"Family Values Don't Stop at the Rio Grande…":
Can the Republican Party Convert Hispanic Voters?

Donald Davison
Rollins College
ddavison@rollins.edu

Abstract

As the Hispanic community becomes increasingly important in American politics there are competing views about whether they can be converted to the Republican Party. One perspective argues that Hispanics' religion and traditional social values makes them natural constituents of the Republican Party. Alternatively, Hispanics are primarily concerned about issues promoting their well-being, while topics such as moral values or religion are private. I use a novel approach to test whether traditional social values might attract Hispanic voters to the Republican Party. Using exit poll results for ballot propositions on moral issues from Arizona, Colorado, and Florida I find weak evidence that traditional values will convert Hispanics to the Republican Party. Instead, the results indicate that traditional social values issues reinforce the polarization between the two parties. [1]

Keywords: Hispanic, Republican Party, moral values, referenda

Introduction

There is widespread agreement about the increasing importance of the Hispanic population in American politics. The size of the Hispanic community is estimated to increase 121% between 2010 and 2050; soon the United States will be a majority-minority nation (Frey 2015). Generally, Hispanic voters have preferred Democratic over Republican Party candidates. For example, in 2012 Barack Obama received 71% of the Hispanic vote compared to only 27% for Mitt Romney. Hillary Clinton received 66% of the Hispanic vote and Donald Trump received 28% in the 2016 election. This is partially related to immigration's salience in American politics that seems to divide both political parties and large segments of the Hispanic and white populations. The hostility towards immigration by many Republicans, personified by Donald Trump's disparaging characterizations, doubtlessly alienates many Hispanic voters. A second explanation offered is that the rapid growth of the Latino population motivates some white voters to align with the Republican Party in opposition to immigration which, in turn moves Latino voters to the Democrat Party. Also important are the different party positions on issues basic to opportunity such as education, health care, and jobs.

Yet some conservatives believe Hispanics' religiosity and embrace of traditional values are opportunities for the Republican Party to attract converts—perhaps not a majority of Hispanic voters but enough to offset their losses in recent elections. George W. Bush often said,

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"Family values don't stop at the Rio Grande and a hungry mother will try to feed her child." (The Growth and Opportunity Project 2013). In other words, according to the Republican National Committee, President Bush's statement communicated to Hispanics that he cared about them and their future. In return, George W. Bush received 40% of the Hispanic vote in 2004 which is seen as evidence of the possibility that when a temperate posture, moral values, and national security concerns are communicated to Latinos then their voting decisions makes them similar to other Republican-leaning voters (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler 2008).

Can Hispanics really be convinced to adopt the Republican Party? A large percentage of the Hispanic population is either Catholic or evangelical Protestant. These faith traditions tend to favor traditional religious and social values. The Republican Party's long-standing opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, support for religious liberty, and promotion of the family—it is argued—should be attractive to many Hispanic voters. Following their loss in 2012, the Republican National Committee admonished its membership to be less offensive and more inclusive as well as appeal to traditional values in order to attract Latino support (Growth and Opportunity Project 2013). Yet alternatively, perhaps social values issues are less consequential than immediate concerns such as jobs, health care, education, and immigration.

I find weak evidence at best indicating that appeals to traditional values are sufficiently strong to persuade Hispanic voters to join the Republican Party. Specifically, I argue that Latino voters appear to separate issues into public and private domains. Issues touching upon moral values lie inside Latinos' personal domain. Latinos may hold traditional attitudes regarding social values but prefer government and politicians to refrain from acting in these areas (Barreto and Segura 2014). Conversely, issues of personal well-being such as education, jobs, health care, and immigration are appropriately in the public domain and suitable for political action. The Republican Party should not count on attracting large numbers of Latinos based upon the party's values positions—at least not until bread and butter issues are first satisfied.

Partisan Identification, Moral Values, and Issues of Personal Well-Being

The political significance of the Hispanic community is realized as America's largest and most rapidly growing minority. Furthermore, Hispanics are becoming an increasingly important component of the Democratic Party's coalition. Some argue that the growing Hispanic population—especially in states such as Colorado, Florida, North Carolina, Arizona, and New Mexico—will eventually contribute to a long-lasting Democratic majority (Oakford 2015; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). The competition for the loyalties of Hispanic voters though should be understood partially through the theoretical perspective of partisan identification and understanding which issues matters most to them.

The classic interpretation of partisan identification views membership as a foundational orientation acquired early in voters' lives (Campbell 1961). Individuals gain their political orientation from their parents, it strengthens over time, and is resistant to change. Further,

individuals' social and economic attributes reinforce their partisan and political predispositions. Since partisan loyalty is inherited at a young age then it exists prior to political experiences.

Partisanship shapes how policy issues and problems, political information, messages, and candidates are perceived. Later scholars find that party identification exhibits more volatility— at least in the short-term—than the classicists concluded. Citizens' partisan attachments can exhibit short-term change in response to evaluations of economic conditions (Fiorina 1981; Kiewiet 1983), foreign policy crises, and other salient political events which can produce considerable fluctuation in individuals' partisan loyalties at particular moments (MacKuen, Erikson, Stimson 1989). Nevertheless, the partisan changes identified by recent scholarship still tend to be small movements; wholesale partisan realignments of the electorate are rare.

Perhaps Hispanic preferences operate differently from those of whites and African Americans even when social and economic factors are controlled (Claussen 2004). Instead, different life experiences, separate national origins, and social identities might better explain the political opinions of immigrant groups (Alvarez and Beddola 2003; Kinder and White 2000). In other words, many Latinos' partisan attachments are politically and contextually shaped by their experiences after arriving in the United States. This leads some to see Latinos available to acquire an allegiance to the Republican Party because they have not yet adopted strong partisan loyalties. Consequently, since partisan inheritance is weak then the cues and messages appealing to fundamental values delivered to Latinos can be instrumental in cultivating their partisan identity.

