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Changing Hispanic Demographics: The Shift to Democratic Support

Trevor Wayne Schoonover
Eastern Illinois University
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Changing Hispanic Demographics: The Shift toDemocratic Support

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BY

Trevor Wayne Schoonover

THESIS

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Abstract

While the body of literature concerning voter participation continues to grow there has been a lack of research into the attitudes and behaviors of Hispanics in the United States. To address this disparity in the literature I use the 2012 National Election Study Survey to find support for a Hispanic shift from the right to the left of the political spectrum. I find that Hispanics support the Democratic Party more than Whites on moral values and foreign policy, but not on economic issues. Hispanics are also more likely than Blacks to support the Democratic Party on foreign policy, but not moral values or economics. While my findings support the conclusions of previous authors, less support can be found for the types of shifts that V.O. Key described in Critical Election Theory.
Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who only wished for me to get an education, and did not live to see my education fulfilled; to my mother for pushing me to be a better student and always supporting me when times were tough; to my brother and sister who have always been my inspiration to further my own knowledge; and to the countless others who have helped along the way.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without, first and foremost, the expert guidance and mentorship of Dr. Andrew McNitt. His tutelage has helped me navigate uncertain waters and emerge clear and confident.

I also wish to acknowledge Mr. Shane M. Rogers, without whom I would have never entered the field of political science. His friendship and guidance have led me to where I am today.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It was the Greek philosopher Plato who once said, "One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors." Almost two-hundred forty years after American independence, this is a quote that holds real meaning for a large portion of the country. Only 57.5% of eligible voters went to the polls in the 2012 election compared to 60.4% in the 2004 election, and 62.3% in the 2008 election (CNN Wire 2012). While there may not look like much of a difference between 57% and 62%, the total of voting eligible population in the United States was around 225 million in 2012. Five percent of all eligible voters in 2012 represent over 11 million votes that were not cast. The margin of victory for candidate Obama in 2012 was less than half of that (United States Election Project 2013). The likelihood that enough of those voters would have gone for candidate Romney is slim, but it gives one pause to the importance of voting in general elections.

What caused a drop in voting participation from the 2008 to the 2012 election? The election of 2008 was exciting for Americans for many reasons. For the first time in history Americans chose an African American, Democrat
Barack Obama, for President of the United States. Along with taking back the White House after eight years of the Bush presidency, Democrats also expanded their control of the House of Representatives by 21 seats, and the Senate by eight seats. The Democrats looked to be invincible heading into Obama’s first term. Much of the credit for Obama’s victory was given to the Black community, where Obama won 95% of the vote. African-Americans make up 13% of the population of the United States (CNN Election Center 2008). With that type of dominance it is easy to see why Obama won handily. However, this is not the only minority he was able to woo during the election cycle. I will argue that Hispanic voters are becoming one of the most sought after votes in presidential elections.

Hispanic voters make up 17% of the population. Obama garnered 67% of the Latino vote in 2008, a figure which grew to 71% in 2012. This is astounding considering that his predecessor John Kerry was only able to gather 58% in the 2004 presidential election (Lopez and Taylor 2012). There have been some variations in Hispanic voting over time. Obama was able to shift the tables more in the Democratic Party’s favor with Latino voters. Not since Bill Clinton had the Democratic Party shared such a large percentage of the Hispanic vote.
What is it about the Democratic Party that draws a larger number of Hispanics? The Democratic Party has been a leader on "bread and butter" domestic issues, such as immigration reform, the economy, and healthcare reform. All of these are issues with which lower-income Hispanic voters can identify. In more recent elections, the Democratic Party has also been able to win over some initial supporters of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan because continued spending and ill-defined goals have turned off some Latinos who may have originally supported the conflicts.

Second, the regional concentration of Hispanics should not be ignored when examining Democratic support. Many Latino communities are in larger cities, as is the case with African Americans. Larger cities tend to vote Democratic overwhelmingly. Region is also important in determining Hispanic country of origin. Contrary to popular belief, not all Hispanics vote the same way. The American Southwest has a large concentration of Mexican and Central American Hispanics. This region has shown a tendency to lean Democratic in recent years. On the East coast and in the Midwest, especially around cities like Chicago, there are Puerto Rican immigrants. They, too, tend to be Democratic. However, Cuban immigrants in Florida lean to
the right. Given the relatively small number of Cuban Americans, and the Republican’s success in the state of Florida, it is unlikely that the bulk of Hispanic votes Kerry received came from Cuban Americans.

What were the primary causes of this Democratic surge in the polls? How did minority voting behavior affect the outcome? More specifically, what role did Hispanic voters play in the elections of 2004, 2008, and 2012? Has Hispanic voting behavior changed from prior elections? After reviewing the literature on voting behavior, I will formulate a quantitative argument based on data from the American National Election Studies. By using a critical election theory framework, I will show that strong Democratic candidates are able to draw Hispanic voters away from the Republican Party. Obama was able to do this by including Hispanics in his vision of change for America. On the other hand, his rival John McCain was unable to capitalize on the Hispanic vote, despite being from a southwestern state.

The second chapter of this thesis will review the literature on voting behavior and Hispanic voting behavior specifically. I will cover both because the area of Hispanic voting behavior is still relatively new and little literature exists on the subject. The third chapter will
examine the roots of critical election theory and make a case for its use in this analysis. The fourth chapter of this thesis reports my data, methods, and hypotheses for my analysis. My fifth chapter will run a series of OLS regressions using data from the American National Election Studies to examine and analyze Hispanic attitudes about the Democratic candidate for president in 2012. The sixth and final section of this paper will present a discussion of implications pending questions that grow out of this work.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers have been studying voting behavior among whites and African Americans for a long time. The literature on Hispanic voting is still very young, but it has deep roots in work that dates back to the 1950s. However, this early literature lacked strong empirical support due to the limitations of quantitative data at the time. Even though the American Institute of Public Opinion was founded in 1935 by George Gallup, it wasn’t until 1958 that it was modernized. This is not to say that early work was not sophisticated or important.

