

**Determinants of Political Participation in Urban Politics:
A Los Angeles Case Study**

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Abstract

Levels of participation in Los Angeles are historically low (Almendra 2013; Sonenshein et al. 2014; Welsh 2013). This trend concerns scholars and political activists alike (Lozano 2006; Sonenshein 2006). Increasing levels of political participation in Los Angeles, and nationally, requires understanding what moves people to become active. Analysis of polling conducted by the Pat Brown Institute sheds light on some of the factors that influence participation in Los Angeles. This analysis shows that voting frequency and political participation are largely motivated by education and political interest; access to news media does not appear to have a significant impact on either voting or participation. These factors underlie the phenomenon that whites are more likely to participate than nonwhites, and those who are older more than those who are younger. This analysis provides inferences on what proposals might increase participation in Los Angeles, particularly among minority and younger voters.

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While there has been much research on political participation as it relates to national politics and presidential elections (Conway 2000; McLeod et al. 1999; Subervi-Velez 2008), there is far less focus on local and regional political participation (Becker and Dunwoody 1982; Conway 2004; Marschall 2001; Morlan 1984). Given declines in the levels of participation, it is crucial to know what stimulates and what depresses political participation and what reforms, if any, might improve the situation.

Low turnout in Los Angeles, the nation's second largest city, has renewed discussion about the causes of low turnout. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the percentage of voters who participated in the 2013 Los Angeles mayoral election, 23.3 percent, was the "lowest in any two-candidate runoff in 100 years" (Welsh 2013). Sonenshein (2006) states that in Los Angeles "levels of political activity are relatively low" (156) in general and attributes this effect to several different factors: low media attention, limited access to governmental information, and a lack of debate on issues that are salient to working-class voters. This study examines determinants of participation in Los Angeles in order to contribute to the debate on local political engagement.

Socioeconomic and Psychological Characteristics

Broadly speaking, there are three theoretical models of political participation. The socioeconomic model, which is prominent in national studies, (Conway 2000; Krishna 2002; Milbrath 1965) views education and income as the primary explanatory variables determining the likelihood of political participation. In studies of regional politics, some go beyond the socioeconomic variables to examine the impact of political interest and efficacy (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Marschall 2001). This is categorized as the participation model, or the psychological characteristics model. Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) find, for example, that political interest, in addition to income and education, among other variables, is statistically significant in predicting participation in Texas communities.

Others postulate that race, marital status, home ownership, and other forms of social connectiveness are relevant in measuring participation and voting (Filla and Johnson 2010; Krishna 2002; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Marschall 2001). Alvarez and Butterfield (1999) analyze voter turnout rates among Latinos and whites and demonstrate that in Los Angeles County, Latinos do not participate as much as whites with other variables controlled.

In addition, Marschall (2001) finds that in New York communities education, gender, and political efficacy are statistically significant variables for political participation among Latinos.

For whites, but not for nonwhites, age is statistically significant and positively related to participation. Specifically in the area of voting, education and gender are positive and statistically significant for Latinos, with gender being the more prominent indicator. For whites, political efficacy is the only statistically significant variable, in a positive direction.

Filla and Johnson's (2010) study on voting frequency in Los Angeles County found that income, gender, political interest, and strength of party identification are statistically significant variables. The coefficients for these variables are all positive, and political interest has the largest impact on voting frequency.

News Media

A third model, the news media, suggests that newspaper and television coverage have a significant impact on political participation (Bachmann et al. 2010; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006; Hoffman and Young 2011; McLeod et al. 1999; Shah et al., 2005). These studies typically find a positive relationship between higher levels of reading newspapers and voting or participation.

In particular, Subervi-Velez (2008) tests the effects of media use and other variables on political participation for Latinos using the 1989 Latino National Political Survey and finds that gender, age, length of residence, education, use of newspapers as a primary source, and political knowledge are all statistically significant variables that account for political participation. While Subervi-Velez (2008) performed his study using a national poll, the results are still relevant since Latinos are a major demographic group in Los Angeles, and our research seeks to find ways to improve minority turnout. Subervi-Velez (2008), however, does not control for all relevant variables, such as political interest and efficacy. Thus, it would be useful to broaden the analysis performed by Subervi-Velez.

