

# Hitting the Mark? The Effect of Ethnically Targeted Campaigns in the 2000 Presidential Election

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## Abstract

Figures from the 2000 Census indicate that Latinos are now the largest minority group in the United States. With population projections showing a continued growth in the Latino population over the next 50 years, the major parties are making a push at appealing to this growing segment of the electorate. We examine this changing political landscape by looking at the effects of campaign advertisements on Latino political preferences in the 2000 presidential election. In addition to looking at the direct effect of ads on vote choice, we examine whether ads have indirect effects on the traditional components of the vote: partisanship, issue preferences, and assessments of candidate traits. We argue that political advertisements may have both direct and indirect effects on Latino vote choice, especially those that are more clearly targeted to the Latino population. We test our arguments using data at the individual-level data merged with political ads from the 2000 presidential election.

The 2000 presidential election coincided with the census finding that Latinos are now the largest minority group in the nation. Census projections show a continued growth in the Latino population over the next 50 years. Moreover, the growth of the Latino population is no longer confined to traditional destinations (e.g. Los Angeles, New York, Miami). The South and the Midwest are now experiencing the fastest rates of growth. Given these changes, political practitioners and academics alike are taking a new look at this growing segment of the electorate.

Having picked up on these trends, the major political parties have made a concerted effort to woo potential Latino voters in the past two presidential elections. The 2000 presidential election had been noted as the most vigorous and concerted effort yet to target the Latino vote (García 2003), which was then surpassed in the 2004 presidential election (Segal 2004). Evidence shows that Latinos are not only being targeted by more traditional GOTV efforts, but have begun to figure prominently in partisan campaign media strategies (Connaughton and Jarvis 2004; Doherty and Anderson 2003; DeFrancesco Soto and Merolla 2006; Subervi-Velez and Connaughton 1999; Subervi-Velez 1992). Millions of dollars were spent on both general and targeted campaign media strategies but we do not know if this money had the intended effect of swaying Latino voters.

We examine whether campaign appeals, in the form of political advertisements, influence Latino political preferences. First, we ask whether the ads have a direct effect on voting decisions in the 2000 presidential election. Second, do they have an indirect effect on voting decisions by influencing preferences antecedent to vote choice such as candidate evaluations, partisanship, and issue preferences? Finally, we explore whether the *type* of campaign ad appeal matters. That is, did the ads that were more ethnically targeted to Latinos have a different effect from more general ads and if so what type of influence did they exert? We argue that political advertisements will directly and indirectly influence the voting decisions of Latinos. However, not all advertisements will necessarily be effective. We posit that ads targeted more specifically to the Latino community will

be of higher relevance to this group and should thus have stronger effects than non-targeted advertisements. We test these arguments using individual level data from the National Annenberg Election Study as well as ad data from the Campaign Media Analysis Group.

The results from this study make important contributions to the study of Latino political behavior and the general study of ad effects. Little work has been done that focuses on the voting behavior of Latinos in general and no quantitative work has looked at the effect of either general or ethnically targeted ads on their political preferences. As parties are increasingly trying to appeal to this segment of the electorate, given that high (and growing) proportions of Latinos reside in many battleground states, it is important to understand whether and how political advertisements affect their voting behavior. The results also speak more broadly to the literature on campaign ads by looking at a specific and measurable example of targeted advertising. While factors such as the tone of advertisements have received a fair amount of attention in the literature (for a review see Lau et al. 1999), fewer works have focused on targeted political communication via advertisements (for exceptions see DeFrancesco Soto and Merolla 2006; Clinton and Lapinski 2004). To date, this work has only looked at the effect of targeted ads on turnout, not voting decisions. In a marketing world in which segmented messages are becoming more of the norm, Latinos serve as an important case study in understanding the effectiveness of this type of targeted approach among one segment of the electorate.

### **The Effects of Political Advertising**

Electoral campaigns are primarily concerned with two objectives: mobilizing one's supporters to go to the polls and persuading individuals to vote for the candidate. Political advertisements are but one of a range of tools available to campaigns to meet these objectives. They are an attractive medium of communication in the extent of their reach and given that people will be exposed to the message when they are not specifically seeking out political information. It is

therefore not surprising that with technological innovations, candidates are increasingly using political advertisements as part of their campaign toolkit. In the 2000 presidential election, \$771 million was spent on television advertising; four years later, over 1.6 billion was spent in the presidential election (Memmott and Drinkard 2004).

Studies have demonstrated that exposure to political advertisements increases the propensity of turnout (e.g., Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Freedman, Franz, and Goldstein 2004; Clinton and Lapinski 2004; DeFrancesco Soto and Merolla 2006, but see Huber and Arceneaux 2007 for null findings). In this paper, we focus on the second goal of advertisements, which is to persuade voters. There are many dimensions over which individuals form impressions about candidates, and an advertisement can focus on any number of these dimensions (Brader 2006). An advertisement will often provide information on a candidate or their opponent's background, record, and experience. It may also convey a candidate's or their opponent's stances on particular issues, which may also signal which issues the candidate deems important in the race. Through an advertisement, a candidate can also signal which groups they or their opponent are aligned with. Whichever focus is chosen, the advertisement will convey cognitive content with respect to the given focus but also emotional cues through things such as images and music.

Exposure to political advertisements may have a direct effect on voting decisions. Learning candidate stances may mean that a citizen becomes more supportive of one candidate over another. Even just getting a sense of the issues that a candidate prioritizes or the groups candidates are aligned with may lead to similar effects. An experimental literature has found that ads persuade the voting preferences of individuals (e.g. Brader 2005; Valentino, Hutchings, and Williams 2004; Iyengar and Simon 2000; Kahn and Geer 1994). Survey results have rendered a picture in line with experimental work in that ads are found to have a persuasive effect influencing vote choice and

candidate evaluations at the presidential level (e.g., Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson 2004), as well as in Senate races (Franz and Ridout 2007). In fact, Huber and Arceneaux find that the effect of ads in the 2000 presidential election were most pronounced in their ability to persuade potential voters, rather than to mobilize or inform the electorate (2007).