It is impossible to overlook the work of V.O. Key (1955, 1959) who was a pioneer in the field of voting and elections. Key (1955) asserts that, “In behavior antecedent to voting, elections differ in the proportions of the electorate psychologically involved, in the intensity of attitudes associated with the campaign cleavages, in the nature of expectations about the consequences of the voting, in the impact of the objective events relevant to individual political choice, in individual sense of effective connection with community decision, and in other ways” (p. 3).
Key also makes an early distinction that may play a part in this analysis of Hispanic voters. Key (1959) says that, "A secular shift in party attachment may be regarded as a movement of the members of a population category from party to party that extends over several presidential elections and appears to be independent of the peculiar factors influencing the vote at individual elections" (p. 199). As I will examine later, Hispanic voter support appears to shift from the Democratic to the Republican Party as the strength of the Democratic candidate waxes and wanes.

Axelrod (1972) asks the important question, where do Democrats and Republicans get their votes from? To answer this question he examines voter coalition formation, and he discovers that, "Democrats are a coalition of diverse overlapping minorities: the poor, Blacks, union members, Catholics and Jews, Southerners, and city dwellers." Note that Hispanics are not specifically listed, despite high support for the Democratic Party. However, a large percentage of Hispanics are Catholic, and they are readily identified as Democratic supporters. Axelrod (1972) attributes the Catholic support for Democrats to the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy and their loyal turnout (p.16). He concludes that, "There is little that a party can do to
increase the size of a demographic group, but there is much it can do to try to its turnout and loyalty" (p.19).

A host of different researchers on voting behavior (Filer, Kenny, and Morton, 1993; Godbout and Belanger, 2007; Gomez and Wilson, 2001, 2007; Kramer, 1971; Lynch, 1999; Nadeau and Lewis-Beck, 2001) have advanced economic arguments to explain voter's decisions. This is one of the most prevalent discussions in the voting behavior literature. It is by no means the only argument being made.

Kramer (1971) founded his economic argument concerning voting behavior between the elections of 1896 and 1964. He incorporates a complex statistical model that assumes that a voter will not always chose to vote "rationally" but will vote for the incumbent party if performance is "satisfactory" and will vote against them if their performance is unsatisfactory. In terms of congressional elections specifically, Kramer (1971) finds that, "economic fluctuations, in particular, are important influences on congressional elections, with economic upturn helping the congressional candidates of the incumbent party and economic decline benefitting the opposition" (p. 141). I argue this argument is too calculated, as it leaves no room for partisan attitudes prior to voting.
Filer, Kenny, and Morton (1993) build a model that reconciles the positive association between income and voting with the negative correlation between income and voter turnout over time. Their data include voter turnout rates for the 1948, 1960, 1968, and 1980 elections. They conclude that their, “theory predicts that the absolute level of real income and the voter’s level of relative income compared with other voters have separate effects on voter participation” (p. 80).

Lynch (1999) tests the stability of the relationship between the economy and presidential elections over time using aggregated economic data. She finds that, “it appears that voters have rewarded GNP growth and stable prices between 1872 and 1946, but voters have become increasing sensitive to changes in GNP since 1946” (p. 841). This raises questions about the election of 2000 and how well the Democratic Party was rewarded for the continued economic success of the United States. An argument based solely on economics doesn’t seem sufficient to explain anomalies like these.

In the subfield of voting behavior there are a host of economic arguments being made by various authors. Gomez and Wilson (2001, 2007) advance an economic argument that draws criticism from Godbout and Belanger (2007). This sort of
exchange back and forth in an argument is rare in contemporary political science, but is precisely what needs to take place to determine the merits of research. Gomez and Wilson (2001) first argue that low voting sophisticates rely on economic judgments to determine support for the incumbent party candidate, while Godbout and Belanger (2007) argue that the results do not hold for either low or high sophisticates if the post-electoral reported vote is used as the dependent variable. Responding to this criticism, Gomez and Wilson (2007) pen a short piece explaining their rationale. They say that the criticism ignores their subsequent work which backs up their results. Although economic considerations are not part of my initial argument they are important to remember when considering voting behavior.

The literature on Hispanic voting behavior is still in its infancy as far as literature in political science goes. Many previous works would only address Hispanics as a side note to a larger study on African American or Anglo American voting behavior. Despite this, there is a growing emphasis on Hispanic voting behavior, especially since the highly contested election in 2000. Hispanic votes are coveted by both parties because their votes would make the difference between defeat and victory.
Bass and Casper (2001) start with one of the most basic questions about Hispanic voting behavior, who registers to vote and who votes among naturalized Americans. They use data from the Voting and Registration Supplement in the 1996 Current Population Survey. They are looking to see if region of origin and length of residency in the United States have an effect on the likelihood of registering and voting among naturalized citizens. They find that older naturalized citizens with longer length at their current residence, as well as higher educated naturalized citizens are more likely to register, and are more likely to vote in elections.

One of the first studies to use actual data collected on Hispanics was performed by Cassel (2002). She is looking at the distinctiveness of Hispanic voter participation. The main focus of the research is whether immigrant Latinos who come to the United States and maintain proximity to their home country, that is to say they live in the South or Southwest, vote at the same rate as other ethnicities. She finds that in midterm elections and lower level elections there is a definitive drop in voting. However, in presidential elections, these Latinos vote at similar rates to whites and blacks of similar socio-economic status.
Alvarez and Bedolla (2003) argue that research focusing largely on descendants of white immigrants may be heavily biased toward sociological reasons for the development of partisan attitudes. They use a telephone survey to study the partisan affiliations of Hispanic voters to see if they are more explicitly political than white voters. The authors point out that national studies like the ANES or Gallup polls contain few Latinos, and this can cause problems with generalization because they are not nationally representative.

