural nationalism. Leaders in the Chicano Movement pushed for change across the board, from labor rights to education reform to land reclamation. While Cesar Chavez led the farmworkers movement and activist Reies Lopez Tijerina pushed for land reclamation, activist Rodolfo Gonzales aka Corky led the student movement. Corky was a strong believer in the power of education and the importance of bringing Chicanos together to learn about Chicano rights and culture through civic engagement and education. In the end, Corky led many successful reforms. The creation of bilingual education in the southwest, the hiring of Chicano teachers, and the rise of more Mexican Americans serving in office (Carrillo, 2020).

My project will explore whether or not an education curriculum that is centered around Latinos and other ethnicities shapes participation among Latinos that leads to effective responsiveness from elected officials. My project will focus on Latino students that attend community colleges and four year universities where they have the opportunity to enroll in ethnic courses. I want to know if ethnic courses, among other factors, serve as motivation for Latino students to get involved politically, by voting or protesting in different forms. I will compare the responses of Latinos to students who are nonlatino. The unique history of Latinos in the U.S. shines light on the use of education, particularly through ethnic courses and makes a case why it's important to stay politically involved. Before I move to the literature review, I note that when I refer to "civic engagement, I mean political activity, community service, service learning, and volunteerism.

Literature Review

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Education is not Enough

Across the United States, there are universities that identify as Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSIs). These universities have a Latino community that constitutes 25% of the school population, a requirement to become federally designated as HSIs. At the same time there are universities that are considered emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions when they are enrolling between 15% and 24% (Garcia, Cuellar, 2018). According to the federal government website sites.ed.gov, the goal is to expand educational opportunities and improve the attainment of college degrees among Latino students. The program aims to enhance schools academic offerings, program quality and institutional stability. The attention these institutions deserve cannot be ignored since they provide better outcomes for diverse students, many who are low-income, underprepared, first-generation and commute long distances (Garcia, Cuellar, 2018).

However, the question remains, are universities that are considered HSI doing enough to make sure that Latinos learn about their background, their history and exercise what they know through extracurricular activities? If the goal of HSI institutions is to lift up Latinos and people of color, it should do a holistic work and teach the importance of civic engagement. It comes as no surprise that there is little known about the approaches, values or contributions of HSIs to the civic engagement of students. For a very long time civic engagement has been recognized as an important result. In fact, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), have valued civic engagement as an important outcome in their students since their founding (Garcia, Cuellar, 2018).

The focus on HSI institutions is to illustrate that HSI designated institutions have room for growth. Creating safe spaces and being generous with financial aid is only a small part of the equation. Findings show that Latino students who are likely to enroll in HSI and non-HSI institutions are least likely to be civically engaged (Cuellar, Garcia 2018). It should be noted that even institutions that are not classified as HSI play a crucial role to prepare future leaders with the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors necessary for widespread civic renewal, per the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement in 2012. People of lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to be civically engaged, but it has been recognized that civic engagement increases with educational attainment.

The key to change how students think about their future is to make them aware of their past and introduce them to initiatives that propel them to spaces where they are vocal about issues that matter to them. Here is where HSI institutions have room for growth. Civic engagement should be engendered in ethnic courses, which give students the opportunity to question the structures of power and oppression. Students that lack citizenship are also encouraged to be civically active.

How did We get Here?

Latino students in the United States face many challenges. Many of these challenges negatively affect Latinos' ability to achieve socioeconomic mobility, but also the opportunity to engage in politics, where they can increase their opportunities to be represented in spaces where policy is being discussed at levels that are observed in their political behavior (Bedolla, 2012). It is important to acknowledge that Latino children already walk into a system in which their opportunity structures are determined by policies that were created and put in place with little to no input from Latino community members. Because of the lack of policies to address the needs

of the Latino population within the educational system, Latinos have been unlikely to achieve educational success, hindering their opportunity to move up the socioeconomic ladder, which potentially can increase their civic engagement in U.S. politics (Bedolla, 2012).

Latino students have historically attended racially segregated schools in poor neighborhoods (Blakemore, 2018). The unequal distribution of resources among public schools that serve Latino students has been so high that national dropout rates for Latino youth were more than twice the national average in the early 2000s. A study released in 2009 found that Latino college graduation rates remained stagnant for almost three decades. This proves that investment in the Latino community has been neglected due to lack of representation that would result in policies that would do otherwise.

