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To: Friends of Democracy Corps

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RE: HISPANICS – DEAD CENTER IN THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD
A national survey on reclaiming Hispanics as loyalist Democrats

Democrats witnessed the loss of a small though significant portion of their Hispanic support to George Bush in 2000 and 2004, but by no means were these dislodged voters an advance party for a greater flight of Hispanics from the Democratic Party. Hispanic voters remain instinctively very Democratic, but more important than that, they hold values, views of society, the economy and the role of government, as well as issue priorities and hopes for America, that put them deep inside the Democratic world. The Democrats will stem the erosion of the Hispanic vote, not by chasing the defectors or waving the partisan banner, but by rediscovering their own values and beliefs. The route to a national Democratic majority goes right through the Hispanic community, where Democrats will find the themes that best define the modern Democratic Party.

The starting point for this study is the very real in-roads achieved by George Bush in 2004, raising his vote among Hispanics to 40 percent, up from 35 percent in 2000 and Bob Dole's pathetic 21 percent in 1996, and holding John Kerry to 58 percent.¹ In this study, 4 percent of Hispanics say they voted for Gore but not Kerry; 11 percent say they voted for Clinton in

¹ 2004 results from National Election Pool Cross Survey exit poll data, conducted by Edison/Mitofsky Research. News organizations initially reported that Bush won 44 percent of the vote in 2004, but this number was due to the exit poll over representing Cubans in South Florida, who are heavily Republican leaning. In their report, Edison/Mitofsky explain this over representation in the original exit poll and explain how their "Cross Survey" – which combines the exit poll results of all 51 state surveys and produces a sample 75,537 respondents – shows Bush's share of the Hispanic vote at 40 percent ("Evaluation of Edison/Mitofsky Election System 2004" January 19, 2005, pages 59, 62-63); previous numbers from 2000 and 1996 VNS exit polls. In the June Democracy Corps Hispanic survey that forms the basis of this report, the 2004 vote recall was 58 to 37 percent, which is quite close to the actual margin.

Hispanics – Dead Center in the Democratic World

1996 but not Kerry last November. That erosion reduced the Democratic margin among Hispanics to 18 points, down 8 points from just 4 years ago.

This small bloc of dislodged Hispanic voters are the product of Bush's attentiveness, seeming racial tolerance, openness on immigration and support for the family, as well as the Republicans' success in making social issues, like abortion and gay marriage, and security matter more in people's presidential preference. That happened in an election in which Democrats were inarticulate on their values and priorities.

As a result, some pundits and Democratic strategists have started speaking of the Hispanic bloc as a "contested-swing group" or a "Democratic-leaning swing group." They are right on the swing, but they miss the partisan character of this group.

These voters were disappointed and dislodged; they did not defect. In this survey just completed, Hispanics had swung back to the Democrats with a vengeance, giving them a 32-point margin in a generic race for Congress (61 to 29 percent).² The Republican vote today is 10 points below what Bush achieved just six months earlier.³ These voters are deeply dissatisfied with the Bush economy and Iraq war; they are socially tolerant and internationalist; they align with a Democratic Party that respects Hispanics and diversity, that uses government to help families, reduce poverty and create opportunity, and that will bring major change in education and health care. This is even truer for the growing younger population under 30, including Gen Y voters, who support the Democrats by a remarkable 46 points (70 to 24 percent).⁴ All together, this paints a portrait of a group that respects Bill Clinton, indeed giving him higher marks than the Catholic Church, and that embraces his vision of the Democratic Party.

This is a good place for Democrats to center themselves and discover their future.

These findings are based on a large-scale national survey of 1,000 Hispanic voters, conducted June 5 to 16, 2005. It was completed using a sample of Hispanics with Spanish surnames, as well as those who self-identify as Latino or Hispanic.⁵

² The same conclusion is evident on party identification: 63 percent of Hispanics identify as Democrats, twice the number who identify as Republicans; one-half of the Democrats identify strongly with the party.

³ 2004 National Election Pool exit poll data had Democrats winning Hispanics in the Congressional vote by an 11-point margin, 53 to 42 percent; Using our core voter model to estimate a slightly smaller, likely off-year electorate, the margin was 28 points.

⁴ Among Hispanic voters under 30 (n=204), the generic vote was 70-24 in favor of the Democrat. The Gen Y figure (74 to 19 percent) is for Hispanic voters born in 1977 or later (n=137) and is subject to a higher margin of error due to the smaller sample.

