

---

HIM 1990-2015

---

2013

## Socio-economic influences on the party affiliation of hispanic voters

Angelo Montagner  
*University of Central Florida*

 Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in HIM 1990-2015 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Montagner, Angelo, "Socio-economic influences on the party affiliation of hispanic voters" (2013). *HIM 1990-2015*. 1815.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015/1815>

Socio-Economic Influences on the Party Affiliation of Hispanic Voters

by

Angelo Montagner

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science  
in the College of Sciences  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2013

Thesis Chair: Dr. Andrea Vieux

## **Abstract**

Voting analysts in the United States have attempted to predict political orientation based on race, gender, occupation, educational achievement, and economic background. Yet, the substantial amount of research available on these factors has been directed toward the understanding of the white-majority vote. Now, as a result of the overwhelming growth of ethnic minority populations scholars are beginning to look at the potential decisive role of ethnic minority voters. Part of this newly formed voting bloc consists of Hispanics which are now one of the fastest and largest racial minority groups in the United States. This thesis aims to understand the Hispanic electorate by addressing their social mobility. Furthermore, this research will shed light into the socio-economic factors affecting the political affiliation of Hispanic voters.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Social Mobility of Hispanics .....	3
Chapter 2: The Profile of the Hispanic Electorate.....	5
Representation.....	6
Country of Origin and Well-known Patterns of Hispanic Political Affiliation .....	7
The Issue of Citizenship and Age.....	8
Religious Affiliation .....	10
Chapter 3: The Socio-economic Mobility of Hispanics .....	12
Intragenerational Social Mobility.....	13
Are Socio-Economic Variables a Good Measurement for Predicting Political Affiliation? .....	14
Barriers to Social Mobility.....	15
Disadvantage in the Educational System and its effect on Job Opportunities .....	15
Chapter 4: Methodology .....	19
Data Collection.....	22
Coding .....	22
Chapter 5: Results .....	25
Table 1: Spearman Correlation between Total Household Income and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election. ....	25
Table 2: Cross Tabulation of Highest Degree of Education and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election. ....	26
Table 3: Spearman Correlation between Age and Political Affiliation. ....	27
Table 4: Cross Tabulation of Country of Origin and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election .	28
Table 5: Cross Tabulation of Religion and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election. ....	29
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	31
References .....	34

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The primary questions concerning the nature of party identification in American politics linger around the conclusion that people's socio-economic status is a good fit for determining their political partisanship. The beginnings of this argument can be found in *The American Voter* where Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1980) propose that any valuable model of partisanship will frequently have party identification come as result of social causes (Campbell, et. al., 1980). In other words, party preferences have a lot more to do with social factors than political issues (Campbell, et. al., 1980). With this in mind, scholars have long debated the strength of significance in relating socially driven variables such as socio-economic status to an individual's party identification. To this day, many of the studies available on party identification concentrate on the large sectors of the white (Anglo) American population. The scholarly interest on identifying partisanship has often overlooked and in some cases entirely forgotten about minority populations.

The 2010 census reports that the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States is the "Hispanic" or "Latino" population. Political researchers hypothesize that it is only a matter of time before Hispanics completely change the political landscape of our major political institutions. Since political parties tend to be one, if not the most important political institution, it is now time to consider the role the Latino electorate will play in their development. In order to understand this dynamic, the current research on party affiliation needs to accommodate previously thought models of political inclination and apply it to the party preference of Latinos.

Over the years, studies dealing with Latino political behavior have become disproportionate in comparison to the booming growth of the Hispanic population. Researchers looking to find the reason behind the political identification of Latinos have been greatly hindered by their failure to collect sufficient data to match the characteristics of this heterogeneous group. In many cases the past studies on the partisanship of Latinos have not been recognized as a national representative and in most situations have often prone to generalization.

Some studies have only focused on a particular group of Latinos; some went as far as bulging different country of origins and disregard specific groups of Latinos (Coffin, 2003); some manage to leave out major groups of Hispanics such Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans (Bedolla and Alvarez, 2003); and most noticeably, other studies failed to further investigate the core social factors affecting the partisanship of Hispanics (Clifford, 1993). The latter neglect is the most imperative of all since social causes have been shown to be potentially helpful in explaining the socio-economic dynamics behind the political affiliation of Latinos.

Needless to say, the current studies of the Hispanic electorate have become incomplete with many areas of interest untouched. As a result, it is proposed in this research that data analysis can be effectively used to predict party identification of Hispanics only if it addresses the social and economic mobility of Latino voters. In order to clear misconceptions regarding the party preferences of Hispanics, the present study will conduct a statistical analysis of

influential socio-economic variables that could have an impending outcome on the party inclination of Hispanics.

### **Social Mobility of Hispanics**

Essentially, one of the most noticeable social movements faced by minority groups living in the United States is their transition within the framework of social mobility. Based around the subsistence of class structure and more importantly social progress, social mobility is often used to refer to the ability of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to move up in the social ladder (Independent Commission on Social Mobility, 2009). Considering that social mobility has frequently been applied to class structures, it is entirely promising to contemplate the body of literature with an analysis as to how the social mobility of Hispanic voters is attached to their party preference. It is suggested here that the social mobility of Hispanics is key to understanding their partisan identification and instrumental for investigating their support for a particular political campaign.

The present examination will be guided by two sets of questions. The first set of questions deal with the core social characteristics of Hispanics and how their profile can be used to properly address their party identification. Does country of origin and nationality have a significant effect on the party affiliation of Hispanics? And last but not least, how does citizenship status and religion profiling add into their political party preferences?