Uhlaner, Gray, and Garcia (2000) use the Latino National Political Survey, which shows that policy positions affect Hispanic party identification more than ideology or demographics. Their results indicate that Latino partisanship develops over time and that younger voters tend to be more independent while older voters tend to have more established partisan attachments.

Claassen (2004) asks more meaningful questions about the group agreement of Hispanics by introducing his theory of Hispanic Distinctiveness. His research looks at whether Hispanic self-identifiers are similar enough in their political preference to be analyzed as a group, and if that is the case, are Hispanics dissimilar enough from other minority ethnic groups to be analyzed separately. He does
this by looking at socio-economic variables from the National Election Study data. He concludes that Hispanics share inter-group opinions and their opinions are distinctive from other groups, such as Anglos and blacks.

Barreto (2007) shifts the research in a new direction by looking at Latino candidates in mayoral elections. He tests whether candidate ethnicity impacts Latino voting behavior. He looks at elections in five major U.S. cities (Los Angeles, Houston, New York, San Francisco, and Denver) to determine if Latinos were mobilized by co-ethnic candidates. His results show that precincts with no Latino candidate on the ballot are less likely to mobilize Latino voters. The presence of a viable Latino candidate results in increased Latino voter turnout in Latino precincts.

Kenski and Tisinger (2006) narrow the focus of Hispanic voting behavior to the presidential elections in 2000 and 2004. Their specific focus is on the demographics George W. Bush was able to gain votes from in two elections where he won by a narrow margin. Their data comes from the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) to examine the extent to which Bush was able to make gains with Hispanics. The results indicate that Bush was able to improve support among Latino voters in 2004, which explains the wider gap than in the highly contested election of
2000. They note that while Bush improved support among Hispanics, Hispanic party identification was comparable to its level in 2000.

One of the most recent works is by Abrajano, Alvarez, and Negler (2008), analyzing at the 2004 presidential election. Their work contributes to the growing literature by applying theories of issue and economic voting to a nationwide survey of Hispanics for the first time. As they point out (p. 369) no previous work in 30 years of research has included Hispanic voting behavior. The data they utilize is a statewide aggregation of the National Election Pool (NEP). They are able to demonstrate that Latinos are similar to Anglos in that issues and ideology are highly influential in vote choice. They also demonstrate that moral values and national security were more important to Hispanics than the economy or education. This, they say, accounts for gains beyond the overall increase in Bush’s vote share from 2000 to 2004.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Analysis

This chapter focuses on trends in Hispanic voting for the Democratic Party and provides support for the theory that undergirds my analysis. It is my belief that gains in Hispanic votes for the Democratic Party will ultimately lead to a realignment where the Democratic Party wins the Presidency with consistency.

Table 1 below shows the percentage of Hispanic vote by party for elections going back to the 1980 election between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. I argue that strong Democratic candidates will do better among Latino voters than weaker Democratic candidates will. I will define a strong Democratic candidate as one that is able to win the majority of Electoral College votes in an election. The data in this table bear this out for the most part. Our first instinct may be to look at the percentage the Democrat received from election to election. This is deceiving because, although it fluctuates, it essentially levels out after 1988. Democratic candidates have consistently received more than 60% of the Hispanic vote since 1984, when Mondale garnered 61%.
### Table 1: Percentage Difference in Hispanic Vote Since 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Democratic %</th>
<th>Republican %</th>
<th>Difference %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carter v. Reagan 1980</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mondale v. Reagan 1984</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dukakis v. Bush 1988</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton v. Bush 1992</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton v. Dole 1996</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore v. Bush 2000</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry v. Bush 2004</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama v. McCain 2008</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama v. Romney 2012</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from the Pew Hispanic Center 2012*

The only exception to this was in the 2004 election where John Kerry was only able to get 58% of the Hispanic vote. The 2004 election is also the narrowest the gap between the two parties has been since 1980. It is much more accurate to look at the percentage difference between the Democratic and Republican parties over the different elections to get a sense of how Republican candidates have been able to take away support for the Democratic Party. If, as I argue, strong Democratic candidates will gather a greater majority of Latino votes it should be evident in the percent difference column.
I argue that strong Democratic candidates will do better among Latino candidates than weaker Democrats. By this definition, all strong Democratic candidates have gone on to the presidency of the United States. This is evident by looking at the elections in 1992 and 1996 where Bill Clinton won 36% (61% to 25%) when running against George H.W. Bush. Support among Latino voters rose to 51% (72% to 21%) in the 1996 election against Bob Dole. This is a swing of 15% over four years. Barack Obama can be viewed as a strong Democratic candidate, as we see this pattern again in the 2008 and 2012 elections. In 2008, Barack Obama received 36% more of the Hispanic vote (67% to 31%) than Republican challenger John McCain, who is from Arizona. Arizona has a considerable Hispanic population. In the 2008 election, Obama only fared as well as his predecessor John Kerry in 2004, gathering 56% in the state. However, Obama was about to widen that margin in 2012 to 74% of the state Hispanic vote. In the 2012 election at the national level, Obama held a 44% lead in Hispanic votes (71% to 27%) over Mitt Romney. One major outlier of this trend is in the 1988 election between Michael Dukakis and George H.W. Bush. Dukakis was able to maintain a margin of 39% over Bush among Latinos, but is widely considered to be as a weak Democratic choice for president. This is evident by his
thrashing in the election, 426-111 in the Electoral College.

The alternative is that stronger Republican candidates will syphon Hispanic votes away from Democratic candidates. This may be true, but only in the instance that you get an election with a weak Democrat. Reagan was able to hold the percentage difference of Hispanic voters to less than 25% for both the 1980 and 1984 elections. George H.W. Bush, who was able to trounce Dukakis is the 1988 election lost Latino support in his bid for reelection in 1992.

