

Overcoming Obstacles to Latino Mobilization in Walla Walla, WA

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I. Introduction

This report aims to explore Latino political participation and civic engagement through mobilization efforts in Pasco, Washington. Identifying organizations and individuals involved in local mobilization endeavors, determining their respective activities, and assessing their impact on the Latino community remain within the general scope of this report. Additionally, this research specifically addresses the role of the local political environment and nonpartisan, advocacy, and associational organizations in shaping political participation and civic engagement within the community. The central questions of this study inquire: How does the political environment, as formed by local political parties, interact with Latino mobilization efforts? What kinds of strategies have developed in reaction to the particular political climate of Pasco?

Addressing the general scope of this research and answering my central questions serves a variety of purposes. First, an initial, though not exhaustive, documentation of past and current organizations involved in Latino political and civic engagement will provide a reference point for the community of Pasco. Second, a discussion of how Pasco fits within the larger context of Latino political mobilization and participation offers suggestions, support, and critique for current and past efforts. In this report I hope to contribute to the dialogue on current and future projects that work toward increasing the Latino community's involvement in political and civic life.

The majority of my research was conducted through formal and informal interviews as well as scholarly research. Interviews were completed in person and by phone. Organizations and individuals to interview were found through professors, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) representatives, newspapers, the presidential Democratic caucus in Pasco, and through the recommendations of other interviewees. Moreover, academic articles and books were used to support and enhance my findings in the field. A small portion of my research also involved observation by attending meetings and events of organizations that were studied.

A range of individuals facilitated this report. David Chassin, the chairman of the Franklin County Democratic Party, provided me with the party's current activities, expressed his views on the political environment of Pasco, and highlighted their current struggles. Tony Benegas, a leader from the Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly (RNHA), shared Republican efforts to increase Latino participation in Pasco. Gilberto Mendoza and Gabriel Portugal illustrated the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization's (HLLO) goals, activities, and proposals for future actions. Members have also shared their experiences with the HLLO and issues in the community that concern them through an HLLO meeting that I had the opportunity to attend. Additionally, Rosa Fernandez of the Franklin County Elections Office provided information about current non-partisan voter registration drives and Latino outreach initiatives on the county level. Finally, David Cortinas, the editor and CEO of *La Voz Hispanic Newspaper* shared his experiences as an active Latino member in Pasco. I thank all those involved in this study.

Based on my research, I have come to several conclusions about Latino political participation and civic engagement in Pasco. The first conclusion finds low levels of Latino political mobilization initiatives by individuals and organizations. The second finding realizes

the negative influence the political environment has had on current and past Latino mobilization efforts. The suspended Latino Vote Project of the Democratic Party, dissolving of key political nonpartisan organizations, and previous infighting among members of the Latino community as a result of partisanship created disappointment and hesitancy towards efforts to organize the Latino community in Pasco. Thirdly, political parties are contradicting traditional roles in minority mobilization efforts. Finally, despite the overall low level of political mobilization in Pasco, I have found that the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization (HLLO) is by far the most directly involved in politically mobilizing the general Latino community. In reaction to the obstacles that political parties invoke, the HLLO has taken on a different route from previous organizations through its focus on legislative action and education.

Drawing from these conclusions, several recommendations can be suggested to Latino political mobilization and civic engagement efforts in Pasco. Primarily, coalition building would greatly benefit and strengthen already existing activities within Pasco. Moreover, increasing Latino youth and working-class participation within organizations such as the HLLO, the Democratic Party, and the Republican Party is essential to achieving a larger impact on the Pasco Latino community. Finally, I would encourage current and future organizations and initiatives to be cautious of their leadership style and be sensitive to partisanship among the members of the organization.

II. Scholarly Literature

Latino political and civic engagement has become an increasingly important topic within the academic world. This comes as no surprise as reports have found that Latinos turnout to vote at lower rates than non-Latino voters. The NALEO Educational Fund report, *Latino Vote in Washington: A Demographic and Political Profile of Latinos in Washington* found that “there is nearly a 19% lag in participation between the Latino electorate and overall turnout (2007, 7).” The findings of this study show that there is an obvious need to increase Latino political and civic engagement in the state of Washington. Generally speaking, civic engagement includes any activity, at the institutional, organizational, or individual level, devoted to influencing the structure of government, the selection of government officials, or the policies of government (Macedo 2005, 6-7). Most scholars view political and civic engagement as interdependent and the terms will be used interchangeably for the purposes of this study. What is more, the terms *engagement* and *participation* are also used synonymously.

Earlier research on Latino political participation focused on the standard SES (socioeconomic status) model to explain apparent nonvoting by the Latino population. This model measures individuals’ income, age, education, and civic orientation such as political efficacy, strength of partisanship, and political interest as indicators of status. The SES model argues that individuals with a higher SES are more likely to participate as a result of their ability to overcome the costs of participation (Ramírez 2007, 157). Other studies have shifted their focus beyond the SES model, examining a variety of activities that increase Latino political engagement. The proceeding literature review focuses on this particular direction, exploring the social structural factors of political parties and nonpartisan organizations as a base to examine political and civic participation as well as the use of legislative action to achieve those ends.

Understanding the specific circumstances of Latino political and civic engagement in the Pasco area involves a broader awareness of other scholarly works. Though not independent from one another, there are three major bodies of literature that can advance a better understanding of the political mobilization efforts occurring in Pasco. The three fields of research that prove particularly insightful in this study include political parties' role in shaping political participation, the effects of nonpartisan organizations on levels of Latino political engagement, and Latino legislative action.

Political parties are largely responsible for setting the local political environment. In *Race, Ethnicity, and Electoral Mobilization: Where's the Party?*, Leighley discusses the "dominant view" or "normative perspective" of political parties within the United States (2005, 154). In the normative perspective, the role of political parties is to act as a "linkage institution" that connects citizens with the political system (Ibid). Under this paradigm, political parties are then responsible for encouraging widespread electoral participation (Ibid).

Furthermore, Leighley discusses that this view encompasses historical accounts of political parties that often draw from eras of high immigration levels and implies that parties have played an important role in incorporating and encouraging new groups into the democratic system. Providing transportation to polls or food to families in need have been typical strategies that provided incentives, particularly for immigrants, to vote (Leighley 2007, 154). In the contemporary era, however, minority leaders have criticized political parties for altering their positions on racial policies to adhere to the Anglo vote at the detriment to racial and ethnic minorities. Minority leaders believe that political parties have strayed from the *normative perspective* in today's political world (Ibid.).

The notion that political parties are no longer serving as a linkage institution is recognized in *Political Parties, Minorities, and Elected Office*. Contrary to the normative perspective introduced in Leighley's article, Kittleson and Tate discuss the role political parties play in mediating democratic inclusion and exclusion of minorities (2005, 163). Although political parties offer a potential for democratic inclusion and representation, Kittleson and Tate report that "minority groups . . . feel slighted by their parties and by the party system (2005, 166)." Based on a survey administered in 1984, one-quarter of African American respondents "felt that the Democratic Party did not work very hard on issues blacks cared about (2005, 166)." In this case, political parties alienated minority groups as opposed to encouraging their participation within the democratic system.

Andersen and Cohen further support the conclusion that the central role of political parties to socialize and mobilize new citizens and minorities into the democratic system has declined. In *Political Institutions and Incorporation of Immigrants*, Andersen and Cohen contend that other institutions such as "local non-profit organizations, ethnic voluntary organizations, and groups explicitly organized to mobilize immigrant or ethnic voters" have replaced political parties as linkage institutions (2005, 196). However, Andersen and Cohen state: "outside of the public education system, political parties are the closest thing Americans have to a nation-wide institutional framework for the pursuit of such knowledge and activities (2005, 202)." Thus, the question remains whether non-party institutions will be able to effectively replace political

parties' function by facilitating minority and immigrants' need to "identify, understand, and advocate" for their own interests within the democratic system (2005, 202).

Recent studies address Andersen and Cohen's concern about the effectiveness of non-party institutions; nonpartisan organizations have taken center stage in the realm of minority political mobilization and civic engagement research. These organizations act as the normative perspective would expect from political parties. Previous research by Verba and Nie demonstrated a positive relationship between associational participation and political participation in *Participation in America*. Drawing from this research, Diaz questions if this relationship holds true for Latinos in the United States in *Latino Participation in America: Associational and Political Roles*. Organizational activities in Diaz's research include charitable, social, sports related, work related, and Hispanic concerns. Using data from the Latino National Political Survey, Diaz determines that organizational participation for Puerto Ricans and Mexicans has a significant positive effect on their electoral participation (1996, 163). Moreover, the impact of membership in an organization was even found to increase the electoral participation for members who claimed to be inactive within the organization (Diaz 1996, 169).

Hritzuk and Park take Diaz's findings one step further, concluding that individuals who take part in politically active voluntary organizations are more likely to become familiar with the overall political system of the United States. Furthermore, they find that politically involved organizations and exposure to political mobilization affects levels of Latino participation more than African-Americans or Anglos (Hritzuk and Park 2000).

Boosting Latino and Black Political Participation: The Impact of Associational and Religious Resources, adds to Diaz and Hritzuk and Park's conclusions by finding that membership in voluntary organizations focused on changing the status quo is the most effective avenue for Latino political engagement. Here, McMiller claims that instrumental organizations as opposed to expressive organizations increase Latino electoral and non-electoral political participation. Instrumental organizations include: political clubs, professional associations, school service, civil rights, and social welfare organizations and neighborhood associations while expressive organizations include groups, associations, or clubs that meet on the basis of similar interests and entertainment, usually avoiding political topics (McMiller 2005, 451). Together, Diaz, Hritzuk, Park, and McMiller's studies provide positive feedback to Andersen and Cohen's uncertainty of the success non-party institutions have as political facilitators for minority groups. What is more, these findings present sound arguments for a stronger emphasis on and support for membership-based organizations in the Latino community in order to achieve a higher level of political participation.

