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LATINO IDEOLOGY, CONGRESSIONAL POLARIZATION, AND RACIAL THREAT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF LATINOS ON CONGRESSIONAL POLITICS

Lisa Sanchez

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Lisa M. Sanchez

Candidate

Department of Political Science

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Michael S. Rocca, Ph.D.

chairman

Gabriel R. Sanchez, Ph.D.

Timothy Krebs, Ph.D.

Matt Barreto, Ph.D.

**LATINO IDEOLOGY, CONGRESSIONAL POLARIZATION, AND RACIAL
THREAT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF LATINOS ON
CONGRESSIONAL POLITICS**

BY

LISA M. SANCHEZ

B.A., Political Science, University of New Mexico 2009

M.A., Political Science, University of New Mexico 2011

DISSERTATION

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Requirements for the Degree of
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DEDICATION

For my Mom and Dad who sacrificed so much to see their children here. This is as much mine as it is yours.

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M.A., POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO 2011

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF NEW
MEXICO

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationship between changes in demographics and changes in congressional polarization. It comes out of two important trends in American politics in the last several decades: (1) Rising Latino Population and (2) Rise in Party polarization in Congress. Latinos are the primary source of immigration to the United States and high fertility rates among this population are contributing to a record number of Latinos becoming eligible to vote. According to Pew every 30 seconds, a Latino becomes eligible to vote totaling 66,000 every month. In terms of the polarization trend, Congressional polarization is at its highest point since reconstruction. Since the mid-1970s it has continued to steadily rise with Republicans pulling away from Democrats at a faster rate than Democrats are pulling away from Republicans. Looking at these two trends leads me to ask: to what extent are the two trends related? My dissertation finds that there are several reasons to believe that they are related, chief among them the lower levels of ideological extremity exhibited by U.S. Latinos. Using a combination of data from the American National Election Survey (ANES) and data from the Almanac of American Politics between 1972 and 2014, I find that a rise in Latino population leads to important changes in the ideology of whites and Latinos residing in Congressional districts, as well as moderation of their member of Congress.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction.....	1
Congressional Polarization.....	3
The Puzzle.....	10
Theoretical Perspective.....	14
Outline of Chapters.....	15
CHAPTER TWO	
Introduction.....	19
Literature Review.....	21
Theory.....	26
Data & Methods.....	32
Results.....	38
Discussion.....	44
CHAPTER THREE	
Introduction.....	46
Literature Review.....	49
Theory.....	54
Data & Methods.....	60
Results.....	64
Conclusion.....	72
CHAPTER FOUR	
Introduction.....	74
Literature Review.....	77
Theory.....	82
Data & Methods.....	86
Results.....	92
Conclusion.....	98

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction.....	101
Review of Key Findings	101
Discussion.....	107
Avenues for Future Research.....	111
REFERENCES.....	115
APPENDICES.....	132

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1: Ideological Polarization by Party In Congress.....	10
1.2: Representative Extremity and Constituency Extremity.....	11
1.3: Representative Extremity and % Latino in District.....	13
2.1: Average Predicted Extremity by Ethnicity.....	40
3.1: Predicted Curvilinear Relationship Between Social Welfare Ideology Index and District Percent Latino for All Respondents.....	66
3.2: Predicted Curvilinear Relationship Between Social Welfare Ideology Index and District Percent Latino for White versus Latino Respondents.....	67
3.3: Predicted Curvilinear Relationship Between Social Welfare Ideology Index and District Percent Latino for White versus Latino Respondents among Republican Respondents Only.....	71
4.1: Theoretical Relationship Ideological Extremity by District Latino Population.....	84
4.2: Mean Ideological Extremity in the U.S. House of Representatives 92 nd -113 th Congresses.....	88
4.3: Average DWNominate Score in the House of Representatives 92 nd - 112 th Congress.....	90
4.4: Bivariate Quadratic Plot, Extremity and Percent Latino.....	92
4.5: Predicted Ideological Extremity by Latino District Population (1973-2014).....	95
4.6 Cross-tabulation of Latino Partisanship and Ideology.....	96
4.7: Predicted Ideological Extremity by Hispanic District Population Including Interactions (1973-2014).....	97

LIST OF TABLES

2.1: Frequency Distribution of Racial and Ethnic Categories by Ideological Extremity.....	32
2.2: Two Sample T-test Latino Versus Non-Latino Ideological Extremity.....	38
2.3: Regression Analysis for Ideological Extremity and Latino Ethnic Identity.....	39
3.1: Descriptive Statistics.....	61
3.2: Base Model OLS Regression for Relationship between District Percent Latino and Social Welfare Ideology Index.....	64
3.3: Republican and Democratic OLS Regression for Relationship between District Percent Latino and Social Welfare Ideology Index.....	68
4.1: Ideological Extremity of Members of Congress (92nd-113th) OLS Regression Base Model.....	93

Chapter 1

Congressional Polarization and Latino Politics

INTRODUCTION

Congress is more polarized now than it has been in over 100 years. Increased polarization leads to severe legislative and representational consequences. Extreme polarization makes it more difficult to pass legislation, with most proposed policies ending in gridlock and stalemate (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Gilmour 1995; Groseclose and McCarty 2001; Krehbiel 1998; Brady and Volden 2005, Binder 2003). Evidence suggests that this problem is growing. Each Congress passes fewer policies than the previous one (Pew 2014). It has also become harder to pass certain *types* of policies, particularly, long-term redistributive welfare policies, coherent foreign policies and even the annual budget (Galston and Nivola 2006). Moreover, when Congress is unable to act, there are material consequences, such as sequestration, government shut down, and debt limit crises. These were all consequences of Congressional inaction in 2013.

Heightened Congressional polarization is also harmful to representation. Hyperpolarization drives down Congressional approval and trust in government, hindering the important link between the citizenry and their government (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 2002; King 1997; Heatherington 2005). In 2015, confidence in the United States Congress hit a historical low of just seven percent (Gallup 2015)- a low that reflects not only a Congressional record, but also a record among all U.S. institutions in the last forty years of polling (Gallup 2015). Trust in government is in a similar state

with only 19 percent trusting the government to “do what is right” most or all of the time (Gallup 2015).

Yet the fundamental determinants of polarization still prove elusive. Explanations for the increase in polarization can be placed into two general categories: electoral and institutional partisanship (see for example: Carson et al 2007; Hirsch 2003; Oppenheimer 2005; Stonecash, Brewer and Marinani 2003; Roberts and Smith 2003 2008). Concerned pundits and analysts have suggested a wide variety of reforms to decrease polarization in Congress, ranging from capping campaign money to reforming the primary system (Gerber and Morton 1998; Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003; Brady, Hahn, and Pope 2007; Jacobson 1990; Lessig 2011; Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003; but see Hall and Wayman 1990; Smith 1995; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Bonica 2012). However, it is easy to forget that the United States Congress has been here before. Record high polarization at the turn of the 20th Century eventually gave way to record low levels in the mid-20th Century. Moreover, analysis of polarization beginning with the first Congress in 1789 reveals that polarization is commonly high. Indeed, the low levels of polarization experienced between 1900 and 1970 are reason for pause.

While it is true that a series of extra- and intra-legislative reforms may have contributed to decreased polarization (see, for example, Theirault 2008), one oft overlooked factor clearly had an important effect on falling polarization: demographic changes in the electorate. Just as at the turn of the 20th Century we are faced with record levels of polarization and a rapidly changing demography. Only this time, it is Latinos who are changing American demography rather than the Irish, German and Polish immigrants of the early 20th century.

Though any demographic change is expected to affect the American political system and polarization, the political identities that Latinos bring with them are key. Because most Latinos affiliate with the Democratic Party, in the short term, I expect the increase in Latino population to reinforce polarization in Congress (Taylor and Fry 2007). However, because they are also more ideologically moderate than non-Latinos regardless of party affiliation (the primary focus of the second chapter), in the long run, I expect a rising Latino population to decrease congressional polarization. That is, as more districts have sizeable Latino populations due to immigration, high fertility gains and rising migration trends, the Latino electorate could have a strong mitigating effect on polarization within Congress- an effect that may be similar to the impact of demographic shifts that took place in the early 20th century.

CONGRESSIONAL POLARIZATION

As a general concept, polarization refers to the divergence of political attitudes towards ideological extremes. As characterized by McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, congressional polarization is “the separation of politics into liberal and conservative camps (2006).” Congressional polarization specifically refers to the ideological distance between the two major parties, Republicans and Democrats, within the United States Congress. Therefore, congressional polarization has both relational and spatial components. One party cannot be deemed “polarized” without comparison to another on the same ideological spectrum, nor can one member of Congress be deemed polarized without being related to those in his party and/or chamber.¹ Congressional polarization

¹ Though they can be deemed extreme based on the positions they hold.

can also be understood spatially because all ideological scores are related to one another on a spectrum ranging from liberal to conservative. Therefore, the location of scores along the spectrum of ideological possibilities is imperative for its interpretation. Further, congressional polarization is most often considered as a trend over time, thereby relating the ideological polarization of Congresses through time.

Generally speaking, there are two facets to identifying congressional polarization: overlap and distance. Overlap is concerned with the number of members of Congress in opposing political parties that have similar ideological leanings- leanings that are ideologically centrist. In other words, moderates. Conversely, distance identifies the ideological spread between opposing partisans. Most often this involves comparing the average ideology of each party. In such indicators it is important not only how far apart the average member of each party is, but also how tightly distributed the ideological distance is within that party. These are referred to as inter and intra party homogeneity (Rohde 1991). Both facets vary over time and have both independent and combined effects on congressional polarization. Extreme polarization occurs when overlap disappears and distance grows through high intra-party homogenization and low inter-party homogeneity.

Empirical metrics for these two aspects of congressional polarization abound. They include: distributional overlap, directional skew, magnitude of skew, standard deviation, and shape of distribution (Levandusky 2009; Brady 1988; Levandusky and Pope 2011; Schmid and Schmidt 2006; Fleisher and Bond Date 2013). Today, the gold standard for generating any of the forgoing measures is the DWNominate score created by Poole and Rosenthal (2011). It accounts for all roll call votes cast by each member of

Congress as they relate to the rest of the chamber.

However, regardless of the metric used, it is clear that polarization in Congress is on the rise in the last fifty years. Figure 1.1 illustrates that polarization began remarkably high following the founding, and decreased for a period of sixty years before increasing to an oscillating baseline for roughly 120 years. Finally, beginning in the late 1960s, we see the polarization story we are used to, which is characterized by a steep and steady increase in polarization that is still occurring today. Interestingly, the highest level of polarization today, what many tout as unnaturally high, is still lower than many of the historical highs in the early period of the country. Polarization in the United States Congress is commonly high. Even more interesting, dramatic declines resulting in long term lows in polarization are abnormal, as they have heretofore, only occurred twice. By contrast, high polarization is the common baseline. Thus the question becomes why did Congressional polarization begin a decline in the early 1900s and why did things rebound in the 1970s?

Scholarship regarding the possible causes for repolarization in the 1970s falls into two camps: institutional and electoral. The institutional perspective, championed by Thierault (2008), holds that institutional changes resulting in more divisive congressional rules are to blame for hyperpolarization. Over time, congressional polarization has become balkanized over procedure with more power ceded to party leadership (Theirault 2008). Though the institutional perspective provides important insights into congressional polarization, it simply “kicks” the mechanism of causality down the road. In other words, it leads researchers question why institutional changes were implemented to begin with.

The electoral perspective helps fill the gaps left behind by institutionalists.

Electoral theorists place the electoral connection at the heart of Congressional polarization trends. Chief among electoral theories of congressional polarization is the Conditional Party Government theory (CPG) (Aldrich and Rhode 2000, 2001; Rhode 1991).

CPG proposes a four-step link between the masses and congressional polarization. The progression begins with the realignment of diverse partisan preferences within reelection constituencies,² which, through several mechanisms, become more

² Debate rages as to whether the masses are truly polarized or if they are simply made to look that way due to the way they are studied. Well known political scientists like Morris Fiorina, for example, argue that the distributional center in red and blue states has not disappeared across a wide range of issues. Rather, the distribution looks polarized due to the polarized nature of the candidates vying for political office in elections. Because voters must choose between two polarized candidates, they *appear* polarized. In other words, Fiorina argues that there is a polarization of choices and not necessarily of issue preferences (see for example, Fiorina and Abrams 2008 for a review). He does concede that the masses are ideologically sorted, but the match between ideology and party identification is not evidence of polarization, *per se*. On the other side, Abramowitz (2010), finds considerable differences in opinion between red and blue states, particularly among voters and activists (see also, Abramowitz and Saunders 2005, 2008; Jacobson 2012). Moreover, scholars on this side of the divide find little evidence of a disconnect between mass and elite preferences. They theorize that voters are aligned with the

homogeneous across geographic areas. As geographic areas become more homogeneous, party caucuses change to reflect the building consensus among the partisan masses. As a result of this process, parties become more homogeneous themselves. Once district homogeneity hits a critical tipping point, members of Congress respond to this homogeneity with more extreme behavior in Congress. Finally, as intra-party preferences become more homogeneous, inter-party preferences become more divergent, resulting in roll call votes that are polarized along party lines. The slow progression toward homogeneity becomes a vicious cycle. Unless new, non-homogeneous (diverse) voters are added to reelection constituencies, increases in homogeneity leads to increases in polarization, which feeds back by creating more polarized masses who become more homogenized. Due to the strong linkage established by CPG between the realities of electoral politics, member goals, the masses, and congressional behavior, it is the foundation for the present study.

In particular, I focus on the first two steps of the CPG progression: increasing homogeneity among reelection constituents and consolidation into geographic areas. I propose that the vicious cycle perpetuating hyperpolarization can be broken when districts undergo demographic shifts. When the population in a Congressional district shifts, diversity of preferences reenters the equation, reducing homogeneity and with it the likelihood of polarization. As members of Congress respond to diverse district interests, their strategies and behavior will also change. Instead of working to please a

ideological orientation of their chosen party based on issue preferences (electoral sorting) and therefore, the masses *are* polarized.

homogeneous, polarized reelection constituency within their district, they must work to create a winning coalition (aka reelection constituency) of heterogeneous actors with diverse opinions. Therefore, while in Congress, members' policy strategies, roll calls, and bill sponsorship behavior will exhibit lower ideological extremity.

Taken to its logical extreme, high levels of district diversity can result in the election of a new member of Congress that better represents a districts' heterogeneity. In this scenario, the member of Congress does not change his behavior to suit his constituents (or if he does, he does not succeed in this pursuit), rather, constituents elect a member of Congress that already reflects the heterogeneity of the district. The trick is finding the tipping point between these phenomena. I ask: At what percentage of diversity does a member of Congress change his behavior in Congress to appease a heterogeneous constituency? Is it 10 percent? 20? 30? Research has yet to address the critical mass required to produce behavioral change among members of Congress. It is also unclear at what point a member of Congress is simply not returned to their seat altogether.

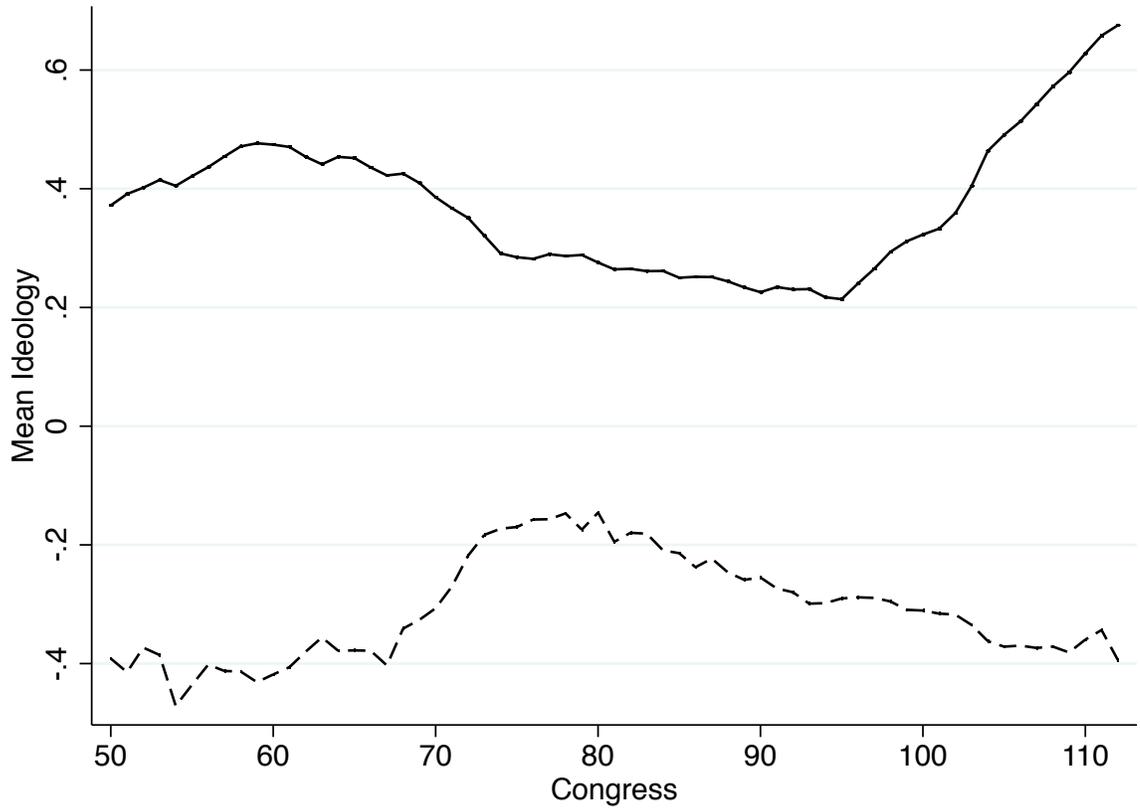
History provides some insights into these questions. We have witnessed these phenomena (high polarization and high population change) before at the turn of the 20th Century with the influx of new immigrants and their absorption into the political system. At the turn of the century the Democratic Party, in particular, courted new immigrants. Democrats, commonly the minority party between the 1850's and 1930s worked hard to enfranchise minority populations, thus tying them to the Democratic Party. The result: the strong Democratic, political machines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The legacy of immigrant populations in the Democratic Party enabled them to create a stronghold in

Congress lasting nearly 50 years. This suggests a lag in the influence of immigrants on electoral politics. Moreover, due to the politics of race and ethnicity, Democrats also experienced an important schism between southern and northern Democrats. The ideological sorting that took place following this schism gave rise to one of the most intense inclines in polarization to date.

Today Republicans are in a similar state. With a short hiatus to majority status in the nineties, the pendulum is shifting back to majority democratic politics as it was for much of the 20th century. Therefore, I argue that Republicans stand to undergo more profound changes from an increasing Latino population than does the Democratic Party.

Republicans are currently experiencing a schism between tea-party conservative Republicans and mainstream conservative Republicans. This schism sets the stage for Latinos to moderate the mainstream wing of the Republican Party while exacerbating the schism involving extreme Tea-Party conservatives. Each of the examples, both historical and contemporary, emphasize the point that the United States has experienced high polarization and demographic shifts before. After a period of enfranchisement of immigrants into the American political process, congressional polarization underwent the most significant dip in history. I argue that we are poised to do so again.

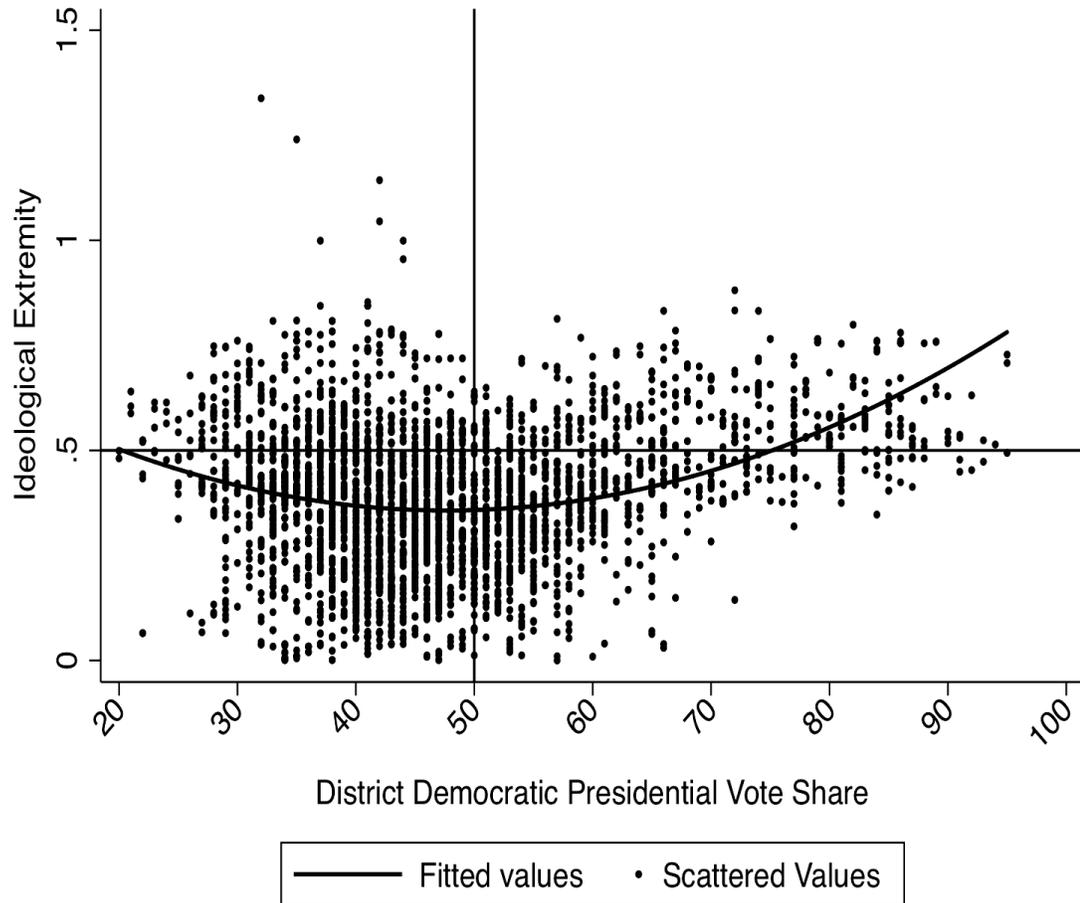
Figure 1.1: Ideological Polarization By Party in Congress



THE PUZZLE

I have established that congressional polarization has been on the rise since the late 1960s and is currently rising today. To further emphasize this point, Figure 1.1 illustrates that the Republican party is moving more quickly away from the ideological center than the Democratic party, though both parties are experiencing movement.

