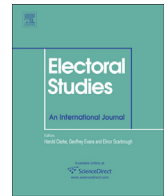




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Group-based appeals and the Latino vote in 2012: How immigration became a mobilizing issue

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ABSTRACT

We evaluate a theory of campaign learning in the context of immigration and the 2012 Latino vote. Following events in Nevada and Arizona after the 2008 election and prior to the 2012 election, we argue and show that Obama's campaign team learned from several Democratic U.S. Senate campaigns in how best to mobilize the Latino vote on the issue of immigration. As a result, we argue, this campaign learning led to an increase in the Latino vote for Obama. To demonstrate this, we compare a group-based appeals model against a traditional vote-choice model, and show that variables measuring Latino Outreach had the greatest impact on the 2012 Latino vote – above and beyond party identification and other traditional vote-choice predictors.

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1. Introduction

During the 2012 presidential election Barack Obama no longer saw crowds of one hundred thousand adoring fans at every campaign stop. Instead, his first term as President led to a concerted effort by conservative Republicans and Tea Party sympathizers to block and defeat his policies and drove his approval ratings down. According to a CBS News poll, by April 2012 only 42% of registered voters had a favorable opinion of Obama compared to 45% unfavorable. Unlike the 2008 election when Obama routed John McCain by over seven percentage points – a resounding victory by contemporary election standards – Obama would need a much tighter and more effective campaign in 2012 than running on *Hope* and *Change*. On election night, exit polls

indicated that Obama lost considerable ground among White voters as compared to 2008, dropping to just 39% support against 59% for Mitt Romney. Among Latinos, however, a Latino Decisions election eve poll¹ reported that Obama defeated Romney 75%–23%, the highest Latino vote margin ever for a Democratic presidential candidate. Moreover, the Latino turnout also increased from 9.7 million in 2008 to 11.2 million in 2012, suggesting that the Obama campaign was effective in both mobilization and persuasion among Latino voters. What explains gains among Latino voters in 2012 for the Democratic ticket against considerable declines otherwise? We argue that Obama engaged in successful Latino outreach emphasizing ethnic appeals through both campaign rhetoric and executive branch policy. Focus on traditional predictors alone such as perceptions of the economy and party identification fail to fully capture the enthusiastic Latino vote for Obama in 2012.

This paper examines the role of campaign learning and priming vis-à-vis the Latino vote during the 2012 elections.² In 2008, while Obama did conduct ethnically-

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¹ Research by Barreto et al., 2006 suggests exit polls do a poor job at estimating Latino vote preference. Therefore we rely on a national, telephone survey of Latino voters from Latino Decisions to estimate the Latino vote in 2012. http://www.latinodecisions.com/files/9313/5233/8455/Latino_Election_Eve_Poll_-_Crosstabs.pdf.

² This paper builds on previous work by Collingwood et al. (2014).

targeted mobilization aimed at Latino voters, such as Spanish-language advertising, he did not stress immigration-specific issues as he did during the 2012 campaign. Instead, his 2008 outreach was *more or less*, a Spanish translation of his overall 2008 campaign. We argue that between election cycles Obama's campaign team engaged in a learning campaign of sorts regarding the mobilization of the Latino vote. Coupled with events in Arizona and Nevada – which placed immigration towards the forefront of the political agenda – the Obama campaign increased voter turnout among Latinos as well as the Democratic vote-share by emphasizing culturally relevant and salient issues. Indeed, as we will show, relative to other issues, such as the economy, health care and education policy, immigration broadly defined was a much more salient feature in the voting behavior of Latinos during the 2012 election. In addition, we will show that Latino outreach broadly defined was much more connected to the Obama vote compared to the U.S. Senate vote, suggesting that Obama's focus on the issue paid clear political dividends.

We start by presenting our theoretical framework upon which we examine the 2012 Latino vote for Obama. Between election cycles, campaigns often attempt to improve their vote by learning new technological tactics, strategies, and appeals on certain issues. We argue that the Obama campaign paid special attention to learning and improving their appeals to Latino voters vis-à-vis the issue of immigration. We next examine Latino outreach by comparing the Obama 2008 Latino strategy to changes and improvements in his 2012 approach. In particular, we review the role that Arizona's SB-1070 anti-immigration law played in increasing the salience of immigration, and how the Obama campaign learned from Harry Reid's 2010 U.S. Senate campaign that targeted mobilization of Latinos. We draw on in-depth interviews with campaign officials that link strategies and personnel between the two campaigns. To test whether campaign learning and improved Latino Outreach actually worked, we turn to a discussion of our data and methods followed by regression analyses of the 2012 Obama and U.S. Senate votes. Finally, in the discussion, we summarize our findings and discuss their implications on the continued study of elections and minority politics.

2. Campaign learning and campaign strategy

While little research has investigated whether candidates and their campaigns learn from other campaigns during and between election cycles, much research has investigated whether in fact campaigns matter. The original “minimal effects” literature has been dispatched in research years, with most research indicating that campaigns can matter in determining the outcome of elections (Holbrook, 1996; Vavreck, 2009). Indeed, campaigns appear to hold sway over public opinion – and hence election outcomes – via the priming process (Druckman et al., 2004; Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000).

In a theoretical piece about parties and campaign strategy, Rohrschneider (2002) argues that party strategists generally tend to view elections as related to one another.

This, of course, suggests that campaigns and strategists may learn from previous targeting successes or failures and adapt strategy accordingly. Furthermore, research indicates that parties tend to appeal to subsets of the same core voters across time, in an attempt to ensure voters favorable to the party show up on Election Day (Budge et al., 1987). All of this suggests that parties/candidates tend to target the same blocs of voters from one election to the next and that strategists are likely open to new approaches to mobilizing key voter blocs.

