"(Dis)enfranchised Citizens: Informational Messaging and Puerto Rican Political Mobilization"

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Abstract: Puerto Ricans are a growing population on the U.S. mainland. They hold a distinctive position in the hierarchy of American citizenship because they are disenfranchised in national elections on the island but immediately become eligible to vote if they move to the mainland. How can Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland be mobilized to participate in politics? This paper explores whether campaign contact increases Puerto Rican political participation. Using observational data, we establish that campaign contact is associated with political participation among mainland Puerto Ricans. We also conduct a survey experiment, testing the mobilizing effects of positive and negative campaign messages that prime Puerto Ricans to think about their group's distinctive political experiences. These messages convey the enfranchised status of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland and their disenfranchised status on the island. While the negative treatment has limited effects, the positive treatment increases intentions to vote, to participate in non-electoral political activities, and feelings of political efficacy relative to a pure control. We observe heterogenous treatment effects across electoral contexts and levels of linked fate with other Puerto Ricans.

Introduction

> "For more than a century the people of Puerto Rico have been U.S. citizens, but have been denied the right to vote for the President and members of Congress, leaving us without representation in the federal government." – Jenniffer González-Colón, Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico

Puerto Ricans are the second largest ethnic group in the Latino community, representing about 9.5% of the Latino[1] population in the U.S. (López and Patten 2015). As conveyed in the above statement, Puerto Ricans also hold a distinctive position in the hierarchy of American citizenship. Those who live on the island are denied the right to vote in national elections, despite the fact that they are American citizens. However, Puerto Ricans are immediately eligible to vote if they move to the U.S. mainland.

While they differ from other Latino sub-groups in terms of their citizenship status and distinctive pathway to enfranchisement, Puerto Ricans' political orientations are typically studied in the context of the broader Latino electorate. Relatively little is known about Puerto Rican political participation on the mainland, especially in the contemporary period. This research addresses this gap with a study of group-specific campaign messages. Specifically, we ask: How can Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland be mobilized to participate in politics?

Recent data suggest that like the Latino population as a whole, Puerto Ricans on the mainland vote at lower rates than the general population. For example, although Puerto Rican turnout has steadily increased since 2000, there is a consistent 10 to 15 percentage point voting gap between Puerto Ricans and the general population (Vargas-Ramos 2016).[2] Also, while the number of voting eligible island-born Puerto Ricans in Florida has increased substantially in the

[1] While this paper uses the term "Latino" to refer to people of Latin American origin, other terms used to describe the same pan-ethnic identity group include "Latinx" and "Hispanic."
[2] Other work has found higher rates of registration and turnout among Puerto Ricans compared to other Latinos in New York City (Vargas-Ramos 2003).

past five years, Latino voter registration in counties with large Puerto Rican populations has remained relatively stable (Flores, López, and Krogstad 2018). These statistics align with historical accounts that document low levels of political participation among Puerto Ricans in New York City and Chicago (Jennings 1977; Falcon 1983; Michelson 2003a). Scholars attribute low levels of political participation among Puerto Ricans to limited knowledge about the voter registration process and a lack of mobilization efforts by political parties and campaigns (Aranda, Arroyo-Flores, and Rosa 2019; Vargas-Ramos 2003; 2016). In addition, many Puerto Ricans have re-settled under conditions of hardship, which may make political participation a low priority.

Understanding how to mobilize Puerto Ricans is important because they are a growing presence on the U.S. mainland and their inclusion in the American polity goes to the heart of democratic ideals. While the Puerto Rican population has been larger on the mainland than on the island since the early 2000s, the mainland population has grown rapidly in the past decade due to migration after an economic decline and several natural disasters (Cohn, Patten, and López 2014; Krogstad 2015a). The Center for Puerto Rican Studies estimated that "between 2017 and 2019, Puerto Rico may lose up to 470,355 citizens" (Meléndez and Hinojosa 2018). This trend of outmigration is coupled with new settlement patterns. Many Puerto Rican migrants are moving to Florida, making them a potentially pivotal group in future national elections (Sutter and Hernandez 2018). In fact, the Puerto Rican population in Florida has grown to over one million, nearly the size of the established community in New York (Krogstad 2015b).

This study explores whether group-specific campaign messages mobilize Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland. We hypothesize that messages priming Puerto Ricans to think about their distinctive political experiences increase voting and non-voting participation. We examine multiple forms of participation because theories of group mobilization predict that experiences of

marginalization may mobilize minority group members to vote, participate in campaigns, and engage in protest (Dawson 1994; Barreto et al. 2009). Moreover, social movements and protest are critical forms of political activity among Puerto Ricans due to legacies of colonialism and marginalization (Marquez and Jennings 2000; Vargas-Ramos 2003).

We test these claims with observational and experimental evidence. Using survey data from the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), we establish that campaign contact is associated with increased political participation among Puerto Ricans on the mainland. Next, we conducted a survey experiment with Survey Sampling International to test whether group-specific campaign messages mobilize a national sample of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland to participate in politics. We exposed respondents to tailored informational messages, similar to those used by real political campaigns. We randomly manipulated the content of the messages between a positive "reminder of enfranchisement," which informed Puerto Ricans of their right to vote on the U.S. mainland, a negative "reminder of disenfranchisement," stating that Puerto Ricans who live on the island cannot vote in national elections, and a pure control.

To preview the results, we find that the enfranchisement message mobilizes Puerto Ricans, increasing intentions to vote and participate in various forms of non-electoral political activity such as protesting, donating to political campaigns, attending political rallies, and discussing politics. We observe heterogenous treatment effects across electoral contexts and levels of linked fate with other Puerto Ricans, two potential moderators of mobilization effects.