The second set of questions touch on the socio-economic factors behind the party affiliation of Latinos. To be more specific, does income and level of education play a role in the party identification of Hispanics?

This study will first proceed with a comprehensive description of the Hispanic electorate to demonstrate how the Hispanic identity is a unique element influencing the political party preferences of Latinos. After properly introducing the Hispanic demographic, this research will move on into addressing the social mobility framework as it applies to the socio-economic influences faced by Hispanic voters. The social mobility section of this study will be heavily used as a reference guide for finding the adequate socio-economic variables needed to conduct the necessary cross-sectional analyses.

To form the analyses, this research will use the most recent survey datasets provided by the Hispanic PEW Research Center in order to demonstrate the strength and validity of socially driven factors affecting the political partisanship of Hispanics during the 2008 election. Part of the methodology will include distinct hypothesis aimed at providing a better picture of the most important social variables behind the party inclination of Hispanics. The end result will attempt to seek compromise between the present literature and future points of interest regarding the political behavior of Hispanics.

## **Chapter 2: The Profile of the Hispanic Electorate**

Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States surpassing the number of African Americans. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), the Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010 and accounted for more than 43 percent of population growth, or four times the nation's 9.7 percent growth rate (U.S. Census, 2010). It is expected that the growth of Hispanics will bring a change in the demographic profile of the United States. This change is based on population projections developed by the PEW Research Center (2008) which speculates that the Latino population will triple by the year 2050 (Passel and Cohn, 2008). Due to these increasing figures, Hispanics are becoming more than just a minority group but instead are emerging as a new upcoming majority.

The voting behavior of Hispanics in the United States mirrors their identity as a diverse group of people. Among eligible Hispanic voters there are as many conservative, liberals, and third party political participants as it can be expected of any distinctive population. Political parties themselves tend to have a hard time addressing Hispanics as a single group due to their wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and variant identities. Yet, voting analysts continue to seek for simpler ways of classifying the political views of Hispanics in order to obtain what is now an influential voting bloc.

## Representation

Of course, as the number of Hispanics goes up so does the number of ethnic labels assigned to them. The demographic profiling of Hispanics has recently become a taunting task due to the difficulty of finding out whether or not they are true candidates for pan-ethnic labels. The federal government commonly categorizes groups of people by race and in some cases by ethnicity alone. Hispanics are not immune to this rule. In most cases, Hispanics are not given the proper identifiers. It was not until recently that for the first time the U.S. census (2000) exclusively provided more distinctive categories for Hispanics to fill in. This recent effort is shown through the changes made to the latest US census (2010) which expanded the definition of Hispanic and Latino to also include sub-categorical labels for any person of “Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture” (U.S. Census, 2010).

Furthermore, the present ethnic labels have been adjusted in order to accommodate recent findings showing that Hispanics prefer to identify themselves more in relation to their country of origin. According to Taylor, Martinez, Lopez, and Velazco, researchers for the PEW Research Center (2012) “only about one-quarter (24%) of Hispanic adults say they most often identify themselves by ‘Hispanic’ or ‘Latino’ while “the majority of about half (51%) say they identify themselves most often with their family’s ethnic background such as Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran or Dominican” (Taylor et al., 2012). Even more surprisingly, first and second generation Hispanics have also been found to identify themselves primarily by the country their parents left in order to settle in the United States (PEW Hispanic Center, 2009).

### **Country of Origin and Well-known Patterns of Hispanic Political Affiliation**

Hispanics migrate from a diverse number of countries with a distinct number of governmental and political infrastructures. Most countries in Latin America, for example, tend to be military oligarchies posing as Democratic Republics while many others are Socialist Republics (Barrera and Lopez, 2013). Due to this diversity, it is clear that Hispanic voters do not all vote the same way.

Following the events of the Cuban Revolution, many of the Cubans who were migrating into the United States were essentially leaving a country which had become politically unstable. Sudden shifts of governmental rule made the situation even more severe as Cubans went from living in the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista to the more socialist ruling of Fidel Castro (Paterson, 1995). Nearly ten years later after Communism had impacted the Cuban government; more Cubans immigrated to the United States seeking not only refuge but means of fighting back Communism. As a result, the Republican Party quickly gathered the attention of Cubans who disagreed with the liberal attitudes of the Democratic Party towards anti-Castro policies (Paterson, 1995). Many other Cubans were simply looking for a conservative stand against Communism (Paterson, 1995).

Other major groups of Hispanics such as Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans have also developed well known loyalties with political parties. From a historical perspective, the New Deal reforms of 1933 introduced a series of economic programs enacted not only for financial relief but also as a way of assisting financial and ethnic minorities (Carmines & Stanley,

1992). African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans along with many other poor white Americans benefited the most from these reforms. In exchange, the Democratic Party saw a huge increase in support from minority groups in disadvantage positions. In addition, the New Deal also gave birth to a separate set of programs that began to take place in Puerto Rico from 1935 to 1937. Led by the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, these social reforms took on the challenge of land reform while simultaneously improving Puerto Rico's agricultural and factory setting (Trias, 1997).

### **The Issue of Citizenship and Age**

In American politics, partisanship has been investigated to a great extent. More importantly, scholars have researched the political behavior and preferences of those who actually take the time to cast a vote. In many cases, socio-economic reasons prevail as top contributors affecting voting decisions. Particularly, socio-economic factors tend to be strongly guided by a particular window of available opportunities. On this particular topic, Robert Jackson (2003) explains that "the general argument is that citizens at higher levels of socioeconomic status have the civic skills (including the ability to engage and process political information), and the time and money that facilitate participation" (Jackson, 2003).

