

Chapter 2

Hispanic Voting in the American States:

The Case of 2004

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As the chapters of this volume attest, Hispanic political influence across the American states is diverse (see also de la Garza and DeSipio, 2005). Some states contain large concentration of Hispanics while others do not. Hispanic Americans themselves are ethnically and politically diverse. Recent arrivals come from Mexico, from the Caribbean, and (increasingly) from Central and South America. While the aggregate number of Hispanics is increasing, their influence lags because (except for Puerto Ricans) many recent entrants lack citizenship. Even among Hispanic U.S. citizens, the voting rate is below average in a nation with a deplorably low rate of turnout compared to other democracies. In presidential politics, Hispanic influence is limited due to Hispanic concentration in states where no group is pivotal because the presidential vote tends to be one-sided and the Electoral College vote is certain.

The positive side of this equation is the tremendous potential influence of the Hispanic population on American politics. Their rate of participation can only grow with further assimilation into the American culture. We can await the impact of the disproportionate number of Hispanics who are young—currently under or barely over the age of voter eligibility—when they mature politically. Their future voting patterns and the likely fluidity of Hispanics' partisan choices only increase the relevance of the Hispanic vote in future elections.

This chapter examines the Hispanic vote in the American states from a perspective focused on the 2004 presidential election. The chapter is intended not only to analyze state voting patterns in that election, now fading into the past, but also to explore how changes in state-level Hispanic voting can affect the future of American politics. It

also asks what the state-level patterns of turnout and vote choices among Hispanics in 2004 tell us about the long-term influence of Hispanic voting power on U.S. elections.

This chapter addresses these questions by merging the two common datasets regarding state-level voting in 2004. For Hispanic turnout in the states, the dataset is the U.S. Census's November 2004 Current Population Survey (CPS) and its report of state-level voter turnout in 2004. For Hispanic vote choices in the states, the dataset is the collection of state-level National Election Pool (NEP) exit polls conducted for the television networks and the Associated Press by Edison Media Research/Mitofsky International. From these data, I compare the turnout rates and the partisan vote by state among Hispanics and whites, with an eye toward answering questions about Hispanic voting power. The chapter addresses these questions through the use of data simulations of counterfactual scenarios involving changes in Hispanic turnout and voting patterns and their hypothetical effect on the 2004 outcome.

Although these data sources contain certain flaws, they are nonetheless quite useful. The 'raw' 2004 exit polls were notorious for inflating the Democratic vote in 2004, and their leakage on election day created a widespread but mistaken belief that Kerry had defeated President Bush. Importantly, the reported exit polls used here are not the notorious raw or early exit poll returns. Rather, they are the clean post-election data, re-weighted to reflect the states' voting electorate and to correct for actual election results. The re-weighted exit polls released after the election are useful because they allow estimating the behavior of different voting groups made up of actual election day

voters rather than the claimed intentions or reports of voting behavior in surveys on the days immediately before or after the election.

In this analysis, the exit poll data have been linked to the Current Population Survey of voter participation. The analysis of CPS respondents is restricted to self-reported citizens only. The CPS survey has its flaws, too, in that it greatly inflates voting participation rates. If one were to take the self-reports of voting participation in the November 2004 CPS survey, a full 64 percent of U.S. adult citizens cast ballots. The basic ethnic breakdown shows 47 percent of Hispanic adult citizens and 67 percent of white (non-Hispanic) adult citizens turned out to vote. The 64 percent voting rate among all citizen survey respondents is higher than the official tally of 55 percent voting among the U.S. voting age population. One prominent study suggests that the actual voting rate among adult eligible voters was 60 percent, where the eligible was defined to exclude non-citizens and felons, but to include citizens abroad (McDonald 2004). By this standard, the CPS figure of 64 percent voting among citizens is only modestly inflated. Of course whatever the degree of inflation in the CPS numbers, they indicate clearly that that Hispanic turnout lagged considerably behind that of whites.

A first question is what were the actual turnout rates of whites and Hispanics in 2004? We observe that in the CPS survey, the ratio of Hispanic to non-Hispanic white citizens is .109, indicating that among citizens, whites outnumber Hispanics about 10 to one. Among self-reported voters in the CPS survey, the ratio of Hispanics to non-Hispanic whites is a lesser .076. When talking about reported voters rather than both voting and non-voting citizens, the ratio of Hispanics to whites declines by 70 percent. It

follows that with citizens in the denominator, Hispanic turnout is about seventy-percent that of whites. If we accept the CPS survey's reported proportions for all respondents, whites, and Hispanics among both citizens and voters and adjust the inflated turnout percents by taking 60 percent as the net turnout rate for all citizens, the turnout rates for white and Hispanic citizens are 64 percent and 45 percent respectively, for a nineteen-point gap.¹

A second question is what were the presidential vote percentages for whites and Hispanics? According to the national exit poll, whites voted 41 percent for Kerry to 58 percent for Bush. As is well known, the national exit poll undercounted the Kerry vote among Hispanics as 53 percent Kerry and 44 percent Bush. If this account were true, it would have been a remarkable Republican gain over past elections. The problem with the national exit poll is that by chance, a disproportionate number of its highly Hispanic sample precincts were in Florida, which includes a pro-Republican Cuban population. The more accurate estimate is the net vote from aggregating the state exit polls (and properly weighing by the number of voters). This new estimate, based on a larger sample than the national poll, is a Hispanic vote that was 40 percent for Bush and 58 percent for Kerry.² In terms of the major-party vote in the (adjusted) exit polls, Kerry won 41.8 percent among non-Hispanic whites and 59.2 percent among Hispanics.

Here, our interest is in the Hispanic vote at the state level. In the following presentation, the first section discusses the variation by state in comparison with the white non-Hispanic vote, both in terms of turnout rate and candidate choice. The second section presents various counterfactual scenarios regarding shifts in Hispanic turnout or

candidate choice. It extends the counterfactuals to examine Electoral College implications whereby gains for one party among Hispanics are offset by an equal number of votes gained among non-Hispanic whites. Finally, the third section develops the conclusions from this exercise.

State Variation in the Hispanic Vote

As the chapters to this book attest, Hispanic voting behavior is not uniform across the states. Turnout rates vary, as do the divisions of candidate choice. Why is this so? Are there 51 separate stories about the Hispanic vote? Is the variation idiosyncratic or can we account for it in some way? As de la Garza (2004) emphasized, Hispanic voting behavior varies across the states for reasons beyond the fact that Hispanic settlements in the states vary by national origin.