Existing literature on Puerto Rican political participation

Research on Puerto Rican political behavior finds that structural factors, racialization, and political context influence their political participation. For example, Falcon (1983) and Michelson (2003a) note the importance of structural factors within local contexts, such as organizational

efforts by political machines in New York City and Chicago, in mobilizing Puerto Ricans. Relatedly, some studies identify Puerto Ricans' lower status in American racial hierarchy and intentions to return to Puerto Rico as explanations for their under-participation in mainland politics and low levels of political efficacy (Meléndez 2003; Michelson 2003a). One study finds that Puerto Ricans in New York City are less likely to vote, donate to political candidates, work on campaigns, and report contact from campaigns, compared to other racial groups (Vargas-Ramos 2003). Other work suggests that protest is an important, though often overlooked, form of participation among Puerto Ricans (Marquez and Jennings 2000).

Taken together, this research links Puerto Rican participation on the mainland to legacies of colonialism, migration, and experiences within local political contexts. These studies make important contributions towards understanding Puerto Rican political behavior. We build on this work by investigating the mechanisms that lead to political participation among Puerto Ricans on the mainland.

Examining the Puerto Rican case through theories of immigrant and Latino politics

Research on immigrant political behavior offers several explanations that might also apply to Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland. A major finding from these studies is that standard socioeconomic theories do not explain political participation in immigrant groups (Junn 1999; Ramakrishnan 2005). This literature also explores the distinctive factors that might explain immigrant political participation, including length of residence in the U.S. (Wong 2000), English language proficiency, foreign-born status (Cho 1999), and institutional barriers (Jones-Correa 2001). Other work finds that a focus on voting may under-estimate immigrant political engagement, which often occurs through non-electoral political action (Barreto and Muñoz 2003; Ramakrishan and Bloemraad 2008).

Building on this work, studies of Latinos in the United States find that group-specific factors influence their political behavior. For example, pan-ethnic group consciousness is an important predictor of Latino political participation (Stokes 2003; Sanchez 2006). However, it does not influence the political participation of Puerto Ricans (Stokes 2003, 370). Although some scholars find evidence of conflict between subgroups in the Latino community, most studies conceptualize Latino group consciousness on the pan-ethnic level (Monforti and Sanchez 2010). Research on Latino voter mobilization draws on this pan-ethnic conceptualization of group consciousness, finding that Latinos are more likely to turnout when a co-ethnic candidate is on the ballot, when they are contacted by other Latinos, and when they live in majority-Latino districts (Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; McConnaughy et al. 2010; Nuño 2007).

A growing body of experimental research suggests that campaign contact may boost Latino political participation, although findings on the effectiveness of group-specific messages are mixed. For example, García Bedolla and Michelson (2012) show that "get out the vote" campaigns mobilize minority voters by engaging them in the political process and developing new schemas for political participation among historically demobilized groups. As they show, civic engagement messages regarding enfranchisement can lead to mobilization. Some studies find that group-specific messages are no more effective at mobilizing Latino voters than generic appeals (Michelson 2005; Ramirez 2005). Others find that targeted appeals are effective at mobilizing certain subgroups within the Latino community. For example, Michelson (2003b) finds that face-to-face campaign contact that "emphasized voting as a tool for ethnic solidarity," increased turnout in a local California election by about 10 percentage points among Latino Democrats (254). Abrajano and Panagopoulos (2011) find that Spanish-language messages increase turnout in a local New York election among those who primarily speak Spanish. Valenzuela and Michelson

(2016) find that mobilization messages emphasizing Latino pan-ethnic identity increase turnout among voters with high levels of Latino group identity.

Collectively, these studies suggest that that group-specific appeals have the potential to increase the political participation of some Latino subgroups. Puerto Ricans on the mainland may represent one such group, given their distinctive political experiences and strong sense of cultural identity (Duany 2007).

A theory of Puerto Rican political mobilization

The literature on Puerto Rican identity argues that Puerto Ricans maintain a sense of "cultural distinctiveness" on the island "despite a lack of political sovereignty" (Dávila 1997, 3). Others convey that this sense of cultural identity extends to Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland (Flores 1985). For example, Duany (2007) argues that "diasporic communities are an integral part of the Puerto Rican nation because they continue to be linked to the island by circular movement of people, identities, and practices," (5). In fact, several studies find that both Puerto Ricans who live on the island and mainland primarily see themselves as "Puerto Rican" rather than as "American" or "Latino," (Dávila 1997; Duany 2007). The intersection of multiple identities is similar among other Latino subgroups, like Mexican Americans, who also have distinctive histories and cultures (Beltrán 2010).

Given the persistence of Puerto Rican cultural identity on the U.S. mainland, our theory predicts that members of this diasporic community can be mobilized through group-specific campaign messages. Puerto Ricans who live on the U.S. mainland may be motivated to participate in politics because they were previously disenfranchised or are aware of the unequal voting rights of fellow Puerto Ricans on the island. Messages that prime Puerto Ricans to think about their group's experiences of disenfranchisement on the island and immediate enfranchisement upon

arrival to the mainland may increase their political participation. When exposed to campaign messages about disparate voting rights in their community, Puerto Ricans on the mainland may particularly value their right to vote.

Mobilization messages focused on Puerto Rican group experiences may also increase their participation in non-electoral political activities and feelings of political efficacy. Activities like attending a political rally, putting up a yard sign, calling or writing to a political official, and donating money to a party or candidate constitute "high-cost" forms of non-electoral participation that require time and effort (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Messages that prime group experience may motivate Puerto Ricans who already vote to engage in these costly non-electoral activities. We also examine the effect of mobilization messages on intentions to participate in protest. We separate protest from other high-cost forms of participation because it is a system-directed activity. Finally, mobilization messages may increase the likelihood of engaging in low-cost forms of participation, like political discussion, and levels of political efficacy.