The next instance of a strong Republican candidate comes in the elections of 2000 and 2004. George W. Bush, a Texas Republican, was able to reduce the percentage difference from 27% to 18% in four years. This may be because George W. Bush had a much softer immigration stance than his Republican predecessors. This version of the hypothesis is unlikely though, because in both the 2000 and 2004 elections the Democratic candidates can be considered strong contenders. Al Gore lost one of the closest contested elections in recent history, even winning the popular vote by over 500,000 votes nationwide. John Kerry was leading polls well into the late election season but lost by 35 electoral votes. Kerry was strong in support of immigration reform, keeping the border with Mexico open,
and providing citizenship for illegal immigrants who had been in the country without causing problems for over five years. An analysis by Leal, et al. (2005) disputes that Kerry lost Hispanic votes to Bush in Texas and that Bush was able to gather 59% of Latino support there. Latino support for the war effort in Iraq and Afghanistan is the most likely explanation for the Republican gain in Hispanic votes.

Table 2: Percent Hispanic Voters for Democratic Party by State, 2004-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AZ</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>FL</th>
<th>IL</th>
<th>NV</th>
<th>NM</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from Pew Hispanic Center 2012

When looking at a state-by-state analysis of states with a large Latino population in the 2004, 2008, and 2012 elections, trends in Hispanic support can be seen. Table 2 shows the percent of Hispanic vote for the Democratic Party candidate by state from 2004-2012. In only two cases did Hispanic support for the Democratic Party remain the same.
or increase across all three elections. In every other situation Hispanic support either increased from 2004 to 2008 then decreased from 2008 to 2012, or decreased from 2004 to 2008 and increased from 2008 to 2012. This is interesting and peculiar given the strength of the Democratic candidates. John Kerry was able to outperform Obama among Latinos in 2008 in California, Illinois, and tied in Pennsylvania. These are all generally Democratic strongholds. However, Obama was able to make up ground in 2012, running behind Kerry in the state of Arizona.

Looking at Obama’s elections specifically, his support among Latino voters has wavered in different states across both elections. In the southwest (Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico) Obama actually lost support from Latinos in 2012 compared to 2008. Other regions of the country proved to be more resilient for him. In California, Florida, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, Obama was able to widen his margin of Hispanic voters. Nowhere did Obama do better than California where he was able to increase turnout for the Democratic Party by a whopping 14% over 2008. The Democratic Party in general was able to increase its percentage of the Hispanic vote by 9% from 2004 to 2008 and by another 4% from 2008 to 2012.
Strong Democratic candidates like Clinton and Obama are able to increase the difference in Democratic and Republican Hispanic vote share greatly. Whereas John Kerry was only able to hold an 18% advantage over George W. Bush in 2004, Obama had widened this advantage to 44% over Romney in 2012. One reason for this could be Romney’s strong opposition to immigration reform policy. Romney made several gaffes over his campaign, even writing off half of the electorate as lost to the Democratic Party in a private speech. Moreover, Democratic Hispanic gains have leapt from 58% to 71% nationally in only three elections. I will argue that this is the start of the change in Hispanic voting patterns.

Partisan lines are already forming between the Democrats and Republicans on a chief concern of Hispanic voters, immigration reform. Democrats have already recognized that embracing immigration reform for Hispanics in the United States will lead to a greater support. Republicans, though, have struggled with their message. Hispanic support for Republican candidates peaks at 40% in the 2004 election, but Bush is not the only Republican to receive Hispanic support. Reagan also received high levels of Hispanic support in both the 1980 and 1984 elections. As I have argued, Republican candidates received more Hispanic
support when they are from the Southwest or West, which is true in all cases, but the 2008 election. Arizona Senator, John McCain, was unable to translate his Southwestern heritage into Hispanic votes.

Electoral shifts have occurred in Congress as well over the last few decades. The shift from Republican control in the 1990s to Democratic control in the 2000s has largely held since 2006. The Senate remained Democratic until 2010. If the concept of critical elections requires that a type of election occurs in which a sharp durable electoral realignment occurs between parties, for Hispanic voters, that was the 2008 presidential election. Why is this? I posit it is because the Hispanic population in the United States has grown dramatically over the last several decades.
Chapter 4: Methodology

Variables

To determine how Hispanic attitudes differ from other groups' voting behavior, I will perform three regression equations, one for Hispanics, one for whites, and one for blacks.

The basic method of this study is a linear regression analysis. This is a widely used method testing various independent variables against a dependent variable that is a feeling thermometer.

To perform my analyses I will use data from the 2012 American National Election Studies data center. The ANES survey accurately reflects the population of the United States and thus is excellent for testing this question. This is the most up-to-date data set available from the ANES at this time.

The ANES election study is a random sampling of responses from over 5000 voting aged Americans that come from many backgrounds. Information concerning this study can be found at the ANES website at http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_2012direct_democracy/anes_2012direct_democracy.htm.
The dependent variable I will examine is a feeling thermometer toward the Democratic candidate in the 2012 election. The use of a feeling thermometer as my dependent variable means that a linear regression analysis is appropriate.

My independent variables will be sorted into three categories: moral values, foreign policy, and economic variables.

**Moral Values**

Moral issues play a strong role in Hispanic attitudes. Moral values can readily be defined here as attitudes or positions taken on hot button issues such as same-sex marriage, marijuana legalization, abortion rights, the death penalty, and the importance of religion.

Given the shift from foreign policy to domestic policy, national security will be less prevalent in Hispanic voting decisions. Without those worries to fall back on to determine vote choice, what issues will Hispanics pay the most attention to? I argue that “moral values” will replace foreign policy as Hispanics flock back to the Democratic Party. A good indicator of issue importance to Hispanic voters would be a comparison of Hispanic responses to ANES questions on these subjects.
These responses can also be compared to responses from other voting ethnicities.