Various case studies have addressed the impact of Latino legislative action as a strategy that influences the institutional elite. In *Conventional Politics Takes Center Stage: The Latino Struggle against English-Only Laws*, Santoro delineates two types of oppositional strategy. First, Santoro introduces extrainstitutional activity as an approach that includes social movement organizations that mobilize demonstrations before the government. For instance, to contest the enactment of English-only Laws, Latino organizations held protests in Arizona's state capital, boycotted businesses in support of English-only legislation in California, and testified in the Texas legislator (Santoro 888, 1999). Historically, these social movement organizations and

protests have been considered the primary means oppositional groups mobilize to reach their objectives. Santoro adds: “Latino advocacy organizations organized demonstration, litigated cases of concern for Latinos before the U.S. Supreme Court, lobbied state legislatures, sponsored voter-registration drives, and fought against gerrymandering (893,1999).”

Institutional mechanisms such as elected minority officials and voting blocs to gain political leverage act as the second oppositional strategy that Santoro identifies (1999, 893). While elected minority officials are more likely to promote policies that benefit their community, significant racial and ethnic voting blocs create a stronger political leverage that increases politicians’ responsiveness to minority needs. Together, extrainstitutional and institutional strategies present two ways of influencing legislation.

Santoro finds that extrainstitutional Latino efforts did not extensively affect the passage of English-only legislation due to the lack of funding, a late start to organizational mobilization efforts, and the lack of an effective way to reach voters (1999, 899-900). Instead, Santoro points out that Latino institutional rather than extrainstitutional efforts reduced the likelihood that state legislators adopted English-Only legislation in the 1980s. The results of this research suggest that Latino legislators acted as “institutional activists” that pursue social movement goals through bureaucratic or conventional political processes (Santoro 1999, 903). Although Santoro’s research finds that extrainstitutional activities were ineffective in their efforts, Latino advocacy organizations may find more success in achieving their legislative goals through the political system.

Reflections on Latino Advocacy and Welfare Reform in New Jersey exemplifies the kind of institutional action that Santoro claims as an effectual means to change policies in favor of a contesting group. Canino-Arroyo evaluates the community-based nonprofit, Hispanic Association of New Jersey (HANJ) and its advocacy efforts to influence the Governor Whitman administration’s welfare reform proposal. Here, HANJ worked to influence the formulation, adoption, and implementation of the administration’s *Work First* program by preparing a position paper, maintaining communications with legislators, and sustaining a political presence (Canino-Arroyo 2003, 183).

However, this study equally stresses HANJ’s contributions to the overall evolution of Latino legislative advocacy. A sense of cohesion, efficacy, and motivation among Latino leaders resulted from HANJ’s efforts to represent the concerns and interests of low-income Hispanic communities and make institutional policy changes. Consider the following response by an organizational leader on HANJ’s advocacy for welfare reform efforts:

“We see ourselves as active players with an ability to accomplish things . . . There’s a renewed passion and commitment to these issues and we feel now that we can make a difference.”¹

¹Interview from: Canino-Arroyo, María Josefa. “Reflections on Latino Advocacy and Welfare Reform in New Jersey. *Centro Journal*. P. 183.

The HANJ case study embodies the findings of both bodies of research. Canino-Arroyo's study can be seen in light of McMiller's research by supporting the idea that membership in an *instrumental* organization increases the Latino community's likelihood to engage themselves in politics. Additionally, this study reveals the potential of Latino organizations to function as a mediator between the community and the government. Most significantly, however, this case study resonates with Santoro's point that Latino advocacy organizations can use legislative action and institutional influence as an effective strategy to change the status quo at the state level.

These three fields of research: political parties' contemporary role, the effects of nonpartisan organizations on levels of Latino political engagement, and Latino legislative action, provide a series of key ideas and arguments that shape my original study in Pasco, Washington. First, the literature explains that the general role of political parties in the United States has shifted away from acting as a linkage institution and instead has taken a relatively passive position in minority and immigrant political engagement. Second, nonpartisan advocacy groups have replaced political parties' responsibility of increasing Latino political engagement and have served as an effective channel for Latino participation. Third, nonpartisan advocacy organizations are more likely to be affective when they work through conventional political systems such as the legislator. These key arguments have led me to explore the types and strategies of Latino organizations as well as the role of local political parties in Pasco. Furthermore, the aforementioned research has led me to ask the central questions in this study: How does the political environment, as formed by local political parties, interact with Latino mobilization efforts? What kinds of strategies have developed in reaction to the particular political climate of Pasco?

III. Research Methods

Finding available factual data on political mobilization efforts in the Pasco area and Washington State in general involved extensive exploration through a variety of networks. Currently, there is no collective database that simply lists all functioning organizations within the Tri-Cities region. This was the most challenging aspect of my research as I predominantly relied on community members and leaders from Pasco to inform me about active organizations within the area and supplemented that with website and local newspaper searches. Although these sources were invaluable to my research, this study is not an exhaustive list of every organization in Pasco involved in Latino mobilization efforts as a result of my reliance on word-of-mouth, limited time, and the overall coverage of the media.

Organizations that I have documented in this study include: the Franklin County Democratic Party, the Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly, the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization, the Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee, the Franklin County Elections Office, the Hispanic Political Action Committee (HISPAC), and the former LULAC Chapter in Pasco. However, this study closely studies the dynamics of the Franklin County Democratic Party, the Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly, and the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization for specific reasons that will be addressed in the following research methods discussion.

General Overview

Of the local organizations that were widely known, I used an organizational profile to assess a variety of factors within each organization. This systematic framework evaluates:

- Membership size
- History of the organization
- Activities
- Finances
- Official mission statement and goals
- Leadership structure
- Media coverage
- Relations with other organizations

Further data was collected through documents collected at organizational meetings and through documents posted on official organization websites. These documents included bylaws, agendas, and written statements on the organization's priorities. Other information found on websites included sponsors, fundraisers, leadership structure, and updates on the organizations' current activities.

As a collective, these factors were imperative to determining how each local organization fits within the broader body of research that measures Latino organizational impact on participants' political engagement. Together, Diaz, McMiller, and Hritzuk and Park's findings highlight the positive influence of membership-based organizations on Latino political and civic engagement. However, as these scholars' research shows, organization's influence on Latino political participation varies depending on the type of organization. Thus, distinguishing the type of organization was accomplished through the organizational profile.

Identifying factors affecting levels of political mobilization and participation in Pasco was another component of this study. The three main elements identified include the political environment, nonpartisan advocacy organizations, and legislative action and were determined through a combination of interviews, organizational data, and scholarly literature.

Preliminary research through the reviews of organizations, informal interviews, and attendance at community events provided an initial direction towards specific factors influencing Latino political mobilization and participation. Furthermore, using scholarly articles to examine other case studies of Latino political mobilization and participation, I began to specifically seek the opinions and experiences of leaders and community members with local political parties and previous activities with existing or defunct organizations. Combining observation, field research, and academic research revealed the contextually specific factors that this study perceives as influential factors on Latino political mobilization and participation levels in Pasco.

Interviews

Interviews were the most important component to the data of this study and form the foundation of my findings. People that were interviewed both formally and informally were found through a variety of ways. LULAC representative Rico Ricardo and Professor Paul

Apostolidis both provided me with initial contacts that they had formed through previous research and connections within the community. From there, finding interviewees was a matter of the “snowball effect” where I simply asked key members and organizations for other informants they considered key players in political and civic engagement initiatives.

Interviewees can be categorized in to two separate groups: those who take a leadership role and rank-and-file members. These groups can also be placed in to separate organizations, mainly the Franklin County Democratic Party, the Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly, the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization, the Migrant/Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee, the Franklin County Elections Office, and the formal Tri-Cities LULAC Chapter.

The Franklin County Democratic Party

Rank-and-File Members:

Five mini-surveys were conducted at the Democratic caucus on February 9th that took place at the Plumbers and Steamfitters Local Teamsters Union building in Pasco. The mini-surveys were directed at caucus participants and included the following questions:

- How do you identify yourself?
- How did you find out about the caucuses today?
- Why did you decide to come?
- What efforts are there by the Democratic Party or other organizations to mobilize the Latino vote?
- What would be a good way to get more people involved in the political process?

These questions provided me with a preliminary idea of the kinds of efforts that currently exist, the motive for informants’ political participation, and a general idea of Latino involvement in electoral participation in Pasco. Most notably, preliminary research at the caucus allowed me to further explore initial findings that political parties are strongly impacting Latino politics in Pasco.

Leaders:

David Chassin has been the chairman for the Franklin County Democratic Party for the past five years. The questions during the interview included:

- Tell me about the politics in Pasco, how would you characterize it?
- How do you think partisanship in Pasco affects people’s involvement in politics?
- What is the Democratic party doing to get Latinos to turn out to vote and how does the Democratic Party connect with the community?
- What kinds of events do the Democratic Party put on, where do they take place, and how successful are they?
- How successful was the Latino Vote Project and what were the obstacles?

- Are you aware of any non-partisan organizations that are trying to get more people to vote?

Chassin’s insight was fundamental to my understanding of the nature of politics in Pasco and political parties’ role in political participation as Leighley’s article addresses the dominant perspective of political parties in general has been one of a linkage institution. Chassin’s interview allowed me to assess where the Franklin County Democratic Party fit in as a linkage institution and where it did not. Several interviews were conducted by phone between 30 and 50 minutes, recorded, and transcribed.

The Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly (RNHA)

Rank-and-File Members:

No members were contacted due to the limited time of this report.

Leaders:

Tony Benegas is the assistant treasurer of the statewide RNHA. He is based out of Richland, allowing him frequent communication with the Richland-Pasco chapter of the RNHA. Benegas, along with Raul Diaz and Fernando Avalos, played a strong role in the establishment of the RNHA chapter in the Richland-Pasco area and Benegas continues to be a leader within the organization. The interview was conducted over the phone, lasted an hour, and was recorded and transcribed. Interview questions included:

- How active is the RNHA in Pasco? What kinds of activities does the organization host?
- What kind of outreach efforts are you seeing from the Franklin County Republican party? To what extent do the Franklin County Republican Party and the local RNHA chapter work together?
- What extent do you think that the organization’s partisanship is encouraging or preventing people from joining the organization?