If Puerto Ricans can be mobilized through group-specific campaign messages, are negative or positive informational messages about the group's status more likely to increase political participation? While some work suggests that negative campaign information is no less effective than positive information (Arceneaux and Nickerson 2010; Freedman and Goldstein 1999), others find that negative campaign information is demobilizing (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999; Krupnikov 2011). Accordingly, both the positive and negative messages have the potential to mobilize Puerto Ricans.

The effectiveness of group-specific political messages may also be contingent on the existence of group-based attachments to other Puerto Ricans on the mainland and the island. Those who have attachments to other members of their ethnic group may be more strongly influenced by

group-specific mobilization appeals because their identity as a Puerto Rican is personally important (Dawson 1994; Sanchez 2006; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010).

It is also possible that the mobilizing effects of group-specific messages are contingent on settling in competitive political environments on the mainland. Existing research finds that local political context has large effects on political participation, vote choice, and partisanship (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Giles and Dantico 1982). Local political environment also influences Latino political participation (Fernandez and Dempsey 2017; Hritzuk and Park 2000; Leighley 2001; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). This perspective is relevant to the Puerto Rican case because many recent migrants live in competitive electoral contexts, where they are likely to receive messages from political campaigns. Puerto Ricans who live in competitive environments also may be more likely to respond to campaign messages because they feel that they have the potential to influence political outcomes.

Drawing on these theoretical claims, we develop the following hypotheses:

Campaign contact hypothesis: Campaign contact increases Puerto Ricans' political participation, relative to receiving no contact.

Mobilization message hypothesis: Group-specific mobilization messages increase Puerto Ricans' intentions to participate in various forms of political activity and feelings of political efficacy, relative to receiving no mobilization message.

Message valence hypotheses: We test two competing expectations with regard to message valence since this information is of practical importance to future campaigns.

> *Positive valence hypothesis:* Positive informational messages reminding Puerto Ricans of their right to vote on the U.S. mainland are mobilizing, relative to receiving no message.
>
> *Negative valence hypothesis*: Negative messages reminding Puerto Ricans that friends and relatives on the island are disenfranchised are mobilizing, relative to receiving no message.

Linked fate hypothesis: The mobilizing effects of group-specific messages are stronger among those with high levels of linked fate with other Puerto Ricans than those with low levels of linked fate.

Electoral competitiveness hypothesis: The mobilizing effects of campaign contact and group-specific campaign messages are larger among Puerto Ricans who live in competitive environments than those who live in non-competitive political environments.

Observational data and methods

We use data from the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) to conduct an observational test of the campaign contact and electoral competitiveness hypotheses (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2017). The 2016 CCES is useful for this analysis because it includes a large sample of Puerto Rican respondents who live on the U.S. mainland (n = 1,186). Although these results are observational, they offer evidence about the associations between campaign contact and various forms of political participation using high-quality national survey data.

We use two measures of political participation as outcomes in this analysis. The first is a validated measure of *voting in 2016 presidential election*, which equals one if the respondent is matched as "active" in the 2016 voter files and zero otherwise. The second dependent variable is an index of *non-voting political participation* scaled from four questions about non-electoral political activities. Respondents were asked if they had participated in the following political activities in the last year: (1) attended a local political meeting, (2) put up a political sign, (3) worked for a candidate or campaign, and (4) donated money to a candidate, campaign, or political organization. Responses are scaled into an index that ranges from 0 to 1 (alpha = 0.61). Each item in the index is binary, with zero coded as non-participation and one coded as participation.

The independent variables include measures of campaign contact, local partisan context, and demographic controls. The primary independent variable is a binary measure of whether respondents were *contacted by a candidate or political campaign* during the 2016 election cycle. While this self-reported measure is imperfect, it offers an estimate of exposure to mobilization messages. To measure *local political context*, we include an indicator for whether a respondent

lives in a swing state.[3] Puerto Ricans who live in uncompetitive (or non-swing) states are the comparison group.[4] We include controls for *college education, household income, unemployment*, *homeownership*, *partisanship, age, gender, generational status*, and *marital status* in all models. See Appendix Table 1 (pp. 2-3) for question wording, coding, and descriptive statistics.

This analysis uses regression models to estimate the effects of campaign contact on validated voting and non-electoral participation under various specifications. We use logistic regression for validated voting models and ordinary least squares for non-electoral participation models. To account for missing data, we imputed missing values of several variables, including income, partisanship, campaign contact, and non-electoral participation using the multiple imputation R package "Mice" (van Buuren and Groothuis-Oudshoorn 2011). We ran regressions on five imputed datasets. The pooled results from these analyses are presented in the main paper. For comparison, the complete case results are included in the appendix.

Observational results

We begin by comparing the demographic characteristics of the CCES sample to those of a nationally representative sample of mainland Puerto Ricans from a 2013 survey (López and Patten 2015). As Table 1 shows, this CCES sample represents a diverse cross-section of the mainland Puerto Rican community that is similar to the national population on many demographic characteristics including local electoral context, college education, and gender. While the CCES did not ask whether respondents were born in Puerto Rico, approximately 10 percent of the CCES

[3] We use a binary coding of local partisan context because we are most interested in the effects of electoral competitiveness. Additionally, since Puerto Ricans are clustered in a few states, a more granular coding such as state fixed effects may pick up on other features of local environments, like Puerto Rican population size.