The U.S. schools are fertile ground to build a strong relationship between education and civic engagement. Latino parents, especially recent immigrants, know this, and while many are unaware how things work, it is the main reason why they encourage Latino children to study and use education as a tool to improve representation (Pew Research Center, 2009). Indeed, it has been proven that low Latino educational attainment has significant political consequences. Over the same past three decades, studies have shown that Latinos lag in political engagement behind Anglos and African Americans across any form of political participation – from voting, to engagement in protest activity, to reaching out to elected officials, to signing petitions, and volunteering (Bedolla, 2012).

The influence of Latino parents

Universities and community colleges already have ethnic courses. But Latino students don't have to wait until higher education to take on ethnic studies or be encouraged to civically participate. While some high schools are already teaching ethnic studies, it is important they also

create environments that make students feel welcome and encourage them to be civically engaged.

Education policies are products of what goes behind the political discussion tables at all levels of government. It is important that parents get involved in their children's education to help create atmospheres that empower their children to learn about their group's history, as well as to be encouraged to make a difference through extracurricular activities that allow them to exercise their knowledge (Ginsberg, Levine, 2014). And there are a number of ways that Latino parents can influence political representation, from voting for school boards, lobbying bodies that are instrumental to getting things done, participating in parent-teaching meetings/activities and other similar programs (Bedolla, 2012).

Many cities have taken the initiative to give parents the opportunity to get involved. There are numerous school boards across the country that allow parents to get involved and citizenship is not required to participate. These are great opportunities for parents to get involved and lead by example, modeling for their children the importance of getting involved to make a difference in their education. In addition, Latino representation at school boards is important because it brings tremendous effect on the hiring and education policies within the districts. In the past Latino, representation has resulted in bilingual services at schools (Bedolla, 2012). Latinos young and old can expand on this effect and demand ethnic courses that inform students of the importance of civic engagement (Bedolla, 2012).

Introduction to Ethnic Courses and Civic Engagement and Why it Matters

There has been serious debate whether ethnic courses or the university environment determine a student's political behavior (Nelsen, 2019). I say it is both. Studies, however, have shown that due to civic education, along with parent support, young adults make informed

political decisions (Kawashima-Ginsberg, Levine, 2014). Moreover, policies that promote extracurricular participation where students are given the opportunity to discuss current issues can be more effective.

Before coming to college, students take at least one civic engagement course; however, Latinos may feel left out because they may not feel comfortable in their new environment, which may lead to lack of participating in extracurriculars. Studies have shown that in schools that incorporate recognition of socioeconomic background, in other words, foster the diverse backgrounds of every student, students are more likely to feel like they belong and they have a voice (Kawashima-Ginsberg, Levine, 2014). This is important and policymakers should start paying attention to the content of civic education courses, while ensuring these courses are also complimented through such extracurriculars.

This is why the content of civic education matters. A study in Chicago where the focus was high school students showed that critical pedagogy in the curriculum matters, especially among Latinos (Nelsen, 2019). A study with a total of 678 students where Latino students made 27% of the participants across 20 schools yielded that critical content that reflected the experiences of young Latinos increased Latino students' willingness to participate in acts of political engagement, relative to those exposed to the traditional curriculum where there was no mention of Latino history.

It has been found that curricula with ethnic courses that teach students about ways underrepresented communities have influenced political decisions in the face of discriminatory policies stimulates empowerment. Students feel empowered to speak and be vocal about the issues that matter to them. In fact, it has been proven that empowerment serves as a predictor of political participation among people of color. Outside of academics, scholars have found that

black Americans who live in cities with black mayors or local leaders, are more politically involved than white people with similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Nelsen, 2019). It comes as no surprise, black students who take courses that highlight black history helped them facilitate the necessary conversations about marginalized communities, their contributions and necessary representation. In a study done by Nelsen with data from the Black Youth Project's 2005 Youth Culture Survey civic education, courses appear to increase acts of public voice among black and Latino respondents. This research found that civic education courses that incorporate the history of marginalized communities encourages political behavior. Some indicators of public engagement included voting, joining a political group, working or volunteering on a political campaign, and community service work, among other kinds of activities that fall under public voice and cognitive engagement (Nelsen, 2019).