As we will see, there is a pattern across states that can be described as follows. As a general tendency, while Hispanic voting behavior differs from white voting behavior across the states, the differences are systematic. In general, while Hispanic turnout rates are lower, the Hispanic rate is highest where the white turnout rate is the highest. In general, the Democratic (Kerry) vote among Hispanics was higher in states where whites voted most heavily Democratic. In other words, whatever causes white turnout to rise or fall, or whites to vote Republican rather than Democratic, works for Hispanics in the state as well. The difference is that Hispanic turnout rates are almost always lower. In addition, Hispanics almost always vote more Democratic than their white non-Hispanic

counterparts. At the same time, these are only tendencies, as there is variation in Hispanic voting patterns that cannot be statistically accounted for by the pattern among whites. Importantly, even after accounting for common trends between whites and Hispanics, and adjusting for measurement error in the occasionally small state samples of Hispanics, the turnout rates and voting tendencies of Hispanics show more variation across states than do the tendencies of whites.

Hispanic Voter Turnout in the States

We turn first to state variation in turnout, comparing Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites in the November 2004 CPS survey. This massive survey following the 2004 election has sufficient samples of Hispanics in 30 of the 50 states to record relevant participation data. For these 30 states, we can obtain percentages of Hispanic (and non-Hispanic white) respondents who report U.S. citizenship, voting registration, and decision to vote in 2004.

Figure 2.1 displays the proportion of adult Hispanic citizens who reported being registered to vote on the vertical (Y) axis as a function of the proportion of adult non-Hispanic whites who reported being registered on the horizontal (X) axis. This figure contains several important features. The first thing to notice is the elongation of the graph. As the X- and Y-axes were drawn to a common scale, the graph is elongated vertically. This is to accommodate the fact that in terms of registration rates, there is more Hispanic variation across the states than variation by whites.

** Insert Figure 2.1 about here **

Second, we notice that registration rates are (except for the Ohio sample) higher among whites than Hispanics. (Nationally, according to CPS data, the gap is 20 percentage points, as the registration rates are 47 percent for Hispanics and 67 percent for non-Hispanic whites.) Moreover, the two sets of registration rates track each other. The higher the rate of voter registration among white citizens, the higher is the rate of voter registration among Hispanic citizens. In terms of a statistical equation predicting the Hispanic registration from the white registration rate, we find:

$$\text{Hispanic Registration Rate (if a citizen)} = -37.82 + 1.25 \text{ White Registration Rate (if a citizen)}$$

Adjusted R squared = .255.

If we are willing to tease a causal interpretation from this relationship (statistically significant at the .01 level) it would be that whatever state-level variables (culture, etc.) that cause whites to register also cause Hispanics to register, and impact Hispanic registration even more. We might even infer that general appeals to voter registration have stronger impact among Hispanics than Anglos.

The final remark about figure 2.1 is that even after we note that twenty-five percent of the variance in Hispanic registration rates can statistically be accounted for by

the white registration rate in the state, the residual (unaccounted for) variance in Hispanic registration rate is still four times that among whites. While some of the wobble in the Hispanic registration rate is due to fluctuation in the small CPS state Hispanic samples in states with small Hispanic populations, this fact is indication that state differences like those reported in this volume do matter.³

Next we turn from registration to voting. Figure 2.2 shows Hispanic voting rates among registered Hispanics as a function of white voting rates among registered whites. First we note that both Hispanics and whites are more likely to vote if registered than to register if a citizen. The harder task is getting citizens to register than getting registered voter to show up at the polls for a presidential election. (Across the CPS national sample, 82 percent of registered Hispanics turned out to vote in 2004, compared to 89 percent among whites.)

** Insert Figure 2.2 about here **

Looking specifically at the state-to-state differences in figure 2.2, we see the same patterns for voting as we saw for registration, but even stronger. When discussing voting rates among registered, the state-to-state variance for Hispanics is thirteen times that for whites. In some states, the Hispanic voting rate (once registered) is on par with whites' and in fact in several states Hispanic registrants vote at a higher rate. Yet in other states (especially Tennessee and North Carolina) hardly more than half the Hispanic registrants

actually voted. Let us consider the regression equation describing the Hispanic voting rate as a function of the white rate:

$$\text{Hispanic Voting Rate (if Registered)} = -146.99 + 2.56 \text{ White Voting Rate (if Registered)}$$

$$\text{Adjusted R squared} = .486$$

Half of the variance in the Hispanic voting rate among registered can statistically be accounted for by the white voting rate. The state-level forces that encourage or discourage whites to vote (if registered) have the same effect on Hispanics. Given the coefficient of 2.56, their effects must in fact be must larger. We might infer that efforts to encourage (or repress) the vote generally in a state have a much bigger impact among Hispanics than among whites.

As the final observation regarding figure 2.2, we note that even when we account for half the variance in the Hispanic voting rate as statistically explained by the white voting rate, that the residual unexplained variance is still seven times the variance in the voting rate among whites. Even if we accept that some of the Hispanic variance is due to sampling variance with a small sample, Hispanic voting rates are far more variable.⁴ In most states, the white voting rate among those registered is in the high “80s” or low “90s.” Register an Anglo and he or she will almost always vote for president. Register an Hispanic and the likelihood of voting still depends to a surprising degree on the state in which he or she resides.

** Insert Figure 2.3 about here **

Next, figure 2.3 combines the registration decision and the vote decision to present the Hispanic and white voting rates among citizens in the 30 states of the 2004 CPS sample. We see the patterns we have learned to expect. In almost all states, the net voting rate is higher among whites. The variance is higher for the Hispanic rate. The regression equation predicting the Hispanic net voting rate from the Anglo net voting rate shows a slope greater than 1.0, and the residual variance in the Hispanic net voting rate is almost three times that of the non-Hispanic white voting rate:

Hispanic Voting Rate (if a Citizen) = $-47.81 + 1.40$ White Voting Rate (if a Citizen)

Adjusted R squared = .400

From this analysis of state-level participation data, we can form several conclusions. Statewide rates of Hispanic voting participation are more variable than the comparable rates for whites, especially when it comes to whether registrants will vote. At the same time, participation (registration and voting) rates for Hispanics track those for whites. Even when taking the rates for whites into account, the state-level variation for Hispanics is greater.

Hispanic Partisan Voting in the States

Next we shift from turnout to the voting decision. As we do so, we also change from the 30 states with reported turnout figures for Hispanics in the CPS survey to the 21 states with reported Hispanic voting in the 2004 Exit Polls. Figure 2.4 presents the relationship between the Hispanic Democratic vote and the white vote according to the state exit polls. As expected, the Hispanic vote is more Democratic than the white vote, although Oklahoma is a mysterious exception.

