

**Who's (not) invited to the party?:
Expanding Latino Voter Participation in
Washington State**

by

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Abstract

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group, and one of the fastest-growing, in the United States and in Washington State, but they vote at much lower rates than the rest of the electorate. A literature review and an original study of 11 interviews and 3 focus groups reveal a web of cultural, social, and institutional barriers to electoral participation for Latino eligible voters in Washington State. Through an intersectional framework, the author examines differences between the experiences of electoral barriers among diverse Latino eligible voters based on their geographic and social locations. Based on varying experiences and needs across Washington State, this capstone recommends the adoption and implementation of four policy alternatives, which include election systems changes and more concerted voter engagement efforts.

Keywords: Latinos; intersectionality; voter participation; voting rights; Washington State

I dedicate this work:

to my parents, whose endless love and support have motivated me to pursue graduate studies and strive for my goals, whatever they may be.

to the community leaders in our midst who have worked and continue to work each day to make our world better and more just. I am humbled and inspired by your examples. ¡Sí se puede!

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List of Acronyms

AALDEF	Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
CVRA	California Voting Rights Act
LULAC	League of United Latin American Citizens
NALEO	National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
SOS	Secretary of State
VAN	Voter Activation Network
VRA	Federal Voting Rights Act
WA	Washington State
WVRA	Washington Voting Rights Act

Glossary

Eligible voter	a U.S. citizen at least 18 years of age, who has the legal right to vote in federal, state, and local elections
Intersectionality	the existence and recognition of multiple overlapping social systems of oppression, such as sexism, racism, and homophobia, as well as the ways in which these affect people differently based on their social locations
Latino	a U.S. resident of Latin American origin
Naturalized citizen	a person who was born outside the U.S. and subsequently gained U.S. citizenship
Racially polarized voting	voting in which members of certain racial or ethnic groups predominantly support different candidates
Registered voter	an adult U.S. citizen who has registered to vote in accordance with applicable state laws
Secure Communities	a federal program that mandates collaboration between state and local law enforcement agencies, and federal immigration enforcement; colloquially known as “S-Comm”
Voter turnout	the rate of electoral participation among eligible voters
Washington	a state located in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, bordering British Columbia. In this report, “Washington” refers to the state, not to Washington, District of Columbia (D.C.), the U.S. federal district, unless otherwise noted.

Executive Summary

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States and in Washington State; however, Latino eligible voters have historically voted, and continue to vote, at rates far lower than their share of the population and far below the electoral participation of the electorate as a whole. Latinos currently constitute one-sixth of the U.S. population—with a projected increase to one-fourth by 2050—but only 48% of Latino eligible voters nationwide participated in the 2012 presidential election, compared to 62% of the electorate as a whole. While Washington’s Latino population has more than tripled since 1990, multiple and significant barriers have impeded this population from voting and, simultaneously, from achieving anywhere near a proportional representation in politics throughout the state. Literature shows a record of scarce Latino candidates winning elections in communities with large or even majority-Latino populations, and experts suggest that cultural as well as structural factors play a role in diminishing the political power of Latinos in Washington State. This study has two aims: to build on existing knowledge by exploring how Latino eligible voters experience barriers to voting differently depending on their age and region, and to recommend policy alternatives to increase electoral participation.

This capstone lays out existing barriers to electoral participation for diverse Latino eligible voters in Washington State, and applies an intersectionality-based framework to examine the ways in which these barriers affect Latinos differently based on their social location. In addition to existing literature about electoral participation in Washington and nationally, this capstone draws on an original study consisting of eleven expert interviews and three focus groups with 16 eligible voters. The study is based on themes from a 2013 pilot project with Latino registered voters, who participated in two focus groups in King County, Washington.

This research reveals how existing barriers are interconnected, and vary depending on people’s geographic location, economic class, age, and immigration background. Barriers include a lack of electoral outreach to Latinos; a climate of fear and distrust towards institutions; a lack of awareness about the electoral system; and a

record of Latino candidates mostly losing races. In combination, these barriers amount to a systematic exclusion of many Latinos from electoral processes and structures.

My policy analysis evaluates four alternatives recommended by interview participants, in order to determine their effectiveness in increasing voter participation and their distributional impact on diverse Latino populations. Because barriers to voting are complex, and vary across the Latino electorate, a combination of policies and programs is necessary to address this policy problem. Accordingly, this capstone recommends all four policy alternatives to remove some of the existing barriers and energize electoral participation among Latinos in Washington State. I recommend enacting the Washington State Voting Rights Act and preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds, as well as increasing electoral outreach efforts and improving coordination among civic, governmental, and political groups in Washington State.

1. Introduction

The United States has become a strikingly diverse nation in recent decades as a result of dramatic demographic changes, but the country's democratic institutions have historically left out many voices among the diverse citizenry. In particular, Latinos¹ and Asian Americans², two of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population, are underrepresented among the ranks of people who register to vote, cast ballots, and win elected office. Multiple systemic barriers hinder voting for these ethnic groups, as documented in ample academic and popular literature (Udbye 2008; Dawson, Kiely, and McCullough 2012). The persistent gap in the electoral participation of Latinos vis-à-vis the general electorate (Lopez, Motel, and Patten, 2012) presents a challenge for the largest ethnic minority group, and for democracy as a whole, in the United States.

It is important to note that the term "Latino" encompasses people with a wide variety of cultural, ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and lived experiences. It refers to immigrants to the United States (37% of all Latinos), as well as to people whose families have lived in the U.S. for one or more generations (63%) (Taylor et al., 2012a, 11). Four in five (82%) Latino adults speak Spanish (2), and about a third are fully bilingual in English and Spanish (38%) (4), but almost all Latinos believe that learning Spanish is important for future generations (2). In referring to people with pan-Latin American ancestry, the term Latino also includes people with roots in Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country. Last but not least, Latino also includes people who mostly or only speak one or more of the many Indigenous languages in Latin America.

The U.S. Census Bureau and other federal government agencies have officially recognized Hispanic ethnicity as a distinct category in addition to and separate from

¹ In the U.S., the term "Latino" refers to people of Latin American descent.

² Unless otherwise noted, this paper uses the terms "white," "black," and "Asian" to refer to people within those racial and ethnic groups who do not trace their origins to Latin America—as do multiple sources cited herein.

race since 1978 (Alcoff, 2005, 403); Latino was added in 1997 (Taylor et al., 2012a, 4). The 2010 census, for example, asked respondents if they were persons “of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin,” and gave the option to select a specific national origin (11). The subsequent question on the form asked respondents their race, and provided options such as white; Black, African Am., or Negro [sic]; American Indian or Alaska Native; several Asian (e.g. Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino) and Pacific Islander (e.g. Samoan, Native Hawaiian, Filipino) labels, and lastly, “some other race (11).” The form also gave the option of selecting multiple races.

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the country, and their share of the population is projected to increase further over the next few decades. In 2011, the 51.9 million Latinos in the U.S. made up 16.7% of the national population—roughly one in six residents (Lopez, Motel and Patten, 2012, 6). The Pew Research Center—a nonpartisan “fact tank”—estimates that, even in a “low immigration scenario,” at least one in four (26%) U.S. residents will be Latino by 2050 (Taylor et al., 2012b, 8). At the same time, the rates of voter registration and voting by Latino eligible voters—that is, U.S. citizens of Latin American ancestry—significantly lag those of their white and black counterparts³. Partly as a result of these low levels of participation, Latinos are underrepresented at every level of government: in 2011, 2% of U.S. Senators and 5.5% of U.S. Representatives were Latino (Cárdenas and Kerby, 2012, 8).

In many ways, the current situation in Washington State exemplifies the underrepresentation of Latinos in the country as a whole. The Latino population in this Pacific Northwest state has more than tripled over the past 20 years, from approximately 215,000 in 1990 (NALEO, 2007, 1) to 760,000 in 2010 (Motel and Patten, 2012, 1). The percentage of the state’s population that is Latino is lower than the national average—since the majority of Latinos in the U.S. lives in a small number of states⁴. At the same time, Washington has more Latino residents than most U.S. states (1). Today, more

³ For example, in the 2012 presidential election, less than half of Latino (48%) and Asian American (47%) eligible voters voted. Meanwhile, 64% of white eligible voters and 67% of black eligible voters cast ballots (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013 13).

⁴ In 2012, more than half (55%) of all Latino eligible voters in the country lived in California, Texas, and New York. Those three states plus Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey and New Mexico include over two-thirds (68%) of the national Latino electorate (Lopez, Motel and Patten 10).

than one in ten Washington State residents is Latino. However, the state's Latino adult citizens vote at much lower rates than the non-Latino electorate. For example, in the 2012 presidential election, more than four in five (81%) registered voters in Washington voted, but just under two-thirds (66%) of Latino registered voters did (SOS, 2013a). In the 2006 midterm election, one in four Latino registered voters (40.3%) in Washington turned out to vote—whereas nearly three out of five (59%) of their non-Latino counterparts cast ballots (NALEO, 2007, 7).

The problem of low electoral participation is especially pronounced among young Latino voters. In the 2012 presidential election, less than half (48%) of all Latino eligible voters in the U.S. cast ballots, but just over half (37%) of Latino eligible voters age 18-29 voted (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 13). In Washington, just over half (51%) of Latino registered voters cast ballots in the November 2012 election; this was 12 percentage points lower than the turnout rate among all registered voters age 18-29, and 30 points below the level of turnout among the electorate as a whole (SOS 2013a). Low electoral participation among youth poses an important challenge because, while the U.S. electorate as a whole has become much more diverse in recent decades—that is, less proportionally comprised of Americans of European descent—the magnitude of this change is even greater among younger generations. While seven in ten (71%) U.S. eligible voters in 2012 were white, nearly four in ten (38%) eligible voters below age 30 were Latino, black, or Asian American (13). As ethnic minority groups continue to grow, policies and programs to narrow or close gaps in electoral participation will be essential to ensure that the diverse American electorate is fully and equitably represented.

The profile of elected officials throughout the state both results from and contributes to the low level of participation among Latinos, as relatively few Latino candidates have mounted and succeeded in bids for city, state, or federal races. In 2008, two of the 147 state legislators in Washington were Latinas (Udbye, 2008, 4, 46). A comprehensive 30-year study of every city council and school board election in the 10 Washington counties with the largest percentages of Latino residents found that Latinos were “systematically underrepresented (Dawson, Kiely, and McCullough, 2012, 3).” Latinos comprised over one-fifth (22%) of residents in those ten counties between 1983 and 2013, but won just one in twenty (5.3%) school board or city council elections (16).

Research has documented numerous barriers to voting for Latinos as well as other ethnic minority groups, both in the U.S. as a whole and in Washington specifically (Udbye, 2008; AALDEF, 2009; NAACP, 2011). Many of these barriers are tied to a centuries-long history of systematically denying or abridging the right to vote for specific groups in the United States. A report from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (2011, 5-6) narrates how, after former slaves gained voting rights,

“[d]iscriminatory voting laws proliferated, as states implemented grandfather clauses, voter roll purges, poll taxes, and literacy and “understanding” tests, each of which was discriminatorily enforced against African-American voters at the polls...⁶ In addition, states passed “second generation” barriers to prevent African-American participation in voting, enabling county councils and school boards to use at-large elections to submerge newly-registered minority voters within white majorities, draw racial gerrymanders, close or secretly move polling stations in minority neighborhoods, and employ countless other strategies to minimize or to cancel out minority voting strength.

Finally after mass civil rights mobilization—a cause in service of which many heroes were murdered and scores of others badly beaten—Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act (VRA) to “combat the widespread and persistent discrimination in voting.”¹⁰ The VRA aims not only to guarantee the right of all citizens to participate in the electoral process, but also to provide a legal framework to prohibit and/or remedy a wide array of barriers that are used to threaten that right.

Although the Voting Rights Act was a monumental achievement, it did not end practices that marginalize voters from ethnic minority groups. For example, in the 2008 presidential election, election observers with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) received hundreds of complaints: “Asian American voters were unlawfully required to provide identification to vote, mistreated by hostile or poorly trained poll workers, directed to the wrong poll sites, and did not receive adequate notification of their poll site assignments. Asian American voters also faced long lines, a lack of Asian-language assistance, poll books with missing voter names, and machine breakdowns (AALDEF, 2009, 2).” As recently as 2011, new laws in 14 states threatened to prevent people of colour from voting (NAACP, 2011, 13).” Clearly, much remains to be done to protect the fundamental right of all U.S. citizens to cast a ballot, and ensure fair access to voting for all members of the country’s increasingly diverse electorate.

In spite of historic and persistent efforts to disenfranchise them, African Americans voted at a higher rate than white, Latino, and Asian voters in the 2012 presidential election (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 6). Individual accounts suggest that the efforts to restrict their vote in fact motivated people to exercise that right (Maxwell, 2012), and that supporting President Barack Obama was another strong motivator (Samuels, 2012). In addition, community-based organizations—including churches—mobilized many Black voters to the polls (Maxwell, 2012), and the native born African American population tends to have generations of socialization with the U.S. political system, which is an advantage that many Latinos lack (Maffucci, 2008, 6).

Several crucial and comprehensive studies have examined the political behaviour of Latinos in Washington, but some gaps remain in the literature in terms of providing a comprehensive picture of electoral barriers that persist after the 2008 and 2012 elections that featured Barack Obama’s historic election and re-election to the U.S. presidency. This capstone, thus, seeks to answer two research questions: How do barriers to electoral participation vary for Latinos of different ages and across regions in Washington State? And, having established these barriers, which policy alternatives can be adopted to increase voter turnout among Latinos in Washington?

This capstone seeks to build on existing understandings of barriers to voting in Washington State by focusing on how Latino eligible voters experience them differently based on their age, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and generational status. It begins with a brief outline of the U.S. electoral system, an overview of the Latino population at the national and state levels, and trends of political participation among different racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. An exploration of literature about key barriers to voting follows. Then, the report analyzes findings from focus groups with Latino eligible voters in Washington and interviews with experts. It concludes with an analysis of policy alternatives and recommendations to increase rates of electoral participation among Latino eligible voters in the Evergreen State⁵.

⁵ Washington State’s official nickname is “the Evergreen State.”

2. Background

2.1. The Electoral Process in Washington

In order to understand the participation of voters in U.S. elections, a basic understanding of the electoral system is useful. This section explains the mechanisms of elections in the U.S. as a whole and Washington State in particular.

2.1.1. *Voter registration*

Only adult citizens of the United States are eligible to vote in elections at the federal and state levels, and in almost all local elections. For the purposes of voting, an adult is a person at least 18 years of age (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 4). Citizens include those who are “native born” or “U.S. born” and those who are “naturalized.” U.S. born citizens are people born in the U.S., as well as people born outside the United States who had at least one U.S. citizen parent (2). Naturalized citizens are those who immigrated to the U.S., met the requirements for citizenship, and subsequently became citizens (Taylor et al., 2012b, 3).

49 of the 50 states require eligible voters to register in order to be able to vote; North Dakota is the only state that does not require registration to vote (North Dakota SOS, 2014). Ten states currently offer same-day voter registration; Washington is not one of them (Siders, 2012). In Washington, as in most other states, eligible voters must

submit a voter registration form in advance of an election⁶. Attempting to register to vote as a non-citizen⁷ is a federal crime (Semple, 2010).

2.1.2. Local, state, and federal elections in the U.S.

The U.S. has fixed schedules for federal, state, and municipal elections. General elections take place on the first Tuesday in November. Other elections include primaries, where voters typically select general election candidates for specific parties, and special elections, which serve to fill positions that become vacant before their term ends. Dates and procedures for primary elections and special elections vary by state.

Presidential elections take place every four years, and elections for members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate take place every two. Congressional elections that happen on years without a presidential election are known as midterm elections. Many states also hold elections for state legislatures and local offices concurrently with federal races.

2.1.3. Elections in Washington

Washington is one of two states that conduct elections entirely by mail (the other one is Oregon, its neighbour to the south) (Schmidt, 2011). Washington switched to mail-only elections in 2011, after all but one county in the state had already made the transition from in-person polling places (Schmidt, 2011).

In addition to state and federal elected officials, Washington voters cast ballots to weigh in on local races, state and local ballot measures, and judge elections. Many

⁶ In Washington, voters must submit a voter registration form at least twenty-nine days prior to the day of the election in which they wish to vote (Washington State Legislature 2013d, 29A.08.140).

⁷ Non-citizens include legal permanent residents, legal temporary migrants, and unauthorized migrants. Legal permanent residents have a visa that allows them to live and work in the U.S. indefinitely (Taylor et al., 2012b, 3). Legal temporary migrants are allowed into the U.S. on a shorter term, and may or may not have the right to work depending on their type of visa (3). Unauthorized migrants are people who do not have a current visa at the time of their presence in the U.S. (3)

cities elect city council and school board members on odd-numbered years, which means that they do not coincide with state and federal races.