The Franklin County Democratic Party and the Richland-Pasco Republican National Hispanic Assembly Chapter play key roles in the findings of this study. Preliminary interviews suggested that partisanship greatly affected Latino mobilization in Pasco. Additionally, referring back to the scholarly literature, Leighley finds that political parties traditionally served as a linkage institution and was a key organization in promoting the political participation of new citizens and minorities. However, Andersen, Cohen, Kittleson, and Tate have found that contemporary political parties no longer fill this role. Instead, these authors argue that political parties have taken an active role in excluding minority and new citizens. Thus a close study on the Democratic Party and the RNHA was essential to understanding Latino political participation in Pasco.

The Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization (HLLO)

Rank-and-File Members:

Four HLLO members were contacted by phone and each informal interview was noted by hand and conducted in English. The names of the members will remain anonymous and pseudonyms will be used to refer to HLLO members that were interviewed. Members were asked the following questions:

- How long have you been a member?
- How and why did you join?
- Tell me about your involvement.
- How has being a part of the HLLO affected you?
- How does the organization help the community?
- In what ways can the organization improve?
- What other organizations are you involved in?

Previous research by Diaz, McMiller, and Hritzuk and Park found a positive correlation between membership in politically active organizations and political and civic engagement of Latino individuals. The length of members' experience, why they joined, their level of involvement, other organizations a member is involved in, and how membership in the organization has impacted them were all vital aspects in assessing the correlation between membership in the HLLO and members' political participation. Furthermore, the specific case studies of Santoro and Canino-Arroyo conclude that Latino legislative action has produced successful results in shaping government policy that specifically affect the Latino community. Thus, how the organization helps the community and a members' involvement was telling of how the HLLO's legislative strategy has or has not impacted the community.

Leaders:

Gabriel Portugal is the Southeast Chair of the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization and is part of the Immigration Committee within the local HLLO. Portugal was also the past Franklin County Democratic Chairman. His experiences within the Democratic Party and role in the HLLO provided valuable information and understanding on the organization itself and the political environment of Pasco. The interview lasted 50 minutes, was recorded and transcribed, took place at The Hut diner in Pasco, and was conducted in English. Interview questions included:

- Tell me about the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Day. How many people went, what is the objective of the trip, how was this accomplished?
- Tell me about the HLLO. What are the logistics of the meetings, how many people are involved, what are its objectives?
- To what extent does the nonpartisan focus of HLLO promote or discourage members from involving themselves politically?
- How successful was the Latino Vote Project? Is there anything like that currently?
- Do you know of any other organizations that are getting people politically engaged?

Gilberto Mendoza is the Southeast Treasurer of the HLLO and is part of the Fundraising Committee. Mendoza's active leadership role in the HLLO presented insight into the organization and the overall Latino community in Pasco. One initial formal interview of 30 minutes was conducted by phone. A follow-up formal interview was conducted, lasting 50 minutes and a final informal conversation occurred at an HLLO meeting at the PUD in Pasco. All formal interviews were recorded, transcribed, and conducted in English. The interview questions for Mendoza were similar to those of Portugal. In addition, Mendoza's initial interview questions included specific details on funds because Mendoza is the treasurer. Additional follow-up questions included:

- To what extent does the Pasco HLLO work with other HLLO groups in Washington in forming the meeting's agenda? What kind of cohesiveness exists between the regional organizations?
- Has the issue-based focus within the HLLO lead toward partisanship within the Pasco group? Have any specific issues proved particularly divisive? If so, how does HLLO maintain unity?
- What kind of impact has the HLLO produced within the legislature thus far? In the community?

In this study, the HLLO is closely studied as a result of the three bodies of literature that I addressed in the Scholarly Literature Section. Again, Diaz, McMiller, and Hritzuk and Park's literature on membership-based organizations and Latino political participation lead me to question the HLLO and its objectives, logistics, and membership. Furthermore, political party literature by Andersen, Cohen, and Kittleson and Tate suggest that the contemporary role of political parties has been more exclusive, leading advocacy organizations to fill political parties' traditional responsibility to facilitate political participation among minority and new citizens. Looking at the issue-based focus of HLLO and possible partisanship developing as a result of this kind of activism will reveal how inclusive or exclusive this nonpartisan advocacy organization is and whether or not it is truly connecting the community to political processes. Finally, based on previous affects of Latino activism within the political system on English-only legislation and welfare reform in New Jersey as presented by Santoro and Canino-Arroyo's research, I question what kind of impact the HLLO has had in the legislature and community so far.

The Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee of the Pasco School District (PAC)

Rank-and-File Members:

No interviews were sought for rank-and-file members due to the focus of this study.

Leaders:

The Assistant Director of Student Achievement, Director of Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee, and Coordinator of the PAC were informally contacted by phone and interviewed for the purposes of exploring possible political mobilization efforts in an apolitical

organization. General questions about the organization such as its purpose, the types of issues brought up at meetings, and initiatives to increase parental civic engagement were the major topics during the informal interviews that lasted between 10 to 15 minutes. Inconclusive information pertaining to political mobilization and participation efforts were found to the extent that in-depth information was not relevant to the objective of this study.

The Franklin County Elections Office

The categorizations of rank-and-file and leader positions are not relevant in this case. Although the Franklin County Elections Office is not considered an organization, rather it is an entity of the Washington State government, there are important mobilization activities occurring through their outreach efforts. Rosa Fernandez works for the Franklin County Elections Office and directs the office's outreach efforts. Themes of inquiry were mainly based on the logistics, history, and methods of the voter registration and assistance events. Although these activities do not directly relate to topics discussed in the scholarly review, they play an important role in electoral mobilization efforts for Latinos in Pasco.

The Hispanic Political Action Committee

As a former member of HISPAC, David Cortinas provided information about the dissolved organization. I was unable to find other informants that were knowledgeable about HISPAC because of the organization's inactive status and the fact that the organization went defunct in 2003-2004. Interview questions included basic organizational profile questions such as objectives, activities, history, and relations with other organizations. Information about HISPAC was particularly instrumental in explaining past and current Latino mobilization efforts in Pasco. The phone interview lasted 50 minutes, was conducted in English, recorded, and transcribed.

The Formal Tri-Cities League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Chapter

It was worth interviewing past members and leaders of the defunct LULAC Chapter to explain the current status of Latino organizational efforts today.

Rank-and-File Members:

Gabriel Portugal shared his perspective as a member of the previous LULAC Chapter during my initial interview with him about the HLLO. Why the chapter dissolved, what he saw as the major obstacles, and prospects for a future chapter were addressed in his interview.

Leaders:

Gilberto Mendoza was the former president of the LULAC Chapter. Interview topics included: affects of failed Latino organizations on the community and current-organizing efforts, reasons for organizational failure, and general leadership characteristics. As ex-president of the LULAC Chapter, I sought a follow-up interview with Mendoza from the previous interview

about the HLLO to explain past Latino organizational endeavors in the area and what can be learned from them.

David Cortinas was a member of the LULAC Chapter as well as appointed State Director for the Tri-Cities LULAC Chapter. He has also been an active member in the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and other politically involved associations. Thus, Cortinas provided yet another perspective on mobilization efforts in the area. Topics during the interview included similar topics asked during Mendoza’s interview about LULAC as well as inquiry about previous political organizations such as HISPAC. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and conducted in English over the phone.

Again, Diaz, McMiller, and Hritzuk and Park’s literature that explored the impact of membership on Latino political participation lead me to ask about previous efforts to establish member-based Latino organizations in Pasco. Although the LULAC Chapter was dissolved, looking at why it was not successful and what kind of impact the organization had on Pasco is particularly helpful in understanding the initiatives that are taking place in Pasco today.

IV. Political Mobilization Analysis

This section accomplishes several undertakings. First, I provide an organizational profile that documents the endeavors of major organizations in Pasco. Second, I analyze the effects of political parties and organizations on Latino mobilization and participation and how they are influenced by each other using the organizational profile, interviews, and scholarly literature. Although various Latino political mobilization initiatives exist, I have focused on the Franklin County Democratic Party, the Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly, and the Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization. Also mentioned are the Franklin County Elections Office, the Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee, the Hispanic Political Action Committee, and the League of United Latin American Citizens.

The Franklin County Democratic Party

Organizational Profile²

Membership	~25
Activities	Registration drives, speakers, booths at fairs, Latino Vote Project, monthly meetings
Funding	Washington State Democrats: contributions, fundraising events

² Washington State Democrats Website. Retrieved March 6, 2008 from www.wa-democrats.org.

Official Mission Statement and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic opportunity • Social and civil justice • Personal freedom, security, and privacy • Dedicated to achieving peace, prosperity, opportunity, and a government based on responsible optimism
Leadership Structure	Democratic National Committee, Washington State Democratic Central Committee, County Organization Legislative District Organization, Precinct
Media Coverage	Newspapers, radio, television
Relations with other Organizations	No formal relationships established

Membership

Individuals who are involved in and contribute to Franklin County Democratic Party activities constitute the base of members within this organization. This does not account for voters who are registered as Democratic in Franklin County.

Activities

The Franklin County Democratic Party’s voter registration drives have taken place during election events such as the caucus and at community events such as fairs. Specific to the Latino community, the Franklin County Democratic Party in years past has set-up booths at the Cinco de Mayo celebration. In addition to promoting the act of voting in general, these registration drives are also an attempt to advocate for Democratic candidates and to gain a larger Democratic base in the county.

The Latino Vote Project of the Washington State Democrats was one of the few outreach attempts that directly targeted the Latino community. The Latino Vote Project aimed to “register, educate, and mobilize more voters to participate and be heard in the upcoming elections” and encouraged “more Latino participation in our elections.”³ However, the project is currently in a period of transition and was temporarily suspended as of Fall 2007. There are varying opinions on how effective the initiative was while it was active. According to David Chassin, the current chairman of the Franklin County Democratic Party, the Latino Vote Project was largely ineffective. During an interview David Chassin expressed his opinion on the initiative:

³ *Latino Vote Project*. Washington State Democrats Website. Retrieved March 6, 2008 from www.wa-democrats.org.