** Insert Figure 2.4 about here **

Just as with participation, the state-level variance is greater for Hispanics than whites. The variance of the state-level Hispanic vote is 2.5 times that of the variance in the white vote. This tells us something important and surprising. When we think of which states are Democratic and which are Republican in their presidential voting, variation in the vote of white voters mainly drives the distinction. Since Hispanics are fewer in numbers, their impact on the total vote goes largely undetected. As figure 2.4 shows, however, there is greater diversity in the Hispanic vote. This can be only partly explained by the differences between the more Republican Cuban-Americans and their more Democratic counterparts in the Mexican-American and other Latino communities.

As with participation, the Hispanic voting pattern tracks the white voting pattern—as if whatever makes whites vote for a party has the identical effect on Hispanics, only magnified. The equation is:

Hispanic % Democratic = 16.67 + 1.00 White % Democratic

Adjusted R squared = .378

The coefficient of precisely 1.00 means that on average, the Hispanic vote tends to be the same as the white vote except about 17 points more Democratic. This tracking of the Hispanic vote to the white vote helps account for much of the state variation. For instance, Hispanics in Texas vote less Democratic than Hispanics elsewhere, but this can be explained by the fact that whites also vote less Democratic in Texas than elsewhere.

Overall, the white vote statistically “explains” one third of the variance in Hispanic voting in the states—but a considerable amount is not explained and idiosyncratic to the states. The unexplained variance in the Hispanic vote remains 1.5 times the total variance in the white vote. Even with an adjustment for sampling error due to the small Hispanic samples in some state exit polls, the residual variance in the Hispanic vote (unexplained by the white vote) exceeds the observed variance in the white vote.⁵ There can be no doubt that the Hispanic vote varies more by state than does the white vote.

Hispanics, Blacks, and Whites

So far, we have compared Hispanic turnout with white turnout and Hispanic voting with white voting. It is useful to add state participation rates and state-level voting behavior among African-Americans to the mix. Figure 2.5 shows the details comparing

black and Hispanic participation rates with those for non-Hispanic whites. Figure 2.6 does the same for Presidential vote choice comparing black and Hispanic voters on the vertical axis with white voting behavior on the horizontal axis.

**** Insert Figures 2.5 and 2.6 about here ****

Figure 2.5 reveals that African-American (black) voting rate (as percent of citizens) exceeded that for Hispanics in 26 of our 30 states from the CPS survey. Similarly, the white voting rate exceeded that for blacks in 26 of the states. This hierarchy is not surprising. Like the Hispanic voting rate, the black voting rate has more variance than the voting rate for whites. But what is different is that the black voting rate depends little if at all on the white rate. Whatever generates state-to-state differences in participation rates by African-Americans, it is distinct from that which predicts white participation.⁶

Figure 2.6 shows 2004 presidential voting for the three groups in the 15 states with data for both groups. As one would expect, in all 15 states, blacks in the exit polls voted more Democratic than both whites and Hispanics, typically in the 80 or 90 percent range. Unlike the Hispanic vote in the states, the state-level black vote is typified by its low variance. The variance of the black vote is one third that of the white vote and one eighth that of the Hispanic vote. Thus we see a crucial distinction between the black and Hispanic minorities when comparing across states. Blacks are not only more one-sided (Democratic) in their voting behavior, they are also more uniform in that behavior.

Across all states, African-American voters are decidedly Democratic in their presidential voting. Compared to African-Americans, Hispanic voters do not comprise one political community.

Simulating Counterfactuals: What If...?"

The influence of the Hispanic vote in presidential elections depends on its impact on the Electoral College. As DeSipio and de la Garza (2005) demonstrate for earlier elections (1988-2000), the Latino vote has rarely been pivotal in determining states' Electoral College winners. Was the situation different in 2004?

We can ask a series of what-if questions regarding hypothetical shifts in the Hispanic vote. For instance, we could ask what would happen if the Hispanic vote were neutralized either due to 100 percent non-voting, or if Hispanics vote choices exactly were to mirror those of non-Hispanics. We could ask what if turnout increased, perhaps to white levels, or if the Hispanic voting electorate were to, say, double in size. We could also ask what would happen with large shifts in the vote. It has been argued, for instance, that the actual voting rate among Hispanics of 2004 is considerably larger than the exit poll estimates—around two-to-one for Kerry. We could also consider magically large shifts in the Hispanic vote. For instance, suppose Latinos were to become just as one-sidedly Democratic as African-Americans. Alternatively, suppose Karl Rove's dream is realized and Hispanics vote even more Republican than the general population.

We start with the actual Democratic vote among Hispanics, estimated from exit polls for 20 states and—more shakily—from the predictions based on the presidential vote in the remaining 10 states with CPS participation data for Hispanics.⁷ To estimate the Hispanic proportions of the voting electorates in the thirty states, we use the Hispanic proportions of state voters in the CPS survey. The realism of the simulations depends on the accuracy of these sets of state level figures, plus (depending on the simulations), the turnout rates in the CPS survey. Thus, they should be taken with more the usual grain of salt even as they expand the imagination.⁸

Six Simulations of Counterfactual Scenarios

I conduct six simulations involving hypothetical shifts in the net vote. These are:

1. Hispanic percent Democratic equals the white non-Hispanic percent Democratic in the state.
2. Hispanic turnout rate matches the white turnout rate in the state.
3. Hispanic turnout doubles in each state.
4. Hispanics vote 8 percentage points more Democratic than in 2004 while the non-Hispanic vote stays the same.
5. Hispanics vote 28 percentage points more Democratic than in 2004 (averaging about 87 percent) while the non-Hispanic vote stays the same.
6. Hispanics vote 28 percentage points less Democratic than in 2004 (averaging about 31 percent) while the non-Hispanic vote stays the same.⁹

The results are summarized in table 2.1. The simulated state scenarios are shown in the six panels of figure 2.7. The striking thing about these results is that our

counterfactual assumptions lead to very little change in either the national vote or the Electoral College result. If Hispanics were to vote like Anglos, the Democratic vote would be depressed further but by less than one percentage point, and with no change to the Electoral College. If Hispanics were to vote at the same rate as Anglos and for the same candidate as they did in 2004, the change in the vote would also be less than one point, but this would flip one state, New Mexico, in the Electoral College. Even if we double the size of the Hispanic electorate or add eight percentage points to the Hispanic Democratic vote in all states (enlarging the Democratic vote among Hispanics slightly beyond the 2000 figures), the net vote changes by less than one point and only New Mexico flips.