More recently, Filla and Johnson (2010) measure the impact of the availability of daily and weekly newspapers on voting frequency in Los Angeles County. They classify several municipalities in Los Angeles County into two groups based on their access to daily and weekly newspapers. They conclude that those who live in areas that have abundant access to daily newspapers are more likely to participate in political activities. Their research finds that improved newspaper availability increases self-reported voting. The following analysis studies the effects of all these variables at once.¹

Research Limitations

There are some limitations in this research. For example, studies that rely on self-reported voting often overestimate the number of people who vote (Belli et al. 1999). This can be addressed by considering broader measures of participation, such as contacting the mayor and attending a city council meeting, on which voters might be less likely to misrepresent their actions. These broader measures are useful because voting is not the only effective interaction with the political process; one can make a similar impact on local government through other avenues of communication.

¹ It is worth noting that within all of the described models, there is a level of endogeneity such that interest, news media, and education, for example, are not entirely distinct from one another.

Numerous scholars have noted the importance of social capital in local communities. This analysis considers interactions in the community as a means to describe participation. There are clear benefits in drawing findings about what drives citizens to participate in local government beyond voting. One way to gain purchase on this is to introduce *both* political participation and voting frequency as dependent variables in our analysis.

Filla and Johnson (2010) recognize drawbacks found in their study that may be mitigated by future research. They first posit that the “usual” slate of independent variables provides very little explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.08$). They only use newspaper coverage when discussing the role of media and go on to recommend future inclusion of other types of news media, incorporating television and radio among others. They propose investigating whether or not “it is the case that local print news really does focus on local government more than central-city television reporting” (688).

Their recommendations provide some foundation for the following analysis. To incorporate this into the current analysis, the effects of both broadcasting and newspapers as main sources of news are tested and compared. The overall goal is to test and compare the three models—the socioeconomic model; the psychological characteristics model; and the news media model—regarding their impact on political participation.

Hypothesis

Based on previous research, we anticipate how certain variables may account for political participation and voting in the following regression analysis. Of the three models, the psychological characteristics and the socioeconomic models are likely to be the strongest predictors. It is intuitive that those who are likely to participate in local activities are more enthusiastic about certain issues or the state of the city in general.

Individuals who pay attention to local politics or believe that they can influence local politics are more likely to contact the mayor, city council, etc. Furthermore, the notion that political interest is likely to have predictive power implies that education also should. For political participation variables (given that education, age, gender, and efficacy are significant in most relevant studies and increase participation,) we predict that they have a significant and positive coefficient.

The effect on participation is less clear-cut with news media. We are not measuring how often these individuals watch or read the news. People may use newspapers or television as their source of news but sporadically take account of current events in general. Theoretically, an individual who does not read/watch news very often will not be as politically active as an individual who does. Since those who use newspaper or broadcasting sources as a main source of news may include individuals who do not follow current events, the news media model may have less predictive power than the other two models.

The literature suggests that the three main models are statistically significant in accounting for voting frequency. Specifically, gender, income, education, political interest, political efficacy, newspaper reading, and party identification have been found to be good predictors of whether someone votes or not. Of the models, we predict that we are more likely to see socioeconomic variables and psychological characteristics as stronger variables in the regression analysis than those related to news media. While news media variables have been found in prior studies to be statistically significant in predicting voting frequency, there is still the issue of ignoring how often an individual reads or watches the news. Therefore, we still predict that news media plays a weaker role.

In this study, we test two dependent variables: participation and voting. For predicting participation, we propose that interest, efficacy, education, age, and gender will be significant and positive indicators of political participation. Of these five, interest, efficacy, and education will be the strongest variables. The second hypothesis (which we refer to as the “voting hypothesis”) is that income, education, interest, efficacy, newspapers (as the main source of news), party identification, and gender will be significant and positive indicators of voting frequency. Of these seven variables, education, income, efficacy, and interest are likely to have the strongest impact.

Methodology

The polling data employed in this study come from two Pat Brown Institute (PBI)/California State University, Los Angeles polls. In PBI’s first poll 904 registered voters were interviewed several weeks before a closely contested mayoral election runoff. This poll was conducted from April 29 to May 7, 2013 by telephone. In the second poll, 501 registered voters in the city of Los Angeles were interviewed by telephone from October 2 to 5, 2013. Adults in both samples were weighted slightly to conform to their respective census proportions by sex, ethnicity, age, education, city region, and cell phone usage. The margin of sampling error for registered voters is +/-4 points. For certain subgroups, the error margin may be somewhat higher.