Advertisements may also have indirect effects by influencing many of the ingredients of the vote. For example, an advertisement that focuses on a candidate's background may influence an individual's assessment of the candidate's traits. Learning candidate stances on the issues of the day may influence one's own opinions on the issues. Such information, as well as which groups the candidate aligns with may even influence longer term forces, such as one's partisanship (Fiorina 1981). There is some evidence in the general literature that ads are working in these indirect ways (Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson 2004; Huber and Arceneaux 2007; Franz and Ridout 2007). For example, Huber and Arceneaux (2007) show that political advertisements in the 2000 presidential election had an effect on summary candidate trait assessments, while Franz and Ridout present strong evidence that ads influence candidate favorability in presidential and Senate elections (2007).

While advertisements may certainly have direct and indirect effects on voting decisions, it is not necessarily the case that all advertisements will be equally persuasive for all voters. Ad content may be a crucial determinant of whether a television advertisement has persuasive effects. To date, the focus on how content influences the motivational and persuasive effects of ads has centered around issues of tone, that is whether an advertisement is negative or positive (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Finkel and Geer 1998; Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Geer 2006). The findings with respect to tone are mixed (for a review, see Lau et al. 1999), however both schools agree on the importance of the ad content itself in terms of influencing electoral behavior. Another dimension of content that we seek to explore is how the targeting in the advertisement affects its persuasive quality. To date, few studies have addressed this dimension. Of those that exist, their focus is on

turnout (e.g., Clinton and Lapinski 2004; DeFrancesco Soto and Merolla 2006, 2007) and not on vote choice. In the next section, we outline our expectations as to how targeting should condition the effectiveness of ads on voting decisions.

### **Targeting Audiences**

In the face of modern day communication clutter (TV, internet, cell phones) it is increasingly difficult to win the attention of individuals. In order to break through the clutter, marketing has become increasingly focused on following a segmented or targeted communications strategy (Batra et al, 1996). According to this strategy, once a target audience is identified, messages are tailored to appeal to the specific needs, desires, or concerns of this population (Batra et al 1996). Targeted communication strategies have been found to be highly effective in the consumer product marketing world (Batra et al. 1996; Kitchen 2005; Kitchen and Schultz 1999; Schultz 1991). While products and candidates are not interchangeable, we may expect similar effects when we turn to political advertisements.

Political advertisements can be created to appeal to a diverse range of voters. For example, an advertisement might highlight a candidate's position on a host of issues such as the economy, the environment, health care, education and social security. The advantage of such an advertisement may be the ability to simultaneously appeal to a broad cross-section of voters. Alternatively, a political ad may focus on one issue, such as Social Security, which may only appeal to those who are retired or close to retirement. While the first type of political advertisement may have a broader appeal, it may not be tailored enough to capture the attention of any voters, which is essential if the advertisement is going to be an effective agent of persuasion.

The key mechanism for targeted messages having stronger persuasive effects is that they *are* more likely to capture the attention of particular individuals in a group. If a member of a group is watching a message that is tailored to them, it will likely activate their group identity or

predispositions (Clinton and Lapinski 2004), which will cause them to pay attention to the advertisement and process the messages. This expectation is reinforced by the literature in persuasion which establishes that individuals are more likely to be persuaded when there are fewer issues in a message (e.g., Mutz, Sniderman, and Brody 1996; Petty and Cacioppo 1986), and when such issues are high in relevance (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Both factors should be present in a targeted advertisement. While there has not been much work in this domain, in an experimental study, Clinton and Lapinski (2004) find that targeted messages are more effective in getting the target population to turnout. We expect this general relationship to also hold with respect to the direct and indirect effects of political advertisements on voter choice.

Looking at efforts to persuade Latinos in the 2000 presidential election serves as an excellent test case for the general argument that targeted messages are more effective in influencing political behavior. First, both partisan campaigns (and nonpartisan groups) used Latino targeted advertisements in an effort to persuade this growing segment of the population. Post-election analysis by the Hispanic Voter Project estimated that more than 10 million dollars were spent trying to woo Latino voters in 2000 (Segal 2004). Second, the ability to micro-target via political ads without exposing the more general population to the message is especially possible with the Latino segment of the population. Political campaigns can choose to air a portion of their ethnically targeted ads in Spanish on Spanish language television stations which are generally not viewed by non Spanish speakers. Twenty-three unique Spanish-language political advertisements aired on Spanish language channels over 3,000 times in key battleground states with sizable Latino populations. Finally, as we will elaborate on below, targeted strategies have been found to be particularly important in mobilizing the Latino community.

Ethnically based political targeting was first examined by Raymond Wolfinger (1965). Wolfinger developed a mobilization theory of ethnic voting where ethnicity is latent, but once

activated in the political environment it serves to effectively persuade voters. Electoral contexts, specifically targeted campaign efforts, are the trigger for calling forth ethnic group identity. In line with Wolfinger's work, scholars have found that campaigns that highlight Latino ethnicity are more successful in influencing Latino voters. For example, studies have shown that the fielding of a Latino candidate and a Latino centered campaign activates Latino ethnic predispositions, which in turn influence partisanship and candidate evaluations (Cain and Kiewiet 1984; Graves and Lee 2000). Analyses of recent elections (Hill, Moreno, and Cue 2001; Barreto 2006; Manzano and Vega 2006) together with experimental work (DeFrancesco Soto 2006) has shown that the activation of Latino predispositions via Latino targeted campaigns has a strong effect on vote choice and may in fact supercede the role of more traditional vote choice predictors such as partisanship.

To date, few works have explored attempts of political ads to target Latinos. In a recent qualitative study, Connaughton and Jarvis (2004) provided a content analysis of Latino targeted ads from 1984 to 2000. The activation of ethnic predispositions was central in the vast majority of the ads; the dominant strategy of these ads was to establish psychological connections with individuals through the employment of cultural symbolism. The emphasis of the ads was more centered on the Latino population and Latino ethnicity than on the candidates. Furthermore, the top issue addressed in the targeted ads by both parties was education, which was the top issue of concern to Latinos leading up to the election as documented by the 2000 Tomas Rivera Policy Institute Survey. However, to date there has not been a quantitative analysis of the effect of these ads on Latino voting decisions. The core question of whether these ads were effective through their targeted focus remains unanswered.