The reason campaigns may go out of their way to “learn” is obvious: to increase their chances of winning. One area in which campaigns learn is technological. For instance, many campaigns used to target voters at the precinct level and simply bloc-run precincts that had a history of voting 70 percent or more for a candidate's party. Over the past 10 years or so, competitive campaign teams have instituted micro-targeting practices such that each voter on the rolls is assigned a specific probability on vote choice and turnout. Campaign outreach is then based on these individual probabilities instead of at the precinct level. This practice of course was refined over successive campaigns and was used widely in 2012.

Another area in which campaigns may learn regards agenda setting and issue ownership. Research indicates that campaigns can and do have an influence in agenda setting (Dalton et al., 1998). Because candidates are constantly searching for an edge over their opponents, it seems quite plausible that when the use of an issue works for one candidate during an election, he or she may pass along what was successful to other candidates/members of their own party. This is especially relevant with regards to cross-racial mobilization where a candidate may be tempted to pursue a minority bloc but worry about possibilities of white backlash. That is, candidate stances on some issues may produce particularized benefits for specific groups, and may be seen by the dominant group to be unfair (Collingwood, 2012). Because whites typically comprise the majority in a voting jurisdiction – especially at the presidential level – many candidates simply back off a targeted and public minority-focused effort (to avoid the backlash). For instance, Frymer (1999) argues that issues of special concern to African-Americans are rarely discussed in presidential politics because the group is captured. In this case, the Democratic Party is so worried issues like Affirmative Action create backlash among moderate white swing voters that the party actively disengages from the issue.

But, we argue, that when a presidential candidate is running for re-election in a competitive environment, they may be willing to pursue ostensibly risky strategies if there is strong evidence the tactic will prove beneficial to the candidate's net results. Other campaigns – such as two very competitive Senate contests in 2010 – facing similar demographic and political features, then, may serve as a laboratory of sorts to help presidential campaigns learn and improve their mobilization of minority voters. Surprisingly, how candidates learn to navigate the engagement of minority-specific issue areas is an understudied area in political science. This paper, then, uses Latinos and immigration as a test case for presidential learning in the campaign context.

At times, however, through necessity, a candidate will be forced to focus directly on minority specific issues because this may be central to electoral success. One clear example of this is Harry Reid in his 2010 Senate re-election bid. Reid pressed new issues in ways that few White candidates had done in the past. He focused on immigration – broadly – but discussed the Dream Act specifically. While most pundits and nearly every poll predicted Reid would lose in 2010, he won on the record strength of Latino support. According to polls during the Nevada election, Latino voters cited Reid's strong support for immigration reform and the Dream Act as a reason to come out and support his candidacy (Latino Decisions, 2010). As we demonstrate below, the 2012 Obama campaign attempted to learn from and emulate the Latino outreach that was so effective by Reid in 2010. In this sense, learning is passed along to succeeding generations in an evolutionary manner. In an effort to prove this dynamic is present in campaigns, we go into more detail on the Reid-Obama campaign learning below.

Relative to the 2008 contest, in the 2012 election, we argue that the Obama campaign primed Latino voters to weigh the broad issue of immigration when considering their vote choice. Indeed, in previous work we have documented that Obama spent “considerable effort mobilizing the Latino vote as well as taking policy positions favorable to a majority of Latino voters,” (Collingwood et al., 2014). Obama offered an executive order of “deferred action” to effectively implement the *Dream Act* and he strongly challenged the SB-1070 law, while his opponent, Mitt Romney, took the opposite strategy saying that Latinos should “self-deport” and that the Arizona law should be the law of the land. According to Pedraza (2014), when Latinos perceive an unwelcoming message or discrimination it can highlight in-group identity especially on immigration issues. Thus the Romney-Obama dynamic on immigration (unwelcoming versus welcoming) should prime Latinos to be responsive to Obama's group based appeals. Among Latinos – and indeed the electorate as a whole – this strategy would prove to be successful for a few reasons. First, the Obama campaign, like many observers of politics, had learned from both the Harry Reid and Michael Bennet 2010 U.S. Senate campaigns that stressing the importance of immigration reform and appealing openly to the Latino vote can be a winning strategy in Latino-heavy swing states such as Nevada and Colorado. Second, by taking a stand on the issue most in line with a majority of Latinos and an issue that was pushed onto the agenda for a variety of reasons (most notably SB-1070), Obama was able to distinguish himself very clearly from his opponent.

3. Changes in Latino Outreach: 2008 – 2012

After Barack Obama survived a long and spirited primary challenge from Hillary Clinton, some pundits wondered whether Obama would be able to consolidate the Latino vote in a general election match-up against John McCain. A clear majority of Latinos had voted for Clinton in the Democratic primaries, and McCain had been successful (for a Republican) in winning Latino votes in Arizona during his U.S. Senate elections. In contrast, Obama had little

experience reaching out to Latino voters. His State Senate district in Illinois was an overwhelmingly Democratic seat with few Latinos, and his 2004 U.S. Senate election against Alan Keyes was a landslide win that required little outreach to Hispanics. Thus Obama had not been in a campaign situation before the January 2008 Nevada primary caucus where he had to work hard to win Latino votes. As he won primaries and caucuses, the Obama campaign became more attuned to the Latino vote, which Clinton had been winning by a 2-to-1 margin. Emerging from the primary campaign victorious, Obama knew he needed to shore up Latino support, which could prove especially crucial in 2008 battleground states like Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado and Florida.