I don't think it was very successful. Regardless of my views about the relationship between the Latino community and the Democrats in general I think the Democratic Party hasn't done a good job of understanding and addressing the issues that are of concern to the Latino community.⁴

In addition to confirming the Latino Vote Project's ineffectiveness in Franklin County, Chassin's comment also reveals the overall lack of mobilization efforts on the part of the Democratic Party. This evaluation of the Democratic Party challenges the dominant view of political parties expressed by Leighley as an ideology that perceives political parties as linkage institutions that mobilize minority groups. However, Gabriel Portugal, who served as a local chairman for the Washington Democrats as well as a representative for the Latino community, saw other challenges preventing the successfulness of the project:

The Latino Voting Projects, we did well a couple of times when it was ran consistently . . . right now it's not. The Democratic Party is having some type of bureaucratic B.S. in terms of why it's not funded. There was some pressure on the chair of the state . . . I saw a lot of bureaucratic challenges that I thought they shouldn't be there, but they were, and I got a little disappointed.⁵

Chassin and Portugal's comments provide a vague idea about the effectiveness of the Latino Vote Project; however, Portugal's comments reveal general institutional obstacles within the Democratic Party that prevented his participation within the organization. In Portugal's comment, he sees the Democratic Party as an inefficient and unproductive organization concerning the increase of Latino political participation and has chosen to work with other organizations like the HLLO to achieve those ends.

Leadership Structure

The disconnect between the Franklin County Democratic Party and the Latino community is understandable given its leadership structure. At the county level, there are no Latino representatives within the Franklin County Democratic organization and few participate within the organization itself. David Chassin expressed his reliance on outside sources to keep him updated on the Latino community in Pasco:

My ability to communicate what it is that I am interested in seeing happen, how I'd like to see things handled, is hampered. I have to rely on other people to inform me. I think right there is a problem. The fact that I don't speak Spanish and so for me to communicate with that part of the community is a real challenge. Before when Gabriel [Portugal] was the chairman, that made things a lot easier . . .⁶

⁴ Chassin, David, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 4, 2008.

⁵ Portugal, Gabriel, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco, Washington, February 4, 2008.

⁶ Chassin, David, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 4, 2008.

The Franklin County Democratic Party's ability to serve the Latino community heavily depends on those involved in leadership and member positions. Although Chassin expressed interest in addressing Latino concerns, he has not "figured out how."⁷

Relationship with other Organizations

The Franklin County Democratic Party has not formed relations with Latino organizations in Pasco. When asked about other organizations devoted to increasing Latino political mobilization efforts Chassin commented: "No I'm not aware of any, at least active in the Franklin County. I sure would like to know if there are any because they would have my support and I certainly could use their support."⁸ Thus, there is a real potential to close the disconnect between the Franklin County Democratic Party and the Latino community. The Democratic Party in Franklin County can gain the insight and connections with the Latino community by forming a coalition with existing Latino organizations and individuals that have similar goals.

Analysis

Political Party Bureaucracy

The above organizational profile reveals the obstacles that political parties produce in mobilizing the Latino community. Aside from partisanship, the very structure of political parties has created obstacles to Latino participation within the parties themselves. As mentioned above, David Chassin, the Franklin County Democratic Party Chairman, indicated his disconnect with the Latino community and his challenge to address Latino concerns because of the low level of Latino participation and lack of Latino leadership within the party. However, low levels of Latino political participation are not only a result of the lack of Latino leaders within the Democratic Party but also the lack of mobilizing efforts on the part of political parties. Elaborating on get-out-the-vote efforts made by the Democratic Party, David Chassin stated:

[W]e look at people who would vote Democratic by virtue or what we've seen historically and we call them and remind them to vote and that's just sound practice. Because of the limitation of resources, we don't call everybody. That would be impossible, there's like 20,000 voters. We usually have 5 people on the phone, so we're very seriously limited about what we can do.⁹

By calling people that have already had a history of voting, the Democratic Party's efforts fail to mobilize the voters least likely to vote. Although Chassin recognizes this shortcoming, the lack of resources allocated to increasing voter turnout prevents the party from reaching unlikely voters. The Franklin County Democratic Party exemplifies Kittleson and Tate's argument that political parties mediate the inclusion and exclusion of minorities in the political realm. Recalling the survey administered by Tate in 1984, one-quarter of African

⁷ Chassin, David, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 4, 2008

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

American respondents “felt that the Democratic Party did not work very hard on issues blacks cared about” (2005, 166). The same sentiment is expressed for Latinos and the Franklin County Democratic Party based on Chassin’s previous comment that the “Democratic Party hasn’t done a good job of understanding and addressing the issues that are of concern to the Latino community.”¹⁰

What is more, the likelihood of involving more Latino leaders and participants in the Democratic Party is not improving. Gabriel Portugal, a well-recognized and highly appraised Latino leader in Pasco, discussed his past involvement with the Democratic Party:

After two terms I decided to just give up on my efforts by being involved in this party and I totally pulled out from that party . . . I saw a lot of bureaucratic challenges that I thought . . . shouldn’t be there but they were and I got a little disappointed and said you know what, I want to go back working grassroots in the area where I live . . . I tried for 4 years, I ran two terms for the Latino caucus at the state level and I thought ok now my energy can be used in a different way.¹¹

For Portugal, working through the Democratic Party was an obstacle to achieving meaningful change in the Latino community. As mentioned earlier, the Democratic Party pulled funds for the Latino Vote Project, an initiative that in Portugal’s opinion was successful. Referring to his decision to change direction with his work in the Democratic Party, Portugal declared: “why am I going to beat my head in something that I see as a waste of time.”¹² Even as a prominent leader within the Democratic Party at the county level, Portugal found political parties an unproductive way to address the concerns of the Latino community.

The Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly

Organizational Profile¹³

Membership	~200 statewide, ~12 for Richland-Pasco Chapter
Activities	Registration drives, organizational meetings, meetings with candidates, booths at fairs, community events
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National organization: grew out of the Hispanic Finance Committee in 1974 • Washington State RNHA: founded in March, 2001

¹⁰ Chassin, David, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 4, 2008

¹¹ Portugal, Gabriel, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco, Washington, February 4, 2008.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly Website. Retrieved April 10, 2008 from <http://www.wrnha.org/>.

Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership fees: \$30, \$10 for students every 2 years • Contributions • Fundraisers
Official Mission Statement and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster the principles of the Republican Party in the Hispanic community • Provide Hispanic Americans with a forum to play an influential role in local, state, and national Party activities • Increase the number of Hispanic Republican elected officials • Create and maintain a network of Hispanic Republican leaders • To promote and encourage citizen participation in Republican activities and to support the principles, objectives, and platforms of the Republican Party
Leadership Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State Chapter: chairman, vice-chair, treasurer, assistant treasurer, secretary, National Committee man/woman • Local chapters: chairman, vice-chair, treasurer, secretary, directors
Media Coverage	Website
Relations with other Organizations	Republican Party, Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Membership:

The Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly (RNHA) is a national and statewide organization, however, this study focuses on the Richland-Pasco chapter of the RNHA. This chapter has 12 solid members but there are current recruitment efforts to gain a larger member base. Tony Benegas, the state assistant secretary and a leader of the Richland-Pasco RNHA Chapter, stated in addressing the membership base: “The organization is growing . . . but Pasco and Richland is not as strong as it ought to be just because there’s a huge number of Hispanics here, we need to get involved.”¹⁴

Activities:

In addition to hosting registration drives and setting up booths at public events, the RNHA plays a significant role in connecting the Latino community with the Republican Party and candidates. For example, candidates like Dino Rossi have specifically sought to meet with the RNHA to speak with the Republican Latino community.¹⁵ As a result, the RNHA set up an event where members and Dino

¹⁴ Benegas, Tony, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. April 10, 2008.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Rossi had the opportunity to engage in dialogue. Furthermore, the RNHA has worked to create an awareness of Latino concerns within the Republican Party in general. As an active leader in the RNHA, Benegas mentioned his efforts through the organization to spread a consciousness of the importance of the Latino vote:

I go around the state and I make presentations to a lot of other Republican organizations saying there's a lot more that we as a Republican organization, not just a Hispanic organization, I'm talking about what all of us, need to do for outreach. I think you guys don't understand why, but it's really important.¹⁶

As evidenced through Benegas' statement, the organization's activities spread awareness to both the Latino community and Republican Party. Although the RNHA is not a political party, the organization is taking on the responsibility of a linkage institution, or an association that encourages and provides an outlet for minority political participation.

History:

The Washington State RNHA was established in 2001 by a group of Latinos that were involved in the "Hispanics for Bush" campaign.¹⁷ The RNHA Richland-Pasco Chapter has also been established for nearly eight years and is one of the most well known chapters in the state of Washington.¹⁸

Official Mission Statement and Goals:

As stated in the mission statement and objectives of the RNHA, the organization is interested in promoting Latino political participation specifically through the Republican Party. Benegas elaborated on the organization's presence in Pasco:

What we've been finding out is that Hispanics have the tendency not to get involved . . . Pasco prime example. How can we get more Hispanics involve in the political process, preferably conservative Hispanics, but Hispanics nonetheless? We Hispanics need to accept the fact that it's time for us to take the leadership roles and to step up to the plate and lead. So . . . that's why the organization is involved.¹⁹

Although the central objective of the RNHA is to increase Latino involvement in politics, their efforts geared towards Republican Latinos are limiting in scope. By promoting the principles of the Republican Party, it is inevitable that these values will exclude a substantial amount of Latinos that hold differing political views.

¹⁶ Benegas, Tony, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. April 10, 2008.

¹⁷ *About Us*. Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly Website. Retrieved April 10, 2008 from www.wrnh.org.