I have taken three moral values variables from the ANES study. How much was the respondent in favor of abortion as a woman’s choice? What is the respondent’s position on same-sex marriage? Is religion an important part of the respondent’s life?

**Foreign Policy**

One of the issues that the Republican Party advanced in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, was a message of national security.

The Two-Presidencies Theory advanced by Aaron Wildavsky (1966) claims that there are two different presidencies, one for domestic politics and one for foreign politics. Republicans have traditionally been seen as the stronger party on national security issues (Fleisher and Bond 1988, Fleisher et al. 2000) although not all scholars agree (Parson 1994).

The United States sent troops to Afghanistan shortly after the attacks on September 11th, 2001, its first major conflict since the Gulf War in 1991. There was a sense of patriotism and pride in the nation. Americans were out to exact revenge on those who had wronged them. The mission
and goals became increasingly murky as a resilient enemy hid out in the mountains of Afghanistan causing high casualties.

Then, the United States entered into a second war in the Middle East. The Bush administration had been pushing a war with Iraq to topple a so called “axis of evil.” At the time there were few critics, and the nation reluctantly went along with the plan. Hispanics were also reluctant to support the administration (Pew Hispanic, 2007). Perhaps they saw the military as a good option for becoming citizens. In any event, George W. Bush was able to edge Republicans over the 40% Hispanic support mark for the first time in recent history.

The Pew Hispanic Research Center’s data previously discussed shows that the Republican Party lost nine percent of Hispanic support from their high water mark of 40% support in 2004 to the election of 2008. Another four percent was lost from 2008 to 2012. All thirteen percentage points were captured by the Democratic Party during that time. This leads me to speculate that Hispanic voters’ concern with foreign policy issues dropped and there was a shift to domestic concerns.

The 2012 ANES Time Series study does not ask any specific questions about the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts,
so my variables for attitudes toward foreign policy had to be updated. One of the questions I used concerns Iran, which is a similarly located within the region. Should we try to stop Iran from developing a nuclear bomb by using air strikes? This question will test the attitudes of Hispanic voters toward foreign policy initiatives given the already lengthy existence of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. The final two variables are about the nature of war in general. Is war worth the cost? Has war increased or decreased the threat of terrorism? These variables are indirect post-war evaluations to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflict.

**Economics**

It is not a coincidence that economic concerns permeated the 2008 elections. Wildavsky (1966, p. 7) asserts that it is difficult for presidents to be effective at domestic policy unless under extraordinary crises such as Roosevelt’s one hundred days during the Depression. While this topic is contentious among scholars, many agree that having a majority in Congress helps to mitigate opposition to domestic policy, which has been increasing partisan in recent years. Hispanic voters are not mute in all of this. Hispanic members of Congress, and indeed in
lower offices, are overwhelmingly Democratic. It stands to reason that domestic issues would prevail over foreign policy since it is a mainstay of the Democratic Party.

Democratic superiority on economic issues goes back to before World War II. Much credit has been given to the Democratic Party for leading the country out of the Great Depression. The 1932 election is billed as another realigning election for the Democratic Party at the national level. Roosevelt won election running on bringing relief to the economic woes of the Great Depression. Similarly, Obama ran his 2008 campaign on relieving the financial crisis that started earlier that year.

An analysis by Gosnell and Coleman (1940) of Democratic vote change in Pennsylvania counties from 1928-1936 found there was a negative correlation in Democratic vote between 1928 and 1932 and a positive correlation between 1932 and 1936. W.A. Kerr (1944) examined the correlations of economic indices with the conservative vote, which was defined as the Whig vote prior to 1856, and the Republican vote thereafter. His analysis led to the conclusion that there was only modest support at best for his hypothesis. These cases show that support for the Democratic Party rises as the Great Depression takes its toll. The Democratic Party, just as in 2008, was able to
demonstrate an ability to relate to those who were out of work and translate it into votes. I argue that the Democratic Party has been able to do this among Hispanic voters on economic issues.

Work by Cain et al. (1991) tests what best explains Hispanic partisanship. They propose a "minority group status hypothesis," suggesting that there is a perceived economic discrimination Hispanics feel which drives them toward the Democratic Party. Democrats have historically fought for minority rights. They also find no support for the theory of "economic advancement." This theory posits that as economic status increases, second and third-generation Hispanics are more likely to become Republicans than first-generation Hispanics. As the Democratic Party gains Hispanic voters they are retaining them over time. Alvarez and Bedolla (2003) assert the argument that Republicans can potentially win over Hispanic voters by advancing issues that they believe will appeal to them. Issue voting is a compelling strategy given its prevalence in the literature (Carmines and Stimson 1980; Jackson 1975; Page and Brody 1972).

I have included two economic variable measures on various topics, including reducing the deficit and how well the economy is performing. The specific questions asked for
the economic variables are as follows. What is the respondent’s view of the state of the economy? Will the economy be better or worse if a Democratic candidate wins?

Moral variables, as I hypothesize, are related to support for the Democratic Party in different ways, too. Democrats support the right of a woman to choose an abortion and are in support of abortion in the case of incest or rape. Most Democrats support same-sex marriage. However, there is more of split on whether to legalize marijuana. It is considered a progressive platform agenda. Most Democratic candidates also report attending some sort of religious service. On foreign policy, Democrats tend to favor diplomacy first, even if they view another country as a threat. Historically, Democrats have been viewed as having presided over the best of economic times. President Roosevelt helped pull the country out of the Great Depression, and President Obama helped keep the country out of a second depression. The next two sections will examine how Hispanic voters differ from white and black voters.