The ability or at least the opportunity to vote has created a point of interest among researchers. For Hispanics, the most prominent restricting barrier affecting their opportunity to vote is associated with their citizenship status. Hispanic individuals, especially those of older age, often lack citizenship and in most cases do not attempt to pursue it at an advanced age

(Camarillo and Bonilla, 2001). According to a report from the PEW Research Center, Jeffrey Passel and D’Vera Cohn (2009) estimate that about “three-quarters (76%) of the nation’s unauthorized immigrant population are Hispanics. The majority of undocumented immigrants (59%) are from Mexico, numbering 7 million” (Passel and Cohn, 2009).

Even more astonishing than the number of illegal Hispanic immigrants is the number of many other Hispanics who are just waiting to be part of the Latino voting bloc. Senior researchers from the PEW Research Center explain that there are “5.4 million adult legal permanent residents (LPRs) who could not vote because they have not yet become naturalized U.S. citizens” and “7.1 million are adult unauthorized immigrants and would become eligible to vote only if Congress were to pass a law creating a pathway to citizenship for them” (PEW Research Center, 2012).

Adding to the statistical number of illegal Hispanics who continue to have trouble with their citizenships status is the number of young Hispanic individuals who are yet to become legible voters. According to the PEW Research Center, Hispanics under the age of 18 compose the majority of the Latino demographic (PEW Research Center, 2012). To be more precise, “17.6 million are under the age of 18 and thus too young to vote—for now. The vast majority (93%) of Latino youths are U.S-born citizens and will automatically become eligible to vote once they turn 18. Today, some 800,000 Latinos turn 18 each year” (PEW Research Center, 2012). Thus, for first and second generation Hispanics the problem of citizenship is less of an issue resulting in a high number of young voters (PEW Research Center, 2008).

Moreover, in states like Florida, for example, the “Hispanic eligible voters are younger than all eligible voters—25% of Hispanic eligible voters are ages 18 to 29 versus 19% of all eligible vote” (PEW Research Center, 2008). So, by adding the number of unauthorized immigrants with the legal permanent residents and the number of illegible young Hispanics it accumulates to about 30.1 million potential Hispanic votes yet to be counted for upcoming elections.

### **Religious Affiliation**

Finding links between party affiliation and the Hispanic population is no simple task. To a certain extent, Hispanics like any other particular group of voters are prone to cast their votes according to their interactions with religious institutions. The most prominent religious institution amongst Hispanics happens to be the Catholic Church. Estimates of the proportion of Hispanics who consider themselves as Catholics vary to a high degree, some studies mention that over half of the Hispanics in their sample consider themselves Catholic while other researchers conclude that over ninety percent of Hispanics in their studies commonly see themselves as followers of the Catholic faith (Dolan and Deck, 1997). Despite not having an accountable figure of Catholic Hispanics, it can be safe to assume that the prominent number of Roman Catholics found in Central and South America contribute to an abundance number of Catholic Hispanics living in the United States (Kane and Williams, 2000).

Recent research on the political affiliation of Latino voters show that there is indeed a connection, although not clear, between party preference and religion. This connection is

predominantly troublesome to Democrat party officials who, despite of having strong Hispanic support, fear that religious Hispanics are more than likely to identify themselves with the conventional conservative principles of the Republican Party (Espinosa, 2011). This fear of losing Hispanic voters to the Republican chiefly comes from the unclear support posed by Protestant Latinos. According to Gaston Espinosa, although many Protestant Hispanics chose to elect President Clinton in 1996 and then voted again for Al Gore in 2000, they still manage to switch over to the Republican Party by endorsing the 2004 Bush campaign (Espinosa, 2011). What is even more alarming to the Democratic party is the fact that “the amount of Latino Protestants has risen to almost 11 million and they usually have the highest voter turnout in comparison to Hispanic Catholics” (Espinosa, 2011).

### **Chapter 3: The Socio-economic Mobility of Hispanics**

In its early theoretical stages, social mobility was structured around class stratification. In the late 1950's, social mobility was further expanded to explain the voting behavior of individuals with different levels of socioeconomic standing. In order to break down the influences affecting this socioeconomic relationship, political scientists constructed occupational classification models to pin point the transitions of social mobility among socially mobile individuals. On this particular association, Gerhard E. Lenski (1966) published data on the connection between occupation and voting behavior of nine industrialized nations. These data sets show that in every country, socially mobile individuals (referring to blue collar workers) had the tendency to vote for a 'left' wing party (Lenski. 1966).

On a latter empirical body of research, Lipset and Bendix (1992) further the concept of social mobility by conducting a cross tabulation of nine industrialized countries to determine the fluidity or rate of social mobility among the working class (Lipset, and Bendix , 1992). In their final observation, Lipset and Bendix (1992) concluded that upward social mobility in the United States is common within the ranks of the elite but not amongst the middle and lower classes (Lipset, and Bendix , 1992). According to the data recorded from the United States, people who moved upwards from the blue collar to the middle class turned out to be more conservative than those belonging to the middle class since their birth (Lipset and Zetterberg, 1956). In retrospect, social mobility is a very active influence affecting party

affiliation among American voters and hence becomes an important factor to consider when studying a particular group of people.

### **Intragenerational Social Mobility**

Similar to any other ethnic group living in the United States, the socioeconomic well-being of Hispanics is subject to their economic fluidity, or in other words, becoming upward and downward mobility are well established possibilities for Hispanics. With this in mind, voting preferences among Hispanics is, to a substantial extent, dependent on the trajectory of their social mobility. But in order to measure this trajectory, an intragenerational perspective toward the social mobility is necessary. Generally speaking, social scientists regard intragenerational, along with intergenerational, as two of the main forms of social mobility. To be exact, intragenerational social mobility concerns the ability of a specific individual to move up or down the ladder within his or her lifetime (OCDE, 2010). Put differently, intragenerational mobility reflects to the change in socioeconomic status within a single generation.