It is within this context that competition for Hispanic loyalty becomes politically consequential. The traditional interpretation asserts that partisan identification is a prism through which political reality is interpreted. For Hispanics and other recent immigrants, political events and salient policy issues such as immigration may 'push' weakly aligned new migrants to one of the political parties because many have no American partisan inheritance to pass down (Bowler, Segura, Nicholson 2006; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). Important policy positions might influence Latino partisan identification more than ideology or demographic factors such as education or income (Nicholson and Segura 2005; Uhlaner and Garcia 2005). Since their partisan inheritance is weaker compared to others then their experiences with the state and the appeals by parties and their candidates potentially can exert significant influence on their choices (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003). Abrajano and Alvarez (2011), for instance, find that many Hispanics who identify as Democrats do not consider themselves ideologically liberal. In other words, many Hispanic Democrats do not equate their partisanship with an ideology as is typical of Anglo voters although Hispanics who identify with the Republican Party think of themselves a little more as conservatives. Hence, the relationship between ideology and political party is weaker for Hispanics compared to the rest of the American electorate. Nor are classic demographic factors such as education and income levels strong predictors of Hispanic partisanship (Abrajano and Alvarez 2011).

What replaces ideology and personal demographic characteristics as predictors of Hispanic partisanship? National origin, age and length of residency in the United States,

inclusion into communities, and issues that directly impact their daily life appear to be important sources of partisan affect. Issues of immediate concern such as access to education, jobs, health care, and the parties' positions on immigration are important predictors of Democratic identification. Thus, Hispanic partisan preference may be more dynamic and nuanced compared to the generally stable party identifications of Anglos; it is potentially receptive to the overtures and appeals of the parties.

Another explanation for the Hispanic lean to the Democratic Party is offered through the dynamics of dramatic demographic change and its resulting polarization. Traditional applications of conflict theory argue that significant demographic change often produces anxiety by the majority [white] population. As the Latino community grows a heightened sense of threat is experienced by many white voters who move to the Republican Party (Hajnal and Abrajano 2015; Hajnal and Rivera 2014; Barreto and Segura 2014; Teixeira, Frey, Griffin 2015). The feeling of threat can be ignited by local elites who serve as *issue entrepreneurs* (Gulasekaram and Ramakrishnan 2015). For example, Republican Governor Pete Wilson's advocacy of Proposition 187 in California rallied some white voters to the perceived threat posed by immigration (Bowler, Nicholson and Segura 2006; Monogan and Doctor 2017). In response to the heightened fear and perhaps its exploitation by political leaders states often adopt restrictive immigration policies. Hispanic voters may be repelled away from the (Republican) party sponsoring hostile legislation and conversely embrace the (Democratic) party proposing policy positions that are less threatening and aligned with their preferences. Given these factors potentially affecting Hispanic partisan identity, can Republican appeals to religious and traditional values offset the losses attributed to antagonistic posturing, harsh immigration positions, and an agenda of lower taxes and personal liberty?

Can Cultural Values Bring Hispanics to the Republican Party?

Given the lean toward the Democratic Party by Hispanics over the past 25 years is there evidence that socially conservative values might offer the Republican Party some hope? A large literature establishes the movement of religious conservatives to the Republican Party (Kellstedt 1994; Layman 1997b; Green, Guth, Smidt, Kellstedt 1996). Indicators of religious conservatism such as frequent church or worship service attendance, biblical literalism, and born-again experiences predispose individuals towards the Republican Party. Further, the Republican Party intentionally recruited religiously conservative voters through specific policy appeals which bridge traditional religious and cultural values. The so-called 'Culture Wars' of the 1990s and early 2000s were waged over issues including abortion, gay rights, and contraception.[2]

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[2] Morris Fiorina, though, questions whether a 'Culture War' exists in the United States. He believes the majority of the American population hold centrist opinions on most issues. The source of polarization is ideologically extreme elites offer radical policy alternatives to the public. (2011).

The possibility to attract Hispanics is seen by both the Republican Party organization as well as by conservative intellectuals. Strategists acknowledge the Democratic advantage but contend the Republican Party can and must broaden its appeal to Hispanic voters. They argue Republican positions on traditional religious and cultural/family values, and the large percentage of Latinos who are Christian are attractive to many Hispanic voters; Latino social conservatism predisposes many to adopt the Republican Party. Thus, the Republican National Committee after the 2012 presidential election acknowledged the need to soften its "unwelcoming" rhetoric. "The RNC must improve how it markets its core principles and message in Hispanic communities (especially in Hispanic faith-based communities)" (Growth and Opportunity Project 2013). George W. Bush was able to win 40% of the Latino vote because of his softer rhetoric and using family values as a broad appeal to sympathetic Hispanic voters. Frequent attendance at worship service or being 'born again' reinforces traditional religious values which in turn, strengthens conservative (i.e., Republican) attachment. Indeed, according to the 2008 national exit poll 80% of Hispanics identified as Catholic or belonging to another Christian denomination. Approximately 38% of Hispanics attend church or worship service at least once per week and 34% acknowledge being born again. Indicators of religious identity and commitment, therefore, seem to offer an opening for the Republican Party to increase its Hispanic support.

Writing in *National Affairs*—a conservative thought journal—Mike Gonzalez (2014) advances an intellectual agenda for the Republican Party to attract Hispanic voters. Gonzalez argues that Hispanics became a Democratic constituency for three related reasons. When the Census Bureau classified Hispanic as a "minority" in the 1960s a particular identity was created that fostered a view of "persecution." Second, Great Society programs encouraged Hispanics to become consumers of government social benefits. And finally, the "countercultural revolution of the 1960s eroded Hispanics' family traditions and values . . ." (118). The Republican Party can attract Hispanics by emphasizing the importance of traditional family values and structures as well as the virtue of climbing the social hierarchy similar to the paths followed by the Scots-Irish and Roman Catholics decades ago.

Barreto and Segura (2014) though argue that while Latinos are religious, particular issues dominate their decision calculus. They find that Latinos are primarily concerned about matters affecting their personal well-being such as immigration, jobs, health care, and education. Latinos separate issues between their personal and political identities. Latinos overwhelmingly reject abortion but believe politicians and government should refrain from being involved in these types of issues. Conversely, many Latinos view job opportunity, expanded educational access, and health care are appropriate policies for elected officials. Unlike other religious traditionalists, Latino voters appear to differentiate between the political/public domain and personal space that is reserved for moral issues. Perceptions of political parties' ability to solve the issues important to voters are consequential for partisan affection and analysis suggests that Latinos see the

Democratic Party as better able to respond to their policy preferences (Nicholson and Segura 2005).