**** Insert Table 2.1 and Figure 2.7 about here ****

It is worth noting that an eight point shift by Hispanics in all states would add only New Mexico to the Democratic column, not enough to have shifted the 2004 verdict from Bush to Kerry. An eight-point shift would have meant an even greater share of the Hispanic vote going to Kerry than went to Gore in 2004. If Hispanics had maintained their 2000 level of support for the Democratic candidate in 2004, it would still not have been enough to change the Electoral College outcome.

Why do these counterfactual shifts, seemingly at the fringe of realistic changes in Hispanic behavior, create so little movement in the net outcome? For shifts in the vote choice, the net vote change represents the gap between the actual and the counterfactual

vote percentage (e.g., 8 points more Democratic in all states) multiplied by the percent of Hispanics in the voting electorate (e.g., $.06 \times .076$ nationally). For shifts in turnout, the net vote change represents a similar multiplication of small numbers. The conclusion therefore is that even a rather large change in the number of Hispanic voters, or their vote choice, would have little impact on presidential politics.

But we can also consider a truly large change in vote choices of Hispanics. Consider the scenario where the Hispanic vote increases by 28 percentage points in favor of the Democrats (fifth panel of figure 2.7).¹⁰ In this simulation, the Hispanic vote would be as strong as the African-American vote for the Democratic Party. As table 2.1 shows, the majority of the resultant national vote would tip to Kerry. If Hispanics had voted by this scenario in 2004, the Democrats would have captured Nevada and Florida in addition to New Mexico (winning the Electoral College majority by a comfortable margin), but still fallen short in states like Arizona and Colorado.

The final panel of figure 2.7 shows the result if Hispanics had become 28 percentage points more Republican. This Republican fantasy leads to only one additional state, Wisconsin, swinging to the Republicans. This result illustrates that in 2004, Hispanics generally did not supply the margin of victory in states where the Democrats carried.

Simulating Offsetting Hispanic and non-Hispanic Vote Shifts

Close observers of the Hispanic vote are aware that the Electoral College works against Hispanic influence on U.S. presidential elections. Hispanics tend to reside in those states with the most Electoral College delegates (such as California, Texas, and New York), which are usually non-competitive in close presidential elections. Florida is the exception with its politically unique Cuban-American population.

This imbalance can affect the thinking of political strategists. Suppose for instance, an issue such as “immigration reform” could push Hispanics to vote, say, X percentage points more Democratic across all states while pushing non-Hispanics to vote slightly more Republican in all states by a lesser amount that offsets the Democratic surge among Hispanics in a vote-neutral way. (In other words, after the shift, the net national vote remains the same.) Would this vote-neutral shift affect the balance of partisan control of the states?

We can readily simulate such outcomes in the states. Suppose that our new issue drives Hispanics to vote 10 percentage points more Democratic while driving non-Hispanics to vote 0.66 points more Republican. This scenario generates a vote-neutral offset at the national level but provides mixed results at the state vote level. Given the 2004 vote starting point, the net result should not surprise given our earlier simulations: the Democrats retake New Mexico while the Republicans flip Wisconsin.

Next, suppose the issue drives Hispanics to vote a full 20 points more Democratic, while non-Hispanics move an offsetting 1.32 points the opposite direction. This shuffling of the vote produces no changes in Electoral College outcome. If we get truly revolutionary and allow a 30 point Democratic gain for Hispanics with a 1.96 non-

Hispanic offset, the Democrats do not gain any further states beyond New Mexico, while the Republicans add the trophy of Pennsylvania in addition to Wisconsin.

For completeness's sake, we can also check what would happen if Hispanics voted more Republican while non-Hispanics move more Democratic in a vote-neutral way. Hispanic Republican shifts of 10 or 20 percent have no effect on the Electoral Vote map, but a shift of 30 points more Republican by Hispanics and an offsetting 1.96 points more Democratic by non-Hispanics leads to an ironic result: The Democrats win Ohio.

These scenarios inform us about the possible impact of newly relevant issues that further the political divide between Hispanic Americans and non-Hispanic Americans. For instance, would the development of anti-immigrant or anti-Hispanic wedge issues change the political landscape as far as which party wins which states? Based on the analysis here, if non-Hispanic votes moving in one partisan direction are offset by Hispanic votes moving in the other, there would be little net impact on presidential politics. We should be cautious about thinking we know in advance what a new wedge issue would bring, however. The outcome could differ from the limited set of counter-factual scenarios applied to re-run the 2004 election as we have done above.

Conclusion

At the state level, Hispanic voting behavior is more variable than one might think; in fact, it is more variable than the vote among blacks and non-Hispanic whites. Registration and turnout rates across the states vary more for Hispanics than for whites,

and the Democratic vote percentage across the states varies more for Hispanics than for whites. These observed tendencies are sufficiently large that they cannot be explained by sampling error of small state samples. Registration, turnout, and vote choice varies for Hispanics across the states in a manner correlated with the same variables for whites in the states. Such state-level tendencies for Hispanics are partially—but only partially—“explained” by similar tendencies among whites.

This variability offers a strong reason for analyzing the Latino vote at the state level. Latino voting varies across states even more than for the white majority. At the same time, the small sample sizes for some states examined here produce anomalies that might be sampling error. For instance, as discussed above, the exit poll data show that Oklahoma Hispanics are just as Republican in their presidential voting as Oklahoma whites. This might be more a mirage than a true pattern.¹¹

Various “what if” simulations of the 2004 presidential vote suggest that it would have taken major changes in the Hispanic vote to have changed the election result beyond shifting a state or two and would not have shifted the Electoral College majority to Kerry. Hispanics are not that different from others—or numerous enough in the voting booth—to expect them to be pivotal in a moderately close election such as 2004. Like most other politically relevant groups, Hispanics move in tandem with other segments of society from one election to the next.

This conclusion is similar to DeSipio and de la Garza’s assessment of Hispanic influence in previous presidential elections. It is difficult to see the Latino vote holding the balance of power since such voters are rarely pivotal in determining a state’s electoral

vote winners. Some might draw the conclusion that ultimately Latinos have little reason to engage in presidential politics. That would be wrong for several reasons.

To start, it cannot be denied that the Hispanic vote is often crucial in elections for state and local offices. Moreover, it follows that when the Latino vote is pivotal for statewide office, that same balance could plausibly occur in future presidential elections. In other words, contrary to the specific scenarios examined here where the starting point is the set of 2004 vote divisions in the states, we can imagine different scenarios where the vote for president mimics more closely the vote for statewide office. For instance, suppose voters realign for presidential elections so that heavily Latino states like Arizona, Colorado, and Nevada become pivotal rather than (as it turned out) safely Republican as in 2004. Then, the influence of the Latino vote on the outcome greatly increases over our scenarios based on a 2004 alignment.