While Obama made efforts to court the Latino vote in 2008, he was still new to the game. Perhaps most important was that his opponent, John McCain had previously supported comprehensive immigration reform for undocumented immigrants and had spoken out against the more conservative anti-immigrant voices in the Republican Party. However, in order to make it through the GOP primary McCain moved substantially to the right on immigration reform and endorsed a border-security first approach, which created an opening for Obama to appeal on the immigration issue. But immigration reform was not a central issue in Obama's campaign. Rather, the 2008 election focused much more heavily on the national economy, the Iraq War, and health care reform. The Obama campaign ran three Spanish language advertisements in 2008, one focusing solely on the economy, a second called “the American Dream” which focused on education, health care and jobs, and a third, an attack-ad in which he attempted to link McCain to anti-immigrant statements made by Rush Limbaugh, as well as George W. Bush's tax cuts for the rich. In the last days of the 2008 campaign Obama ran a 30-min long campaign ad on all major television stations that his communications team hoped would deliver the knock-out punch. Rather than develop a separate or unique ad for *Univision* and *Telemundo*, the Obama campaign simply dubbed the ad into Spanish. So while Obama did speak of the need for comprehensive immigration reform in 2008, his Latino outreach focused much more on the economy, education, health care and Iraq. Generally speaking, Obama's 2008 campaign appeals to Latinos were the exact same as his general campaign appeals without much unique ethnic-focus.

Immediately after taking office in 2009 Obama pressed forward with a plan to set the stage for comprehensive immigration reform. In order to win over conservative votes in the House and Senate Obama promoted a very heavy border enforcement strategy that resulted in the detention and deportation of more than 1.5 million undocumented immigrants. However, Congress never went along with Obama's immigration efforts and so despite promises of reforming immigration to include a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, the Obama administration wound up deporting more immigrants than any other presidential administration in our nation's history. Numerous polls of Latino voters demonstrated that lowering approval levels of Obama, and in particular opposition to his handling of immigration policy. If these

numbers would hold up through the 2012 election, Obama's chances of winning high-Latino swing states such as Nevada, Florida, New Mexico, and Colorado would be greatly compromised.

Going into the 2010 midterm elections the Obama re-election campaign team learned an important lesson from U.S. Senate majority leader Harry Reid in how to mobilize and energize Latino voters. Back in Nevada, Reid was caught in a very competitive re-election campaign against Republican Sharon Angle. As Angle ran on a get tough on immigration platform, Reid saw more opportunity in engaging and reaching out to the immigrant community in Nevada. As majority leader, Reid pushed very hard for a vote to pass the Dream Act, which had already won favor in the House. In September 2010 Reid brought the issue up for a vote in the Senate, but was defeated by Republican opposition. Despite the Dream Act's defeat, Reid campaigned vigorously on the issue in Nevada and said passing the Dream Act was the right thing to do. Angle, campaigned vigorously against the Dream Act. While other Senate elections in 2010 tended to focus on the Affordable Care Act, the economy, and government spending, the Nevada Senate election – and to a lesser degree the Colorado Senate race – also featured a very heavy dose of immigration and Latino outreach. The Reid campaign went door-to-door for Hispanic votes, had extensive Spanish-language outreach and relied heavily on the Dream Act vote vis-à-vis Angle's anti-immigrant statements such as calling Dream Act recipients “illegal alien gang members.” Indeed, there was a sudden emergence of the Dream Act in media reports shortly before Election Day indicating the importance of Latinos and the newness of such a bold minority outreach strategy.

After Reid's surprise 5-point win over Angle many in Washington D.C. were ready to declare a new strategy for winning Latino votes: ethnic-based outreach. Edward Schumacher-Matos wrote in the *Washington Post*³ one day after the election:

“Latinos Tuesday helped save the Democrats from total defeat by coming through with outsized participation in a few showcase races, none more high-profile than that of Harry Reid. The Tea Party and Republicans gunned particularly for the Senate majority leader, and until the last few days, he looked like a goner. But the Latino vote came out – 12 percent of the vote – and Reid received an extraordinary 90 percent of it, according to estimates by Latino Decisions, the only poll that specifically tracked Latinos. Reid would have lost handily to Tea Party favorite Sharron Angle without that lopsided support.”

Likewise, Illinois Congressman Luis Gutierrez held a press conference the day after the 2010 midterm to highlight the importance of Latino outreach and to warn Obama and his Republican challenger in 2012 that immigration reform would be crucial to the White House:

“Latino citizens responded to Majority Leader Harry Reid's aggressive pursuit of immigration reform by

voting for him in overwhelming numbers. They were clearly the difference in his victory. He embraced immigration reform as his issue and many called him crazy because of it. When we went to him and said it was time to call for a vote on the DREAM Act, he immediately put it on the schedule. He stood by us. He fought for Latinos and immigrant voters and for sensible immigration reform that establishes the rule of law. Facing some of the most vicious political attacks I can remember, he responded with conviction and courage. Neither political party can expect to win the White House without a significant percentage of the Latino vote. And they both know it.”⁴

4. Evidence of campaign learning

While many touted the success of Reid, and also Michael Bennet in Colorado in reaching out to Latino voters, this alone does not prove that campaign learning was taking place. To actually prove our theory, we need to look to the campaigns themselves for evidence of overlap and information sharing. To accomplish this we conducted in-depth interviews with high-level campaign officials in both the Reid and Obama camps. In addition, we corroborated their accounts by examining news coverage of each campaign and public comments that they had made with regard to Latino outreach.

At the top of the Obama campaign, Jim Messina used the Reid 2010 campaign as their blueprint for Latino outreach. To start, he asked a Reid senior campaign advisor for Hispanic Affairs, Jose Parra, to participate on the OFA advisory board and eventually to lead a meeting of senior campaign staff on Latino outreach. Parra had been senior communications staff on the 2010 Reid campaign and oversaw all Latino outreach and Hispanic media for the Senator in 2010. Parra had reassured Reid that leaning in on the Dream Act would be well received in the Latino community and would give Latinos a reason to vote. Messina asked Parra to break down the Reid 2010 campaign and to advise his team on Obama's 2012 Hispanic outreach. Eventually Parra would be appointed as the director of Hispanic media for the DNC in 2012, and to “ensure the Reid model was in place.” While Parra served in a national capacity, the Obama campaign also tapped Bennet campaign manager Craig Hughes to oversee Colorado and to integrate Latino outreach into their Colorado statewide efforts. Although Reid was the champion of the Dream Act in 2010, Bennet was a strong ally and Hughes notes that Bennet knew the Latino vote would be critical in Colorado: “Right after he was appointed he met with Latino activists. As superintendent he saw the impact of immigration and the lack of policy every day, and he committed to immigration reform and the Dream Act, and he never wavered from it. That kind of commitment pays off.”