From a similar perspective, Daniel P. McMurrer, Mark Condon, and Isabel V. Sawhill (1996) suggest that intragenerational mobility is affected by the total amount of economic opportunities available to any particular individual (McMurrer, Condon, and Sawhill, 1996). These authors suggest that intragenerational mobility has an intrinsic effect on peoples' economic well-being (McMurrer, Condon, and Sawhill, 1996). Indeed, by evaluating race-based differences in wages and income levels among African American families, Melissa S. Kearney (2006) found that interactions between race and class continue to play a role in the

intragenerational difference in income standing (Kearney, 2006). Now, this research aims in finding out whether or not Hispanics are also influenced by these socioeconomic factors and being social mobile can be a major player in determining the political affiliation of Hispanics.

### **Are Socio-Economic Variables a Good Measurement for Predicting Political Affiliation?**

The current American voting literature embodies the use of socio-economic measurement to predict an individual's party affiliation. In respect to the socio-economic status of voters, voting analysts have primarily focused on explaining how an individual's level of education, profession, and overall level of income affect their political inclination. For the most part, casting a ballot for a political candidate is directly related to an individual's economic well-being. Thus overtime, social-economic measurements have become sound and reliable predictors of political partisanship. For one, socio-economic variables are not constant and in most cases create a chain of economic resources that ultimately guide a voter's party affiliation. The opportunity to attend college or at least some sort of preparatory/technical schooling, for example, allows for an individual to have not only a broader number of job opportunities but also the likelihood of attaining a higher paying job. In return, those individuals who are better off economically are more at stake and in most cases make them more aware of the surfacing political and economic issues brought up by political parties (Zaller, 1990). Regrettably for Hispanics, this chain of socio-economic opportunities is limited and sometimes nonexistent due to their setbacks on their trajectory to becoming economically mobile.

### **Barriers to Social Mobility**

Becoming upwardly mobile, in terms of having a prosperous economic future, is in itself a hardship endured by almost every ethnic group. To a large extent, the country in which one resides is a good indicator of how far an individual can grow socially and economically. On the world stage, socialism and capitalism reign over a country's labor workforce, education prospects, living standards and essentially their limits to social mobility. Unfortunately for Hispanics, capitalism as seen in the United States is rare in Latin America thus becoming intuitive to note that Hispanic immigrants have little to no experience with capitalism. To no surprise, many Hispanics immigrating from Central and South America face not only a cultural shock but also a social readjustment. Although many Hispanics succeed in progressing through this economic readjustment many others do not.

### **Disadvantage in the Educational System and its effect on Job Opportunities**

For Hispanics living in the United States, the American educational system is one of disproportionate disadvantage. Hispanics attending K-12 educational system are less likely to have the necessary resources that many other students receive. Unfortunately for Hispanics, private schooling is often out of the question leaving Hispanics students with no choice but to attend public schools. In most cases, Hispanic students are matriculated in large public schools that assist a high number of minority students. Although many of these public schools offer access to special aide programs, as it is often the case, the clustering of minority students creates a number of problematic learning environments for Hispanics (Valdés, 2001).

Furthermore, usually problems arise from the failure to hire properly trained educators with enough cultural diversity to teach multinational groups of minorities (Valdés, 2001). As a direct consequence, learning programs such as ESL which is designed to improve the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) become ill equipped in providing the right kind of learning environment for Hispanics children. Researching the disparities in the teaching of Hispanics students, Claudia Galindo and Sean F. Reardon (2006) found:

“Overall, only a small percentage of Hispanic students have teachers with five or more years experience teaching in bilingual or ESL classes. Even among the contextually/linguistically disadvantaged subgroups of Hispanics, fewer than 25% of students have teachers with five or more years of bilingual education experience, and fewer than one-eighth of students have teachers with five or more years of ESL teaching experience.” (Galindo and Reardon, 2006)

But not all the educational disadvantages faced by Hispanics stem from inefficient public teaching. In addition, the home environment of Hispanic students has been shown to promote little to no aide towards education. Claudia Galindo and Sean F. Reardon (2006) describe this inefficient home environment surrounding Hispanics as:

“Students who are contextually/linguistically and/or socioeconomically disadvantaged have, on average fewer educational resources (books, computers) in their homes, are less likely to have attended center-based child care, and are read to less often by their parents than are more advantaged Hispanic subgroups

(South American- and Cuban-origin students, third-generation Mexican students, students from homes where English is the predominant language used)” (Quote from pg, 3)

Parallel to the experiences of Hispanic students in the K-12 system, older Hispanics looking to enroll in postsecondary institution regularly find themselves short on economic resources. Lack of state funding of public universities and technical institutions has increased the amount of financial burden taken on by Hispanic students. As a direct result, one study finds that Hispanics often choose to obtaining a short technical or vocational degree rather than attending 4-year Universities (Campbell, 1986). In the short run, a technical degree has proved to have improved the lives of Hispanic minority workers by providing them with the necessary working experience needed to obtain a salary that pays above minimum wage.

It is proposed here that in order for us to get a complete picture of the Hispanic voting preference we must analyze the Hispanic economics from a collective approach. This collective approach leads us to inquire about the overall economic burden meet head-on by many Hispanic voters. To do such task, this research utilizes survey data in order to address total household income earned by eligible Hispanic voters.