Hypothetically, suppose Hispanics were to withdraw from presidential politics, for some reason choosing irrevocably not to vote for president. The result would be that Hispanics, currently underrepresented in Washington, would see their influence decline toward zero. By this reasoning, Hispanics' current level of influence on national policy is largely due to their showing up at the polls and voting for president. The flip side is to imagine the result if Hispanic Americans grow in numbers and spread more evenly across the states from its current concentration in a few large non-competitive states. This is not hypothetical, as the population of vote-eligible Hispanics is growing and with a pool of younger than average potential voters who, given historical patterns, will vote more

frequently as they mature politically. The potential exists, therefore, for the Hispanic vote to both grow and become more fluid in its vote choice.

Table 2.1. Counterfactual simulations of the 2004 Presidential elections examining the Hispanic vote

	National vote as Democratic percent of two-party vote	Electoral College switches (Electoral Votes)
Actual Vote	48.8%	---
Hispanic % Dem. = White % Dem. in State	48.1	None
Hispanic Turnout Rate ^a = White Turnout Rate in State	49.0	R→D NM (5)
States' Hispanic Turnout Doubles ^b	49.4	R→D NM (5)
Hispanic % Democratic Increases by 8 Percentage Points in all States	49.2	R→D NM (5)
Hispanic % Democratic Increases by 28 Percentage Points in all States	50.5	R→D NM (5) NV (5) FL(25)
Hispanic % Republican Increases by 28 Percentage Points in all States	47.1	D→R WI (10)

a. Percent voting among citizens

b. Number of Hispanic voters doubles.

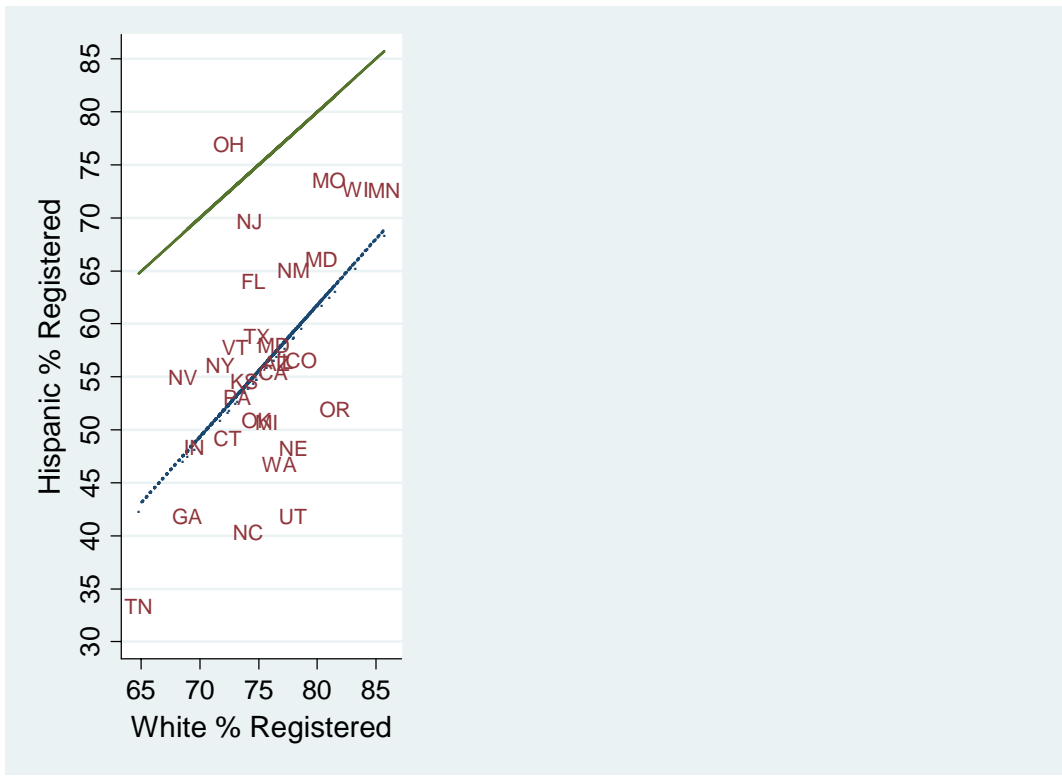


Figure 2.1. Hispanic registration rate by white non-Hispanic registration rate in 30 states. Each percent represents the registration rate among adult citizens. The thick dashed line represents the regression line predicting Hispanic rate from white rate. The thin solid line represents equality of white and Hispanic registration rates. Data Source: November 2004 Current Population Survey.