The two datasets are used to find the determinants of voting and political participation. The first dataset asks respondents if they voted in the primary election, and the second dataset asks respondents if they voted in the general election. The second polling dataset includes several more variables that are germane to this analysis, as can be seen in Appendix C. For example, variables on news media and variables on political participation, with questions about contacting the mayor or the city council, voting, and discussing local issues with friends/family, are included. The value of both surveys for this study is that in addition to questions about whether or not respondents voted in the mayoral election, PBI asked a series of questions about political efficacy, political interest, and socioeconomic characteristics.

For the first poll, the age group with the most respondents is ages 45—64, with 33.7 percent, and 25 percent of respondents are in the 18—34 age group (Appendix A). Just over half of the respondents are Latino, while a quarter of the respondents are white. An overwhelming majority of the respondents have, at least, graduated from high school. Of the respondents, 54 percent are female, 31 percent fall within the \$10,000—\$39,999 income bracket, and 54.5 percent either classify themselves as Democrats or lean that way.

In the second dataset, approximately 51 percent of the respondents are female, 46 percent are white, and 43 percent are Latino. The distribution of attentiveness to local politics with respect to race is shown in Appendix B. To incorporate the three models into the Poisson loglinear regression and the probit regressions, equations 1 and 2 are used:²

Poisson loglinear regression:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Log}(E(\text{Political participation})) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{interest}) + \beta_2(\text{efficacy}) + \beta_3(\text{newspapers}) + \\ & \beta_4(\text{broadcasting}) + \beta_5(\text{income}) + \beta_6(\text{High school}) + \beta_7(\text{College}) + \beta_8(\text{Democrat}) + \\ & \beta_9(\text{age}) + \beta_{10}(\text{gender}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Latino}) + \beta_{12}(\text{White}) + \mu \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

² The variables used in this analysis are defined in Appendix D.

Binary probit regression:

$$P(\text{voted} = 1 | \mathbf{X}) = \Phi [\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{interest}) + \beta_2(\text{efficacy}) + \beta_3(\text{newspapers}) + \beta_4(\text{broadcasting}) + \beta_5(\text{income}) + \beta_6(\text{High school}) + \beta_7(\text{College}) + \beta_8(\text{Democrat}) + \beta_9(\text{age}) + \beta_{10}(\text{gender}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Latino}) + \beta_{12}(\text{White}) + \mu] \quad (2)$$

This paper employs a more robust measure of political participation than previous studies. In many studies, participation is calculated by measuring one activity as a binary variable. In this paper, we measure seven activities as binary variables and combine the results to produce an index of participation. The highest value is 7, the lowest is 0.

The activities are chosen such that they either reflect involvement with local politics or demonstrate social capital. For example, one of the activities, “making a financial donation to a nonprofit or community organization,” cannot necessarily be characterized as participation in local government, but it does measure one’s activism and involvement in the community, which is germane to this study. The rest of the activities include contacting the mayor, contacting the city council, participating in a neighborhood council meeting, attending a public meeting or hearing of a government agency, talking to friends or family about an issue involving the city of Los Angeles, and engaging in a community activity. This measure of participation allows for a comprehensive look at what motivates citizens to be involved in their local communities.

Since this analysis seeks to count the number of interactions with the community among individuals in Los Angeles, the most appropriate statistical model to use is the Poisson model. The typical OLS regression, when applied to small counts, can produce some biased results (Coxe, West, and Aiken 2009). In addition, the standard Poisson model contains the assumption that the conditional mean and conditional variance must be the same. After looking at the datasets used, the conditional mean is approximately 2.1, while the conditional variance is approximately 2.6. To account for this, regression analysis of count data is used with the Quasi-Poisson model,³ which multiplies the standard errors by a parameter computed by the model.

Results

Table 1 shows that for voting, political interest and age are the most consistent statistically significant explanatory variables. For the primary election, political interest has the strongest coefficient, whereas for the general election, college education has the strongest coefficient. The intercepts in all of the probit models are considerably high; this most likely reflects overreported voting frequency. In our sample, approximately 50 percent of those polled reported voting in the general election, although only about a quarter of voters in Los Angeles actually voted.

One explanation for this disparity might be that the respondents are not reporting their voting history accurately. Alternatively, given that the poll was conducted by telephone, there may be some self-selection on the part of the respondents in the sample such that those who took the poll were more likely to have voted than those who did not take the survey.