[4] Non-swing states are coded as states that went for a single party over the past five presidential elections (2000-2016). See Appendix Table 1 (Appendix pp. 2-3) for a full categorization.

sample reported that they are "immigrants to the USA." This measure likely excludes many Puerto Ricans who were born on the island and migrated to the U.S. mainland, a group that makes up about 30% of the mainland Puerto Rican population.[5]

[Table 1 here]

Next, we explore the association between campaign contact and political participation for Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland. Table 2 presents the pooled results of regression analyses conducted on five imputed datasets, examining the relationship between campaign contact and participation. Columns 1-4 present the results for validated voting and columns 5-8 present the results for non-electoral participation. To test whether Puerto Ricans who live in electorally competitive areas are particularly responsive to mobilization messages, we re-estimate these models separately for respondents who live in swing and non-swing states (Table 2, Columns 2-3 and 6-7). Finally, we include models interacting campaign contact with an indicator for living in a swing state, to test whether these the differences in effects across electoral contexts are statistically significant (Table 2, Columns 4 and 8). The complete case results, which are largely similar to the imputed results, are included in Appendix Table 3 (p. 8).

[Table 2 here]

As the campaign contact hypothesis predicts, reporting contact from a political campaign has a large and significant association with voting for the full sample (Table 2, Column 1). Puerto Ricans who were contacted by a political campaign were about 16 percentage points more likely to vote in the 2016 election than those who did not report contact. Campaign contact increases turnout by about 20 percentage points among Puerto Ricans in swing states, but only by 9

[5] Although the CCES does not include a measure of English language proficiency, about 63% of Puerto Ricans on the mainland speak English "very well" (López and Patten 2015).

percentage points for those in non-swing states (Table 2, Columns 2-3). These predicted probabilities are calculated across values of campaign contact, holding all other predictors at their means. While not statistically significant (Table 2, Column 4), the difference in the magnitude of effects offers suggestive support for the electoral competitiveness hypothesis.

Campaign contact is also associated with non-electoral political participation. As expected, reporting campaign contact is associated with about a 9 percentage point increase in non-electoral political participation (Table 2, Column 5). The results are also mixed with regard to electoral competitiveness. Campaign contact has a moderately-sized and statistically significant association with non-electoral participation for both Puerto Ricans who live in swing and non-swing states (Table 2, Columns 6-7). The effect is slightly larger among those who live in non-swing states (12 percentage points) than those who live in swing states (7 percentage points), although these differences are not statistically significant (Table 2, Column 8).

The results also offer insights into the demographic characteristics associated with political participation among Puerto Ricans. While age, income, and identifying as female are associated with voting, homeownership and first-generation status decrease the likelihood of turning out (Table 2, Column 1). Having a college degree, income, and first-generation status increase non-electoral political participation (Table 2, Column 4). These findings suggest that resource-based theories may, in part, explain who participates within the mainland Puerto Rican community. With the caveat that first-generation status likely undercounts island-born Puerto Ricans, these results also suggest that migrant Puerto Ricans are less likely to vote but more likely to engage in non-electoral participation than their mainland-born counterparts.

Experimental data and methods

We complement the observational analysis with an original survey experiment that tests for the causal effects of group-specific mobilization messages on the political participation of Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland. We consider the effects of these messages on intentions to participate in politics and feelings of political efficacy. The experiment leverages the group's marginalized political status to test whether a negative message about disenfranchisement on the island or a positive message about enfranchisement on the mainland increases political participation.

The survey experiment was conducted in December 2015 on an internet sample of 430 Puerto Rican adults living on the U.S. mainland, recruited through Survey Sampling International. The survey used quotas to obtain roughly equal proportions of respondents from competitive and non-competitive states (henceforth swing and non-swing states) in national elections, using the same coding as the observational analysis.

We measured the following demographic and political variables pre-treatment: *age, gender, education, party identification, state of residence, place of birth, and voter registration status*. We also measured linked fate with Puerto Ricans, asking how much respondents have in common "in terms of things like government services, employment, political power, and representation" with (1) Puerto Ricans on the mainland and (2) Puerto Ricans on the island. These items were scaled together into a single index and binned into binary categories (alpha = 0.81). Respondents with values above 0.5 were coded as having "high linked fate" and those with values below 0.5 were coded as having "low linked fate" with other Puerto Ricans. See Appendix Table 2 for more coding information and the distribution of the linked fate measures.

Next, respondents were exposed to one of two informational treatment conditions or to a no-information control condition and answered several post-treatment questions. Respondents were required to stay on the treatment screen for at least a minute. We measured a range of political outcomes post-treatment, including *intention to vote the 2016 presidential election*, *intention to participate in protest*, and *intention to discuss politics.* We also include a continuous scaled (0 - 1) index of *intention to participate in "high-cost" non-electoral political activities,* which includes intentions to: (1) donate money to a political party or candidate, (2) advertise for a political campaign, (3) attend a political rally, and (4) call or write to the office of a political official (alpha = 0.67). The "high-cost" scale contains similar items to the non-voting participation index from the observational analysis.[6] Both protest and high-cost participation represent costly forms of political activity but are measured separately because protest is a system-directed form of participation and the other measures are within-system forms of participation. Intentions to discuss politics represents a lower-cost form of political activity that reflects general interest in politics.

Finally, we measured *political efficacy*, a scale that includes: (1) "The government pays attention to what people think," and (2) "I am satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States" (alpha = 0.65) (American National Election Study 2000, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2012). We use validated measures of government responsiveness to citizens and satisfaction with democracy to measure efficacy because they are directly tied to voting rights, the topic of the experimental treatment. See Appendix Table 2 (pp. 4-7) for question wording, coding, and descriptive statistics.

[6] These are binary measures, where 0 represents "no" or "not sure" and one represents "yes." We conduct robustness checks separating "no" and "not sure" in the relevant outcomes (Appendix Tables 4 – 8, pp. 9-13).