⁵ The sample included 201 interviews from Democracy Corps database sample (achieved by random digit dial) and 799 interviews from a voter file surname sample of 12 states with the largest Hispanic electorates (California, Texas,

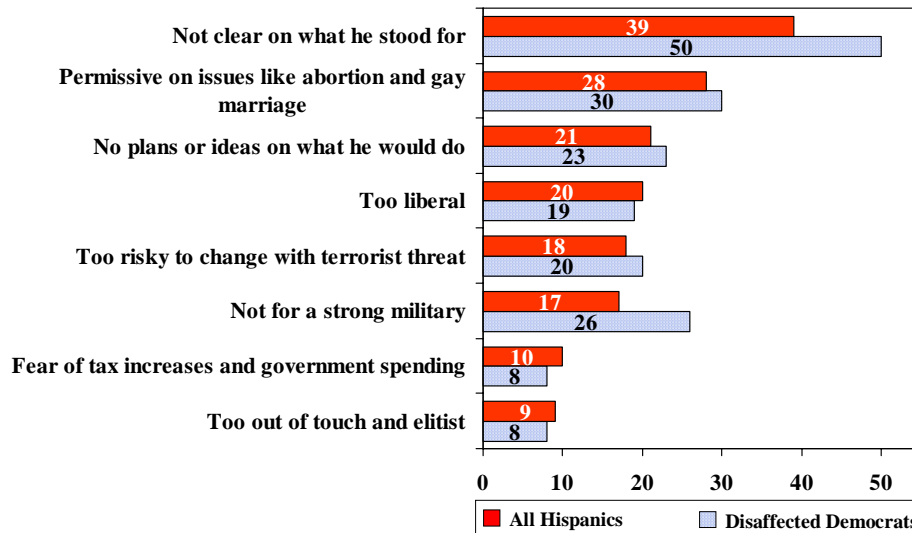
The Dislodged Hispanic Voters

The Bush campaign set out to raise the Bush vote to at least 40 percent, from the 35 percent in 2000, and they hit the target. That was very important to Bush’s re-election and his ability to carry key states in the Southwest and Florida. They were able to do it by extending the culture war to the Hispanic community and making it matter more for at least a segment of the Hispanic electorate. They raised doubts about Kerry on lacking strong convictions, permissiveness on abortion and gay marriage and lack of support for the military. They were able to make it work because of factors specific to George Bush that will not be easy to extend to the Republican Party or even another Republican presidential candidate.

Conviction, values and security. When Hispanic voters were asked why Kerry lost, they focused above all on Kerry himself, his lack of clear convictions, followed by worries about his positions on abortion and gay marriage. When we focus in on the disaffected Democratic voters who pulled back, they add a third concern, Kerry not being for a strong military.

Why Did Kerry Lose?

All Hispanics and Disaffected Democrats*



“Please tell me which TWO reasons you believe were most important to John Kerry losing the election.”

**Disaffected Democrats - Hispanic voters who self-identify as Democrats or voted for Gore but did not vote for Kerry*

Florida, New York, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Colorado and Michigan). Together, these states make up 87% of the national Hispanic electorate. The margin of error is +/- 3.1%

The swing was more ideological than demographic. Bush's small gains were evenly spread across class, country of national origin, language use, age and generation. The defections to Bush also occurred across all ideological groups, but were somewhat greater among political conservatives and those with socially conservative views of the world. For example, 14 percent of pro-life Hispanics defected since supporting Clinton in 1996, but among pro-choice Hispanics, there was a lesser defection (9 percent). The same pattern held for gay marriage, though stronger: 15 percent of those hostile to gay marriage defected (Clinton-not Kerry), while only 5 percent of those open to gay marriage did so.

That values issues were part of the erosion in 2004 and 2000 is not the same as saying that addressing those issues directly is the best way to rebuild the Democrats' majority. Majorities of Hispanics believe we should be tolerant of homosexuality, would keep abortion legal, and support stem cell research, even with church opposition. This is especially true among the large younger and more middle-class segments of the community.

Bush above party. Hispanic voters still see the Republican Party of the Congress and states and perhaps of Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich, which has championed numerous anti-immigration initiatives and has seemed less welcoming of cultural diversity and less opposed to discrimination. It is hardly the party of the poor or opportunity, as we shall see later in this report.