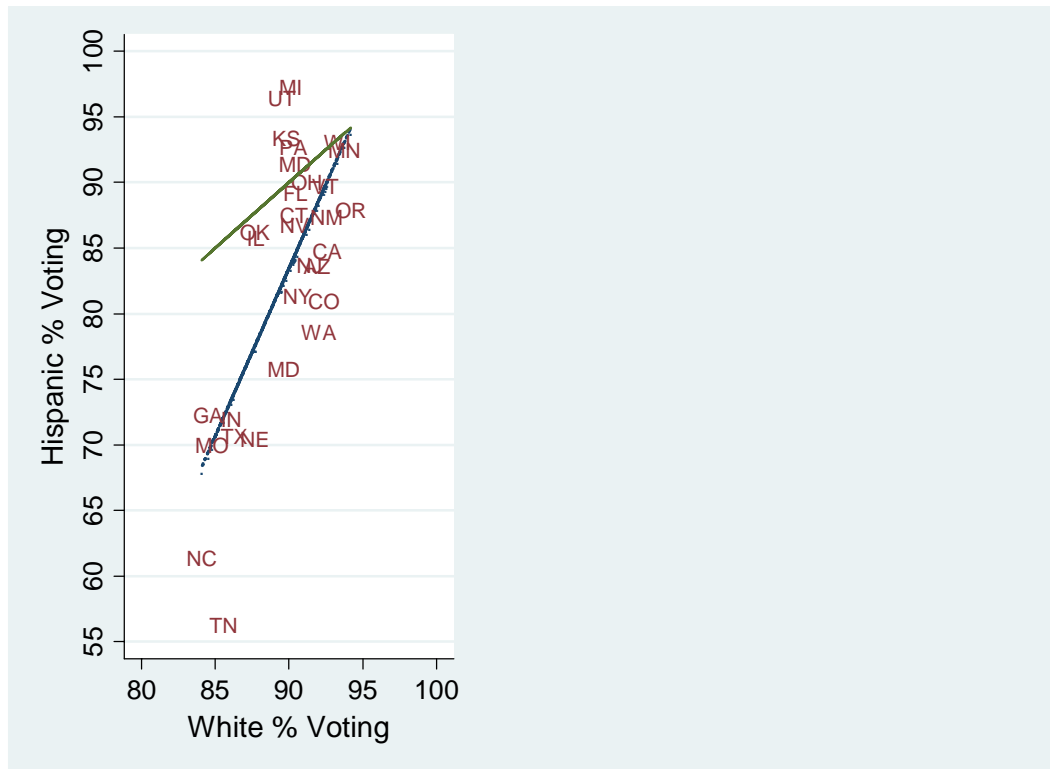


Figure 2.2. Hispanic voting rate among registered voters by white non-Hispanic voting rate among registered voters in 30 states. Each percent represents the registration rate among citizens. The thick dashed line represents the regression line predicting Hispanic rate from white rate. The thin solid line represents equality of white and Hispanic voting rates. Data Source: November 2004 Current Population Survey.

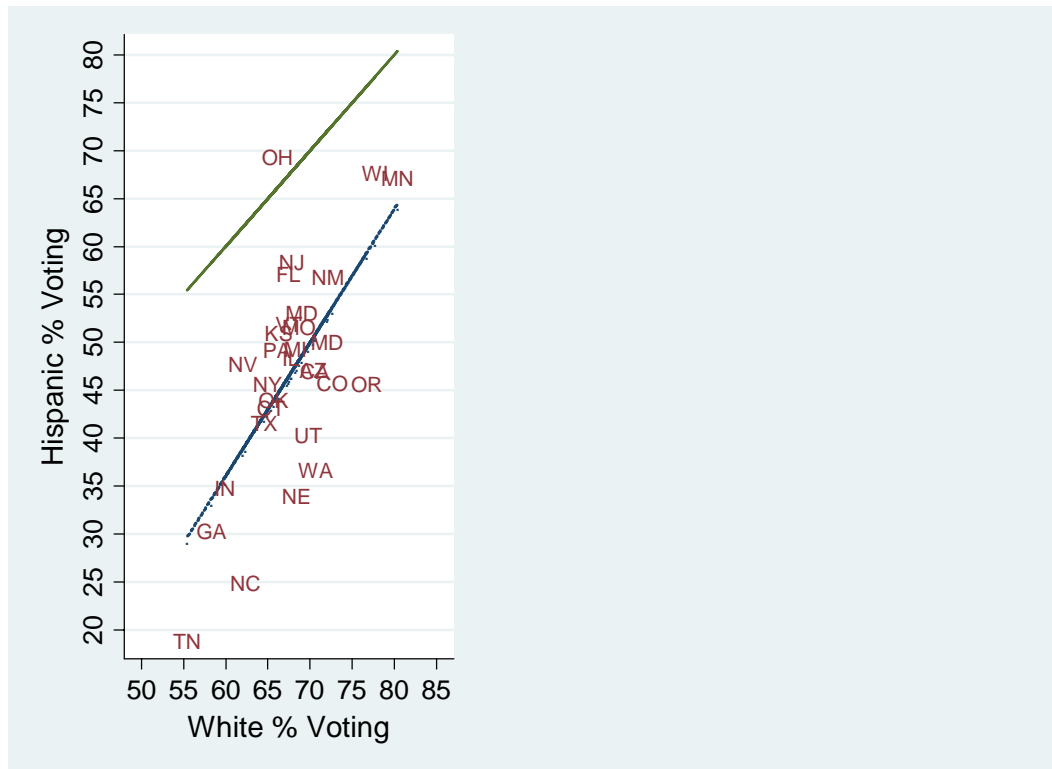


Figure 2.3. Hispanic voting rate among citizens by white non-Hispanic voting rate among adult citizens in 30 states. Each percent represents the voting rate among citizens. The thick dashed line represents the regression line predicting Hispanic rate from white rate. The thin solid line represents equality of white and Hispanic voting rates. Data Source: November 2004 Current Population Survey.

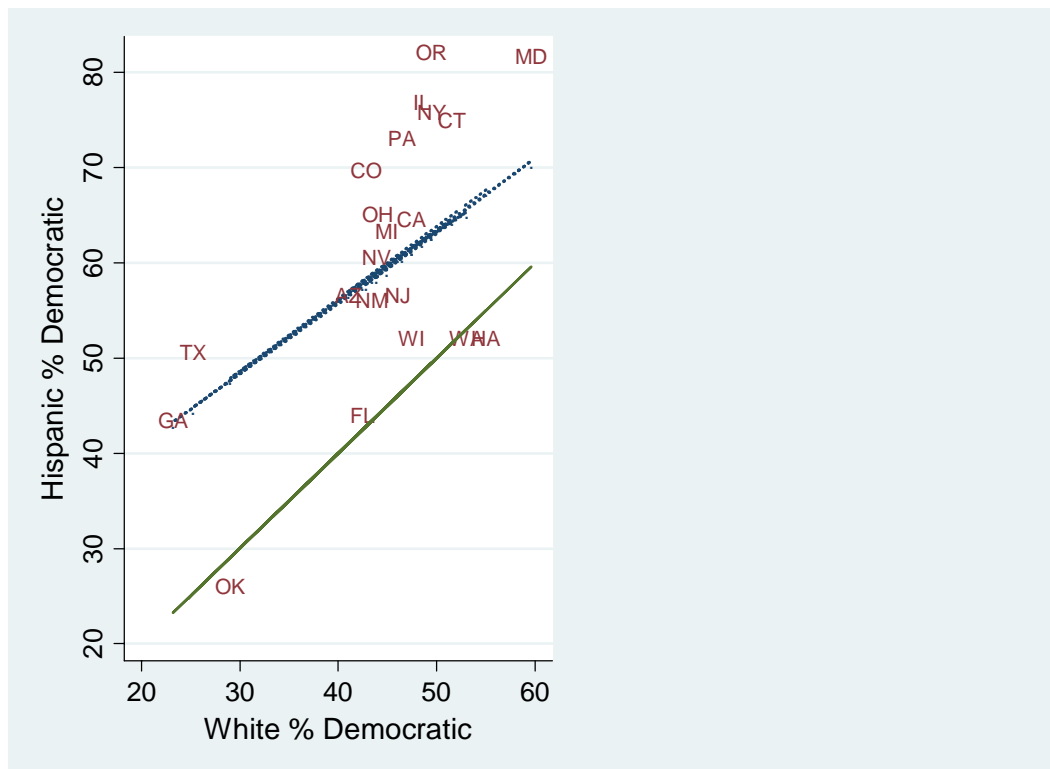


Figure 2.4. Hispanic Democratic vote for President by white non-Hispanic Democratic vote for President in 18 states. The thick dashed line represents the regression line predicting Hispanic % Democratic from white % Democratic. The thin solid line represents equal white and Hispanic percentages voting Democratic. Data Source: NEP 2004 Exit Polls.