Figure 1.2: Representative Extremity and Constituency Extremity



One reason for these trends is an increase in district homogeneity. Increased homogeneity has led to safer congressional seats, another well acknowledged trend in congressional literature (see, for example, Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977; Abramowitz 1991; Abramowitz, Alexander, and Gunning 2006). Therefore, the electoral link is vitally important for the level of congressional polarization. As districts become more homogenized, they are also becoming more polarized or extreme. Thus making their member of Congress more extreme. Figure 2 shows the relationship between district competition and the ideological extremity of a district's member of Congress. It is clear from Figure 2, that there is a curvilinear relationship between the two variables. It

suggests that the higher the percentage of votes accruing to the Democratic party, the more ideologically extreme the member of Congress who represents them and vice versa. It also makes clear that there are quite a few members of Congress who are moderate when their district is competitive (decided by a near fifty-fifty split). This forms the dip within the center of the distribution.

The question is, who are these moderates with low ideological extremity and competitive districts? I argue that many of these cases are members of Congress who represent large Latino populations- the subject of chapter four.

Even members of Congress who are in safe districts, are still near the mean ideological extremity of .47 as depicted by the horizontal line in Figure 1.2. This indicates that it is not just the safety of a district, but that it may be the makeup of a district. In other words, *who* a member of Congress is representing that may change his/her extremity regardless of simple measures of safety and homogeneity. To further illustrate this point, Figure 3 shows the relationship between ideological extremity and the percentage of Latinos in a district by party.

Figure 1.3: Representative Extremity and % Latino in District

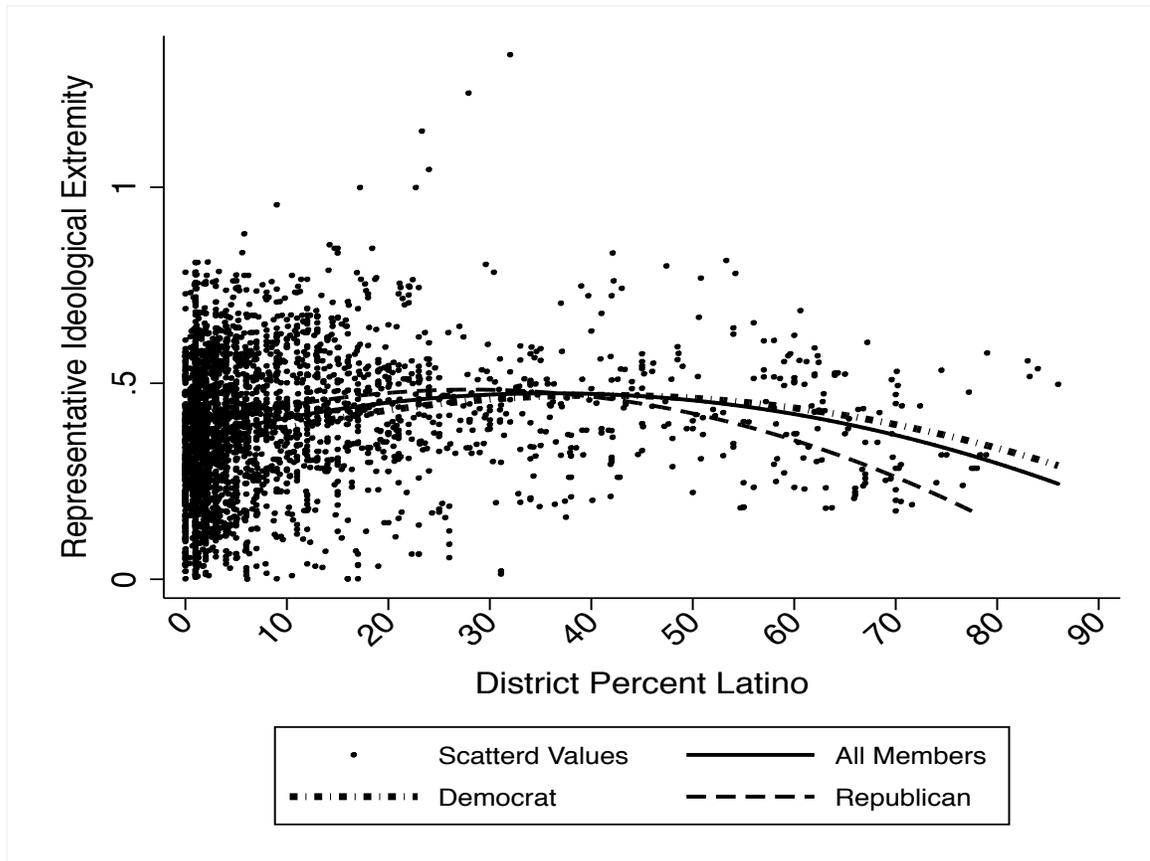


Figure 1.3 strengthens anecdotal evidence regarding the electoral politics of Republicans today. Figure 1.3 shows that the relationship is steeper for Republicans, lending credence to the assertion that Republicans stand to be more profoundly affected by the influx of Latinos into their districts than Democrats. However, the trend *is* similar for both parties. It is also clear from figure 3 that there is a tipping point. When there is a low Latino population in a district, the ideological extremity of a member of Congress increases slightly, up to approximately thirty percent. As the Latino population eclipses 30%, the trend reverses and members of Congress become more ideologically moderate. Thus, preliminary evidence suggests that the ideological extremity of a member of

Congress changes based on the percentage of Latinos in his/her district. However, the question becomes why this relationship exists.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

I theorize that congressional polarization responds to demographic shifts in districts. In particular, when diversification of districts occurs, members of Congress become less ideologically extreme because they must respond to heterogeneous interests. As this process continues in districts across the U.S., the aggregate level of Congressional polarization should also fall as members of Congress' heterogeneous electoral incentives drive down their individual levels of ideological extremity.

In this dissertation, I argue that de-homogenizing, demographic shifts change the ideological extremity of members of Congress through two mechanisms. Shifts can either change (1) the district representative or (2) the behavior of the existing district representative.

In the first case, the influx of individuals with viewpoints inconsistent with the existing homogenized district are so numerous as to elect an entirely new member of Congress. This could be a more moderate member of the same party, which is most likely, or a member of a different party, which is less likely.

In the second case, the influx of a sizeable number of individuals with viewpoints inconsistent with that of existing population fundamentally change the electoral politics of the district to the point where members must respond behaviorally in order to keep their seat. This is predicated on the assumption that reelection is the number one goal for a member of Congress, otherwise they cannot achieve any of their institutional or policy objectives (Mayhew 1974). As a first step, this study focuses exclusively on the

behavioral change mechanism and leaves for future study the replacement mechanism. Though seemingly simple, the behavioral change mechanism is highly complex and explains, not only behavioral changes among members of Congress, but also those occurring among the masses as a result of intergroup context.

My general theory hinges on population shifts *writ large* and could apply to any group whose population is undergoing a major increase; however, I specifically focus on the increase in Latinos within congressional districts that is occurring today. Simply put, I predict that congressional polarization will decrease as Latino populations increase in congressional districts. It is important to note that demographic shifts do not have to include large Latino populations per se, but I focus on Latinos because they are currently in prime position to change the polarized landscape of the U.S. Congress. Latinos are causing demographic shifts as they immigrate to and migrate across the United States. Moreover, their ideological positioning is unique in the current political landscape. I illustrate in the next chapter that Latinos are more ideologically moderate than their non-Latino co-partisans. Due to their religious affiliations, economic situation, unique political socialization, lack of monolithic partisan affiliation, and diverse pan-ethnic identity, Latinos *may* be the answer to the perceived ills of resurging polarization in our government. In recent decades, electoral sorting has wrought severe polarization in Congress due to MCs inability to cross an expanding partisan chasm. I propose that with rising numbers of Latino voters, observed polarization in Congress may decline.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In the forthcoming chapters, I ask whether the rise in Latino population influences the ideological extremity of members of Congress and, in the aggregate, the United States

Congress, as well. To this end, Chapter two begins with a close look at the ideological positioning of the U.S. Latino population in relation to that of their non-Latino co-partisans. I argue, that Latinos, though largely affiliated with the Democratic Party, are cross-pressured by their economic realities and their underlying ideological beliefs regarding morality politics and individualism. The evidence presented in the second chapter suggests that Latinos are more ideologically moderate than their non-Latino co-partisans and suggests that their presence in a district may have a direct moderating effect on their member of Congress.

Chapter three takes this a step further by examining the ideological changes produced by the interactions between Latinos and non-Latinos within Congressional districts. This is of particular important because intergroup relations are an often-overlooked factor among polarization theorists. In this chapter I ask whether the heterogeneous context of districts that undergo Latino population increases effects the ideological positioning of its citizenry. In particular, I examine how a rising Latino population within the context of a Congressional district, activates feelings of racial threat among the existing majority white population. Though many studies of racial threat assume a linear relationship between rising minority populations and the activation of racial threat, I find that majority populations become more conservative due to racial anxieties, but only for a time. After the population rises above forty percent, the majority population begins to adjust to the minority population through increased positive contact experiences and thus experiences declines in their ideological conservatism. I also consider group context from the vantage point of the minority population. Few intergroup contact studies consider this side of the equation. I uncover strong evidence that the

minority population is as affected by population shifts in Congressional districts as the majority population. I find that the minority, Latino population also experiences ideological changes as the result of heterogeneous group context. Contrary to expectations, Latinos initially exhibit *increases* in ideological conservatism as their population rises to roughly forty percent. After this initial stage, ideological conservatism among Latinos begins to fall back to previous levels. I conclude this chapter by proposing that Latinos may be attempting to assimilate to their new populations by becoming more ideologically conservative for a time, and discuss the implications for future research of this finding.

Chapter four carries forth these findings to generate a theory of ideological change among members of Congress as the result of changing district demography. Contrary to findings related to majority-minority districting, I find that a critical mass of thirty-percent Latinos is required in a district to produce ideological changes in roll call voting behavior among members of Congress. Here, evidence suggests that members of Congress become more ideologically extreme in response to a racially threatened majority population and an assimilating Latino population until the Latino population reaches a threshold of thirty percent. After thirty percent Latinos in a district, majority white voters ease their racialized conservative positioning and Latino populations begin to return to less conservative positions allowing members of Congress to become less ideologically extreme as well. In the final chapter, I discuss the combined implications of the findings from chapters two-four with particular regard to expectations for the future.

In summary, this dissertation sets out to answer a small part of an important, classic question: does the identity of participants influence politics? I combine individual

behavior, group behaviors, and Congressional politics literatures to provide insight into the following question: Are Latinos unique and, if so, can they have a broader impact on the national hyperpolarization we are witnessing today?

CHAPTER 2

The Middle Ground: An Analysis of the Ideological Polarization of Latinos

INTRODUCTION

There is considerable disagreement among political scientists regarding the extent to which the American electorate is polarized. One camp argues that the mass public only appears polarized given the oversimplification of choices by political elites (Fiorina et al 2005; Fiorina 2006, 2008). Another views polarization as characteristic of mass public opinion the result of demographic-based cultural divides like religion and socioeconomic status (Green et al 1996; Kohut et al 2000; Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; Brewer 2005; Layman and Green 2006; Abramowitz 2010). While the scope and cause of polarization are unclear, scholars and pundits seem to agree: American politics is undergoing a process that, more often than not, produces two uncompromising camps (VanDrehule 2004).

For the most part, studies of mass polarization focus on an ethnically undifferentiated electorate. However, scholars of minority politics have long understood that important differences exist between majority and minority populations (for a review, see de la Garza 2004). Everything from socialization (de la Garza 1995; Michelson 2001, Wong 2001; 2003; de la Garza and Yetim 2003; Michelson and Garcia 2003) to participation (Verba et al 1995; Hero and Campbell 1996; DiSipio 2003) and representation (Hero and Tolbert 1995, but see Kerr and Miller 1997) has potential to vary across racial and ethnic groups. Though scholarship has been devoted to understanding the ideological differences between Black and white voters (for a review, see Hutchings and Valentino 2004) considerably less has been devoted to the United

States' fastest rising minority population: Latinos. This raises an important question: Are Latinos in the electorate subject to the same polarization processes that the majority population appears to have undergone? Or, more simply, are Latinos more or less polarized than non-Latinos in the electorate?

Though no study to date examines this specific question, there is substantial evidence that Latinos, due to their demographic differences, are likely to exhibit unique levels of ideological extremity and polarization. In this study I draw on existing Latino politics literature to develop an explicit theory of Latino ideological placement and extremity. My primary argument is that Latinos are less ideologically extreme than non-Latinos due to a series of ideological cross-pressures, the result of a unique set of political and demographic realities in their environments. Using data from the 2012 American National Election Survey, I find evidence that Latino respondents consider themselves more ideologically moderate than non-Latinos.

The ideological placement of Latinos is likely to become more important to American politics, as Latinos are expected to comprise nearly thirty percent of the population by 2050, surpassing both Black and Asian minority populations (Passel and Cohn 2008). Moreover, the white population in 2050 is projected to fall from a super-majority of 67 percent to less than half of the population at 47 percent. Immigrants and their U.S. born offspring are expected to comprise 82% of the population increases between 2005 and 2050, the majority coming from Latin American Countries (Passel and Cohn 2008). Latinos are going to play a major role in district demographics in the coming decades. What is less clear is what that role will look like. How will Latinos' unique socialization and ideological outlook change the political environment of the mass

electorate and thus political institutions? It is precisely this void, which the present study begins to fill.

In addition, this study has broader implications for representation, particularly in Congress. Congressional scholars have long been interested in the link between members of Congress and their constituents (Miller and Stokes 1963; Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974). The sharp increase in Congressional polarization beginning in the 1970s has resulted in many questioning whether Congress is truly representative of its electorate (Binder 2003). Given the demographic movement among the electorate, it is of great interest whether the movement of the electorate, whether more or less polarized, will result in identical changes among members of the U.S. Congress. If the two move together, there is reason to believe that strong collective and dyadic ties exist between the electorate and their representatives. However, if they do not, the health of our representational link may be in serious decline.

The electoral changes wrought by the Latino population serve as a prime opportunity to decipher the strength of representational ties in the wake of hyper-polarization. In other words, as the electorate changes, due to the influx of Latinos to the United States, it will be telling whether members of Congress begin to change their ideological behavior in response to these changes, or whether constituents must resort to replacing their member of Congress with a new representative. Therefore, I seek to understand whether a growing Latino population *could* produce positive changes in an already hyper-polarized political environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a general concept, polarization refers to the divergence of political attitudes

towards ideological extremes. As characterized by McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, congressional polarization is “the separation of politics into liberal and conservative camps” (2006). Citizens who are highly polarized exhibit ideologically extreme behavior- what I term ideological extremity. Though ideological extremity and mass polarization are semantically different, they will, hereafter, be used interchangeably- mass polarization being the widely recognizable term and ideological extremity being the more obscure, but correct terminology for the concept under investigation in this study. What is more important to define is what is meant by ideology. Ideology is one of the most diversely applied terms and therefore bears further identification in this setting. I rely on the definition generated by Phillip Converse (1964) where ideology is essentially equated with “belief system.” Converse (1964) defines belief systems as: “A configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence (p.3).” Converse goes on to explain “constraint” as the success in predicting an individual’s attitudes given prior information. Though I will soon argue that Latinos are more ideologically moderate, a separate interpretation could be that Latinos are less ideologically constrained as described by Converse. That is, that Latinos may, due to social and psychological factors, have a lower level of constraint when it comes to American political ideas. Thus, they are able to simultaneously hold conflicting ideas because the underlying organizing principle is either lacking or weak. I take a more conservative explanation of low constraint (or what I refer to as moderation) among Latinos. Measurement of belief systems is far from perfect. Current methods allow researchers to either tap into self-placement metrics or single political attitudes that can then be aggregated to give a picture of an individual’s ideology or belief system. To say

that an individual lacks an underlying organizing principle for ideas that are seemingly dissonant, when researchers cannot directly measure the latent, underlying organizing principle is far too liberal an interpretation. For example, an individual who is pro-life, yet supports the death penalty could be viewed as an unconstrained ideologue if we rely on issue positions alone to assess their ideology or belief system regarding their value of human life. However, the underlying constraint that allows these two seemingly disparate ideas to coexist could rely on perceptions of innocence versus guilt and not simply on “life” writ large. As rational individuals it is much more likely that individuals’ have constraint and researchers cannot yet measure it rather than to say that an individual lacks constraint when in fact one might exist.

Semantics aside, perhaps the most compelling question in this literature is: why have polarization trends increased over time in the mass populace? Many assume that mass polarization has occurred in response to the increase in party polarization among elites, particularly those in government. Disagreement exists as to the processes underlying the polarization of the electorate by elites. Three camps have emerged. The partisan displacement camp argues that partisans become more polarized as new cross-cutting issues emerge to displace existing cleavages (Schattsneider 1960; Sundquist 1983; Schofield 2003). Those who support ideological realignment theories suggest that individuals are increasingly choosing partisan affiliations based on their ideological holdings (Carmines and Stanley 1990; Abramowitz and Sauders 1998). Finally, Layman and Carsey (2002, 2006) proffer that the electorate is becoming increasingly polarized on multiple issue dimensions, most notably social welfare, race, and cultural issues. They refer to this process as “conflict extension.” This line of reasoning suggests the United

States may be in the midst of a “culture war” in which the electorate is divided into “two Americas.”

Though widely touted by pundits and the media, the “culture war” hypothesis is not without empirical evidence (Wuthow 1988, 1989; Hunter 1991; Fiorina et al 2005; Abramowitz and Saunders 2005). Hunter finds that there are two underlying philosophical impulses among the electorate: orthodoxy and progressivism. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that this divide leads to important political behaviors (Green et al 1996; Layman 2001). An outgrowth of this literature focuses on the ideological and attitudinal differences among subgroups of the American populace (Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; Evans and Nunn 2005). In particular there is evidence that important ideological differences are present between men and women, rural versus urban dwellers, religious persuasions, and racial dichotomies (DiMaggio et al 1996; Kaufman and Petriock 1999; Kohut et al 2000; Layman and Green 2006). Scant work has broached the topic of polarization among Latinos. DeSipio (1998) evaluates whether the impact of Latinos on the electorate might “emerge as a ‘realigning electorate’” similar to that of eastern Europeans immigrants during the New Deal era (Anderson 1979; Gamm 1986; Erie 1988). Though not discussed directly, DeSipio assumes that the unique ideological positioning of Latinos may be strong enough to produce an ideological shift in American politics. Moreover, DeSipio finds that Latino ideology has been studied through the lens of locally based subgroups in cross-sectional snapshots, which produces a multitude of theories and findings that produce, at times, puzzling observations of the Latino experience. Nationally representative Latino samples and surveys dedicated to the study

of Latino such as the LNPS, LNS, and those from Latino Decisions, have provided scholars better leverage on issues of Latino politics across the United States.

The majority of what is known regarding Latino ideology comes from research that focuses on a limited number of policy issues with dichotomous, for/against, results such as immigration, affirmative action, and interactions with law enforcement and the courts (de la Garza 1992; Cain et al 2000; Pachon et al. 2000; de la Garza and DiSipio 2001; Uhlaer and Garcia 2002; de la Garza 2004). Though somewhat limiting in terms of ideological studies, they imply that Latinos have distinctive political attitudes (Uhlanher and Garcia 2002).

While there has been a plethora of research done on the level of polarization among the general American population, there remains a large hole in research concerning the public opinion and policy preferences of the growing Latino population (Sanchez 2006). Latino politics scholars are beginning to create a foundation as they delve into this population's interests, behaviors and opinions (Garcia 2003). Work on Latino ideological leanings generally finds that Latinos lean liberal. Selected policy attitudes indicate a preference for liberal policies regarding the government's use of social welfare programs, inequality, and environmental policies (Barreto and Segura 2014). However, core values appear to be espouse more conservative leanings regarding self-reliance (Barreto and Segura 2014) and morality (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010). When asked whether the moral values of society are better in the United States than their home countries, only 26.2 percent respond in the affirmative (Pew/ Kaiser Hispanic Survey 2002). Moreover, Latino voting patterns also tend to switch between parties. In 2004, George Bush's discussion of moral values during the election was rewarded with 40%

Latino voting support (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler 2008; Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Green 2006). However, Latino voters favored the democrat candidates in the last two presidential elections. Taken together, there is convincing evidence that Latinos hold a complex set of policy preferences that at times appears to be contradictory (Sanchez 2006; Abrajano and Alvarez 2010). It is clear that Latinos may not fit into existing molds for ideological constraint established decades ago by Converse, Campbell, Miller, and Stokes (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010). Research has yet to attach a satisfying ideological placement to the complex set of attitudes, behaviors, environments, and values of the Latino voter. Are Latinos closer to the center or are they out at the poles like many of their white partisans? Therefore, the primary goal of this study is delve into the overall ideological positioning of Latinos versus other racial and ethnic groups.

THEORY

My theory hinges on the idea that Latinos have social, demographic and contextual factors that lead to a series of ideological cross-pressures. In particular, I hone in on three factors that push Latinos of all partisan affiliations closer to the ideological center: (1) religious leanings, (2) economic situation, and (3) unique patterns of socialization.

At fifty-five percent, Latinos overwhelmingly belong to the Roman Catholic Church (Pew Hispanic 2014). The second largest category, at 16%, is made up of strongly conservative Evangelical Protestants (Pew Hispanic 2014). Both of these religious traditions stress conservative values. Catholicism, a moderate, yet conservative, leaning religion, aligns itself with the political right through its conservative teachings on abortion, gay marriage, and the death penalty. Interestingly, the Catholic Church is, itself,

cross-pressured with teachings falling on both sides of the political spectrum. While, most well-known for its conservative teachings, the Catholic Church simultaneously holds liberal sentiments regarding issues of social justice for immigrants, the poor, and victims of war (Catechism 1995). Thus the Catholic Church applies a conservative leaning, moderating pressure to the core values of adherents.