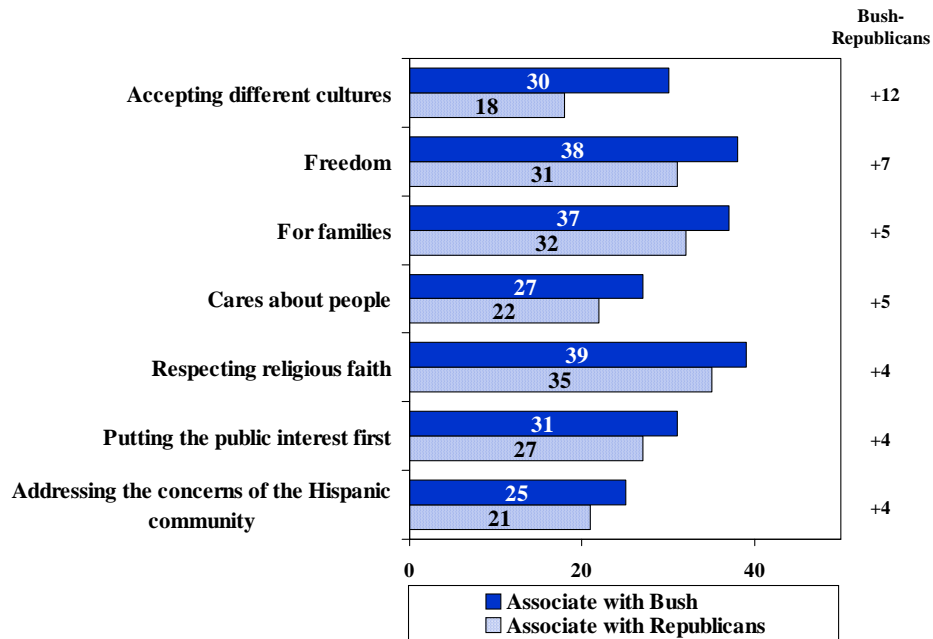
George Bush has worked to distinguish himself from his party's history, explaining a part of his gains in 2004. While George Bush is not popular in the Hispanic community, he is hardly reviled, as an equal number of Hispanics give him "warm" (43 percent) and "cool" (43 percent) ratings on a thermometer scale.⁶ That is hardly characteristic of other Democratic loyalist groups, where Bush gets a much cooler reception. Among African-Americans at a comparable time, just 18 percent were favorable and 58 percent unfavorable; among white union households, who were actually less supportive of Kerry in 2004 than Hispanics were, just 43 percent were positive to Bush, with 49 percent negative.⁷

Bush stands out dramatically from other Republicans on "accepting different cultures." That, more than anything else, created an openness to Bush personally and to his values argument. While Bush's standing on this dimension is still very modest (30 percent associate him rather than the Democrats with this openness), he stands way above the Republicans, with only 18 percent of Hispanics choosing them on accepting different cultures. Bush also does better than Republicans in general on being attentive to the Hispanic community.

⁶ Respondents were asked to rate political figures on a favorability scale of 0-100. Ratings below 50 are considered cool or unfavorable while ratings above 50 are considered warm or favorable.

⁷ Comparison figures from Democracy Corps national survey of 1,078 likely voters, conducted June 20-26, 2005.

Bush Better than Republicans on a Few Dimensions



Bush gets somewhat of a pass because he does better than the Republican Party on putting the public interest first, which likely has something to do with his being commander in chief at a difficult time, as well as being for families, reflecting his family-centered agenda.

Hispanics at the Center of the Democratic World

While Bush moved some voters to him in the context of the 2004 choice, there is no reason to believe that is enduring. When asked about an upcoming race for Congress, they vote Democratic right now by 61 to 29 percent. With anti-immigrant and more intolerant forces on the Republican side muzzled, Bush was able to gain a better hearing, but there is no evidence of a partisan shift. Bush lost by 19 points among Hispanics six months ago, but Republicans now trail the Democrats by 32 points.

Hispanic voters default back to the Democrats more because of their worldview than simple partisan identity. These voters are less caught up in the polarized partisanship of the last election. They are very favorable to the Democrats (54 percent warm and only 23 percent cool), but they are not as anti-Republican as other loyalist groups. On balance, Hispanics view the Republicans more negatively (40 percent cool and 35 percent warm), but that lacks the heat and passion of the loyalist Democrats, who are almost as negative about the Republicans as they are positive about the Democrats. That suggests that Republicans can get a hearing here if Democ-