Ballot measures are another consequential electoral matter, where voters have the power to directly approve or reject legislative changes. In Washington, the electorate decides two types of statewide ballot measures: referenda and initiatives. Referenda are bills proposed or approved by the state legislature, and subsequently referred to the voters for final decision (SOS, 2013b, 5). On the other hand, initiatives are introduced by citizens outside the elected government, and require a substantial number of registered voters' signatures to qualify for the ballot (4-5). In addition to statewide measures, voters also approve or reject local ballot measures (Washington State Legislature 2013d).

2.2. Latinos in the United States

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinos in 2011, the 52 million Latinos in the U.S. made up 16.7% of the national population—roughly one in six residents (Lopez, Motel, and Patten, 2012, 6). This section provides an overview of Latino residents in the United States: who they are, where they live, and how they participate in U.S. political life.

2.2.1. *Definition of Latino*

Throughout my capstone, I use the term “Latino” to include people who trace their origins to Latin America regardless of the languages they speak, and not people from Spain—the former colonial power that ruled most of the Americas for centuries—whom the term “Hispanic” sometimes encompasses. However, as Patricia Zavella states in her article about Chicana feminist approaches to ethnography—with regard to labels for U.S. women of Mexican heritage—“no one term will please everyone (Zavella, 1993, 69).” According to a 2011 survey with a nationally representative sample (Taylor et al., 2012a, 42), a majority (51%) of Latinos in the U.S. have no preference between the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino (2).” Most U.S. residents of Latin American ancestry (51%) also prefer to define their identity in relation to their family’s country of origin (2-3). Among those who do express a preference between the two, more than twice as many

prefer Hispanic (33%) to Latino (14%) (3). Furthermore, more than twice as many respondents opined that U.S. Hispanics “have many different cultures” (69%) as those who regarded U.S. Hispanics as having a common culture (29%).

Having said this, I prefer to use “Latino” instead of “Hispanic” for descriptive as well as political reasons. Self-identified Latinos have criticized the term “Hispanic” for decades, to the point that the Los Angeles Times banned using the word in its pages (Alcoff, 2005, 395), and the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies also took a strong stance against its use (Zavella, 1993, 68). In summarizing her arguments on the meaningfulness of using either term, philosopher Linda Martín Alcoff argues that

“[P]olitical considerations, far from being irrelevant to the choice of ethnic names, are legitimate issues to take into account for three different reasons: (1) because non-political considerations of descriptive adequacy will be insufficient to determine absolutely the question of names, (2) because political considerations may well be germane to questions of descriptive adequacy, as in the case of a name that signals relevant political conditions of a group, and (3) because in naming we affect a future which we need then to be accountable to, and we can only be accountable in opening up for discussion the political question of where we want to go (2005, 404).”

She argues that “Latino” has at least two advantages vis-à-vis “Hispanic:” it acknowledges the relevance of historical and current colonial relations, and it has significance in anti-imperialist movements in the U.S. (397) Alcoff references Jorge Gracia’s *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, a comprehensive discussion of the two terms’ significance. Gracia, who favours “Hispanic,” regards it as a signifier of culture and not of political condition, based on the cultural linkages that formed throughout Spain’s former sphere of influence (397). The term Hispanic, thus, emphasizes culture, and deemphasizes geography. Rather than connoting ties to a particular region—Latin America—it evokes colonial ties to Spain (404). Alcoff suggests that, in acknowledging the enduring implications of colonialism, the term “Latino” also provides a pan-American symbol of anti-colonial solidarity; in its place, the term “Hispanic” references a relationship to a former colonial power rather than shared political interests for people with a shared regional origin (405).

With regard to the widespread preference to identify by country of origin, Alcoff takes a similar position to Juan Flores, who points out that people can, and do, adopt

pan-ethnic terms and specific national identities concurrently (405). As Flores put it, “[T]here is “Latino” only from the point of view and as lived by the Mexican, the Puerto Rican, the Cuban, and so forth; without denying the congruences and threads of interconnection among them that the term implies, “Latino” or “Hispanic” only holds up when qualified by the national-group angle or optic from which it is uttered: there is a “Chicano/Latino” or “Cuban/Latino” perspective, but no meaningful one that is simply “Latino.” (405-6). These observations underscore the importance of examining and validating the nuances in the lived experiences and self-identities of Latinos⁸.

2.2.2. The Latino Electorate

Latinos are a substantial segment, and one of the fastest-growing, within the U.S. electorate. Out of the 215 million eligible voters in the U.S. last year, 23 million—over 1 in 10—were Latino (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 3). The ranks of Latino eligible voters grew by 19% between 2008 and 2012. Of the 3.8 million new Latino eligible voters between 2008 and 2012, 3.2 million were U.S. born citizens who became adults. Over half a million newly naturalized citizens made up the remainder (4).

As large as the Latino electorate is, most Latinos in the U.S. are not eligible to vote because they are not U.S. citizens, or they have not yet reached voting age (5). According to the Pew Hispanic Center, 30.1 million Latinos living in the U.S. during the 2012 presidential election were ineligible to vote. Of these 30.1 million, 5.4 million were adult legal permanent residents; 7.1 million were adult unauthorized immigrants, and 17.6 million were youth under the age of 18 (Taylor et al., 2012b, 6-7). Almost four-fifths (78.6%) of U.S. residents who are white are eligible to vote, as are two-thirds (69.1%) of black U.S. residents and a majority (51.7%) of Asian U.S. residents. Meanwhile, just over two-fifths (43.9%) of Latinos living in the U.S. are eligible to vote (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 5).

⁸ The U.S. Census does not ask people to choose between Hispanic and Latino; it merely asks respondents to self-report whether they are “of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.” Respondents additionally have the option to choose one or more specific national origins (Taylor et al., 2012a, 11).

2.2.3. Latino Voters in Recent Elections

The 2012 U.S. presidential election had a record Latino turnout, with 11.2 million Latinos casting ballots (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 3). At the same time, 12.1 million Latino eligible voters did not vote in that election (3). Turnout among Latino eligible voters was 48%, a decrease of almost 2 points from the 2008 presidential election (3). 15% of the 82 million non-voters in 2012 were Latinos (4). By comparison, 66.6% of black eligible voters cast ballots, as did 64.1% of white eligible voters (3). 2012 was the first year in which black voters cast ballots at a higher rate than white voters (5).

Table 2.1. 2012 Demographic Composition of U.S. Eligible Voters and General Election Voters, by Race, Ethnicity, and Age (in thousands) (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 13)

Age group	Subgroup	All ethnic groups	Latino	White	Black	Asian
Total	Eligible	215,081 (100%)	23,329 (11%)	152,862 (71%)	25,753 (12%)	8,032 (4%)
	Voted	132,948 (100%)	11,188 (8%)	98,041 (74%)	17,163 (13%)	3,770 (3%)
Ages 18-29	Eligible	45,603 (100%)	7,634 (17%)	28,188 (62%)	6,447 (14%)	1,720 (4%)
	Voted	20,539 (100%)	2,818 (14%)	12,987 (63%)	3,459 (17%)	622 (3%)
Ages 30-39	Eligible	33,543 (100%)	4,496 (13%)	22,075 (66%)	4,437 (13%)	1,462 (4%)
	Voted	19,458 (100%)	2,114 (11%)	13,242 (68%)	2,875 (15%)	650 (3%)
Ages 40-64	Eligible	91,379 (100%)	8,446 (9%)	66,694 (73%)	10,944 (12%)	3,466 (4%)
	Voted	60,786 (100%)	4,597 (8%)	45,398 (75%)	7,889 (13%)	1,751 (3%)
Age 65+	Eligible	41,169 (100%)	2,566 (6%)	33,224 (81%)	3,562 (9%)	1,290 (3%)
	Voted	29,641 (100%)	1,538 (5%)	24,385 (82%)	2,669 (9%)	688 (2%)

Meanwhile, the turnout rate declined among all but three major Latino demographic subgroups between 2008 and 2012 (3). Voter turnout increased from 41%

to 47% among Latino naturalized citizens who arrived in the U.S. in the 1990s (4). In general, Latino naturalized citizens voted at a higher rate (53.6%) than did Latino U.S.-born citizens (46.0%) (7).

The Latino subgroups with the highest rates of participation in the 2012 election were college graduates (70.8%) and Cuban Americans (67.2%) (6). Eligible voters of Central/South American origin also participated at a higher rate (57.1%) than the overall rate for all Latino eligible voters (48.0%), as did eligible voters of Puerto Rican origin (52.8%) (6). Mexican Americans had the lowest turnout rate of any national-origin subgroup (42.2%) (6).

The Latino subgroups with the lowest turnout rates in the 2012 fall election were people with less education than a high school diploma (35.5%) and Latinos under age 30 (36.9%) (6). Voter turnout among voters of all ethnic groups between the ages of 18 and 29 dropped by six percentage points between the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, from 51% to 45% (5).

The Pew Hispanic Center observed two salient differences between Latino eligible voters who cast ballots in the 2012 election and those who did not (8). The first had to do with age: 40% of Latino non-voters were between the ages of 18 and 29, whereas only 25% of Latino voters were in that same age group (7). The second had to do with national origin: just over half (52%) of Latino voters in that election were Mexican American, but two-thirds (66%) of Latino non-voters were of Mexican origin (8).

Electoral participation among white, black, Asian, and Latino voters increased drastically between 2002 and 2012, but significant gaps in turnout remain. The gaps between turnout rates among Latino and white eligible voters in the 2002 and 2012 November elections were 18% and 16%, respectively. In the 2002 midterm election, Latino (30%) and Asian and Pacific Islander (31%) eligible voters had lower turnout rates than did their white (49%) and black (42%) counterparts. The fact that many Asian and Pacific Islander and Latino U.S. residents are not citizens compounds a disparity in representation; fewer than one in five (19%) of all Latino adults—including noncitizens—voted in 2002, whereas nearly half (48%) of all white adults voted in the same election (Udbye, 2008, 3).

2.3. Latinos in Washington

This section explores some key characteristics of the Latino population in Washington. In some ways, the state's Latino population is comparable to that of the country as a whole—in terms of share of the total population, for example. In other ways, Latinos in Washington differ substantially from Latinos in the rest of the country.

2.3.1. *Washington's Latino Population*

While Washington State's Latino population is not among the largest in the U.S. in absolute terms, it is still relatively large among the 50 states in the country. In 2010, Washington ranked 13th in population, with 6.7 million of the country's 309 million residents living in the state (Motel and Patten, 2012, 1). Washington also ranks among the top third in size of Latino population (760,000) (12th), percentage of state population that is Latino (11%) (15th), and number of Latino eligible voters (271,000) (12th) (1).

Most of Washington's Latino residents moved to the state or were born after 1989. The state's total population grew by one-fifth (21%) between 1990 and 2000, from 4.8 million to 5.9 million. During the same period, the Latino population in the state more than doubled, growing from 215,000 to 440,000 (105%). According to the American Community Survey, 541,722 Latinos lived in the state in 2005 (NALEO, 2007, 1). In 2005, 56% of the 338,067 Latino adults in Washington were U.S. citizens. This share of adults in the Latino population who are citizens is similar to California's (59%) (2).

2.3.2. *Latino Eligible Voters in the Evergreen State*

Age, national origin, and type of citizenship are key areas of difference between Latino eligible voters in Washington and elsewhere in rest of the country. On average, Latino eligible voters in Washington are younger than the state's electorate as a whole, and than the Latino electorate nationally. The share of Latino eligible voters who are below age 30 is greater in Washington (37%) than it is in the U.S. as a whole (33%) (2). "Latino eligible voters are younger than black, Asian and white eligible voters in Washington. Some 37% of Latinos are ages 18 to 29, compared with 26% of black eligible voters, 22% of Asian eligible voters and 19% of white eligible voters (5)." Most

Latino eligible voters in Washington and nationwide are of Mexican origin. However, Mexican Americans represent a much greater share of Latino eligible voters in Washington (73%) than they do nationally (59%) (3). In Washington, just over one-fifth of Latino eligible voters are naturalized citizens (21%), whereas one-quarter (25%) of Latino eligible voters nationwide are naturalized citizens (3). Just over one-third of Latinos in Washington (36%) are eligible voters, which ranks the state 33rd in terms of the percentage of the state's Latino population that is eligible to vote. (2)

Two important socioeconomic factors also distinguish the Latino electorate in the Evergreen State: income and level of education. As a percentage in 2010, more Latino eligible voters in Washington (77.3%) had at least a high school degree than nationwide (75.3%). However, the gap in high school completion between Latinos and the general electorate was greater in Washington (13.6 points) than in the U.S. as a whole (12.3 points) (Motel and Patten, 2012, 3). The gap in representation in a low income bracket was twice as large: a higher percentage of Latino eligible voters in Washington (by 5.2 points) had an annual household income of less than \$30,000 than the rest of the electorate, compared with a national difference of 2.4 points between Latino and non-Latino eligible voters (3). Looking at Latino, white, Asian, and black eligible voters in Washington, Latinos were by far the youngest group (with 68% under age 45) and the group with the least formal education (with 50.7% having pursued at least some college studies) (5). Higher levels of income and education are two factors that have been found to positively influence turnout among Latinos (Arvizu and Garcia, 1996).

Latino eligible voters in Washington have historically had lower rates of voter registration and of voting once registered than do their non-Latino counterparts (NALEO, 2007, 7). In 2012, 4% (156,232) of the nearly 4 million registered voters in Washington were Latino (SOS, 2013a). The 58% voter registration rate among Latinos was a substantial increase from 2006, when less than half of the 190,576 Latino adult citizens in the state were registered to vote (NALEO, 2007, 3). In 2006, almost as many Latino registered voters in Washington had registered after the 2000 presidential election (47%) as those who had registered prior to that election (53%). By contrast, a full two-thirds of non-Latino registered voters (67%) in 2006 had registered prior to the fall 2000 election, while the remaining third (33%) of non-Latino registered voters had

registered after that election (4). In other words, the length of voter registration for most Latinos in Washington is shorter than for non-Latino registered voters (4).

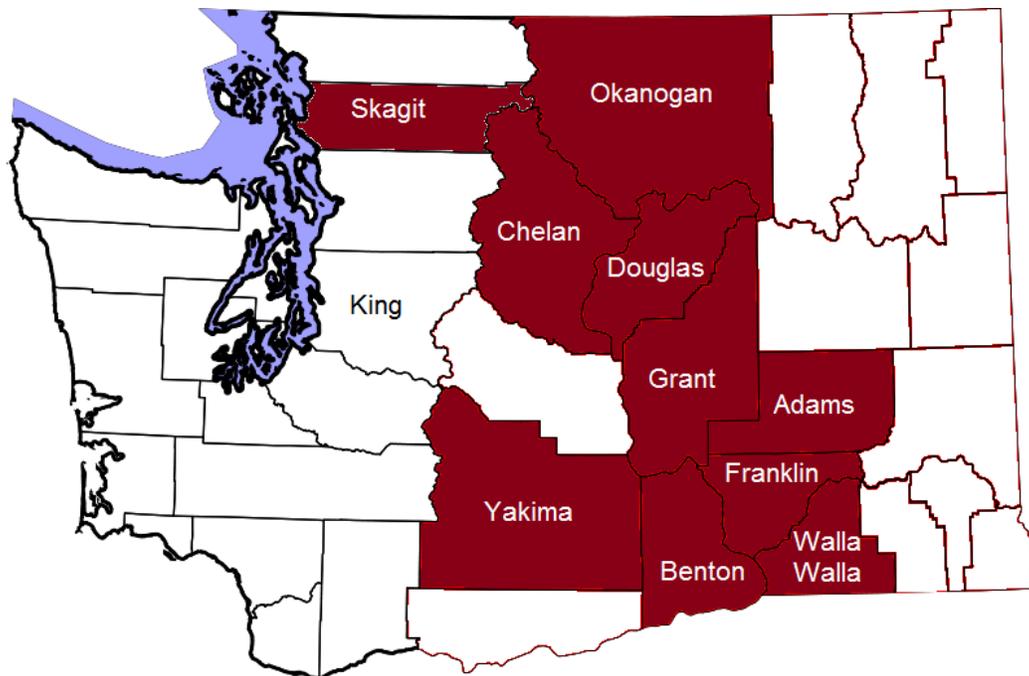


Figure 2.1. Map of the 10 Washington State counties with the highest percentages of eligible voters who are Latino (Lukoff, 2009; SOS, 2013a; SOS, 2014)

The Latino electorate in Washington is geographically concentrated in Central and Eastern Washington. In 2012, Latinos comprised more than one in ten registered voters in four of the state's 39 counties: Adams (24%), Franklin (21%), Yakima (20%), and Grant (12%); many more counties had substantial shares of eligible voters who were Latino, including Douglas (7%), Walla Walla (7%), Chelan (6%), Benton (6%), Skagit (4%), and Okanogan (4%) (SOS, 2013a) Latino residents are even more concentrated at the municipal level: in the 15 cities with the largest shares of Latino registered voters in 2012—all of which are located in Adams, Franklin, Yakima, and Grant counties—between 30% and 79% of registered voters were Latino (SOS, 2013a). Although they accounted for large shares of the electorate in those areas, in the 2012 presidential election, Latino voter turnout in all 10 most heavily Latino counties was lower than the statewide Latino voter turnout rate of 66%—which itself was 15 percentage points lower than the overall voter turnout rate of 81% (SOS, 2013a).