³ We attempted the Negative Binomial regression, but the model could not be specified to the dataset potentially because of underdispersion

Table 1			
Binary Probit Regressions on Voting			
		Primary	General
Psychological Resources			
	Political Interest	0.463** (0.116)	0.508** (0.149)
	Political Efficacy		0.172 (0.163)
News Media			
	Newspapers		-0.007 (0.234)
	Broadcasting		0.024 (0.163)
Socioeconomic Variables			
	Income	0.037* (0.018)	0.013 (0.041)
	College Education	0.153 (0.110)	0.524** (0.170)
	High School	0.058 (0.159)	0.349 (0.201)
Demographics			
	Democrat	-0.002 (0.099)	-0.070 (0.143)
	Age	0.013** (0.003)	0.014** (0.004)
	Female	0.055 (0.099)	-0.063 (0.136)
	White	0.016 (0.125)	0.096 (0.147)
	Latino	-0.163 (0.127)	0.178 (0.163)
Constant		-1.208** (0.222)	-1.386** (0.329)
N		N=728	N=306
** indicates variables statistically significant at p-value<0.01			
* indicates variables statistically significant at p-value<0.05			

Of the socioeconomic variables for the primary election, voting is mainly predicted by income, whereas for the general election, voting is largely predicted by college education. This allows us to contrast the kind of voters who are likely to show up at the polls during these two elections. Older, wealthier individuals were more likely than younger, poorer individuals to vote in the primary election. Education had no impact. Likewise, older, college-educated individuals were more likely to vote in the general election than younger, less educated individuals. Income had no impact. According to these results, optimal mobilization efforts may differ between education and income depending on the type of election.

The strength of the political interest variable in both regressions is noteworthy because this shifts the emphasis from the ease of voting to the exploration of salient issues during campaigns and mobilization drives. If one wanted to increase voter turnout in Los Angeles (for example, by a proposal to move the election date to November of even numbered years) or make the act of voting less demanding, this would probably have less effect on overall turnout than a more vigorous discussion of salient issues by candidates and media sources (national and local).

Looking at Table 2, the variables interest, efficacy, and high school education are robust statistically significant predictors of political participation. In all three regression models, political interest is by far the strongest predictor. Reading newspapers and watching television as a main source of news does not matter when it comes to either voting or participation.

This contradicts the findings of many of the studies discussed in the literature review. For example, Subervi-Velez et al. (2008) finds that relying on newspapers as a main source of news is a significant and strong predictor of participation for Latinos, a large demographic group in the city of Los Angeles. Filla and Johnson (2010) found a statistically significant impact in the availability of daily newspapers on voting frequency. Other studies had similar findings on a national level (Bachmann 2010; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006). Our findings suggest that whether one reads newspapers, watches television, or utilizes another source as a go-to place for news does not predict an impact on participation.

The political interest coefficient in the OLS regression suggests that, with other variables held constant, those who are at least somewhat attentive to local politics participate in approximately one more activity than those who are not attentive. Given the strength of the political interest variable, we further tested political participation by adding five interaction variables that are presented in Table 3. Most of the equations suggest that political interest is positively correlated with participation for those who are white. We do not find any significant correlations for those who are Latino.

Those who are older are less likely to actively engage in politics if their attentiveness is high. One possible explanation is that those who are older and attentive may be knowledgeable about local politics and as a result do not participate as much in learning more about local politics. Scholars have written on the relationship between age and political participation and suggest that older voters are less likely to engage in some political activities, such as signing a petition, attending a demonstration, or making a political post on social media, than younger individuals (Holt et al. 2013). This dynamic may be a contributing explanation as well.

Political interest is stronger in this regression than it is in regressions listed in Table 2, and it is stronger than education. In Table 3, age and income are significant variables, in contrast with Table 2. Education seems insignificant in this regression.

The findings in Table 3 suggest possible explanations. Political interest does not appear to be a determinant of voting for Latino registered voters, so one may infer that other avenues of mobilization may be preferable, such as civic education. Latino voters may feel very distant from local government, and that bridge needs to be crossed even before political interest is activated. On the other hand, younger voters, another important demographic group, appear to be more likely to participate when they are attentive to local politics and government. For this particular group, an upsurge of interest, as opposed to making voting easier, may be most effective in increasing participation.