¹⁸ Benegas, Tony, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. April 10, 2008.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

Relations with other Organizations:

The Washington State RNHA established an affiliated relationship with the Washington State Republican Party in 2002.²⁰ In response to the extent in which the RNHA and the Franklin County Republican Party work together, Benegas expressed:

I just talked to Shawn Sant (Chairman of the Franklin County Republican Party) the other day and we're looking for the same things and we are working very closely together to try and figure out how to get more people involved. Bottom line is that we're trying to coordinate our efforts and Shawn Sant really depends a lot on our organization to help him reach out . . . we have phone banks, Spanish, so you're not asking people to step in to an unfamiliar environment.²¹

The Richland-Pasco RNHA Chapter is bridging the gap between the Latino community and the Republican Party. Unlike the Franklin County Democratic Party, the Republican Party has a resource such as the RNHA that provides Spanish-language abilities and social contacts that increase the party's ability to reach the Latino community. Referring back to the scholarly literature, Kittleson, Tate, Cohen, and Andersen's argument that organizations are taking the place of political parties in encouraging minority political participation is clearly seen through the role of the RNHA in Pasco.

Furthermore, it is also evident that the Republican Party has taken an active role in engaging Latino political participation. Benegas claimed that the Franklin County Republican Party's top five priorities include outreach to the Latino community.²² Commenting on Republican Party efforts, Benegas stated: "There are more than just voter drives. It's [the Republican Party] actively looking to place Hispanics as PCO's."²³

Benegas further emphasized the crucial role Precinct Committee Officers (PCO) play in developing leaders and future candidates. As Benegas explained, the PCO level is instrumental in introducing potential leaders to "A. see the process, B. get their names out, and C. make decisions that affect what kind of issues will go on a ballot."²⁴ As such, encouraging Latinos to become PCO's is a fundamental step in generating more Latino candidates to run for office. In this sense, the Republican Party's efforts are doing more than mobilizing Latino voters; the party is also attempting to create more Latino political leaders.

As evidenced through Republican Party efforts, the common perception that the Democratic Party is generally more responsive towards minority issues is dispelled. In Pasco's case, it is the opposite; Republican mobilization efforts are clearly stronger and more effective in comparison to the nonexistent efforts of the Democratic Party. Thus, while the Democratic Party is failing as a linkage institution, it seems that the Republican Party is active in its role as a political mobilizer.

²⁰ *About Us*. Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly Website. Retrieved April 10, 2008 from www.wrnha.org.

²¹ Benegas, Tony, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. April 10, 2008.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Analysis

Linkage Institution through Coalition Building

Despite RNHA’s promotion of Republican viewpoints, Benegas recognizes the limiting effects of partisanship within an organization. In addressing differing values and opinions related to political viewpoints, Benegas proposed the possibility of a different approach through coalitions:

There are defiantly common grounds that we can work to. And I’ve actually spoken to some folks on the Democrat side, saying maybe there’s a coalition we can build, if you look back all of our Latino organizations kind of want the same thing, we want to get Latinos involved in the political process. Right now we’re an incredible minority, but do we even have those numbers in the legislator? No. Well it would be in our best interest to at least try to get those numbers to go up.²⁵

As Benegas suggested, coalition building would mitigate the limiting factors of RNHA’s focus on the conservative Latino community. Comparing Republican and Democratic efforts, there is an imbalance between mobilization efforts happening within differing political parties because there is no Latino Democratic organization that functions like the RNHA. Thus, organizations that bridge Latinos from differing political spectrums would prove beneficial in reaching the overall goal of increasing Latino political participation.

The Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization

Organizational Profile

Membership	40-60 people, attendance varies
Activities	Annual Hispanic/Latino Legislative Day in Olympia, Meetings, Fundraisers
History	2005- 1 st annual Hispanic/Latino Legislative Day 2006- 2 nd annual Hispanic/Latino Legislative Day 2007- January- 3 rd annual HLLD November- 1 st official meetings in Pasco begin 2008 January- 4 th annual HLLD February- Pasco committees assigned to members
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership Fees: \$50 Organizational Member, \$25 General Membership, \$5 low income/students + community service

²⁵ Benegas, Tony, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. April 10, 2008.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsorships: local businesses • Fundraisers: Dances, concerts by local bands, \$8,000 raised in 2007 event
Official Mission Statement and Goals ²⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote ideals and principles of Hispanic/Latino communities in the State of Washington • Provide opportunities for participation and leadership • Expand the community’s knowledge of local, state, and national legislative issues • Promote civic participation in all elections • Promote and advocate for legislative initiatives that benefit the Hispanic/Latino community at all levels
Leadership Structure ²⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State level: Washington HLLO Board Chair, co-vice chairs for North South Western, and Eastern Washington, treasurer and secretary, committee members • Local level: Pasco HLLO head committee leader, committee members, members
Media Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet site: www.hispaniclegislateday.org • Newspaper: <i>Yakima Herald, La voz, Tú decisión</i> • Radio: KZHR- Gabriel Portugal’s program • Television: Univision
Relations with other Organizations	No current formal ties

Membership

The Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization (HLLO) is a statewide organization, however, this study only focuses on the organization, as it exists in Pasco. The HLLO meets the first Sunday evening of every month at the Public Utility District building. Although membership fluctuates due to time conflicts, activities of the organization, and other factors, a core group of at least 16 dedicated members attend each meeting. Based on interviews, Latino men and women from different occupations, political preference, and interests form the body of this organization that focuses on legislative issues. As one HLLO member said: “The

²⁶ *Mission Statement*. Official Hispanic/Latino Legislative Website. Retrieved March 2008 from [www. Hispaniclegislateday.org](http://www.Hispaniclegislateday.org).

²⁷ *Contact Us*. Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization Website. Retrieved March 2008 from www. Hispaniclegislateday.org.

organization is not made up of any particular political party or religion, that's what I like about it."²⁸

Activities

The most publicized activity of the HLLO is the annual Hispanic/Latino Legislative Day event that has taken place since 2005. At this event, the organization hosts a trip to Olympia, Washington, the state capital, for the local Latino community. Trip activities include: a tour of the capital, educational workshops on the legislative process, and panel discussions with state representatives where participants can ask questions. Participation within the Latino community in Pasco has steadily increased since the trip's first year. In response to when the organization started in Pasco, Portugal stated: "We have participated in the Olympia trip for three years. It was gradual, maybe 5 or 10 (people) from school, maybe 5 or 10 from business. But this year we brought that together and organized it into a mass group."²⁹ The low turnout from previous years has developed in to a much larger undertaking, last year the HLLO from Pasco took 150 people to Olympia. As the HLLO and their annual trip to Olympia become more recognized, it has served as one of the largest Latino mobilizing agents in Pasco.

The monthly meetings form the majority of the HLLO's activities. Official HLLO meetings started in November of 2007. Until this February, monthly meetings in Pasco were largely held to plan for the trip to Olympia in January including fundraising, advertising, and other logistical concerns. However, February's meeting began the distribution of committee responsibilities among members. Members were divided in to the following committees: Organization, Fundraising, Public Relations, Legislation, Membership, and Education. Committee reports were presented at the meeting in March where the committee members shared what they had researched regarding their topic, proposed ideas and solutions, and were able to voice their concerns. Following each committee's presentation, dialogue opened to the entire audience.

Funding

Membership fees, sponsorships by local businesses, and local fundraisers financially support the HLLO. Fundraisers are a key contributor to the Olympia trip as Mendoza, the HLLO treasurer mentioned:

Our Tri- Cities organization, we raised all the money for the entire group. We had two dances with bands; it was just exciting to see. Our group, the way they took ownership by selling tickets to the event and after it's all said and done, they had some ownership in this for all their efforts. It raised enough money to provide transportation and paid for everything including the food. We were very proud of that. Those are the kinds of things we can do to empower them.³⁰

²⁸ Rebecca, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 20, 2008.

²⁹ Portugal, Gabriel, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco, Washington, February 4, 2008.

³⁰ Mendoza, Gilberto, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 17, 2008.

Clearly fundraisers are not just about raising money for the HLLO, but also about taking ownership and creating excitement within the organization. This feeling of accomplishment created by organizational activities was the same type of response expressed by an active member who felt “passion and commitment” and “an ability to accomplish things” in the case study of the Hispanic Association in New Jersey (HANJ) that worked to change the state’s welfare reform (Canino-Arroyo 2003).

Mission Statement and Goals

As declared in the official mission statement and goals of the HLLO, the organization is heavily invested in encouraging political and civic engagement through education by expanding “the community’s knowledge of local, state, and national legislative issues.”³¹ As Portugal stated in reference to educating HLLO members:

The first is to let the people know that they have the right to sit down at a table with legislators and don’t feel like they’re doing you a favor, that you have a right to exchange, to get into a dialog with them to say this is where we stand. But before you do that, you have to look at how you explain the issues.³²

The HLLO’s said mission and objectives have become solid practice as Sara, an HLLO member and working mother, cited her reason for involvement in this particular organization is because the HLLO is “actually doing something and getting results.”³³ This particular member referenced the HLLO’s action against the proposition for the requirement of a social security number to obtain a drivers license in the state of Washington. In this instance, the Latino community’s position was voiced at the legislator through the mediating efforts of the HLLO. The proposition was successfully rejected as a result of a variety of factors, including the efforts of the HLLO. The organization’s success in “getting results” is partly due to the efforts of the HLLO to educate their members on legislative issues as Portugal’s comment explains. Accordingly, the HLLO can be defined as an *instrumental organization*, the most effective way to increase Latino political participation in McMiller’s research. Furthermore, the organization’s focus on legislative action can be considered an *institutional mechanism*, as opposed to an *extrainstitutional activity*, deemed more influential in Santoro’s study of legislative action against English-Only laws. Consequently, the HLLO’s use of legislative action and education has instigated feelings of efficacy and empowerment among its members.

Leadership Structure

As mentioned above, the leadership structure of the HLLO is dispersed statewide. There is the Washington HLLO Board that consists of all regional leaders. On the state level, the executive board consists of the Chair, Co-Vice Chair of Eastern Washington, Co-Vice Chair of Western Washington, treasurer, and secretary. The organization is regionally divided in to the

³¹ *Mission Statement*. Hispanic/Latino Legislative Website. Retrieved March 2008 from www.Hispaniclegislateday.org.