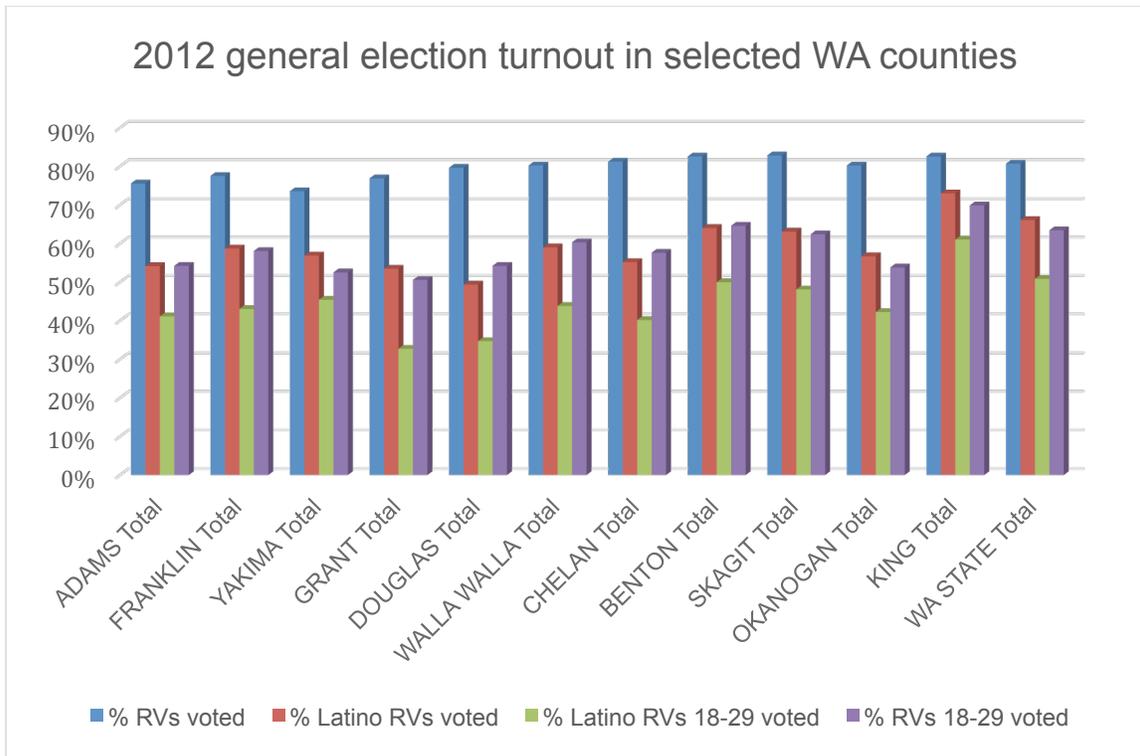


Figure 2.2. 2012 presidential election turnout among registered voters in 11 Washington counties, including (1) all registered voters, (2) Latino registered voters, (3) Latino registered voters age 18-29, and (4) all registered voters age 18-29 (SOS, 2013a)

2.4. Barriers to voting for Latinos

Latino eligible voters in Washington vote at rates that are well below the voting rates for the state’s electorate as a whole. This capstone examines why some Latino eligible voters do not vote while others do, and why turnout among Latino eligible voters has been much lower than turnout among the rest of the electorate. These questions seek to identify structural barriers that Latino U.S. citizens in Washington State face, and the ways in which these barriers vary. This report does not attempt to examine in depth additional barriers that exist for the entire Latino population inclusive of non-citizens, such as permanent residents and unauthorized immigrants. It also does not speak to ways of eliminating larger socioeconomic disparities between Latinos and the rest of the electorate, which would positively impact political participation.

Several reports from academic, non-profit, and governmental sources have documented reasons that discourage Latino eligible voters in Washington State from voting. In addition to socioeconomic factors that influence participation among voters of any ethnic background, these sources focus on issues such as political underrepresentation, lack of information, and alienation from the political system.

A report to the Washington Secretary of State Elections Division establishes five categories of reasons why, in Washington State, immigrants and members of certain ethnic groups have historically had relatively low rates of political participation (Udbye, 2008, 1). This report is grounded on a November 2002 Census Bureau survey that asked registered voters of all ethnic groups why they had not voted in that month's elections. Udbye observes that all but one—illness, disability, or family emergency—among the categories of responses reflects an “attitude problem (4).” The other reasons given included: “Too busy or had conflicting work or school schedules (most cited by Latinos);” “Not interested or felt the voice would make no difference;” “Out of town;” “Did not like the candidates;” “Forgot to vote;” “Confused or uncertain about registration,” and “Transportation problems (3).”

In addition to this national survey, the report draws on interviews with 35 Latino and Asian American community leaders from governmental, non-profit, and business organizations (13-14). The interviews yielded the following categories of barriers to electoral participation for Latinos and Asian Americans:

- “Ignorance and confusion about what is perceived as a complex democratic and voting system”
- “Distrust and fear about the whole voting process”
- “Other priorities: voting is low on the list of concerns and not considered a big benefit of citizenship”
- “Issues and candidates are often uninteresting or unappealing to the ethnic voters”
- “Disenfranchisement and a feeling among naturalized citizens that they are still foreigners” (1)

Informants in Udbye's report suggested that the lack of non-white candidates depresses voter participation, particularly in Eastern Washington cities that had majority-Latino populations and all-white city councils (3). In 2008, four in five Washington State

residents were white, but 95% of elected officeholders were white. Udbye says that “[t]his may have been reflective of the population mixture in the year 1908, but not in 2008 (2).” He suggests that a higher presence of non-white candidates would motivate people from minority groups to vote, and cites the “larger than usual Chinese-American turnout” when former governor Gary Locke, who is Chinese-American, ran (4).

Udbye mentions a few instances of underrepresentation for immigrant and ethnic communities in Washington in 2008. For example, only two of the 147 state legislators (1.4%) were foreign born, compared to 12.4% of the state’s population. Eleven state legislators (7.5%) were members of racial minority groups, compared with one-fifth (20%) of the state population. And the cities of Pasco (in Franklin County) and Yakima (in Yakima County) had no Latino city council members, in spite of large shares of Latino residents (56.4% and 33.7%, respectively) (4).

A 2012 report by the State of the State for Washington Latinos, an ongoing research project at Whitman College in Walla Walla, found that the Latino population of Washington State has been—and continues to be—systematically underrepresented on both city councils and school boards throughout the state (Dawson, Kiely, and McCullough, 2012). The authors reference a previous report, which states that “underrepresentation is likely a product of a confluence of structural and demographic factors that conspire to reduce both the turnout of Latino voters and the value of their votes” (3). This report concluded that the combination of at-large election systems and racially polarized voting has prevented Latino candidates from winning local elections in the ten counties with the largest percentages of residents who are Latino. In addition to a comprehensive overview of local elections in ten counties over 30 years, the authors examined the city of Sunnyside as a case study, and interviewed community leaders to learn about social, cultural, and local influences on political participation by Latinos (3). They argue for the implementation of election reform in tandem with initiatives to increase Latino participation, (3) and state that

“[a]s a representative democracy, the legitimacy of the American government is inexorably tied to the integrity of the electoral process. Accurate representation is not just an abstract notion toward which America strives; it is an ideal that strikes at the very heart of our national identity (3).”

Per the Fifteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude (4).” To further enshrine this right, in 1965, the U.S. Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act (VRA), a landmark achievement of the civil rights movement, which ended many institutionalized discriminatory practices, such as literacy tests and poll taxes. It has also served to expand electoral access through the requirement of bilingual voting materials in places where large numbers of registered voters speak languages other than English (4).

Dawson, Kiely, and McCullough (2012) cite ample literature to explain how a phenomenon known as racially polarized voting⁹ has prevented minority groups in cities across the U.S. from electing candidates of their choice. Combined with at-large election systems¹⁰, racially polarized voting has created nearly insurmountable barriers for candidates from ethnic minority groups. In many cases, courts—including the U.S. Supreme Court—have found such systems to violate the VRA (4-5). The most common legal remedy nationally has been to replace at-large systems with single-member districts, including some districts with larger ethnic minority populations. Research has found that these changes effectively increase the number of minority candidates elected to office (5).

A comprehensive 30-year study of every local election in the 10 most heavily Latino counties in Washington shows that while Latinos accounted for over one-fifth of the population in those counties between 1983 and 2011, Latino candidates won just over one in twenty city council and school board races in those counties during the same period (16). The report points out that out of 4753 school board and city council elections, 122 Latino candidates were elected—103 of them in uncontested races, while only 13 of 58 candidates who faced non-Latino opponents won (28). Thus, the authors identify a lack of Latino candidacies and the candidacies of non-Latinos as barriers to

⁹ Racially polarized voting refers to bloc voting behaviour, such that voters in a jurisdiction of certain ethnic or racial groups cohesively vote for one candidate, while voters of other ethnic groups cohesively vote for another candidate (Dawson, Kiely and McCullough 4).

¹⁰ An at-large election system is one in which eligible voters in an entire jurisdiction—e.g. city, county, school district, etc.—elect representatives for its government, in contrast with jurisdictions that are subdivided into districts (Dawson, Kiely and McCullough 4).

political representation for Latinos (27). They conclude that

“the data strongly suggests that the race of candidates does affect voter behavior, and this effect may have produced racially polarized voting several times in the past 30 years. When combined with at-large elections, these voting trends tend to deny minority voters an equal opportunity to elect the candidate of their choosing (Davidson and Korbel 1981; Leal et al. 2004; Meier et al. 2005; Polinard et al. 1994). If voting is affected by race to the extent that the data suggests, then the very structure of most local elections is likely diluting the votes of the Latino communities across Washington State and removing their voices from local government (28).”

A 2013 survey of adult residents of Washington State explored attitudes towards Latinos in different regions of the state, and found that significant minorities of people in Washington associate Latinos with negative stereotypes (KCTS9 et al., 2013). In most cases, higher percentages of respondents in Eastern Washington agreed with negative stereotypes of Latinos than respondents in Puget Sound—where Seattle is located—and elsewhere in Western Washington. For example, slight majorities of respondents in Eastern Washington agreed with associations of Latinos and the phrase “have too many children,” as well as “culture of gangs and crime,” while most respondents in Western Washington disagreed with those associations. This poll also found that in a hypothetical election, large majorities (58-76%) of the people who held each of the negative attitudes towards Latinos would not support a candidate named Roberto Lopez, who was highly qualified and highly rated by the state bar association, over a less-qualified and unrated candidate¹¹ named Charles Erickson. As well, 58% of respondents in the Puget Sound region and 49% elsewhere in Western Washington stated that they would vote for Lopez, compared to 43% of respondents in Eastern Washington who would do so.

This hypothetical race mirrored actual observed voter behaviour in the August 2012 primary election for the State Supreme Court, which has been described as “a textbook case of racially polarized voting (Barreto, Caldwell, and Oskooii, 2012, 3).” In that race, Justice Steve González campaigned statewide, spent over \$300,000, and won endorsements from newspapers like the Yakima Herald (1). Meanwhile, his

opponent, Kitsap County attorney Bruce Danielson, spent \$0, and his County Bar Association said that he had "zero qualifications to be on the bench (Sanders, 2012)." In spite of this, Danielson won every county in Central and Eastern Washington—while losing in Kitsap, his home county—though González won the overall statewide vote (Sanders, 2012). In Yakima County, Danielson beat González by almost 30 points—64% to 36%. Furthermore, Danielson won far greater percentages of votes cast in Yakima County than did better-known Republican candidates for governor and U.S. senator on the same ballot (Barreto, Caldwell, and Oskooii, 2012, 2). Meanwhile, Susan Owens, another candidate for Supreme Court Justice characterized as “center-left,” won over 60% of the vote in Yakima County, which suggests that voters did not base their support entirely on conservative ideology. Using weighted ecological regression of demographic data and election results by precinct, Barreto, Caldwell, and Oskooii (2012) found an “unmistakable” trend—an approximately 40% gap in support for González between Latinos and non-Latinos in Yakima and Grant Counties (2).

The aforementioned literature presents the insights of key experts, scholars, and community leaders in Washington, but this body of work could benefit from additional diversity of perspectives in terms of age, geography, socioeconomic status, and level of political engagement. Also, Udbye’s report does not capture any important changes that may have happened since the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, both of which saw Latino voter turnout reach unprecedented heights. In order to address these gaps, two organizations designed and conducted focus groups with Latino registered voters in the summer of 2013. A non-profit agency (the Latino Community Fund of Washington) and a government agency (the Elections Division of the Washington Secretary of State) co-sponsored two focus groups, one in South Seattle and one in Kent, to investigate current catalysts and barriers to voting for Latino registered voters in Washington State (Flores Cantrell, Labra, and Rodriguez-Flores, 2013, 2). Both focus groups took place in King County, which is the most populous county in the state, includes the state’s largest city (Seattle), and has the largest number of Latino registered voters in Washington (NALEO, 2007, 6; SOS, 2013a).

These focus groups generated insightful conversations about barriers and catalysts to voting, as well as participants’ views and experiences with regard to civic participation generally, the electoral process, and sources of information about elections

(Flores Cantrell, Labra, and Rodriguez-Flores, 2013, 2, 6-7). The resulting report condenses participants' remarks about factors that prevent or discourage Latinos from voting in Washington into nine themes: (1) an intimidating process; (2) cynicism towards politicians, (3) and uncompetitive races, as well as a perceived lack of: (4) knowledge or understanding of the electoral process, (5) influence or usefulness, (6) campaign outreach, (7) campaign materials in Spanish, (8) Latino candidates, and (9) civics education (2). These are largely consistent with the themes in Udbye's report. The King County focus group report also identifies six themes with respect to factors that motivate Latinos to participate in elections. These themes are (1) exercising rights, (2) the good of the community, (3) greater impact at the local level, (4) inspiring candidates, (5) important ballot measures, and (6) personal relevance (7-8).

While the focus groups were insightful, they were somewhat unrepresentative of the Latino electorate in Washington State in at least two ways. First, both focus groups took place in the largest metropolitan area in the state. The political, geographic, cultural, and social character of that region differs significantly from other regions of the state, particularly those where Latinos make up larger percentages—or even a majority—of the population. Second, the participants who attended the two groups were predominantly active community leaders, including executive directors of organizations and even elected officials (3, 7). A sample of less politically active eligible voters might, then, express significantly different perspectives about the importance of civic participation and experiences with voting.

The purpose of the original study presented in this capstone is twofold: to gain a current and comprehensive understanding of electoral barriers for diverse Latino eligible voters across Washington State, particularly with the inclusion of young Latinos as well as Latino eligible voters in communities with high percentages of Latino residents, and to identify the most feasible and effective policies to increase Latino voter turnout in Washington. Thus, it will aim to bridge existing gaps in knowledge about the particular political environment for the Latino electorate in the Evergreen State.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research questions

The policy problem addressed in this capstone are the existing barriers to electoral participation among Latinos, with a particular interest in examining how these barriers vary throughout the state for people of various demographic backgrounds. Therefore, my primary research study focused on the following research questions:

1. How do barriers to electoral participation vary for Latinos of different ages and across regions in Washington State?
2. Which policies would be most effective and viable to increase electoral participation among Latinos?

3.2. Theoretical framework

My approach to this study is grounded in my own social location as an immigrant to the United States from Mexico, as well as my prior education in, and commitment to, feminist studies. Verta Taylor (1998) suggests that five elements are crucial to feminist methodology: “a focus on gender and gender inequality, a spotlight on the everyday experiences of women, reflexivity as a source of insight, an emphasis on participatory methods, and a policy or action component (360).” Although I decided not to focus on women or gender in my study due to time constraints, other forms of inequality were central in my research, and the other three elements were also important pieces in my approach. In lieu of a gender specific focus, my research and policy analysis drew on another frame of analysis that examines various forms of oppression and emerged from

the experiences of diverse women: intersectionality¹². Women of colour defined the concept of intersectionality as it is now understood, but it is not limited to a focus on women or gender. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) wrote, “[w]hile the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color (1244-1245).”