In retrospect, although the social mobility of Hispanics cannot be directly represented with a single economic measure or with a less complex measure such as language fluency it is, nevertheless, an ongoing framework barrier affecting the party preference of Hispanics. This paper analyzes the effect of social mobility on the party identification of Hispanics by making

connections between two most influential socio-economic variables: income and education attainment. The application of income, for example, gives us a better idea of the discrepancies existing within the party identification of those Hispanics who happen to be less fortunate and those Hispanics who are better off economically. Similarly, testing for education attainment gives us a solid foundation for addressing the lack of resources available to Hispanic voters.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

To adequately address the Hispanics electorate, it is necessary to combine social and economic factors that shape their social mobility in America. The use of social mobility to deal with the demographic portfolio of Hispanics gives this research the variables needed to understand the political preferences of Hispanics. To recap, the Hispanics are subject to a number of social factors that ultimately affect their affiliation. Social standings such as citizenship, for instance, have become major obstacles in the political participation and affiliation of Hispanics.

The lack of citizenship restrains a large portion of Hispanics from voting and as a result we are seeing a strong number of young Hispanic voters. With this trend in mind, this paper aims to put focus on the party affiliation of young Hispanic voters while simultaneously acknowledging other traditional social factors that affect political preference. In other words, the present study also takes into consideration the importance of religion on the partisanship of Hispanics. Moreover, this paper suggests that we must address the party preference of Hispanics according to their perspective country of origin. To do such task, we must break down party affiliation by nationality.

In part, Hispanics also pertain to the challenge of facing a various numbers of economic setbacks. A disadvantage position on educational system, for example, has been well documented to be a result of disadvantages in the workforce. Such factors ultimately take a toll on the economic well-being of Latinos. Many of these factors can be mentally pictured as a

chain of reactions that starts with the lack of educational attainment and shrinks down even more narrowly as the number of available economic opportunities are reduced to a minimum.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that almost all economic driven factors mentioned in this paper have a direct link to the political affiliation of Hispanics. Preceding research on the political affiliation of Hispanic has slightly touched on this relation. For example, Malcolm Coffin (2003) previously demonstrated that the longer Latinos lived in the United States the more likely was the chance that they will become Democrats. In the same report, Coffin (2003) conducted a correlation in which he found that high earning Hispanics preferred and relate more with the Republican Party while lower earning Hispanics had tendencies to support the Democratic Party.

Another social pattern was linked to the party affiliation of Hispanics when Keysar and Kosmin (1995) concluded that there was a constructive relation between Democratic partisanship and the income, age and religion of Hispanics. Specifically, Keysar and Kosmin (1995) discovered that “Protestantism and higher income favour the Republicans and femaleness [referring to feminism] and older age Hispanics assist the Democrats” (Keysar & Kosmin, 1995). Withstanding, many other researchers have also shown that income is in fact halfheartedly connected with the Democratic Party preference.

With equal power, education has been shown to be an important factor affecting the political preference of Hispanics. On this particular topic, Lisa Bedolla and Michael Alvarez (2003) found that highly educated Hispanics were more likely to associate with the Republican

Party (Bedolla and Alvarez, 2003). On the other hand, these results clearly conflict with Coffin's (2003) conclusion which states the opposite. Coffin (2003) concluded that a higher education level amongst Hispanics resulted in their increase support for the Democratic Party.

It is suggested that social mobility connects this research to the independent socio-economic backgrounds affecting the party preferences of Hispanics. The goal of this research is to examine the party preferences of Hispanics while still keeping in mind their identity and nationality differences. The second purpose of this paper is to attempt to link the social reasons behind the Hispanic support for the Democratic and Republican institutions. In addition, the research question of whether or not social mobility has an impact on the party affiliation of Hispanics will be dependent upon the analysis of economic and social causes.

While not many scholars have connected the literature on social mobility to our understanding of the Hispanic electorate, it is nevertheless an increasingly relevant and important connection to make. To test this connection this paper aims to examine the following hypotheses about the party identification of Hispanics:

- Income: Those Hispanics who report to have low household income are more likely to support the Democratic Party; those who are better off financially are more likely to support the Republican Party.
- Education: Hispanics with low educational attainment will identify themselves as Democrats. It is expected that as Hispanics obtain more education they will more likely support the Republican Party.

- Age: A majority of Hispanic voters are more likely to be young individuals. Young Hispanics are more likely to vote for Democrats.
- Religion: Catholic Hispanics are more likely to be Democrats.
- Country of Origin: Cuban Americans are less likely to be Democrats. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans and Mexican American are more likely to support the Democratic Party.

### **Data Collection**

For research purposes, this study will rely on aggregated survey data provided by the PEW Research Center. The national surveys will be used to create a multivariate, binary logistic model between the socio-economic variables of Hispanic voters and their party preferences. In order to address this link, the present research will use the Hispanics' 2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos.

The 2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos contains a series of survey questions representing post electoral opinions of 1,540 Latino respondents. The survey covers political questions as well as corresponding demographics of Hispanic respondents. The entire sample is compose of responses from Hispanics ages 18 and older.

### **Coding**

The dependent variable consisted of the number of responses given by Hispanics regarding their partisanship: "Democrat", "Republican", and "Independent." This study omitted those who selected "Refused" as a response to their partisanship simply because it provided little insight into the investigation. Due to this omission, there is a few number of missing cases

which come from those who refused to specify a party identification. In addition several changes were made to the 2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latino for the purpose of either simplifying or merging common responses from respondents. For example, this study re-categorizes many of the categories under “Highest Degree of Education.” The attainment of education was re-coded and grouped by the highest level of education achieved. Those Hispanics who completed “none or grades 1-8” and “Grades 9-11” were labeled as falling under the “Less than High School” category. Moreover, those who originally reported being a “GED” or “high school graduate” were merged together and labeled as “High School Graduate.” In the case of those who acquired higher education, the label “Some College” was created in order to include those who originally reported having “vocational training” or “some college.” Finally, “College Graduate” and “Post Graduate” were left as originally coded by the PEW Research Center.