Hypothesis

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My research question focuses on curricula that include ethnic courses and can potentially shape political participation among Latinos. My hypothesis is that young Latinos can increase civic participation by reshaping their political thought process through ethnic courses. I also theorize that civic engagement initiatives along with ethnic courses can serve as a pipeline to encourage Latinos be politically involved by exercising their right to vote or be vocal about issues that matter to them. My prediction suggests the younger generation can end this toxic culture of the non-voting Hispanic bloc. The more young Latinos learn from the past and their groups' experiences, the more they are inclined to get involved in civic engagement.

Ethnic courses and the introduction of civic engagement initiatives in higher education give the opportunities to young Latinos to be active advocates of their own future. My main hypothesis is that students who have taken ethnic courses are more aware of their group's history

and either exercise their vote or engage in civic engagement through other means. I understand there are undocumented students, but for the purpose of this paper, I am replacing their inability to vote with civic engagement, such as protesting, volunteering for a campaign, being vocal about issues that concern them through social media or other means. My expectations include:

- Civic engagement increases higher confidence in a students ability to identify the most important issue facing their group
- Civic education increases civic engagement or it influences a students decision to be civically engaged.

Research Methods

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To test my theory, I created a survey using Qualtrics with basic questions that takes about 5 minutes to answer. The questions range from backgrounds, school major, political engagement through school or outside of school; parents' educational background among other basic things that I will go over when I break down my data. Though Latino ethnic courses are the primary focus of this project, the survey also includes ethnic courses not limited to Chicano Latino studies. In addition, the survey was distributed to non-Latino students to compare their answers with that of Latino students. Because I want to get a comprehensive list about how Latinos feel towards ethnic courses and civic participation, undocumented students were also welcomed to answer in order to analyze civic engagement, since it goes beyond just voting.

The survey was distributed to the Dream Center at Santa Monica College to get answers from students who are either DACA recipients, undocumented (nonDACA) or know of anyone who lacks proper documentation. I also distributed the survey among three classes at UC Irvine; African American Politics, Asian American (Politics of Protest) and Economics (An Economics Approach to Religion). This was intentional to compare answers among the diverse majors

across these three courses. The point is to prove that ethnic courses somehow influence civic engagement regardless of majors. The survey has the following questions to measure

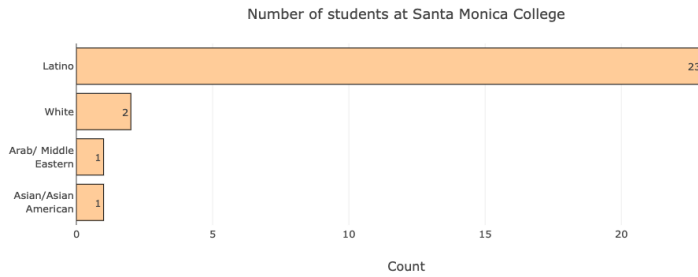
- Have students taken ethnic courses in the past
- How confident are students they can identify the most pressing issues facing their group
- The list of civic actions they report having done (or not) in the past.
- Their parents level of knowledge about politics
- Their parents discussion of political matters with them

Results

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Before I move on, it is important to keep in mind this paper was done towards the end of the pandemic with lingering effects. During the month of March 2022, when the survey was distributed students were in hybrid classes, and in most cases remote. Due to the unfortunate circumstances, I decided to distribute the survey to the schools and courses I had access to. At Los Angeles Valley College, I didn't have any success after the Counselor shared the survey. My goal at Los Angeles Valley College was to gather data from undocumented students and analyze if immigration status completely hinder any civic engagement that students can participate in. With no success, I distributed the survey to the Dream Center at Santa Monica College with the same purpose. At Santa Monica College, 27 students answered the survey, all with diverse academic majors being pursued. All 27 students are presumed to be undocumented because they were surveyed from the Dream Center pool and all do not qualify to vote. From the 27 students, 9 claimed to have taken ethnic courses. 2 students reported to have taken more than one ethnic course. Of the 27 students, the majority were Latino, 2 white, 1 Arab/Middle Eastern, and 1 Asian American.