While I am interested in reducing social inequalities in general, I chose to focus specifically on Latinos because of my experience with campaigns to mobilize low-propensity Latino eligible voters in California, as well as advantages conferred due to my shared identity and culture—such as my familiarity with certain customs or my fluency in Spanish. At the same time, I was wary of conflating my own background with the lives of participants. Chicana feminist ethnographer Patricia Zavella warns of the complications of “insider status”—that is, the situation in which a researcher shares a gender, ethnic, class, and/or sexual identity with research participants:

[B]eing a member of a subordinated group under study carries particular problems and create personal and ethical dilemmas for social scientists on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, political sympathies, or even personal foibles (1993, 54).

On one hand, insider status can allow a researcher to gain easier access to certain groups of people, and to understand important points and nuances that may not be apparent to people outside the group. On the other hand, the researcher risks overlooking significant differences between herself and research participants, and can make false assumptions or misrepresentations of participants as a result (53-70). With this awareness in mind, I attempted to verify research themes and my understandings with people in Washington as much as possible.

¹² Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner defined the term thus: “By intersectionality, we refer to the connection between aspects of identity, and by “intersectional discrimination”, the different types of discrimination or disadvantage that compound on each other and are inseparable... An intersectional approach asserts that speaking about race in isolation from other aspects of identity results in concrete disadvantage... Intersectional discrimination means people are discriminated against in qualitatively different ways as a consequence of the combination of their individual characteristics (AVERT, 2010, 1).”

Short of using truly participatory methods as Taylor (1998, 360) suggests, my methodology involved a few steps of collaborative decision-making, as well as confirmation with interview and focus group participants. I used qualitative methods to give participants the opportunity to broadly express their experiences and opinions. This allowed me to identify themes of which I had been unaware, and to better understand the topic of my research overall. My interview and focus group schedules were designed to gather original feedback from experts and diverse eligible voters across Washington State, as well as to elicit their comments and critiques on the previous findings from focus groups in King County in August 2013. In addition, prior to submitting my protocol for ethics review, I asked my co-researchers in the King County pilot project to review my research materials, including the questions I planned to ask participants.

Because I wanted to acknowledge the diversity within Washington State's Latino population, intersectionality is another major concept from feminist scholarship that informed my research and, more so, my policy analysis. As Hankivsky and Cormier (2011) explain, "intersectionality recognizes that to address complex inequities, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work (218)." During my research, I made a concerted effort to gather information about the particular experiences of Latinos under 30 years old, and of Latinos living in Central and Eastern Washington. Over the course of my research, two additional social locations that significantly affect Latinos emerged: socioeconomic status and generational status.

In my policy analysis, I most closely followed the second approach that Hankivsky and Cormier describe: intersectional policy process analysis (221-223). They establish four stages in a policymaking cycle: (1) agenda setting, (2) policy formulation, (3) policy implementation, and (4) policy assessment. My process of selecting a research topic for this capstone involved discussions with people in Washington who have been directly involved in efforts to increase electoral participation among Latinos. For the policy formulation and assessment stages, I considered whether and how policy alternatives would have a positive impact on Latinos of diverse social and geographical locations. Although I cannot be involved with the implementation stage, I plan to present my findings to diverse audiences in Washington, and to encourage leaders and decision makers to consider how policies might impact and include diverse members across the Latino population, particularly young people. For the purposes of data dissemination, I

am planning to coordinate with several contacts in Washington State—including interview participants and people who helped conduct outreach for focus groups—to identify appropriate venues and organize presentations in King, Skagit, Grant, and Franklin Counties. I am also tentatively planning to present my findings and recommendations to the Washington State Commission of Hispanic Affairs in May 2014.

3.3. Literature review

This capstone draws on literature from a variety of sources, including academic journals, the United States Census, and reports prepared by government and non-profit agencies. The data drawn from those sources provides a background of the Latino population in Washington, and of some key barriers to electoral participation.

My primary research was based on a pilot project developed in conjunction with staff members at the Latino Community Fund of Washington State¹³ and the Elections Division of the Washington Secretary of State¹⁴ in the summer of 2013. That project consisted of two focus groups with Latino registered voters in King County, the county with the largest number of Latino residents and the largest overall population in Washington. The King County focus groups resulted in a report that identified several themes of factors that motivate and restrict Latinos' electoral participation, and those themes served as a starting point for this study. My primary research built upon the pilot project by adding three focus groups in smaller, heavily Latino communities around the state, and by discussing the previously identified themes with participants in interviews as well as focus groups in order to explore them further.

¹³ The Latino Community Fund is a non-profit organization that supports leadership, advocacy, and capacity-building for the Latino community in Washington (Latino Community Fund, 2014).

¹⁴ The Elections Division facilitates elections at all levels in collaboration with local officials, conducts voter education, and supports the state voter registration database (Augino, 2014).

3.4. Interviews

I conducted eleven interviews with expert informants to explore the political atmosphere for Latino eligible voters in Washington State, and to discuss potential policies that might increase Latino voter participation. Participants included a state legislator, university professors, and staff members or officers of community organizations that work to engage Latino voters. Seven interview participants were located in King County, while the remaining four reside elsewhere in the state. Nonetheless, most of the participants had experience working in various areas of the state—including the Yakima Valley, although none of the participants lives in that area. Nine interviews took place in person, and two over the phone. Every interview participant signed an informed consent form with three options for identification, which were to have quotes (a) attributed to them by name and professional title, (b) included in my report without identifying their name or title, or (c) paraphrased without exact quotes or attribution. Ten participants gave permission to identify them by name and title, and one gave permission to quote their remarks without identifying them by either.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format. I used the same schedule as a guide for every participant, but made adjustments for time and asked spontaneous follow-up questions as appropriate during each interview. Each conversation began with a brief discussion of the political, social, and cultural environment for Latino eligible voters in Washington State from each participant's point of view. Then, I asked about factors that encourage Latino eligible voters from voting and, subsequently, about those that discourage electoral participation. During each interview, after giving each participant an opportunity to identify describe key factors, I explained the themes of motivators and barriers identified from the 2013 King County focus groups and asked participants to comment on them. Finally, I asked each participant to identify programs, policies, or initiatives that would increase electoral participation among Latinos, and to describe significant challenges to enacting each one.

In addition to the semi-structured format of the interviews, I attempted to follow some suggested interview “best practices” by summarizing and verifying, over the course of each interview, key points that participants made (Roulston, 2010, 202). This allowed me to build some rapport and to try to ensure that I was interpreting their ideas

in the way interviewees intended to convey them. In a few cases, I think it also elicited additional information from participants that built upon the previous points.

Felipe Rodriguez-Flores: Okay. So, just to recap, the two things that you mentioned as factors are when eligible voters don't hear candidates mention issues that matter to them, and so they don't feel compelled to vote, like immigration, for example. And then, when people are part of mixed-status families and they have relatives who can't vote because they're not U.S. citizens, and so for various reasons, maybe solidarity because their relatives can't vote, they also don't vote. Sorry I'm repeating everything; I just wanna make sure...

Dr. José Luis García-Pabón: That's good. It's a good way to make sure you're getting it the way that I want to answer. But yeah, I mean, you're right; I think that's what I wanted to say.

3.5. Focus groups

In addition to expert interviews, I conducted three focus groups in order to include the perspectives of Latino eligible voters in the counties with the largest Latino shares of population. A total of 17 participants joined the focus groups. As specified in my recruitment criteria, almost all the participants were (1) Latino, (2) U.S. citizens, and (3) age 19 or older, with the exception of one participant who was not a U.S. citizen.

I selected focus group locations based on literature about the 10 counties in Washington with the highest shares of Latino residents out of the general population. The following three focus groups took place:

- Burlington (Skagit County, ranked 9th), January 29th, 2014 (2 participants)
- Quincy (Grant County, ranked 4th), January 30th, 2014 (5 participants)
- Pasco (Franklin County, ranked 2nd), February 1st, 2014 (10 participants)

I aimed to recruit between 5-10 participants for each focus group, and succeeded in doing so for the groups in Quincy and Pasco. Other researchers (Stevens 2000, Hale 2012) have found focus groups with two participants useful for the purpose of their studies—although both attempted to gather more participants—and I did as well. Stevens used a focus group with two participants to verify information (2000, 73) and

discuss emerging themes (91), which I also did in the three focus groups I conducted. According to Hale (2012 9), many social researchers consider three to six participants to be the ideal size for a focus group, but she found very few differences between a group with two participants and one comprised of three. In her experience, “both involved discussions and interactions with each other, rather than adopting the dynamics of individual interviews (9).” This was also the case with the groups I conducted in Burlington, Quincy, and Pasco.

The focus groups lasted approximately ninety minutes each, and I facilitated all of them in person. They took place at a government building, a church, and a restaurant. Food was provided at all three, but based on previous experience with a noisy focus group environment, I reserved private rooms in order to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions.

The focus groups also followed a semi-structured format (Sixsmith, 2013). Each group discussion began with an explanation of the session’s purpose, group agreements on confidentiality and discussion guidelines, and individual introductions. Afterwards, I used a series of questions to guide the conversation. A brief general discussion of civic participation opened each focus group, followed by sections about reasons why participants had voted or had not voted in previous elections. I also mentioned the themes identified in the King County focus groups, and asked participants to compare and contrast their experiences in their own communities with those themes. The focus group in Pasco alternated between English and Spanish, as most participants were fluently bilingual but some felt more comfortable with one of the two languages. The discussions in Quincy and Burlington transpired entirely in English. At the conclusion of each focus group, participants completed a demographic survey. Participants agreed to maintain confidentiality over focus group discussions, as did a note-taker who was present in Pasco. Pseudonyms have replaced focus group participants’ names in transcripts and in the quotes included in this report.

Outreach to potential participants was the most challenging task in organizing the focus groups. The efforts of community leaders in all three cities to promote the focus groups and ask potential participants to contact me were crucial. My early efforts to organize focus groups failed; the only group I was able to arrange in December 2013

did not happen because no participants showed up. Based on these experiences, I planned again, reconsidered focus group locations, and redoubled my outreach efforts.

3.6. Thematic analysis

To interpret my primary research findings, I used a thematic analysis approach, which involved making some of the choices that Braun and Clarke (2006) delineate for this method. Because I already had specific research questions as a frame of reference, and had set out with the goal of better understanding barriers to participation, my process of identifying themes was theoretical rather than inductive (83-84). I searched for semantic, not latent (84), themes, meaning that I summarized informants' remarks at face value without searching for underlying meanings and implications. Simply, I scanned transcripts of my entire data set, including the eleven interviews and three focus groups, for information that seemed consequential—in my subjective opinion—and grouped those excerpts into themes with descriptive names.

Using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer program, I sorted the content of interview and focus group transcripts into thematic nodes. These included three main categories: environment for eligible voters, policy alternatives, and miscellaneous themes. The environment category was further subdivided into positive factors, negative factors, and other factors (such as those that can be positive or negative depending on the circumstances). Meanwhile, the category of alternatives included subcategories for policies, programs, and considerations for each alternative, including funding, political feasibility, and cultural competency.

3.7. Limitations

The focus group outreach flyers I developed and distributed were only in English; in fact, my entire protocol was designed in English. This was largely due to the logistical and financial challenge of arranging simultaneous interpretation to ensure that meetings are fully bilingual and also time efficient (an alternative to simultaneous translation is to translate each speaker's remarks for monolingual participants, which can take time). I

am certain that this deterred potential study participants who are mostly comfortable speaking Spanish. As a result, focus groups in particular may have excluded naturalized citizens, many of whom only or mostly speak Spanish.

The fact that I do not live in Washington State was also a limitation. I had no previous relationships with local leaders in any of the communities that I visited; I was unable to provide a domestic phone number in my outreach flyer for interested people to call, and travel to meet with focus group and interview participants was logistically challenging. Additionally, due to these factors and the relative ease of traveling to Seattle from Vancouver, I interviewed few people outside King County. In terms of scope, my study touched on only a few locations in Washington State, including input from participants in seven counties.

I also did not conduct any quantitative data analysis; this could be a potential area for future research. Large-scale quantitative research, such as surveys and regressions of voter turnout data with socioeconomic data for different regions, could potentially provide more accurate distinctions in terms of the differences that socioeconomic factors like income and education play in voter participation. However, I specifically did not conduct a survey for two reasons. I was wary of potential biases in responses and sampling, among other areas, and I felt that more qualitative research was needed in order to explore themes that did not emerge in the King County focus group, with its mostly educated, politically active, and metropolitan participants.

In spite of these limitations on my part, my study benefited from a remarkable amount of support from community leaders in Washington. My entire study would not have been possible without their interest, support, and collaboration. In particular, Laura Flores Cantrell at the Latino Community Fund and Cristina Labra at the Secretary of State's Office connected me with individuals who provided vital assistance with logistics and outreach for all three focus groups. They also suggested the names of potential interview participants, several of whom replied to my emails with interest upon learning about my involvement with the King County pilot project in the summer of 2013.

4. Research findings

The interviews with experts and focus groups with eligible voters revealed a complex network of interconnected social, political, and cultural factors that influence the electoral participation of Latinos in various ways throughout Washington State. By and large, and with a few exceptions on particular points, participants in both the interviews and focus groups agreed with the motivating and discouraging factors that emerged from the King County focus groups. However, they also added critical perspective on additional positive and negative factors, as well as insight into the way the focus group themes flow together.

Although interviews and focus groups overlapped in some areas, they diverged in others. Participants in both gave comments and critiques on the motivators and barriers identified in the King County focus groups, and provided important points that contextualized those themes and built upon them. The three focus groups added to the diversity of perspectives about the political environment in Washington State, as they gave voice to Latino eligible voters in heavily Latino communities outside King County, several of whom were in their early twenties. Interview participants, on the other hand, gave more thorough and detailed comments about policy alternatives to increase voting among Latinos than the focus group discussions allowed.

4.1. What sets Washington State apart

Participants mentioned features that distinguish Washington State from other jurisdictions in the U.S. These characteristics pertain to electoral systems, as well as to the state's demographic history. Some of them facilitate and encourage political participation, while others hinder it.

4.1.1. A progressive voting system

Vote by mail is an important component of elections. In areas of Washington State that have a history of voter intimidation, vote by mail has also removed a barrier because people are free to vote in their homes. This includes Central and Eastern Washington. As a few examples of voter intimidation, participants in Pasco and Quincy mentioned that individuals in polling places throughout the region would ask to see only certain people's ID's, that signs for Democratic candidates have been vandalized, and that employers at large companies in the region have instructed workers not to put up lawn signs—or even vote—for certain candidates. Focus group participants, including Denise*¹⁵ in Quincy, mentioned mostly positive aspects about it, such as its convenience and accessibility:

Because I am disabled, I vote by mail, and it gives me two weeks to think about it. And I first look at the names, the first day, and then I think about it. And then the second day, I look at the voter's pamphlet, and I read, and then I start to choose. And then I vote, and then I mail it in.

On the other hand, participants expressed that vote by mail poses challenges for participation because it is an unfamiliar system to many young people and Latinos. This also applies to online voter registration, another feature of the electoral system that is convenient but often not understood. Therefore, several participants consider that efforts to increase awareness about the way voting works in Washington are needed.

4.1.2. Recent growth in Latino population

Many participants stated that Latinos in Washington are not as deeply rooted in the state as are Latinos in other areas, such as California, New York, Florida, and Arizona, where large Latino populations have resided for several generations. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that the number of Latinos in Washington more than tripled between 1990 and 2010, but it is an important factor in the relationships that Latino residents have with institutions and organizations in the state. Alberto*, a participant in the Pasco focus group, explains this historical difference:

¹⁵ Asterisks (*) indicate that a pseudonym is used in lieu of a focus group participant's name.

“The closer you go south, you get people who are second, third, fourth, fifth generations that have already been in the country. And up here in Washington State, it’s more agricultural. So, what do you get? You get people that are coming from Mexico all the way up here, so their kids are gonna be first generation. So you’re not gonna see more of an involvement until the second, third, you know, when they’re established and have a little bit. You know, they have the risk to go get educated, get involved into the community. But right now, you’re dealing with people at basic jobs, doing farm labor, people that work in the restaurants. You know, that’s one of the main reasons, probably; you don’t have the voter registration or Latinos voting. I think that a lot of them probably can’t, or a lot of them don’t have the comprehension to understand what’s being asked of them, so they just don’t do it. You know, you give this another... Ask them; they’ll tell you how much this community’s changed in 15 years. You know, where we were and where we are now, it’s a huge jump. That we still need to keep going, yes. But we’re first-generation. If my dad hadn’t came up here for agriculture, we wouldn’t be up here. And that’s the main issue. Let us start establishing ourselves. My wife, she’s American. Her family’s been here for 300 years. So they’ve got inheritance that’s been left from one generation to the next to the next. They’ve got land; they’ve got stuff. They’ve got a base, a foundation. We come up here with what you’ve got in your car, in your hands. You’ve gotta start from somewhere. It takes time for somebody to start something. And we’re coming into what they built. So it’s gonna take time for us to establish ourselves to be able to challenge the stuff that’s going on, to be able to change things.”