Data and Methods

This research uses a novel approach to examine whether Hispanic voters can be attracted to the Republican Party through their religiosity and family values. I examine support for ballot initiatives that advanced family value outcomes in Arizona, Colorado, and Florida from 1996 through 2008 as a test of these competing interpretations. During this time several states proposed referenda prohibiting gay marriage or imposing new restrictions on abortion. Ballot initiatives offer several unique advantages. Ballot propositions simplify a voter's decision calculus because citizens do not need to figure out which candidate/party is closest to their overall ideal preference point. Ballot measures allow voters to express their sincere policy preference without considering the influences of candidate characteristics, the tradeoffs among a host of other policy positions held by candidates, or the implications for the balance of power in an assembly. Further, the referenda permit Latinos to express their preference for policies advancing traditional values without voting for a Republican Party that may be perceived as hostile to immigrants or instrumentally using pro-family rhetoric. Second, 1996 – 2008 is a period when 'moral values' are a strong theme in Republican presidential campaigns and are becoming a visible component of their coalition. The Republican Party successfully attracts social conservatives during this period. If there is a context when Hispanics could be drawn by the appeal of moral values, then the selected ballot initiatives during this time frame provide a straightforward test. Finally, this period precedes the intense polarization over immigration and disturbing caricatures of Latinos used by some politicians today. Indeed, this is an interval largely distinguished by "compassionate conservatism" and temperate language. Therefore, the potential pull of traditional values on Latinos' preferences on referenda are less jumbled by the contemporary hostility of the Republican Party.

The selected states experienced substantial increases in their Hispanic populations in the period. There is a total of seven instances of ballot initiatives concerning moral values or indicators of religiosity between 1996 and 2008 in these three states. This provides separate tests of our proposition whether Hispanics distinguish between issues located in their personal and public spheres, displayed in Table 1. If family values occur in their public, (i.e., political, domain)

Table 1. Hispanic Share of Total Population			
	2000	2010	Percent Change
Arizona	25%	30%	46%
Colorado	17%	21%	41%
Florida	17%	22%	57%
Source: Pew Hispanic Study; Population counts for 2010 are tabulated from P.L. 94-171 Summary Files released by the Census Bureau beginning in February 2011.			

then it is a relatively easy choice for these concerned voters to support the ballot proposals and express affect for the Republican Party.

Contemporary research on the Hispanic population typically relies on national level surveys. The American National Election studies and the General Social Surveys are nationally recognized resources but provide a limited sample of Hispanic respondents which limits subgroup and state-level analysis. A further limitation of national surveys is high-growth Hispanic states do not fall within a distinct region as is the case when studying race in the South. Even large-N surveys of Latino respondents such as the PEW National Hispanic Survey or the Latino National Survey can produce small samples when controlling for citizenship status and numerous variables included in models. To overcome these problems, we use the state-level results from the General Election Pool for each presidential election from 1996–2008.[3] A potential limitation of exit surveys is they typically ask voters a slightly smaller battery of questions compared to the national surveys. This means that some equations used to estimate the behavior of Hispanic and white voters are possibly slightly under-identified. At the same time, exit polls offer several valuable advantages. First, exit polls provide a satisfactory Hispanic sample within each state for each election that permits subgroup analysis. Second, the 12-year time span allows for an analysis of trend prior to the prominence of immigration on the public agenda.[4] Is there evidence of the Hispanic population's movement towards the Democratic Party prior to immigration becoming a national issue? Also exit polls give a profile of the 'true' voting public. They recreate the 'real' electorate in each election and provide a good explanation for why citizens voted the way they did. Exit polls, too, are used by many significant scholars to study Hispanic political behavior reflecting their usefulness.[5]

The analysis proceeds in two steps. First, can we detect the Latino community organizing behind the Democratic Party in our selected states? We expect to see the greatest drift toward the Democratic Party in Arizona and moderate patterns in Colorado and Florida. Latino voters are the least likely to display Republican sympathies in a hostile state like Arizona, but they may be more open to moral issues in Colorado and Florida where their experience with the state is

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[3] We use exit polls from Edison Media Research/Mitofsky International. Sponsor: National Election Pool (ABC News/Associated Press/CBS News/CNN/Fox News/NBC News) and from Voter News Service. Voter News Service General Election Exit Polls, Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. The Arizona data files were obtained from the Roper organization.

[4] There are no ballot initiatives concerning moral values in states with high Hispanic growth rates after 2008.

[5] National Election Pool exit polls have been used by many scholars to study Latino voting behavior. For example, see Abrajano, Marisa, R. Michael Alvarez, and Jonathan Nagler 2008. "The Hispanic Vote in the 2004 Presidential Election: Insecurity and Moral Values," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 70, No. 2, April. See also: Abramowitz, Alan and Kyle Saunders. 2006. "Exploring the Bases of Partisanship in the American Electorate: Social Identity vs. Ideology," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol 9, No. 2, (June) and Leal, D. L., Barreto, M. A., Lee, J., & de la Garza, R. O. (2005). The Latino vote in the 2004 election. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 38*(1), 41-49.

more welcoming. State senator Russell Pearce and former Sheriff Joe Arpaio can be considered playing the roles of anti-immigrant issue entrepreneurs in Arizona. Russell Pearce introduces Senate Bill 1070 which authorizes state and local law enforcement officers to inspect the citizenship status of anyone appearing suspicious. This culminates after a decade of anti-immigrant policies being advanced by the Arizona legislature. Sheriff Arpaio aggressively enforced Arizona's anti-immigrant policies during his tenure in Maricopa County. The increased white mobilization and perceived hostile legislation in turn raises the sense of threat by the Latino community who are assumed to move *en bloc* to the Democratic Party. In contrast, Colorado and Florida pursue more restrained policy agendas regarding immigration and have widely-respected Latino political leaders. Federico Pena was mayor of Denver and served in President Obama's cabinet and Mel Martinez was elected to the United States Senate from Florida and was a former chair of the Republican National Committee.

