**The Republican Party's Hold on Latino American Men in the Trump Era**
Zoe McGough
HNRS 2000 Research Proposal

**Abstract**

Between 2016 and 2020, Trump improved his support among Latino American men by 4% despite his racist and xenophobic political rhetoric. As of 2020, Latino Americans make up the largest minority eligible voting population at 13% (Taladrid, 2020). Existing research shows four potential factors for this increased support for Trump. Latino American men are highly motivated by prospects of economic mobility (Medina, 2021) and *machismo* gender norms that are consistent with the Republican party (Garcia, 2021). Additionally, Latino American men identify more with being family providers than their racial minority status (Medina, 2020). Lastly, Latino American men are employed at significant rates with oil and coal companies that are politically protected by Republican government officials (Medina, 2020). To find an answer to why Latino American men are shifting right in the case of the Trump presidency, I will conduct a general survey of Latino Americans along with 20 in-depth interviews with Latino American men based on the results of the general survey. I expect my data to show that a combination of factors explains this Latino shift to the right. The implications for this research may help both major political parties to better mobilize and cater to Latino American voters.

**Introduction**

Considering the obstacles to voting in the American political system, it would be reasonable to ask why we even bother voting all. Altruism, egocentrism, and self-expression are all proposed answers to this question (Munsey, 2008). It is also worth asking how and why ethnic minorities vote in a majority white country. As of 2020, Latino American voters make up approximately 13% of the voting population which makes them the largest eligible minority voting group in the United States (Taladrid, 2020). The lack of polling data on Latino Americans makes deciphering their voting motivations and party affiliations particularly difficult. Democrats often assume that they own the Latino vote, but this may not be the case anymore. Between 2016 and 2020, Donald Trump improved his support among Latino American voters by four percentage points even after his continued anti-immigrant rhetoric (Garcia, 2021). More specifically, Latino American men supported Trump at a much higher rate than Latina American women (Leonhardt, 2021). Even though the Democratic party is more concerned with immigration and social justice issues, why is it that the Republican party is increasingly attractive to Latino American men?
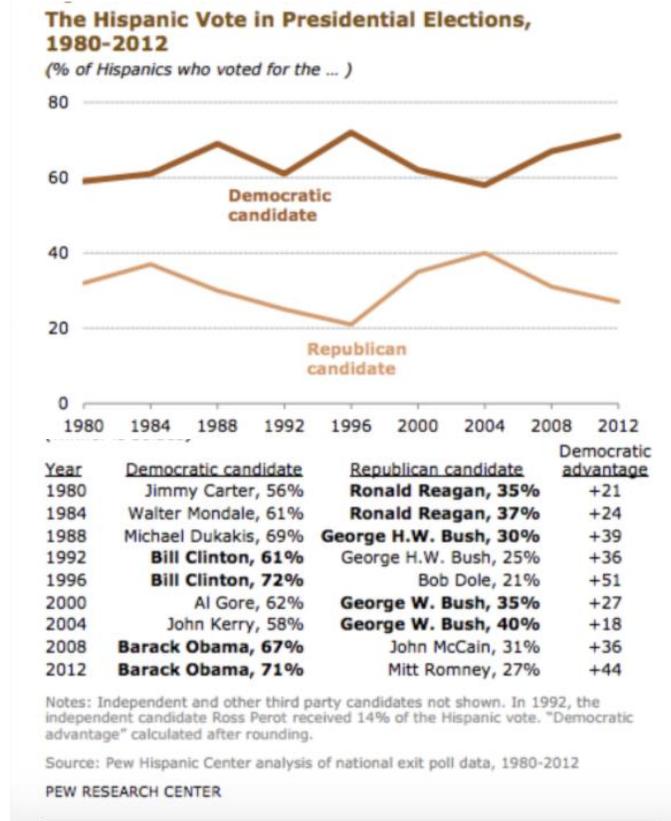
**Background/Related Work and Motivation**

The best way to measure voting patterns is through exit polls conducted by major media organizations. The CNN exit polls from 2016 showed that Trump won 32% of the Latino vote and then won 36% of the Latino vote in 2020 (CNN 2016 & 2020). In 2016, 32% of Latino American men voted for Trump compared to only 25% of Latino American women (CNN, 2016). In 2020, 36% of Latino American men voted for Trump compared to 30% of Latino American women (CNN, 2020). Considering this data, political analysts have attempted to find

answers to why this male minority group increasingly votes for Trump. General trends from interviews and surveys show that the majority of Latino Americans do not see themselves as racial minorities, so they do not identify with the social justice rhetoric of the Democratic party (Medina, 2021). Trends also show that many Latino Americans are more concerned with their personal economic interests as immigrants, and therefore identify with the Republican values of hard work and earned economic status (Medina, 2021). Surprisingly, existing research shows that adherence to Catholicism is not a driving factor towards the Republican party for Latino Americans. Research shows that Catholic Latino Americans overwhelming support the Democratic party compared to Latino American Protestants and Evangelicals which make up a much smaller percentage of the Latino American population (Molina, 2020).