Several participants in focus groups and interviews commented on the difference between political involvement and representation among Latinos in Washington and other parts of the country. Similarly, a recurrent theme among participants was that Latino eligible voters in Washington do not feel that their votes are important, partly because they have not seen electoral changes come about as a result of their participation. Matt Barreto, a professor of political science at the University of Washington who has experience with Latino voter engagement nationwide, explains this perceived lack of influence:

“I would also characterize it as saying that there’s fairly low levels of efficacy, that people don’t feel that the system is responsive; they don’t feel that their individual vote may be the turning point that singlehandedly decides an election. So, they don’t feel that elected officials are listening and responding to them; they don’t feel that there’s an opportunity to elect elected officials who would represent their community. And because of that, because of the institutional arrangements, it creates an incentive to actually not participate. And I think that’s a huge difference between

Washington and California, as well as other states, Nevada, Florida, even Arizona.”

4.2. Outreach is essential—and lacking

One central theme that emerged from interviews is that outreach to eligible voters is a crucial influence on eligible voters’ level of engagement, and that for a variety of reasons, existing political organizations across Washington State habitually and systematically exclude Latinos from their outreach activities. For example, participants in the Burlington focus group criticized the Democratic Party’s lack of effort to include and mobilize Latinos in Skagit County. According to Maru Mora Villalpando, who is the Principal at Latino Advocacy and a longtime political organizer in the state:

“I would say the vast majority of political campaigns believe that the Latino vote is not important, and so they don’t cater to them. Usually, campaigns believe they need either the female or the white vote. That’s it. “I want to win; I just need white people to vote for me, and those are the ones that I’m gonna go door knock. And my media campaigns are only gonna be for those that speak English.” And so usually, unless it’s a presidential campaign, Latinos aren’t going to hear about the local campaigns. And even if I want to vote, if I don’t get that information, if I’m not considered an important vote, I’m not gonna vote... It’s very, very rare to get any political campaign on Latino media. Almost none. And unless you watch the regular mainstream media, then you would see those ads... you wouldn’t get their pieces of mail until you get your pamphlet from the county elections. And then you start reading, and you don’t know anything about those guys; you don’t know anything about the issues because nobody has been telling you about them... So I think that it’s not only about county elections or the state elections, how they run in the part of government, but it’s also in the part of candidates that really underestimate our vote power.”

Interview participants also explained that the way in which databases such as the Voter Activation Network (VAN) classify eligible voters based on prior electoral participation and socioeconomic factors is often a deterrent for outreach to Latinos. Parties and other political organizations that turn out registered voters tend to focus their efforts and resources on informing, persuading, and mobilizing the most frequent voters, which often means that they avoid contacting Latinos—who generally do not tend to have a history of voting often.

David Reyes, Program Manager with the Win-Win Network, a coalition of progressive groups in Washington, explains that organizations engaged in electoral outreach determine who is likely to vote based on data such as people's voting history, which is public information. Because Latinos in general vote less frequently than the rest of the electorate, many Latinos are considered unlikely voters. Certain groups focus their outreach efforts—which include sending campaign mailers, phone banking, and other forms of communication—on frequent voters. Therefore, campaigns tend to ignore Latino eligible voters, which means that Latinos receive less frequent campaign contacts than people who vote at higher rates do.

Interview participants said that many organizations make decisions about where to focus their efforts to register and activate voters based on numerical goals, and from a strategic point of view, targeting low-propensity voters—that is, people who vote less often—is not worth the risk or the additional effort required. An anonymous participant who works for a political organization explained how funding is a factor that drives decisions about which voters organizations target—often to the detriment of Latinos:

“You as a non-profit are forced or at least pushed to put your investments—and when I say investments, I mean like time and energy—into places that will bring you back results that you can message to donors and things like that. Latino communities and other communities of color take a lot more time and energy, so you're technically not getting as much bang for your buck. So the results don't speak as well. And so if you don't have someone that is a donor base or a community that's specifically not worried too much about the development and the relationship-building process that comes with organizing in communities of color and Latino communities, you don't have the sustainability. Unless you have somebody that really doesn't care about number-specific results and more about relationship results, then your funding is in jeopardy.”

Even when outreach does happen, a lack of continuity in investment often interrupts or discourages long-term voter engagement. Several interview participants said that while concerted efforts from large organizations to turn out Latino voters—especially those in Central and Eastern Washington—do exist, they tend to happen only during presidential election years, resulting in a drop-off in participation for all other elections and a loss of confidence on the part of local residents.

4.3. Barriers to electoral participation

Participants overwhelmingly agreed with the nine themes of barriers identified from the King County focus groups in August, which were: (1) a complex and intimidating electoral system, (2) uncompetitive races, (3) cynicism towards politicians, and a perceived lack of the following: (4) knowledge or awareness of the electoral process, (5) influence/usefulness of voting, (6) Latino candidates, (7) campaign outreach to Latinos, (8) Spanish-language campaign materials, and (9) civics education. In addition to confirming these themes, participants provided some important context, identified missing key points, and explained how these factors relate to one another.

Dr. Paul Apostolidis is a professor of political science who directs the State of the State for Washington Latinos research project at Whitman College in Walla Walla, where each year students examine different political issues that affect Latinos in Washington. He explains that political barriers for Latino eligible voters feed into each other to create a system that is not inclusive:

“I would characterize this environment as involving a complex of interrelated inhibitors to political participation. So on the one hand, you have just the sheer fact of the very low numbers of Latinos as elected officials. And political science has shown that it depresses people’s political participation, if they look at those who are in public office, and they see that so few candidates who are co-ethnic, if you want to use the term ethnic that the census provides, or co-racial, that so few of these people have a chance of winning elections, so that feeds a situation in which there are relatively few Latinos who stand for political office. Or if there is a candidate who stands for public office, then that person lacks the political experience and the political networks necessary to raise enough money to run a credible campaign or to achieve legitimacy in the media.”

4.3.1. Demographic factors

In general, people experience barriers to electoral participation differently depending on their economic class status. Several participants in interviews and focus groups reiterated that lack of time is one important factor that particularly affects low-income Latinos. Emily Murphy is the policy manager at OneAmerica, the largest statewide immigrant rights advocacy organization in Washington. She explains how

voting is often not a top concern for people who are overworked or worried about being able to meet their basic needs:

“I think one of the other things that’s really important here is that over the last number of decades, the middle class has been dismantled. And I think that also has huge ramifications for engagement in electoral politics, especially among communities of color, especially among Latino and immigrant communities. I think when you are forced to work two or three jobs to put food on the table for your family and you come home and you have less and less time to focus on the things that matter, like spending time with one’s family, it becomes a luxury to be able to participate in civic life when more and more of your time has to go to just making ends meet. If you don’t know where your next meal is gonna come from, on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it makes having that sort of—well, I’ll say that I think that unfortunately, because of the way the middle class has been systematically dismantled and the continued assault on the working class, it makes civic participation a luxury that is available only to those who can really afford it.”

Socioeconomic class and the associated theme, lack of time, were particularly prominent in the focus groups in Central and Eastern Washington. Nidia*, a participant in Pasco, explains how these factors interact with others to discourage working people in that region from voting:

“I think the reason that people don’t vote that much in Washington, mostly in Eastern, is because there are so many factory workers; there are so many agriculture workers. My mom, I had to strongly encourage her to register to vote, and she still doesn’t vote. She doesn’t know. She tells me “you vote; your vote will count.” And I feel like maybe that’s—then, I see that in my family as well... they’re naturalized citizens, and yet they still don’t vote. They don’t see the importance of it. They think somebody who knows about it, they’ll vote the right way. They don’t see how much their single vote can go towards it. As he was saying, there’s so many workers, all they can think about is going to work, working for 12 hours from the factory, like my mom doesn’t come back to home. Work and come back. She has no time to think about stuff like that. She leaves it to me. And a lot of people do that; they leave it to someone else, thinking they’ll make the right choice, and they don’t see the consequences it comes down to.”

Educational achievement is one more critical factor that is particularly applicable to young eligible voters. Several interview participants mentioned that Latinos disproportionately receive a relatively low quality of education because they tend to

have lower incomes, and schools in poor neighbourhoods have fewer resources. An anonymous interview participant in Seattle describes how this experience can influence the inclination to vote for young Latinos who grow up in the U.S.:

“You don’t have great after-school programs. You don’t have great-quality education. You’re supposed to go to public school, but the classrooms are [not good]. You know what I mean? No-one is upkeeping, no-one is actually taking care of the things that are supposed to be important. So you have that discontent. What do you have? Basically, you have a lot of community factors that are pulling you away, that consume your time. One is mostly trying to find a job, put food on the table. Another is, you really care about family; family is a rock of participation. And those things are great qualities, but they don’t necessarily teach you how to be a citizen. And so, unless you start from a very, very young age, and have the idea that this is something that I’m supposed to do and I’m supposed to be aware of, and not only that I’m supposed to be aware of, but everyone in my school and everyone on my block and everybody in my neighborhood and everyone at my school and and everyone that goes to my church needs to be aware of and needs to know what’s going on, it’s like a snowball. If the snowball doesn’t start, it’s not gonna get rolling. And so that’s like a fundamental breakdown. You essentially just don’t have trust of any institution that’s supposed to be benefiting you. People aren’t coming and knocking on your parents’ doors. And that’s another thing; it’s generational, too.”

The immigration status of family members is another relevant factor, as is the number of generations that one’s family has lived in the U.S. Having family members who are non-citizens, particularly one’s parents, means that Latinos born in the U.S. are less exposed to a culture of voting. Dr. José Luis García-Pabón, a professor at Washington State University Extension, explains this effect:

“I would think that there are a lot of families that have actually kind of a mixed status. Some family members are U.S. citizens eligible to vote; some other people in that same family might be actually people without documents. So those eligible to vote, just seeing that some family members are not able freely to participate, may decide not to participate. It’s some kind of, if you’d like, I don’t find a better term, but maybe, you know, solidarity, saying, “well, if you’re not allowed to vote, then why should I?” And they just stay at home. That might be another factor that prevents eligible voters from actually voting.”

With relation to immigration status, increasingly harsh immigration enforcement measures over the past 10 years have contributed to a climate of fear and distrust

towards institutions among Latinos. This fear and distrust is another important theme, as it has fostered an unwillingness to engage with government agencies even among U.S. citizens, according to several interview and focus group participants. Emily Murphy, policy manager with OneAmerica, describes how fear of immigration enforcement has eroded trust in public institutions:

“I think there’s a lot of municipal governments that are doing a lot of great work. One thing that comes to mind is, the King County Council just passed their detainer ordinance that would not, that would prevent immigration and Customs Enforcement from using local police...”

Felipe Rodriguez-Flores: “As immigration enforcement officers?”

Emily Murphy: “Yes, exactly. Thank you. So, I think building that kind of trust in immigrant communities is hugely important in order to foster greater participation. If you are afraid—and rightly so, because of programs like Secure Communities—that if you call the police and your aunt is going to be taken away and deported and you’ll never see that person again, it disincentivizes access to law enforcement and reporting crimes and reporting domestic violence and all those kinds of things.”

4.3.2. *Regional factors*

Barriers to political access vary across the state. In Western Washington, particularly the Seattle metro area, numerous organizations work to register, inform, and mobilize voters, but because Latinos are a relatively small and less active share of the electorate, those organizations tend to be disconnected from them. On the other hand, Latinos in Washington State are most concentrated in Central and Eastern Washington. However, instead of having greater political power in the eastern counties, Latinos face additional obstacles and marginalization. Matt Barreto explains this regional divide:

“I would say that... the largest problem is definitely in Central and Eastern Washington. That’s where we have our lowest rates of registration, lowest rates of turnout. That’s where we have the lowest rates of representation, so you have the least number of Latino candidates, you have the least number of groups doing outreach to Latinos, and the folks who are elected, the power structure in Central and Eastern Washington historically has tended to be against Latino and immigrant interests. And so there you have the least amount of efficacy. Whatever barriers exist are much, much stronger there. Here, you may have less barriers and you might have elected officials who are a bit more responsive, but you still don’t have that active engagement here in

Western Washington. And so I think there are different types of barriers in Western Washington. People are more likely to be ignored than to be attacked or discriminated against. But even just being ignored means that you don't have an equal seat at the table, so you know, there's still definitely barriers. It's harder for the population to be visible here in Western Washington, because as a percentage, it's only about 10% of the overall population."

Similarly, according to Maru Mora Villalpando, Latinos in Washington have substantially different experiences depending on their region and level of income. In her view, low-income Latinos encounter additional barriers to participation, especially in Central and Eastern Washington, where Latinos tend to be less wealthy and less educated than in the western part of the state. She explains the importance of distinguishing between the experiences of Latinos from different regional locations and socioeconomic statuses:

"When people move here, you also have different levels of class. Immediately, most of us come from countries where classism is really strong, and so that also is part of this group here in the U.S. You will see these more middle-class, better-off Latinos versus the low-income Latinos, and the ones that don't have very formal education. The ones that have very formal education and have a higher income, when they give you their input, you'd assume that's the generality, but that's not it. And so I think that all the topics you mentioned are true, but they apply differently to each of the communities... Low-income Latino communities are more worried about the day-to-day issues. And so, unless it's something that's really critical to them in the moment, I think that's when they will respond by voting. And so that's the difference. I guess that it's really important that when we're talking about the Latino vote, it's so broad and so complicated that that's why I mentioned the eastern versus the western side. Because in Eastern Washington, the majority of Latinos that vote are low-income."

Another important difference between Western and Eastern Washington is the abundance of institutional resources to contact voters in the King County area, versus the relative scarcity of groups and resources in the eastern part of the state. Whereas King County has numerous civic and political organizations with strong voter engagement operations, very few groups do that kind of work in other parts of the state. Patricia*, a focus group participant in Quincy, explains the disparity in institutional resources and participation for Latinos across the state:

“In the west side of the mountains, they do get together; they’re very united. And we’re not, on the east side. And I would really like, for those reasons they get together and they do this, to see a Hispanic caucus in Grant County. So that they can get together and talk... Latinos do not get out to vote. I think most of them are from the west side if they vote. They’re very united.”

A climate of fear, hostility, and intimidation towards Latinos and towards immigrants is another defining feature of the political environment in the Central and Eastern Washington counties that have large Latino populations. Concurrently, Eastern Washington is more politically right-leaning than the West is. Diego*, a participant in the focus group in Pasco, explains how these factors can converge to suppress political participation and expression:

“Here, we are in a place that is different from Seattle. If you are comparing, you are comparing oranges with mangos or whatever. Things aren’t the same. Here, we have more Republicans; this place is more controlled by the Republican political party. And if you look, Seattle is more controlled by Democrats. As you travel towards there, over here, you find an attitude that we the *Hispanos* are their slaves, like, we have to be in the fields, doing their work. And if we get into voting or we get into politics, there are repercussions, reprisals. It’s possible that many feel that, “why would I get involved in that? I know that my boss is Republican...” About 30% of the population here leans towards Democrats, and 70% leans towards Republicans. So employers put on a kind of intimidation, a pressure, that I couldn’t, we couldn’t accuse anyone specifically, but all in all, it’s a culture; it’s something you feel right away. All the members of Congress, the representatives, senators, the majority of all of them are Republican. That tells you everything (translated from Spanish).”

Martin Valadez, a professor at Columbia Basin College in Pasco, also described an unwelcoming climate in Eastern Washington as a deterrent to political participation for Latinos. He cited negative comments about Latinos on the websites of local newspapers, and alluded to a closely related phenomenon, racially polarized voting:

“I think the main difference is... like I said, some people feel some hostility towards Latinos in some sectors that might not be the same on the Westside. You know, there’s people who are anti-immigrant, but it’s not as noticeable as here. And you know, some level of racism towards Latinos. I don’t know that there’s folks who think that if they run, if a Latino-surnamed candidate runs in this area, that they’re gonna win.”