To summarize, targeted ads are focused on one sub-group of the population, and as a result are likely to be high in relevance to a given group, to contain a few key themes and as a result, cut through media clutter. Based on these factors, individuals should then be more likely to pay

attention to targeted messages and be more motivated to process the information. Thus, the effects of targeted messages should be greater than appeals made to the more general population. Applying this argument to the context of Latino evaluations, preferences, and vote choice, we should find a singular targeted effect. *Ethnically-targeted advertisements should have a stronger effect on vote choice and the ingredients of the vote compared to those that are not targeted to Latinos.*

## **Data**

To test our arguments, we need an adequate sample of Latinos in an election survey, as well as measures of political ads differentiated by whether they were targeted to Latinos. The data on the ads are from the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG), whose technology tracks political advertising activity throughout the year in the top 75 media markets on the national networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox) as well as 25 national cable networks (CNN, ESPN, TNT, etc).<sup>1</sup> The database provides information on the content, timing, and geographic location of every commercial aired in these markets. In a joint venture, the Brennan Center for Justice and Professor Kenneth Goldstein obtained these data and analyzed the storyboards of all the ads, coding such variables as the language, and whether minorities are pictured in the ad.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more details see Freedman, Paul and Ken Goldstein. 1999. "Measuring Media Exposure and the Effects of Negative Campaign Ads." *American Journal of Political Science* 43: p. 1192

<sup>2</sup> The data was obtained from a joint project of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law and Professor Kenneth Goldstein of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and included media tracking data from the Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. The Brennan Center-Wisconsin project was sponsored by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Brennan Center, Professor Goldstein or the Pew Charitable trust.

For individual level data, we utilize the rolling cross-section surveys from the 2000 National Annenberg Election Survey. The cross-sectional surveys started in December of 1999 and continued through January 19<sup>th</sup> of 2001. We utilize the three cross-sectional surveys conducted from September 5<sup>th</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>, October 3<sup>rd</sup> until November 6<sup>th</sup>, and November 8<sup>th</sup> until January 19, 2001, since these surveys were conducted after the Democratic and Republican national conventions. Because we focus on the effect of the ads on Latinos, we only kept respondents of Hispanic origin and dropped non-citizens, since they cannot vote. The survey coded the media market for each respondent, allowing us to match the total number of different types of ads that aired in a respondent's market. We created a cumulative count of the advertisements by week and merged this with the individual level data by the week individuals took the survey.<sup>3</sup> Sixty-seven of the top 75 media markets were sampled in the survey. The resulting dataset contains 897 Latino respondents.

### **Direct Effects: Ads and the Vote**

We begin by discussing the measures we employ for the vote choice model. The dependent variable is whether the respondent intended to vote for Gore (in the pre-election surveys) or reported voting for Gore (in the post-election cross-section). The dependent variable is coded such that a one indicates a (intended) vote for Gore, and zero indicates a vote for Bush.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> There is a possibility that we are counting some people as being exposed to ads in a given week when they did not yet air. However, this is much less likely than if we had used only one ad measure per media market (i.e., total ads aired during the election). Given data processing limitations when we assembled the dataset, we were not able to collapse by day.

<sup>4</sup> A very small number of respondents intended to vote or voted for Nader or Buchanan, thus we do not include these voters in the analysis. We also combine pre and post election studies in order to

We now turn to our measurement of the political ads. We first differentiated the party sponsor of the ad and then differentiated the level of targeting of the ad. Ads were coded as *Target* from the storyboards if they were in Spanish or they were in English and mentioned Latinos, had a Latino narrator, and/or had a Latino pictured in the ad. Both Spanish and English language Latino targeted media are important vehicles of communication and mobilization given that there is no clear division of media consumption between dominant English speakers and dominant Spanish speakers. The Latino population is not segmented by language, instead a majority of Latinos, regardless of their dominant language, get their news from both English and Spanish language sources (Pew Hispanic Center Report 2004). Ads in Spanish enable the parties or candidates to target their message to only this segment of the electorate, enabling them to focus more on the issues of importance to the Latino community. Another type of targeted ad is one in English, focusing on Latinos and Latino issues.<sup>5</sup> Such an advertisement is targeted in the message it sends to the Latino community, especially to non-Spanish speaking Latinos. The second type of ad is a general party ad in English (*General*) that is not clearly targeted at Latinos.

After distinguishing the type of ad, we created a cumulative total of the number of each type of ad that aired in the respondent's media market up until the week they took the survey. Of course,

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increase the number of respondents. Given that the targeted ads were fewer in number, the larger sample size provides more variance on the presence of different ads across media markets. The pattern of results is the same if we do not include the post-test sample, but the p-values are weaker.

<sup>5</sup> There were 15 unique Target ads in English, 8 of which dealt exclusively with Latinos. Out of the remaining 7, 5 of the ads had Latinos as part of a crowd, including other minority groups. The Republican Party had a higher prevalence of Target ads in English, while the Democratic Party sponsored more ads in Spanish.

just because an ad is aired in a market, does not mean an individual is exposed to the message. To create ad measures that capture relative exposure, we follow the method used by Goldstein and Freedman (2002). In their analysis of National Election Study data, they create an indicator of television exposure, which runs from 0 to 1, by combining questions on how often respondents watch different types of television shows and how many days a week they watch the national network news and local news. They then multiply each ad measure by this television exposure measure and include these transformed variables into their models. Thus, an individual who does not watch any television would be counted as 0, even if there were a high saturation of ads in that market, while an individual with perfect exposure would get counted as being exposed to all of the ads in that market.