Second, we directly test whether Latino support for the seven referenda and religiosity items predicts Republican Party affect. We are less interested in the specific point estimates of factors; instead, we test whether the counterfactual is statistically significant. Specifically, we are keenly interested in whether the factors measuring Latino support for moral values initiatives and traditional religious appeals are statistically significant with Republican Party affect.

As a further test of our propositions I estimate a logistic model using the Latino National Survey (2006) as a test of robustness. The dependent variable is the likelihood of Republican identification predicted by sets of questions measuring respondents' social and demographic characteristics, positions on issues, financial situation, ideology, and perceptions of inequities between themselves and the majority white population. If the results are consistent with those from the exit surveys, then we can be more confident about the weakness of traditional values as a vehicle for partisan conversion.

Moral Values and Polarization

The white and Hispanic populations agree about many national issues, however, there are nuanced differences. Hispanics appear more concerned with *immediate policy problems* connected to issues of social mobility and economic opportunity. The white population illustrates a slightly greater sensitivity to *general policy issues* such as national security and taxes. Table 2 reports the percentage of the white and Hispanic populations who found an issue to be the most important for their vote in each presidential election. Predictably, the economy and jobs are important issues for both groups. Second, approximately 16% of Hispanics report moral values are significant for their presidential vote. Also, the Hispanic community consistently regards education and health care to be crucial to their vote decision. These differences probably Hispanics' greater concern with policies that offer the potential for opportunity and personal security as well as their economic vulnerability.

Michael Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla (2003) argue that Hispanics display a preference towards the Democratic Party even though their partisan loyalty is not as complete as that of African Americans—some potential sympathy for the Republican Party seems to exist. Recently, however, the Hispanic population is considered to be emerging as a Democratic bloc. The Republican Party's opposition to immigration reflects white "backlash" to the rapid increase in the Hispanic population in communities (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Hajnal and Rivera 2014). Is there evidence that Republican sponsorship of perceived hostile immigration-related legislation contributes to distinctive partisan alignments? We estimate the likelihood that the white and Hispanic populations in our states identify with the Republican Party from 1996 to 2008 using logistic regression where the dependent variable is party identification (scored 1 for Republican and 0 for Democrat) predicted by typical indicators of partisan identification. (Refer to the Technical Appendix for an explanation of the method).

Table 2. Most Important Issue for Presidential Vote (Percent)							
Year/Issue	Arizona		Colorado		Florida		
	White	Hispanic	White	Hispanic	White	Cuban	Hispanic/ Non-Cuban
2000							
Economy/jobs	18%	19%	24%	17%	16%	*	24%
Health Care	7	9	6	9	7	*	6
Education	13	17	16	19	14	*	19
Taxes	15	8	6	9	15	*	19
2004							
Economy/jobs	12	18	16	25	14	6	24
Moral values	23	16	25	16	21	21	13
Iraq	22	22	23	17	20	15	14
Education	4	5	3	7	3	8	10
Health care	5	9	4	9	8	5	5
2008							
Economy/jobs	58	64	54	56	62	58	71
Iraq	11	6	12	14	10	16	11
Health care	7	13	10	11	7	5	7
Energy policy	9	7	10	6	8	9	4

* The exit poll in Florida did not distinguish between Cuban and Hispanic respondents of non-Cuban descent until 2004.
Source: Voter News Service. "Voter News Service General Election Exit Polls", 2000, 2004, 2008. *Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.*

Figure 1 reports the likelihood that white and Hispanic voters identify with the Republican Party in each state. The results for Cuban voters in Florida are reported beginning in the 2000 presidential election—the first year the exit polls distinguish between Hispanic and Cuban voters. Beginning in 1996, Arizona, Colorado, and Florida illustrate a trend where the Hispanic community becomes less Republican and white identification grows for the Republican Party. Cuban voters in Florida identify with the Republican Party about as strongly as the white population in 2000 but decay over the decade. Cuban voters' declining fidelity to the Republican Party appears to be consistent with theories of assimilation by latter-generation Cubans; younger Cubans are less likely to profess strong commitment to the Republican Party over their opposition to the Castro regime. There is noticeable state by state variation in partisan identification. In part, this is likely the result of differing state political, economic, and social contexts. Yet in each election since 1996 the white population increasingly identifies with the Republican Party. Furthermore, the Hispanic community continues to move gradually away from the Republican Party and toward the Democratic Party.

Next, is there evidence that traditional moral values might attract Hispanic voters to the Republican Party? There are several questions used in our states which permit analysis of the attraction of traditional religious and cultural issues for Hispanic voters. Arizona (2008), Colorado (2004), and Florida (2008) all ask voters if they had a born-again experience—an important indicator of religious traditionalism. Florida placed Amendment 2 on the ballot in 2004 and Arizona listed Proposition 102 on its 2008 ballot which legally defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. In 2008 Colorado offered Amendment 48 which legally defines a "person" to exist at the moment of fertilization. Finally, Florida voters were asked how frequently they attended church or worship service in 2004. Collectively these states offer seven instances of either referenda or survey questions that permit a test of whether the Republican party might attract Hispanic voters due to traditional values.