As mentioned in the literature review section of this report, Latinos are heavily underrepresented in the counties where they constitute the largest shares of the population, almost all of which—with the exception of Skagit County—are in Central and Eastern Washington. Two participants described one recent school board election in Yakima that caused outrage among local residents. David Reyes explains:

“Recently, Graciela Villanueva, we assisted with her campaign. You know, I provided a little bit of in-kind time to her campaign and just tried to help her out a little bit. We provided her VAN access; we provided her walking lists. And she went up against a candidate who had no idea what she was doing, or who just dropped out of the race. Pretty much, Jeni Rice, you can look it up in the Yakima Herald—she dropped out of the race entirely. And Graciela ran a campaign, and she was appointed two or three years ago. She did a good job; she was endorsed by many different labor organizations; she was endorsed by conservative House members like Norm Johnson... she was endorsed by all these different people, and she got crushed. The other person dropped out, and said she no longer wanted to run, and won by like, 30 points, in Yakima. That’s just like, having a Latino name in Yakima obliterates your chances of winning. It doesn’t matter how qualified you are; it doesn’t matter all the endorsements—you’re still gonna get obliterated... So, it’s sad, but that’s just unfortunately how it is.”

The fact that Latino candidates tend to lose races against non-Latino opponents in communities with large Latino populations is a significant discouraging factor for eligible voters in those communities. Lauren McCullough is the fellowship coordinator with the Washington Bus, a youth-centred political organization; she was also one of the researchers for the State of the State for Washington Latinos project at Whitman College that comprehensively examined local elections in the 10 most heavily Latino counties. She says that when she was “...doing a lot of interviews in Sunnyside, it was never explicit, but the idea that I kept getting is that there was a lack of energy. People were tired of trying the same old tactics and not getting results.”

Dr. Paul Apostolidis also pointed out that as of 2009, the 10 most highly Latino counties by share of population did not have a single Latino serving on special district boards, such as fire districts, hospital districts, or cemetery commissions. In addition to elected offices, participants in Pasco and Quincy reported that there is a general lack of Latinos in leadership positions in government and civic institutions across the board in those communities.

4.4. Motivators for electoral participation

As well as commenting on inhibitors for political participation, informants in the focus groups and interviews shed light on factors that encourage people to vote. Again, they overwhelmingly agreed with the six King County focus group themes—(1) rights, (2) good of the community, (3) local impact, (4) inspiring candidates, (5) important ballot measures, and (6) personal relevance—while adding some insights about the relationship between these factors, as well as one more critical motivator. Electoral outreach emerged as a crucial motivator for electoral participation; its presence can be a powerful positive influence, just as its absence can be a deterrent. For example, it was the first additional theme that a participant brought up in the Burlington focus group:

Manuel*: Those are, yeah, I agree with all of the above. Why not? That's exactly the reasons people become involved.

Pedro*: Yeah, initiatives certainly are very important, and the local impact. You know, one of the other important reasons that I vote is that the politician actually takes the time to come out and talk to you. To connect directly, that's very important to me.

Most interview participants, as well as participants in all three focus groups, spoke about the importance of voter education and mobilization efforts. They also explained how these factors are interconnected. For example, David Reyes explains how personal relevance and good of the community often coalesce for Latinos:

“With Latinos especially, I think the good of the community is also very much intertwined with personal relevance. It's not just individual based; it's not just about the individual. When I think of personal relevance, I also think about betterment of the community as well. I think that personal is very much branched out to the community. For Latinos, within our communities or within our identity, I think that's a huge part of our identity, is making sure that when the community is helped, the individual is helped, not the other way around.”

As an example, Emily Murphy cites immigration reform as an issue that elicits solidarity among Latinos, regardless of immigration status:

“I think those six measures make perfect sense, and that’s part of what I was trying to express before, is issues, whether it’s ballot measures or the platform of a particular candidate—inspiring candidate, at that. And then good of the community, I think one example of that is comprehensive immigration reform. You see quite a bit of solidarity among the Latino community; even though a particular individual may have citizenship or may be a green card holder, they still stand in solidarity with the 11 million undocumented folks in the country. So I think in the Latino community especially—and I think this tends to be a common theme among immigrant groups—there’s an incredible sense of solidarity that is anchored in the good of the community. So, yeah, those six issues definitely make sense.”

When deployed in combination with robust voter outreach efforts, these themes might have a powerful mobilizing influence on Latino eligible voters. Matt Barreto has conducted research and developed strategies for many political campaigns across the U.S. with Latino Decisions, a campaign consulting firm. He suggests that themes such as exercising rights and good of the community can be political messages:

“Community-oriented messages are very salient with Latinos. They tend to work. The ones that tend to work the best are the ones that have a little bit of threat embedded in them. And maybe that’s a little bit related to rights, but the idea that there are some people, whether it’s in Washington State or nationally in the Congress, who are attempting to make it harder for immigrants to live here, who are attempting to roll back opportunities for immigrants. And when you tell people that information and you expose them to that threat, it really gets their attention and gets them interested in politics.”

4.5. Summary: the electoral system is flawed, and excludes Latinos

Overall, the majority of interview and focus group participants recognized that a variety of interconnected barriers exists that discourages many Latinos in Washington State from participating in elections, even when they are U.S. citizens and they have the right to do so. The majority of interviewees characterized this complex of barriers in a variety of ways, including historical oppression and institutional racism¹⁶. Although I did

¹⁶ Institutional racism refers to structures at the institutional and societal, rather than individual, levels that disadvantage people based on their actual or perceived identity. For example, one

not have this specific frame in mind when I began my research—and in fact, was surprised and unprepared to discuss it at first—the second person I interviewed, Lauren McCullough, brought up the concept of institutional racism:

“I would only say it just because it hasn’t been named. When I think back to the research that we did, at least, when I was a student doing State of the State, you know, you can talk about the way that people aren’t included in systems, and that’s one way of saying it, and I think the flip side of saying it that’s a little more explicit is that there are still institutional forms of racism that prevent people from being involved in systems kind of intentionally, or intentionally insofar as you’re not, you can say we have this thing called voting and everyone can do it, and that therefore brings everyone to the table; it’s just a matter of telling them that they should do it. But that doesn’t really get at the full picture when you look at communities have been systematically prevented from engaging in these types of things for like, their entire lives. Sometimes, I try to think about what an equitable model of civic engagement looks like that acknowledges those institutionalized systemic forms of racism and oppression.”

In fact, the concept of institutional racism encompasses many of the barriers identified in this study. In my thematic analysis, I was able to group the following themes—some of which overlap—into institutional racism: (1) at-large election systems, (2) candidates don’t win, (3) lack of Latino candidates, (4) polarized voting, (5) Voter Access Network, and (6) voter intimidation. Other barriers could also be connected to institutional racism, such as immigration enforcement policies that disproportionately target Latinos. David Reyes also brought up this concept as a central factor:

“That kind of is everything. I mean, it’s institutional racism on so many different levels... not wanting to spend some extra money on Spanish-language materials because it’s, I guess, too expensive. The criminal justice system, how the system interacts with the Latino community... Educational opportunity and how Latinos are, the vast majority of times people of color in general, Latinos especially, are in poor areas of town. They are at the edge of the education system. And education in Washington is based off of property tax... Your property taxes go into the school; that is what your schooling is. So schools on the south end are

British report defined institutional racism as “[t]he collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people (Green et al., 2000, 14).”

gonna be way different than up in Ballard because, you know, houses up here are worth a lot more money, so they're getting a lot more taxes... but it's not only property taxes, but it's also how schools raise money... It gives them the basic ability to buy those things that poor schools can't. When kids have [worse] education, they're less likely to go to college; they're less likely to have a chance to get involved in politics... college usually leads to activism. It's not translatable to them, in a lot of ways. And so that leads to criminalization and all these things, the school-to-prison pipeline."

In sum, the climate for Latino eligible voters in Washington could be much more welcoming than it is now, with the persistent presence of major structural, political, and cultural barriers to broader participation. Three interview participants alluded to a consistent theme: that elections are like a party, and only the people who have been invited will show up. Unfortunately, it seems that all too often, the guest list for who is actually invited to the party in Washington State through electoral structures and outreach tends to exclude Latinos.

5. Policy objectives, criteria, and measures

5.1. Objectives

5.1.1. Effectiveness

The primary objective of policies identified herein is to increase voter turnout rates among Latinos. Several reports and studies define the effectiveness of electoral efforts in terms of their impact on voter turnout (Goldstein and Ridout, 2002; Michelson, García Bedolla, and Green 2008; McDonald, 2009; Abrajano and Panagopoulos, 2011). Thus, the central consideration in implementing any given policy or program is the degree to which it would succeed in increasing electoral participation. These studies describe the percentage change in voter turnout observed as a result of various electoral efforts, although they do not generally specify particular scales or measures to assess the degree of effectiveness of different interventions.

A study by Abrajano and Panagopoulos (2011) examined the effectiveness of different types of English- and Spanish-language treatments to increase voter outreach. The authors described certain campaign mailers, which increased voter turnout by less than one percentage point, as modestly effective (651), while other types of voter mobilization efforts yielded increases in turnout of five percentage points or more. For the purposes of this policy evaluation, I define high effectiveness as an increase of over two points in turnout, and medium effectiveness as an increase of less than two points. Research supports the effectiveness of projects similar to most of the alternatives considered below.

5.1.2. Equity

My literature review and primary research illustrate several ways in which social inequities impact voter behaviour; therefore, equity is another key objective in this policy

area. My goal in evaluating alternatives is to identify those that would contribute to a more equitable, accessible, and welcoming electoral system for Latino eligible voters of diverse demographic backgrounds. The pursuit of greater equity requires a critical and intersectional analysis of the individuals and groups who are most likely to be marginalized, particularly along multiple categories of exclusion from social and political power. As Hankivsky and Cormier (2011) explain, applying intersectionality to policy analysis entails “looking beyond the most clearly visible dimensions of inequality (Weber, 2009) to recognize multiple and intersecting disadvantages underlying the construction of subject positions.” In turn, an intersectional approach can help to create policy alternatives that “better meet the needs of those individuals and groups most disadvantaged by social inequities (Rummens, 2003, 5 in Hankivsky and Cormier, 2011).” Therefore, my analysis of policy alternatives examines not only whether policies will positively impact participation among Latinos in general, but also their effect on the subgroups within the Latino population that have the lowest rates of participation.

5.2. Considerations

5.2.1. *Ease of implementation*

The degree of organizational and administrative complexity that each alternative would entail is key. This includes the legislative process—if applicable—as well as staff training, administrative and programmatic reorganization, changes in infrastructure, and evaluation. An alternative that is easy to implement requires little to no additional organizational capacity, and only slight modifications to other existing policies. Alternatives towards the more complex end of the spectrum may require the creation of new agencies or organizations, or substantial changes in protocol or legislation.

5.2.2. *Cost*

Given other pros and cons, the financial impact of the policies and programs to be evaluated is an important consideration. Public, non-profit, and private agencies operate within the constraints of existing budgets, so a thorough policy evaluation needs to ensure that alternatives to be adopted can be put in place using available financial

resources. Costs could be associated with additional staffing salaries, capital expenditures, consulting fees, or legal fees, among other components.

5.2.3. *Political feasibility*

Political feasibility refers to the likelihood that each alternative will be adopted, given the political climate and the processes that are necessary for its implementation. The level of support for, or opposition to, certain policies and programs among key legislators and groups in Washington is relevant to evaluating this set of policy alternatives, as it will largely determine their viability. Any policy alternative under consideration will need enough support from government bodies and interested parties. The parties in question are:

1. Washington State Legislature – Approval through the state legislature is necessary for the options that entail legislative action.
2. Local government organizations – This category includes groups such as the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Counties.
3. Community advocates – This broad category includes civic leaders, non-profits engaged in electoral work, and other advocacy groups.

5.3. Evaluation criteria and measures

The following scoring system that evaluates the performance of each alternative under consideration, in accordance with each of the objectives and considerations identified above. To highlight their importance, the score for the two policy objectives has twice the weight of the score for the three policy considerations.

Table 5.1. Objectives, criteria, and measures for policy evaluation

Criterion	Definition	Measure	Score
Effectiveness (x2)			
Increase in voter participation	Degree to which the policy alternative increases voter participation	High: Increases electoral participation by more than 2%	High (4)
		Medium: Increases electoral participation by less than 2%	Medium (2)
		Low: Does not increase voting	Low (0)
Equity (x2)			
Intersectional distribution	Distributional impact on Latinos who are disadvantaged in multiple overlapping social locations	High: Increases participation of multiply marginalized Latinos	High (4)
		Medium: Increases participation among the most privileged Latinos	Medium (2)
		Low: Does not benefit Latinos in particular	Low (0)
Cost			
Financial cost	The fiscal impact of the policy alternative	High: No additional expenditures needed	High (2)
		Medium: Up to \$50,000 needed	Medium (1)
		Low: More than \$50,000 needed	Low (0)
Ease of implementation			
Degree of complexity	The administrative ease or difficulty of implementing the policy alternative	High: Requires no additional structures	High (2)
		Medium: Requires simple additional infrastructure	Medium (1)
		Low: Has cumbersome requirements	Low (0)
Political feasibility			
Viability based on stakeholder support or opposition	The degree of support or opposition for the policy alternative among interested groups	High: Broad support from political, civic groups	High (2)
		Medium: Receives a mix of support and opposition from stakeholders	Medium (1)
		Low: No public support, or overwhelming opposition	Low (0)

6. Policy alternatives

The policy alternatives considered herein include a variety of legislative and programmatic interventions to increase voter participation among Latinos. Each of these options was recommended by two or more interview participants, and all are supported by studies and academic literature. All of these policy alternatives could be enacted and implemented within the state, through action by the Washington State legislature or by government agencies and community organizations. Therefore, I have not included federal legislation in the scope of policy evaluation, such as immigration reform to grant unauthorized immigrants legal status and the eventual opportunity to gain citizenship.

In addition, these alternatives are all directly related to voting, but they are by no means the only ones that could increase civic engagement among Latinos. Local and state-level measures to limit harsh immigration enforcement practices could have a significant positive impact¹⁷. For example, King County recently approved an ordinance designed to prevent deportations of unauthorized immigrants, which frequently result from contact with local law enforcement officers, except in cases where individuals are suspected of having committed serious crimes, such as burglary or assault (Leigh, 2013). In addition, broad policies aimed at reducing disparities in educational quality and

¹⁷ In a comprehensive study of the impact of immigration enforcement policies in Eastern Washington, Peterson, Merritt, and May (2012) found that “Latinos of all different generations and backgrounds are, at best, too insecure or, at worst, too afraid to be involved in politics and civic life and to speak up for their rights and needs (66).” The authors also found that these effects mirror studies across the U.S., which show that immigration enforcement nationwide has deterred Latinos from participating in civic life.

boosting high school graduation rates among Latinos would likely also result in greater electoral participation¹⁸.

6.1. Washington State Voting Rights Act

A policy to replace at-large election systems for local elections could increase the likelihood that Latino candidates would win elections, and subsequently increase electoral participation among Latinos. According to Dawson, Kiely, and McCullough (2012), “[s]ubstantial bodies of scholarly literature have established that at-large electoral systems have a tendency to restrict minority representation.” Conversely, they cite a study of local jurisdictions in Texas that found that when those systems changed to district-based systems, dramatic increases in minority representation followed (5). Such changes could have a significant impact in the regions of Washington State where large Latino populations reside, but where few Latino candidates have won elections.

In turn, the successful elections of minority candidates encourage minority voters to participate in elections. In relation to the WVRA, Dr. Paul Apostolidis explains how more representative elections encourage greater participation:

“[W]hat people perceive in a more immediate sense as the barriers that directly affect them can be connected to policies or legal structures of which they’re unaware... And people are generally not that aware of the benefits to minority candidacies that come from shifting from at-large to district elections. And so, that’s one of those things, that when, the record shows—as scholars have analyzed these different cases—that when municipalities make the shift to district elections, then a number of those barriers that people talked about, people’s views on those things and their experiences in relation to those issues start to change. So they start to become less discouraged. They start to feel like their vote does count more, because there are more people running who communicate with them in terms that they relate to and about issues that really matter to them, and they feel that their vote does make a difference more; they feel that they have a personal stake in what happens.”

¹⁸ Higher educational achievement is closely associated with voter turnout. Among Latino eligible voters in the 2012 presidential election, college graduates voted at twice the rate (70.8%) as did people without a high school diploma (35.5%), while turnout among high school graduates (39.4%) and people with some college studies (54.2%) followed the same trend (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013, 12).

The Washington State Voting Rights Act (WVRA) is a bill that would incentivize jurisdictions with at-large elections to move towards other election systems, such as single-member-district or hybrid systems. It is modeled after the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA), which California enacted in 2002. Like the CVRA, the WVRA would allow voters in a jurisdiction to sue in state-level court, rather than through the lengthy federal litigation process. As in California, the WVRA would require local jurisdictions to change their election systems if plaintiffs could prove that racially polarized voting was taking place, and that it was preventing members of a protected group from electing candidates of their choice (Washington State Legislature 2014c 1-4).