The dataset we use did not ask questions about watching particular television shows, but did ask respondents the number of days each week they watched the national news on television, the cable news on television, and the local news on television. We added these three measures together into an exposure scale, weighting local news slightly higher than national or cable news given that local news viewing is slightly more prevalent among Latinos (see coding in Web Appendix).<sup>6</sup> The main reason we incorporate watching cable news has to do with the classification of Univision. In some parts of the country it is classified as a cable station and in others it is not; furthermore, in some parts of the country Univision provides a local news broadcast while in others it only provides general national/international coverage. We thus think including all three types of news is important to account for the different categorization of such stations around the U.S and to account for the

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<sup>6</sup> Model results are consistent if the exposure measure is weighted equally across types of news.

possibility that individuals categorize these stations differently.<sup>7</sup> We then recoded the exposure scale to run from 0 to 1 and multiplied it with our ad measures to arrive at the transformed ad-exposure measures. As is common in other ad studies, we then created a net measure of each type of relative ad exposure measure by subtracting the Republican general and target ads from their Democratic ad counterparts (e.g., Huber and Arceneaux 2007; Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson 2004). We expect that both ad-exposure measures, *Target Net* and *General Net*, will have a positive effect on the probability of voting for Gore.

In Table 1, we present the total number of each type of ad across some of the media markets covered by the CMAG data. We selected a sample of media markets in which there were at least 25 Latinos surveyed from Annenberg. As is clear from the Table, there is a wide distribution of General and Target ads across the media markets. Some markets, such as New York, Houston, and Dallas were exposed to few to zero General and Target ads. Meanwhile, markets such as Miami, Tampa, Albuquerque-Santa Fe, and Chicago, were exposed to a high level of both General and Target ads, though Republicans aired far more Targeted ads than Democrats in these markets. Finally, in the markets of California, it appears that the Republicans aired more General and Target ads than Democrats did.<sup>8</sup> Overall, it appears that there is a fair amount of variance in ad exposure to General and Target ads across the markets covered in our sample.

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<sup>7</sup> “Local TV Economics: 2006 Hispanic Media and News Report.” *Journalism.org*.

<http://journalism.org/node/545>.

<sup>8</sup> The high number of Republican ads in both California and Illinois are of note, given that these states leaned heavily Democratic. However, it is possible that the Republican Party was seeking to establish a more inclusive, multicultural image which has been referred to by some practitioners as

[Insert Table 1 about here]

One factor that may condition the effectiveness of the advertisements is the competitive context of the state. Individuals may be more inclined to pay attention to advertisements in close states (Hill and McKee 2005). To account for this possibility, we include a measure (difference) of the competitiveness in each state in which a person lives based on pre-electoral polls. The measure is the absolute value of the difference in candidate standings in the first available state poll in September, so higher values indicate a less competitive context. In the following analysis, we interact *difference* with the ad measures to determine whether the effects of the ads vary by the competitiveness of the race in that state.

We now turn to the measures of the more traditional ingredients of vote choice. To measure partisan identification, we include a branching question similar to one on the National Election Study, with higher values being more Republican. We measure economic outlook with a question on retrospective evaluations of the economy where higher values correspond to a more positive outlook. To capture preferences on particular issues, we did a factor analysis of measures capturing preferences for increased spending on social security and health insurance, decreased spending on the military, support for abortion, as well as government efforts to help stop discrimination against African-Americans and gays, and opposition to school vouchers. We found two distinct factors, one in which spending on health insurance and the discrimination measures loaded highly, which we label Issues 1, and one in which abortion and vouchers loaded highly, which we label Issues 2. The two factors are coded such that we expect a positive effect on the likelihood

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*ricochet pander.* Most of the Republican Target ads were in English and pictured Latinos or had a Latino narrator.

of voting for Gore.<sup>9</sup> As another indicator of preferences, *Ideology* is a five-point scale, from very conservative to very liberal. We also include two summary trait evaluation measures, Gore Trait and Bush Trait, which were created from a battery of trait evaluation questions.<sup>10</sup>

We include the following social and demographic controls: *age, education, gender, union membership, religious attendance, Spanish speaker, and Catholic*. *Education* is coded such that higher values indicate higher levels of education. *Age* is the respondent's age in years. Higher values on *religious attendance* indicate lower levels of attendance. The remaining variables are also dummy variables where a one indicates being male, a union member, and Catholic, and that the survey was conducted in Spanish. Finally, we generated the following dummy variables to control for ancestry of origin: *Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Other Hispanic*.

Given that the dependent variable vote choice is dichotomous, we use probit analysis. We recognize that since we have two different levels of data, a hierarchical model may be appropriate. With this data, we are a bit hesitant to employ hierarchical models since the number of observations per media market only averages 11. However, we do test for whether a hierarchical model is warranted for each analysis and report the results in footnotes. In general, we find that the results for the hierarchical and non-hierarchical models are consistent. We also recognize that campaigns may have targeted areas based on previous election results leading to the possibility of endogeneity between ad exposure and vote choice. We test for this possibility and report the results in footnotes.

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<sup>9</sup> Missing values were coded to the mean to retain a higher n.

<sup>10</sup> We created additive scales from questions that asked how well the following adjectives describe each candidate: cares about people like me, is honest, is inspiring, is knowledgeable, and provides strong leadership.

The results for vote choice are presented in Table 2. There are no surprises in this model, in that the traditional ingredients of vote choice are significant and in the expected direction. Long term factors such as partisanship and ideology are significant and in the expected direction; thus, Republicans are less inclined to support Gore, while liberals are more inclined to do so. These effects are also substantively meaningful.<sup>11</sup> If we move someone one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above partisanship and ideology, we find a 45.6 percentage point decrease and 14.9 percentage point increase in the likelihood of voting for Gore, respectively. We also find that factors more proximate to the election are statistically significant, including candidate traits and issue preferences. Candidate traits have by far the greatest substantive effects, leading to a 52.9 percentage point increase moving Gore traits and a 60.4 percentage point decrease moving Bush traits one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean on each measure. Those with more liberal positions on issues are more supportive of Gore, though the effects are a bit weaker. The change in the probability of voting for Gore moving from one standard deviation below to one above the mean on issue 1 is 11.8 percentage points and on issue 2 is 8.5 percentage points. Those with a more positive economic assessment are also more supportive of Gore ( $p < .07$ , one-tailed). Looking at our measure of state competitiveness, *difference*, we find that the likelihood of voting for Gore is lower in less competitive states. Finally, among the control measures, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and dominant Spanish speakers are less inclined to support Gore.