Santa Monica Community College Results:



I also measured their political views to see if they aligned with their party registration.

Political views by political affiliation:

Political Views	Political Affiliation			Total
	Democrat	Independent	Other	
Moderate	12	3	5	20
Progressive	3	3	0	6
Conservative	1	0	0	1
Total	16	6	5	27

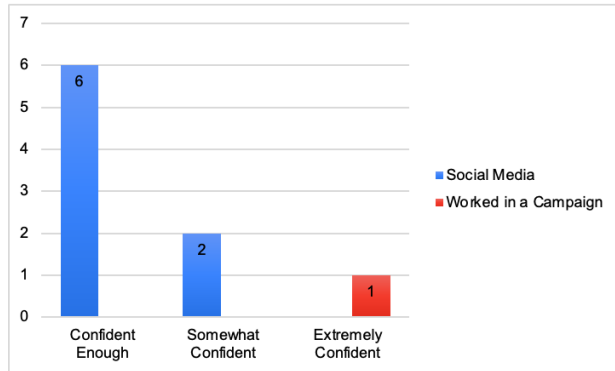
Not surprisingly, only 1 female Latino student between the ages of 18-22 affiliated herself with the Democratic party despite carrying conservative views. The only Arab student identified with both the democratic and republican party. One Latino male student who is a moderate and marked other identifies as a Libertarian.

All nine students who took ethnic courses identified as Latino.

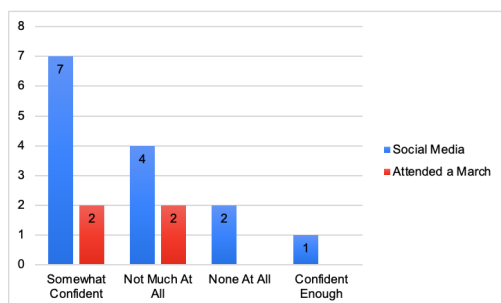
- The nine students who took ethnic courses only engaged in social media to voice their concerns.
- With the exception of one student who is pursuing a Nursing degree, she felt extremely confident about the issues that are pressing to her group and recalled participating in marches and protests in the past.

I also wanted to know among students who took ethnic courses how confident they were with identifying the most pressing issues for their group and analyzing their political engagement and comparing them with students who did not take ethnic courses. What I found out is the group

who took ethnic courses were the most confident in their ability to identify the most pressing issues. The most important issue was immigration, with education equity second and criminal justice third.



For students who did not take ethnic courses, I noticed there were eight students who weren't confident in their ability to identify the current pressing issues their groups are facing. However, 4 of them did participate in a march or protested in the past. the racial and ethnic make-up is as follows: 14 identified as Latino (78%), 2 as White (11%), 1 as Arab (5%), and 1 as Asian (6%). Only 1 Latino and 1 Asian student reported protesting or marching in the past. Two students who also reported to have participated in a march/protest were Latino students who were only somewhat confident in their ability to name the most important issue facing their group. In terms of identifying which were the most important issues for their group, immigration was at the top, followed by education equity and criminal justice reform third.



All 27 students claimed to not be a member of a political organization in Santa Monica College or outside. I am a bit upset that civic engagement only stretched to the use of social media for

both groups. But these findings should not be surprising, as undocumented students have been found to be reluctant when it comes to getting involved in civic engagement. And if they do, engagement is very limited (Cuella, Garcia, 2018).

While ethnic courses here did not determine civic engagement as I expected, the students who took them were far more confident in identifying the most pressing issues, compared to students who didn't take them. This group didn't have a single student who was not confident much at all or none at all, compared to the other group who had eight.

I surveyed this certain bloc of undocumented students to analyze how confident they were to identify the most important issues and see how civically engaged they are. Per my observation:

- rank of issues doesn't matter much because each experience is different,
- but I wonder if students who didn't take ethnic studies would have different thoughts on the most pressing issues had they taken an ethnic studies course
- and if the number of students who had knowledge about the history of their group would have increased. For example, I wonder if criminal justice reform would have been placed as the second most important issue.