The CVRA has pushed many city councils and school districts to change the way their members are elected. Lawsuits—most of them settled out of court—have brought about several of these changes. On the other hand, many local jurisdictions have changed their districts without going through litigation (Fleming, 2013).

The Washington House of Representatives approved the WVRA in 2013, but the bill did not become law because the other body in the state legislature, the Senate, did not consider the bill before the legislative session ended. In the 2014 session, the House once again approved the WVRA, and the bill had its first Senate committee hearing in late February (Washington State Legislature, 2014c). However, the Washington State legislative session ended in March 2014 before the full Senate discussed the bill, which means that it will not become law this year (Washington State Legislature, 2014d).

6.2. 16- and 17-Year-Old Preregistration

Voter preregistration would allow people under the age of 18 to preregister to vote, with their registration becoming active once they reach voting age. This would remove one of the hurdles in the electoral process for the age group with the lowest voter turnout rates in Washington and across the United States. A report advocating for a national preregistration law argues that “[t]he disproportionately low voter registration rate among young Americans is especially alarming given that the vast majority of citizens actually participate in elections once they are registered. In 2008, over ninety

percent of all registered voters cast ballots (Cherry, 2012, 484).” Dr. Matt Barreto, a national expert in electoral participation among Latinos, supports preregistration:

“Your registration’s not active until you turn 18. But you could go to high schools, set up tables, and have every single kid in the senior class register to vote. And once they turn 18, they’ll get their official registration card. This has been very effective, and if we truly want more people registering, then we should pass this policy... Other states have done this without any problems, and it helps encourage young people to register. So, because our population is so much younger, that would help Latinos.”

Currently, six U.S. states and the District of Columbia allow 16-year-olds to preregister to vote; eight U.S. states allow 17-year-olds to do so. These 15 jurisdictions are geographically and politically diverse¹⁹. Similarly to the WVRA, the Washington House of Representatives approved a Motor Voter Pre-Registration bill in January of 2014, after a similar bill cleared the House in 2013 but did not receive a Senate vote that year. This bill would allow 16- and 17-year-olds in Washington State to preregister to vote when they go to the Department of Licensing to obtain a document such as a driver’s license or identification card. Under current federal law, licensing agents must to ascertain whether applicants for those documents wish to register to vote. If they do, agents provide applicants with registration forms, which must then be completed and returned to the Secretary of State’s office (Washington State Legislature, 2014b, 1-2). In 2014, the legislative session once again ended without the Senate having voted on this bill (Washington State Legislature, 2014d).

6.3. Increased electoral outreach to Latino eligible voters

An increase in electoral outreach efforts towards Latinos and other communities of colour could help to encourage greater participation among people who are currently disengaged from the electoral process. Outreach encompasses activities at every stage of the electoral process, such as voter registration, education, electoral campaigning,

¹⁹ As of January 2014, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. allowed 16-year-olds to preregister to vote. In addition, Alaska, California, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Nevada, Oregon, and Wyoming allowed 17-year-olds to preregister (Washington State Legislature, 2014b, 2).

and get-out-the-vote efforts. Informants mentioned that government agencies, non-profit agencies, political parties, and candidates all play important roles in electoral outreach.

Speaking generally about electoral outreach in the United States, Goldstein and Ridout (2002) asserted that “political mobilization—variously labeled voter contact, get-out-the-vote (GOTV), or the voter canvass—matters (Blydenburgh, 1971; Cutright, 1963; Gerber and Green, 2000; Gosnell, 1927; Katz and Eldersveld, 1961; Kramer, 1970; Merriam and Gosnell, 1924; Nagel, 1987)” and that “[r]ecent studies... have taken this basic finding a step further, arguing that mobilization is not only an important determinant of individual participation, but that decreases in either its amount—which would reduce its net effect—or quality—which could reduce its effectiveness—can explain the mystery of declining turnout in the United States over the past 40 years (Kernell and Jacobson, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Schier, 2000) (3-4).”

Several interview participants cited a lack of financial resources for organizations that work closely with Latino communities in both Eastern and Western Washington as an impediment to effective voter engagement. Maru Mora Villalpando, who has worked on numerous electoral campaigns, thinks that increased investment in outreach from organizations and candidates could make a large impact, especially in tandem with policy changes to require cultural competency training for elections officials:

“I think it would be great to have funding for those groups that are doing all the work, and groups that have a connection with people. So they know, okay, these people are potential voters; you know, they already registered to vote; what they need is now the information, how to go about it. That would be really, really helpful. It’s very simple. I think the solutions are not that complicated. I think the complicated part is, for one, to have those policies in place... but it’s also a matter of education on the candidates’ sides, because we can have all these wonderful systems, and we can have a lot of information from grassroots groups, but if you don’t have candidates paying attention to voters, how do we actually make people feel that their vote actually counts when even candidates think that they don’t need your vote? So, when we can have funding and structures on one side, we still need candidates to understand that they need the Latino vote.”

Cultural competency²⁰ would be a critical factor in the effectiveness of any electoral outreach project. Based on comments from interview participants, the following components are essential to culturally competent outreach:

- Addressing topics of concern to Latino residents
- Providing materials in Spanish
- Using familiar and easy-to-understand terminology
- Collaborating with trusted leaders in each community
- Accessing existing community networks.

Another important dimension of cultural competency is youth-focused outreach, which includes empowering young leaders to engage other young people, as well as using platforms and messages relevant to young eligible voters. Several interview participants pointed out that since a large segment of the Latino electorate in Washington is young, outreach efforts need to take into account the concerns and experiences of young people. One interview participant said that electoral outreach should not just focus on “people who are married homeowners.” Simultaneously, voter outreach programs specifically aimed at youth need to take into account the cultural diversity of Washington State’s youngest eligible voters.

6.4. Increased coordination of electoral outreach efforts

Coordination among groups that are already pursuing electoral outreach, or between election-focused groups and various types of community service organizations, could also enable more concerted efforts to increase electoral participation among Latinos and other ethnic groups. For example, McDonald (2009, 4) found that increased collaboration between school administrators and election administrators yielded greater success for voter preregistration efforts in Florida and Hawaii.

²⁰ According to the Office of Minority Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), “Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations (HHS 2014).”

Rather than expanding existing organizational infrastructure, this alternative would entail collaboration among different entities through joint efforts and information-sharing. Such collaboration could allow organizations to identify current areas of strength, as well as gaps. For example, government agencies like the Secretary of State and county auditors, which currently administer elections and provide training and materials, could partner with service providers that do not currently engage in voter registration and education but work closely with Latinos. Lauren McCullough explains the value in this type of undertaking:

“I think there are a lot of groups that tend to do community-based and/or service work, and then separate groups that tend to do voter registration and politics. I know this isn’t super specific, but either funding and further developing organizations that are already doing this, or helping provide support to people who are interested in starting organizations that merge electoral and community organizing could also be a really good way to build community power.”

Because Washington State has a large network of organizations that actively engage eligible voters throughout the state, collaboration could help to focus and direct existing resources towards efforts to increase participation among Latinos and other communities of colour. Through increased coordination, organizations could focus on their areas of strength and take advantage of their unique position in order to maximize the impact of their efforts. Informants also said that social service agencies that work closely with Latino populations can be effective in registering and educating eligible voters, provided with the appropriate training and resources.

Collaboration between various types of organizations to improve electoral outreach efforts could provide distinct benefits, but such a task would present some challenges. In a study about collaboration between schools and community groups, Tett et al. (2001) wrote that “where professionals share a common purpose, where they are able to work jointly and where they are able to build up trust over time, then partnerships are successful. Collaboration, however, has endemic problems. These arise both from the different priorities that agencies establish and from the different definitions of ‘need’ that govern their work. (120)” In spite of these difficulties, Tett found that collaboration produced important benefits, including two that could apply to electoral outreach: “access to a wider range of skills and expertise” and “the co-ordination of a range of

different services which contribute to educational work in communities (111).”

6.5. Investment in statewide leadership development

Leadership development programs can help to build capacity and social capital, especially in communities where Latino populations are large but civic participation among Latinos is low. Leadership training aimed at Latino youth could have a particularly large impact. A study of a high school community service component and a program called Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) in Quincy found that participation in these activities led students and parents to become more civically and politically involved (Maffucci, 2008, 3).

Leadership development could also help to prepare candidates for every level of public office, which would be a further catalyst for greater civic participation among people who are currently disengaged. More generally, leadership development can facilitate the creation of community organizations in places that lack local mechanisms to inform and mobilize eligible voters. Dr. José Luis García-Pabón explains the importance of tailoring leadership development programs to the need of each locality:

“I think you need to have people that are community members doing the educational piece. So, you know, things like you have a community leader who is already known and respected by the community members, train him or her, and have him or her actually educate those community members about those topics. So that’s one way. And for that, obviously you need the right materials, and the right training, and all those kind of things... And the other thing is, as I said, certainly, it’s not only the narrow, you know, yes, participating in elections or in the community life or in civic life, but we need to look at it more kind of holistically. So you have to address the concerns of the community. And if the concerns of the community say, for example, diabetes, well, you have to address that in order to address the election slash participation aspect. And you need to keep in mind, actually, what is in the minds of the community.”

Due to a lack of available literature about the impact of leadership on voter turnout, as well as my lack of information about existing leadership opportunities in Washington, I will not evaluate this as a policy alternative. However, it is an important option for communities and voting-rights advocates to explore.

6.6. Civic engagement curriculum in schools

Several participants in interviews, as well as the Pasco focus group, endorsed the idea of civics education in K-12 education. A statewide policy of including mandatory curriculum about voting could increase awareness of the electoral system and remove one of the main barriers identified in the interviews and focus groups, namely a lack of knowledge or understanding of the electoral process. Diana Perez, President of Southwest Washington League of United Latin American Citizens, thinks that the educational system should instill the importance of civic participation among youth:

“If the school system had mandatory voter registration, can you imagine? If the school system actually had a class about why it’s important for you to vote, this is your country. Instead of just talking about the subject, but really connecting it to—what is the word—patriotism. And so, voting is connected... I think that it should be a requirement for the school system to teach the heart of voting, why we vote, why it’s important to vote. It should be treated the same way as the common-core standards in education. Knowing that you can vote and what impact your vote can have is really based on education.”

Other participants who supported the idea said that civics education should go beyond discussing voting as an abstract concept. Rather, it should connect to students’ everyday concerns, and explain how they can make an impact through participation. In 2009, the Washington State Board of Education added a new civics requirement for students graduating from high school in 2016 and beyond. This curriculum includes the following mandatory elements:

- a) Federal, state, and local government organization and procedures;
- b) Rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington State and United States Constitutions;
- c) Current issues addressed at each level of government; and
- d) Electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda (Washington State Board of Education, 2013).

I will not analyze the creation of a curricular civics requirement as a potential policy option, given that the state recently put one in place. However, the impact of this curriculum on voter turnout could be assessed over time, and civics education could be enhanced to make it more effective.

7. Policy analysis

7.1. Evaluation summary

This table shows the score that each alternative received under each evaluation criterion. An explanation of the rationale for each score follows.

Table 7.1. Policy evaluation summary

Policy/ Criterion	Washington State Voting Rights Act	16- and 17-year-old preregistration	Increased outreach	Increased coordination
Effectiveness (x2)	4	4	4	2
Equity (x2)	4	2	4	2
Cost	0	1	0	2
Ease of implementation	0	1	1	1
Political feasibility	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
TOTAL	9	9.5	10.5	8.5

7.2. Washington State Voting Rights Act

Effectiveness (4) – The WVRA has the potential to induce numerous jurisdictions with large Latino populations to change their electoral systems. By way of comparison, as of 2013, the 2002 California Voting Rights Act had caused 79 school districts to voluntarily change their election systems by applying for a waiver—that is, permission not to require an electoral referendum in order to change systems—with the state board of education (Fleming, 2013).

In a regression analysis of elections in 5 cities across the U.S., Barreto (2007) found that Latinos vote at significantly higher rates when viable co-ethnic candidates run. Another study in Southern California found that turnout among Latinos was higher in majority-Latino districts than in non-Latino-majority districts, sometimes by more than 5 percentage points (Barreto, Segura, and Woods, 2004).

Equity (4) – The WVRA would potentially have the largest impact in parts of Central and Eastern Washington where Latinos account for the largest shares of the local population and, simultaneously, are historically and systematically underrepresented in politics. The bill has the potential to substantially increase participation, specifically in some of the counties where Latinos have the lowest rates of voter turnout in the state, by creating the conditions under which more Latino candidates would run, more politicians would make efforts to win votes from Latinos, and more elected officials would be responsive to the needs and concerns of Latino residents.

Ease of implementation (0) – This policy would compel cities, counties, school boards, and other local jurisdictions in Washington to change their electoral systems by means of litigation or the threat of litigation. As in California, this process would entail a demographic analysis of jurisdictions, as well as a determination of whether racially polarized voting had taken place (Wiskcol, 2013). In California, 53 of the 79 districts that changed their systems voluntarily did so in or after 2012, (Fleming, 2013) which suggests that a comprehensive implementation of the CVRA is taking well over 10 years since the bill was enacted.

Cost (0) – The cost of voting-rights litigation for local jurisdictions or school boards could potentially reach the hundreds of thousands of dollars. In one CVRA lawsuit, a judge awarded plaintiffs against the Madera Unified School District \$162,500, although that was a fraction of the \$1.8 million billed by the plaintiffs' lawyers (Blood, 2010). Jurisdictions could avoid litigation by voluntarily changing their electoral systems. They would still need to incur costs of conducting studies to create districts that ensure fair representation; no data is available for what these costs may be.

Political feasibility (1) – A large coalition of at least 64 civil rights, non-profit, legal, labour, and civic organizations supports the Washington Voting Rights Act (Every Voter

Deserves a State Voting Rights Act, 2014). Among interview participants, the WVRA was the hands-down policy of choice to increase Latino voter turnout, with 10 of the 11 participants speaking about it, all of them in favour.

On the other hand, associations that represent cities, counties, and school districts have opposed the bill, and thus far, none of the Republican members of the State Legislature have co-sponsored it. While they expressed support for the goal of achieving more diverse representation in government, critics of the bill have called it a “litigation bill,” and cited uncertainty over costs, lack of definitions for concepts, and short timelines to implement changes among their reasons to object the bill (Washington State Legislature 2014c). The WVRA has stalled in the legislature in two legislative sessions, which suggests that more work is needed to win support for it. The political feasibility of the bill could improve if proponents found ways to address or mitigate concerns related to cost and ease of implementation.

7.3. 16- and 17-year-old preregistration

Effectiveness (4) – Preregistration could significantly increase voter registration and participation among young people in Washington State. A study of Florida’s preregistration program found that 78,000 minors preregistered in 2008. Furthermore, in that year’s presidential election, the turnout rate among young registered voters who had preregistered was two points higher than turnout among those who had registered upon becoming adults (Project Vote, 2010, 3). In addition, preregistration could significantly increase voter turnout among younger cohorts over their life cycle because several studies suggest that voting may become habitual (Panagopoulos and Abrajano, 2014, 116),

Some concerns have been expressed about the loss of registration for teenage eligible voters who move. However, a study on preregistration in Florida found that nearly as many 18-year-olds (83%) as the adult population as a whole (87%) remained in the same residence for at least a year. Meanwhile, only two-thirds (66%) of 25-year-olds maintained the same address for over a year (Project Vote, 2010, 4).

Equity (2) – This bill would target young Latinos, who are simultaneously the largest—and fastest-growing—age group of Latino eligible voters, and the group with the lowest voter turnout. Because Latinos have lower rates of high school graduation and of college attendance, preregistration in schools would result in the registration of many young people who would become more difficult for organizations to contact once they became adults.

With appropriate delivery and outreach, this bill has the potential to drastically boost participation among a significant, and largely underrepresented, segment of the Latino electorate. A study found that election officials were most successful in preregistering youth when school staff served as liaisons for the program (McDonald, 2009, 4) In Florida, the voter turnout rate in the 2008 presidential election among African Americans who had preregistered before turning 18 was 5 percentage points higher than the turnout rate for African Americans who registered after turning 18—double the difference among the electorate as a whole (Project Vote, 2010, 3-4). On the other hand, preregistration will not directly benefit adults—that is, the current electorate—but only potential future voters.

Ease of implementation (1) – This policy could be administered through existing agencies, and would require minimal additional changes. Counties would potentially need to modify their registration storage systems to process preregistrations (Washington State Legislature, 2013b, 3).

Cost (1) –There would be no additional cost to the Department of Licensing or to the Secretary of State to process voter preregistration forms when 16- and 17-year-olds obtain their driver’s licenses. A potential unknown cost for implementing this project would be the upgrade of counties’ computer systems to include registrations of people who are not eligible to vote (Washington State Legislature, 2013b).