³² Portugal, Gabriel, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco, Washington, February 4, 2008.

³³ Sara, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco Washington, March 3, 2008.

Northwest, Southwest, West Central, and Southeast.³⁴ This report focuses on the Southeastern HLLO.

Although the various regional Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organizations are dispersed throughout the state, they remain in constant communication and work together to maintain the same agenda in conjunction with “tailor[ing] to the needs of [the] community here.”³⁵ Furthermore, Mendoza stated: “We want to be on the same page and show some consistency as well . . . we just all try to have the same agenda, the same set of goals.”³⁶

Although there are defined leaders within the Pasco HLLO, responsibilities are distributed among members through committees, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, it is clear that the leaders take on a facilitating role rather than a position of control. The HLLO meeting on March 3, 2008 started with a review of the group’s vision and mission. Portugal, who facilitates the meetings, stated: “*Todos somos iguales,*” we are all equal.³⁷ Moreover, the second goal of the group’s vision as stated during the meeting is to create leaders in the community. As such, Portugal defines the HLLO’s leadership structure as one derived from the grassroots ideology by “building blocks” or developing informed members and leaders within the organization.³⁸ Portugal explains the HLLO’s method of creating engaged and effective members:

The first block is your volunteers and how much knowledge they have . . . some people don’t know what a caucus is. That shows you the different levels. We need to work with the level of our volunteers. Then build captains and establish goals that work on something really simple: what are the issues and how are we going to present that? And then you have the people that are coming to the meetings, tell you what is that issue, who you’re going to address this issue to, through role-plays.³⁹

The HLLO implements this type of grassroots ideology by dividing members in to committees, as mentioned in the Activities Section above. Again, these committees include but are not limited to: Organization, Fundraising, Public Relations, Legislation, Membership, and Education. These committees increase the level of responsibility that committee members hold as they are expected to update the entire group about their specific topic, address potential concerns, and create solutions.

Relations with Other Organizations

The HLLO in Pasco has not formed any significant relationships with other organizations because the organization is relatively new and is still in the process of developing. However, there are informal ties to the Franklin County Elections Office, small businesses, and other

³⁴ *WSHLLO Board*. Hispanic/Latino Legislative Website. Retrieved March 2008 from www.Hispaniclegislateday.org.

³⁵ Mendoza, Gilberto, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 17, 2008.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Portugal, Gabriel. HLLO meeting, Pasco, Washington, March 3, 2008.

³⁸ Portugal, Gabriel, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco, Washington, February 4, 2008.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Latino organizations as a result of members' ties and involvement in other associations. Thus, there is a strong potential for a more formal and collaborative relationship to form with established organizations, governmental departments, and other initiatives.

Analysis

Legislative Action: A New Strategy

In reaction to partisanship, bureaucratic barriers, and uneven political party efforts that the political environment imposes on Latino political mobilization initiatives as previously mentioned, individuals and organizations are finding new ways to approach this unfavorable situation. The Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization and other Latino individuals in Pasco have sought collective, nonpartisan, state-wide legislative action as a way around obstacles found within the local political circumstances. Drawing from other case studies like HANJ's initiative to influence welfare reform in New Jersey and Santoro's discussion of preventing the passage of English-Only legislation through political institutions, legislative action has served as a useful strategy for Latino communities to make effective change in hostile environments.

The objectives of the HLLO take on a different approach to addressing Latino concerns in light of previous political organizations and initiatives. In the Preamble of the Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization's Bylaw document it states: "We will promote civic participation in all elections, AND will promote and advocate for legislative initiatives that benefit the Hispanic/Latino community at all levels."⁴⁰

The HLLO's two-pronged approach that addresses both civic participation and advocacy within the legislature is a unique organization in the history of Latino organizations and initiatives in Pasco. As mentioned earlier, the HLLO is a statewide organization with regional groups throughout Washington. As such, the HLLO of Pasco is able to work beyond the debilitating local political environment and coordinate with other regions of the state. What is more, the HLLO's objectives are also based at the state level and thus work to create change in Pasco by placing pressure on the capital, Olympia. For the Latino community in Pasco, a legislative focus and statewide support as seen through the HLLO partly avoids the influence of partisan tensions.

The HLLO mobilizes the Latino community through issues. The official priorities of the organization include education, health, immigration, housing, economic development, Latino juvenile justice, and farm workers.⁴¹ To avoid narrow representation of the Latino community, the Bylaw document of the HLLO states that the organization "shall be comprised of individuals

⁴⁰ *Bylaws of Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization*. Retrieved March 22, 2008 from www.Hispaniclegislateday.org.

⁴¹ *Committees*. Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization Website. Retrieved March 2008 from www.Hispaniclegislateday.org.

who represent a broad spectrum of interests, including farm workers and advocates, Hispanic growers, housing health, education, economic development, labor and civic leaders.”⁴²

It is evident, however, that the Pasco HLLO has not yet reached this “broad spectrum” of participants as most of the members lie within middle to upper economic classes. This point is further emphasized by Maria Martinez’s comment about Latino political mobilization efforts in general: “I never really heard about it in this area, if its going on, I really don’t know who the community leaders are.”⁴³ Maria Martinez is a Latina community member from Pasco who worked at the local Tyson factory and played a large role in the protests against Tyson’s treatment of their factory workers in the late 1990s. The fact that Martinez, who was a leader during the workers’ unionizing efforts, was unaware of organizations like HLLO is telling of the organization’s inability to reach the working class.

Although the HLLO’s efforts are in the name of the Latino community at large, issues tend to fall on party lines. It is well known that Republicans and Democrats have opposing viewpoints on, for instance, economic development. Thus, it may prove difficult for the HLLO to truly be nonpartisan and represent varying interests within the organization. However, the HLLO has not yet experienced differing political views as an obstacle to coming together on issues.⁴⁴ On issue-based conflicts, Mendoza expressed that there has been “some disagreement” within a committee on economic development however, the committee “figure[d] it out and move[d] on.”⁴⁵ Mendoza’s comment reveals the importance of the committees within the organization that allow a space to confront differences in opinion in a constructive manner on a divisive issue such as economic development.

Regardless, members and leaders of the organization have positively received the establishment of the HLLO in Pasco. Portugal comments on his departure from the Democratic Party and involvement in the HLLO:

I no longer go to the [Democratic] meetings and I began working only with the community without any affiliation, to any party. And I see it as getting better results . . . I’m a board member with HLLO . . . I try to donate the time and because of all those obstacles that I saw . . .⁴⁶

Members of the HLLO also perceive their involvement in the organization positively. Rebecca, a woman heavily involved in her church and the HLLO, replied that the organization was not in protest but a way to “build bridges” in the sense that the HLLO engages Latino community members in dialogue with state representatives.⁴⁷ Sara, a working mother, further

⁴² *Bylaws of Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization*. Retrieved March 22, 2008 from www.Hispaniclegislateday.org.

⁴³ Martinez, Maria, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. February 9, 2008.

⁴⁴ Mendoza, Gilberto, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 17, 2008.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Portugal, Gabriel, interview by Andrea Miller, Pasco, Washington, February 4, 2008.

⁴⁷ Rebecca, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 18, 2008.

replied that the HLLO gives Latinos an opportunity to change policies before they are enacted.⁴⁸ Overall, HLLO members expressed that the organization has created a new space for the Latino community in Pasco to share ideas, stay informed, and enact change. It is clear that the HLLO's strategy is unique to Pasco's record of political and civic Latino organizations as Juan, a local businessman said, "We never had nothing like this organization in the past. Well, there were other organizations in the past, but not something that is working."⁴⁹ Thus, the HLLO's use of legislative action and education has provided a new strategy to mobilize and engage Latinos in politics in reaction to the lack of Latino organizations within Pasco and the obstacles created by political parties.

Franklin County Elections Office

Small but encouraging efforts are progressing in the outreach program of the Franklin County Elections Office. Key components of the election office's outreach program are its educational events and registration drives. The initiative started in 2006 and aims to orient new voters into the electoral system. During the presentation, Rosa Fernandez, the designated outreach director, presents dates, requirements, answers questions and explains how easy it is to go through the process. Registration and educational events are held for Pasco High School students, the Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee, as well as the public. Fernandez reported a noticeable increase in the amount of students registering as a result of the program.⁵⁰

Informational events are also part of the election office's outreach program. This type of event intends to help people fill out their ballots and clarify possible questions. According to Fernandez, informational events happen before every election and are very accessible to the community. They take place in public libraries or schools from 6-8 at night so that people who work can participate.⁵¹

Although open to the public, these events especially cater to the Latino community. Fernandez reported that 80% of the people who attend the events are Latino.⁵² Furthermore, there are bilingual materials and staff at every event. In addition, advertising for informational and registration events are run through multiple Spanish language medias including: the KCHR radio station, Univision on television, and *Viva* newspaper.

The outreach program of the Franklin County Elections Office adds yet another approach to mobilizing Latino political and civic engagement in Pasco. Unlike the HLLO, Democratic Party, and RNHA, this county-lead initiative benefits a broader base of the community because there is no commitment that comes with being a member of an organization and only requires participants to live within Franklin County. However, these types of events may be less

⁴⁸ Sara, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 3, 2008.

⁴⁹ Juan, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 20, 2008.

⁵⁰ Fernandez, Rosa, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 13, 2008.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

successful in garnering long-term political engagement and participation beyond electoral activities in comparison to the efforts of organizations.

Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)

The Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is a group of elected parents from the Pasco School District that represent the needs of the migrant and bilingual parents and children attending the particular school they represent. Advisory committees are a requirement by the school district and receive grants from the school district and the state of Washington.⁵³ Representatives for each school are elected every two years at a general meeting. All migrant and bilingual parents are invited to nominate and vote for a candidate that is expected to connect the parents' concerns with the school district. The PAC meets three times a year with one extensive convention each year. These meetings are intended to inform the superintendent and school board about issues that concern migrant and bilingual parents.