Figure 1: Probability of Republican Identification
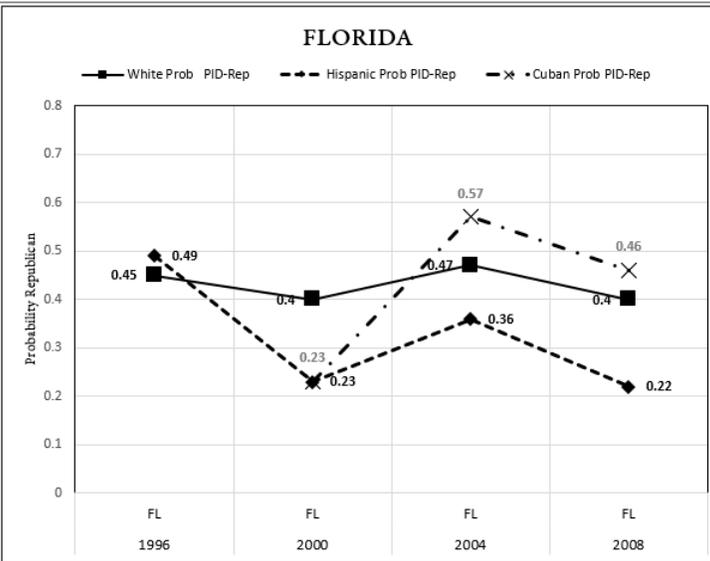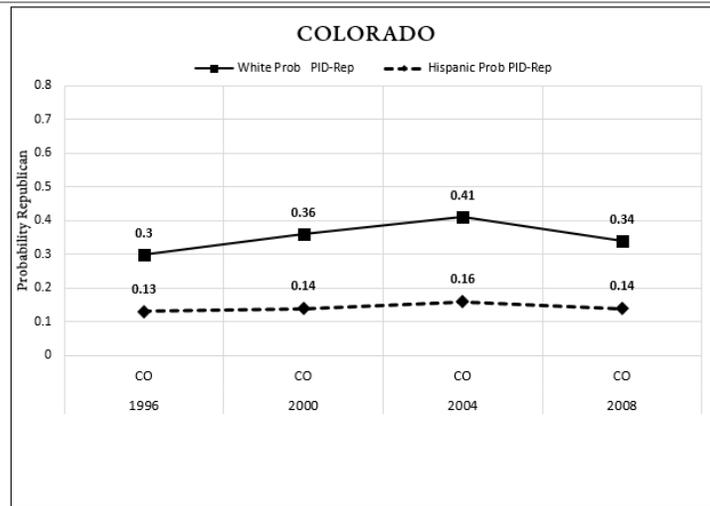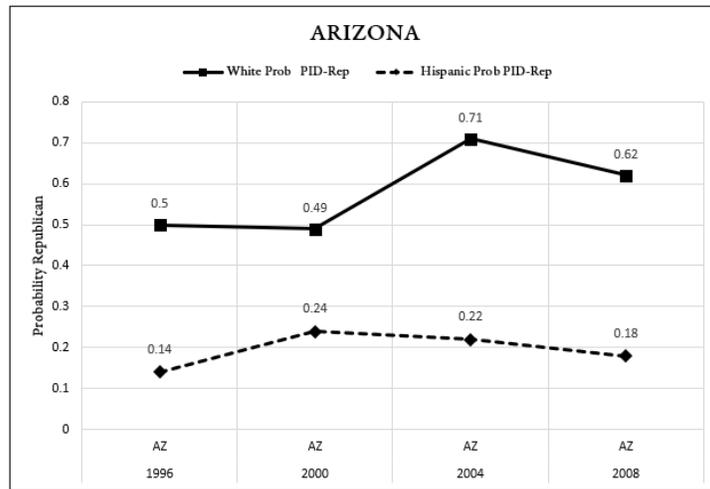
Similar to Equation 1, the analysis uses logistic regression to estimate the likelihood that a voter casts a ballot for the Republican presidential candidate in each election. Republican presidential vote is predicted by a series of independent variables (depending on which are used in each exit poll), dichotomous (i.e., dummy) variables used for race and ethnicity, the relevant variables tapping religiosity and cultural values (i.e., Colorado Amendment 48, etc.) and a series of interaction terms. The interaction terms show the combined effect of race/ethnicity with the variables tapping religiosity and traditional family values.

The interaction terms are the variables of most interest because they estimate the effect between a religious or family value variable and race/ethnicity. Statistically significant interaction terms indicate that religiosity (church attendance or a born-again experience) and/or a family value (heterosexual marriage or personhood begins at fertilization) are important for their respective racial/ethnic group which motivates them to vote Republican. In other words, the test for the hypothesis that the Republican Party can convert Hispanic (or White) voters is whether the coefficient for the interaction term is both positive and statistically significant; the specific point estimates are of less concern.

Table 3. Indicators of Religiosity and Traditional Values from Exit Polls		
Arizona	Colorado	Florida
Born Again (2008)	Born Again (2004)	Born Again (2008)
Proposition 102 (2008) Marriage is union between a man and a woman.	Amendment 48 (2008) Personhood begins at moment of fertilization.	Church Attendance (2004)
		Amendment 2 (2004) Marriage is between a man and a woman.

Table 4. Likelihood of Republican Presidential Vote – Florida (Logistic Estimates)			
	Florida 2004	Florida 2008	Florida 2008
Age	-.033 (0.148)	-.026 (0.209)	-.043** (0.024)
Income	.1509** (0.000)	.149** (0.000)	.189** (0.000)
Financial Situation	-.604** (0.000)		
Education	-.148** (.005)	-.025 (0.616)	-.095** (0.044)
Frequency of Church Attendance	.198 (0.121)		
Amendment 2 (marriage is between man and woman)		.637 (0.151)	
Born again			1.220** (0.004)
White	.049 (0.918)	.194 (0.648)	1.124** (0.005)
Black	-1.577** (0.000)	-2.123** (0.000)	-1.584** (0.000)
Hispanic/Non-Cuban	-1.094** (0.08)	-.495 (0.356)	.631 (0.175)
Cuban	.421 (0.581)	.612 (0.217)	1.683** (0.000)
Other race	.684 (0.178)	.679 (0.264)	1.538** (0.024)
White x church attendance	.2281 (0.093)		
Hispanic x church attendance	.3407 (0.06)		
Cuban x church attendance	.291 (0.225)		
White x amendment 2		1.657** (0.000)	
Hispanic (non-Cuban) x amendment 2		.954 (0.108)	
Cuban x amendment 2		1.267** (0.036)	
White x born again			.019 (0.964)
Hispanic (non-Cuban) x born again			-.492 (0.378)
Cuban x born again			-.832 (0.169)
Intercept	.303 (.553)	-1.667** (0.000)	-2.211** (0.000)
Pseudo R²	0.17	0.26	0.12
N	2007	2575	2521
Asian is omitted group for dummy vars. *P (z); *p<.05 ; **p < .01*			