One of the hypotheses laid out earlier in this analysis, which predicted gender, efficacy, and interest to have the strongest impact, was not borne out by the data. Newspapers, gender, efficacy, and party identification do not appear to be statistically significant variables. Political interest

Table 2		OLS	Poisson	Quasi-Poisson
Psychological Resources				
	Political Interest	1.543* (0.159)	0.893** (0.099)	0.893** (0.099)
	Political Efficacy	0.173 (0.164)	0.130 (0.082)	0.130 (0.082)
News Media				
	Newspapers	0.058 (0.230)	0.050 (0.112)	0.050 (0.085)
	Broadcasting	-0.238 (0.170)	-0.096 (0.084)	-0.096 (0.085)
Socioeconomic Variables				
	Income	0.082* (0.041)	0.040 (0.021)	0.040 (0.021)
	College	0.353* (0.171)	0.163 (0.084)	0.163 (0.085)
	High School	0.447* (0.217)	0.321* (0.125)	0.321* (0.126)
Demographics				
	Democrat	-0.091 (0.149)	-0.052 (0.075)	-0.052 (0.075)
	Age	-0.001 (0.004)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
	Female	-0.148 (0.141)	-0.053 (0.071)	-0.053 (0.071)
	White	-0.170 (0.152)	-0.109 (0.078)	-0.109 (0.078)
	Latino	0.059 (0.171)	0.055 (0.087)	0.055 (0.087)
Constant		0.714* (0.339)	-0.315* (0.188)	-0.315* (0.189)
N = 306	R-squared =	0.270		
** indicates variables statistically significant at p-value<0.01				
* indicates variables statistically significant at p-value<0.05				

is the only significant variable of the three and is only the strongest variable within the context of the general election. Finally, the participation hypothesis predicted that gender, income, education, political interest, efficacy, newspaper, and party identification would be significant

Table 3			
Regressions on Political Participation (with added interactions)			
	OLS	Poisson	Quasi-Poisson
Psychological Resources			
Political Interest	2.474** (0.732)	1.657** (0.504)	0.1657** (0.502)
X White	0.437 (0.323)	0.512* (0.218)	0.512* (0.217)
X Latino	0.132 (0.381)	0.090 (0.241)	0.090 (0.240)
X College	0.115 (0.372)	-0.135 (0.218)	-0.135 (0.217)
X HS	-0.248 (0.473)	-0.421 (0.335)	-0.421 (0.333)
X Age	-0.023* (0.009)	-0.013* (0.006)	-0.013* (0.006)
Political Efficacy	0.216 (0.116)	0.157 (0.083)	0.157 (0.082)
News Media			
Newspapers	0.085 (0.232)	0.047 (0.113)	0.047 (0.112)
Television	-0.287 (0.174)	-0.122 (0.085)	-0.122 (0.085)
Socioeconomic Variables			
Income	0.097* (0.042)	0.047* (0.022)	0.047* (0.022)
College Education	0.169 (0.330)	0.230 (0.204)	0.230 (0.203)
High School	0.618 (0.383)	0.620 (0.304)	0.62 (0.302)
Demographics			
Democrat	-0.118 (0.152)	-0.031 (0.076)	-0.031 (0.075)
Age	0.017 (0.008)	0.013 (0.006)	0.013 (0.006)
Female	-0.105 (0.142)	-0.038 (0.071)	-0.038 (0.071)
Latino	0.002 (0.318)	0.006 (0.221)	0.006 (0.220)
White	-0.441 (0.265)	-0.500* (0.200)	-0.500* (0.199)
Constant	-0.004 (0.640)	-0.958* (0.473)	-0.958* (0.473)
N = 306	R-squared = 0.285		
** indicates variables statistically significant at p-value<0.01			
* indicates variables statistically significant at p-value<0.05			

variables. This is about half right; only party identification, newspaper, and gender are insignificant. Age and efficacy were predicted to have the strongest effect; this is not accurate.

Conclusions and Implications

One of our main findings is that news media does not appear to have a statistically significant impact on political participation or voting, as is sometimes suggested in prior studies. In general, this analysis finds that whether or not one reads newspapers, watches television, or utilizes any other source as a go-to place for news does not impact participation. There could be some theoretical explanations for this, such as the notion that local newspapers and broadcasting do not mobilize individuals to participate in their local communities. These sources may be weak in the coverage of local issues and do not serve an informative purpose in this respect.