Total Household income and Age was left alone according to the original interval coding provided by the PEW Research Center. The interval coding for age was also left on its original continuous state as it proves to be the most efficient way to test the relationship between age and party affiliation.

In addition, the coding for “Country of Origin” was slightly redesigned to exclude those who “Refused”, “Don’t Know”, and most importantly those Hispanics who selected “Other European.” Once again, these exclusions are made because they do not affect the overall focus of the study and are not within the scope of this research. Lastly, the “Religion” variable was

left in its original state but slightly changed to exclude those who selected “Refused” for their religious affiliation. In retrospect, all of these changes were made to accommodate for simpler evaluation of the independent predictors.

## Chapter 5: Results

After re-coding the desired variables, this research moved on into analyzing the effect of Hispanic’s income, age, religious affiliation, country of origin, and educational achievement on the political affiliation of Latinos. Once again, the results were gathered from the 2008 post-election national survey of Latinos which contains a series of survey questions measured in relation to the political preferences of 1,540 Latino respondents. In order to better understand the basic relationship between political affiliation and the predictor variables, an analysis with a series of cross tabulations is necessary because it allows us to explore the available data sets before trying to model things in a statistical way.

**Table 1: Spearman Correlation between Total Household Income and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election.**

		Affiliation	Total Household Income
Affiliation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.088**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
	N	1213	1213
Total Household Income	Correlation Coefficient	-.088**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
	N	1213	1540

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Pew Research Center, *2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos*.

Table 1 show that there is indeed a relationship between the total household income and party affiliation. As shown above, there is a negative relationship between this two variables and it is a statistically significant with a P-value of 0.002.

**Table 2: Cross Tabulation of Highest Degree of Education and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election.**

	Highest Degree of Education					Total
	Less than High school	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate	Post-Graduate	
Count	55	35	44	32	9	175
Republican Affiliation	31.4%	20.0%	25.1%	18.3%	5.1%	100.0%
% within Education	11.8%	11.7%	18.9%	21.9%	15.3%	14.6%
Count	246	175	128	81	34	664
Democrat Affiliation	37.0%	26.4%	19.3%	12.2%	5.1%	100.0%
% within Education	52.9%	58.7%	54.9%	55.5%	57.6%	55.3%
Count	164	88	61	33	16	362
Independent Affiliation	45.3%	24.3%	16.9%	9.1%	4.4%	100.0%
% within Education	35.3%	29.5%	26.2%	22.6%	27.1%	30.1%
Count	465	298	233	146	59	1201
Total Affiliation	38.7%	24.8%	19.4%	12.2%	4.9%	100.0%
% within Education	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Pew Research Center, *2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos*.  
Chi-square value is 21.853 and is statistically significant.

For the highest level of education, there are a large number of respondents who reported having both “Less than High School Education” and Democrat affiliation. In addition, there is a significant number of Hispanics who affiliated themselves as Democrats while obtaining some post-secondary education or obtained a college degree and beyond. As shown above, the Chi-square value is 21.853 and is statistically significant with a P-value of 0.005.

**Table 3: Spearman Correlation between Age and Political Affiliation.**

		Affiliation	Age
Affiliation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.172**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	1213	1213
Age	Correlation Coefficient	-.172**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	1213	1540

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Pew Research Center, *2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos*.

Table 3 shows that there is indeed a relationship between Hispanic’s age and their party affiliation. As shown above, there is a negative relationship between this two variables and it is statistically significant.

**Table 4: Cross Tabulation of Country of Origin and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election**

Affiliation		Country of Origin					Total	
		Mexican (Mexico)	Puerto Rican (Puerto Rico)	Cuban (Cuba)	Dominican (the Dominican Republic)	Other Central American (Central America)		Other South American (South America)
Republican	Count	99	14	22	3	6	8	152
	% within Affiliation	65.1%	9.2%	14.5%	2.0%	3.9%	5.3%	100.0%
	% within Country of Origin	14.3%	12.0%	39.3%	4.7%	8.1%	9.1%	13.9%
Democrat	Count	376	87	14	52	38	46	613
	% within Affiliation	61.3%	14.2%	2.3%	8.5%	6.2%	7.5%	100.0%
	% within Country of Origin	54.2%	74.4%	25.0%	81.2%	51.4%	52.3%	56.1%
Independent	Count	219	16	20	9	30	34	328
	% within Affiliation	66.8%	4.9%	6.1%	2.7%	9.1%	10.4%	100.0%
	% within Country of Origin	31.6%	13.7%	35.7%	14.1%	40.5%	38.6%	30.0%
Total	Count	694	117	56	64	74	88	1093
	% within Affiliation	63.5%	10.7%	5.1%	5.9%	6.8%	8.1%	100.0%
	% within Country	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Pew Research Center, *2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos*.  
Chi-square value is 80.204 and is statistically significant.

Table 4 shows that when party affiliation was broken down according to the country of origin of Hispanics there were sharp contrasts and results. There were a large number of Hispanics respondents who were both of Mexican descent and affiliated themselves with the Democratic Party. Surprisingly, there was not a sharp difference in the amount of Cubans who reported being Republican and those who support Democrats. The cross-tab for country of origin indicates a relative split in Cuban and party id. As shown in Table 4, the Chi-square value is 80.204 and is statistical significant with a P-value of 0.001.