This study considers the effects of the following textual messages because contemporary political campaigns focus digital mobilization efforts on such appeals. Recent research finds that textual messages are effective at mobilizing people to vote (Malhotra et al. 2011; Malhotra, Michelson, and Valenzuela 2012). These treatments are intended to remind rather than inform Puerto Ricans about their voting rights. Both messages are intended to prime Puerto Rican group experience, constituted by disenfranchisement on the island and enfranchisement on the mainland.

(1) *Negative disenfranchisement condition:* "Although Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, those who live on the Puerto Rican island are not allowed to vote in United States national elections. For example, Puerto Ricans living on the island do not have the right to vote in the upcoming 2016 presidential election. This is because Puerto Rico is a United States territory and commonwealth, rather than a state. As a result, the 3.6 million Puerto Ricans living on the island are not represented by the United States national government."

(2) *Positive enfranchisement condition:* "Since Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, those who live in one of the fifty U.S. states (or DC) are eligible to vote in national elections. For example, Puerto Ricans living in a U.S. state (or DC) have the right to vote in the upcoming 2016 presidential election, if they are registered to vote in that state. As a result, the 5 million Puerto Ricans living on U.S. mainland are represented by the United States national government."

(3) *Control condition: No information*

Although we did not expect that the treatments provided new information, we conducted manipulation checks to test whether respondents absorbed the treatment information. First, respondents were asked whether Puerto Ricans who live on the island are eligible to vote in the (then upcoming) 2016 presidential election. Among respondents in the disenfranchisement condition, 76% answered correctly (no), compared with only 60% in the control condition. Second, respondents were asked whether Puerto Ricans who live on the U.S. mainland are eligible to vote in 2016. Among respondents exposed to the enfranchisement condition, 95% answered correctly (yes), compared with 93% in the control condition. This second result suggests that the enfranchisement condition acted as a reminder, rather than a cue providing new information. In contrast, the disenfranchisement condition may have provided new information to some

respondents. Taken together, the results of the manipulation check suggest that the respondents understood the information provided in the treatments.

Table 3 reports on co-variate balance across the treatment conditions for seven pre-treatment demographics. Based on these results, we assume balance on observable and unobservable pre-treatment variables.

[Table 3 here]

Experimental results

The experimental results are presented for the full sample and separately across electoral contexts and levels of linked fate with Puerto Ricans. We conduct separate analyses on these subsets to test the electoral competitiveness and linked fate hypotheses. The sample consists of 198 Puerto Ricans in swing states and 146 who live in non-swing states. There are 169 respondents with high levels of linked fate (greater than 0.50, on a scale from 0 to 1) with Puerto Ricans and 227 with low levels of linked fate.[7] We analyze the effects of the treatments on five political outcomes, using logistic regression for binary outcomes and ordinary least squares regression for continuous outcomes. The full regression results are presented in Appendix Tables 4-8 (pp. 9-13). Table 4 summarizes the experimental results, presenting average treatment effects for the full sample and conditional treatment effects across electoral contexts and levels of linked fate.

[Table 4 here]

As the mobilization message hypothesis predicts, both types of messages mobilize Puerto Ricans to participate in politics, but the enfranchisement condition drives most of the effects. As Table 4 shows, across the full sample and various subgroups, the enfranchisement condition

[7] Instances of missing data are due to item non-response.

increases intentions to vote, protest, participate in high-cost political activity, discuss politics, and political efficacy, relative to a pure control. In contrast, the disenfranchisement condition only increases intentions to discuss politics and political efficacy for select subgroups of respondents. While only the enfranchisement treatment increases intentions to vote, both treatments increase intentions to participate in non-electoral political activity and feelings of political efficacy. Neither message has significant demobilizing effects for any political outcome. We discuss the significant effects of each treatment in more detail below.

Figure 1 presents the percentage point effects of exposure to the enfranchisement condition, relative to the control condition, for the five political outcomes. We present the results for the full sample, subsets of respondents who live in swing and non-swing states, and subsets of respondents with high and low levels of linked fate with other Puerto Ricans within each panel. The results are plotted with 90% confidence intervals.

[Figure 1 here]

The enfranchisement message has mobilizing effects on several political outcomes for the full sample. Exposure to the enfranchisement treatment boosts intentions to vote by about 8 percentage points for the full sample. It also increases intentions to participate in several forms of non-electoral political activity for the full sample. As the remaining panels of Figure 1 show, the enfranchisement treatment increases intentions to participate in high-cost political activities by about 6 percentage points, intentions to discuss politics by 10 percentage points, and feelings of political efficacy by about 7 percentage points.

Contrary to the electoral competitiveness hypothesis, the enfranchisement message has a 12 percentage point mobilizing effect on intentions to vote among those in non-competitive states but does not affect voting among those in competitive states. However, when it comes to non-

electoral participation, the enfranchisement message has larger mobilizing effects among respondents who live in competitive states. Among those in swing states, the enfranchisement condition increases intentions to protest by about 13 percentage points, intentions to participate in high-cost political activities by 11 percentage points, and intentions to discuss politics by 14 percentage points.

We also find mixed evidence for the linked fate hypothesis, as the enfranchisement message has mobilizing effects across the spectrum of linked fate with Puerto Ricans. Among those with high levels of linked fate with Puerto Ricans, the enfranchisement condition boosts intentions to protest by over 20 percentage points and intentions to participate in high-cost political activities by about 12 percentage points. Among those with low levels of linked fate, the enfranchisement treatment increases intentions to vote by about 17 percentage points, intentions to discuss politics by 14 percentage points, and feelings of political efficacy by 10 percentage points.