We now turn to the effects of our ad measures. Given the presence of an interaction between the ad measures and competitiveness, we need to calculate the effect of the ads at different

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<sup>11</sup> First differences were generated with CLARIFY (Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001). All variables were set at their mean, with the exception of the dummy variables, which were set at the mode, as a Mexican Catholic female who is not a union member.

levels of competitiveness. Since we are interested in whether general or target ads have stronger effects, we calculate the first differences moving the ads on a similar scale. We look at the change in the probability of voting for Gore moving from 500 Republican ads and no Democratic ads to 500 Democratic ads and no Republican ads (this is roughly one standard deviation below to one above the mean of target net ads). For now, we look at individuals at the maximum level of media exposure. The effects are illustrated in Figure 1. In the figure, solid bars indicate significant first differences for the ad measures at different levels of state competitiveness. The first important observation is that the Target Net ads are effective in states in which the race is more competitive, namely when there is a dead heat up to a 5 percentage point margin in the pre-election polls. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the ads declines as the race becomes less competitive. For example, in a dead-heat, moving from -500 Target Net ads to 500 Targeted Net ads increases the probability of voting for Gore by about 25 percentage points. The comparable effect when the race is a 5 percentage point margin is roughly 16 percentage points. Furthermore, as expected, the effect of the targeted ads in the competitive states is much higher than the effect of the general ads. The General Net ads are also significant in the more competitive states, though the effects are rather flat across different levels of competitiveness.<sup>12</sup> As a point of comparison, in a state with a dead-heat race, the change in the probability of voting for Gore moving from -500 to 500 General Net ads is

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<sup>12</sup>We also tested the robustness of the results in several ways. The effects are consistent if we remove the socio-demographic controls; if we do not weight the ads by media exposure; if we use ratio measures instead of net ad measures (with or without weighting by media exposure); and, if we run the ads separately by party (with or without weighting by media exposure).

only 9.7 percentage points, which is much lower than the 25 percentage point shift registered for Target Net ads.<sup>13</sup>

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Since the construction of the net ad measures incorporate one's propensity to watch television, we also should look at differences by different values of media exposure. In Figure 2, we look at the predicted probability of voting for Gore moving the net ad measures between -500 and 500 for those at the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile on our media exposure measure (since we already looked at the effects among those at the maximum exposure level) in the most competitive context. As expected, we see that for both ads and for individuals at both levels of exposure, an individual is more inclined to vote for Gore as the number of Democratic ads increases relative to the number of Republican ads. For example, looking at those at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of media exposure, at 500 Republican Target ads and no Democratic Target ads, the probability of voting for Gore is .64. The comparable effects when the net count is 0 ads and when the net count is 500 ads are .75, and .83, respectively. As with the other figure, we also observe that the effect of the target ads are greater than the effect for the general ads when we compare individuals at the same level of media exposure. Using the same comparisons as above, the probability of voting for Gore is .72 at -500

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<sup>13</sup> In a test of an empty model, we did find that a hierarchical model may be appropriate. The results are consistent if we estimate a hierarchical non-linear model. In a Hausman specification test without the interaction terms, we did find some evidence of endogeneity. If we run a three-stage model, we find that the results are consistent for the Target Net ad, though General Net ads become insignificant. Since the results are consistent for Target ads, we present the results from the probit model. Finally, if we drop the post-test participants, the effect of Target Net ads is consistent, though the p-value is weaker.

net General ads, .75 at 0 net General Ads, and .78 at 500 net General Ads. Furthermore, we notice that the effects of the ads are much flatter for those at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of exposure relative to those at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, as expected. In fact, the effect of General Net Ads for those at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of exposure is similar to the effect of Target Net Ads for those at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile.<sup>14</sup>

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

### **Indirect Effects: Ads and the Determinants of the Vote**

In this section, we consider whether ads also have an indirect effect on vote choice by influencing some of the traditional determinants of the vote, such as partisanship, issue preferences, and candidate trait evaluations. In the interest of space, we do not discuss the results for the control measures in detail.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

In the first two data columns of Table 3, we present the results of the effects of the ads on candidate traits. As independent variables, we include the net ad measures, the state competitiveness measure, interactions between the two, economic evaluations, party identification, ideology, and the

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<sup>14</sup> We also explored whether the effects varied by the tone of the different types of net ads. In the interest of space, we do not incorporate all of these results. We find that positive net general ads are significant in highly competitive districts, while negative net general ads are not. Both negative and positive net targeted ads are significant and more substantial in their effects relative to the general net ads. However, the sign on the positive targeted ads is in an unexpected direction. We do not have enough degrees of freedom to explore this unexpected direction further by tone.

same demographic variables as in the vote choice analysis.<sup>15</sup> We do not find any statistically meaningful effects for either type of ad on trait evaluations of Bush or Gore.<sup>16</sup>

In the last data column of Table 3, we model partisanship as a function of the same factors, as well as issue positions.<sup>17</sup> We find that while the *General Net* ad measure is not statistically meaningful, the *Target Net* ad measure is statistically significant across many different competitive contexts, up until about a 7 percentage point difference in the pre-election polls using one-tailed tests. To put these results into perspective, suppose that an individual goes from a market that is exposed to 500 Republican Target ads and zero Democrat Target ads to one with 500 Democrat Target ads and zero Republican Target ads. An individual with maximum media exposure will shift about a half unit on the party identification scale in a more Democratic direction, while an individual with mean media exposure will shift about .23 units on the scale. These are very meaningful effects for a scale that is only five points.

In Table 4, we examine the effect of ads on the issue factors, economic assessments, and ideology. As independent variables for economic assessments and the issue factors, we include the two ad measures alone and moderated by state competitiveness, party identification, ideology, and

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<sup>15</sup> While we suspected long-term dispositions and economic evaluations may affect trait evaluations, we did not include opinions on issues. Even if the issue measures are included, the results for the ads remain unchanged.

<sup>16</sup> The inter-class correlation coefficient was significant for both regressions, indicating that a hierarchical model would be appropriate. The results for the hierarchical regression are consistent.