Though there is considerable debate regarding the correlation between the beliefs of the laity and church leaders, two-thirds of Latinos state that their religion has an important influence on their political thinking (Pew Hispanic 2007). On many issues, most notably abortion, Latinos are congruent with church teachings. Of those Latinos who identify as Roman Catholic, 54% say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases (Pew 2014). Of the growing number of Latino Evangelicals, 70 percent respond that abortion should be illegal in all/most cases. Latinos are also more likely than non-Latinos to support their Church, regardless of religious affiliation, in speaking out on social and political issues.³ Moreover, Latinos are more likely to attend weekly church services and pray daily than non-Latinos and non-Latino Catholics (Pew Hispanic 2014). Thus, the Church's political pressure is repeated frequently (each week), and may apply pressure in spite of any disagreements in teaching between clergy and laity. In other words, an individual who attends mass each week is getting the same message regardless of whether he agrees with the teaching or not. Basic psychology research suggests that this

³ The percentage of Latinos who say that churches should speak out on social and political issues is 47% in favor and 44% against. For the general public this number is 40% in support and 54% against (Pew 2014).

level of cognitive dissonance is hard to maintain. Therefore, the individual is likely to soften towards the stance if he wishes to continue to attend services (Festinger 1957; Festinger and Calsmith 1959). Disagreements between church teachings and laity exist primarily among issues of gay marriage, contraception, and marriage of priests. For example, Catholic Latinos are at odds with church teachings regarding contraception and marriage of priests (Pew 2014).

Despite issues of correlation between the laity and church leaders, Latino Catholics (and religious in general) are entering into an important social context where political ideas are discussed through the grave lens of mortality (Wald, Owen and Hill 1988). Therefore, even when morality issues are not high on the agenda in politics, they are repeatedly discussed and debated in spaces considered sacred to adherents. Thus, they are pre-primed to influence political attitudes when they do make it onto the political agenda. And importantly, the social context that the majority of Latinos engage in stresses both conservative and liberal sentiments simultaneously, the sum of which is a conservative leaning and moderate ideology. In other words, I am making the argument that the Catholic Church *may be* to Latinos what Black churches have been for African Americans (see, for example McDaniels 2008). The Catholic Church has the capacity to foster and build political identity for Latinos and particularly for Latinos immigrants. Increasingly, the American Catholic Church is adding routine Spanish language masses as a dictate of the American Conference of Catholic Bishops to provide for the largest growing demographic of the United States Catholic Church: Latino immigrants.

Whereas religion may provide the Latino political identity with conservative leaning, moderate ideologies, the demographic realities of Latinos in the United States

pull strongly in the opposite direction. In 2010, the median income for Hispanics was \$39,000, a full \$11,000 less than the U.S. average (Census 2010). Likewise, 26% of U.S. Latinos are in poverty versus 16% nationally. Latino families are more likely to receive food stamps (22%) compared with all other U.S. households (13%) and are twice as likely to lack health insurance (Pew Hispanic 2013). Less than half of Latino families own their own homes (Pew Hispanic 2013). Economically, many Latino households depend on social programs to survive. Therefore, they are likely pulled towards liberal ideologies that stress the need for programs that address economic inequalities. According to a survey conducted by Segura and Bowler (2011), Latinos express liberal views on many economic issues. For example, when asked if government should do more or less to help people, eighty-two percent of Latinos believed that the more the government does, the better off people will be (Segura & Bowler, 2011). These factors tend to move voters towards the more liberal ideologies of the Democratic party (Conover 1981). Perhaps this is because of the perception that the Democratic party is the “champion of the poor,” with their emphasis on welfare and other social programs. It may also be that Democratic politicians have done a better job reaching out to those whose socio-economic status puts them at a disadvantage. Whatever the reason, polls have indicated, for some time now, that those who find themselves in marginalized sectors of society are drawn to “progress” politicians and policies.

Finally, Latino’s unique socialization lends itself to moderation and non-polarization, particularly as it relates to the role of immigration. Though little work has been done in this area, a few studies address the role of immigration for socialization (Marilyn Hoskin 1989; García-Castañón 2013; Wals 2011). Preliminary research suggest

that Latino Immigrants have a unique socialization experience due to several factors including: primary socialization outside of the United States, reliance on simultaneous socialization with children due to language brokering, and the important role of the family and the non-traditional use of children's school as a mechanism to socialize adults (Tam Cho 1999; Wong and Tseng 2008; Wong 2006; García-Castañón 2013; Mollenkopf and Hochschild 2009). Wals (2011), demonstrates that experience with democracy in their home country effects foreign born citizen's trust in government, political engagement and expectations of the U.S. political system. Likewise, Hajnal and Lee (2011) have discovered that Latinos immigrants are more likely to identify as political independents than partisans, further indicating that the immigrant socialization experience impacts political orientations in the United States and not in traditional partisan breakdown.⁴

Naturalized citizens also have a unique socialization experience through the naturalization process. Those who are native born do not experience language classes,

⁴ A compelling counter theory is that Latinos are not more moderate from their socialization elsewhere (for immigrants), but simply not as familiar with the liberal conservative ideology scale. Appendix A indicates that Latinos than non-Latinos do tend to submit non-response answers to the ideology self-placement questions more frequently than non-Latinos, but a simple t-test of foreign born versus U.S. born Latino ideological extremity (not reported here) shows that there is not a statistical difference between the ideological extremity of those Latinos born in the United States versus those with alternate nativity.

entrance exams, nor naturalization ceremonies. Unique socialization processes do not end with first-generation immigrants, but rather persist in family networks and offspring. Because of the strong link to immigration through family, friends, and relatives many Latinos, though not new immigrants or foreign born, are in the situation of socializing other Latino adults into the American political process (Jimenez 2008). Unique socialization also affects the offspring of first-generation immigrants. Research suggests that it is retained by subsequent generations who continue to reside in ethnic enclaves, rely on ethnic media for their political information and retain the language of their parents (Lee and Hajnal 2008). These experiences make Latino immigrants, their receiving families, and offspring experience political socialization in a unique manner.

The country of origin is likely to affect the socialization of Latinos as well. An individual's primary socialization period occurs in another political system with different norms, rules, and values. Several of the largest Latino groups are from countries that are not a two party systems with many originating from places with multiparty systems such as Mexico and Spain, or from countries with strong communist politics like Cuba. In other words, they bring with them debates that are outside of the polarized Republican-Democrat split that is so pervasive in American politics. The debates they bring cut orthogonally through the liberal-conservative spectrum upon which parties are based (Lee and Hajnal 2008).

Taken together, conservative/moderating pressures from religious affiliation, liberal economic values based in inequality, and unique socialization experiences result in a Latino political identity that is drawn more towards the middle than that of white partisans. Thus, due to these pressures, I expect Latinos to be more ideologically

moderate than non-Latinos, all else constant. Finally, I expect that the pull to the center will be stronger for Latino Republicans than for Latino Democrats. Given the strong material needs associated with the Latino population, particularly naturalized immigrants, and the ever present preoccupation of politics with the economy (Barreto and Segura 2014), I expect a more pronounced substantive pull towards the center for Latino Republicans than for Latino Democrats.

DATA & METHODS

Table 2.1: Frequency Distribution of Racial and Ethnic Categories by Ideological Extremity

Race/Ethnicity	0 (moderate)	1	2	3 (extreme)	Total
White	1021 (30.84)	238 (7.19)	1136 (34.31)	916 (27.67)	3311 (100)
Mexican	202 (42.35)	35 (7.34)	114 (23.90)	126 (26.42)	477 (100)
Cuban	19 (31.67)	9 (15.0)	17 (28.33)	15 (25.00)	60 (100)
Puerto Rican	35 (38.46)	5 (5.49)	23 (25.27)	28 (30.77)	91 (100)
Other Hispanic	69 (34.16)	17 (8.42)	59 (29.21)	57 (28.22)	202 (100)
Other Race/Ethnicity	127 (37.91)	25 (7.46)	86 (25.67)	97 (28.96)	335 (100)
Latino (all)	328 (39.33)	66 (7.91)	213 (25.54)	227 (27.22)	834 (100)
Latino Foreign Born	97 (35.66)	21 (7.72)	76 (27.94)	78 (28.68)	272 (100)
Latino U.S. Born	229 (40.97)	44 (7.87)	137 (24.51)	149 (26.65)	559 (100)

*Note: The number in the Latino subgroups, when added together, is higher than the number in the heterogeneous Latino category. This is due to the movement of four Latino respondents to the “refused” and “don’t know” categories. Row percentages in parenthesis below frequency. For information on ideology non-response by ethnicity, see Appendix A.

The goal in this analysis is to determine if Latinos are less ideologically extreme than their non-Latino counterparts. To evaluate this question I use survey data from the American National Election 2012 Times Series Study. ANES 2012 consists of 5,914 eligible American voters. It is especially desirable due to its oversample of eligible Latinos (n=1,005).⁵ To determine each respondent's level of ideological extremity, I calculated each respondent's distance from "moderate" on a 7-point ideological scale and took the absolute value. The further a respondent was from moderate (zero), the more extreme they are considered in the model. The present analysis is not concerned with which side of the political spectrum a respondent falls, but rather how far from moderate they place themselves given their political leanings. It is important to note that I do not argue that Latinos are political *moderates*, but that whatever their political leanings, tend to place themselves closer to moderate than non-Latinos. The dependent variable, *Ideological Extremity*, ranges from 0 to 3. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics for all variables.⁶

⁵ The ANES 2012 also accounted for differences based on language. The survey was conducted in both Spanish and English.

⁶ The use of self-reporting metrics is not without its own limitations. However, as a first cut look at understanding how all of Latino's individual policy opinions work in concert, it is among the best measures available for this type of question. Future work will be required to create an index of policy positions to compare to self-placement metrics, but as with self-placement metrics it has its limitations as well. Which policy positions

The primary independent variable, *Latino*, is a self-reported response answered in the affirmative if a respondent considered him or herself “Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino” (ANES 2012). The resulting variable is coded one if a respondent identifies as Latino and zero otherwise. I also created three additional racial and ethnic variables as a means of comparison: African American, White, and Other Race/Ethnicity. All three variables are dichotomous taking on a code of one for its namesake category and zero if not. The results for *Latino*, *Black*, and *Other Race/ Ethnicity* are interpreted in comparison to the white category.

I control for several other factors that may have independent effects on ideological extremity in addition to the relationship between ethnicity and ideological extremity. These include: party affiliation, religious affiliation, income level, employment status, education level, interest in politics, gender, and age. Despite the close relationship between ideology and partisan affiliation following electoral sorting in the South, I expect important differences between the ideological extremity of partisans. Studies of political polarization in the masses suggest that Republicans may be more ideologically entrenched than Democrats (McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2006). Therefore, I expect that Democrats will be less ideologically extreme than Republicans.

should be included? How many is enough? Moreover, self-placement itself indicates how individuals position themselves in society. To self-identify as moderate means something important about the way an individual fits into the political environment and how they *desire* to fit into the political world. It conveys not just the accumulation of all actual policy positions, but also how an individual relates themselves to others in the electorate.

Partisan affiliation is included as a dichotomous variable coded one if a respondent affiliates with the Democratic Party and zero if he/she affiliates with the Republican Party.

Above I make assertions regarding the role of religion in affecting the political ideologies of Latinos. Though I argue that Latino's strong association with the Catholic Church sets up an important cross-pressure when combined with multiple social and demographic realities, I include it here as a control variable to account for any independent moderating effects on respondents. Thus, I expect that in the absence of particular cross-pressures, affiliating with the Catholic Church will not provide a significant impact on ideological extremity of respondents. It is only in the presence of multiple interactions do I expect Catholicism to be statistically significant. *Catholic* is coded one for respondents who self-identify as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, and zero otherwise.

Socioeconomic status is a well-known factor driving ideological leanings. I include as income, employment status, and education as socioeconomic control variables. Given the 2008 economic recession, socioeconomic variables have the potential to be particularly important for 2012 respondents. As collected by ANES in their unrestricted data set, income is coded as a 28 category, ordinal variable with categories ranging from under \$5,000 to \$250,000 or more. I combine the 28 categories into four using standards established by the U.S. Census 20th, 50th, 80th and 95th percentiles. In terms of our raw data, the 20th percentile for income ranges from less than \$5,000 to \$22,499. The 50th percentile ranges from \$22,500 to \$49,999. Likewise, the 80th percentile for income begins at \$50,000 and peaks at \$109,999. The final category, the 95th percentile, is what

each of the preceding categories are compared to within the regression model. It ranges from \$110,000 to \$250,000 dollars or more. It is our expectation that those who make less money are likely to be more extreme than those who make higher amounts of money given their strong likelihood of reliance on social programs championed by liberal politics. For similar reasons I expect unemployed respondents to be more ideological extreme as well. Those who are unemployed are given a code of one whereas those who are employed are given a code of zero. In terms of educational attainment, I make no specific predictions. I measure educational attainment with a series of five dichotomous variables: (1) *Less than a High School Diploma*, (2) *High School Diploma*, (3) *Some College*, (4) *Bachelor's Degree*, and (5) *Graduate Degree*. The excluded category for comparison is *High School Diploma*.

A significant body of literature suggests that individuals who pay a great deal of attention to politics are likely to be more ideologically extreme as they get closer to being political elites (see, for example, Layman and Carsey 1998). To this end, I control for a respondent's level of interest in politics.⁷ I include a control variable for those who responded that they never pay attention to politics. *Never Interested in Politics* is coded one if a respondent never pays attention to politics and zero otherwise.

Research suggests that men and women may exhibit important political differences based on their gender alone (see, for example, Baxter and Lansing 1983; Conover, 1988, and Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Research on various aspects of the "gender gap"

⁷ Political knowledge questions are closely related to measures of political interest. Both measures were initially included in the models, but both remain statistically insignificant and do not impact the substantive interpretation of the models. In the interest of parsimony, I include only the political interest variable as it tends to capture not only interest in politics but a small piece of knowledge as well.

suggests that women may be more liberal on particular policies than men. Therefore, it is included here as a control. *Female*, takes a code of one if the respondent is female and zero otherwise. Respondent age is controlled for with a continuous variable measured in years. There is some evidence to suggest that as individuals age, they become more conservative. However, this does not necessarily mean they become more moderate. Therefore, I make no specific predictions regarding the role of age.

Finally, in order to evaluate my theory, I run an OLS regression model to test the effect of Latino status on ideological extremity. Given the limited range of the dependent variable, it is technically more appropriate to run an ANOVA. However, after running the model using both an ANOVA and OLS Regression, I find similar results. I choose to report the results of the regression analysis given the greater ease of their interpretability. All models are estimated using survey weights provided by ANES.

RESULTS

Table 2.2: Two Sample T-test Latino Versus Non-Latino Ideological Extremity

<u>Group</u>	<u>Obs.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Err.</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>
White	4444	1.521	0.018	1.208
Latino	834	1.406	0.043	1.255
Combined	5278	1.503	0.017	1.216
Difference		0.1145	0.046	

t = 2.5005

Degrees of Freedom = 5276

Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0124*

Note: The dependent variable is measured as the absolute difference from zero in ideological extremity. *p<.05

Are Latinos more ideologically moderate than non-Latinos? Table 1 shows a bivariate cross-tabulation of our focal relationship. Interestingly, the highest frequency resulting from the overlap of ideology and white respondents is two absolute units from moderate. For all Latino subgroups, the modal category is zero, or moderate. Among Latinos in general, 39.33% of all Latino respondents are in the zero or moderate category. The highest percentage of zeros among Latino respondents lies among Mexican respondents. 42.35% of Mexican American respondents are moderate with value of zero. Though descriptive in nature, these statistics begin to suggest a relationship between Latino identification and lower levels of ideological extremity. The difference of means test in Table 2 confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship between Latino ethnicity and ideological extremity ($p < .05$). Latinos have a mean ideological extremity score of 1.406 versus non-Latinos with a mean ideological extremity score of 1.521, for a difference of 0.1145. However, these results are still bivariate.

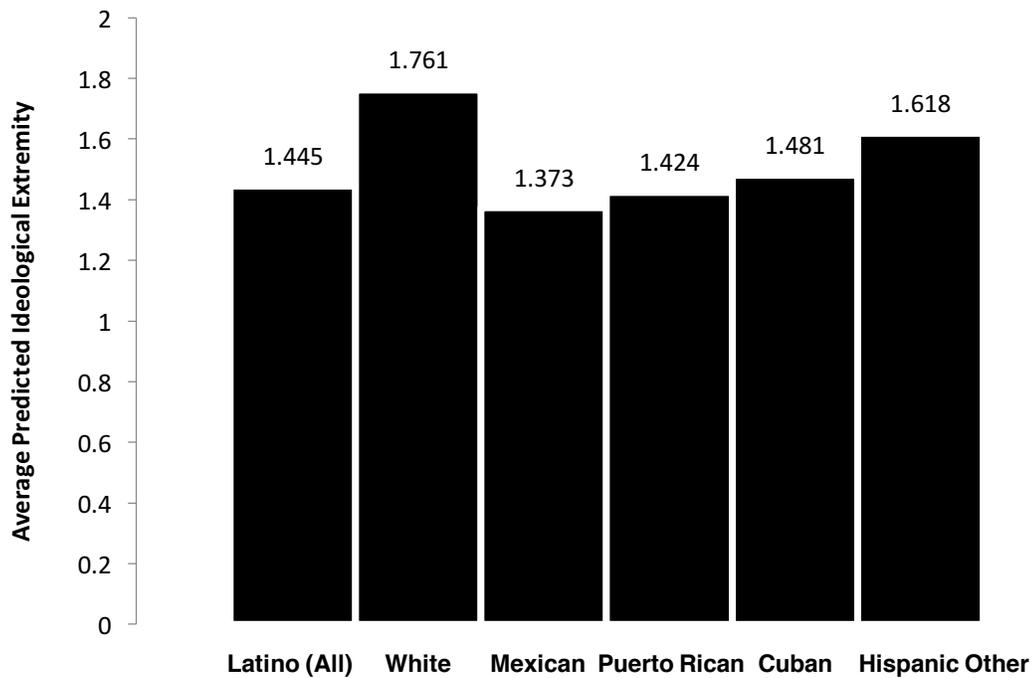
Table 2.3: Regression Analysis for Ideological Extremity and Latino Ethnic Identity

VARIABLE	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>	
	COEF	SE	COEF	SE
Latino	-0.189***	0.066	--	--
Mexican	--	--	-0.252***	0.083
Cuban	--	---	-0.189	0.177
Puerto Rican	--	---	-0.180	0.171
Other Latino	--	--	0.014	0.115
Female	-0.089**	0.040	-0.091**	0.040
Democrat	-0.241***	0.044	-0.243***	0.044
Age	-0.004***	0.001	-0.003	0.001
Catholic	0.043	0.051	0.047	0.051
Less than High School Diploma	-0.062	0.092	-0.059	0.092

Some College	0.189***	0.057	0.189***	0.057
Bachelor's Degree	0.333***	0.063	0.332***	0.063
Graduate Degree	0.378***	0.070	0.377***	0.070
Never Interested In Politics	-0.192	0.202	-0.190	0.201
Voted in 2008	0.059	0.069	0.060	0.069
Unemployed	-0.050	0.085	-0.049	0.085
Census Income 20 th Percentile	-0.161**	0.071	-0.163**	0.071
Census Income 50 th Percentile	-0.068	0.067	-0.073	0.067
Census Income 80 th Percentile	-0.022	0.059	-0.022	0.059
Constant	1.909***	0.114	1.904***	0.115
Number of Observations		3391		3391
Probability>F		.000		.000
R-Squared		.0643		.065

NOTE: *p<.01, **p<.05, ***p<.001. The dependent variable is the distance from the ideological center (zero). Estimation performed using ANES survey weights.

Figure 2.1: Average Predicted Extremity by Ethnicity



Note: Ideological Extremity values closer to zero denote increased ideological moderation.

Table 2.3 depicts the regression results, controlling for other factors. Respondents identifying as Latino (inclusive of all subgroups) are .189 units closer to moderate than white respondents. In other words, Latinos are less ideologically extreme than white respondents. While magnitude of this number might seem small, the relatively narrow range of possible values (1-3) puts this number in perspective. This relationship is statistically significant at the less than .01 level. Figure 2.1 shows how the ideological extremity of Latinos compares to other race and ethnicities. The average predicted Latino extremity is 1.445, versus a value of 1.761 for white Americans and 1.547 for those in the “Other” category.

As a whole, Model 1 is statistically significant at the less than .01 level. Furthermore, it displays that multiple factors also influence the level of ideological extremity of respondents. In addition to being Latino, other factors that make a respondent less extreme include being female, black, older, poorer, or a Democrat. Some of these factors were surprising to us and run contrary to our expectations. I find that females are .089 units less extreme than male respondents. This relationship is statistically significant at the less than .01 level. It appears that our expectations regarding income and ideological extremity are unfounded. Instead, I find that those with low income are actually more ideologically moderate as compared with those with high-income levels in the 95th percentile. All other income categories are insignificant at the less than .05 level. It appears that reliance on social programs does not increase ideological extremity. It suggests that ideology is somewhat impervious to transient

economic situations and that income may be too transient a measure to tap into long term metrics like wealth.

Consistent with expectations, Democrats are less ideologically extreme than Republicans by .241 units from moderate.⁸ I also find that as age increases, respondents become less ideologically extreme. Interestingly, in our model there is only one factor that pushes individuals to be more extreme: education. Compared to those with a high school diploma, those who have completed some college, a bachelor's degree, or a graduate degree are more ideologically extreme at the less than .05 level than those whose highest level of education is a High School diploma. I find that with each increasing level of education, the magnitude of extremity also increases beginning with a .189 increase in ideologically extremity for those who have completed some college to a .333 unit increase for Bachelor's degree holders and topping out at .378 increase in extremity for those with a graduate or professional degree. It would seem that education settles individuals more firmly in an ideologically extreme camp, perhaps making them closer to political elites than the masses.