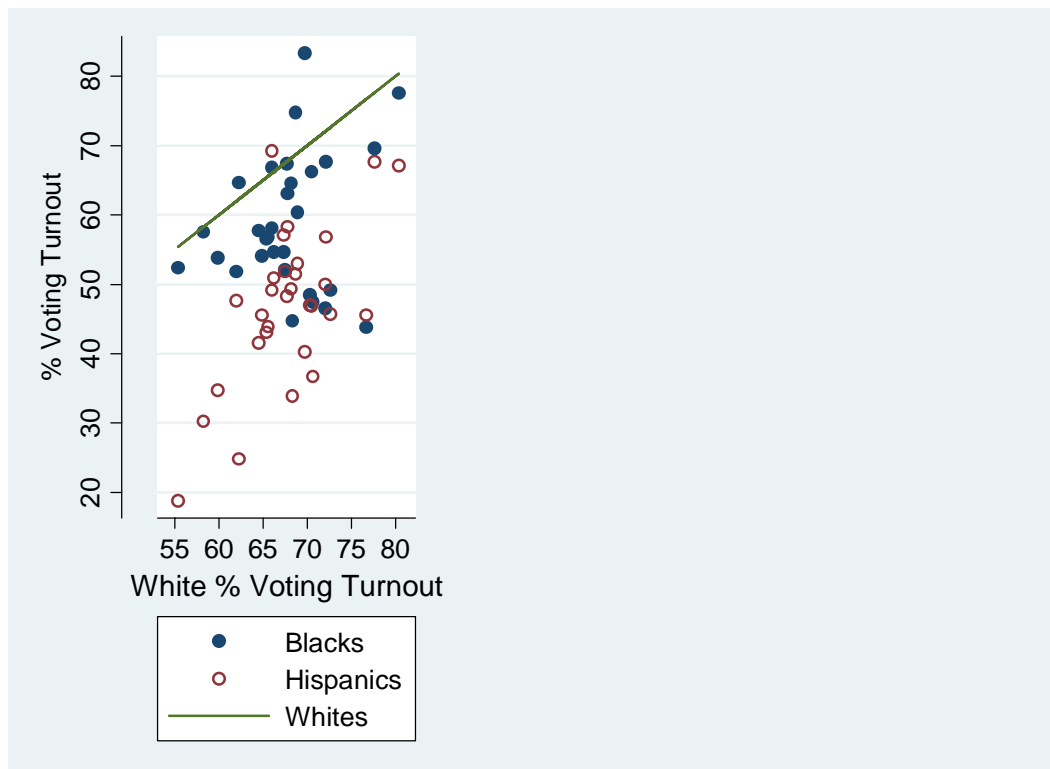


Figure 2.5. Hispanic and black Democratic voter turnout by white non-Hispanic Democratic vote turnout In 30 states with CPS reports of both the Hispanic and the black turnout. Turnout percentages are for adult citizens. Data Source: November 2004 Current Population Survey.

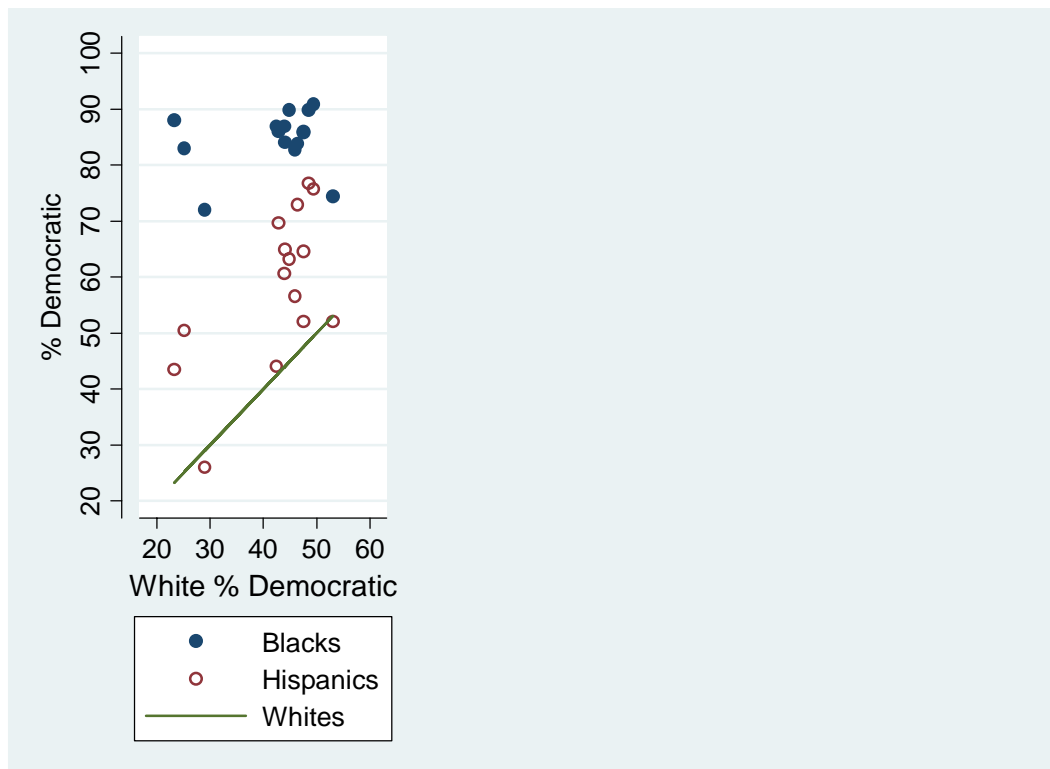


Figure 2.6. Hispanic and black Democratic vote for President by white non-Hispanic Democratic vote for President. In 15 states with exit poll reports of both the Hispanic and the black vote. Data Source: NEP 2004 Exit Polls.