Table 4. Likelihood of Republican Presidential Vote (Logistic Estimates)				
	Arizona 2008	Arizona 2008	Colorado 2004	Colorado 2008
Age	-.042 (0.167)	-.053 (0.118)	.030 (0.186)	.061 (0.092)
Income	.125** (0.002)	.1555** (0.001)	.174** (0.000)	.116** (0.006)
Financial Situation			-.404** (0.000)	
Education	-.065 (0.390)	.121 (0.156)	-.251** (0.000)	-.192** (0.007)
Born Again	-1.016 (0.065)		-.492 (0.266)	
Arizona Proposition 102 (marriage is union between man and woman)		-.655 (0.301)		
White	.768 (0.296)	-.345 (0.668)	-.413 (0.406)	1.634 (0.339)
Black	-2.199** (0.014)	-2.201* (0.027)	-1.658** (0.005)	-1.462 (0.346)
Hispanic	.411 (0.590)	-.774 (0.370)	-1.622** (0.002)	1.377 (0.429)
Other race	.083 (0.917)	-.195 (0.839)	-.715 (0.239)	1.773 (0.292)
White x born again	.335 (0.562)		1.357** (0.003)	
Hispanic x born again	-1.427* (0.032)		1.384* (0.016)	
White x Arizona Prop 102		2.012** (0.002)		
Hispanic x Arizona Prop 102		.698 (0.351)		
Colorado Amendment 48 ('person' begins at moment of fertilization)				-2.437* (0.038)
White x CO Amend 48				-.212 (0.858)
Hispanic x CO Amend 48				-1.273 (0.314)
Intercept	.719 (0.558)	-.301 (0.838)	1.982* (0.043)	2.218 (0.243)
Pseudo R²	.12	.25	.16	.17
N	994	1015	2074	1003
Asian is omitted group for dummy vars. P (z); * p<.05 ; ** p < .01				

Consistent with other research, in every election the likelihood of voting Republican increases as household income increases. Education, too, mostly conforms to expectations. In most elections, higher levels of education indicate greater support for Democratic presidential candidates. Respondents' age, however, is not significant in most models. The explanation might be age crosscuts other issues and divisions in these particular electorates.

The results from the interaction terms provide inconsistent-to-weak support for the hypothesis that religiosity increases Hispanic support for the Republican Party. Of the seven elections analyzed the interaction term for Hispanics was significant in only two—church attendance for Florida in 2004 and having a born-again experience in Colorado in 2004. Both states were won by George W. Bush. The interaction term for Hispanics and 'born again' is significant in Arizona in 2008, however, the sign is negative indicating support for the Democratic Party. The only factors with statistical significance for Republican presidential vote are limited to traditional indicators of religious commitment.

Arizona and Florida placed constitutional amendments on their state ballots which legally define marriage as the union between a male and female. Favoring traditional marriage is strongly supported and statistically significant among white voters in both states. The coefficients in both instances are quite large indicating support for traditional marriage exerts a substantial influence on white support for the Republican Party. Similarly, Cuban respondents in Florida strongly favor traditional definitions of marriage. In contrast, the interaction term fails the test of statistical significance for non-Cuban Hispanics in both states—traditional marriage does not influence the partisan choice of non-Cuban Hispanics. Gay marriage, of course, is an issue undergoing rapid evolution in public opinion although Republican attitudes were relatively more fixed in 2008 compared to 2014.

Colorado Amendment 48 legally defined a person to exist at the moment of fertilization. Interestingly, Amendment 48 does not achieve statistical significance for either white or Hispanic voters. Importantly, again, an indicator of traditional values does not appear to motivate Hispanic voters to consider the Republican Party.

The results are even less encouraging for the Republican Party when re-estimating Equation 2 for the likelihood that voters claim Republican Party affiliation. Only one interaction term is significant for Hispanics. The interaction term for Hispanic voters and born-again is statistically significant in Colorado in 2004. All other interaction terms using religious or moral values referenda fail to demonstrate any evidence of converting Hispanics to Republican Party identification—even in Colorado and Florida where their state environments are more welcoming and Hispanic movement to the Democratic Party is weaker compared to Arizona.

Conversely, the interaction terms for white voters are consistently significant predictors of Republican identification: the importance of being born again is significant for white voters in Colorado in 2004, traditional marriage is significant in Arizona and Florida in 2008, life begins at the moment of fertilization in Colorado in 2008, and frequent church attendance in Florida in 2004.

Table 5. Likelihood of Republican Identification – Florida (Logistic Estimates)			
	Florida 2004	Florida 2008	Florida 2008
Age	-.026 (0.262)	-.026 (0.209)	-.043** (0.02)
Income	.206*** (0.000)	.1499*** (0.000)	.189*** (0.000)
Financial Situation	-.527*** (0.000)		
Education	-.079 (0.13)	-.025 (0.61)	-.095** (0.04)
Frequency of Church Attendance	-.185 (0.185)		
Amendment 2 (marriage is between man and woman)		.637 (0.15)	
Born again			1.22*** (0.004)
White	-.793* (0.06)	.194 (0.64)	1.124*** (0.005)
Black	-1.434*** (0.002)	-2.123*** (0.000)	-1.58*** (0.000)
Hispanic/Non-Cuban	-1.133* (0.06)	-.495 (0.35)	.631 (0.175)
Cuban	.477 (0.338)	.612 (0.217)	1.683*** (0.000)
Other race	-.020 (0.97)	.679 (0.26)	1.583** (0.02)
White x church attendance	0.412*** (.002)		
Hispanic x church attendance	.148 (0.44)		
Cuban x church attendance	.134 (0.419)		
White x amendment 2		1.657*** (0.000)	
Hispanic (non-Cuban) x Amendment 2		.954 (0.108)	
Cuban x Amendment 2		1.267** (0.03)	
White x born again			0.019 (0.964)
Hispanic (non-Cuban) x born again			-.492 (0.378)
Cuban x born again			-.832 (0.169)
Intercept	.037 (0.937)	-1.66*** (0.000)	-2.21*** (0.000)
Pseudo R^2	0.14	0.26	0.12
N	2041	2575	2521
Asian is omitted group for dummy vars. P (z); * p<.05 ; ** p < .01			