Finally, several variables are statistically insignificant at the less than .05 level. Being a Catholic, in and of itself, does not influence the ideological extremity of respondents. This is unsurprising given that I expect that the interaction between Catholicism and being Latino provides the situation for cross-pressuring, not Catholicism

⁸ I also ran interactions between ethnicity (Latino) and partisan affiliation (Democrat). These proved to be statistically insignificant at the less than .05 level. Therefore, I excluded them in the interest of parsimony.

alone. In addition, employment status, voting status, interest in politics, and high-income brackets did not have a statistical impact on our dependent variable. In addition, there is no impact on ideological extremity of having less than a high school diploma versus having a high school diploma.

Thus far, I have discussed Latinos as though they are a homogenous group, when in fact, they are a highly heterogeneous group with multiple countries of origin. To more fully understand the statistically significant relationship between ideological extremity and Latino ethnicity, I take our models a step further by splitting the “Latino” variable into the four subgroups collected by ANES: Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Other Latino. Because ANES conducted an oversample in 2012, I have a high enough number of observations within each Latino subgroup with which to engage in statistical analysis. The frequency of each subgroup can be found in Table 3. The regression results using Latino subgroups instead of the heterogeneous Latino variable appear in Table 4.

Model 2 remains statistically significant at the less than .01 level and all other variables remain with the same sign and significance level. What our Latino Subgroup model clearly illustrates is that Mexican Americans appear to be driving the trends that I observe in the previous undifferentiated models. Mexican Americans are less ideologically extreme than whites by .252 units ($p < .01$). All other Latino subgroups are statistically insignificant at the less than .05 level. The predicted effects are depicted in Figure 2.1. Among Latinos, Mexican Americans have the lowest level of predicted extremity at 1.33. Puerto Rican Americans and Cuban Americans are close to the Latino average at 1.424 and 1.481, respectively. I can conclude from this that: (1) Latinos as a group are less ideologically extreme than most race and ethnic groups; and (2) this a

trend is driven by the large number Mexican Americans who are less ideologically extreme than whites. More simply, it appears that Mexican Americans are our swing voters.

DISCUSSION

In this paper, I sought to determine if Latinos are less ideologically extreme than non-Latinos. I find that Latinos are more ideologically moderate than non-Latinos and I attribute this to their unique set of cross-pressures given their demographic realities. However, most important, I find that Mexican Americans, with their sizable and growing portion of the American Latino population are responsible for the lower levels of ideologically extremity in this population. With the Latino population growing faster than any other minority group, and with evidence of Latino political participation on the rise (Garcia 2003), the implication that Latinos may not align along a polarized ideological spectrum is an important one. Realizing that Latino voters may not automatically fall into the fold of one of the major two parties, they stand to play an important role in national politics.

With this knowledge in hand, I can easily make some normative conjectures. Since this study provides evidence that Latinos, despite expressing a loyalty to either the Democratic or Republican party, are less extreme than their fellow partisans, this information can provide a greater understanding of the policy preferences of Latino voters. It would be up to the major political parties to recognize that within their own ranks sit a population of moderate voters who seem to be shying away from the more ideological wing of the party apparatus. It could be that Latino partisans are turned off by the increasing partisanship of the two major parties, particularly in the Republican party

with the rise of the Tea Party. With the Latino electorate being more and more important with each election (Garcia 2003), the party that successfully courts the votes Latinos most effectively could find itself with a sizable electoral advantage in the future.

This research builds upon an already growing body of evidence that Latinos are a distinctive voting group with different attitudes and policy preferences. My contribution can be further disentangled in a multitude of ways. In particular, it is incumbent upon future research to test the theoretical underpinnings of the present study. Further research could involve the direct testing of factors such as religion, demographics and political socialization and their effect on Latino partisan extremity. In other words, I still have yet to unearth *why* Latinos, particularly Mexican Americans, are more ideologically moderate than non-Latinos. Moreover, it would be useful to map the areas in which cross-pressuring appears among the vast political landscape. Issues like abortion, immigration, education and economic issues might present a clearer picture of ideological leanings. The Hispanic community is a rich and diverse subgroup, which demands to be more fully understood politically. The one thing that is clear with this study is that Latino voters are poised to impact American politics and that as a group, they seem to be neither fully liberal nor fully conservative. As such, they become even more important as both parties must battle for the support of this ever-increasing slice of American voters.

CHAPTER 3

Shared Political Context: Changes among White and Latino Political Ideologies in the Context of Rising Latino Population in Congressional Districts

INTRODUCTION

Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to comparing the beliefs and voting habits of U.S. voters based on racial and ethnic categories (see, for example, Abrajano and Alvarez 2010 and Barreto and Segura 2014). Studies find considerable common ground, as well as noticeable differences among white, black, and Latino voter ideologies. What is still unclear is how these populations influence the ideologies of one another when they come into contact. Theories of group interaction posit that rising minority populations result in either tangible political concerns among majority white populations or intangible prejudice and stereotypes (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). Considerably less has been devoted to understanding what occurs among minority populations when *they* come into contact with majority populations. I ask whether it is white majority populations or minority, Latino populations, that are most profoundly affected by a shifting ethnic context within their Congressional district.

This question is particularly timely given that the United States is changing demographically. Currently, the Latino population is quickly increasing in new areas of the United States (Census 2000, American Community Survey 2011). Between 2000 and 2011, Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee all experienced Latino population increases in excess of 150%- the largest increase in the country during this time period (Census 2010, ACS 2011). Indeed, the biggest population surges have taken place in the U.S. South, an area with previously low levels of Latino residents (Census 2010, ACS 2011). Increases in the Latino population in the United States can be attributed to high

immigration and fertility rates among Latino populations (Passel, Livingston and Cohen 2012). Moreover, evidence suggests that Latinos are also beginning to migrate to new areas of the United States in search of (primarily) agricultural jobs (Frey 2006; Hopkins 2010).

I argue that when new Latino populations arrive in historically homogenous Congressional districts, they act as a “shock” to the current electoral balance. Latinos influence the electoral balance in two ways. First, and most obvious, is through the direct application of their beliefs, values, and voting habits. Second, though less obvious, is through the activation of racial and ethnic anxieties among existing white resident populations. Therefore, not only do members of Congress (MCs) in these districts have to adjust to the ideologies of the arriving Latino population, but also must adjust to the increasingly anxious existing population. Moreover, I argue that the beliefs of Latinos arriving in these districts are also likely to be impacted by contact with the existing majority population. I hypothesize that in districts with high levels of majority white populations, the Latino population is likely to become more extreme as a response to their low population and acute minority status.

Establishing the ideological effects of intergroup context in districts experiencing population changes has larger upstream effects for their member of Congress. Relying on basic theories of the electoral connection, I assume that MCs are likely to change their behavior to respond to a shifting electoral constituency, or risk replacement (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978). If enough MCs are required to change their behavior as the result of population shifts, a change is likely to occur in the aggregate behavior of the United States Congress and its level of polarization. The deleterious effects of polarization on the

U.S. system have been well documented and range from government shut down and sequestration to declining levels of trust in government and the inability of Congress to pass legislation (Binder 2004). However, if the addition of a new population results in a decline in congressional polarization, which is likely given that MCs must play to the median voter when heterogeneous ideologies exist in their district, the consequences of polarization could be mitigated considerably.

Using opinion data from the American National Election Survey, 1970-2012, coupled with data from congressional districts in this time period, I demonstrate that Latino voters influence the ideologies of white voters as their population increases in Congressional districts. I examine the distribution of white population ideologies in Congressional districts with differing levels of Latino populations in each decade from 1970 to 2012. Likewise I, examine the distribution of Latino ideologies in districts with varying Latino populations. Consistent with expectation, I find that as the Latino population rises in Congressional districts, white voter ideologies related to social welfare become more extreme to a point of roughly 40 percent, after which conservative ideological positioning begins to fall. I find support for racial threat among white populations predicated on district context. Moreover, I find that Latino populations are uniquely affected by the demographic makeup of their district, as well, but not as might be expected. Finally, I discuss the implications of these findings and opportunities for further investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Long touted as a nation of immigrants, the United States is one of the most demographically diverse nations in the world. The integration of racial and ethnic minorities through time has not been without problem. Scars from the civil war, civil rights movement, and recent battles over immigration have displayed that integration of racial and ethnic minorities requires considerable adjustment from U.S. society. As a result of these processes, the social sciences have generated three major theories designed to explain the interaction of populations based along racial and ethnic divisions. Group contact theory, group threat, and cultural theory all seek to explain the social and political processes and outcomes that arise from demographic changes in society.

Group Contact Theory

Group contact theory was first conceived of by social psychologists on the heels of World War II (Alport 1954; Watson 1947; Williams 1967). Current group contact theorists lay their foundation on scholarship by Gordon Alport (1954). Alport hypothesizes that four situational conditions are required for positive contact to arise between majority and minority groups. He cites equal group status, goal sharing, intergroup cooperation, and contextual support by the law, authorities, or cultural customs as the necessary components for positive group contact. According to Alport, positive contact results in reduced racial prejudice and disconfirmation of negative group stereotypes (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004).

Scholars have continued to find evidence of intergroup contact theory and cite it as support for further action on integration and affirmative action policies. Policies that

increase contact, the theory goes, also increase the likelihood of *positive* contact (Pettigrew 1998; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000; Wagner et al 2003, 2006; Pettigrew and Tropp 2000, 2006). Moreover, not all studies support a direct linear effect. Some studies find evidence of a curvilinear relationship (Giles and Evans 1986; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Taylor 1998; Dollase 2001; Forman 2003). While most researchers focus on contact between white and black populations, a handful of group contact studies have focused on the relationship between Latinos and non-Latino white populations (Hood and Morris 1997, 1998; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Fox 2004). For example, Dixon and Rosenbaum (2004) find a reduction in negative Latino stereotypes when community interactions increase between Latinos and non-Latino white populations.

Group Threat Theory

Conversely, group threat, often referred to as racial threat, predicts negative contact experiences. Blalock (1967) conceptualized racial threat as the fear experienced by majority populations tied to perceived social, economic, and political losses resulting from a rising minority population. Group threat theory relates the more tangible changes that result in society after a demographic shift to negative perceptions of that minority population (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). The theoretical threat relationship takes on many forms. For some group threat theorists, anxiety is tied closely to economic concerns, such as employment competition (Bonacich 1972; LeVine and Campbell 1972; Bobo 1999). For others, political displacement and the struggle for political power produces fear among majority populations (Blalock 1967; Dancygier 2007). Despite the variety, the hallmark of group threat theory is its assumption of scare resources,

regardless of whether they are social, political, or economic, and the competition between majority and minority populations for them (Branton and Jones 2005; Gay 2006). The only precondition for group threat is a large proportion of minorities living in a defined geographical area (Blalock 1967; Bonacich 1972; Lieberson 1980; Olzak 1992).

Multiple studies have uncovered a link between the percentage of Black individuals in an area and increases in negative, anti-black stereotypes among white populations (Glaser 1994; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998; but see Blalock 1967 and Oliver and Mendelberg

2000). Studies generalizing group threat theory to other populations besides the black/white dichotomy generally find similar, albeit less clear results. Evidence suggests that Japanese, Chinese, and European immigrants from historical waves of immigration are likely to induce a similar threat response from white populations (Bonacich, 1972; Lieberson, 1980; Olzak 1992), but what is less clear is the relationship between Latino populations and activation of threat. Preliminary results for group threat related to Latinos appears decidedly mixed (Hopkins 2010). While some find evidence of group threat as the result of rising Latino populations (Huddy and Sears 1995; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000), still others find no evidence of group threat resulting from Latino populations (Hood and Morris 1997; Taylor 1998).

Cultural Theory

Cultural theory, or symbolic racism, encompasses an umbrella of theories with a significantly bleaker characterization of the contact between majority and minority populations (Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1972; Olzak, 1992; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004).

Cultural theory posits that historically negative social construction of minority groups has transmitted a negative image of minorities to white populations through socialization processes (Blumer 1958; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988; Huddy and Sears 1995; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). In other words, cultural theory suggests that racial and ethnic prejudices assure negative contact experiences between majority and minority populations. Such prejudices are activated by a focus on out-group status and belief in stereotypes that cast black and Latino individuals as lazy, morally inept, and criminal (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). Cultural theorists suggest that preconceived negative perceptions (prejudice) prime white populations to have negative contact experiences, which in turn, reinforces and perpetuates negative minority stereotypes going forward. Therefore, contact between majority and minority groups will make little impact on negative perceptions. Cultural theorists have largely limited analysis to a black/white racial categorization. Martinez (1993) expands cultural theory to explain anti-Hispanic sentiments, particularly in the west.

Summary

Though scholars may not agree on the nature of interactions between differing racial and ethnic groups, there are some key take away messages arising from this literature. In general, there are two types of outcome variables: attitudinal metrics and policy effects. Attitudinal studies focus primarily on prejudice and stereotyped attitudes related to minority populations (Allport 1954; Blumer, 1958; Blalock 1967; Bonacich, 1972; Sears, 1988; Olzak 1992; Martinez 1993; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Huddy and Sears, 1995; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). A few, also relate prejudice to broad measures

of trust (see, for example, Putnam 2007). A limited number of studies tie attitudinal changes to voting behavior (Stein, Post and Rinden, 2000; Tolbert and Grummel 2003), but no studies of which I am aware, link group interaction to representational outcomes. I fill this hole by placing my analysis within the electoral context of congressional districts and theorize about how the interaction between groups effect the electoral calculus of MCs *and* the type of representation they are able to provide. Moreover, instead of looking at single policy dimensions to assess the outcome of group interaction, I look at broader measure: ideology.

Considerable attention has been devoted to the impact of group interaction on policymaking. Studies relate affirmative action policy (Stephan and Stephan 2000, Taylor 1998) and school, neighborhood, and workplace integration (for a review, see Pettigrew 1998) to group interaction. Moreover, the majority of inquiry focuses on the interaction between black and white populations. Significantly less research delves into the interaction between Latino and white populations (Martinez 1993; Huddy and Sears 1995; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000). However, when scholarly attention is paid to a Latino/white dichotomy, it is often limited to the consequences of Latino immigration and its effects on immigration policy (Citrin et al. 1997; Chavez and Provine 2009; Hopkins 2010; Marquez and Schraufnagel 2013; Ybarra, Sanchez and Sanchez 2015). The present study contributes to this vein of intergroup contact theory by considering not just Latino immigrants, but the Latino population inclusively. This is particularly important given that the immigrant portion of the Latinos is in decline and the native born proportion is continuing to rise (Krogstad and Lopez 2014). Intergroup contact research

must, therefore, progress by looking at native Latinos and consider them in light of their ongoing racialization (Sanchez 1997; Rumbaut 2009; Schmidt et al. 2010).

Finally, my research fills a sizeable gap in this literature by reversing the casual arrow. I ask how the size of the white population in the environment of *Latinos* might influence the ideological position of Latino individuals. Three studies directly consider the intergroup contact effects on both sides of the relationship (Sigleman and Welch 1993; Tropp 2006; Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). However, they only consider Latinos are only considered tangentially as possessing “minority status.” I continue to push the literature by comparing results of white and Latino interactions side by side.

THEORY

I begin my theory of Latino-white interaction with the assertion that demographic shifts in Congressional districts will produce ideological changes in both whites *and* Latino district populations. The logic here is simple. Because Congressional districts are subject to population size rules (one-person, one-vote), Latino population increases require white population decreases. Therefore, in this context, population change can be understood as a zero-sum game. In previous group contact studies, the context is not electorally driven; therefore this assumption cannot be made. Not only does the Congressional district context govern the calculus of population shifts, but also, I argue, the perceptions of electoral power and resources by each of the two groups. Though this study seeks to understand the ideological changes resulting from white-Latino heterogeneous group context, when viewed from the political calculus of the district’s member of Congress (MC), it is easy to understand the zero-sum game in which white and Latino populations see themselves playing.

Members of Congress are concerned with their electoral fortune must continually monitor a district with a changing population closely (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978). An MC must take into account the aggregation of interests as well as how they will play out electorally. Electoral fortune forces MCs to balance the size and beliefs of particular groups within their district while taking into account how each group interacts with one another to allow for a winning coalition. It is from this type of perspective that group interaction is best understood. While the influx of Latinos remains at low levels, an MC can reasonably look to his majority population for his behavioral cues. In this case, he must act to protect his current reelection constituency. However, at average or medium levels of Latino population increase, an MC experiences heterogeneity of interests that he cannot ignore. The heterogeneity likely forces an MC to engage in blame avoidance by taking fewer and less intense positions (Hall 1998). Finally, when minority populations reach high levels, they become electorally viable, and their opinions, whether they match that of the majority population or not, must be accounted for behaviorally by MCs. Like their member of Congress, white and Latino populations understand that their power rises and falls with their ability to elect an MC who matches their ideological positioning. This realization changes the socio-political positioning of each group. Therefore, I hypothesize that both white and Latino populations will be uniquely influenced through their contact experiences in Congressional districts with one another.

Because each group's electoral influence can be expected to change in proportion to their relative size in the district due to the electoral considerations of their member of Congress, I do not expect a linear relationship between population size and group ideological positioning. Instead, I hypothesize that at each level of group population,

different ideological outcomes will be present in each group. The mechanism at work here is context. As district demographic heterogeneity increases, contact between the two groups is also expected to increase in this context. When the context becomes more heterogeneous, the influence on each populations' ideological positioning should also be highest due to increased experience with the alternate group. The reverse is also expected to be true. As district heterogeneity decreases, so too does contact and thus level of ideological influence.

Though the basic mechanism, contextual contact, is expected to be the same for both White and Latino district inhabitants, the ideological changes produced in each population are expected to be different due to the social construction and socio-political status of each group. The social construction of the U.S. Anglo population has historically placed them at the top of the socio-political ladder. Because of this privileged majority status, Anglo populations are in a position to wield political power and utilize the majority of resources in their area. Therefore, when their population begins to fall, especially to the point of minority status in an area, they discover that they have something to lose. This sense of loss activates feelings of threat assigned to the rising minority population. I argue that they will continue to react to this sense of loss until they become accustomed to the minority population in the new heterogeneous context. By contrast, the social construction of Latinos is one of lower socio-political status. Thus when Latinos are at lower levels of population in a district, this context reinforces their low socio-political placement, convincing the Latino population that they must fight for their "share." Once, however, Latinos reach a critical mass that insulates them from contact with white populations (and thus the negative perceptions of their group), they

will maintain an ideological posturing of the “underdog.” Below I discuss in greater depth how heterogeneity, contact, social construction, and socio-political status combine in each population, white and Latino, to produce unique ideological patterns as the result of shifting district demographic makeup.

White District populations: A Story of Racial Threat

The white population’s sense of loss can be attribute to group threat, also known as racial threat. Racial threat, as conceived of by Blalock (1967), is the fear and anxiety produced in majority populations based on the social, economic, and political implications of a rising minority population. In this way, majority populations begin to view their district in terms of a zero-sum game and associate the arriving populations with their own loss. I hypothesize that this sense of loss spurs majority populations to maintain the status quo by intensifying their own political influence.

Increased ideological intensity among the majority white population stems from fear. White populations are afraid that significant changes in the cultural and political ideologies of their district will occur. Economically, the majority population is concerned about loss of economic job opportunities to those arriving. Indeed to anyone living in the last few decades, the refrain “they take our jobs” is, unfortunately, a familiar one. Majority white populations are also fearful that the minority population will result in a reduction of goods and services to their group. The socio-economic realities of Latinos and their use of government services help to convince majority populations of the impending changes to their government. Above all, however, majority populations are fearful of a fundamental change in the balance of power in a district. Indeed, they are

afraid to be out numbered to the point that their voices will no longer be powerful enough to decide, or even sway, politics. Thus I argue that in the face of these fears, white perceptions of a rising district Latino population will lead to more extreme behavior to protect the population's position of power and their ideological impact on the district.

Because fear is a powerful motivator, I propose that the majority white population is likely to become more ideologically extreme. I predict that this is likely to be most apparent among white Republican populations. Given that the majority of Latinos identify as Democrats or Democrat Leaning, the mismatch in ideological and policy opinions is likely to be much higher when Latinos enter into majority Republican districts, as they are in the South. On issues such as taxes, provision of social welfare benefits, and aid to minority population, it is easy to see why Republican-White populations and Majority Democratic Latino populations are likely to disagree. I argue that these processes are likely to take place among democratic districts as well, but may break down upon less on goods and services and aid to minorities and more along the lines of social issues. This is because White-Democrats are already more ideologically extreme than Latinos (Sanchez 2016). Therefore, on social issues such as abortion and family structure, more moderate Latinos are likely to be mismatched.

This sense of loss and protective fear is likely to change with the percentage of Latinos in the district. A greater amount of Latinos in a district means increased contact with Latino populations. Therefore, as contact increases, anxiety over loss of power and resources becomes a "door step" issue with everyday reminders linking population change to fear of loss. Therefore, I hypothesize that in districts with low levels of Latino population, there will be no significant impact on the ideological positioning of Anglos in

that district because the level of contact between groups is too low to produce these changes. On the other hand, as the Latino population rises to a medium proportion of the population, the context will appear more threatening to white populations and results in more extreme conservative ideological behavior. Finally, as Latinos come to comprise a high level of a district's population, the context will be enough to generate positive contact experiences (such as those discussed by Blalock 1967), and result in a decline in the conservative ideological extremity of the white population.