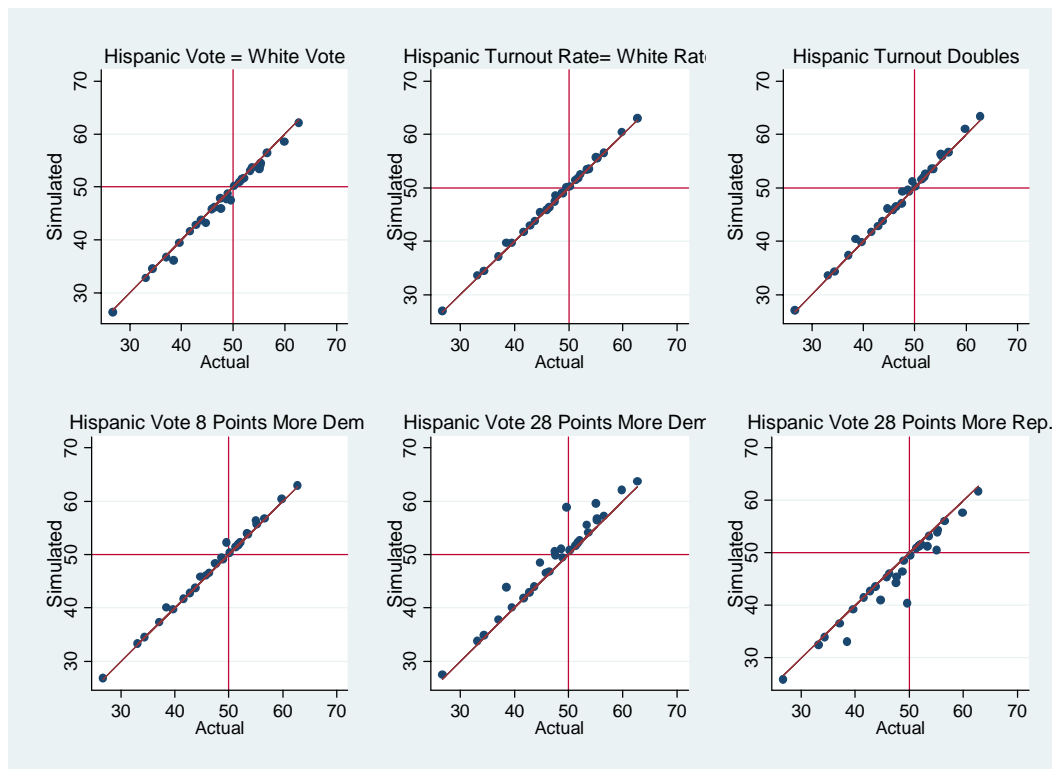


Figure 2.7. Six Simulations of counterfactual 2004 outcomes with alternative scenarios regarding the Hispanic vote. In each panel, the simulated vote and the actual vote represent the Democratic vote in the 29 states with Hispanic data from the CPS survey.

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Endnotes

¹ This differential is similar to that in 2000. See DeSipio and de la Garza (2005), especially table 1.2.

² Anna Maria Arumi of NBC News computed this adjustment and reported it in NBC's "First Read" of December 4, 2004. Arumi stated, "Through the luck of the draw, four Hispanic precincts were in Florida and three of those were in Miami-Dade County. This demonstrates some of the clustering effects you can have in a national sample of 250 precincts when you are looking at breakouts of subgroups like Hispanics—in this case an overrepresentation of Cuban opinion in the overall Hispanic numbers... To ameliorate this clustering problem I aggregated the 50 state polls which were collected from a total of 1,469 precincts and looked at the Hispanic data in this much larger sample, which yielded smaller, but still significant, Bush gains among Hispanics: 40 percent for Bush to 58 percent for Kerry." See the "First Read" of Friday, December 3, 2004 from Elizabeth Wilner, Mark Murray, Huma Zaidi, and Aaron Inver retrieved from www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6531105/. See also the discussion by the authoritative source [mysterypollster.com](http://www.mysterypollster.com): "Correcting the 'Correction'" by Mark Blumenthal on December 6, 2004 retrieved from http://www.mysterypollster.com/main/2004/12/correcting_the_.html. The William C. Velasquez Institute conducted its own exit poll of Hispanics, which shows Hispanics breaking 65.4 percent for Kerry to 33 percent for Bush. See its report at http://www.wcvi.org/press_room/press_releases/2004/us/exit_poll_120204.html. The Velasquez Institute's vote breakdown is in line with the Hispanic vote reported in pre-election polls. For more on the disputed Hispanic vote in 2004, see Leal et al. (2005).

³ Based on sampling theory and the assumption of simple random sampling, it is possible to estimate the statistical reliabilities of the state estimates of registration rates for samples of white citizen and Hispanic citizens. For white citizens, the estimated reliability approaches 1.0, a result of the large state samples. For Hispanic citizens, the estimated reliability is .82, meaning that about 82 percent of the observed variance in states' registration rates by Hispanics is true and the remaining 18 percent is error. Even with this adjustment, the residual state-level registration rate is about three times greater for Hispanics than Anglos.

⁴ Based on the assumption of simple random sampling, the reliability of the state estimates of voting rate among Hispanic registrants is .78, meaning that the observed variance should be discounted by about one-fifth.

⁵ Adjusted for sampling error based on the numbers of Hispanics in the state exit polls and assuming random sampling, the reliability of the Hispanic vote is .85.

⁶ Black voting rates correlate slightly (significant barely at .05) with Hispanic voting rates.

⁷ For the simulations, we exclude Hawaii, which has Hispanic exit poll data but no report of Hispanic data on turnout in the CPS survey.

⁸ One potential source of error is that proportion Hispanic in the exit polls as weighted are slightly larger than the proportion of respondents reported voting in the state CPS state samples.

⁹ The changes of 8 and 28 percentage points are arbitrary selections.

¹⁰ In instances where this scenario predicts over 100 percent Democratic, the simulated vote is reset to 100 percent Democratic.

¹¹ It is a challenge to say why Latino voters are so different from state to state. While we can infer statistically that the Hispanic vote varies more from state to state than does the Anglo vote, extreme caution must be employed about inferring the Hispanic vote in any particular state. This is due to the small sample sizes of the Hispanic vote within some state exit polls. Consider the case of Oklahoma. The Oklahoma exit poll drew 1,207 white non-Hispanic voters but only 62 Hispanic voters. While it is interesting that the Hispanic voters in the Oklahoma exit poll were just as pro-Bush as the Anglo sample, the margin of error is too large to make valid inferences with only 62 cases.