Table 5. Likelihood of Republican Identification – Arizona and Colorado (Logistic Estimates)				
	Arizona 2008	Arizona 2008	Colorado 2004	Colorado 2008
Age	-.042 (0.167)	-0.059* (0.061)	-0.003 (0.874)	0.055 (0.13)
Income	.286*** (0.004)	.295*** (0.004)	0.146*** (0.000)	.179*** (0.000)
Financial Situation			-0.451*** (0.000)	
Education	-0.053 (0.487)	.033 (0.677)	-0.103** (0.03)	-0.192*** (0.009)
Born Again	-.598 (0.282)		-0.180 (0.714)	
Arizona Proposition 102 (marriage is union between man and woman)		-.823 (0.217)		
White	0.892 (0.276)	.0908 (0.91)	-0.731 (0.138)	12.159 (0.98)
Black	-1.159 (0.213)	-1.44 (0.14)	-1.851*** (0.002)	11.807 (0.983)
Hispanic	-0.437 (0.61)	-.510 (0.58)	-2.039*** (0.000)	11.047 (0.984)
Other race	0.188 (0.833)	-0.249 (0.80)	-1.225** (0.05)	12.148 (0.983)
White x born again	0.543 (0.35)		1.202** (0.018)	
Hispanic x born again	.617 (0.381)		1.402** (0.026)	
White x Arizona Prop 102		1.113* (0.10)		
Hispanic x Arizona Prop 102		0.019 (.981)		
Colorado Amendment 48 ('person' begins at moment of fertilization)				-0.268 (0.773)
White x CO Amend 48				2.036** (0.31)
Hispanic x CO Amend 48				1.567 (0.168)
Intercept	-0.593 (0.646)	-.260 (0.857)	1.004 (0.33)	-13.921 (0.98)
Pseudo R^2	0.10	0.16	0.13	0.14
N	1018	1040	2091	1028
Asian is omitted group for dummy vars. P (z); * p<.05 ; ** p < .01				

Together the results are more consistent with the view of increasing polarization between the Republican and Democratic electoral coalitions. We believe the Republican Party is increasingly dominated by white voters in high-Hispanic growth states where the Democratic Party appeals to racial and ethnic minorities. Our findings provide weak support at best for the RNC's ability to attract Hispanic voters through traditional moral appeals. To the contrary, these appeals appear to resonate mostly with white voters, reinforcing the growing distance between the two groups in American politics. Nor does it seem that even if the Republican Party finds a way to move beyond the immigration issue that their appeal to Hispanic voters will improve. The above evidence for Arizona, Colorado, and Florida suggests that the trajectory is Hispanic voters are settling into Democratic Party allegiance. Of course, simple plurality electoral rules mean many elections in the United States can be won with relatively small movements of voters; marginal improvement by the Republican Party among Hispanic voters can be enough to win particular elections. At the same time, the trend appears to be one of an increasing attachment to the Democratic Party by Hispanic voters.

Test for Robustness using the Latino National Survey (2006)

The results from the referenda offer little evidence that the Republican Party can use appeals to traditional moral values and religion to convert Latino voters. Even the more temperate states of Colorado and Florida provide little support that these issues activate favorable Latino affect. As an additional test I use the Latino National Survey (LNS) from 2006 as a test for robustness. The LNS roughly corresponds to the time interval for the referenda. Therefore, it is administered during the similar national context regarding immigration and the Republican Party's appeals to religion and social issues to attract conservative voters. Further, the LNS offers more issues and respondent characteristics. Generally, the results from the LNS are consistent with the evidence produced from the state-level exit polls.

The approach is similar to that of the earlier models. I use logistic regression to estimate the likelihood that a respondent identifies as a Republican (1) or a Democrat (0). Partisanship is predicted by factors organized into four conceptual domains: (1) standard demographic variables including age, education, marital status, household income, and gender, (2) variables used to measure religiosity and traditional social values such as the frequency of church attendance, whether the respondent had a born again experience, should a woman be the primary care giver for children, attitudes toward same sex marriage, and whether abortion is permitted under any condition, (3) issues of immediate concern and general philosophical orientations toward the role of government including support for the DREAM Act, national health care, equal spending across public school districts, support for school vouchers, and personal financial situation, and (4) characteristics of immigrant groups including citizenship and national origin coded as dummy variables. The issue variables and religious indicators are coded such that positive coefficients correspond to Republican leaning. Two additional variables of interest are included in the model. The relationship between ideology and partisan identification is clear and strong

for Anglos who inherit their party affiliation from their parents. The process might be different for immigrant groups because they do not have an American partisan identity to inherit. Hence, the direct effect of ideology is estimated in the model. Also included is the degree to which Latinos believe they share similar experiences regarding job opportunities, educational access, and income mobility with other minority groups such as African Americans. If Latinos see themselves sharing more in common with African Americans regarding the opportunities for personal advancement then Republican appeals to traditional values logically will be less effective, especially in the absence of strong ideological predispositions.

At best, the results from the Latino National Survey offer mixed support that appeals to traditional religious and moral values provide modest leverage for Latino Republican identification. Frequent church attendance is not statistically significant, and a born-again experience predicts Democratic identification. Even the typically powerful abortion issue is not statistically significant. Also, the belief that government should redistribute resources to equalize school funding across districts moves Latinos to the Democratic Party. National origin—except for Cubans—and attitudes toward immigration policy measured by support for the Dream Act are significant and nudge Latino voters to the Democratic Party. Interestingly, access to education measured by favoring vouchers and opposition to same sex marriage do increase the likelihood that Latinos identify with the Republican Party. This suggests the possibility that an agenda of selective conservative issues can gain some support although it must include positions on issues providing opportunity instead of solely traditional values.

The separate effects for ideology and Latinos' shared experiences with other minorities reinforce the view that everyday issues of life are more important than traditional values. Ideology predicts Latino partisan identification. However, 28% of Latinos answered they do not think in left-right ideological terms and 8% reported they do not embrace an ideology. This is consistent with the idea that immigrants evaluate politics using a different calculus. Their encounters with the political and social world might well be more important compared to Anglo voters who largely inherit their partisan identification. Second, Latinos who believe they share similar experiences with African Americans regarding diminished opportunity is powerful and predicts Democratic identification. This supports the idea that Latino political behavior is motivated by issues affecting their immediate life. In short, the test for robustness is consistent with the conclusion that traditional social values and religious appeals offer only weak support for the belief that Latino voters are available for conversion to the Republican Party. For the Republican Party to convert potential Latino voters requires fundamentally refocusing the party's agenda and abandoning its hostile posture.