When examining Latino American voting patterns from a historical lens (See Figure 1), one can see that from 1980 to 2012, Latino Americans voted for both Republican and Democratic presential candidates, yet they voted for Democratic candidates at a higher rate. Most notably, they voted for Bill Clinton in 1996 at a rate of 72% and Barack Obama in 2012 at a rate of 12% (Pew Research Center, 2015). Figure 1 shows that support for Republican candidates among Hispanics does not usually rise above 40%. Despite the increase in racist and xenophobic rhetoric among presidential candidates, such as Donald Trump, Latino Americans are still voting for the Republican candidate in 2016 and 2020, Trump, at similar rates as in 1980 through 2012.

*Figure 1: The Hispanic Vote in Presential Elections 1980-2012 (Pew Research Center, 2015)*

**The Hispanic Vote in Presidential Elections, 1980-2012**
(% of Hispanics who voted for the … )

| Year | Democratic candidate | Republican candidate | Democratic advantage |
|------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1980 | Jimmy Carter, 56% | Ronald Reagan, 35% | +21 |
| 1984 | Walter Mondale, 61% | Ronald Reagan, 37% | +24 |
| 1988 | Michael Dukakis, 69% | George H.W. Bush, 30% | +39 |
| 1992 | Bill Clinton, 61% | George H.W. Bush, 25% | +36 |
| 1996 | Bill Clinton, 72% | Bob Dole, 21% | +51 |
| 2000 | Al Gore, 62% | George W. Bush, 35% | +27 |
| 2004 | John Kerry, 58% | George W. Bush, 40% | +18 |
| 2008 | Barack Obama, 67% | John McCain, 31% | +36 |
| 2012 | Barack Obama, 71% | Mitt Romney, 27% | +44 |

Notes: Independent and other third party candidates not shown. In 1992, the independent candidate Ross Perot received 14% of the Hispanic vote. "Democratic advantage" calculated after rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of national exit poll data, 1980-2012

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Eric Garcia attempts to explain why Latino American men are shifting to the right, and how the Democratic party can pull Latino American voters back. Garcia explains how Trump's focus on masculinity is consistent with the Latino message of *machismo*. Men in low status groups, including racial minority groups, are significantly affected by messages of masculinity. These focus on masculinity leads men to believe it will improve their social standing. On the other hand, Latina women are more focused on running households, managing childcare, and employment in domestic jobs. This difference in experience answers why Latino men are more attracted to Trump than Latina women. Additionally, Equis research found that 28% of Hispanics see themselves as part of a group that can get ahead through hard work overall several generations (Garcia, 2021). Similarly, 32% of Hispanics see themselves as being similar to

European American immigrants who can assimilate into mainstream American culture (Garcia, 2021).The Republican party represents the traditional American experience to many Latino Americans.

Jennifer Medina, national politics reporter for The New York Times, focuses on finding to answers to why Latino American men are being driven toward the Republican party. She says that interviews from 2020 show that many Latino American men resented the idea that they would immediately support Democratic candidates because of their race (Medina, 2020). Additionally, Latino American men generally identified more strongly with being providers from their families rather than identifying as being a racial minority (Medina, 2020). In their minds, the economy is a more pressing issue than social justice. The Republican party's stance on environmental regulations is also a significant factor. Many Latino American men living in Texas rely on the oil-fields for their primary source of income. Republicans seek to protect these oil fields and limit the interference of environmental regulations. Furthermore, many Latino American men perceive the Republican party to be the party of the wealthy and successful. This leads to them to want to associate with a party whose status they perceive as desirable.

While many political experts have speculated as to why Latino American men are increasing their support for the Republican party, no conclusion has yet been reached. The Latino American population is a diverse electorate with competing identities and interests. There is no existing literature available about what the most influential voting factor is for Latino American men. While this encompasses a wide range of Latino identities, it is worth noting that discovering what political factors have the most significance for Latino American men can guide the Republican and Democratic party's voter mobilization strategies. Additionally, identifying

the differences in political priorities for Latino American men and women can aide the parties in crafting specific messages to mobilize Latino American voters of all genders.

**Method**

Obviously, the Latino American population is extremely diverse across the United States. There is a danger in attempting to find patterns in certain voting populations. It is easy to create monoliths about diverse populations such as the Latino community in the United States. For this reason, it is important that my research includes different measures to answer my research question. I propose a mixed methods approach that includes a survey of 500 Latino American men and women and 20 in-depth interviews with Latino American men. These two methods will generate both quantitative and qualitative data. The general survey of Latino Americans will include topics like ethnicity, job status, citizenship status, family income, religious affiliation, economic security, gender ideology, and political priorities. I will use Amazon's MTurk service to generate survey responses. Although MTurk has problems related to sample bias, it is a generally accepted sampling service if used correctly (Kline, 2020). Additionally, MTurk has been widely used in the academic and legal fields and is a convenient way to sample large populations (Kline, 2020). The sections of the survey that ask about political priorities and gender ideology will ask participants to rank their agreement on a scale of one to seven, as is typical in most psychological surveys. The results of the general survey will inform the topics covered during the in-depth interviews.