<sup>17</sup> We did find that a hierarchical model would be appropriate for partisanship. The Target net ad measure is not significant in the hierarchical model.

the demographic measures from the previous models. We include the same measures for ideology, minus the variable itself on the right hand side.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Turning first to the shorter term measure of economic assessments, we see that the Target net measure is significant in the expected direction in the most competitive states. Going from -500 to 500 on the measure shifts economic perceptions by .2 units among those at the maximum level of exposure. The effects of the Target ads are also significant when the margin is 1 and 1.5, but the effects disappear after that point. However, the General net ads are not statistically meaningful at any level of competitiveness.

Turning to issue preferences, in the model for issue factor 1 we again see targeted ads exerting a significant effect in highly competitive contexts. More specifically, Target Net ads are significant in states in a statistical dead heat or where there is a 2.5 percentage point margin between the candidates. Moving from -500 to 500 Target Net Ads for those with maximum media exposure leads to a .43 unit shift in a more conservative direction on the factor when the race is a dead heat, and a .26 unit shift in a more conservative direction when there is a 2.5 percentage point difference between the candidates. The negative effect is somewhat surprising in that greater exposure to the Democratic targeted ads relative to Republican targeted ads leads to a more conservative stance. To refresh, the issues that loaded heaviest on issue factor 1 regarded how active the government's role should be in helping stop discrimination against blacks and gays, as well as how much government should spend on health insurance. If we break the analysis down separately by the party of the targeted ads, it appears that the Democratic target ads are exerting a negative effect while the Republican Target ads are exerting a positive effect in the most competitive states. This explains why we observe a negative effect on the net measure in this context. It appears that Latinos resisted the intended direction of both party ads. However, as a potential explanation for these results we

consider that this was the first large-scale targeting attempt by both parties and as a result their accuracy in both persuading and in the desired direction may still need fine-tuning. The second issue model, where school voucher and abortion opinions loaded highly, and ideology does not see either type of ad exerting a significant effect regardless of the level of state competitiveness.<sup>18</sup>

### **Total Effects of the Ads**

The last important step is to look at the total effect of the Target Net ads, which includes the direct effect on vote choice, as well as the indirect effects, as they work through partisanship, issue 1, and economic assessments. We calculate the total effect of the advertisements for the most competitive states, among those with maximum media exposure, moving from -500 Target Net ads to 500 Target Net ads. Recall that this is basically one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean of the net targeted ads. In this case, the direct effect of the targeted advertisements is a 24.1 percentage point increase in the probability of voting for Gore.<sup>19</sup> The indirect effects of the Target Net ads as they work through the ingredients of the vote using the same ad comparison are a 2.9 percentage point increase in the probability of voting for Gore through economic assessments, a .3 percentage point increase through partisanship, and a 1.5 percentage point decrease through issue 1. These indirect effects are not very substantial. Combining the direct and indirect effects, the total effect of the Target Ads on the vote in the most competitive state is a 25.8 percentage point increase in the probability of voting for Gore as we move from a market with -500 to 500 Target Net ads. Most of this effect is due to the direct effect of the ads on voting decisions.

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<sup>18</sup> The inter-class correlation coefficient was significant for both issue factors and for ideology, indicating that a hierarchical model would be appropriate. The results for the hierarchical regressions are consistent.

<sup>19</sup> We did not use CLARIFY to estimate these effects, so the values are slightly different.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The preceding analysis indicates that campaigns can influence the electorate. In states with a competitive race, ads had a significant direct effect on Latino voting decisions, as well as indirect effects via the impact they had on partisanship, issue positions, and economic evaluations. In addition, we found that the effect of ads depends in part on the content. General ads seemed to be lost on the Latino sub-segment of the electorate, while in contrast, ads targeted to Latinos were the most successful in influencing political preferences both directly and also indirectly. These findings are important for political science in general but for more practical and tangible campaign purposes, the findings indicate that the resources put into the newly forged Latino ethnic campaigns starting in 2000 were effective.

The ads that were more focused were able to best connect with a particular group of American voters, Latinos. While both types of ads had a significant effect on vote choice, targeted ads had a greater substantive effect. The three additional indirect effects were only manifested via targeted ads. Had we not divided the ad type and looked one step back into the persuasion chain, we may have concluded that ads have no effect on Latinos. Together these findings reinforce the need to first disaggregate the analysis of campaigns, differentiating between general and targeted messages; and second, the need to cast a wide net when considering campaign effects on vote choice. However, the direct effects of the ads on the vote were much greater than the effects of the ads as they worked indirectly through the other ingredients of the vote.

These findings further reinforce recent scholarship that repudiate the contention that campaigns only have minimal effects. New research has found ads to significantly affect vote choice and candidate evaluations among the general American population. Building on this work, we focus on one population sub-segment, Latinos and a component of the larger campaign strategy of targeted ethnic advertisements. Technological innovations will only continue to increase and further allow

for population and/or issue micro-targeting. Turning to the implications of these findings for modern day media campaigns, we see that a “one size fits all” message will not resonate among all, at least among Latinos. The pattern of micro-targeting which has already become pronounced in presidential campaigns is likely to expand in appealing to Latinos as well as other sub-groups in the population.

This project also raises important questions for future research to address. First, there are ways to further sub-divide the content of targeted messages, for example, by language, by specific symbols, or by the particular issues highlighted in the advertisements. Due to data limitations, we could not explore those here. However, this would be a fruitful path to explore in experimental work, in which one would have more control over the ad content and exposure. Second, we only looked at the effects of the advertisements in the presidential race. It is possible that targeted ads aired for other races may have spillover effects on the presidential race. Finally, not all targeted ads aired on Spanish language media. What effect might English language targeted ads have on the non-target population? Campaigns will have to heed special care so as to not alienate one portion of the electorate as a result of the targeted messages sent to another (Barreto, Merolla, and Ramirez 2007), known as ricochet effects.