The disenfranchisement treatment has fewer and less consistent significant effects than the enfranchisement treatment. The disenfranchisement condition has no significant mobilizing effects for the full sample. However, it increases intentions to discuss politics by about 14 percentage points and feelings of political efficacy by 9 percentage points for respondents who reside in swing states. The disenfranchisement message also increases feeling of political efficacy by about 7 percentage points for respondents with low levels of linked fate with Puerto Ricans (Table 4). Although negative cues generally have minimal effects, these results offer suggestive evidence that they may be politically mobilizing in certain instances, particularly for respondents living in swing states. They may also increase feelings of personal political impact for those who are not strongly attached to other Puerto Ricans.

These results largely hold in direction and magnitude when re-estimated with standard demographic controls (Appendix Tables 9-13, pp. 14-18). While there are some differences in the magnitude and statistical significance of treatment effects across models with and without controls, only one new effect emerges in models that control for age, gender, education, household income, registration status, partisanship, and place of birth. Exposure to the disenfranchisement treatment significantly decreases feelings of political efficacy for respondents with high linked fate with Puerto Ricans in the controlled model (Appendix Table 13, p. 18).

Taken together, the results suggest that messages about Puerto Rican group experience can influence the political behavior of those who live on the U.S. mainland. We find support for the positive valence hypothesis, as the enfranchisement message has many more significant mobilizing effects than the disenfranchisement message. As the electoral competitiveness hypothesis predicts, group-specific messages increase non-electoral participation for respondents who live in swing states. However, they increase intentions to vote for respondents who live in non-swing states, which is contrary to this hypothesis. Likewise, the messages also have mobilizing effects across the spectrum of linked fate with others in the Puerto Rican community.

Robustness check: Alternative model specifications

In the analyses described above, we combined "no" and "not sure" responses to create dichotomous measures of political participation. This approach allowed us to compare treatment effects for respondents who were certain that they would participate to all others. However, it is possible that a response of "not sure" is qualitatively different from "no." To account for this possibility, we recoded the participation measures, separating "no" and "not sure" to create outcomes with three levels. We then re-specified our models for intentions to vote, protest, and discuss politics at home using multinomial logistic regression (Appendix Tables 4, 5, and 7, pp. 9-

13). For these analyses, the baseline response was "no" intention to participate. The two coefficients for each multinomial model represent the average treatment effect of moving from "no" to "not sure" and moving from "no" to "yes." For high-cost political participation, we constructed a new index from the three-item participation measures (alpha = 0.78) and re-estimated the OLS models (Appendix Table 6, pp. 11-12).

In general, these results lend themselves to similar conclusions as the main analyses. With the exception of voting, most of the effects from the main analysis hold in magnitude and direction and a large number also hold in statistical significance. The results of this robustness check suggest that the enfranchisement condition is more likely to increase political participation than the disenfranchisement condition. It is important to note that the results for the political context subsets were more robust to the alternative model specifications than those for the linked fate subsets. While these findings do not change the interpretation that the positive enfranchisement message has the potential to mobilize Puerto Ricans, they reveal complexities about the relationship between group-specific cues and political participation. Like the main findings, these results also suggest the importance of political environment in shaping whether Puerto Ricans can be mobilized and that strong group attachments do not always lead to increased political mobilization.

Robustness check: Zip code analysis

One weakness with regard to our measure electoral context is the use of large geographic units to make inferences about local environments. We address this limitation with a robustness check, re-estimating the models using zip code level election returns. Zip codes provide a fine-grained approximation of respondents' immediate political environment. This tests whether the results with regard to electoral competitiveness hold in more geographically concentrated areas.

For this analysis, we define zip codes where the partisan difference in vote share for the 2016 election was less than 12 percentage points, the 20th percentile for this sample, as "competitive," and all other zip codes as "uncompetitive." In the experimental sample, 85 respondents live in swing zip codes, and 337 live in uncompetitive zip codes. Compared to the state-level coding, the distribution of respondents across zip codes suggests that Puerto Ricans who live in swing states do not necessarily live in mixed partisan neighborhoods. Therefore, this analysis provides a stronger test for the moderating effects of electoral competitiveness.

The results of the robustness check largely replicate the main results (Appendix Tables 14-18, pp. 19-21). In the zip code analysis, the positive effects of the enfranchisement condition on high-cost participation and intentions to discuss politics replicate in direction, magnitude, and statistical significance for respondents in swing and non-swing states. The effects of the disenfranchisement condition on intentions to discuss politics and efficacy for Puerto Ricans in swing states are similar in direction and magnitude but become statistically insignificant. Likewise, the effects of the enfranchisement condition on voting for respondents in non-swing states and on political efficacy and protest for respondents in swing states are similar in direction and magnitude but become insignificant. Although some of these results are not a perfect match to the main results, the effects are similar in magnitude where they differ in statistical significance.

Discussion:

The results of the observational analysis convey that that Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland are more likely to be politically active when they report contact by political campaigns. Our finding that campaign contact is most strongly associated with voting among Puerto Ricans in swing states further suggests that Puerto Ricans can be potentially be a pivotal electoral constituency if they are targeted by political campaigns. This result also raises questions about

whether Puerto Ricans know whether they live in electorally competitive contexts. While we are unable to directly answer this question, the positive correlation between self-reported campaign contact and political participation across electoral environments suggests that mobilization might not depend on this knowledge. As recent migration trends show Puerto Ricans moving to swing states, campaigns may be incentivized to invest resources into mobilizing this constituency.