Latino Case: A Story of Minority Status and Critical Mass

I argue that Latinos are also likely to respond to district demographic changes based on two variables: their socio-political status and the relative size of their own population. I theorize this response will also result, at certain points, in increased ideological extremity, though not in the same direction as white populations. As hypothesized by Blalock (1967), one of the preconditions to positive contact experiences is equality among populations. I argue that the converse is also true. Negative contact is likely to arise when there is a significant gap in the status between majority and minority populations. Latinos have long been socially constructed in a negative light (Martinez 1993; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Chavez 2013). Latinos have been constructed as “criminal” and unwilling to assimilate to mainstream values since the 1920s, a stereotype that has been reinforced with recent battles over immigration (Chavez 2013, see for example Huntington 2004). As a response to these negative stereotypes, Latinos who live in districts with low levels of Latino population (said another way: high white populations) are reminded of their minority status often, given their predominately non-

Latino context. Therefore, their response is likely to become more ideologically extreme in their beliefs in equality and reparation for discrimination. Social welfare issues relating to use of social welfare spending to reduce inequalities, increased taxes to provide for resources for disadvantaged populations, and policies like affirmative action are likely to be greatly affected. Thus, I expect their response to result in increased ideological liberalism. Given their small numbers, Latinos in these districts will compensate by becoming even more liberal to force members of Congress to listen to their distinct views. Likewise, I expect that Latinos who reside in districts with the highest level of heterogeneity (approaching 50-50), will also become more ideologically extreme given that they have an opportunity to become a part of an MC's reelection constituency and thus have an impact on politics. It is in these districts that their perceived political sway is likely to be most important to MC's electoral calculus.

However, once Latinos reach a critical mass (districts with high Latino populations) ideological placement will begin to decline. When Latinos reside in high Latino population districts, their contact with White populations also declines. Therefore, minority status is not constantly experienced. Moreover, high Latino population districts are most likely to be electorally generated. In other words, they are likely to be majority-minority districts. Therefore, the group interaction context is greatly diminished as well as an increased likelihood of being represented by a co-ethnic MC. Thus, Latinos are less likely to feel their minority status.

DATA AND METHODS

To examine how contact influences the ideologies of white and Latino populations in Congressional districts, I rely on ANES data from 1970 to 2010. To the

ANES data, I add Congressional district data from the Almanac of American Politics from 1972 to 2012. This data set allows me to place my research within the context of Congressional districts while still leveraging ideological opinion data. It also allows for examination of ideological trends over multiple decades as demographic changes ebb and flow. Finally, this time period also aligns nicely with the Congressional polarization trend that began in 1970 and continues today.

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable Name	Obs.	Mean	St.Dev.	Min.	Max
Social Welfare Ideology Index	37200	3.097	1.338	.25	7
District Percent Latino	37723	9.571	15.247	0.30	86.60
District Percent Latino Squared	37723	324.079	1010.595	0.09	7499.56
Female Respondent	41500	0.554	0.497	0	1
White Respondent	41500	0.759	0.428	0	1
Latino Respondent	41500	0.083	0.275	0	1
Black Respondent	41500	0.127	0.333	0	1
Other Ethnicity Respondent	41500	0.026	0.160	0	1
Republican	41110	0.357	0.479	0	1
Independent	41110	0.129	0.335	0	1
Democrat	41110	0.515	0.500	0	1
Age	41258	46.244	17.597	17	99
Catholic	41038	0.221	0.415	0	1
Less than High School Diploma	41123	0.209	0.407	0	1
High School Diploma	41123	0.332	0.471	0	1
Some College	41123	0.239	0.426	0	1
Bachelor's Degree	41123	0.146	0.353	0	1
Graduate Degree	41123	0.074	0.262	0	1
Interest in Politics Hardly Ever	30165	0.129	0.335	0	1
Interest in Politics Sometimes	30165	0.586	0.493	0	1
Interest in Politics Often	30165	0.285	0.451	0	1
Voter	38383	0.679	0.467	0	1
Income: 0-16th Percentile	36751	0.173	0.378	0	1
Income: 17-33rd Percentile	36751	0.167	0.373	0	1
Income: 34-67th Percentile	36751	0.341	0.474	0	1
Income: 68-95th Percentile	36751	0.268	0.443	0	1
Income: 96-100th Percentile	36751	0.052	0.221	0	1

Dependent Variable:

The dependent variable taps into respondent ideology. I replicate the measure used by Fleisher and Bond (2013) that generates an index measuring each ANES respondent's support for government provided social welfare benefits. The measure consists of four survey items that were asked consistently between 1970 and 2010. They include support for the following:

- 1) Government provided healthcare.
- 2) Government guaranteed job and standard of living
- 3) Government aid to blacks and other minorities
- 4) Reduced government spending and services

Each item ranges from one to seven with one indicating the most liberal position and seven indicating the most conservative position. To arrive at an index of social welfare ideology, I continue to follow the lead of Fleisher and Bond (2013) and take the average for each respondent across items. For an in-depth discussion of this measure's validity see Fleisher and Bond (2013). See table 1 for descriptive statistics for each of the variables described here.

Focal Independent Variables

The primary independent variable measures the percentage of Latinos in each Congressional district. Data for this measure was derived from the Almanac of American Politics. In an effort to account for the hypothesized curvilinear relationship between Latino district heterogeneity and ideological extremity, I include both the raw percentage, as well as the squared value of this variable.

In addition to district demographic data, I also break down the data by respondent race and ethnicity. I utilize a series of four dichotomous variables taking on the value of one if the respondent identifies with each racial or ethnic category and zero if not. The variables appear in each table as *White Respondent*, *Latino Respondent*, *Black Respondent*, and *Other Ethnicity Respondent*. Coefficient values for these variables are compared to the *White Respondent* category in all three models.

I also wish to understand the intervening role of partisanship in the relationship among ideological extremity and Latino district heterogeneity. Therefore, I include three dichotomous partisan variables within in the base model. I transform the seven-category ANES partisan self-identification variable by collapsing pure partisans and partisan leaners into the variables *Democrat* and *Republican*. Only those who identify as pure independents are included in the third variable, *Independent*. In the second and third models, partisanship is accounted for by limiting the analysis to *Democrats* and *Republicans*, respectively.

Control variables:

Because this analysis seeks to understand the pressure that white and Latino voters place on elected officials as the result of group contact, I include the measure, *Voter*, to account for respondents who voted in the most recent Presidential election. I also include standard controls in each model for, income, educational attainment, interest in politics, gender, and age. See Appendix B for specific coding information.

I generate three OLS regression models to analyze the extent to which the percentage of Latinos in a district influences the ideological extremity of white and

Latino respondents in those districts. The first model examines both the basic underlying relationship between ideological extremity and district heterogeneity, as well as the role of ethnicity (particularly for Anglos and Latinos) in determining ideological extremity. The second and third models assess the intervening role of partisanship within the base relationship.

RESULTS

Table 3.2: Base Model OLS Regression for Relationship between District Percent Latino and Social Welfare Ideology Index

	Base Model
District Percent Latino	0.014*** (0.002)
District Percent Latino Squared	-0.000*** (0.000)
Female Respondent	-0.155*** (0.016)
Latino Respondent	-0.117*** (0.037)
Black Respondent	-0.324*** (0.027)
Other Ethnicity Respondent	-0.038 (0.056)
Republican Respondent	0.421*** (0.018)
Independent Respondent	0.066** (0.026)
Age	0.004*** (0.001)
Catholic	0.104*** (0.021)
Less than High School Diploma	-0.337*** (0.025)
Some College	0.138*** (0.021)
Bachelor's Degree	0.130*** (0.026)
Graduate Degree	0.069** (0.034)
Interest in Politics Hardly Ever	-0.081*** (0.030)
Interest in Politics Sometimes	0.063*** (0.019)
voter	0.124*** (0.019)
Income: 17-33 rd Percentile	0.102***

Income:34-67 th Percentile	(0.029) 0.179***
Income:68- 95 th Percentile	(0.026) .237***
Income:96-100 th Percentile	(0.028) 0.239***
Constant	(0.042) 2.579*** (0.042)

Observations	22282
Prob>F	0.000
R-Squared	0.1048

Note: Dependent Variable Social Welfare Ideology Index. Higher numbers are more conservative. p<.05**;
p<.01***

Figure 3.1: Predicted Curvilinear Relationship Between Social Welfare Ideology Index and District Percent Latino for All Respondents

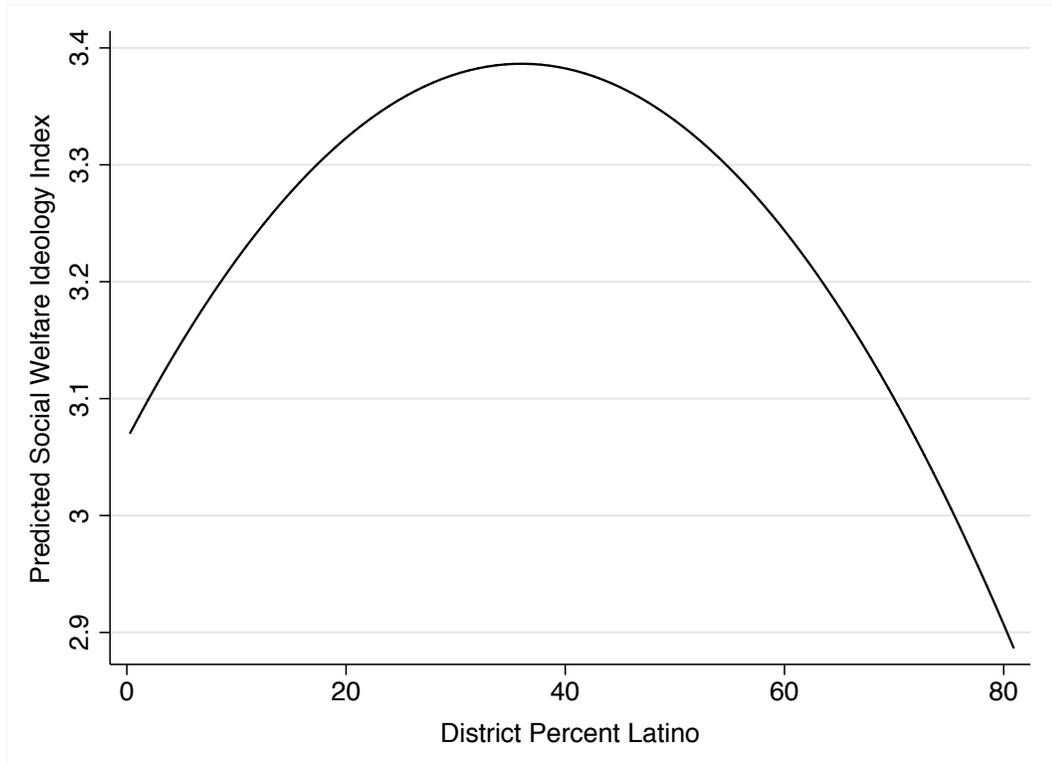
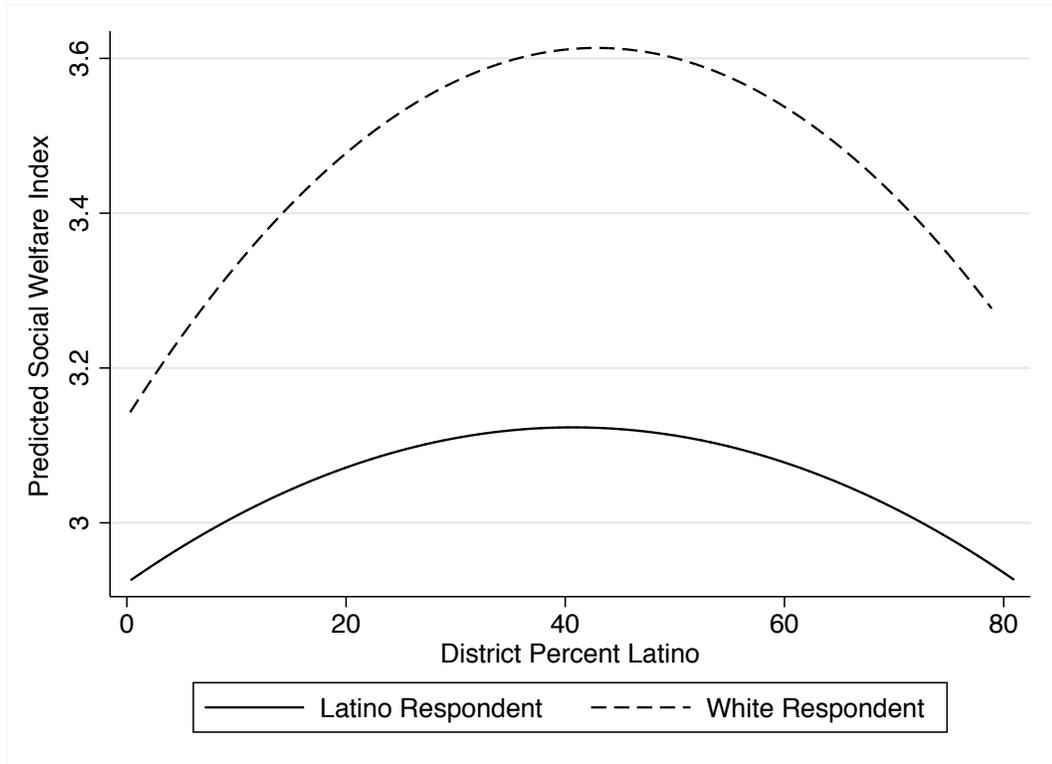


Table 3.2 displays the regression results for the base model. The model is statistically significant at the less than .01 level. The primary independent variables, *District Percent Latino* and *District Percent Latino Squared*, are statically significant at the less than .05 and .01 level, respectively. As expected, the signs point in opposite directions suggesting a curvilinear relationship between district percent Latino and respondent ideological extremity. Figure 1 displays this relationship graphically. With each percentage increase in district Latino population, the ideological extremity of respondents in the conservative direction increases until roughly 35% Latinos in a district. At this point, the ideological extremity of respondents begins to steadily decline. This model suggests that there is an important racial threat effect present when Latinos population shifts results in an increase in district level heterogeneity.

Figure 3.2: Predicted Curvilinear Relationship Between Social Welfare Ideology Index and District Percent Latino for White versus Latino Respondents



Note: All other variables held constant

In addition to a district's percentage of Latinos, the base model also indicates that the impact of context is substantively different for white, Latino, and black respondents. Figure 3.2 illustrates the substantive difference between Anglos and Latinos as the result of differing levels of demographic heterogeneity. From this figure, it is clear that white populations are most strongly influenced by Latino district heterogeneity. White respondents become more conservative as Latinos begin to increase in respondent's districts up to about forty percent. After this point white populations begin to become accustomed to the Latino population and thus experience declines in extreme conservative ideological positioning. Latino respondents experience a similar trend, though they begin and end less ideologically extreme than white respondents. Until a district's Latino population reaches roughly forty percent, Latino respondents experience

an increase in their conservative ideological positioning. After this point, however, ideological extremity decreases among Latino respondents. On balance, this suggests that both Anglo and Latino respondents exhibit their least extreme conservative ideological behavior when they reside in districts with low Latinos populations or high populations. Put another way, both groups are most extreme when the highest level of ethnic heterogeneity exists.

Table 3.3: Republican and Democratic OLS Regression for Relationship between District Percent Latino and Social Welfare Ideology Index

	Democrats	Republicans
District Percent Latino	0.005 (0.003)	0.023*** (0.004)
District Percent Latino Squared	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
Female Respondent	-0.139*** (0.027)	-0.191*** (0.033)
Latino Respondent	-0.166*** (0.057)	-0.029 (0.088)
Black Respondent	-0.347*** (0.033)	-0.395*** (0.126)
Other Ethnicity Respondent	0.054 (0.094)	-0.253** (0.120)
Age	0.004*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Catholic	0.058 (0.033)	0.225*** (0.043)
Less than High School Diploma	-0.388*** (0.037)	-0.244*** (0.057)
Some College	0.123***	0.131***
Bachelor's Degree	0.064 (0.045)	0.180*** (0.048)
Graduate Degree	-0.003 (0.056)	0.214*** (0.067)
Interest in Politics Hardly Ever	-0.061 (0.048)	-0.227*** (0.067)
Interest in Politics Sometimes	0.088*** (0.030)	-0.014 (0.037)
voter	0.066** (0.030)	0.271*** (0.040)
Income:17-33 rd Percentile	0.127*** (0.042)	0.024 (0.067)
Income:34-67 th Percentile	0.176*** (0.039)	0.217*** (0.061)
Income:68- 95 th Percentile	0.236***	0.256***

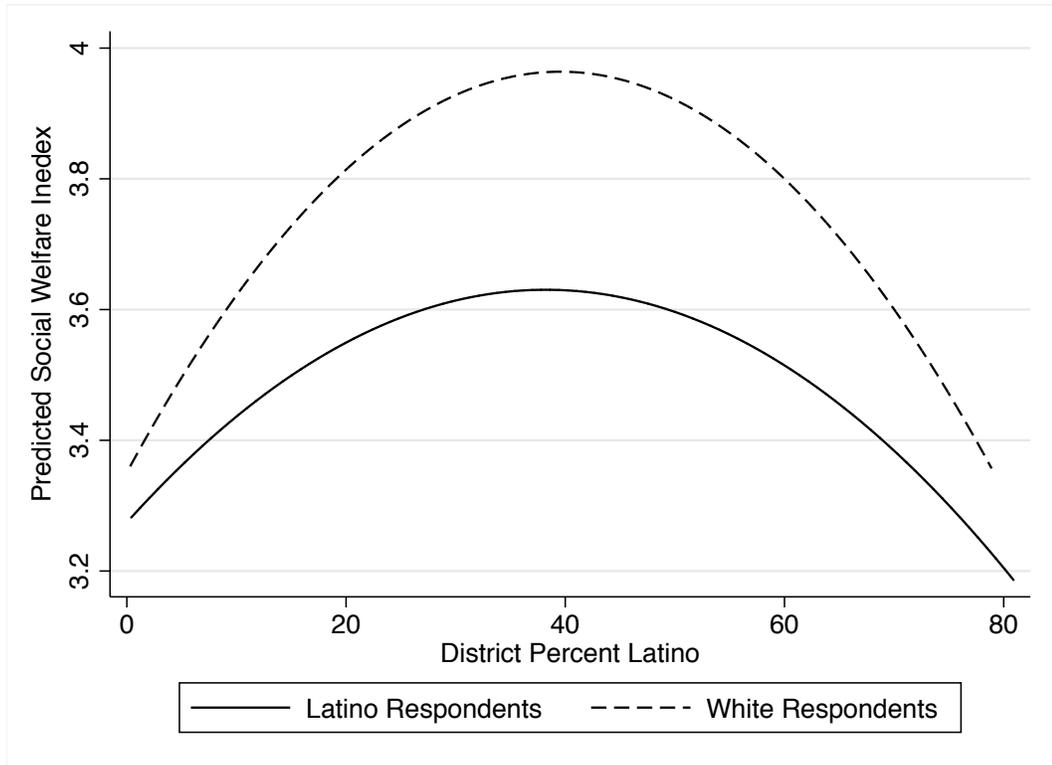
	(0.044)	(0.062)
Income:96-100 th Percentile	0.284***	0.165**
	(0.080)	(0.077)
Constant	2.636***	3.034***
	(0.068)	(0.088)
<hr/>		
Observations	8487	5679
Prob>F	0.0000	0.0000
R-Squared	0.0633	0.0810

Note: Dependent Variable Social Welfare Ideology Index. Higher numbers are more conservative. $p < .05^{**}$; $p < .01^{***}$

β.

Returning to the results from the base model, there are only a few factors that result in a decrease in conservative ideological extremity among respondents. Latino respondents are less conservative than white respondents by .117 units. This relationship is statistically significant at the less than .01 level. Likewise, respondents who are female, black, have completed less than a high school diploma, or display low interest in politics all exhibit decreases in conservative ideological positioning. Each of these are statistically significant at the less than .05 level. By contrast, there are many factors that result higher conservative positioning among respondents. Increases in age, identification as a Roman Catholic, educational attainment, and each stepwise increase in income all result in increases in conservative ideological positioning. Moreover, voter status and “some” interest in politics are related to increases conservative positioning. Perhaps the most interesting statistically significant, positive factor is partisanship. As expected given electoral sorting that took place in the 1970s, Republican respondents are more ideologically conservative than Democrats by .421 units. This relationship is statistically significant at the less than .01 level. Independents are also more ideologically conservative than Democrats by .066 units ($p < .01$). To further probe these results, I now turn to a discussion of the Democrat and Republican only models found in Table 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Predicted Curvilinear Relationship Between Social Welfare Ideology Index and District Percent Latino for White versus Latino Respondents among Republican Respondents Only



Aside from the focal variables, the results are remarkably stable across all three models. Among Democratic respondents (the democratic only model), the percentage of Latinos is statistically unrelated to the ideological conservatism of respondents at the less .05 level. This finding is unsurprising given that the majority of Latinos are Democratic co-partisans. Given the close relationship between partisanship and ideology, this means that Democrats are less susceptible to racial threat as the result of context because ideologically, white Democrats and Latinos are ideologically more similar, *a priori*. In other words, there is little need for ideological change among Democrats given rises in the Latino population because Latinos are viewed as co-partisans. By contrast, among Republican respondents, the percentage of Latinos in a district has a strong curvilinear

influence on their ideological positioning. This supports my hypothesis that Republicans are most susceptible to ideological shifts as the result of changing ethnic context. In addition, Latino respondents are only statistically influenced in the Republican model, not the Democratic model suggesting that Latino Republicans are unique among their co-partisans. Among democrats, Latinos appear to be statistically indistinguishable from white respondents with regard to ideology. Figure 3 supports these findings by graphically depicting the relationship between rising Latino populations on ideological conservatism among Republican respondents. Again, both white and Latino Republican respondents undergo similar curvilinear trends in response to their changing district context; however, white Republicans exhibit a sharper substantive shift than Latino Republicans. Though, it also depicts that white Republicans become accustomed to the new context and eventually down shift their ideological conservatism to pre-population change lows.

CONCLUSION

I set out to understand how district ethnic context influences the ideology of Anglos and Latinos. I uncover strong evidence of racial threat conditioned on demographic context. As predicted, white populations experience racial threat until the district Latino population rises above 40 percent. After this point, White populations become accustomed to the heterogeneous context and ease their extreme conservative positioning. This result is driven primarily by Republican respondents who experience intense feelings of social and political threat at the hands of a rising Latino population. Democrats, who enjoy co-partisan status with the majority of the rising Latino population, do not experience the same feelings of threat. Contrary to expectations,

Latinos become more conservative as their district context becomes more heterogeneous. Future research is necessary to probe the underlying reasons for this phenomenon, but a strong case could be made for assimilation theories. Latinos could be responding to the intense feelings of fear among Republican white populations by becoming more “appropriate” to these populations so as to increase their chances of a more positive reception into the district.