**Figure 1: Change in the Probability of Voting for Gore Moving from -500 to 500 Net Ads  
Different Levels of Electoral Competition**

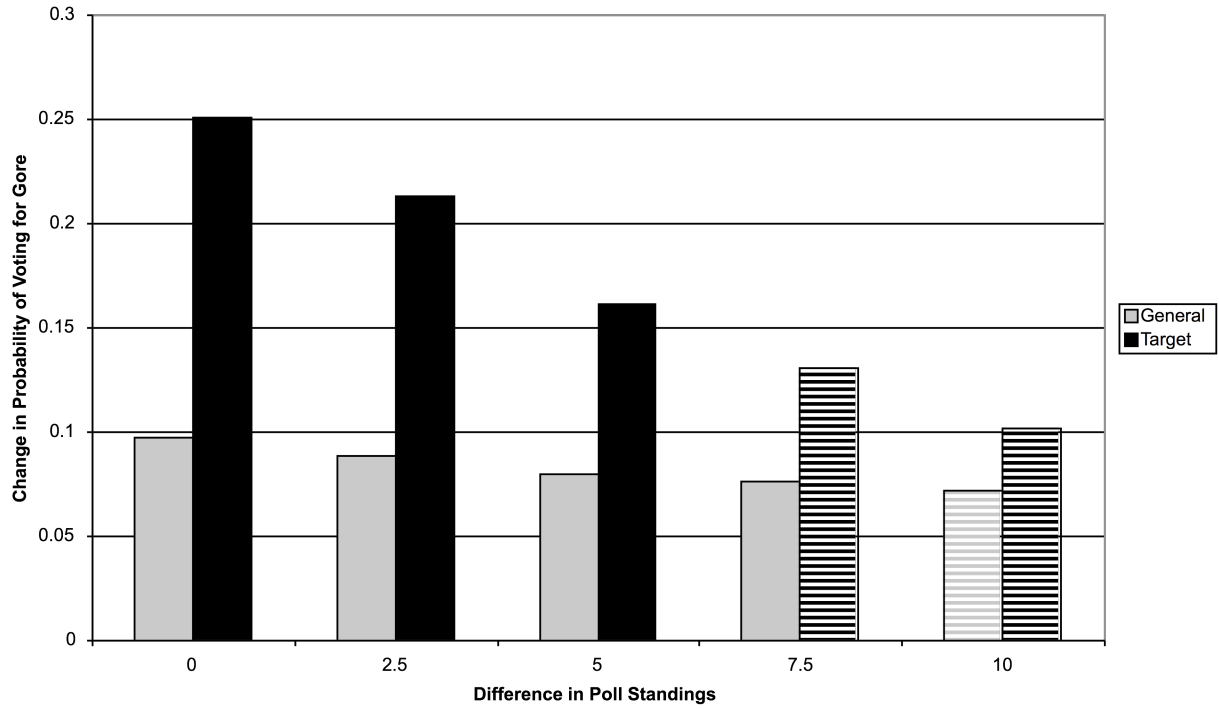
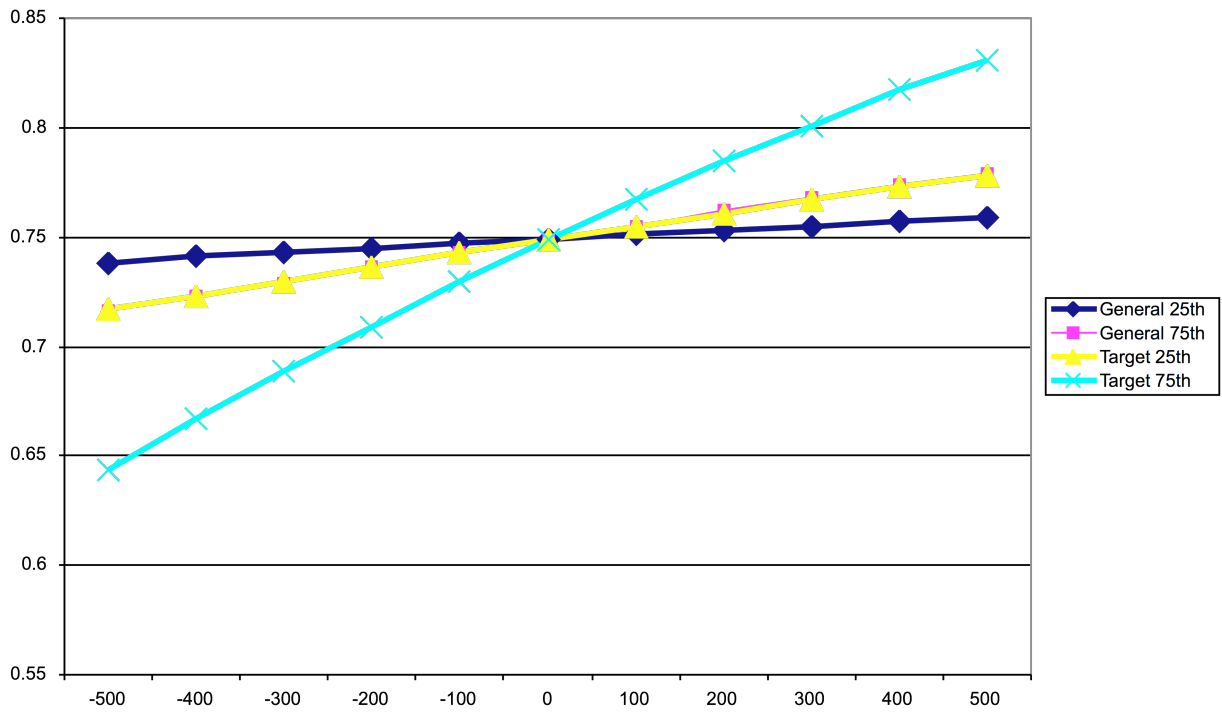


Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Voting for Gore by Net Ads in the most Competitive Context †  
those at the 25th and 75th Percentile of Media Exposure



**Table 1: Distribution of General and Targeted Political Ads across Media Markets for the 2000 Presidential General Election**

Media Market	General		Target	
	Democrat	Republican	Democrat	Republican
New York	0	1	0	4
Miami-Ft. Lauderdale	3412	3558	14	2044
Tampa- St. Petersburg	3035	2909	0	1289
Chicago	1632	1079	56	691
Houston	0	0	0	0
Dallas Ft. Worth	0	0	0	0
Denver	7	0	79	10
Albuquerque-Santa Fe	4096	2484	1023	2252
Los Angeles	0	839	46	458
San Francisco	5	415	26	26
San Diego	0	985	0	1087
Sacramento	23	756	10	978