One of the PAC's main goals is to promote leadership. Workshops review the characteristics of a leader and public speaking to encourage active participation within the community at large and within the PAC itself. However, political participation is not emphasized; in fact, the PAC tries to stay away from promoting political engagement, because they often deal with undocumented participants who are more likely to feel uncomfortable participating in political activities. Instead, the PAC includes neutral efforts such as occasional voter registration events held by the county as part of their leadership promotion among those who can vote.⁵⁴

Although the Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee is not directly involved in promoting political participation, it is an organization worth noting in the overall agenda of increasing Latino political engagement. As Diaz's research shows, participation in organizations related to "Hispanic concerns" have a positive relationship with Latino electoral participation. Thus, the representatives in the PAC have a higher likelihood of becoming politically engaged. In fact, the Coordinator of the Pasco High School Migrant and Bilingual PAC commented that the organization increases an overall awareness of political issues among the representatives and that most of these parents become more involved in their communities after their involvement with the PAC.⁵⁵ The impact of the PAC on increasing participation within the Latino community is limited, however, because a parent must be elected to become involved in the organization. While there are obvious benefits to the general Latino community from the PAC, such as representation in the school district, this group has a small impact on the general mobilization of Latino political participation and civic engagement.

⁵³ Solano, Claudia interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 26, 2008.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Varaza, Chrissy, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 28, 2008.

Dissolved Organizations: HISPAC and LULAC

Addressing organizations that have attempted to mobilize the Latino community in the past offers a deeper understanding of the context that has formed current Latino mobilization endeavors. A discussion of the Hispanic Political Action Committee (HISPAC) and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) provides two examples of what has happened in the past.

HISPAC: Republican and Democratic Tensions

The relations between the Democratic Party and Republican Party expose an insightful explanation for the low level of mobilization efforts in Pasco and for the strategies that current organizations have used to avoid the involvement of party agendas. The former Hispanic Political Action Committee (HISPAC) revealed the disruptive nature of partisanship within the organization. The HISPAC was founded in 2002 as a nonpartisan organization. David Cortinas, owner of *La Voz Hispanic Newspaper* and an active Latino citizen was a member of the HISPAC and described their purpose:

The main object [was] to bring Latino leaders together to help understand the issues for the Hispanic community, to identify the Latino issues within the community, to educate and prepare Latinos leaders in the community, and to reach out to the youth and young voter to get them prepared so they can run for office.⁵⁶

However, the HISPAC only lasted a year before the organization dissolved. Cortinas explains:

[O]nce everything was up and running, it seemed like the Hispanics just couldn't see eye to eye to get even one event off the ground. There was a lot of partisanship, the Democrats wanted to bring their political people to speak and the Republicans wanted their people to speak and they couldn't come to the middle ground and say ok we'll get two Republican leaders to come and speak and we'll get two Democratic leaders to come and speak and we'll put on a dinner and let them speak to us. They couldn't even come to that, it was either all Democrats or all Republicans. They couldn't come to an agreement. So the Hispanic Political Action Committee went defunct.⁵⁷

Cortinas' account of HISPAC's failure due to divisive tensions between the Democrats and Republicans is telling of the kind of political environment these parties create. In this sense, political party presence in Pasco achieves the opposite of what Leighley calls the *normative perspective* that recognizes political parties as mobilizing agents. What is more, the failure of HISPAC had particularly negative consequences for the community. When asked whether there are current endeavors similar to HISPAC's objectives to take the place of this organization, Cortinas responded:

⁵⁶ Cortinas, David interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 7, 2008.

⁵⁷ Ibid

No, because I think that left such a bad in the mouths of people that nobody even wants to touch it. If he wants to be a Democrat he can be a Democrat, if he wants to be Republican he can be Republican, I'm just not going to go there. That's the type of attitude people have. Nobody's trying to organize it and nobody's trying to do anything to organize the political world.⁵⁸

Despite the fact that Cortinas failed to mention the HLLO's presence in Pasco, the political environment as shaped by local party politics has not fostered organizations that evoke political participation as exemplified in the case of HISPAC. Moreover, the political environment has prevented influential Latino organizations from entering the political realm. For instance, the Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce strictly adheres to a business-oriented agenda. Speaking as a founder and member of the Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Cortinas stated: "this is business and commerce, we do not take sides in any political life."⁵⁹ Clearly, the consequences of partisanship in Pasco have created a bad name for political involvement on the part of organizations for fear of increased hostilities.

LULAC: Leadership Deficiency

LULAC is a national nonpartisan membership-based organization that according to Diaz, McMiller, Hritzuk and Park's research, should enhance Latino political participation. However, as evident from its disbanded status, the Pasco chapter was not successful. However, based on interviews, it appears that the suspended organization was not a direct result of partisan tensions like that of HISPAC. The case of the former Pasco LULAC Chapter presents a different obstacle that is worth noting in this study.

Gilberto Mendoza was the former LULAC Pasco Chapter president. Recounting what happened and why the chapter dissolved, Mendoza replied:

[W]e had no guidance. It was the leadership again, it made it difficult to know what we were suppose to do, we had no direction, there were really no hot topics in our community that we could go after, so it made it really challenging. Some of the items I mentioned before, individuals that are suppose to be our counselors, the leaders that are out that should be coaching us and showing us the ropes, there weren't any in our community. So I learned a lot through the process of LULAC and saw how the leadership from the top down can influence, in a good way or a bad way, an organization.⁶⁰

Further elaborating on LULAC and other national organizations, Mendoza stated:

If you look at the achievements of Council de La Raza, the big organizations, and again I can't put my finger on why I don't see the mobilization that should be taking place and a

⁵⁸ Cortinas, David interview by Andrea Miller via phone, March 7, 2008.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Mendoza, Gilberto, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 17, 2008.

lot of it has to do with the leadership, if people don't believe in the leadership, they're not going to follow, and to me that's key.⁶¹

The particular case of LULAC points to the importance of strong local leadership and a solid local sense of how to run the organization. As Mendoza expressed, the type of leadership within LULAC prevented possible mobilization efforts and therefore could not increase Latino political participation. Through the LULAC Pasco Chapter's particular situation, it is apparent that the political environment as shaped by political parties is not the only factor impeding Latino political mobilization. Furthermore, this example shows that not all nonpartisan advocacy organizations successfully increase Latino political participation as shown through Diaz, McMiller, Hritzuk, and Park's research. Consequently, future studies closely examining leadership and Latino mobilization in a political environment similar to Pasco's would prove beneficial to local and national organizations looking to promote Latino political and civic engagement.

V. Discussion of Findings

The central questions of this study asked: How does the political environment, as shaped by local political parties, interact with Latino mobilization efforts? What kinds of strategies have developed within Latino mobilization initiatives in reaction to the particular political climate of Pasco? My findings and arguments include:

- The political environment as shaped by local political parties has largely discouraged the development of general Latino political mobilization efforts that would increase Latino political and civic engagement of all political viewpoints in Pasco as illustrated through the HISPAC organization.
- The Democratic Party has not upheld their role as a linkage institution as the *normative perspective* suggests. Instead, the party has supported the finding that the political party's role in contemporary society is declining as a political socializer and mobilizer of minorities and new citizens.
- In contradiction to traditional political party roles, the Republican Party in Pasco has upheld its role as a linkage institution with the help of Latino organizations such as the local RNHA.
- Politically active and instrumental organizations that currently exist, as supported by Hritzuk, Park, and McMiller, encourage and augment Latino political participation and thus serve as an effective mobilizer as exemplified in the activities of the HLLO and the RNHA.

⁶¹ Mendoza, Gilberto, interview by Andrea Miller via phone, February 17, 2008.

- The political environment has caused current political and civic Latino organizations to shift the way they accomplish their goals as demonstrated by the HLLO. Moreover, legislative action has been used as a strategy to bypass local partisanship tensions.
- The major organizations mobilizing the Latino community are not reaching the Latino youth or working-class.
- As exemplified by the former LULAC Chapter in Pasco, leadership is another important aspect to look at when forming mobilization organizations and initiatives.

These findings support what has been established by previous social structural studies on Latino political mobilization and participation as well as case studies on Latino legislative action. However, the content of this study adds another dimension to this issue. While previous studies have demonstrated Latino mobilization efforts' affects on the political world, this case study of Pasco illustrates the political world's affects on Latino mobilization initiatives. By examining the nature of Pasco's political parties in relation to Latino political mobilization, this study illustrates how the local political environment can interact with Latino political participation and cause mobilization efforts to take different forms.

VI. Policy and Activism Recommendations

Addressing the concern of low Latino political participation and the obstacles that impede endeavors to improve it is no easy task. Based on my assessment, there are several recommendations that I can suggest in an attempt to work towards the overall goal of increasing Latino political and civic engagement in Pasco.

Nonpartisan and Advocacy Organizations

While these recommendations are suggested for nonpartisan and advocacy organizations in general, I will specifically address the HLLO as they are a current and principle nonpartisan advocacy organization in Pasco. Furthermore, these recommendations take in to account that the HLLO is newly established and is still in the process of forming a solid organization.

Increase membership base

As the only functioning organization in Pasco with a focus on nonpartisan political participation, the HLLO plays a vital role in mobilizing the Latino community at large. For this reason, involvement in the organization should be widely promoted within the community. As the HLLO claims, the organization welcomes diverse perspectives, however, there are various perspectives that are missing in the current membership of the Pasco HLLO. Latino youth are gravely underrepresented in this organization. I would then encourage the HLLO to expand its membership base not only in numbers, but also in age range. As various informants expressed, the Latino youth are the future of the community and are able to provide new and interesting ideas. Working-class Latinos are another group that is underrepresented in the HLLO's membership. As evidenced by Martinez, working-class Latinos on the whole are not aware of

current mobilization efforts. Greater outreach to these two groups are essential if the Pasco HLLO is to abide by the HLLO's goals toward including a "broad spectrum" of perspectives. Furthermore, as Diaz, McMiller, Hritzuk, and Park's findings suggest, membership-based organizations, particularly politically active organizations such as the HLLO, increase Latino political participation. However, this increase in Latino participation will only be distributed to a limited demographic of Latinos if the HLLO does not expand its membership base.