The 2012 Obama campaign then turned to Gabriela Domenzain, a veteran Hispanic outreach director. Domenzain was to handle all Hispanic media outreach and to

³ http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postpartisan/2010/11/how_should_harry_reid_say_grac.html.

⁴ http://www.politico.com/blogs/glennthrush/1110/Gutierrez_Hispanics_saved_Reid.html.

position Obama favorably within the Latino community and media. Her first task was to consult the Reid and Bennet successes of 2010: “I know that Obama for America leaders saw the Reid and Bennet races as races where Latinos made a big difference and they thought, ‘OK, Latinos can make a difference here.’” When asked why they relied on the Reid and Bennet campaigns as models, Domenzain said, “They were the first two where – in Spanish and in English – the candidates leaned into issues of specific importance to the Latino community, including immigration and the Dream Act.”

Following the 2012 election, the D.C. political magazine *Roll Call* did an in-depth story on how Obama courted the Latino vote, focusing on how they “learned” what strategy to employ. Journalist Humberto Sanchez spoke with all the key players inside the Obama campaign and concluded that Obama made a strong connection to immigration and the Latino vote because of Harry Reid and Michael Bennet in 2010.

He writes⁵:

“The Democratic Senators’ pioneering efforts in reaching out to Latin voters in their 2010 re-election races in Nevada and Colorado respectively, provided a template that Obama for America developed into a national juggernaut. It’s a blueprint Obama largely followed in 2012, by building a voter outreach initiative that aggressively targeted Hispanics and simultaneously taking executive actions to ensure that children of illegal immigrants were not deported.”

Sanchez goes further to draw a direct link between Reid’s Hispanic media advisor Jose Parra and Obama’s counterpart Gabriela Domenzain: “In order to win, Obama also needed to surpass previous outreach efforts and engage Latino voters in new ways. Domenzain drew on her experience as a former journalist with Univision, as well as a press adviser for the National Council of La Raza, and she took a few pointers from Reid’s 2010 example, led by Jose Parra,” (Sanchez 2012).

The in-depth interviews support the argument that Obama’s campaign team learned from previous campaigns in similar situations, and then employed similar tactics. But did this learning produce actual results in terms of increased vote share? We evaluate this question in the rest of the paper, using standard econometric methods. Our analytical approach is to compare baseline presidential voting models stipulated by the mainstream voting literature (see for example [Campbell \(1960\)](#); [Markus \(1988\)](#); [Miller \(1991\)](#); [Lewis-Beck \(1988\)](#); [Lewis-Beck et al. \(2008\)](#)) against augmented *Latino Outreach* (i.e., improved outreach based on campaign learning) models. Building on [Collingwood et al. \(2014\)](#), we further assess whether cross-racial appeals work to get out the Latino vote. If we are right, then we expect model fit to improve for the *Latino Outreach* (learning) models and that *Latino Outreach* will be a statistically significant and substantive predictor of presidential vote. To further substantiate our case, we do

this both for the presidential vote and the U.S. Senate vote to demonstrate that Obama’s Latino Outreach is more intimately tied to the presidential vote than the Senate vote. If we are right then Latino Outreach will be much more impactful on the presidential vote than the Senate vote – even though we do expect coattails at the Senate level ([Campbell and Summers, 1990](#)).

5. Data and methods

We rely on a large election survey of Latino registered voters conducted by Latino Decisions⁶ in November 2012, to evaluate whether ethnic-based outreach has effects above and beyond traditional vote choice variables. The sample includes 5613 Latino voters across the United States, contacted on both landlines and cellular phones. All interviewers are bilingual; as such the survey was conducted in both Spanish and English with 39 percent of respondents preferring to take the Spanish-language version versus 61 percent in English.

Our statistical analysis takes the traditional vote choice model as a starting point, and then compares it against a model accounting for Latino-targeted campaign appeals. For all models we use logistic regression to predict presidential vote choice. In one set of the models, the dependent variable is vote for Obama, where Obama is coded as a one and Romney a zero. In the other set of models, the dependent variable is vote for U.S. Senate, where a one represents a vote for a Democrat and a zero a vote for a Republican. The few respondents who failed to answer the question are dropped from the analysis.⁷ As discussed above, party ID is a very strong predictor of vote-choice, so we include dummy variables for Republicans and Democrats, which also account for leaners coded as partisans. In addition, we control for policy evaluations with two dummy variables, one for those who think that the main issue facing the community is the economy and the creation or jobs and another variable for those who see immigration as the most important issue.

We also take account of other traditional predictors of vote-choice. A variable “Contacted by Democrat” receives a one if the respondent was contacted by the Democratic Party, and zero otherwise. Likewise, a variable “Contacted by Republican” receives a value of one if the respondent was contacted by the GOP and zero otherwise. We include traditional socio-economic status (SES) variables, with a categorical variable for income and an indicator variable for college education to capture Latinos with a college degree or greater (1) versus those who have not graduated college (0). Other standard vote choice models include age, gender

⁶ Latino Decisions is a political research firm specializing in public opinion analysis and election trends concerning primarily Latino voters. The company regularly works with universities, non-profit organizations, and media outlets such as Univision, *impreMedia*, and the Los Angeles times. During the 2008 and 2012 elections, the company did several tracking and baseline surveys for *impreMedia* and Univision to track attitudinal changes in the Latino electorate.