These results open up an interesting line of research. The majority of group contact theory considers the impact of minority populations on majority populations. This research suggests that minorities may be influenced by contact as much or more than majority populations within the microcosm of Congressional districts. Moreover, the influence of heterogeneous context among Latinos changes their ideological behavior in surprising ways. Future research must continue this line of inquiry to gain further leverage on whether these findings stem from socialization, environmental changes, or contextual support for equality among districts where population is in the near equal range between Latino and white residents. These findings could result in a more complete picture of what it means to be Latino in America.

CHAPTER 4

Congress, Polarization, and Latino Demography: Understanding the Influence of Latino Constituents on Congressional Polarization

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, members of Congress have exhibited increasingly extreme roll call voting behavior. As a result, considerable attention has been devoted to explaining this polarization trend. Southern realignment (Sundquist 1983; Black and Black 1987; Rohde 1991, Hood et al. 1999, Jacobson 2000, Weisberg 2002, Roberts & Smith 2003, Theriault 2003, Polsby 2005; Layman et al 2006), gerrymandering (Carson et al. 2003, Theriault 2003; Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003, but see McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006), primary elections (Gerber and Morton 1998; Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003; Brady, Hahn, and Pope 2007), economic inequality (Piketty and Saez 2003; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Gelman 2009; Garand 2010), money in politics (Jacobson 1990; Lessig 2011; Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003; but see Hall and Wayman 1990; Smith 1995; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Bonica 2012), and changes in media coverage (Zelizer 2006; Prior 2007; Snyder and Stromberg 2010, but see Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006) have all been closely examined as factors contributing to Congressional polarization. However, the factor that has received the greatest amount of attention is the link between mass and Congressional polarization (see, for example, Layman and Carsey 2002 and Levendusky 2009; but see Fiorina 2013). The logic here is simple. When the electorate becomes increasingly polarized, Congressional representatives must respond in kind due to strong reelection incentives (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978). Though theoretically compelling, conclusive evidence for mass polarization remains elusive (Barber and McCarty 2015). Despite strong evidence

for electoral sorting among the mass electorate, research is less clear as to the frequency with which voters are displaying extreme ideological positions (Fiorina 2013). Moreover, even *if* we are convinced that the electorate is displaying extreme ideological positions, the mechanism for change is often poorly theorized or missing all together.

I contribute to this literature by suggesting a simple reason for mass electorate ideological change: district population shifts. Unlike gerrymandering theorists who place their emphasis on the redistricting of an existing population, I focus on changes that arise from district heterogeneity, particularly those resulting from immigration and migration among the U.S. Latino population. The question is, when Latinos arrive in their new, homogenous district will they reinforce existing Congressional polarization trends or change them?

I argue that when Latinos migrate to new areas of the United States, they create a district-wide “shock” that produces ideological changes among the existing electorate. These changes have electoral implications for members of Congress. Thus, I theorize that district demographic shifts have the potential to change (1) the behavior of an existing district representative or (2) the district’s representative entirely. Each mechanism relies on the idea that adding new voices to a district increases the heterogeneity of interests to which a member of Congress (MC) must respond. Using district and Congressional data from 1970 to 2014, I demonstrate that increases in Latino population at the district level result in conditional changes in the ideological behavior of members of Congress. Particularly, I find that members of Congress display increasingly extreme voting behavior until the Latino population rises to thirty percent. Above thirty percent, MCs exhibit declines in their ideological extremity.

This study takes a close look at how increases in the Latino population are likely to affect district electoral politics, particularly the ideological behavior of members of Congress. Understanding the impact of Latino population shifts is imperative in light of their large and growing population. Due to high immigration and fertility rates, this young population has the potential to change politics for decades to come (Passel, Livingston and Cohn 2012). Moreover, any resulting changes in electoral outcomes are likely to have upstream affects for Congressional polarization. If, as I argue, Latinos decrease electoral polarization in their new districts, the United States Congress could become, in the aggregate, less polarized than today's hyperpolarized state.

A better understanding of polarization is important due to its negative legislative and representational consequences. Extreme polarization makes it more difficult to pass legislation, with most proposed policies ending in gridlock and stalemate (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Gilmour 1995; Groseclose and McCarty 2001; Krehbiel 1998; Brady and Volden 2005, Binder 2003). Moreover, hyperpolarization makes it more difficult to pass certain *types* of policies, such as long-term, redistributive welfare policies and coherent foreign policies (Galston and Nivola 2006). There are also material consequences when Congress does not act. For example, in 2013, when Congress was unable to pass a budget, citizens were negatively impacted by sequestration, government shut down, and debt limit crises. Furthermore, evidence suggests that Congressional inaction is becoming more common. For example, the 112th Congress was the least productive⁹ Congress in a century.

In addition to policy effects, heightened Congressional polarization also affects

⁹ Productivity is measured as the number of laws passed per Congressional session.

representation. High congressional polarization drives down Congressional approval and trust in government (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 2002; King 1997; Heatherington 2005). Congressional approval currently hovers near 11 percent, just two points higher than the lowest Congressional approval rating ever recorded (Gallup 2015). Trust in government is in a similarly dismal state with only 19 percent trusting the government to “do what is right” most or all of the time (Gallup 2015). Therefore, a changing electorate *could* help mitigate the serious effects of hyperpolarization in the United States Congress by changing the behavior of one member of Congress at a time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Congressional polarization literature exhibits both breadth and depth in the field of American politics. Though extensive scholarship explores causes of polarization internal to Congress (Theirault 2008), the present study is concerned exclusively with the external relationship between members of Congress and their constituents. Literature concerning these two political actors has focused a great deal of attention on the level of polarization in the mass electorate, the level of polarization resulting from the dyadic representation of constituents by a member of Congress, and the implications for polarization as the result of demographic changes in Congressional districts. Below I review each of the forgoing research areas and discuss the questions that remain unanswered by the current literature.

The Role of Mass Polarization

For mass polarization to influence Congressional polarization levels, it is necessary to establish the extent to which the masses are polarized. Considerable

scholarly attention has been paid to this subject. Generally, scholars agree that polarization among the mass electorate has increased in recent decades (DiMaggio et al 1996; Carmines and Layman 1997; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2002; Jacobson 2000, 2005; Fleisher and Bond 2001; Weisberg 2002; Stonecash et al 2003). However, the extent to which the masses are polarized is a significant point of debate. The debate centers on what type of evidence constitutes “support.” Scholars tend to focus on two types of evidence when discussing mass polarization: electoral sorting and extreme opinion data.

As previously mentioned, strong evidence exists for electoral sorting among the masses. Empirical evidence indicates that liberal voters are increasingly supporting the Democratic Party and conservative voters are increasingly supporting the Republican Party (Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman et al 2005; Levendusky 2009). This process, also known as partisan realignment, is one of the necessary conditions to establishing the link between mass and Congressional polarization. Partisan realignment occurred as a result of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 70s. During this period, issues of race and ethnicity restructured the base of the two major parties by crosscutting classic New Deal economic and social agendas. Slowly, white Southern Democrats began to affiliate with the Republican Party (Sundquist 1983; Black and Black 1987; Layman et al 2005) and African Americans almost unanimously affiliated with the Democratic Party (Abramowitz 1994; Legee et al. 2002).

Partisan realignment is an important condition supporting mass polarization because it establishes the bifurcation of mass interests into two camps that exhibit inter-group heterogeneity and intra-group homogeneity. For some however, this evidence

supports exactly the opposite. The divide between Fiorina and others centers on the conceptualization of polarization. Where most view polarization as a widening gap between the average Democrat and the average Republican, Fiorina and Levendusky view this phenomena as “party sorting” (Fiorina et al 2005; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006). In other words, they argue that party sorting is an elite driven trend, and the masses have little part to play except as followers. Fiorina et al (2005) argue that the level of mass polarization may be exaggerated given the polarized political choices with which the electorate is presented (see also Fiorina and Abrams 2008). Fiorina does concede, however, that the masses are ideologically sorted, but the match between ideology and party identification is not evidence of polarization, *per se*.

To further this vein of study, scholars have begun to look at the issue positions of the mass electorate for evidence of extreme ideological positioning. Again, mixed evidence suggests that Americans may be moderate on most issues (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2006; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Levendusky, Pope, and Jackman 2008; Bafumi and Herron 2010), but those who engage in politics have more extreme issue positions than the average American (Abramowitz 2010; Sunstein 2002).

Paramount to any discussion of the dyadic relationship between MCs and constituents is being able to establish how strongly MC and constituent preferences are correlated. Again, the results are decidedly mixed. While some scholars find that MC’s take considerably more extreme positions than their constituents (Clinton 2006; Bafumi and Herron 2010), others find little evidence for disconnect between mass and elite preferences (Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; Jacobson 2012). They theorize that voters

are aligned with the ideological orientation of their chosen party based on issue preferences (electoral sorting) and therefore, the masses *are* polarized (Abramowitz and Saunders 2005, 2008; Jacobson 2012).

Demographic Changes and Congressional Polarization

Implicit in most studies linking mass and congressional polarization is the assumption that demographics and ideology are closely related. In other words, knowing a few demographic facts about an individual will allow us to predict, with some accuracy, their political orientation. Therefore, polarization studies that focus on such factors as turnout and redistricting, imply that changing the constituency a member of Congress represents will change the behavior of a member of Congress. Therefore, though many studies imply that district demographic changes could result in behavioral and delegation changes in Congress, few studies test particular demographic shifts out right. Recently, Collie and Mason (2000), find evidence that even small changes in the partisan electoral base of an MC can result in representational effects. They attribute this finding to what they term the “single-member district phenomenon.” Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani (2003) conduct a more direct test of the relationship between district demographic makeup and polarization. They argue that over time, Republican and Democratic districts have become increasingly homogenous since the 1960s. Republican districts tend to be more affluent, white, and suburban, while Democratic districts are becoming predominately urban, low income, and increasingly minority. They find a strong correlation between homogenous partisan districts and the ADA scores of their representatives in Congress.

Few studies have addressed the role of increasing Latino demographics. McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal (2006) discuss the role of immigration as a “dance partner” to inequality and polarization in the United States. They theorize that the strong relationship between immigrant status and low socioeconomic status result in the lack of electoral pressure from those with low income on elected officials. Therefore, much like the early work of V.O. Key (1949), the singular pressure from the majority white population applies extreme ideological pressures to the policy process through elected officials. One reason for their lack of representation, according to McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, is that the majority of immigrants are not eligible to vote due to non-citizen status. However, in 2014, 25.2 million Latinos were eligible to vote (Lopez et al 2014). Since 2010, Latino eligible voters have risen by 3.9 million and have made up over ten percent of the eligible voting population (Lopez et al 2014). Moreover, their rates of increase are higher than other racial and ethnic groups (Lopez et al 2014). As discussed above, the problem is not *eligibility* to vote, but mobilization. Furthermore, the authors assume that the impact of ethnic politics is confined to the U.S. immigrant population. Since 2000, the U.S foreign-born population has begun a steady decline, while the native born Latino population has continued to grow with increasing speed (Krogstad and Lopez 2014; Garcia 2012). Therefore, the impact is likely to be much stronger than tangentially discussed in this work.

What remains unclear is whether and how the fastest growing population in the U.S., Latinos, affect elite Congressional polarization. Has the dramatic growth since the 1990s in the Latino population reinforced or curbed polarization in Congress? And what does the future hold, assuming the Latino population continues to increase? Coupling

current research regarding Latino voting behavior and their demographic trends into new electoral localities, I generate a structural impact theory of how Latinos are and will continue to change the face of polarized congressional elections. While research on the characteristics of Latino opinion increases, we know very little about its consequences. For example, it is unclear whether an increasing Latino electorate will increase current Congressional polarization patterns or, as they grow and exert more pressure, result in a decline in Congressional polarization. It is to this we now turn.

THEORY

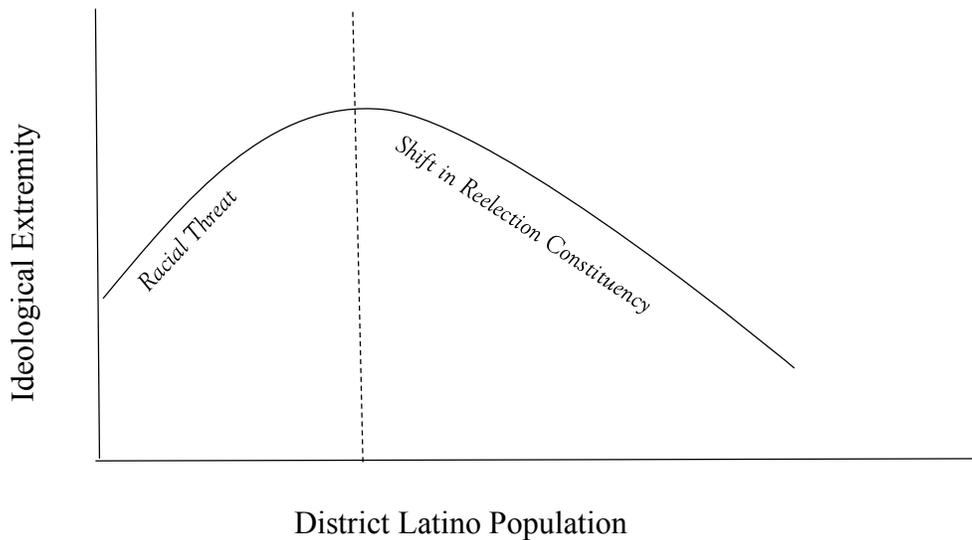
The basic theory advanced here is that Congressional polarization will decrease over time, as Latino populations continue to increase in congressional districts. My theory is predicated on the assumption that members of Congress have a strong reelection incentive (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978) and thus, their behavior in Congress will seek to represent the beliefs of their reelection constituency as far as possible. Therefore, when members of Congress experience demographic changes within their districts, they are likely to respond behaviorally, if it is in their electoral interest to do so. If an MC does not respond or cannot respond to a shifting constituency, he/she could risk replacement.

Current U.S. demographic trends are placing multiple members of Congress in the position of adjusting to shifting reelection constituencies. In the last several decades, the U.S. Latino population has not only continued to grow through immigration and high birth rates, but has also begun to spread through-out the United States. Historically, Latinos engaged in enclave living, settling in states like New Mexico, California, and Texas. Recent migration trends show Latinos moving into states and districts that are historically unfamiliar with the Latino population- particularly in the U.S. South (Census

2000, American Community Survey 2011). For example, between 2000 and 2011, states like Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee experienced Latino population increases in excess of 150% (Census 2000, American Community Survey 2011). Moreover, Latinos have begun to move into congressional districts that are the most polarized the United States has seen in 100 years. For example, Georgia's Latino population increased drastically by 105% between 2000 and 2011 and in 2011 had a Cook Partisan score of D+26¹⁰ (*Almanac of American Politics*). Similarly, Tennessee's 9th district, which experienced a 154% increase in Latino population by 2011, had a Cook Partisan score of R+19. Both of these districts are highly polarized and experienced a drastic change in their voter population in the early 2000's (*Almanac of American Politics*). The forgoing statistics, may, at first glance, appear counter intuitive as the districts experiencing high Latino population growth in the preceding decade do not appear to experience the predicted polarization downshift. However, the influence of Latinos in Congressional districts extends beyond a simple linear effect. Instead, I hypothesize that the relationship between a rising Latino population and the ideological extremity of MCs is curvilinear. This is due to the fact that Latinos are not only adding increased ideological heterogeneity to the existing district, but evidence also suggests that intergroup contact within Congressional districts results in ideological changes in both the majority and minority populations.

¹⁰ The Cookpartisan index is a measure of electoral polarization that measures how strongly a district leans towards Republicans or Democrats as compared to the nation as a whole. The least liberal district is D+0 and the least conservative district is R+0. For more on cookpartisan, see cookpolitical.com.

Figure 4.1: Theoretical Relationship Ideological Extremity by District Latino Population



Due to intergroup context following demographic shifts, I argue that at low levels, a backlash of racial threat among the majority white population may actually push MCs ideological positioning farther away from those of the arriving Latino population. However, once Latinos reach a tipping point, or critical mass, in their district, Latinos are able to place meaningful ideological pressure on members of Congress, which may help push MCs closer to the ideological center. Figure 1 illustrates the theorized curvilinear relationship between the ideological extremity of MCs and the percentage of Latinos in their district. There are two distinct periods of impact when Latino populations increase in a district: (1) racial threat and (2) shift in reelection constituency.

During the racial threat period, a MC's primary constituency becomes politically reinvigorated based on a perceived threat from what is believed to be an outside group- in this case, Latinos. Blalock (1967) defines racial threat as the means by which white populations maintain both power and privilege. Racial threat manifests itself in three distinct areas: economic, political, and symbolic. Economic threat refers to concerns

among white populations regarding job and wage stability. Concerns regarding employment availability have become a common refrain in reference to immigrant populations. Economic threat relies on the idea of zero sum politics where limited government resources must be split among the population. When a new, rising population requires any portion of scarce government resources, existing populations respond with anxiety over their perceived losses. Political threat manifests itself as fear of losing political leverage to a minority population. Finally, symbolic threat refers to the belief that non-white populations are tied to criminal and deviant behaviors that often manifest as racial prejudice. In these ways, racial threat results in more vehement demands of elected officials to rectify what white populations perceive as imminent threat to their livelihood.

Regardless of the specific cause of racial threat, the outcome is the same. Existing majority populations become extreme in their desire to hinder the incorporation of the minority population by demanding political action from their MC. During this period, MCs become more ideologically extreme to account for the political demands of their primary reelection constituency. As the percentage of Latinos increases, so too does the vigorous opposition from the MCs existing primary reelection constituency. However, this cannot continue indefinitely. Once the Latino population reaches a critical mass, Latinos become a large enough segment of the population so as to increase the likelihood of inclusion in a MCs reelection constituency. Thus, Latinos are able to make their own, less extreme, demands on a MCs behavior. After this point, the MC must either alter their behavior to be more moderate (e.g. more accommodating of multiple perspectives) or risk replacement in the next election. Implicit in the shift from racial threat to shifting

reelection constituency is the electoral connection as described earlier. The electoral connection is the well-established mechanism by which constituent demands are met by MCs (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978, Miller and Stokes 1963). Therefore, in this case the predicted outcome of the electoral connection is expected to be unique, while the mechanism has been well established in the literature.

To summarize, I expect a curvilinear relationship between the ideological extremity of members of Congress and the percentage of the district population comprised of Latinos. As the Latino district population increases, MCs' ideological extremity is also expected to increase in response to the racial anxieties experienced by majority white constituents. However, once the Latino population reaches the critical mass that allows them access to their MCs' reelection constituency, the ideological extremity of MCs will begin a slow descent to pre-racial threat levels.

DATA AND METHODS

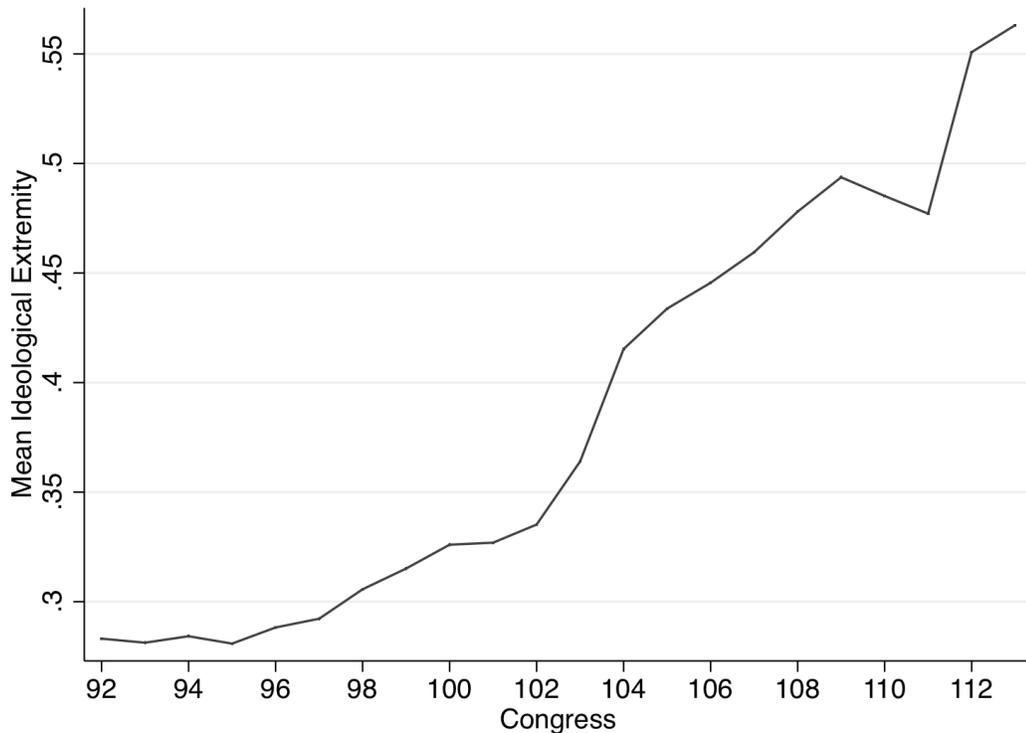
To analyze the link between the rising numbers of Latino voters, ethnicity and their effects on Congressional polarization, I compile Congressional data from the 92nd – 113th Congresses (1971-2014). Data is derived primarily from the *Almanac of American Politics* and includes personal, partisan, and district demographic information related to each member of Congress. Additional demographic data was obtained from the United States Census between 1970 and 2010. This time period captures enough time before and after the polarization and immigration trends under evaluation in this study to establish a link between the two phenomena. The unit of analysis is the member of Congress by Congress accounting for 9,635 observations in the data set. To ensure independence of observations across Congresses, each model presented here is clustered on the unique

ICPSR identification code for each distinct member of Congress that has served through time. Between 1971 and 2014, 1,753 distinct members of Congress have served in the House of Representatives.