**Table 5: Cross Tabulation of Religion and Political Party Affiliation for the 2008 Election.**

Affiliation		Religion				Total
		Catholic	Evangelical Christian	Protestant	Something else	
Republican	Count	95	49	6	18	168
	% within Affiliation	56.5%	29.2%	3.6%	10.7%	100.0%
	% within Religion	12.2%	26.2%	18.2%	16.8%	15.2%
Democrat	Count	450	87	19	57	613
	% within Affiliation	73.4%	14.2%	3.1%	9.3%	100.0%
	% within Religion	57.8%	46.5%	57.6%	53.3%	55.4%
Independent	Count	234	51	8	32	325
	% within Affiliation	72.0%	15.7%	2.5%	9.8%	100.0%
	% within Religion	30.0%	27.3%	24.2%	29.9%	29.4%
Total	Count	779	187	33	107	1106
	% within Affiliation	70.4%	16.9%	3.0%	9.7%	100.0%
	% within Religion	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Pew Research Center, *2008 Post-Election National Survey of Latinos*.  
Chi-square value is 24.179 and is statistically significant.

As show in table 5, there was a sharp difference in the number of Hispanic respondents who reported being both Democrats and Catholics. Yet, Hispanic Protestants or Evangelical Christians did not show such contrast in numbers. The Chi-square value for this relationship is 24.179 and is statistical significant with a P-value of 0.001.

Social and economic variables such as religion, income, age, education, and country of origin all have different effect on the political affiliation of Hispanics. One major precaution to acknowledge is the fact that there were a number of missing cases pertaining to excluded responses. Nevertheless, this research still found a number of significant relationships. There was a large number of Hispanics who reported being Catholics and Democrats. Similarly, there were also a number of Hispanics, which according to cross-tabulations, chose to affiliate with the Republican Party. In addition, Cuban Americans along with Puerto Ricans turned out to be predominately Democrats. Still, Mexican descendants demonstrated to be sharp supporters of the Democratic Party. Finally, Hispanics with low educational attainment were found to be predominately Democrats.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Similar to the previous extensive literature dealing with party affiliation, this study analyzed the effect of social and economic factors on the political affiliation of Hispanics. This study utilized the most recent dataset provided by the PEW Research Center in order to evaluate the latest political inclination favored by Hispanic voters. As mentioned in the first couple of chapters, Hispanics like any other ethnic group are confronted with socio-economic influences such as education and income which intensify the complexity of their political participation. Moreover, this researched primarily goal was to explain the traditional socio-economic variables of Hispanics and their party affiliation. With this in mind, this research presents the idea that we must carefully evaluate not one but several defining factors affecting the political affiliation of Hispanic voters.

This research concludes that the previous research done on American party affiliation can be successfully applied to Hispanics. Moreover, the present study connects the social mobility literature to a few of the most important factors affecting the party preference of Hispanics. Religion was an influential factor that led us to see that Hispanic respondent reported being both Catholics and Democrats. On the other hand, there was also a large number of Hispanics who were reported being Protestant and supporters of the Republican Party.

In the end, the Hispanic electorate is quickly expanding and growing in number by the day. As a result, future political analysts looking to understand the party affiliation of Hispanics

should not hesitate to go beyond socio-economic variables. When it comes to party alliance, there are a number of important issues that voters tend to heavily consider when choosing their party partisanship. Many of these imperative issues are controversial in nature. To Hispanics, immigration is one of those controversial topics that, in general, are given the highest priority.

Any political party looking to obtain the Latino voting bloc must fully stand behind the issue of immigration in order to appeal to Hispanics. Nevertheless, immigration policies are normally not so straightforward. In other words, targeting immigration involves tapping into other areas of public policy that this research did not cover. Particularly, immigration laws tend to cover a large number of other distinct issues such as entrance to the United States, working permits, welfare, governmental assistance and across-the-board immigration control in which not all Hispanics agreed on. Noting that not all Hispanics agree on the immigration subject, party officials needs to at least attempt to address the issue by confronting the debate head on.

In retrospect, future researchers attempting to profile the Hispanic electorate should have an understanding of their demographic and communal stand on politics. Without a doubt, the political and social experiences of Hispanics act as the very core foundation for their tendencies to support political parties. More importantly, Hispanics have developed a strong sense of identity and along with it an immense amount of groundwork towards a solid form of representation in the American political system. In the end, future researchers might want to

consider not only the demographics of Hispanic voters but also their attitudes toward political institutions.

## References

- Campbell, P. B. (1986). Outcomes of vocational education for women, minorities, the handicapped, and the poor. Columbus, OH: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., Stokes, D. (1980). "The American Voter [Unabridged]" University Of Chicago Press. pp. 200-270. Print.
- Carmines, Edward & Stanley, Harold (1992). "The Transformation of the New Deal Party System: Social Groups, Political Ideology, and Changing Partisanship among Northern Whites, 1972-1988." *Political Behavior*. Vol. 14, No. 3, Special Issue on Party Identification (Sep., 1992), pp. 213-237.
- Clifford, P. and Heath, A. (1993), '*The Political Consequences of Social Mobility*', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A (Statistics in Society)* Vol. 156, pp. 51-61.
- Coffin, M. (2003), *The Latino Vote: Shaping America's Electoral Future*. *The Political Quarterly*, 74: 214–222. doi: 10.1111/1467-923X.00531.
- Barrera, A., Lopez, I., Passel J., and Taylor, P (2013). "The Path Not Taken." *Pew Hispanic Center RSS*. February 4, 2013. Web. 24 Feb. 2013.
- Bedolla, Lisa and Michael, Alvarez (2003). *The Foundations of Latino Voter Partisanship: Evidence from the 2000 Election*: *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 65, No. 1, pp. 31-49.
- "*Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America*." *Pew Hispanic Research Center (2009)*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Oct. 2012.