**How Hispanic Voters Differ from White Voters**

Filer, Kenney, and Morton (1993) show that voter participation in non-white counties is lower than in white
counties, even after controlling for education and income (p. 80). Voter turnout from 1948-1980 dropped then to rose as families move up the income distribution (p. 63). Research by Mccartney, Bishaw, and Fontenot (2013) for the U.S. Census Bureau shows that 23% of the Hispanic population in the United States lives in poverty, which is double the national average. What does this mean for Hispanics? Having large numbers of Hispanics in poverty means that turnout should be low. This hasn’t shown to be the case necessarily for Hispanics. Data from the Pew Research Hispanic Trends (2013) report shows that 48% of voting eligible Hispanics turned out to the polls in the 2012 election, down 1% from 2008.

According to the Pew Hispanic Report by Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera (2012), Hispanics are consistently voting at a rate almost twenty percentage points lower than whites or blacks. In the 2012 election, black voters actually turned out to vote at two and half percentage points higher than white voters for the first time ever.

I have already demonstrated that Hispanics supported the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; however, their support has fallen off sharply, as indicated in the shift from Republican support in 2004 to Democratic support in 2008.
and 2012. President Obama, according to Roper Center Data (2014), was only able to obtain 39% of the white vote, versus 71% of the Hispanic vote. Don’t let this be misleading, however, as Hispanics are a much small portion of the population than white voters.

I argue that Hispanic voters support the Democratic Party on moral grounds more often than whites, simply because “moral” white voters will identify with the conservative message more than that of the liberal message. Bafumi and Shapiro (2009) show, in a linear regression model which predicts party identification, that southern White voters have become more Republican over time.

Given these differences, I can hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1**: Hispanic voters are more likely than white voters to support the Democratic candidate because of foreign policy.

**Hypothesis 2**: Hispanic voters more likely than white voters to support the Democratic candidate because of economic conditions.

**Hypothesis 3**: Hispanic voters are more likely than white voters to support the Democratic candidate because of moral values.
How Hispanic Voters Differ from Black Voters

When talking about Hispanic voter participation it can be helpful to have a base to compare the data to. As I mentioned previously, academic research prior to the 1960's largely grouped voters together into one bloc. Since that period there has been extensive research into African-American voting behavior. Peterson and Gabbidon (2007) break the analysis of prior research down into three categories: socioeconomic, empowerment, and age.

Their summary of the literature shows many authors have found that African American voter turnout rises along with higher income and greater education (Matthews and Prothro, 1966; Peterson and Somit, 1997; Salamon and Van Evera, 1973; Verba and Nie, 1972), greater empowerment, which are communities with black mayors or elected officials (Banducci, Donovan, and Karp, 2004; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Danigelis, 1977; and Peterson and Somit 1992, 1997), and age, whereas older black voters are more involved, as is the case with older Americans in general (Peterson and Somit, 1992, 1994, 1997). However, none of this research compares African American voting attitudes against that of Latinos. I have already shown that the
existing Hispanic voting behavior literature does not do this either.

As of the 2008 elections, white voters made up nearly three quarters of all voters in the United States, down from four fifths eight years prior. It can be reasonably assumed that a little over half of that bloc will vote for the Republican Party. African Americans, on the other hand, are a solid voting bloc of the Democratic Party. African Americans and Hispanics provide a roughly equal percentage of the total vote, although the black vote is much more supportive of the Democratic Party.

The percentage of the population of Hispanics (16%) and blacks (13%) is roughly the same, despite a nearly twenty percent gap in actual voter participation in the two groups. I reasonably assume that Hispanics will behave in a similar fashion when compared to black voters because they are both minorities.

Given these differences, I can hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4:** Hispanic voters are as likely as black voters to support the Democratic candidate because of foreign policy.

**Hypothesis 5:** Hispanic voters are as likely as black voters to support the Democratic candidate because of economic conditions.
Hypothesis 6: Hispanic voters are as likely as black voters to support the Democratic candidate based because of moral values.
Chapter 5: Analysis

For my analysis I have performed three regression equations: one for Hispanics, one for Whites, and one for Blacks using the 2012 American National Election Study survey. My dependent variable is a feeling thermometer of the Democratic candidate for president in 2012. My independent variables were broken down into three categories: moral values, foreign policy, and the economy.

Table 3 reports the results of my first regression equation. The R squared value, at .46, is strong, and explains a significant amount of variance. Examining the beta weights, this table shows that Hispanics are less likely to support the Democratic candidate on abortion and more likely to support them on the issue of same-sex marriage; however whether or not religion was important in the support of a Democratic candidate was not statistically significant. Hispanics are also likely to support the Democratic candidate based on an anti-war stance and their policy on terrorism. The condition of the economy was the strongest for Hispanics, and the b value is about the same as it is for whites. This is significant and has a negative effect on the approval ratings of the Democratic candidate.
Table 3: Hispanic Feelings toward the Democratic Candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.06</td>
<td>.00*</td>
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<td><strong>Moral Values</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>-.97</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-2.52</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Marriage</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb Iran?</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War worth cost?</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased terrorism?</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Economy</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ. Better/Worse?</td>
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<td>1.29</td>
<td>-.69</td>
<td>-18.93</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: Feeling Thermometer of Democratic Candidate for President. Adjusted R sq. value: .46; * is statistically significant greater than .05; N=1005

Table 4 reports the results of my second regression equation. The R squared value for Whites is the strongest of all the groups at .61. Examining the beta weights shows that Whites, too, are less likely to support the Democrat on abortion, and only slightly support them on same sex-marriage. Neither of these results is statistically significant. What is significant in terms of moral values is their support of Democrats based on religion. Foreign policy is a strong positive for Democratic support among Whites. All three variables are statistically significant with the strongest support for the Democratic candidate coming for their stance on dealing with Iran. Economics,
too, is very strong. Both measures were found statistically significant, but are negative, indicating that their views of the Democratic candidate were degraded.