**Table 2: Probit Model of Determinants of Latino Vote Choice for Gore in the 2000 General Election**

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error
Difference	-0.0157 **	0.0075
General Net Ads	0.0003 +	0.0002
Target Net Ads	0.0009 **	0.0004
Difference*General Net	- 0.0000	0.0000
Difference*Target Net	-0.0001 +	0.0000
Gore Trait Assessment	1.211 **	0.188
Bush Trait Assessment	-1.259 **	0.167
Economic Assessments	0.122 +	0.081
Issue1	0.166 **	0.077
Issue2	0.119 +	0.074
Party Identification	-0.331 **	0.041
Ideology	0.217 **	0.079
Sex	0.202	0.128
Age	-0.002	0.004
Education	-0.046	0.063
Union	-0.046	0.160
Religious Attendance	-0.016	0.050
Catholic	0.178	0.135
Mexican	-0.389 **	0.165
Cuban	-0.181	0.294
Puerto Rican	-0.328 *	0.189
Spanish Speaker	-0.344 **	0.171
Income	-0.057	0.036
Constant	1.440 **	0.516
N	897	
Pseudo R2	0.5872	
Wald chi2	205.10	
Percentage Correctly Predicted	89.86%	

Note: \*\* p≤.05 (two-tailed) \* p≤.10 (two-tailed) + p≤.10 (one-tailed).

**Table 3: OLS Model of Determinants of Candidate Traits and Party Identification**

Variables	Bush Trait	Gore Trait	Party Id
	Coefficient (S. E.)	Coefficient (S. E.)	Coefficient (S. E.)
Difference	-0.0001 (0.0028)	-0.0002 (0.0022)	-0.0014 (0.0071)
General Net Ads	-0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0002)
Target Net Ads	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0005 (0.0003)
Difference*General Net	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0001 (0.0000)
Difference*Target Net	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0001)
Economic Assessments	-0.029 (0.029)	0.112 ** (0.026)	-0.111 (0.078)
Issue 1			-0.472 ** (0.062)
Issue 2			-0.176 ** (0.068)
Party Identification	0.128** (0.011)	-0.141** (0.011)	
Ideology	-0.084** (0.025)	-0.010 (0.022)	- 0.336 ** (0.074)
Sex	0.085* (0.047)	-0.081** (0.039)	0.308 ** (0.126)
Age	0.000 (0.002)	0.003** (0.001)	-0.011 ** (0.005)
Education	-0.076** (0.023)	-0.054** (0.019)	-0.012 (0.060)
Union	-0.060 (0.059)	-0.009 (0.050)	-0.028 (0.160)
Religious Attendance	-0.087** (0.018)	0.004 (0.015)	-0.088 * (0.051)
Catholic	0.029 (0.049)	0.078* (0.042)	-0.576 ** (0.129)
Mexican	0.080 (0.055)	-0.023 (0.046)	-0.012 (0.143)
Cuban	0.023 (0.098)	-0.035 (0.085)	1.407 ** (0.293)
Puerto Rican	0.027 (0.066)	0.026 (0.058)	-0.091 (0.189)
Spanish Speaker	0.083 (0.072)	0.104* (0.062)	0.243 (0.191)
Income	-0.025* (0.014)	-0.017 (0.012)	0.069 * (0.037)
Constant	1.965** (0.154)	2.265** (0.132)	4.958 ** (0.373)
N	897	897	897
R-squared	0.2333	0.2611	0.2017

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .05$  (two-tailed) \*  $p \leq .10$  (two-tailed) +  $p \leq .10$  (one-tailed).

**Table 4: OLS Model of Determinants of Economic Assessment, Issues and Ideology in the 2000 General Election**

Variables	Economic Assessments	Issue 1	Issue 2	Ideology
	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)
Difference	0.0013 (0.0032)	0.0121 ** (0.0037)	-0.0079** (0.0036)	0.0068 (0.0037)
General Net Ads	-0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
Target Net Ads	0.0002 + (0.0001)	-0.0004** (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0002)
Difference*General Net	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
Difference*Target Net	-0.0000 * (0.0000)	0.0001 ** (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
Issue 1				0.160 ** (0.031)
Issue 2				0.142 ** (0.034)
Party Identification	-0.021+ (0.014)	-0.121** (0.019)	-0.045 ** (0.017)	-
Ideology	0.036 (0.031)	0.116** (0.033)	0.121 ** (0.033)	-
Sex	0.251 ** (0.055)	-0.173 ** (0.065)	-0.055 (0.063)	0.003 (0.064)
Age	0.005 ** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.004 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Education	0.089** (0.026)	0.007 (0.029)	0.155** (0.029)	0.017 (0.030)
Union	0.037 (0.071)	-0.016 (0.081)	0.019 (0.080)	0.112 (0.085)
Religious Attendance	0.006 (0.023)	0.019 (0.028)	0.163 ** (0.025)	0.085 ** (0.025)
Catholic	0.049 (0.057)	0.040 (0.066)	0.100 (0.064)	0.000 (0.065)
Mexican	0.067 (0.063)	0.010 (0.075)	0.099 (0.075)	-0.123 * (0.073)
Cuban	0.145 (0.115)	0.024 (0.162)	-0.001 (0.141)	-0.341 ** (0.130)
Puerto Rican	-0.016 (0.084)	0.378 ** (0.088)	-0.152 * (0.090)	-0.280 ** (0.095)
Spanish Speaker	0.202** (0.085)	0.342 ** (0.090)	-0.309** (0.101)	-0.017 (0.094)
Income	0.082 ** (0.017)	-0.038 * (0.020)	0.011 (0.018)	-0.001 (0.018)
Constant	0.578** (0.187)	0.045 (0.216)	-1.236 ** (0.211)	2.833** (0.177)
N	897	897	897	897
R2/Pseudo R2	0.1116	0.1617	0.1771	0.0926

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .05$  (two-tailed) \*  $p \leq .10$  (two-tailed) +  $p \leq .10$  (one-tailed).

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