Political feasibility (1.5) – In 2013, HB 1279 passed in the Washington House of Representatives but stalled in the Senate; this happened again in 2014. This policy has wide public support from advocates, including student groups, civil rights groups, and non-profit organizations. On the other hand, nobody spoke or submitted a written testimony against the bill during public hearings in the 2013 and 2014 legislative

sessions (Washington State Legislature, 2014b, 3). Addressing some of the implementation issues for this bill may help to win support and ensure its passage.

7.4. Increased electoral outreach to Latino eligible voters

Effectiveness (4) – Electoral outreach is one of the most significant determinants of voter turnout, and an increase in well-targeted and appropriate outreach could make a big difference in Washington. Increases in outreach to different groups of voters have been shown to increase their electoral participation. According to Abrajano and Panagopoulos (2011), [s]tudies suggest individuals are more likely to vote if they are asked to do so (Gerber & Green, 2000; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Latinos are no exception, and the field experiments conducted by Michelson (2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) reveal the importance of door-to-door, personal contact in mobilizing Latino voters” (646) Further, Abrajano and Panagopoulos found that nonpartisan radio ads in Spanish increased Latino voter turnout by 4.3 points in the 2006 midterm election (647).

As the interviews and focus groups in this study revealed, electoral outreach to Latinos in Washington has plenty of room for improvement, whether in King County, where existing organizations often avoid contacting Latino eligible voters for various reasons, or in Eastern Washington, where fewer resources exist. Across the state, funders and established groups could make a significant impact by increasing their organizational and financial commitments to inform and mobilize Latino voters.

Equity (4) – Focused, culturally competent outreach has the potential to increase voter participation among Latinos, including youth, monolingual Spanish speakers, low-income people, and people living in small cities. A report examining voter turnout efforts by community organizations to mobilize 82,000 low-propensity voters in California found that door-to-door canvassing in South Los Angeles increased voter turnout by between 5.2 and 8.5 percentage points (Michelson, García Bedolla, and Green, 2008). This disproves the notion that engaging Latino low-propensity voters is futile. Long-term investment would have the most significant impact in Latino communities, as it would help to develop leadership and create a culture of frequent voting.

Ease of implementation (1) – Ease of implementation could vary by region of the state, requiring few to no additional resources in King County but significant new infrastructure in Central and Eastern Washington. Existing organizations could expand outreach efforts significantly through their current tactics, simply by having additional resources and changing their focus to target often-ignored low-propensity voters.

Cost (1) – An increase in outreach would most likely require an increase in staff investment, particularly in areas of the state that currently have little or no infrastructure for electoral outreach. More effective outreach efforts would likely require sustained (i.e. multi-year) investment to support the growth of organizations in areas that lack resources, as well as the work of Latino organizations that already conduct effective and culturally sensitive work but are underfunded.

Political feasibility (1.5) – Most of the interview participants in my study agreed that more electoral outreach efforts to Latinos are needed. Conceptually, many groups support increasing outreach, but this option could also be met with resistance. According to interview participants, political parties, as well as certain funders, may not be inclined to make sustained financial investments to turn out voters who are not as easy to mobilize as the wealthier, more educated, and predominantly white voters whom campaigns tend to prioritize. On the other hand, interested organizations could adopt this alternative almost immediately and without legislation.

7.5. Increased coordination of electoral outreach efforts

Effectiveness (2) – A strategic refocusing of electoral outreach efforts could allow organizations to use existing resources to turn out voters whom current efforts are not reaching. Tett et al. (2001) found that generally, effective collaboration depended on three points: “added value from collaboration,” “extended service provision through collaboration,” and “complementarity in provision (108-109).” All three of these characteristics would potentially exist in inter-agency collaboration to boost electoral participation in Washington: groups could share valuable skills, knowledge, and assets; plan together to expand their collective reach, and take advantages of each partner’s unique position to maximize meaningful contact with the electorate. Nonetheless,

without increased investment in outreach or a change in institutional structures, this alternative would likely produce a modest increase in electoral turnout.

Equity (2) – Through increased coordination, non-profit and political organizations could build connections with eligible voters who are most excluded from the electoral process, such as youth and low-income eligible voters. For example, political and governmental agencies could collaborate with social service providers that work closely with Latinos to integrate voter registration and education efforts.

Ease of implementation (1) – Coordination could primarily entail a refocusing of existing organizations and resources, and in most cases not require any sort of legislation. This would make it easier to implement than other alternatives under consideration; in an ideal scenario, it would require at most some additional meetings between organizations that already carry out electoral outreach. However, inter-agency collaboration is often not so simple. According to Salisbury (2001), [r]esearchers emphasise that working collaboratively is not easy; it involves crossing occupational boundaries with professionals setting aside the ‘primacy’ of their own disciplines and demonstrating a receptivity and willingness to listen to the views of colleagues from other occupational settings. (237).” Tett (2001) found similar challenges, which included differences in perspectives and organizational cultures, as well as lack of time and money (109, 111). For these reasons, this alternative receives a medium score in implementability.

Cost (2) – Coordination of outreach efforts among existing organizations, by itself, would carry few or no additional costs. For this reason, this is the highest-scoring alternative in this criterion.

Political feasibility (1.5) – Similar to an increase in voter outreach, this alternative would be easier to adopt than the first two because it requires no legislative action. Some interview participants spoke enthusiastically about increasing coordination of electoral outreach efforts. On the other hand, some organizations could be reluctant to collaborate with others around electoral efforts. Also, many different interests and mandates exist among groups—e.g. political parties, government agencies, and non-profit entities—that conduct electoral outreach.

8. Recommendations

Having examined the strengths and disadvantages of each policy alternative, and having found them to score highly in different areas, I recommend the adoption and implementation of all four. Each option will address distinct areas of need among the Latino electorate, and in combination, they will have the greatest positive impact.

The Washington State Voting Rights Act and preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds are necessary institutional changes to create a more equitable and encouraging voting environment in Washington. The WVRA would transform the electoral systems of jurisdictions with heavily Latino populations, from a status quo that engenders disengagement and alienation into an environment in which many more residents feel that their votes count, their voices are heard, and their elected representatives understand their concerns. Its largest drawback is that it would require significant time, resources, and potential conflict in order to be fully implemented. Preregistration, on the other hand, would be among the easiest and most cost-effective available alternatives. It could cause a large positive shift in the participation of Washington State's future voters—but would not directly affect the adult electorate.

Along with the WVRA, an increase in electoral outreach to diverse Latino eligible voters would be the most effective and equitable policy alternative of the four under consideration. Washington State has remarkable room for improvement in every region of the state when it comes to electoral engagement of Latinos, whether it is in Eastern Washington—where few organizations exist that focus on electoral work—or King County—where many organizations exist, but they often systematically exclude Latinos from their outreach efforts. Outreach in schools and in diverse communities would also be crucial in order to amplify the effectiveness of the two recommended legislative policies. An increase in outreach activities could be costly; on the other hand, outreach activities could substantially boost Latino voter turnout without additional expenses through increased coordination among existing organizations.

9. Conclusions

Latinos account for over a tenth of Washington State’s population—a share that is growing faster than the state’s population—and yet, numerous institutional, cultural, and political barriers converge to drastically diminish their political representation and civic participation. However, several policy alternatives that would substantially correct this disparity and alleviate some of the barriers are within reach, including the Washington State Voting Rights Act, increased and more coordinated outreach electoral outreach efforts, and preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds. In tandem, the adoption of all of these measures would invigorate participatory democracy in Washington, and remedy the systematic exclusion of many marginalized groups within the state.

This capstone sheds light on some of the numerous reasons why, in 2014, the clout of the U.S. Latino electorate remains diluted, even as turnout among Latinos reaches record levels and the population experiences rapid growth. The research and analysis presented here build upon the existing literature on electoral participation among racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. by articulating the interconnections between existing electoral barriers for the Latino electorate in Washington State specifically, and by applying an intersectionality framework to understand how barriers affect Latinos differently based on other social locations. Using this framework in combination with a comprehensive literature review and qualitative research focused on recruiting diverse participants, I have mapped out the complex of barriers that deter Latinos from voting, described how these factors vary throughout some of the areas with the largest and most concentrated Latino populations in the state, and identified practical approaches to overcome or eliminate those barriers.

A combination of policies and programs to increase participation is necessary because electoral barriers in Washington are deep-rooted and complex, and they affect Latinos differently depending on factors that include—but are not limited to—their geographic location, age, class status, level of education, and experiences with

immigration policy. Latinos in Washington and elsewhere are not monolithic, but rather, are a strikingly diverse population in every conceivable way. An intersectional frame of analysis is helpful in providing a more nuanced understanding of experiences of members within the Latino population, as well as the ways in which particular approaches would benefit certain segments of the population.

Based on my deeply held principles of feminist scholarship and activism, and also on the insights provided by an intersectionality-based policy analysis framework, I am convinced that the process of implementing these and other alternatives is of critical importance. In order to successfully enact equitable and effective measures, diverse members of affected communities must be included in conversations about them, including Latino eligible voters from different age groups, class statuses, immigrant backgrounds, and regions across Washington State—as well as other members of their communities. The process of implementing these alternatives can also be instructive and insightful in the development of policies aimed at benefitting marginalized groups in Washington State and elsewhere.

Through my research, I learned about some of the ways that Latino leaders across Washington State have engaged in a multitude of efforts to educate, mobilize, and empower their own communities over several decades. The wide array of discouraging factors detailed in this report is not meant to take away from the political efforts and successes of Latinos in Washington, of which I have a limited understanding. Rather, I intend to highlight systemic and institutional forces that create challenges for those efforts, and to suggest concrete actions to level the playing field for all voters.

Future research could expand the work done in this capstone in a variety of directions. Research into the voting behaviour of, and barriers for, other immigrant and ethnic groups in Washington State could help to devise comprehensive strategies to build an inclusive electoral system in a multicultural state. Large-scale quantitative research could also use some of the barriers identified in this project and determine more precisely to what extent they affect different populations. Another important area of research is to look into which types of outreach would be most appropriate and effective in different communities across Washington. My hope is that my work can make at least a small but useful contribution to those conversations.

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Appendix A.

List of interview participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Interview date</u>
Dr. Jose Luis García-Pabón	WSU Extension	Dec. 10 th , 2013
Lauren McCullough	Washington Bus	Dec. 11 th , 2013
Dr. Paul Apostolidis	Whitman College	Dec. 16 th , 2013
Martin Valadez	Columbia Basin College	Dec. 16 th , 2013
Dr. Matt Barreto	University of Washington	Dec. 17 th , 2013
David Marcos Reyes	Win-Win Network	Dec. 17 th , 2013
Anonymous participant		Dec. 18 th , 2013
Emily Murphy	OneAmerica	Dec. 19 th , 2013
Maru Mora Villalpando	Latino Advocacy	Dec. 19 th , 2013
Diana Perez	SW WA LULAC	Jan. 28 th /29 th , 2014
Rep. Luis Moscoso	WA State Legislature	Feb. 5 th , 2014

Appendix B.

Interview schedule

1. Personal relationship to topic
 - i. Please tell me your name and affiliation.
 - ii. What is your involvement with the topic of civic participation among Latinos in Washington State?
 - iii. What do you think stands out about the environment for Latino eligible voters in Washington State?

2. Motivators to voting
 - i. What are the most important factors that motivate Latino eligible voters in Washington State to vote?
 - ii. Participants in recent focus groups have mentioned these six themes as motivators for voting: exercising their rights, good of the community, local impact, inspiring candidates, important ballot measures, and personal impact.
 - a. What do you think about these themes?
 - b. Would you add anything?

3. Barriers to voting
 - i. What are the most significant factors that deter or discourage Latino eligible voters in Washington State from voting?
 - ii. How do these barriers vary across regions of the state?
 - iii. Participants in recent focus groups have mentioned these nine themes as barriers to voting: an intimidating process; cynicism towards politicians, and uncompetitive races, as well as a perceived lack of: knowledge or understanding of the electoral process, influence or usefulness, campaign outreach, campaign materials in Spanish, Latino candidates, and civics education.
 - a. What do you think about these themes?
 - b. Would you add anything?

4. Policies to increase electoral participation
 - i. What is your experience with programs or policies increase voting among Latinos?
 - ii. Which policies or programs would be most effective in increasing electoral participation among Latino eligible voters in Washington?
 - iii. What would be some challenges about implementing these policies?
 - iv. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix C.

Focus group schedule

Introduction

1- Welcome and purpose of the session

To generate a conversation about reasons that encourage or discourage Latinos from voting in in this community.

2- Planned Activities

I will ask several questions, and the session will last an hour and a half. Before we start, I need to make sure everybody has read and signed a consent form. If anyone has not completed a consent form, please do so now. Do I have consent forms from all of you? (Wait for response) I will also ask you to complete a demographic survey at the end of our discussion; please do that before you leave. This focus group is part of a study for a master's thesis.

3- Disclosures

This study is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. You may leave now, or at any point in the focus group. Raise your hand if you wish to leave.

Information and answers are confidential. Personal data will not be included in the study. We also have an observer who will be taking notes. Everyone here has agreed to maintain confidentiality—please do not identify comments that anyone makes.

Does everyone understand?

4- Introductions

I will introduce myself to the group, and then participants will introduce themselves by first name only.

5- Group Agreements

- Speaking clearly and one at a time
- Need to hear from everyone/all participate
- Open discussion/speak to one another and to me
- No wrong answers; don't let the group sway you – not looking for consensus
- Any other suggestions?

Civic Participation

1- What do you think about civic participation?

a. Follow-up: What does civic participation mean to you? Is it important?

2- How much do you participate in civic life? What activities do you do in your community?

Voting and political information

- 1- What does voting mean to you?
 - a. Follow-up: What impact does voting have?
- 2- What encouraged you to register to vote?
- 3- What do you know about voting by mail?
- 4- When you receive your ballot, what's the number one question you have?
- 5- How informed do you feel about ballot measures?
- 6- Where do you access election information?
 - a. Examples: voter's pamphlet, campaign literature, local and national media, friends and family, social media, etc.
- 7- Whom do you ask when you have election questions?

Motivators for voting

- 1- What motivates you to vote?
 - a. Follow-up: are you likely to vote for local races, issues, etc.?
- 2- Participants in recent focus groups have mentioned these six themes as motivators for voting: exercising their rights, good of the community, local impact, inspiring candidates, important ballot measures, and personal impact.
 - a. What do you think about these themes?
 - b. Are these themes similar or different from your experience here?

Barriers to voting

- 1- What are some reasons why you haven't voted in the past?
- 2- Participants in similar focus groups in King County mentioned these nine themes as barriers to voting: an intimidating process; cynicism towards politicians, and uncompetitive races, as well as a perceived lack of: knowledge or understanding of the electoral process, influence or usefulness, campaign outreach, campaign materials in Spanish, Latino candidates, and civics education.
 - a. What do you think about these themes?
 - b. Are these themes similar or different from your experience here?

Organizational Resources

- 1- In Washington State, Latinos have historically voted in lower rates than the general population. Why do you think this is?
 - a. Follow-up: Is there anything about this community in particular, or about Washington State in general, that encourages or discourages voting among Latinos?
- 2- What would encourage people in Washington State to vote?
- 3- Do you have any last comments?

Appendix D.

Focus group participant survey

All information provided in this survey will remain confidential. Only the primary investigator (Felipe Rodriguez-Flores) will have access to surveys. Compiled data, but not individual surveys, may be used in future research projects to further advance understanding of opportunities and obstacles to political participation by Latinos. The purpose of this survey is to identify factors that influence electoral participation among Latinos in Washington State.

I understand and agree to the statement of purpose for this survey:

Signature

Date

Ethnicity:

City/Town:

U.S. Born Citizen

Age:

County:

Naturalized Citizen (No of years __)

1- Highest level of education completed (please select one)

____ Less than high school

____ High school degree

____ Trade or certificate degree

____ Some college studies

____ College degree

____ Postgraduate degree

2- How long have you been registered to vote? (Please select one)

____ Less than a year

____ 1 - 2 years

____ 3 - 4 years

____ 5 - 10 years

____ 11 - 20 years

____ Over 20 years

3- Where did you register to vote in Washington State?

____ Online

____ At the DMV

____ I sought out a paper form

____ Someone approached me

4- How often have you voted in past elections?

____ Always

____ Most of the time

____ A few times

____ Never

5- Who else in your family votes?

_____ Parents

_____ Siblings

_____ Grandparents

_____ Spouse

_____ Children

_____ Grandchildren

6- Do you talk to your children, family, and friends about voting?

_____ We talk about voting when an election is going on.

_____ We sometimes talk about voting when issues come up.

_____ We never talk about voting.

7- Did you parents vote when you were growing up?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ They started to vote recently

8- Please describe any relevant experiences or changes over the past 5 years that have influenced your electoral participation.