Table 4: White Feelings toward the Democratic Candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>73.23</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td></td>
<td>48.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Marriage</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>11.57</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb Iran?</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>10.93</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War worth cost?</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased terrorism?</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Economy</td>
<td>-3.80</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>-10.03</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ. Better/Worse?</td>
<td>-23.67</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>-.68</td>
<td>-45.56</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: Feeling Thermometer of Democratic Candidate for President.
Adjusted R sq. value: .61; * is statistically significant greater than .05; N=3495

Table 5 reports my results for my third regression equation. The R squared value for Blacks is significantly lower than Whites or Hispanics. This could simply be because their support is less influenced by the independent variables than other groups. In short, they are very loyal supporters of the Democratic Party. The R squared value is .17. Examining the beta weights, only same-sex marriage generates positive views of the Democratic Party among African Americans. Neither abortion nor religion was
statistically significant among moral values measures. Both the cost of war and the stance on Iran generated positive views of the Democratic candidate, with the stance on Iran the strongest of the three groups.

Table 5: Black Feelings toward the Democratic Candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>88.28</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Marriage</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb Iran?</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War worth cost?</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased terrorism?</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Economy</td>
<td>-3.07</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>-5.55</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ. Better/Worse?</td>
<td>-8.27</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>-8.89</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: Feeling Thermometer of Democratic Candidate for President.
Adjusted R sq. value: .17; * is statistically significant greater than .05; N=1016

The increased threat of terrorism was not statistically significant. Both economic measures were significant, however. Blacks had a less favorable view of the Democratic candidate in both instances.

When we compare Hispanic data in Table 3 to White feelings for the Democratic candidate in Table 4 using the beta weights (standardized regression coefficients) we can see that a comparison is difficult because the two groups
care about different issues. Abortion and same-sex marriage are statistically significant to Hispanics, but not to Whites. Likewise, Religion is significant to Whites and not Hispanics. Foreign policy provides an easier comparison. Hispanics have stronger feelings than whites in both statistically significant measures of foreign policy. Although the Democratic position on Iran was significant for Whites, it is not for Hispanics. On the question of the economy, both Whites and Hispanics shared equally negative feelings toward the Democratic candidate.

Comparing Hispanic feelings in Table 3 to the feelings of Blacks in Table 5 nets a similar result. The one statistically significant finding for Black voters was same-sex marriage, with Black feelings in support for Democratic candidates greater than those of Hispanics. Black voter’s feelings about Democrats are influenced less than Hispanic views on abortion and more on religion, though neither is statistically significant. Feelings for the Democratic candidate were very positive on Iran and the cost of the war, but not significant for the threat of terrorism. On the measure of whether the war was worth the cost, Blacks and Hispanics shared positive feelings toward the Democratic candidate at about the same rate.
Of the economic metrics, only the question of the economy getting better or worse was statistically significant across all three groups. However, it resulted in less support for the Democratic candidate in all three groups as well. This effect is strongest among Hispanics, followed closely by Whites, and to a lesser extent Blacks. Based on the state of the economy, Blacks and Whites felt more negatively about the Democratic candidate. When they felt the economy was worse, this was statistically insignificant for Hispanic supporters.

I will now shift to the second part of this analysis, to explain which variables have stronger or weaker influence between the groups. When looking at the moral values measures of all three groups, abortion has the strongest influence on Hispanics, followed by Whites, then Blacks. Same-sex marriage also has the strongest influence among Hispanics. It has the next highest influence on Blacks, and then Whites. Religion is three times more influential among Whites than Hispanics, and nearly six times as influential as it is for Blacks.

Foreign policy is the key category for Whites. Iran had the strongest influence on their feelings toward the Democratic candidate, edging Blacks, and leaving Hispanics
behind. However, the cost of the war and the threat of terrorism were both most influential among Hispanics, followed by Whites, and then Blacks.

Turning to the economic variable measurements, the state of the economy was most influential to Whites, followed by Blacks, and lastly Latinos. For the metric of the economy being better or worse, Hispanics felt the most influence, followed by Whites, and Blacks felt the least influence. It should be noted that all of the influence economically was negative.
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

This discussion will be broken down into two parts. First I will talk about which variables are relatively more important to each group, and then I will discuss for which group a specific variable has the greatest impact. In examining the tables, high positive values and high negative values represent opposite ends of the spectrum from each other.

For Hispanics the top variables in each measure were gay marriage, whether the war was worth the cost, and if the economy was better or worse. The measure of the economy was deeply negative. The condition of the economy was the strongest for Hispanics, and the b value is about the same as it is for whites. This is significant and has a negative effect on the approval ratings of the Democratic candidate. Each of these variables was statistically significant at the .05 level.

For Whites the top variables in each measure were religion, the question of whether to bomb Iran, and if the economy was better or worse. Again, the economic measure was strongly negative. All three of these variables were statistically significant for white supporters.
For Blacks the top variables in each measure were gay marriage, the question of whether to bomb Iran, and if the economy was better or worse. Again, the economic measure was negative, but not nearly as negative as either Hispanics or Whites. All three variables were statically significant for Black supporters.

The second part of this discussion breaks down which group each particular variable has the greatest impact on. As a reminder, my three measures of moral values are abortion, gay marriage, and religion. My three measures of foreign policy are the question to bomb Iran, whether the war was worth the cost, and increased terrorism. My two measures of the economy were the state of the economy and if the economy was better or worse. The strongest value will be the highest reported value, whether it is positive or negative.

My measure of moral values has three variables. The first variable, abortion, has the biggest impact on Hispanic voters, as indicated by the unstandardized coefficient of -.97. Gay marriage also has the strongest effect of Hispanics, with an unstandardized coefficient of 2.71. Religion has the strongest effect on White supporters, with an unstandardized coefficient of 7.94.
My measure of foreign policy also has three variables. The first variable, whether we should bomb Iran, has the greatest impact on White supporters, with an unstandardized coefficient of 3.84. The question of whether the war in Iraq was worth the cost had the greatest impact on Hispanics, with an unstandardized regression coefficient of 4.12. The question of whether terrorism has increased also had the greatest impact on Hispanics, with an unstandardized regression coefficient of 3.93.