⁷ Because this is a poll of actual voters, nobody reported being undecided. Only two percent of voters said they voted for someone else besides Obama or Romney.

⁵ http://www.rollcall.com/news/latino_vote_sprang_from_local_touch-219863-1.html?pg=1.

(1 for female, 0 for male), and a dummy for marriage. To capture the importance of religion, we include a dummy variable for whether the respondent is Catholic, and a separate religion variable indicating whether the respondent is a born-again Christian.

Finally, we include variables relevant to the Latino community that better account for the changing demographics discussed above. These variables include generation (1 = first generation, 2 = second generation, 3 = third generation), country of ancestry, and whether the respondent took the survey in Spanish.

There are many ways to capture targeted group appeals but since we are interested in comparing an enhanced group appeals model to a more traditional model of vote-choice we use cross-racial mobilization indicators that can be operationalized in the survey context. Thus, while being contacted by a political party is a common predictor used in models, our theory suggests that the type of outreach performed is relevant. Therefore, our measure of Latino targeted appeals (or Latino Outreach) is based on an index of two questions:

Thinking about the 2012 campaign for President, would you say that Barack Obama/Mitt Romney is someone who truly cares about the Hispanic/Latino community, that he didn't care too much about Hispanic/Latinos, or that Obama/Romney was hostile towards Hispanic/Latinos?

This variable allows us to distinguish how the outreach is perceived, which is a key element of our theory. Indeed, being contacted with a hostile message should produce a different outcome than being contacted by someone who

cares about the Latino community. This portion of the outreach variable is coded so that 3 = Truly Cares; 2 = Did not care too much and 1 = Being hostile.

Second, within the survey we embed Obama's most publicly discussed position on immigration policy: his deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) policy. Obama's Executive Order in June, 2012, to defer action on deporting *Dreamers* is viewed as positive group appeal. We asked respondents the following question:

In June President Obama announced a new Department of Homeland Security policy to stop the deportation of any undocumented immigrant youth who attends college or serves in the military and to provide them with a legal work permit that is renewable. Did this announcement make you feel more enthusiastic about Obama, less enthusiastic about Obama, or did it have no effect on how you feel about Obama?

This portion of the group appeal variable is coded as 1 = Less enthusiastic; 2 = No effect; 3 = More enthusiastic about Obama. Thus our index ranges from 2 to 6 and captures both perceived group-based outreach as well as reaction to a specific policy of group-based outreach. Those on the low end of our index (2) believe the Obama campaign was hostile towards Latinos and were unenthusiastic about his DACA policy. In contrast those on the high end of the scale (6) believe the Obama campaign truly cares about Latinos and were most enthusiastic about his DACA policy. We hypothesize that this variable will not only have an independent effect on vote choice but further that it will significantly increase the overall model fit of our vote-choice models.

Table 1
Predictors of Latino vote for President and U.S. Senate (Dem) 2012.

Base model	Vote for Obama			Vote for US Senate (D)		
	Coef.	S.E.	Chg.	Coef.	S.E.	Chg.
Immigration top issue	.361	(.301)	3.6%	.037	(.290)	.5%
Economy top issue	-.506	(.239)*	-5.5%	-.361	(.236)	-4.7%
Democrat	3.023	(.296)***	49.3%	2.670	(.313)***	46.7%
Republican	-2.522	(.304)***	-41.4%	-1.905	(.320)***	-32.8%
Contacted by Dems	.251	(.323)	2.5%	-.188	(.307)	-2.5%
Contacted by Reps	.217	(.299)	2.2%	.191	(.288)	2.4%
Generation	-.245	(.154)	-5.4%	-.009	(.148)	-.2%
Spanish Interview	.243	(.267)	2.5%	.532	(.253)*	6.6%
Mexican origin	-.248	(.309)	-2.6%	.044	(.300)	.6%
Cuban origin	-1.201	(.416)**	-18.0%	-.463	(.373)	-6.7%
Puerto Rican origin	-.089	(.392)	-1.0%	.501	(.418)	5.5%
Dominican origin	.621	(.805)	5.2%	.310	(.730)	3.6%
Central American origin	-.455	(.455)	-5.5%	.343	(.432)	3.9%
Spanish origin	-.877	(.427)*	-12.1%	-1.015	(.416)*	-17.0%
Married	.045	(.225)	.5%	-.284	(.215)	-3.6%
Age	-.015	(.007)*	-12.5%	-.003	(.007)	-2.7%
Catholic	.172	(.231)	1.8%	.372	(.224)†	4.9%
Born-again	-.338	(.366)	-4.0%	.644	(.379)†	6.8%
Income	-.089	(.064)	-5.9%	.003	(.061)	.2%
Female	.298	(.207)	3.2%	.376	(.200)†	4.8%
College degree	-.157	(.231)	-1.7%	.405	(.226)†	5.0%
Constant	1.952	(.665)**		-.095	(.639)	
N	1908			1439		
Log-likelihood	-374.1			-382.0		

†p < .1 *p < .5; **p < .10; ***p < .001.

Logistic regression results. Dependent variable = 1 when vote is for Obama/Dem; 0 for Romney/Republican.

Table 2
Predictors of Latino vote for President and U.S. Senate (Dem) 2012.