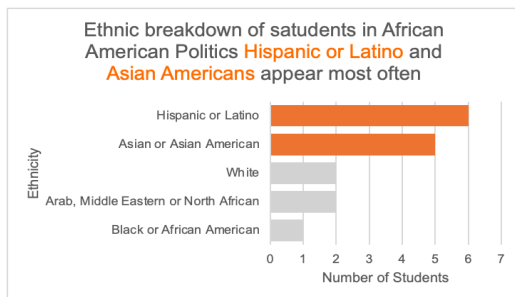
Also, among both groups I found out that the group who took ethnic courses believed they had considerable knowledge about the history of their group compared to students who didn't take any ethnic courses. Four students had a *moderate amount*, and five had *a lot* of knowledge about the history of their group. For students who did not take ethnic courses only one had *a lot* of knowledge, eight had *moderate amount*, seven had *little* and two *none at all*.

This bloc of students is a little different since civic engagement can be measured on their knowledge they have gained through their personal experiences as undocumented students. Santa

Monica College makes a lot of effort to inform them of political issues surrounding this community. The college also encourages a lot of social media advocacy and this may well explain why many students marked social media as a means to voice their concerns. **(lack of santa monica towards civic engagement)**

Moving to UC Irvine, I distributed the survey to two classes. The first one African American Politics, and second Asian American (Politics of Protest). The ethnic breakdown for this ethnic course is not a full representation of the class. In my observation there were more than 1 African American student; on several occasions I observed 7 students in the early start of the winter quarter. It is important to note some students were remote attending via zoom and some just simply did not show up to class at all.

African American Politics:

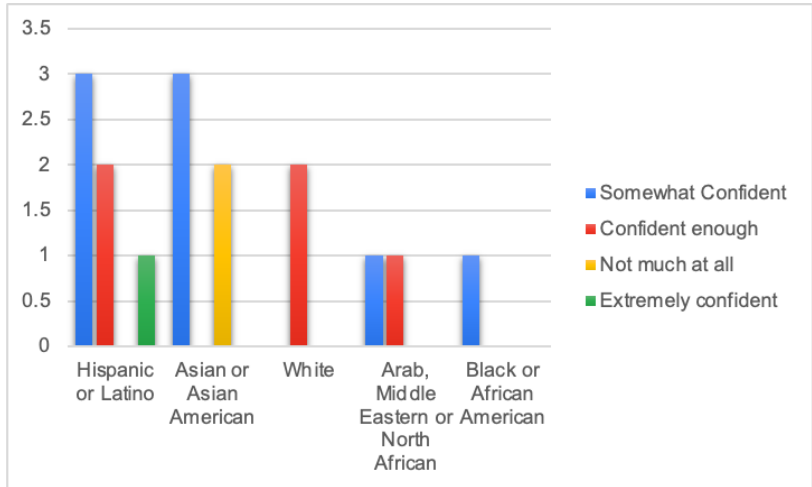


Eight students reported to have taken additional ethnic courses. Courses were Asian American and Chicano Latino studies. I also wanted to know if their political views on things aligned with their political affiliation.

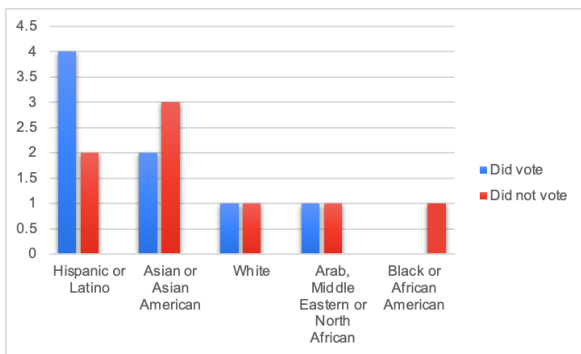
Political Views	Political Affiliation			Total
	Democrat	Independent	Other	
Progressive	9	1	2	12
Moderate	1	1	0	2
Conservative	0	1	0	1
Other	0	0	1	1
Total	10	3	3	16

I also measured how confident they are to identify current pressing issues in their current group, observing how this trend pairs with their civic engagement activity. Among Latinos, immigration

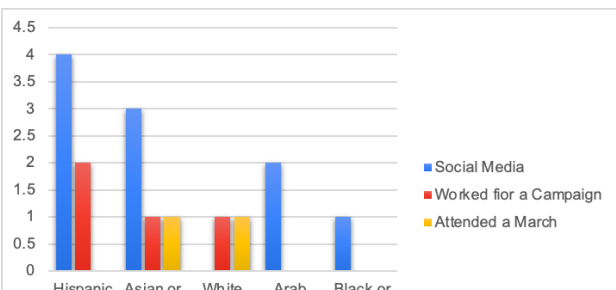
was the most important issue. Education equity was second, followed by criminal justice. For non-Latinos, education equity was the most important issue, followed by criminal justice and immigration.