This data is ideal for several reasons. First, it includes both contemporary and historical data spanning forty-four years and twenty-two congresses. Given that rising Latino demographics are the primary catalyst in my model, this period has some of the most dramatic increases in Latino immigration to date and five of the most fundamental pieces of immigration legislation passed in the last 100 years.¹¹ Second, the time period is contemporary enough to be predictive of future population flows and ideological changes. My analysis is conducted using multivariate OLS Regression to understand the unique ways in which ethnicity impacts ideological extremity in Congress given a MC's district level and intra-Congressional political context. I also utilize Clarify to predict the impacts of Latino populations on the ideological extremity of MCs at specified levels.

¹¹ Federal legislation includes: the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the 1990 Immigration act which expanded immigration provisions in the 1965 Immigration Act, the 1996 Illegal Immigration Act, the 2002 Enhanced Security and Visa Entry Reform Act, and finally, the 2005 Real ID Act.

Figure 4.2: Mean Ideological Extremity in the U.S. House of Representatives 92nd-113th Congresses



Dependent Variable: Ideological Extremity

The dependent variable in my analysis measures the ideological extremity of each member of Congress. For this purpose, I use McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal's DW-Nominate scores. DW-Nominate scores measure the ideological positioning of each member of Congress based on a three stage weighting of his/her roll call voting record. I transform this variable by taking the absolute value of the measure. Before transformations, DW-Nominate scores range from -1 to 1. By taking the absolute value, all scores become standardized in the positive direction and allow for a direct comparison between members regardless of partisan direction. In other words, a Republican with a score of .7 and a Democrat with a score of -.7, when viewed in terms of absolute value, are both equally extreme. Figure 2 depicts the average change in the dependent variable

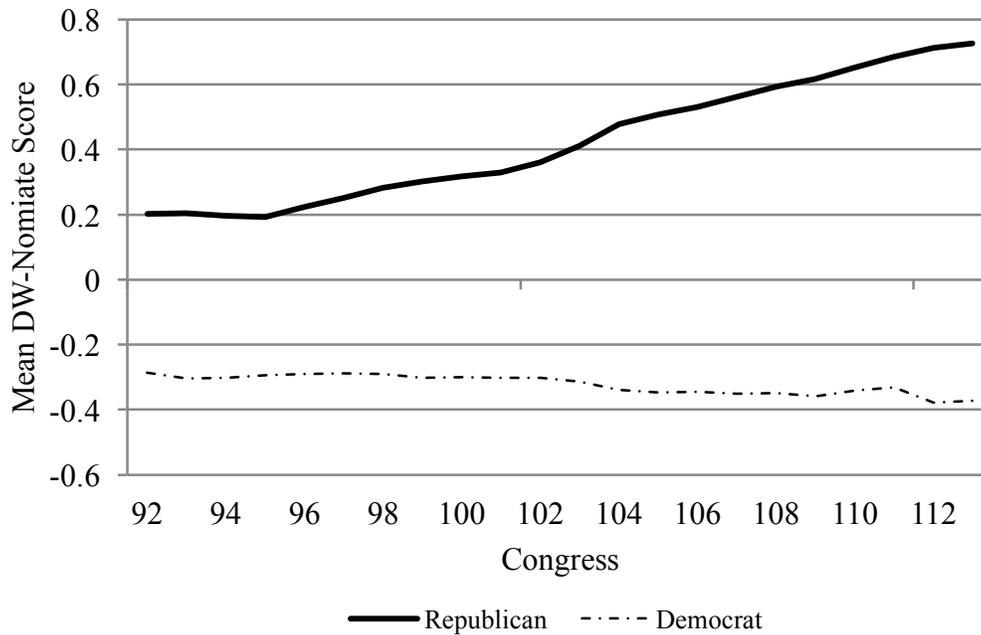
over the time period in this study (1971-2014). Clearly, the average ideological extremity of House Members has risen drastically over time. This is consistent with other measures of polarization in Congress over similar time periods, such as Poole and Rosenthal (2000).

Focal Independent Variables

I use three ethnicity measures to tap into the relationship between ideological extremity and the role of Latinos. They include: (1) the percentage of Latinos in a district (2) the percentage of Latinos in a district squared, and (3) an interaction between the two forgoing variables and the MC's partisan affiliation.

I hypothesize that the relationship between district level Latino population and an MC's ideological extremity is curvilinear. The primary mechanism by which ethnicity affects the ideology of an MC is through local electoral pressures from a large Latino constituency. Therefore, I include two measures accounting for the percentage of Latinos in a MCs' district. The first measure is the percentage of Latinos in each MCs district. To test whether the hypothesized curvilinear relationships exists between a district's percentage of Latinos and the ideological voting record of a member of Congress, I include both the untransformed percentage of Latinos as well as a squared percentage of the same measure. If both measures are statistically significant with opposite signs, a curvilinear relationship is confirmed.

Figure 4.3: Average DWNominate Score in the House of Representatives 92nd - 112th Congress



Finally, to account for interactions between and MC’s partisanship and the influence of Latinos in a district, I include in model two an interaction term between a MCs’ partisan affiliation (Democrat=1) and the raw and squared percentages of Latinos in a MCs district. Figure 4.3, depicts the average ideological extremity by partisan affiliation (democrat and republican). Democrats are not the primary driver in the overall extremity trend in Congress. Since the 105th Congress, it is Republicans who have begun to move away from Democrats at an accelerated rate. Therefore, my analysis accounts for differences based on partisan affiliation of members of Congress.

Alternative Hypotheses:

In addition to the key variables of interest, I add several measures accounting for causal alternatives of congressional ideological extremity. They are: (1) the presidential

vote share in each district for the most recent presidential election, (2) the ideological extremity of the district, (3) the previous vote margin for each MC's most recent election, (4) holding a committee leadership position, (5) holding a party leadership position and (6) the ethnicity of a member of Congress. These variables are meant to capture a MCs' context at both the congressional and district level and are explained in greater depth below.

At the district level, the model takes into account district presidential votes share and the previous vote margin by which the incumbent MC won reelection (or election). These measures tap into ideological and partisan trends, as well as the level of competition in a MCs' district. The first variable, *District Presidential Vote Share*, is the percentage of all votes cast for the Democratic presidential candidate in each district in the presidential election more proximate to each Congress. I also include the variable *District Ideological Extremity*. It takes into account the ideological extremity of the districts voting behavior. It is created by taking the Democratic presidential voting percentage in each district, subtracting it from 50 and taking the absolute value. It is included as a proxy for district ideological extremity of the district. The higher the value of this variable, the less ideologically extreme the district. The final district level variable refers to the competitiveness of each district. *MC Winning Election Percentage* is the margin by which the incumbent won election (or reelection) to his/her House seat.

Inside of Congress, context also matters to the ideological extremity of a MC. In particular, the power dynamics within Congress are likely to affect the level of ideological extremity displayed by each MC. To account for personal power dynamics I include the variable *Party Leader* which takes the value of one if the MC is a party leader

and zero if not. Party leaders are likely to display more partisan, and therefore more extreme, behavior than backbenchers. Similarly, I account for committee leaders with a dichotomous variable assuming the value of one if the MC is a committee leader and zero if not. I also account for the ethnicity of each member of Congress with the variable *Latino MC*. It is a dichotomous measure derived from the annual publication of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. The variable takes the score of one for MCs who are Latino and zero otherwise.

Finally, the model contains several standard control variables to account for gender, race (MC and district percentages), urbanicity, southern location, tenure, and time. See Appendix B for specific coding information for all control variables.

RESULTS

Figure 4.4: Bivariate Quadratic Plot, *Extremity and Percent Latino*

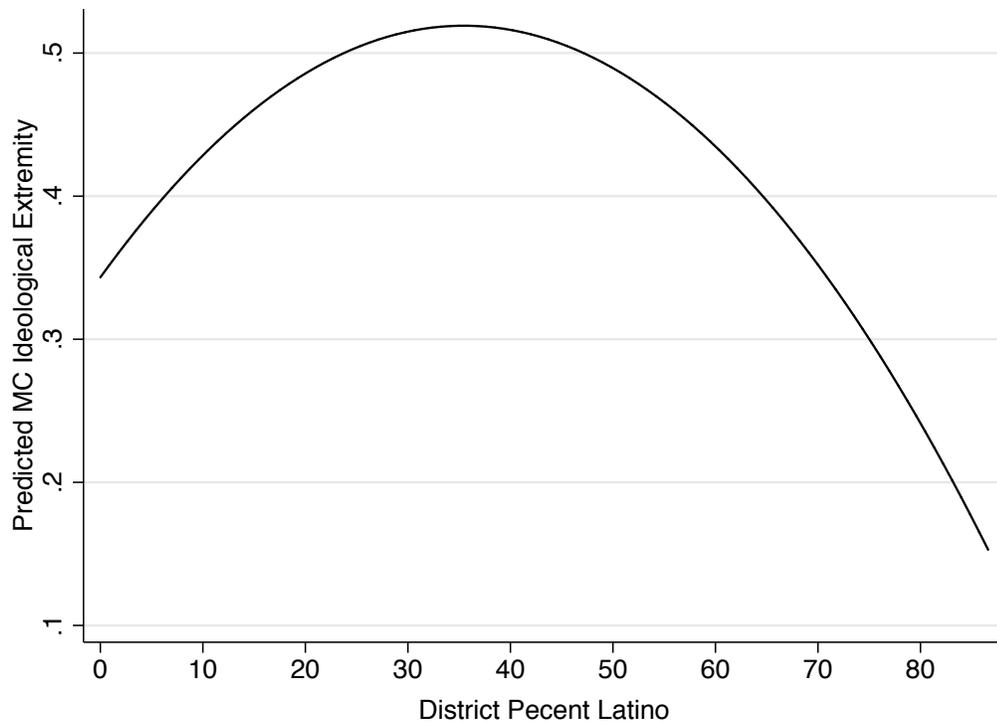


Table 4.1: Ideological Extremity of Members of Congress (92nd-113th) OLS Regression Base Model

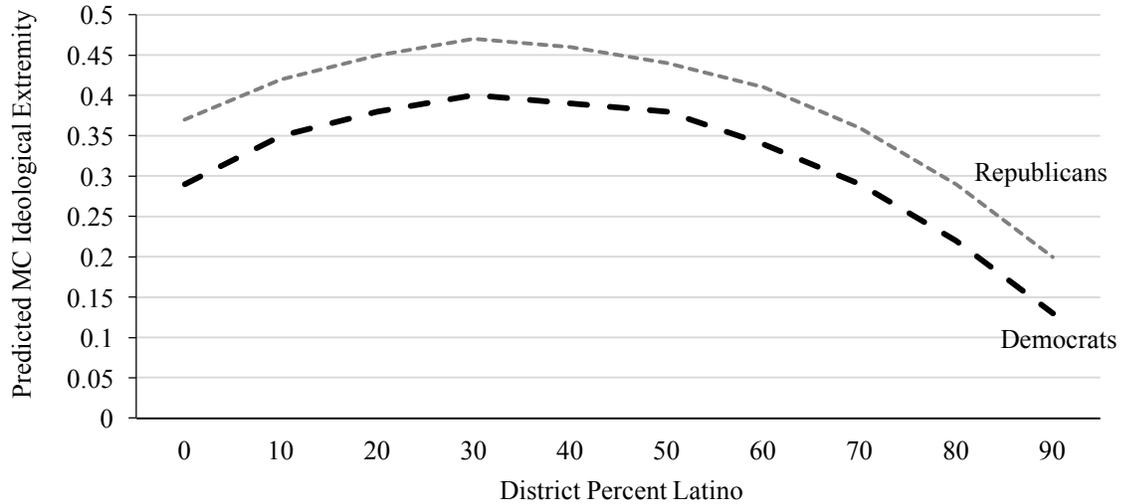
	Base Model	Interaction Model
Democrat	-0.069*** (0.012)	-0.023* (0.014)
Latino MC	0.022 (0.026)	0.029 (0.026)
Female MC	-0.026** (0.013)	-0.019 (0.013)
Black MC	0.061*** (0.021)	0.067*** (0.020)
District Hispanic Percent	0.006*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
District Hispanic Percent Squared	-0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Democrat x Hispanic Percentage	- -	-0.01*** (0.002)
Democrat x Hispanic Percentage Squared	- -	0.000*** (0.000)
District Black Percent	-0.002*** (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)
District Black Percent Squared	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Percent Urban	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
South	0.082*** (0.014)	0.085*** (0.014)
Southern Democrat	-0.179*** (0.017)	-0.189*** (0.017)
District Ideology	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
Democratic Presidential Vote	0.000 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)
MC Winning Election Percent	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Years in Congress	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Party Leader	0.044* (0.024)	0.037 (0.025)
Committee Leader	0.032*** (0.006)	0.028*** (0.006)
Post 104th Congress	0.127*** (0.008)	0.121*** (0.008)
Constant	0.272*** (0.020)	0.230*** (0.021)

Observations	8,666	8,666
P-Value	0.000	0.000
R-Square	0.366	0.3813

Note: Dependent variable is the absolute value of the distance from zero of each member's DWNominate score. Standard Errors in parentheses. *p<.1 **p<.05 ***p<.01. The model number of observations drops from 9,635 to 8,666 because of the few districts with a measureable Latino population higher than a full percent in the early 1970s.

To begin testing my assertions regarding population changes and ideological extremity of members of Congress, I first create a bivariate quadratic plot displaying the relationship between ideological extremity and the percentage of Latinos in a district. Figure 4 shows that a tipping point appears to be at work here. At a certain point, around 30 percent, members of Congress become less ideologically extreme. Before that point, members of Congress display increased ideological extremity. The multivariate base model found in Table 1 confirms this relationship. The model is statistically significant at the less than .01 level ($p < .000$) and Predicted Ideological Extremity by Latino District Population (1973-2014) explains over 36 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. The focal variables (*District Hispanic Percent* and *District Hispanic Percent Squared*) are both statistically significant at the less than .01 level while controlling for several other factors discussed above. Figure 4 confirms that a curvilinear relationship exists given that the signs are opposite on the coefficients for *District Hispanic Percent* and *District Hispanic Percent Squared*.

Figure 4.5: Predicted Ideological Extremity by Latino District Population (1973-2014)



To better interpret the model coefficients, I use Clarify to predict the ideological extremity of a member of Congress at each percentage of Latinos residing in a district. Figure 5 shows the predicted ideological extremity of members of Congress while holding all control variables in the base model at their means or modes. What is being predicted in this figure is the most average member of Congress- a non-Latino White male MC who is neither a committee leader, nor a party leader. The figure confirms the curvilinear relationship hypothesized above. What is particularly important is that the intercept is higher than the ending value, suggesting that MCs become *on the whole* more moderate than they began. Moreover, the average Republican member of Congress begins much more extreme than the average Democrat. This suggests that there may be an important interaction between the percentage of Latinos in a district and the partisan affiliation of the member of Congress whose extremity is impacted.

Figure 4.6: Cross-tabulation of Latino Partisanship and Ideology

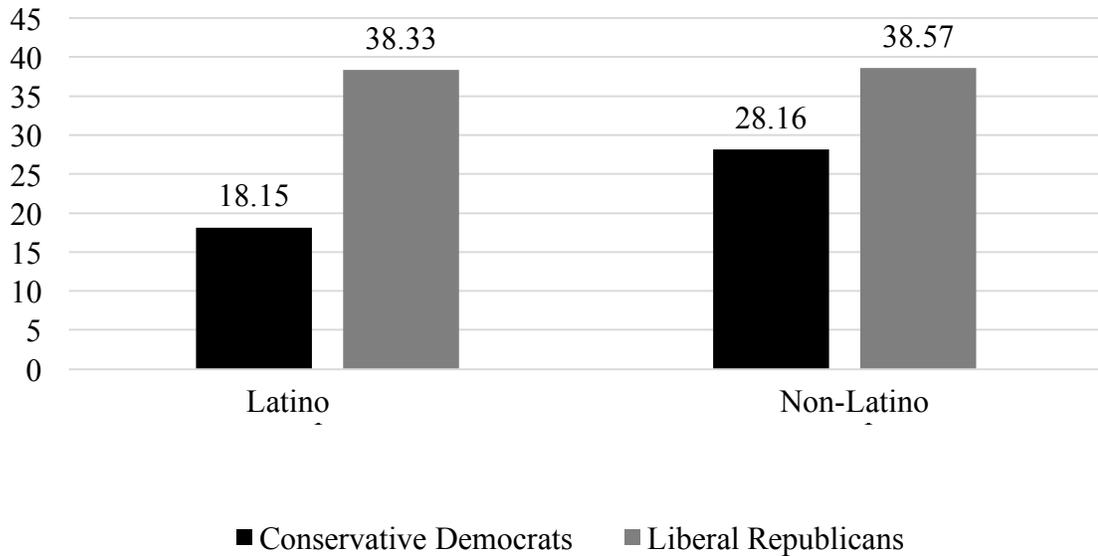
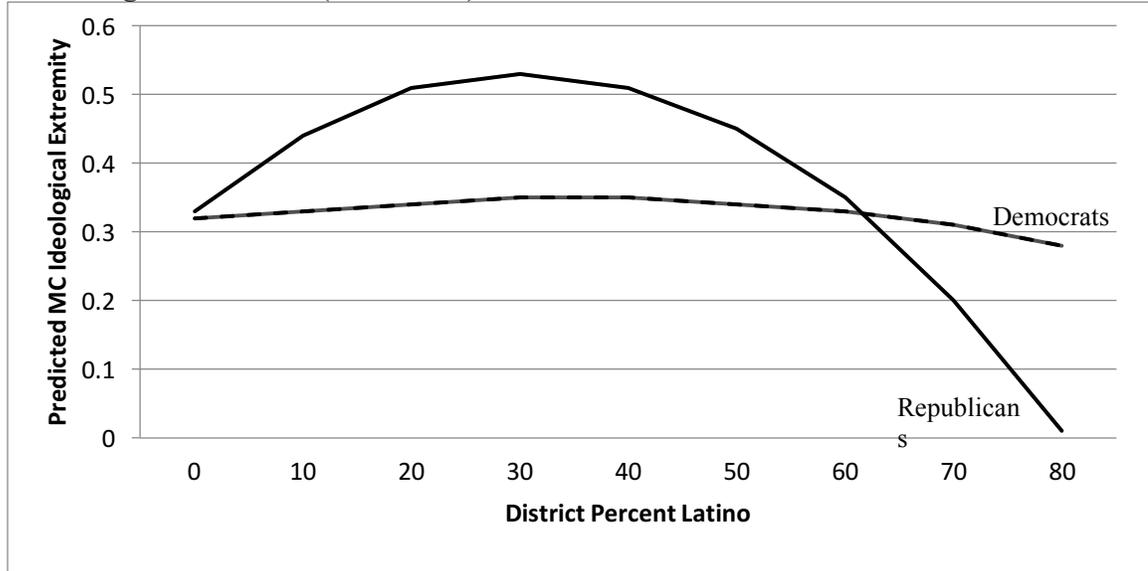


Figure 4.6 shows the descriptive differences between ideology and partisanship among both Latinos and non-Latinos from ANES 2014 data. Interestingly, there are about ten percent more liberal Republicans than conservative Democrats (28.16 and 18.15 percent respectively). The number of partisans who are ideologically sorted by party are statistically identical (33.33 liberal Democrats to 38.57 Republican conservatives). Therefore, I expect the impact of Latino populations while be greater on Republican members of Congress than Democratic members of Congress.

Figure 4.7: Predicted Ideological Extremity by Hispanic District Population Including Interactions (1973-2014)



As predicted, when partisanship is interacted with the percentage of Latinos in a district, there are sizeable substantive differences. The interaction model in Table 4.1 is statistically significant at the less than .01 level and explains over 38% of the variance in the dependent variable (ideological extremity of MCs). Again both focal (*District Hispanic Percent* and *District Hispanic Percent Squared*) variables are statistically significant at the less than .01 level and their signs are opposite one another. Moreover, the interaction variables between District Hispanic Percent, District Hispanic Percent Squared and a MC's party are both statistically significant at the less than .01 level and exhibit opposite signs on the coefficients. Figure 4.7 displays this relationship graphically using Clarify to predict the ideological extremity of members of Congress at each percentage of Latinos in a district while holding all other variables at their means and modes. The figure confirms that the presence of Latinos in a district has a stronger substantive impact for Republican members of Congress than for Democratic members of Congress. The curvilinear effect is still present for Democrats, but is much flatter, or less

pronounced, than for Republicans. It also confirms that the switch from extreme behavior to moderate behavior occurs around 30 percent. It is important to note that these figures are based on predicted ideological extremity and not real ideological extremity. In other words, there is currently not a member of Congress in the data set that is Republican with 80% Latinos in their district. It represents the outcome should these combinations occur. While the majority of districts are currently lower than 30 percent Latinos and thus have not experienced decreased levels of ideological extremity from their MCs, about 15 percent of the cases are at 30 percent and above. There are also 5.4 percent of districts that are poised to tip over the 30 percent mark, as they are currently sitting in the 20-30 percent range. If current population projections are correct, by 2050 the percentage of districts explained by this model could be around 25%. This is enough to have a sizeable impact on the level of polarization in Congress.

CONCLUSION

As Latinos continue moving into new areas of the United States, the results here will become more important in understanding a shifting U.S. political climate. If recent Latino migration trends continue, district demographic shifts will become increasingly common. The process described here has already begun in multiple states. One example to watch currently is Arizona. Arizona has infamously passed multiple anti-immigrant laws in response to the changes the state has witness in their population (Ybarra, Sanchez and Sanchez 2015). In 2014, they hit 30.2% Latino in their state population. Therefore, it is likely that we will begin to see changes among their congressional delegation. Arizona is currently ensconced in the racial threat portion of the ideological curve displayed above. Members of Congress like Paul Gossar (R- AZ4) with 19.4% Latinos in his

district and an extreme ideological score of .807 and Trent Franks (R-AZ8) with 18% Latinos and an ideological extremity of .855 are likely to be impacted in coming years. Both of these members of Congress are highly extreme. However, as the populations of Latinos rises above 30% we are likely to see either ideological adaptation or their replacement as members of Congress.