**Expected Results**

I expect that the results of the survey and the interviews will show that the increase in support for Republicans by Latino American men is due to a combination of factors. As I explain

in the Method section, Latino American men are not a monolith—they all have different experiences as voter, and therefore have different priorities. I expect the statistical data from the surveys to show what political issues are most significant to Latino American men. I hope to find a relationship between variables such as ethnicity, job status, citizenship status, family income, religious affiliation, economic security, gender ideology, and/or political priorities. I will also produce interview transcripts from the 20 interviews. I hope that both the survey and interview data will provide statistically significant data that helps answer my research question.

**Conclusion**

Hopefully, this work will help to inform both Republicans and Democrats about how best to mobilize and represent the Latino American voting population. There is a reason that Latino American split their votes between these two parties; neither party has provided an obvious path for Latino American voters. Their identity remains complex and multifaceted. Due to the lack of clarity about Latino American male voting behaviors, it is clear that both major parties need to do more to understand their potential constituents. Democracy can only succeed if people are actively involved in government. If the major parties fail to cater to all Americans, the government fails to be representative. Latino Americans deserve to be represented by political leaders that understand their identity and what policies will get them to the polls in November.

# References

Agiesta, Jennifer, et al. "More Latino Voters Support Trump in 2020 than 2016, but Young Americans Favor Biden, Early CNN Exit Polls Show." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 5 Nov. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/11/03/politics/exit-polls-2020/index.html.

Cortez, Leticia, and Tim Sherrill. "The Latino Vote in Presidential Races: 1980–2012." *Latino USA*, 29 Oct. 2015, https://www.latinousa.org/2015/10/29/the-latino-vote-in-presidential-races/.

Garcia, Eric. "Why did Latino men shift toward Trump in 2020? I looked to my dad for answers." Washington Post 22 Mar. 2021: NA. Business Insights: Global. http://bi.gale.com/global/article/GALE%7CA655890929/7c5e859562a262555c0fb0172e385ec9?u=loym48904.

Kline, Teresa. "Mechanical Turk: Potential Concerns and Their Solutions." *Summit*, NuvoSum, 4 Dec. 2020, https://www.summitllc.us/blog/mechanical-turk-concerns-and-solutions.

Leonhardt, David. "The Latino Gender Gap." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Oct. 2020, Date accessed: 10/31/21 www.nytimes.com/2020/10/22/briefing/pope-francis-russia-iran-purdue.html.

Medina, Jennifer. "A Vexing Question for Democrats: What Drives Latino Men to Republicans?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 Mar. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/us/politics/latino-voters-democrats.html.

Medina, Jennifer. "The Macho Appeal of Donald Trump." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 14 Oct. 2020, Date accessed: 10/31/21 www.nytimes.com/2020/10/14/us/politics/trump-macho-appeal.html.

Molina, Alejandra. "Poll: Latino Protestants Are More Conservative and Supportive of Trump than Latino Catholics." *America Magazine*, 2 Dec. 2020, Date accessed: 10/31/21 www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/12/02/latino-protestants-catholics-conservative-support-trump-poll-239386.

Munsey, Christopher. "Why Do We Vote?" *Monitor on Psychology*, American Psychological Association, June 2008, Date accessed: 10/10/21www.apa.org/monitor/2008/06/vote.

Taladrid, Stephania. "Deconstructing the 2020 Latino Vote." *The New Yorker*, 31 Dec. 2020, Date accessed: 10/31/21 www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/deconstructing-the-2020-latino-vote.

2016 Election Results: Exit Polls - *CNN*, 2016, Date accessed: 10/31/21 www.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls.

2020 Election Results: Exit Polls - *CNN*, 2020, Date accessed: 10/31/21 www.cnn.com/election/2020/exit-polls/president/national-results/7

**Budget**

| Week: | Description | Hours of Personal Work | Money Needed |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | -Generate survey<br>-Work with mentor to generate questions<br>-Use Qualtrics to code and create survey (free with LMU) | 8 | Time worked = 8 hours<br>→ $15/hour in Los Angeles = $120 |
| 2 | -Send out survey using Amazon MTurk<br>-Wait for results | 1 | Time worked = 1 hour =$15<br><br>MTurk typically costs $0.50 per complete<br>→ 500 responses needed =$250 |
| 3 | -Wait for survey results | 0 | N/A |
| 4 | -Close survey<br>-Analyze results using SPSS<br>-Meet with mentor to analyze and debrief data | 8 | Time worked = 8 hours<br>→ $15/hour in Los Angeles = $120 |
| 5 | -Based on data from surveys, create interview questions<br>-Reach out to 20 respondents to conduct interviews with | 6 | Time worked = 6 hours<br>→ $15/hour in Los Angeles =$90 |
| 6 | -Wait for 20 respondents to agree to interview | 0 | N/A |
| 7 | -Wait for 20 respondents to agree to interview | 0 | N/A |
| 8 | -Conduct interviews | 15 | Time worked = 15 hours<br>→ $15/hour in Los Angeles =$225 |
| 9 | -Conduct interviews<br>-Analyze qualitative interview data with mentor | 20 | Time worked = 20 hours<br>→ $15/hour in Los Angeles =$300 |