In addition, all Latino students claimed to be registered to vote and have voted in the previous election, with the exception of two students who don't qualify to vote. Here I compared them with other students who have voted. I did notice among Asian Americans, confidence to identify the most pressing issues doesn't correlate with voting. Asians had a high degree of confidence, but also had a high number who did not vote in the past elections.



All students who are registered to vote have exercised their right to vote. Two of four Latino students who are registered to vote have worked for a political campaign in the past, while the rest limited themselves to social media.



Because all students here were surveyed from an ethnic course I am not going into detail how much knowledge they have on the history of their group, instead focusing on their parents' levels of political knowledge. I did also find out that among this group, Latinos reported having parents that are up to date with politics and keep them informed. Four reported having parents who informed them on a moderate amount, while two reported their parents have little knowledge about current politics, and therefore don't talk to their children much about politics. For non-Latino students, their parents significantly talked to them about politics more from a moderate amount to a lot—significantly higher than Latino students. Only three reported having parents that hardly talk to them about politics or current issues. However, per data, it doesn't mean they will exercise their vote. In fact, Latinos exercised their vote more.

Though the number of Latinos is small, it seems that in-class exposure to the history of their group is more relevant and a motivator for them to exercise their vote, as well as to participate in a campaign or protest. We can see this by analyzing the top three issues for their group, and Latinos identify immigration and education to be their top two, compared to non-Latino students who identified education equity and criminal justice system as the top two.

This may be due to the nature of the African American class, which focuses on the injustices African Americans have endured over the years and the recent events. Historically, parents of Latinos have stressed about the importance of education, but it is important to acknowledge immigration has impacted Latinos the most considering Latinos are the fastest

growing population due to immigration. Latinos in this group all know someone who is undocumented as well, indicating they may come from a mixed status family.

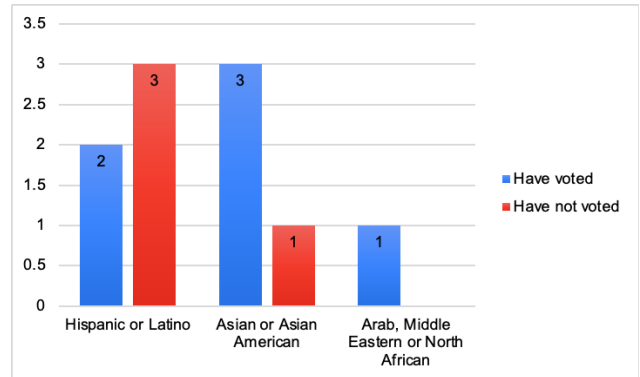
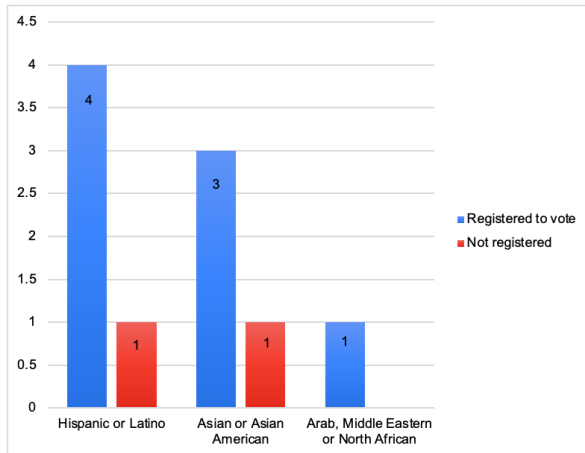
While there's no indicator, I presume Latino students were influenced by their parents' experiences and support. How much of an impact do parents have on their children, that's a different question. But per these data sets, it is safe to assume parents' knowledge has some influence among Latino students. This is also noted by Kawashima and Levine (2014). I also noticed that Asian Americans and the only African American that participated in the survey did not participate as much as Latinos.