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/12/11/between-two-worlds-how-young-latinos-come-of-age-in-america/>.

"Census 2010 News | 2010 Census Shows Nation's Hispanic Population Grew Four Times Faster Than Total U.S. Population." Census 2010 News | 2010 Census Shows Nation's Hispanic Population Grew Four Times Faster Than Total U.S. Population. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 June 2012. <http://2010.census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn146.html>.

Dolan, Jay P., and Allan Figueroa Deck (1997). *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, pp.1-5. Print.

Espenshade, J. Thomas (1995). Unauthorized Immigration to the United States. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 21, pp. 195-216.

Espinosa, Gastón (2011). *Religion, Race, and the American Presidency*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 256-257. Print.

Galindo, Claudia and Reardon, F. Sean (2006) *Hispanic Students' Educational Experiences and Opportunities: A Report to the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics* [https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/hispanic\\_experience.pdf](https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/hispanic_experience.pdf).

Handelman, Howard, and Thomas G. Sanders (1981). *Military Government and the Movement toward Democracy in South America*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, pp. 30-35. Print.

Humes, R. Karen, Jones, A. Nicholas, and Ramirez, R. Roberto (2010), "U.S. Census Bureau, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*." <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>.

Jackson, Robert A. (2003) "Differential Influences on Latino Electoral Participation." *Political Behavior* 25.4 : 339-66. Print.

Lipset, Seymour Martin., and Reinhard Bendix (1992), "*Social Mobility in Industrial Society.*"  
New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction Publishing, pp. 5-15.

Lipset, Seymour Martin.and H. Zetterberg (1956), 'A Theory of Social Mobility', in: *Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology*, Vol. III: 155-77, (London: International Sociological Association).

Lenski, G. (1956): *Social Participation and Status Crystallization*. *American Sociological Review*.  
Vol. 21: 458- 464.

Lenski, G. (1967): *Status Inconsistency and the Vote: A Four Nation Test*. *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 32: 298- 301.

Kane, Michael and Williams, Margueritta (2002). *Journal of Religion and Health*. Vol. 39, No. 2,  
pp. 107-121.

Kearney, Melissa S. (2006), "*Intergenerational Mobility for Women and Minorities in the United States.*" *The Future of Children*.16 (2): pp. 37-53.

"Latin American Government Information." *Latin American Government Information*. N.p., n.d.  
Web. 30 Oct. 2012

<[http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/govinfo/foreign/gov\\_latamgvt.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/govinfo/foreign/gov_latamgvt.html)>.

McMurrer, P. Daniel, Condon, Mark and Sawhill, V. Isabel (1996), "*Intergenerational Mobility in the United States*," Urban Institute, No. 6796 (1997), and Sawhill and McMurrer, "Are Justice and Inequality Compatible?" *Opportunity in America* series, Urban Institute, No.

2.

National Research Council. "4. Hispanics in a Multicultural Society: A New American Dilemma?."

America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, Volume 1. Washington, DC:  
The National Academies Press, 2001.

Passel, Jeffrey and Cohn, D'Vera (2008) "U.S. Population Projections: 2005-2050." *Pew Hispanic Center*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Oct. 2012. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/>.

Passel, Jeffrey (2005) "*Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Undocumented Population*" PEW Research Center. N.p., n.d. Web Jan. 13, 2013.  
<<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/44.pdf>>.

Passel, Jeffrey & Cohn, D'Vera "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States." *Pew Hispanic Center RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web Jan. 13, 2013  
<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/14/a-portrait-of-unauthorized-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>.

Paterson, Thomas G. (1995). *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*. New York: Oxford UP, pp. 12-14. Print.

Rivera, F. I., P. J. Guarnaccia, N. Mulvaney-Day, J. Y. Lin, M. Torres, and M. Alegria (2008).  
"Family Cohesion and Its Relationship to Psychological Distress Among Latino Groups."  
*Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 30.3: 357-78. Print.

Rocha, R. R., and R. Espino (2010). "Segregation, Immigration, and Latino Participation in Ethnic Politics." *American Politics Research* 38.4: 614-35. Print.

Taylor, Paul, Mark Lopez, Jessica Martinez, and Gabriel Velazco (2012). "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity." Pew Hispanic Center. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>>.

Taylor, Paul, Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana, Passel, Jeffrey, and Lopez, Mark (2012) "An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate Is Likely to Double by 2030." *Pew Hispanic Center RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Jan. 2013. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/11/14/an-awakened-giant-the-hispanic-electorate-is-likely-to-double-by-2030/>

Trías, Monge José (1997). Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World. New Haven Conn.: Yale UP, 1997. pp.96-98. Print.

OCDE (2010), "A Family Affair: Intergenerational Social Mobility across OECD Countries", Ch. 5, Economic Policy Reforms Going for Growth 2010, OCDE,

Independent Commission On Social Mobility (2009), "Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility", pp. 4. April 1, 2012.

<[http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/Social\\_Mobility\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/Social_Mobility_Report_Final.pdf)>

Valdés, Guadalupe (2001). Learning and Not Learning English: Latino Students in American Schools. New York: Teachers College, pp. 1-10. Print.

Zaller, John (1990). Political Awareness, Elite Opinion Leadership, and the Mass Survey Response. *Social Cognition*: Vol. 8, Thinking about Politics: Comparisons of Experts and Novices, pp. 125-153.