Table 6 - Likelihood of Republican Identification Latino National Survey 2006	
Central and South America	-2.649**
	(1.3301)
Mexican	-1.042*
	(0.594)
Cuban	1.535*
	(.913)
Puerto Rican/Dominican Republic	-0.546
	(0.686)
Citizen	0.267
	(0.528)
Church attendance	0.085
	(0.184)
Born again	-0.786*
	(0.430)
Same Sex marriage	0.771***
	(0.310)
Abortion	0.228
	(0.254)
Dream Act	-0.328*
	(0.174)
Health care	0.057
	(0.214)
Equal funding for schools	-0.646***
	(0.264)
School vouchers	0.329*
	(0.178)
Mother care for kids	-0.161
	(0.132)
Married	0.413
	(0.499)
Education	0.227*
	(0.141)
Household income	0.034
	(0.122)
Gender	-0.144
	(0.394)
Age	-0.017
	(0.014)
Financial situation	0.680**
	(0.274)
Ideology	-1.186***
	(0.320)
Common with African Americans	-0.341*
	(0.212)
Constant	-0.448
	(2.696)
Pseudo R²	0.332
N	258
Omitted category is "Hispanic from other countries" *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 (standard error)	

Discussion

Can appeals to traditional social values help the Republican Party convert Hispanic voters in high-growth states? The results suggest that Hispanic voters do not respond to religious and moral value positions in the political arena. Indeed, the likelihood that Hispanic and white voters identify with the Republican Party have been diverging from each other since 1996. The most dramatic change occurs in Arizona which adopted the most restrictive anti-immigrant legislation. However, even in Florida and Colorado where the state responses are more mixed, there is consistent movement by Hispanic voters away from the Republican Party.

What does this imply about the importance of religion for minority politics? One possibility is that economically and socially marginalized voters weigh issues differently compared to white voters. Barreto and Segura (2014) seem correct when arguing that Hispanic voters are more concerned about issues addressing their immediate economic security rather than religious appeals. A second possibility is that conceptualizations of 'God,' religion, social suffering, and moral issues are different for minority citizens who might connect religion with social justice outcomes. Religious appeals may reinforce a collective identity of social suffering and injustice that interprets hardship as a pathway to God instead of God becoming one's personal savior (Horner and Martinez 2015). Hence, religious appeals that resonate with comparatively advantaged white voters may not ring similarly with Hispanic voters. In fact, religious primes may inspire the desire for a larger role of government as a way of reducing unjust inequities. Yet, Latinos' weak ideological predisposition and focus on issues that advance their economic and social opportunity suggest they could become an important swing constituency under the right configuration of issues. These results suggest that if the Republican Party wishes to attract potential Latino voters then it needs to adjust its policy positions away from an agenda of limited government, lower taxes, and personal liberty. Instead the Republican Party must embrace positions that tangibly responds to personal well-being and opportunity as well as abandon its hostile posture.

What explains Latino support for George Bush in 2004? Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler (2008) argue that moral values and national security concerns motivated 40% of the Latino vote for President Bush. National anxiety over terrorism following the September 11 attacks combined with Republican exploitation of national security issues likely contributed to some portion of his Latino vote. I am less convinced that moral values is a primary causal factor that moved Latinos to support President Bush. Instead, it might be more likely that President Bush's personal outreach to Hispanic voters and his record as governor of Texas mobilized Latino support. Or Latino support for President Bush reflects candidate-centered characteristics in national elections rather than the potential for the conversion of significant numbers of voters to the Republican Party. In either case the results call attention to the need for additional research at the state-level in order to better understand minority political behavior.

Finally, the rhetoric and policy positions of Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential election campaign and as president reinforces the likelihood that Latinos will solidify around the Democratic Party. Candidate Trump clearly seemed uninterested in the RNC's recommendation for welcoming rhetoric and appeals to family values; President Trump's strategy seems designed to strengthen the existing partisan divisions in the United States.

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Technical Appendix

Partisan identification is regressed on typical indicators and may be estimated using Equation 1. The estimated logits are used to retrieve the predicted probability for i^{th} member of each group who considers him/herself Republican by calculating P for the average voter,

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-L}}, \text{ when } e = 2.7182....$$

$$L = \alpha + \beta_1(education) + \beta_2(income) + \beta_3(age) + \beta_4(black_{0/1}) + \beta_5(hispanic_{0/1}) + \beta_6(asian_{0/1}) + \beta_7(other_{0/1}) + e,$$

when L = predicted logit (1=Republican/ 0=Democrat) for partisan identification (or presidential vote),

β_1 = coefficient for education level,
β_2 = coefficient for income level,
β_3 = coefficient on age.
β_4 = coefficient on dummy for black population,
β_5 = coefficient on dummy for Hispanic population,
β_6 = coefficient on dummy for Asian population, and
β_7 = coefficient on dummy for other population,
(white is omitted category).

Equation 1:

The test for whether moral values has the potential to attract Hispanic voters is expressed as the following function for relevant election years as,

Eq. 2 $L = \alpha + \beta_1 Age + \beta_2 Income + \beta_3 Education + \beta_4 \text{ Financial Situation} + \beta_5 \text{ Born Again} + \beta_6 \text{ Marriage} + \beta_7 Person + \beta_8 Attend + \beta_9 White + \beta_{10} Black + \beta_{11}Hispanic + \beta_{12}Cuban + \beta_{13} \text{ Other race} + \beta_{14} \text{ Interaction white} + \beta_{15} \text{ Interaction Hispanic} + \beta_{16} \text{ Interaction Cuban} + \varepsilon,$

when,

L = predicted logit (Republican presidential vote = 1, Democrat =0), Age = age of respondent,

Income = household income,

Education = respondent educational level,

Financial Situation =whether respondent's financial condition has improved or worsened,

Born Again = has respondent had a born-again experience,

Marriage = state referenda defining marriage only between male and female, Person = legal definition of 'person' begins at fertilization,

Attend = frequency of church attendance from rarely attends to more than once per week;

Interaction white = interaction term for white dummy and relevant independent variable, i.e., marriage, person, born again, attend,

Interaction Hispanic = interaction term for non/Cuban Hispanic dummy and relevant independent variables (marriage, person, born-again, attend), and

Interaction Cuban = interaction term for Cuban dummy and relevant independent variables (marriage, person, born again, attend).