Asian American (Politics of Protest)

For Asian American course, I did not get many participants. The racial breakdown of participants was:

- 5 Latinos
- 4 Asian Americans
- 1 Arab student.
- Four Latino students reported to have taken a Chicano course.
- Four Latinos were registered to vote but only two reported to have voted in the past. The key information to know for students who didn't vote in the past election but are registered to vote is whether or not they were legal voting age. There is a possibility that students who are registered but didn't vote were not 18 yet.
- Asian Americans, in contrast, all voted with the exception of one student who was not registered to vote.
- Two Latino students who voted in the past reported to have worked for a campaign or protest in a march.

- Only one Asian American who voted reported to have participated in a march.
- The only Arab student also reported to have participated in a march.



I moved forward to measure how confident each participant was in their ability to identify the most pressing issues. All Latinos identified as *confident enough* and identified immigration as their top concern, followed by education equity and criminal justice reform. Two Asian Americans felt they were *confident enough* while the other two identified as *not much at all*. The only Arab American as well identified as *not much at all*. Non-Latinos identified criminal justice reform as their group’s top concern, followed by education and immigration. Strangely, two Asian Americans had little knowledge about their group's history. What I find interesting is that two Latinos who are registered to vote but didn't in the past feel they have a lot of knowledge about their group’s history. Parents for both groups have a lot of political knowledge and talk to their children about civic engagement.

Discussion

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Among undocumented students at Santa Monica College, majors varied and were irrelevant. What I did find interesting was the Latino students who had taken ethnic courses in the past were more confident in identifying the most pressing issues they believed their group faced. Latino students who had not taken ethnic courses weren’t confident enough to identify the

top three issues Latinos face. It is important to understand that students with a background in ethnic courses had a wealth of knowledge about their group's history and were able to pick up from there to conclude what issues are still relevant today.

But for students from Santa Monica College, their experiences as undocumented students mattered most since immigration and education were their top two issues. This group has two white students who identify immigration as their top issue. Chances are likely that immigration would not be their top issue if they weren't undocumented. For this group, experience matters more than ethnic courses. In addition, a collective force is necessary to have undocumented students to change their political behavior from using social media to protesting. Current research shows that undocumented students do civically engage but in a very limited manner. This falls in line with research finding that undocumented students participate in at least one civic engagement activity during their college years (Cuellar, Garcia, 2018).

For the African American course, I really wished I had more participants. The class had 100 students registered but I only got 16 participants. Latinos' top two issues were immigration and education and for non-Latinos, criminal justice and education were the top two issues for their group. I want to believe there is a slight correlation between ethnic studies and civic engagement, however, data proves parents to be a factor. Two Latino students worked in a campaign, and both from four out of the six voted. If more students had participated, assuming more Latino students had participated, I strongly believe the data would have been clearer.

However, ethnic studies is not the only answer. Parents' political knowledge plus their personal experiences all contributed. For the four students who are registered to vote and voted, all reported to have parents that talk to them about politics at a moderate level. Meanwhile the

two who are not registered to vote reported their parents have little knowledge about politics or communicate very little about politics to them.

There is no correlation between ethnic courses and civic engagement for non-Latinos. It seems their parents' political knowledge did not determine their political behavior either. As an example, for one white student, their parents talked to them a moderate amount about politics, but this particular student did not vote, but somehow was confident about the issues to his group. A similar situation with a black student who reported to be somewhat confident, also reported to not have voted in the past, but their parents did talk to them a moderate amount about politics. Again, this class proves that ethnic courses are not the only answer here. It takes collective action.

For students from Asian American (Politics of Protest), again I was hoping for a higher number of participants. I didn't find any correlation among Latinos and the results suggest ethnic studies were irrelevant. The Latinos for this class all reported to have taken Chicano studies, yet, only two exercised their vote when four reported to be registered to vote. For Asian Americans, all identified criminal justices as their top issue, while only two had considerable knowledge about their group's history. Again, ethnic courses alone don't prove my hypothesis right. I fall short since other things factor in.