The statistical significance and strength of political interest is worth noting since it suggests that proposals that focus on having an enthusiastic discussion of salient local issues would be beneficial. This shifts the emphasis away from improving the ease of voting. The regression analysis in Table 3 shows that those who are older and more attentive are less likely to participate. This may be because paying attention to local issues makes one more knowledgeable generally and lessens the need for more participation in the community. Older individuals are less likely to participate in some activities that are geared towards younger generations, such as signing a petition and posting on social media.

Finally, this analysis shows that there is an interesting contrast between primary and general elections. In primary elections, income was a statistically significant predictor whereas education was not. In general elections, the reverse was true. This may demonstrate that optimal mobilization efforts would differ depending on the type of election.

Appendices

Appendix A

Descriptive Statistics of Explanatory Variables (First Polling Dataset)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Voting	904	0	1	0.552	0.498
Interest	904	0	1	0.737	0.441
Income	1705	0	8	2.403	2.582
High School	1705	0	1	0.276	0.447
College	1705	0	1	0.703	0.457
Democrat	904	0	1	0.545	0.498
Age	1705	18	95	43.821	19.053
Female	1705	0	1	0.543	0.498
Latino	1705	0	1	0.529	0.423
White	1705	0	1	0.233	0.499

Appendix B

Crosstabulation of Attentiveness to Local Politics by Race

	Latino	White	African-American	Asian-American
Interested	76	164	41	25
	58.50%	78.20%	78.80%	47.20%
Not Interested	54	49	11	28
	41.50%	21.80%	21.20%	52.80%
Total	130	206	52	53
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Appendix C

Descriptive Statistics of Explanatory Variables

(Second Polling Dataset)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Political Participation	413	0	7	2.173	1.626
Voting	413	0	1	0.576	0.495
Interest	413	0	1	0.705	0.457
Efficacy	413	0	1	0.248	0.432
Newspapers:	413	0	1	0.164	0.371
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	51				
<i>Los Angeles Daily News</i>	6				
<i>Other Local Newspapers</i>	11				
Broadcasting:	413	0	1	0.569	0.496
<i>Ethnic Media Outlets</i>	3				
<i>Local TV News</i>	175				
<i>Public Radio/Public TV</i>	21				
<i>Talk Radio</i>	25				
<i>Local Cable Channels</i>	10				
Income	413	0	5	2.143	1.939
High School	687	0	1	0.746	0.436
College	687	0	1	0.280	0.450
Democrat	413	0	1	0.582	0.494
Age	687	18	98	42.189	18.195
Female	687	0	1	0.509	0.500
Latino	687	0	1	0.435	0.496
White	687	0	1	0.463	0.499

Appendix D	
Name	Description
Participation	This is computed as an index of the number of political activities the respondent has engaged in, where 0 is the lowest value and 7 is the highest. The political activities include: contacting the mayor; contacting the city council; participating in a neighborhood council; attending a public meeting or a hearing of a government agency; talking to friends or family about an issue involving the city of Los Angeles; engaging in a community activity; and making a financial donation to a non-profit or community organization.
Voting (Primary Election)	This is a dummy variable measuring whether the respondent voted in the 2013 mayoral primary election.
Voting (General Election)	This is a dummy variable measuring whether the respondent voted in the 2013 mayoral general election.
Interest	This is measured as a dummy variable by asking respondents the question: "Some people pay lots of attention to local politics and government here in the city of Los Angeles. Others don't pay as much attention. How about you?" (0 = Not Interested at All, Not Too Interested, 1 = Somewhat Interested, Very Interested)
Efficacy	This is a dummy variable measured by asking, "Which of these statements comes closest to your view: 'People like me are able to influence what city government does' OR 'City government mostly pays attention to special interests and not to people like me'?" (1 = "People like me are able to influence what city government does", 0 = "City government mostly pays attention to special interests and not to people like me")
Newspaper	This is a dummy variable that measures individuals who read newspapers as their main source of news.
Broadcasting	This is a dummy variable that measures individuals who watch television as their main source of news.
Income	This is a categorical variable measuring income.
High School	This is a dummy variable measuring individuals who have completed their high school education but have not received an undergraduate degree.
College	This is a dummy variable measuring individuals who have completed their undergraduate education.
Democrat	This is a dummy variable measuring political affiliation (1 = Democrat, 0 = Everyone else)
Age	This is a continuous variable measuring age.
Female	This is a dummy variable for Female.
Latino	This is a dummy variable for Latino.
White	This is a dummy variable for White.

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