Outreach model	Vote for Obama			Vote for U.S. Senate (D)		
	Coef.	S.E.	Chg.	Coef.	S.E.	Chg.
Obama immigration outreach	1.726	(.135)***	93.0%	.848	(.107)***	61.7%
Immigration top issue	.369	(.344)	2.5%	-.060	(.299)	-.7%
Economy top issue	-.222	(.279)	-1.6%	-.238	(.245)	-2.9%
Democrat	2.635	(.372)***	32.9%	2.175	(.337)***	35.2%
Republican	-2.070	(.383)***	-24.7%	-1.506	(.343)***	-23.4%
Contacted by Dems	.238	(.398)	1.6%	-.259	(.324)	-3.2%
Contacted by Reps	.070	(.36)	.5%	.161	(.302)	1.9%
Generation	-.359	(.182)*	-5.8%	-.040	(.153)	-1.0%
Spanish Interview	.047	(.311)	.3%	.400	(.244) t	4.6%
Mexican origin	-.380	(.365)	-2.8%	.243	(.315)	2.9%
Cuban origin	-1.589	(.503)**	-20.0%	-.372	(.395)	-4.9%
Puerto Rican origin	-.404	(.485)	-3.4%	.546	(.443)	5.5%
Dominican origin	.490	(.919)	3.0%	.214	(.771)	2.4%
Central American origin	-.921	(.548) t	-9.4%	.472	(.46)	4.8%
Spanish origin	-.716	(.514)	-6.8%	-.733	(.436) t	-10.8%
Married	.364	(.264)	2.7%	-.257	(.223)	-3.0%
Age	-.016	(.008)*	-9.1%	.000	(.007)	-.4%
Catholic	.024	(.274)	.2%	.319	(.234)	3.9%
Born-again	-.213	(.456)	-1.7%	.582	(.393)	5.8%
Income	-.100	(.076)	-4.7%	.013	(.064)	.9%
Female	.257	(.243)	1.9%	.246	(.208)	2.9%
College degree	-.130	(.276)	-1.0%	.510	(.24)*	5.9%
Constant	-5.913	(.954)***		-4.195	(.85)***	
N	1908			1439		
Log-likelihood	-264.2			-350.1		

t $p < .1$ * $p < .5$; ** $p < .10$; *** $p < .001$.

Logistic regression results. Dependent variable = 1 when vote is for Obama/Dem; 0 for Romney/Republican.

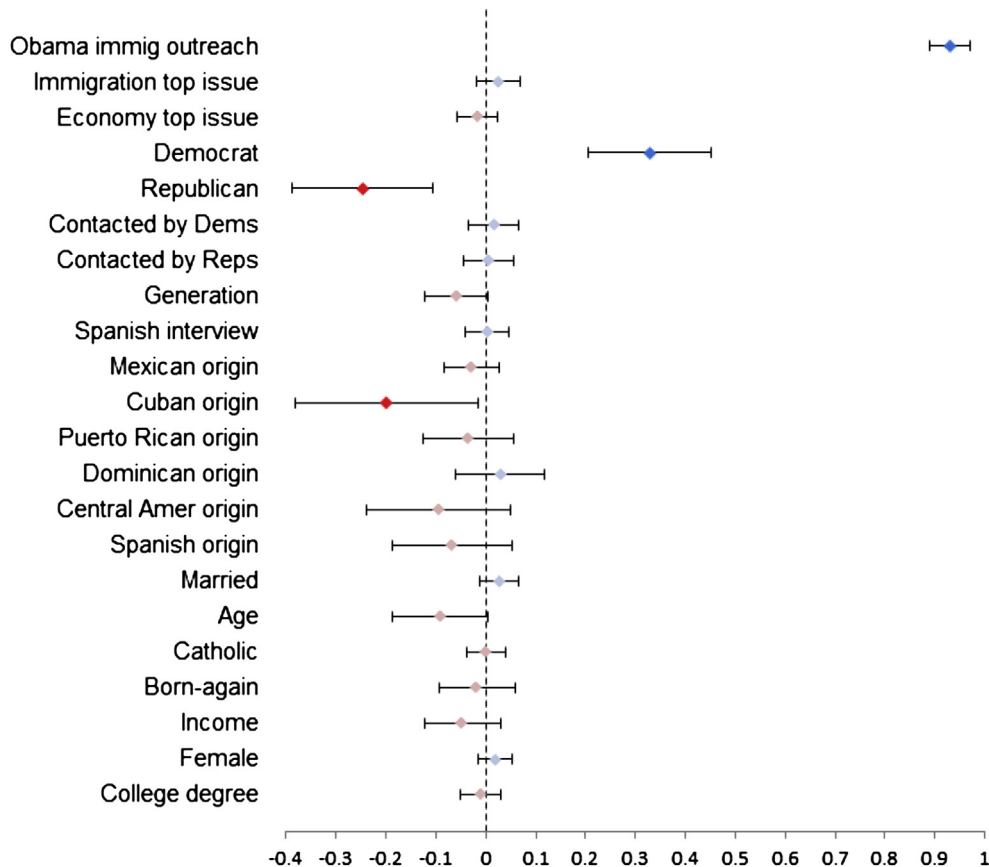


Fig. 1. Change in Predicted Probability of Latino vote for Obama in 2012 (moving each independent variable from minimum to maximum value).

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These variables are ideal to test our theory of the salience of immigration as an issue and of group-based mobilization because they pose direct and specific questions to a group of minority voters about how both candidates conducted cross-racial outreach. Furthermore, they test whether campaign learning on how to mobilize Latino voters was indeed effective. Historically, the ANES has not asked these types of questions limiting the opportunity for theoretical and empirical explanations of cross-racial mobilization, however the 2012 ANES data do contain robust oversamples of African American and Latino voters as well as some questions that could start to measure targeted group appeals such as support for the DREAM Act. We hope to push the research agenda forward by demonstrating new ways to measure and test group-based mobilization effects.