Coalition Building

The Bylaws document of the HLLO states: "[T]he Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Advocacy Organization promotes an "open door" policy in which outside organizations can share their unique professional and technical expertise to benefit . . . Conferences or Subcommittee meetings and the Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization can impart its knowledge to outside organizations."⁶²

As the major organization promoting nonpartisan Latino political and civic participation in Pasco, the HLLO should also emphasize an effort to reach out to other organizations and initiatives within the community. Clearly, this is already within the interest of the HLLO, as stated in its Bylaws, however it is particularly important for the Pasco community. Making connections with other initiatives geared towards Latino political engagement, such as the Franklin County Elections Office's outreach program, could dramatically strengthen those efforts. Thus, the Latino community in Pasco would greatly benefit from collaborative efforts between the HLLO and other initiatives already taking place.

Franklin County Democratic Party

Increase Communication with the Latino Community

While it is clear that the Democratic Party recognizes the low level of Latino political participation in Pasco, they are not taking action to solve this dilemma. The main reason for the party's passivity is that they do not know what approach to take to improve the situation. Therefore, I would suggest that the Democratic Party maintain frequent communication with a variety of organizations such as HLLO, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and other Latino organizations so that an effective effort to increase Latino political participation and voter turnout can develop on the part of the Democratic Party. In other words, Latino organizations and individuals within those organizations can provide helpful suggestions for ways that political parties can help mobilize the Latino community, much like the RNHA provides resources to help the Republican Party connect to the Latino community. In this way, the Franklin County Democratic party can act as a facilitating institution that links the Latino community to the political process.

⁶² *Bylaws of Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization*. www. Retrieved March 22, 2008 from www. Hispaniclegislative.org.

Outreach Efforts

I would encourage the Franklin County Democratic Party to increase its outreach efforts within the Latino community. As mentioned earlier, there is an imbalance between Republican and Democratic outreach efforts, largely due to the help of the RNHA to the Republican Party. If there is to be an increase of Latino political participation in all political view points, the Democratic Party needs to intensify their outreach efforts by increasing communication with the Latino community and continuing its Latino Vote Project or another initiative that aims to target the Latino population. As mentioned in the HLLO recommendations, outreach to working-class and young Latinos should be emphasized by the Democratic Party because of the overall lack of mobilization efforts towards these groups.

Another solution to increasing Latino participation within the Democratic Party is actively seeking Latino Precinct Committee Officers, much like the Republican Party has currently attempted. As emphasized by Benegas, from the RNHA, becoming active as a PCO is a crucial step in developing leaders that later run as candidates within the party.⁶³ By intensifying outreach efforts in an attempt to increase Latino political participation and actively seeking Latino PCO's, there is a greater chance that more Latinos will turnout to vote and a greater chance that a Latino will be elected to office.

Republican National Hispanic Assembly: The Richland-Pasco Chapter

Coalition Building

As expressed by Tony Benegas, the assistant treasurer for the Washington State RNHA and a leader in the Richland-Pasco Chapter, coalitions that bridge the Democratic and Republican Party's efforts would produce the most effective results in increasing the numbers of Latinos participating in politics. The HLLO comes the closest in modeling what Benegas refers to as a coalition. While the HLLO's objectives include efforts to increase Latino political participation, the organization's main focus is on legislative action and education. Thus, I would encourage Benegas and other members of the RNHA who are interested in improving Latino political engagement to create a coalition specific to Latino political and civic engagement between individuals of every political position built to accomplish this shared goal. As seen through other organizations like HISPAC, however, coalitions between differing political parties have dissolved due to party tensions. It will take strong leadership to guide this kind of coalition and prevent partisan conflict from creating a barrier in achieving the overall objective.

Outreach Efforts

Again, as with the HLLO and the Franklin County Democratic Party, it is essential that there is a stronger focus on reaching out to Latino youth and working-class citizens. While there is a great opportunity to develop leaders within the Pasco community through the youth, a large population of working-class Latinos remains politically inactive. The most effective way to reach these two populations lies outside the scope of this study, however, recruiting more Latino

⁶³ Benegas, Tony, interview by Andrea Miller via phone. April 10, 2008.

Precinct Committee Officers like Benegas suggested offers a possible solution in improving Latino political participation.

Future Activist Organizations

The following series of recommendations are directed toward national organizations, such as LULAC, that seek to establish a presence in Pasco, Washington. These recommendations are based off of the experiences of Gilberto Mendoza, David Cortinas, and Gabriel Portugal during the formation of the LULAC Chapter in Pasco.

Locally Based Guidance and Leadership

State and regional representatives for nationally based activist organizations are not enough to allow local chapters to flourish. Leaders of local chapters should be well informed and have a clear and detailed understanding of how to manage the chapter. Frequent exchanges and updates should occur between local, regional, and state representatives.

Knowledge and Understanding of Other Latino Organizations

In accordance with increased exchange between local, regional, and state representatives, it is in the best interest of national organizations like LULAC to be well informed about other initiatives within the communities where local chapters are established. This means knowing the activities, histories, and goals about existing Latino organizations.

Support of Locally Based Latino Organizations

With knowledge about other existing efforts within a local chapter's community, national activist organizations can support local initiatives that are in-line with the organization's values. Social, political, and economic resources that established, nationally based organizations possess may be beneficial to smaller, locally based organizations that have a deeper understanding of what the local Latino community needs. In essence, both national and local organizations can benefit from what each has to offer the other.

Resources for Further Inquiry

For more ideas on methods other communities have used to increase Latino political participation, I recommend the following academic sources that I either did not address in this study or only briefly mentioned:

- Geron, Kim (2005). *Latino Political Power*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Ramírez, Ricardo (2007). Segmented Mobilization: Latino Nonpartisan Get-Out-the Vote Efforts in the 2000 General Election. *American Politics Research*, 35, 155.

- Michelson, Melissa R. (2005). Meeting the Challenge of Latino Voter Mobilization. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 601, 85.
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Leighley, Jan E (2005). Race, Ethnicity, and Electoral Mobilization: Where's the Party? In C. Wolbrecht and R. Hero (Ed.), *The Politics of Democratic Inclusion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

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Santoro, Wayne A. (1999). Conventional Politics Takes Center Stage: The Latino Struggle Against English-Only Laws. *Social Forces* 77, 887-909.

Organization Documents

Bylaws of Washington State Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization. Retrieved from www.Hispaniclegislateday.org.

NALEO Educational Fund. Latino Vote in Washington: A Demographic and Political Profile of Latinos in Washington. 2007.

Other Sources

Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization Website. Retrieved March 2008 from www.Hispaniclegislative.org.

Washington State Democrats Website. Retrieved March 6, 2008 from www.wa-democrats.org

Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly Website. Retrieved April 10, 2008 from <http://www.wrnh.org/>.

Appendix I: Interview List

Benegas, Tony- Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly
Date: April 10, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Chassin, David - Franklin County Democratic Party Chairman
Date: March 6, 2006 Place: N/A- phone interview

Cortinas, David - *La Voz Hispanic Newspaper* Editor and CEO
Date: March 4, 2006 Place: N/A- phone interview

Fernandez, Rosa - Franklin County Elections Office
Date: March 5, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Martinez, Maria- Pasco community member, former Tyson Factory worker
Date: February 9, 2008. Place: Pasco, Washington

Mendoza, Gilberto - Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization Treasurer
Date: February 17 and March 3, 2008 Place: phone interview & Public Utility District Room,
Pasco, Washington.

Portugal, Gabriel- Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization Leader
Date: February 10, 2008 Place: The Hut Restaurant, Pasco, Washington

Solano, Claudia - Director of Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee
Date: February 26, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Varaza, Chrissy - Coordinator of Parent Advisory Committee
Date: February 28, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Juan- HLLO Member⁶⁴
Date: March 24, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Mia- HLLO Member
Date: March 6, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Rebecca- HLLO Member
Date: March 20, 2008 Place: N/A- phone interview

Sara- HLLO Member
Date: March 3, 2008 Place: Public Utility District Room

⁶⁴ Note, all HLLO members have been given pseudonyms

Appendix II: Interview Questions and Themes List

Franklin County Democratic Party Topics:

- Political environment in Pasco
- Partisanship in Pasco
- Democratic Party get-out-the-vote efforts
- Challenges of Latino political participation efforts by the Democratic Party
- Democratic Party Statistics
- Role of political parties in the community

Franklin County Elections Office (Rosa Fernandez) Questions:

- Who sponsored the voter registration event and how often does it happen?
- How many people showed up to the event?
- How was the event advertised?
- Do you know of any other events that are put on to encourage people to vote?
- Could you tell me more about the events you put on for students in Pasco?

Hispanic/Latino Legislative Organization Questions:

Members-

- How long have you been a member?
- How and why did you join?
- Tell me about your involvement
- How has being a part of the HLLO affected you?
- How does the organization help the community?
- In what ways can the organization improve?
- What other organizations are you involved in?

Leaders-

Topics included:

- Organizational profile components (membership, activities, funds, history, mission statement, media coverage, relations with other organizations)
- Strategy of the organization
- Mobilization techniques
- Other organizations or initiatives in Pasco
- LULAC
- Organization cohesiveness (with other HLLO groups in Washington and within Pasco HLLO group itself)

Hispanic Political Action Committee

Topics included:

- Basic organizational profile information (activities, history, objectives, relations with other organizations)
- Why the organization dissolved

Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee Topics:

- Organizational profile components (membership, activities, funds, history, mission statement, media coverage, relations with other organizations)
- Issues of concern among Latino parents
- Other programs available for parental involvement
- Influence of PAC on the school board decisions

Washington State Republican National Hispanic Assembly Questions:

- How long has the organization been established in Pasco?
- How active is the organization, what kinds of activities have they done or are they doing now to increase political participation in the Latino community?
- To what extent is the Washington State RNHA affiliated with the Republican Party?
- What kind of outreach efforts is the RNHA seeing being made by the Republican Party towards the Latino community?
- What other organizations have a relationship with the RNHA?