The experimental results provide additional insight into the types of campaign messages that might mobilize Puerto Ricans to participate in politics. In line with the positive valence hypothesis, the findings show that a positive informational message about enfranchisement on the mainland is more politically mobilizing than a negative message about disenfranchisement. While neither message is demobilizing, the enfranchisement message has significant mobilizing effects for more political outcomes and across more subsamples. Positive messages emphasizing the political rights of Puerto Ricans on the mainland may be more mobilizing because they are more empowering and energizing than negative appeals. This finding builds on García Bedolla and Michelson's (2012) work, showing that providing cues of enfranchisement to a historically disenfranchised constituency can increase their intentions to participate in electoral politics. These types of textual mobilization messages may be less costly for community organizations than door-to-door campaigns.

It is important to note that the enfranchisement treatment has heterogenous effects. The results offer mixed evidence with regard to the electoral context hypothesis, as the enfranchisement treatment increases intentions to vote and political efficacy among those in non-swing states and non-electoral participation among those in swing states. It is possible that this treatment boosted intentions to vote among Puerto Ricans in non-competitive contexts because they had not been exposed to such messages before. The findings also provide mixed support for the linked fate

hypothesis, as higher levels of group attachment are not always associated with increased participation. The positive message increases intentions to participate high-cost activities, like protest and campaigning, among Puerto Ricans with high linked fate. However, it boosted electoral participation and lower-cost activities, like discussing politics at home, among those with low linked fate.

While our results offer insights into the political behavior of an understudied group, there are several limitations to this study. First, with the exception of validated voting in the CCES, the measures of political participation are self-reported intentions rather than behavioral outcomes. Second, the experiment represents a single study conducted on an internet panel. Therefore, it is important not to over-extrapolate from the results. However, given the lack of recent data on Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland, it provides a useful contribution to the study of their political behavior. Third, it is important to note that studies of contextual effects are limited with regard to causal inference. Despite this methodological limitation, our results hold across different sources of observational and experimental data and several model specifications.

This study also contributes to a growing discussion about the valence of political messaging. By testing the valence of political messages about ethnic group experiences, we add a new dimension to this literature. In contrast to other studies, we find limited evidence that negative political messages are demobilizing, at least among Puerto Ricans. In fact, negative political messages increase intentions to discuss politics and feelings of political efficacy for certain subgroups within this community. However, positive messages were more consistently mobilizing. Future research should further test whether positive group-specific messages are also mobilizing for other minority groups.

Conclusion:

Taken together, this study offers a comprehensive examination of the political participation and mobilization of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland, an understudied and politically-important constituency in the United States. We find that positive group-specific political messages have the potential to increase mainland Puerto Ricans' political participation and their representation in the American political system.

The results lend themselves to several conclusions about Puerto Rican political mobilization. Puerto Ricans are most responsive to positive messages about enfranchisement, with heterogenous mobilizing effects across electoral environments and levels of linked fate. Our findings suggest that contacting Puerto Ricans in non-swing states, who may receive limited political messaging, can increase their turnout. Contacting Puerto Ricans in swing states, who may already receive generic campaign appeals, can increase their involvement in other forms of political activity, like campaign work. Consistent with previous research, we show that Puerto Ricans with high linked fate are more likely to be mobilized to participate in high-cost political activities and protest than those with low levels of linked fate (Sanchez and Masuoka 2010). This finding relates to current events, as Puerto Ricans in New York and Orlando recently protested political corruption on the island (Pedersen 2019; Robbins 2019).

The experimental results dovetail with studies of Latino mobilization, which find that group-specific political cues can increase political participation (Abrajano and Panagopoulous 2010; Michelson 2003b; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016). Our findings convey that like other segments of the Latino population, Puerto Ricans may be mobilized to participate in politics through identity-based cues. They also suggest that the limited effectiveness of group-specific appeals used to mobilize Latino voters in previous studies (Michelson 2005; Ramirez 2005) may

be driven by their pan-ethnic nature. Like Puerto Ricans, other subgroups within the Latino community may be more responsive to ethnic group-specific appeals. This suggests that despite a great deal of commonality in the Latino community, political appeals focused on specific subgroups may be most effective (Beltrán 2010).

Finally, these findings suggest that positive identity-based campaign messages might mobilize voters from other marginalized constituencies. Given the increased volume of political discontent and protest around issues of race, gender, and immigration since the 2016 presidential election, this research offers insight into the types of messages that may increase the political participation of other minority groups. Future research should test whether positive group-specific political messages effectively mobilize groups that have been historically disenfranchised in the United States, including residents of other U.S. territories, ex-felons, and African Americans. Political campaigns, organizations, and advocacy groups may also keep these findings in mind when attempting to mobilize members of these constituencies.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the mainland Puerto Rican community (2016 CCES and 2013 Pew Survey of mainland Puerto Ricans)

Sample characteristics	**Descriptive statistics (CCES 2016)**	**Demographics of Puerto Ricans on U.S. mainland (López and Patten 2015)**
State of residence	- Non-competitive states = 58% - Swing states = 42% - New York = 21% - Florida = 22%	- Non-competitive states = 65% - Swing states = 35% - New York = 21% - Florida = 19%
Educational attainment	- Bachelor's degree = 33% - Less than a bachelor's degree = 67%	- Bachelor's degree = 30% - Less than a bachelor's degree = 70%
Party ID	- Democratic = 56%; - Independent = 28% - Republican = 16%	-
Age	- Mean = 43 ; SD = 15	Mean = 29
Gender	- Men = 44% - Women = 56%	- Men = 49% - Women = 51%
First-generation immigrant	- Yes = 10% - No = 90%	- Yes = 29% - No = 71%

Table 2: The effects of campaign contact on Puerto Rican political participation (CCES 2016, pooled results from five regressions using multiply-imputed datasets)