I have demonstrated that Latino demographic changes have an independent effect on Members of Congress. But the effect of this population on congressional behavior is not linear. Below 30% members of Congress become more extreme due to racialized fears among majority populations. Above 30 %, we begin to see members of Congress become increasingly moderate as their Latino population rises. I have also demonstrated that the percentage of Latinos required to affect their MC's behavior is much lower than the 50% required for majority minority districts. At little more than half that amount Latinos have a hand in changing the behavior of their member of Congress. Further research must address what the critical mass is for the number of districts over 30% required for Latinos to achieve adequate substantive representation. In the meantime, Latinos must settle for surrogate representation if they are not lucky enough to reside in a state with greater than 30% Latinos (see, for example, Mansbridge 2003).

Moving away from the individual level lens and the changes among single members of Congress in their districts, as these shifts become more commonplace among Congressional districts an aggregate decline in Congressional polarization is also likely to occur. Congressional researchers have demonstrated that the effects of congressional polarization on policy making and individual affectations towards government are profound. If Congressional polarization were to begin declining, we could witness

decreases in Congressional gridlock (Binder 2003). In other words, the United States Congress could be able to pass important policies such as the budget without shutdowns, furloughs, and sequestration. Moreover, trust and approval in the federal government in general and Congress in particular could also begin to rise (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 2002; King 1997; Heatherington 2005). The U.S. Congress is the least favored branch of government in the U.S. This is particularly troubling given its role as “the peoples” branch of government. Increases in faith in elections and elected officials can only stand to help the health of U.S. democracy.

This research represents a first step in examining the complex relationship between Latinos, Congressional elections and eventual Congressional representation. There are multiple avenues for further study. Chief among them include the disaggregation of this effect by immigration status, close examination of how racial threat is actuated in majority white populations as population shifts take place, expansion of this theory to state and local politics, and finally the role of replacement when MCs are unable or unwilling to change their ideological behavior. However, this first step is an important gateway to a better understanding of how the shifting population of the United States is likely to impact our politics.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Future Research

INTRODUCTION

In the forgoing chapters, I engaged three specific questions related to Congressional polarization and Latino politics. In the first substantive chapter (chapter 2), I asked whether Latino voters display unique patterns of ideological extremity as compared with non-Latino voters. The third chapter focused on the influence of ethnic voter context on the ideological behavior of majority, white and minority, Latino populations. The final substantive chapter addressed the outcomes of shifting ethnic context and ideological behavior on Congressional representation. Each of these questions is designed to chip away at a much more fundamental question: Do Latinos uniquely impact American politics? Or even more basic: Does it matter *who* engages in politics? The findings herein indicate that the rising political presence of Latinos has a unique effect on American politics on multiple political planes (individual, group, and representational). In the coming pages, I first review the arguments and findings of each of the three substantive chapters. I then move into a discussion of these findings when understood together, as well as the arising implications for American politics. Finally, I conclude with an accounting of opportunities for future research.

REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

Chapter 2

In the first substantive chapter, I evaluate whether the growing American population of Latinos are less ideologically extreme than non-Latinos, particularly the majority white population. My theory hinges on the idea that, regardless of party affiliation, those who identify as Latino have a significant set of cross-pressures owing to

social and demographic factors. These cross-pressures make Latinos more ideologically moderate than their white counterparts. Using data from the 2012 ANES, I evaluate the relative distance from moderate on ideological self-placements for both Latino and non-Latino respondents. The model reveals that regardless of party, Latinos are closer to moderate than non-Latino respondents. Mexican Americans, in particular, appear to be driving this trend. As polarization in the mass public increases, a large population of moderates will not only be key in electoral politics, but may help bridge the gap between rugged ideologues in policy debates. With the Latino population growing faster than any other minority group, and with evidence of Latino political participation on the rise (Garcia 2003), the implication that Latinos may not align along a polarized ideological spectrum is an important one. Realizing that Latino voters may not automatically fall into the fold of one of the major two parties, they stand to play an important role in national politics

Because this study provides evidence that Latinos, despite expressing a loyalty to either the Democratic or Republican party, are less extreme than their fellow partisans, it will fall upon the major political parties to recognize that within their own ranks sit a population of moderate voters. More moderate Latinos voters who also seem to be shying away from the more ideological wing of the party apparatus. It could also be that Latino partisans are turned off by the increasing partisanship of the two major parties, particularly in the Republican party with the rise of the Tea Party. With the Latino electorate becoming more important with each election cycle owing to their rising population (Garcia 2003), the party that successfully courts Latinos most effectively could find itself with a sizable electoral advantage in the future.

Chapter Three

Chapter three is devoted to understanding what occurs among minority populations when *they* come into contact with majority populations and vice versa. I ask whether it is white majority populations or minority, Latino populations, that are most profoundly affected by a shifting ethnic context within their Congressional district. I uncover strong evidence of racial threat conditioned on demographic context. I argue that when new Latino populations arrive in historically homogenous Congressional districts, they act as a “shock” to the current electoral balance. Latinos influence the electoral balance in two ways. First, and most obvious, is through the direct application of their beliefs, values, and voting habits. Second, though less obvious, is through the activation of racial and ethnic anxieties among existing white resident populations. Therefore, not only do members of Congress (MCs) in these districts have to adjust to the ideologies of the arriving Latino population, but also must adjust to the increasingly anxious existing population. Moreover, I argue that the beliefs of Latinos arriving in these districts are also likely to be impacted by contact with the existing majority population. I hypothesize that in districts with high levels of majority white populations, the Latino population is likely to become more extreme as a response to their low population and acute minority status.

I demonstrate that Latino voters influence the ideologies of white voters as their population increases in Congressional districts. I examine the distribution of white population ideologies in Congressional districts with differing levels of Latino populations in each decade from 1970 to 2012. Likewise, I examine the distribution of Latino ideologies in districts with varying Latino populations. Consistent with my expectation, I find that as the Latino population rises in Congressional districts, white

voter ideologies related to social welfare become more extreme up to a point of roughly 40 percent, after which their conservative ideological positioning begins to decline. I find that white populations are susceptible to feelings of racial threat until heterogeneity reaches a tipping point of 40 percent. This result is driven primarily by Republican respondents who experience intense feelings of social and political threat at the hands of a rising Latino population. Democrats, who enjoy co-partisan status with the majority of the rising Latino population, do not experience the same feelings of threat. Latino populations are uniquely affected by the demographic makeup of their district, as well, albeit in surprising ways. Contrary to expectations, Latinos become more conservative as their district context becomes more heterogeneous. Once their population reaches roughly 39 percent, ideological conservatism begins to fall again. However, the substantive impact on ideological extremity is smaller for Latinos than it is for white respondents. Interestingly, this result is approximately ten percent lower than the fifty percent threshold required to impact district politics through majority-minority districts. In other words, Latino populations can afford to be more diffused across districts and still have an impact than may have originally been thought.

Chapter Four

Whereas chapters two and three focus on individual and group behaviors, the final substantive chapter asks how the unique behaviors of Latinos and changing ethnic context influence political outcomes. In particular, I focus on representational outcomes from members of Congress. Using district and Congressional data from 1970 to 2014, I demonstrate that increases in Latino population at the district level result in conditional changes in the ideological behavior of members of Congress. Particularly, I find that

members of Congress display increasingly extreme voting behavior until the Latino population rises to a threshold of thirty percent. Above thirty percent, MCs exhibit declines in their ideological extremity.

The theory advanced in this chapter argues that when Latinos migrate to new areas of the United States, they create a district-wide “shock” that produces ideological changes among the existing electorate as displayed in chapter three. These changes, I argue, have electoral implications for members of Congress. Thus, I theorize that district demographic shifts have the potential to change (1) the behavior of an existing district representative or (2) the district’s representative entirely. Each mechanism relies on the idea that adding new voices to a district increases the heterogeneity of interests to which a member of Congress (MC) must respond.

As Latinos continue moving into new areas of the United States, the results become more important to understanding a shifting U.S. political climate. If recent Latino migration trends continue, district demographic shifts will become increasingly common. The process described here has already begun in multiple states as discussed in chapter four.

I demonstrate that Latino demographic changes have an independent effect on Members of Congress. But the effect of this population on congressional behavior is not linear. Below 30% members of Congress become more extreme due to racialized fears among majority populations. Above 30 %, we begin to see members of Congress become increasingly moderate as their Latino population rises. I have also demonstrated that the percentage of Latinos required to affect their MC’s behavior is much lower than the 50% required for majority minority districts. At little more than half that amount Latinos have

a hand in changing the behavior of their member of Congress. Further research must address what the critical mass is for the number of districts over 30% required for Latinos to achieve adequate substantive representation. In the meantime, Latinos must settle for surrogate representation if they are not lucky enough to reside in a state with greater than 30% Latinos (see, for example, Mansbridge 2003).

Moving away from the individual level lens and the changes among single members of Congress in their districts, as these shifts become more commonplace among Congressional districts an aggregate decline in Congressional polarization is also likely to occur. Congressional researchers have demonstrated that the effects of congressional polarization on policy making and individual affectations towards government are profound. If Congressional polarization were to begin declining, we could witness decreases in Congressional gridlock (Binder 2003). In other words, the United States Congress could be able to pass important policies such as the budget without shutdowns, furloughs, and sequestration. Moreover, trust and approval in the federal government in general and Congress in particular could also begin to rise (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 2002; King 1997; Heatherington 2005). The U.S. Congress is the least favored branch of government in the U.S. This is particularly troubling given its role as “the peoples” branch of government. Increases in faith in elections and elected officials can only stand to help the health of U.S. democracy.

Summary of Findings

In summary, I find that Latinos display more moderate ideological positioning than non-Latino, whites. However, these more moderate Latinos also exist in a shifting ethnic context as their numbers among the electorate continue to rise. Therefore,

ideological positioning among both white and Latino population is dynamic and is influenced by the level of heterogeneity within their district. Latinos respond to increased district heterogeneity by becoming more ideologically extreme. Within Congressional districts, when relatively few co-ethnics surround Latinos, they display more moderate ideological positions. Likewise, when they are surrounded by at least 39% co-ethnics, they are also more ideologically moderate. When district heterogeneity is at its highest, however, Latinos become more ideologically conservative. Non-Latino white voters become more ideologically conservative until Latinos reach 40% of the population, at which point the trend reverses. Finally, I find that members of Congress also respond to district ethnic context. Members of Congress become more ideologically extreme in their voting behavior until the Latino population reaches a threshold of 30%, after this point, members of Congress become more ideologically moderate. Though Congressional partisans of all stripes undergo this process, Republican members of Congress appear to be most materially affected by rising Latino populations within their districts.

DISCUSSION

A few broad conclusions can be drawn from these findings. First, the combination of ethnicity and polarization at all political levels appears to most profoundly affect Republicans. When viewed in the context of the 2016 presidential cycle, this is not a surprising conclusion. As Latinos join the electorate, their impact on politics is on track to increase in importance. Therefore, whichever party is able to win the hearts and mind of the Latino voter may have a distinct electoral advantage. When it comes to the 2016 elections, it appears that the Democratic Party is currently running the table. The extreme

wing of the Republican party, the tea party movement, appears to have over-powered traditional Republican branding when it comes to issues that are important to Latino voters, in particular, immigration issues. We are seeing a harder, more un-yielding Republican stance on immigration than in recent electoral cycles. In elections passed, Republican rhetoric used to favor the phrase “immigration reform” today, however discussion of “building a wall” seems to dominate the immigration debate. This is an outward sign of the larger polarization process at work. What is at first puzzling about this new rhetoric is the apparent unwillingness by the Republican party to embrace the fact that American politics *is* changing. The outreach to Latino voters espoused by Bush in his 2000 bid for the presidency has been traded for hostility towards Latinos which is perhaps more damaging to the goal of bringing Latinos into the Republican party than simply ignoring them. However, this unwillingness is precisely what my model suggests. In the early Bush era of the 2000s, the U.S. Latino population hovered around 12.5%. Today, the U.S. Latino population has risen significantly to around 18% of the population. My model predicts a curvilinear relationship between district Latino population as we approach the tipping point. Though the precise national tipping point is outside the purview of this dissertation, it is telling, that at least anecdotally, we are witnessing the same sort of national trend within the Republican Party. What remains to be seen is whether the tipping point of 30 percent at work in districts may also be at work nationally.

The difference between the major party responses could be differing temporal strategies employed by each of the two major parties. The Republican Party appears to have adopted a short-term electoral strategy in which the focus is on a winning coalition

today, at the expense of a winning coalition in years to come. By contrast, the Democratic party seems to have positioned itself for long term electoral gain by catering to a growing demographic that, if sufficiently captured could grant wins for years to come. However, it should be noted, that Democrats, though seemingly focused on building long-term electoral coalitions, are not sacrificing much in terms of their short-term electoral fortunes either. Given their existing edge with Latino voters who overwhelmingly affiliate with the Democratic Party, by courting this demographic, they are not risking a great deal in either the long or short term. Republicans, on the other hand, are in a much more precarious situation when it comes to courting Latino voters. Not only is the Republican party already experiencing internal polarization between tea party and mainline Republicans, but if it were to actively court Latino voters, it would be stretched along a second axis- one that may decide the ideological positioning of the Republican party for years to come. This hypothetical tug-o-war could result in a return to a more moderate, traditional Republican party than we have seen in several decades. However, partisan elites on both sides of the Republican schism have incentives to bide their time in re-focusing the Republican party until they can be assured that their ideological positioning will brand the Republican party.

When viewed solely from an aloof, academic point of view, the process described here holds an alluring fascination. However, when viewed from the normative perspective of a citizen, the process still holds fascination, though also tends to be somewhat panic inducing. One only needs to take a look at the deleterious effects of hyperpolarization to understand why. As previously discussed, hyperpolarization harms the citizenry and democracy from all sides. Representation declines, trust in government

declines, salaries go unpaid and the list goes on. Due to the freedoms associated with Republican Democracy, no one can induce the Republican Party to court Latino voters- nor should they. However, the current path also seems both fragile and unsustainable.

Moreover, a second paradox exists within these conclusions. The literature is well settled on the fact that hyperpolarization is an undesirable state for American politics, but political scientists sounded an alarm once before beseeching political parties to differentiate themselves from one another- i.e. be *less moderate* on every issue. This movement, referred to as Responsible Party Government came about in the 1950s during a long stretch of de-polarization among the American political parties. Therefore, what is the optimum level of polarization in the United States? Research to date returns the nebulous conclusion that some is good and none is bad, but how much is unclear. What seems safe to conclude is that the optimum level tends to depend on the current level being experienced- and that vantage point is always changing.

This conclusion gives rise to the second broad conclusion drawn from this research: The process described here can be most accurately understood as a dynamic and complex system. In other words, different outcomes are present at different points with multiple inputs to the system. Therefore, a single change could have ripple effects throughout this process. For example, Latinos are, in general, more moderate. A single district can be understood as a dynamic context that changes with a multitude of factors such as fertility, immigration, migration, voter registration laws, and electoral policies (to name only a few). Within this complex system, ideological positioning changes with the context. The “systems” nature of the process described herein is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing for policy makers who hope to impact, even in a small way, the

hyperpolarized nature of American politics. Changes to voter registration laws can help enfranchise more Latino citizens, which is a necessary precondition for Latino impacts through voting. The implication being that one small change to the system can cascade into changes to the polarization outcome. However, the nature of a system means that not all inputs cascade into positive outcomes. Therefore, multiple changing inputs within the polarized system can also reinforce existing hyperpolarization or even increase it. The good news is that input trends such as immigration, migration, and fertility rates all appear to be pointing in the right direction for positive changes to polarization to occur at an individual, group, and representational level. The bottom line of this research seems to be that the more Latino voters present in individual districts, the more likely polarization is to decline.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As with all research, seeking answers to a few questions gives rise to many more. As such, several opportunities exist for expansion of the basic research question. One obvious expansion is to test the theories generated herein at the state, local, and national levels. The natural variance in political incentives and context at the state and local level provide a means of honing in on many of the mechanisms at work. At the national level, with particular regard to presidential elections, it would be interesting to take a look at the historical trends to see if national presidential politics also follows trends similar to congressional elections. There is also need to theorize and test the differing percentages of Latino impact against one another. For Latino populations to influence Congressional behavior the threshold is 30%, whereas, for Latino populations to affect individual and group behaviors the percentage is higher at roughly 40%. Who is leading the behavior

changes? Finally, theories of majority-minority districting put the number to elect a co-ethnic to Congress and gain substantive representation at 50%. Why is the percentage necessary to influence members of Congress so much lower than that required influencing individual and grouping behaviors? Is the extra 20% necessary to elect a co-ethnic to Congress from a majority minority district an efficient use of Latino influence? Or would that extra 20% make a stronger impact in a separate district?

The present study looks at Congressional behavioral change in a very specific manner, expanding that scope offers many research opportunities. The present study only considered one pathway to declining Congressional polarization- change in Congressional behavior. Though discussed, the analysis of the replacement pathway was left untouched. Future research must ask when a member of Congress is not returned to their seat at all due to their inability to change their behavior to suit a changing district. How far can a member of Congress stretch his voting record when his district has become unrecognizable? At what percentage of ethnic heterogeneity does a district change not only the representative, but also switch the party of their new representative? Moreover, the two pathways need to be analyzed together to understand when/why replacement occurs instead of behavioral change, and which pathway occurs with the greatest frequency.

Another line of inquiry outside the preview of the current study is the role of co-ethnic members of Congress in light of changing district demographics. Are co-ethnics able to weather the storm more successfully than non-Latinos or are Latino members of Congress primarily an outcome of this process as majority-minority districting theories predict?

In addition, changing the method from quantitative to qualitative methodologies could help unearth multiple factors that the present line of inquiry has yet to consider. In particular, I plan to map the transition of districts with Latino population booms to understand whether the reason for behavioral changes and type of representation received by arriving populations is substantively different from the behavioral changes and representation received in areas adding to their Latino population. The final goal being to return to the base model tested here and refine and add to existing measures in the quantitative models.

As previously discussed, the behavior aspects of this project are dynamic and complex and as such require further refinement. Within the behavioral context analyzed here, there are also multiple avenues for future research. In particular, it is incumbent upon future research to test the theoretical underpinnings of the present study. Further research could involve the direct testing of factors such as religion, demographics and political socialization and their effect on Latino partisan extremity. In other words, I still have yet to unearth *why* Latinos, particularly Mexican Americans, are more ideological moderate than non-Latinos. Moreover, it would be useful to map the areas in which cross-pressuring appears among the vast political landscape. Issues like abortion, immigration, education and economic issues might present a clearer picture of ideological leanings. The Hispanic community is a rich and diverse subgroup, which demands to be more fully understood politically. One area that deserves a close exploration is disaggregation of these models by immigration status and generational status.

Future research is also necessary to probe the underlying reasons for which Latinos become more ideologically conservative in district contexts of high ethnic

heterogeneity, but a strong case could be made for assimilation theories. Latinos could be responding to the intense feelings of fear among Republican white populations by becoming more “appropriate” to these populations so as to increase their chances of a more positive reception into the district. These results open up an interesting line of research. The majority of group contact theory considers the impact of minority populations on majority populations. This research suggests that minorities may be influenced by contact as much, or more, than majority populations within the microcosm of Congressional districts. Moreover, the influence of heterogeneous context among Latinos changes their ideological behavior in surprising ways. Future research must continue this line of inquiry to gain further leverage on whether these findings stem from socialization, environmental changes, or contextual support for equality among districts where population is in the near equal range between Latino and white residents.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ideology Question Frequencies Including Non-Response by Ethnicity

Liberal/Conservative Self-Placement	Ethnic Group					Total
	Refused	Don't Know	White	Hispanic	Other	
Refused	6 (22.2)	0 (0)	13 (0.37)	8 (0.8)	1 (0.27)	28 (0.57)
Don't Know	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (0.31)	10 (1)	1 (0.27)	22 (0.45)
Haven't Thought Much	1 (3.7)	0 (0)	160 (4.58)	153 (15.22)	32 (8.67)	346 (7.06)
Extremely Liberal	0 (0)	0 (0)	91 (2.6)	43 (4.28)	12 (3.25)	146 (2.98)
Liberal	2 (7.41)	0 (0)	361 (10.33)	106 (10.55)	37 (10.03)	506 (10.33)
Slightly Liberal	2 (7.41)	0 (0)	379 (10.84)	115 (11.44)	43 (11.65)	539 (11.00)
Moderate	7 (25.93)	0 (0)	1,021 (29.21)	328 (32.64)	127 (34.42)	1,483 (30.28)
Slightly Conservative	6 (22.22)	2 (100)	537 (15.36)	112 (11.14)	54 (14.63)	711 (14.52)
Conservative	1 (3.7)	0 (0)	775 (22.17)	107 (10.65)	49 (13.28)	932 (19.03)
Extremely Conservative	2 (7.41)	0 (0)	147 (4.21)	23 (2.29)	13 (3.52)	185 (3.78)
Total	27 (100)	2 (100)	3,495 (100)	1,005 (100)	369 (100)	4898 (100)

Appendix B: Control Variables

Partisanship is measured as a dichotomous variable referred to as *Democrat*. It takes the value of one if the respondent is a Democrat and zero if the respondent is a Republican. Income is measured using the five quartiles established by ANES. I also measure educational attainment with a series of five dichotomous variables: (1) *Less than a High School Diploma*, (2) *High School Diploma*, (3) *Some College*, (4) *Bachelor's Degree*, and (5) *Graduate Degree*. The excluded category for comparison is *High School Diploma*.

The polarization literature suggests that those with high political knowledge are likely to be more extreme than with low political knowledge (see, for example, Layman and Carsey 1998). To account for political information, I include a control variable for political interest. The variable, *Never Interested in Politics*, is coded one if a respondent never pays attention to politics and zero otherwise. Those who study the “gender gap” suggest that women may exhibit political differences. Therefore, I include the dichotomous variable, *Female*, which takes the value of one if the respondent is female and zero if not. Finally, I also include a control variable to account for the role of age on political orientation.