My measure of economics has two variables. The first variable, the state of the economy, had the strongest influence on White supporters, with an unstandardized regression coefficient of -3.80. The second variable, whether the economy was better or worse, had the greatest impact on Hispanics, with an unstandardized regression coefficient of -24.59.

Keeping a count of the impact of variables, five of the eight variables had the greatest impact on Hispanics. The other three impacted Whites the most. Taking a closer look at the three variables shows that Hispanics were only second behind Whites on religion. Blacks were impacted slightly less than Whites on the question to bomb Iran and the state of the economy.
While these results are interesting to say the least there are a few things that we can conclude. Hispanic voter views of the Democratic candidate for president were more influenced by abortion and same-sex marriage than Whites. These were the only two statistically significant moral value indicators among Hispanics. Whites were more likely to support the Democratic candidate based on religion. This was statistically significant for Whites, however, and not Hispanics. So it is plausible to say that Hispanics support the Democratic candidate more than Whites based on moral values issues, with the caveat that different values matter to each group at varying levels.

The same could be said about foreign policy, where Hispanics and Whites both supported the Democratic candidate more. That being said, Hispanics were more positive than Whites in both statistically significant categories. This means that our second hypothesis is also plausible. Hispanics are more likely than Whites to support the Democratic candidate on foreign policy.

The economic metric was strongest, though deeply negative, for both Hispanics and Whites. Not only do Hispanics not support the Democratic candidate when they feel the economy is bad, they do so overwhelmingly, edging
out White only slightly. A lower unstandardized regression coefficient (B in the table) than White supporters would show less influence on Hispanics than Whites. This, however, is not the case because it is negatively signed. My third hypothesis, that Hispanics are more likely to support the Democratic candidate than Whites on economic issues, is not supported.

How, then, do Hispanic supporters compare to Black supporters? Hispanics and Blacks are similarly as likely to support the Democratic candidate on same-sex marriage, with Hispanics only marginally more likely. This was the only measurement that both were statistically significant on. Give that this variable is measured three different ways and they only share one in common, I am unable to confirm that Hispanics are as likely to support the Democratic candidate as Blacks. Other variables may corroborate this is future works.

Hispanics were, in fact, more likely than Blacks to support the Democratic candidate on whether the war was worth the cost. This provides that they are at least as likely as Blacks to support the Democratic candidate on foreign policy. Again, however, this was the only shared variable of statistical significance. Hispanics were more
likely to support the president on Iran, and Blacks more likely based on the threat of increased terrorism.

Hispanics are also less likely than Blacks to support the Democratic candidate based on economic issues. Both groups are statistically significant for the question of whether the economy was getting better or worse. Hispanics, however, were nearly three times less likely to support the Democratic candidate as Black supporters. This does not lend sufficient support to my sixth hypothesis that Hispanics are as likely to support the Democratic candidate on economic issues.

When looking at the influence of the variables as a whole, not their constituent parts, moral values have the most influence on Hispanics, and the economy and foreign policy have the most influence on Whites and to a lesser extent Blacks. These issues just weren’t as important in influencing Hispanic voters as they were for the other races. This is curious given the high rate of poverty in the Hispanic community. The fact that foreign policy plays less of a role in influencing their support for the Democratic candidate could mean that either they take their traditional liberal stance of diplomacy first, in which case they wouldn’t need much influencing, or several years
of multiple wars has caused them to focus less on foreign policy and more on moral values.

What sort of implications does this have pertaining to this analysis? Only hypotheses one, two, and five were supported. Hypotheses three, four and six were either not supported or inconclusive given the information in this analysis. This is not surprising given the limited nature of this study, and may raise more questions than it answers.

The Hispanic sub-group is a very diverse and changing population, which will only continue to grow in the United States. If this analysis is any indication, Hispanics will continue to look for moral values, which can be said to include immigration reform, for influence. As I have speculated, foreign policy, whether as a means to citizenship or not, will be less influential in future elections, as will the frail and healing economy. These will continue to play the strongest role among White voters, who make up a far more substantial portion of the population than either Hispanics or African Americans.

Interestingly, the analysis of Hispanic support refutes Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler's (2008) conclusion that moral issues are more important to Hispanics than
economic ones. The measure of the economy was the strongest variable. A Hispanic secular realignment to the Democratic Party may not be sharp or durable enough to be maintained from one election to another. Hispanics may still be riding the fence, so to speak, on many issues, especially when compared to White and Black voters. The results of this analysis pertain to presidential elections only. Separate analysis would be required to test whether Hispanics show the same level of support congressional elections on years when there is not a presidential election.

How, then, does this finding affect how I expect Hispanics to vote for president in future elections? Reexamining the variables and trends from previous elections, Democratic candidates that are able to move to the middle successfully will continue to gather new voters, especially Hispanics. The Democratic Party stance on key issues, such as immigration policy, has all but ensured that the majority of Hispanic voters will be faithful. The Republican Party has shown an ability to siphon the Hispanic vote away when their candidate can also move to the middle of the political spectrum (al la. George W. Bush). Moving into the 2016 election, I expect that the Democratic Party will continue to hold a large portion of
the Hispanic voters they turned out in 2012 due to the inability of the Republican Party to move to the center. The Republican Party has been moving further to the right since the turn of the century. Moderate presidential candidates in the post-Bush era (McCain, Romney) have not been able to separate themselves from his policy mistakes that have grown sour with Hispanics, and voters in general. It will be interesting to see how Hispanics vote in future presidential elections and how these issues shape their support for the Democratic Party.
References


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