This project indicates that ethnic studies are crucial but not the only answer for not only Latinos but all minority identified students. The depth of knowledge these courses offer bring and shape perspectives of students but also give initiative to act on issues they learn and relate to. Latino history is American history, and their history shouldn't be left out. In fact, non-Latinos who had reported to take ethnic courses were also more confident in identifying the issues that were most important than non-Latinos who had not taken any ethnic course. This was noticeable

with students from Santa Monica Community College. The reason why I also feel ethnic courses play a huge role is because students' majors varied greatly but everyone identified the same top two issues.

Some of the limitations of this paper include the lack of financial background of each participant. It would have helped to analyze income and find if there are correlations between how much a parent talks to their children and encourages them to participate in politics. While I did see the parents' educational background, the educational background did not correlate at all, the reason why I didn't mention it at all. The lack of participation is also limited. I was aiming for 100 participants, but was not successful. Additionally, I sent the survey to a department in Los Angeles Valley College, and an economics course at UCI Irvine and didn't get a single response. I also tried to send my survey to Irvine and Saddleback College and CSU Dominguez Hills, but the IRB process made it impossible.

I would have loved it if more students from the courses I served in had answered the survey. More data would have produced a convincing answer that ethnic courses somehow influence people's decision to be civically engaged. Additionally, it would have been great if a large diverse pool of participants outside of UC Irvine had participated. Perhaps universities where Latinos make up less than 25% like UCLA, where Latino students are more civically active. In my opinion, UCLA would have been a perfect example of non HSI that fosters diversity in a unique way that encourages Latino students to be politically active on issues concerning student government but also outside of it.

Saddleback Community College, Irvine Valley College, are also two schools that would have given me a better understanding of whether ethnic studies make a difference. My goal there would have been non-Latino students. If I had been able to get data from CSU Dominguez Hills

(CSUDH), UCLA, I would have been able to get a better understanding of the impact schools have. At UCLA, students are more civically engaged, a 2016 report gathered data and indicated 8% of incoming students were expected to commit to activism, political and civic engagement, the highest percentage of any modern times for UCLA. Universities are responsible for creating environments that allow minorities to feel safe and welcomed to be vocal about issues that are of concern to them. (UCLA Newsroom, 2016). Data from UCLA would have allowed me to measure their parents' political knowledge and determine if it had any influence. I don't know the environment at CSUDH but the heavy presence of Latinos would have given me a better understanding of Latinos students and allowed me to compare them to other Latinos from different schools and see how they measure up to each other and to non-Latinos.

When the Chicano movement emerged and demanded for ethnic studies, it is my sincere belief they advocated for these courses to educate Americans about the history of people of color and for Chicanos to use ethnic studies as a weapon to learn from their history and not let it repeat again. Ethnic courses are not the only answer, but they do give students an idea of why things are the way they are now. Picking up from there and using extracurricular activities and cocurricular activities and their parents' knowledge and their own experiences, all provide the tool kit for Latino students, especially from low socio economic backgrounds, to be politically active and demand responsiveness from elected officials.

Conclusion

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It may have been hard to determine that ethnic courses encourage civic engagement among the Latino community, but without a doubt Latinos who had taken these courses were more confident in identifying the issues most relevant to their group compared to Latinos or non-Latinos who didn't take ethnic courses (from Santa Monica College). Though schools in

California and across the nation have integrated ethnic courses following the demands of the Chicano movement to bring representation among Latinos, ethnic courses are definitely not the only factor that shapes political behavior among Latino students.

Universities, especially HSI designators, need to make their environment more welcoming by promoting extracurricular and cocurricular activities to give students a sense of belonging and that they are cared for. In a positive driven environment, Latino students will realize the importance of participating and be encouraged to do so with the kind of knowledge from ethnic studies as a source that will be part of shaping their political thought process. I don't doubt that professors at four year universities and community colleges that teach ethnic studies already encourage their students to vote, to get involved on issues that affect them. While I didn't make any studies on this, I have personally experienced this from every professor I've taken for ethnic studies.

While my focus was on community colleges and four year universities, high schools also play a major role, since students during this time may also take ethnic courses if the opportunity arises. It is encouraged for parents to get involved in their children's education and do more to make students feel welcome, but also to create an environment that lets Latinos know their voices will be heard. Ethnic studies, extracurricular and cocurricular activities, and parental support, collectively, act as the main driver to encourage Latinos that their communities matter, their future matters and that handing out degrees is not the end goal.

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