6. Findings

We begin our discussion of the results with an analysis of a traditional vote-choice model for both Presidential and U.S. Senate vote (Table 1). Beginning with “most important issues” we see that those respondents who say that immigration/Dream Act were the most important issue to the Latino community are no more or less likely to vote for Obama. However, respondents who say that jobs/economy was the most important issue are actually more

likely to vote for Romney than respondents who do not check jobs/economy as the most important issue which is consistent with the Romney campaigns focus on jobs/economy as the top issue. Turning to party identification, Democratic Party identifiers are considerably more likely to vote for Democrat for president and Senate and Republican Party identifiers more likely to vote for Republican in both contests. Not surprising, these are the most substantively important variables looking at the change in predicted probability (Chg). In our multivariate setting, self-reported direct contact does not appear to make any difference in vote choice. This is not entirely surprising as contact is designed more to increase turnout rather than persuade voters to support one candidate or the other.

The Latino-oriented variables also operate in the expected direction. Respondents who took the survey in Spanish were more likely to vote Democrat for U.S. Senate, while Cuban-American respondents were more likely to vote for Romney. Finally, we see predictable outcomes for the standard demographic and religious variables. Younger Latino voters were more likely to vote for Obama, while women were more likely to vote Democrat for Senate. Interestingly, Catholics and born-again Christians were more likely to vote Democrat for U.S. Senate, which could be a result of Latino churches emphasizing the immigration issue (see Valenzuela, 2014).

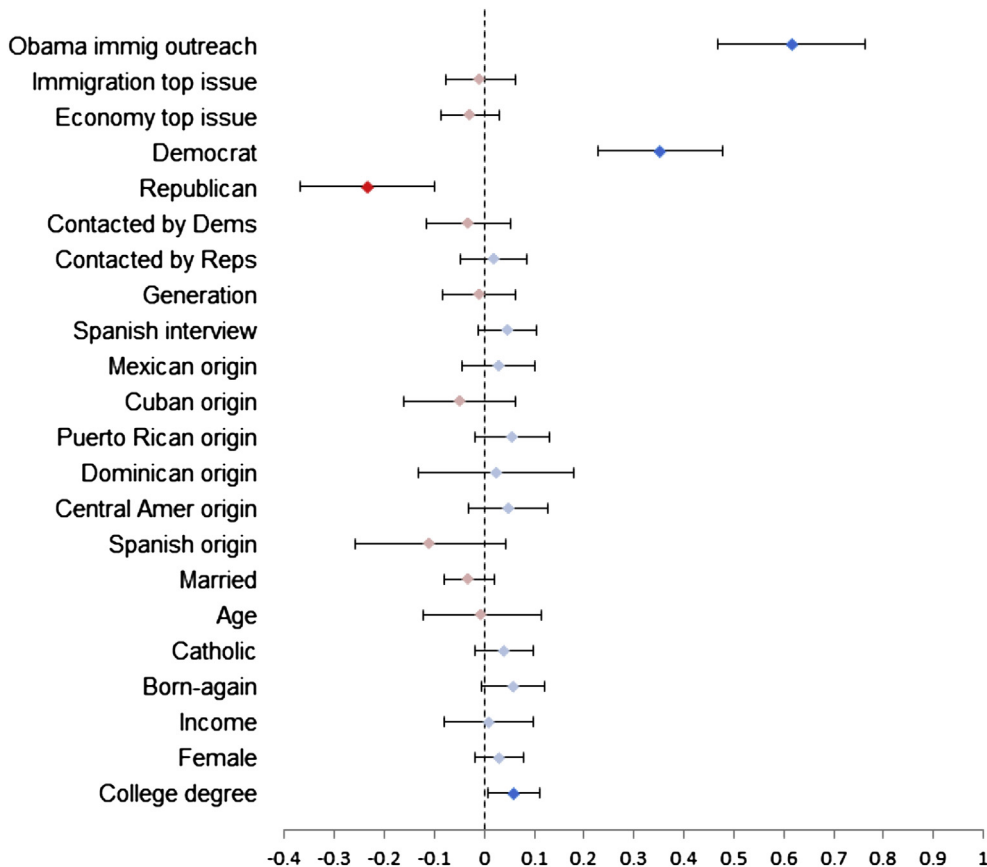


Fig. 2. . Change in Predicted Probability of Latino vote for Senate (Dem) 2012 (moving each independent variable from minimum to maximum value).

Turning to our expanded models which account for group-based appeals, (Table 2), we find statistically significant and relatively large effects for our index variable ‘Obama immigration outreach’. The traditional vote-choice variables all keep their same direction and most keep their same statistical significance. Thus, controlling for traditional vote-choice variables we nonetheless see that Latinos who report a favorable reaction to the Obama campaign’s ethnic-based appeals significantly increase their likelihood of voting for Obama. It is important to note that this effect is very strong even after controlling for party identification and self-reported party contact, and that in comparison, the group appeal variable has the largest effect on moving vote choice.

Fig. 1 and display these changes in graphical form; this figure shows the change in predicted probability (or first difference) of a Democratic vote, moving each independent variable from its minimum to maximum value, as well as 95% confidence intervals for each variable. In our expanded model that accounts for group appeals, our Obama immigration outreach variable delivers a 93% change in probability of Obama vote (Fig. 1). While this same variable does appear to have significant coattail effects in the U.S. Senate model as we speculated, it is also noticeably less robust,

with a 62% change in probability (Fig. 2). In contrast, other more traditional predictors have nearly the exact same effect in both the Obama and Senate models. Only the Obama group-outreach variable performs significantly better in the Obama model (see Fig. 3 for direct comparison of effects). Thus, we can conclude that Obama’s Latino targeted outreach was (1) remarkably effective at winning over Latino voters; and (2) it had coattail effects for Democratic Senate candidates; but that (3) it was much more closely tied to an Obama vote, given that he was the originator of the DACA policy.