Outcome	**Validated vote in 2016 (Logistic)**				**Non-electoral political participation (OLS)**			
Subset	**Full sample**	**Swing states**	**Non-swing states**	**Interactive model**	**Full sample**	**Swing states**	**Non-swing states**	**Interactive model**
Constant	-2.641***	-3.080***	-2.152***	-2.642***	0.058	0.076	0.024	0.042
	(0.291)	(0.486)	(0.372)	(0.294)	(0.036)	(0.031)	(0.050)	(0.033)
Campaign contact	0.643***	0.844**	0.428**	0.538***	0.093***	0.116***	0.660***	0.102***
	(0.180)	(0.210)	(0.195)	(0.196)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.018)
Swing State	-0.009	--	--	-0.213	0.012	--	--	0.027
	(0.131)	--	--	(0.177)	(0.013)	--	--	(0.016)
Campaign contact x swing state	--	--	--	0.273	--	--	--	-0.031
	--	--	--	(0.279)	--	--	--	(0.254)
PID: Democrat	0.163	0.349	0.062	0.179	0.003	0.012	0.009	0.005
	(0.160)	(0.251)	(0.215)	(0.159)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.034)	(0.016)
PID: Republican	0.316	0.276	0.365	0.330	-0.029	-0.015	-0.040	-0.03
	(0.223)	(0.312)	(0.303)	(0.207)	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.034)	(0.020)
Age	0.035***	0.036***	0.036***	0.035***	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.168)	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Gender	0.357***	0.378	0.311	0.354***	-0.025	-0.026	-0.019	-0.030
	(0.131)	(0.208)	(0.168)	(0.133)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.013)
Marital status	-0.135	-0.159	-0.106	-0.131	-0.007	-0.010	0.010	-0.001
	(0.138)	(0.220)	(0.179)	(0.139)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.013)
Homeownership	-0.305**	-0.458	-0.232**	-0.317**	-0.006	0.003	-0.018	-0.013
	(0.145)	(0.228)	(0.194)	(0.147)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.022)	(0.055)
College	0.087	0.272	-0.060	0.086	0.045***	0.042**	0.083***	0.055***
	(0.141)	(0.213)	(0.191)	(0.144)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.022)	(0.014)
Income	1.213***	1.472**	1.258**	1.288***	0.118***	0.015	0.202**	0.116**
	(0.408)	(0.656)	(0.191)	(0.419)	(0.038)	(0.046)	(0.084)	(0.051)
Employment	0.005	0.715*	-0.385	0.005	-0.021	-0.013	-0.027	-0.016
	(0.238)	(0.409)	(0.302)	(0.237)	(0.023)	(0.028)	(0.045)	(0.022)
First generation	-0.506***	-0.704*	-0.398	-0.517**	0.044*	0.030	0.063	0.053
	(0.221)	(0.394)	(0.195)	(0.222)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.038)	(0.024)
Observations	1186	499	687	1186	1186	499	687	1186
Pooled R^2	--	--	--	--	0.110	0.130	0.126	0.111
Note : *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01								

Table 3: Co-variate balance across experimental conditions (SSI experiment)

Demographic variable	**Control**	**Disenfranchisement**	**Enfranchisement**	**F-Statistic**	**p-value**
Age	42.86	41.34	40.25	0.99	0.37
Gender (1 = Female; 0 = Male)	0.68	0.58	0.64	1.63	0.20
Education	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.32	0.73
Household Income	0.36	0.34	0.37	0.33	0.72
Voter Registration Status (1 = Yes; 0 = No)	0.84	0.83	0.91	2.60	0.08
Party Identification	0.68	0.67	0.68	0.04	0.96
Born on Puerto Rican island (1 = Yes; 0 = No)	0.28	0.23	0.26	0.64	0.53

Table 4: Summary of experimental results (SSI experiment)

Outcome	Treatment Group	Effects for Full Sample	Effects for Rs in swing states	Effect Rs in non-swing states	Effects for Rs with high linked fate	Effect for Rs with low linked fate
Voting (Logit)	**Disenfranchisement**	0.10 (0.27)	0.45 (0.40)	-0.21 (0.38)	-0.55 (0.45)	0.50 (0.36)
	Enfranchisement	0.50* (0.29)	0.21 (0.42)	0.75* (0.42)	-0.31 (0.49)	0.99*** (0.38)
Protest (Logit)	**Disenfranchisement**	-0.21 (0.38)	0.10 (0.63)	-0.35 (0.49)	0.26 (0.51)	-1.08 (0.69)
	Enfranchisement	0.30 (0.35)	1.09* (0.58)	-0.26 (0.46)	1.18** (0.49)	-0.91 (0.62)
High-cost Participation (OLS)	**Disenfranchisement**	0.02 (0.03)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.04)
	Enfranchisement	0.06* (0.03)	0.11* (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	0.13** (0.06)	0.03 (0.04)
Discuss politics at home (Logit)	**Disenfranchisement**	0.15 (0.25)	0.71* (0.38)	-0.36 (0.35)	0.22 (0.39)	0.06 (0.33)
	Enfranchisement	0.48* (0.26)	0.73* (0.41)	0.30 (0.35)	0.11 (0.41)	0.73 (0.34)
Political efficacy (OLS)	**Disenfranchisement**	0.03 (0.03)	0.09** (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)
	Enfranchisement	0.07** (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.10*** (0.04)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. This table reports average treatment effects and conditional treatment effects for our experimental models without controls. The results are reported for the full sample, swing/non-swing states, and high/low linked fate subgroup analyses. These coefficients are extracted from Appendix Tables 4-8 (pp. 8-13).					

Figure 1: Marginal effects of exposure to enfranchisement condition on political outcomes (SSI experiment)