Finally, model fit increases substantially, as indicated by the log likelihood, Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) as reported in Table 3. Each of these criteria are used to measure the relative goodness of model fit, with the latter two addressing the trade-off between model complexity and goodness of fit where a smaller value indicates a superior model. The log likelihood increases from -374.08 to -264.16 while the AIC drops from 792.16 to 574.33 and the BIC drops from 914.34 to 702.07 . This is a remarkable improvement in model fit and suggests the second set of models with our Latino-targeted appeals variable is indeed a more appropriate model of vote choice.

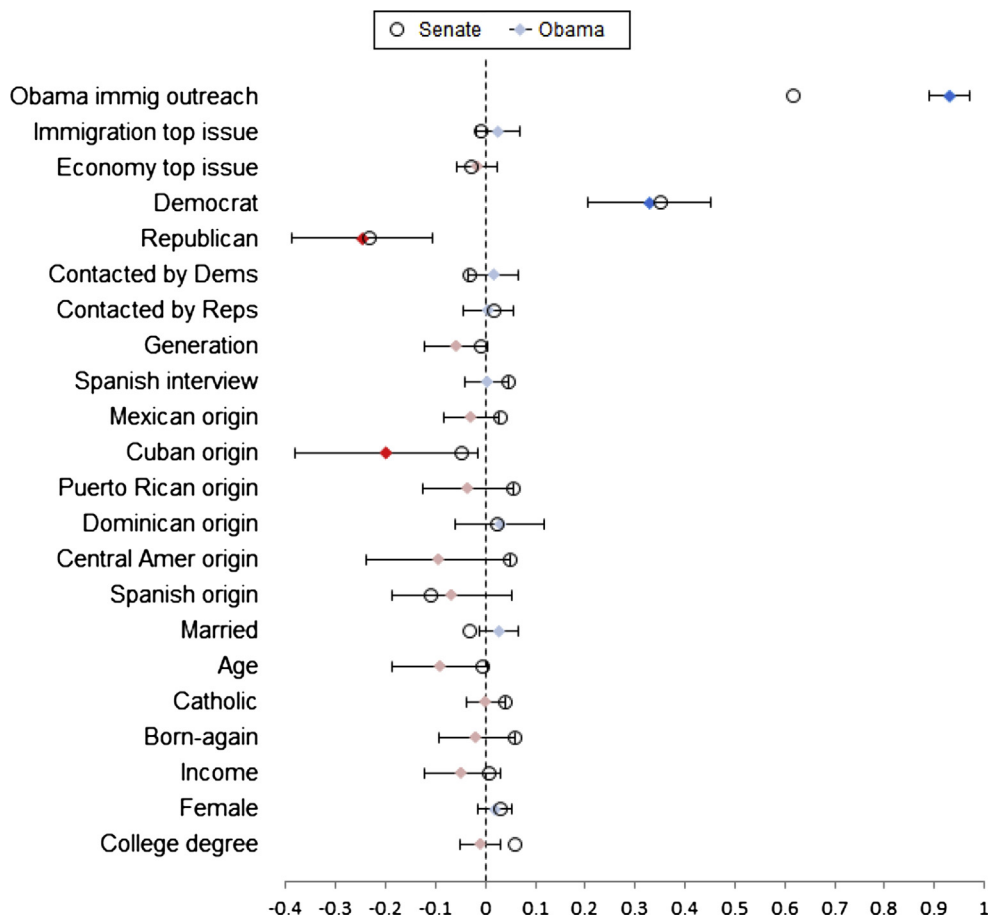


Fig. 3. Comparison of Predicted Probability change for Obama vs. Senate vote (moving each independent variable from minimum to maximum value).

Table 3

Model fit comparison in presidential vote models.

	Base model	Latino outreach	Diff
<i>N</i>	1908	1908	0
AIC	792.16	574.33	217.83
BIC	914.34	702.07	212.27
logL	−374.08	−264.16	−109.92

AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; logL = log Likelihood.

7. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we built on models of campaign learning, arguing first that campaign learning is an understudied phenomenon in American electoral politics. It seems quite natural that – to the extent they can – presidential campaigns will observe tactics from other campaigns and their own past experiences. What did Harry Reid's 2010 Senate campaign do that worked? What can we improve upon for next time? How do we ensure a growing subset of the population will increase their vote share for us? Undoubtedly, these were the types of questions commonly asked among Obama campaign officials, and underscores how the campaign was trying to improve by learning from others' experiences. Second, in order to show that campaign learning is indeed present in American electoral politics, we used immigration and appeals to a minority group (Latinos) as a test case.

Using in-depth interviews with campaign officials as well as media-accounts, we drew the requisite link between Reid personnel and the Obama campaign, indicating clear learning occurred. Indeed, several key Reid officials moved between operations to implement similar strategies for the Latino Outreach component of Obama's 2012 campaign. However, in the study of electoral politics, the inevitable question is often: did it work? To evaluate this, we conducted several regression analyses on an election eve survey of Latino voters. We found that variables measuring Obama's group-based appeals and Latino Outreach were overwhelming in their impact on vote choice – more so even than Party Identification and other mainstays in the voting literature. As a point of comparison, we also demonstrated that Latino Outreach – which was tied to Obama – extended beyond mere coattail effects in the U.S. Senate vote.

This study, and indeed the growing study of minority politics, comes at a decidedly important time in the broader study of voting behavior in general and vote choice in particular. While more work can be done to theorize precisely when, how, and where campaign learning occurs, future research should also investigate the changing nature of group-based targeting. Indeed, it used to be the case that,

because minority voters composed such a small share of the electorate, they could largely be ignored in the broader study of vote choice. As such, we maintain, much of the campaign literature heretofore neglects the micro-targeting of not only minority groups but other identifiable groups in the electorate. To wit, including variables that capture group outreach in our voting models will only serve to enhance such models. With growing numbers of surveys looking at minority voters in-depth, we now have the tools to uncover these effects in the study of campaigns and elections.

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