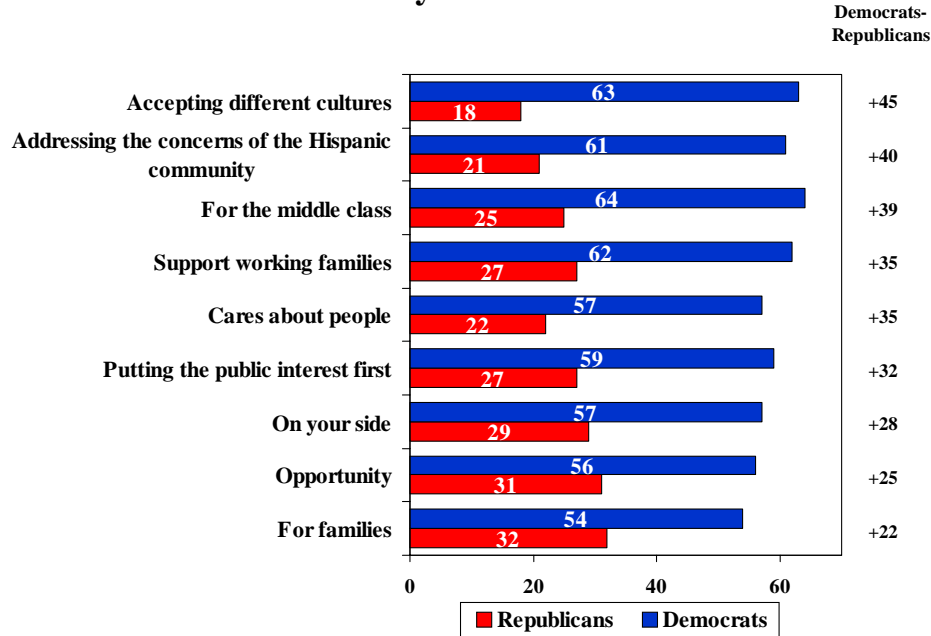
rats fail to make a connection to the values and beliefs that root Hispanics in a Democratic worldview.

Character of the parties. While Hispanic voters are not as polarized in partisan terms as other Democratic loyalist groups, that is less true when they think about the character of the two parties. Here, on values and beliefs, the Hispanics associate very strongly with the Democrats – making clear how important the Democrats can be for Hispanics when thinking about their community and the state of America. Indeed, on many dimensions the Democratic margin exceeds their margin in the congressional contest and on most it exceeds the margin of the 2004 election – confirming that Democrats can readily build back support.

- By over a 40-point margin, Hispanic voters turn to the Democrats, not the Republicans, on accepting different cultures and addressing the concerns of the Hispanic community. Bush may have made in-roads, but barely one in five Hispanics thinks the Republicans are at all interested in them.
- The Democrats are the party of aspiration for Hispanics, preferring the Democrats by 39 points (64 to 25 percent) on being “for the middle class.”
- The Hispanic community turns to the Democrats to care about people and fight for them. The Democrats have a 35-point advantage on supporting working families and caring about people; just 22 percent think the Republicans care about people more. And by 33 points, Hispanic voters turn to Democrats to put the public interest first.
- On the most important dimension in the regression model, being on your side, the Democrats’ advantage is 28 points (57 to 29 percent) – very close to the real margin that Democrats can expect when more expressive of Hispanic ideals.⁸
- The Democrats are the party of opportunity (56 to 31 percent, a 25-point advantage), though they should aspire to a higher margin.
- And Democrats do stand as the party “for families” (54 to 32 percent, a 22-point advantage), though clearly they must make the case even stronger if the party aspires to sustain loyalist levels of support.

⁸ The regression model included all demographics and party associations as independent variables. “On your side” was the strongest indicator of Congressional vote and both Democratic and Republican Party thermometer ratings. “Shares your values” – which Democrats hold an 18-point advantage on – was the next strongest indicator.

Party Associations



“Now I’d like to ask you which party you associate more with these terms, the Democrats or Republicans.”

Democrats are actually preferred to the Republicans on every attribute, though on “shares your values” – important in the regression model – the Democratic advantage is 18 points (52 to 34 percent). That is very close to the 2004 result, suggesting that Democrats must elaborate on the meaning of values or expand the focus to attributes on which they enjoy much stronger advantages.⁹

The Democrats’ advantage is diminished to 10 points or less on “prosperity,” but also, importantly, “respecting religious faith,” “personal responsibility,” “knowing what they stand for,” and “can be trusted to keep America safe.” On these dimensions, about 37 percent of Hispanic voters pick the Republicans – a figure much more in the realm of the 2004 Bush vote – suggesting the need for greater attention and reassurance from the Democrats.

The fundamentals of Bush’s performance. In the short term, the Republicans’ ability to sustain the small gains of 2004 will depend on the Hispanic community’s judgment about Bush’s signature policies – the Iraq war and the tax cut led economy. On both counts, this is a commu-

⁹ The Democrats have only a 10-point advantage on “freedom,” but that is because almost one in five say it applies to both parties.

nity deeply alienated from the current course, which may already be expressed in the current strong Democratic vote for Congress.

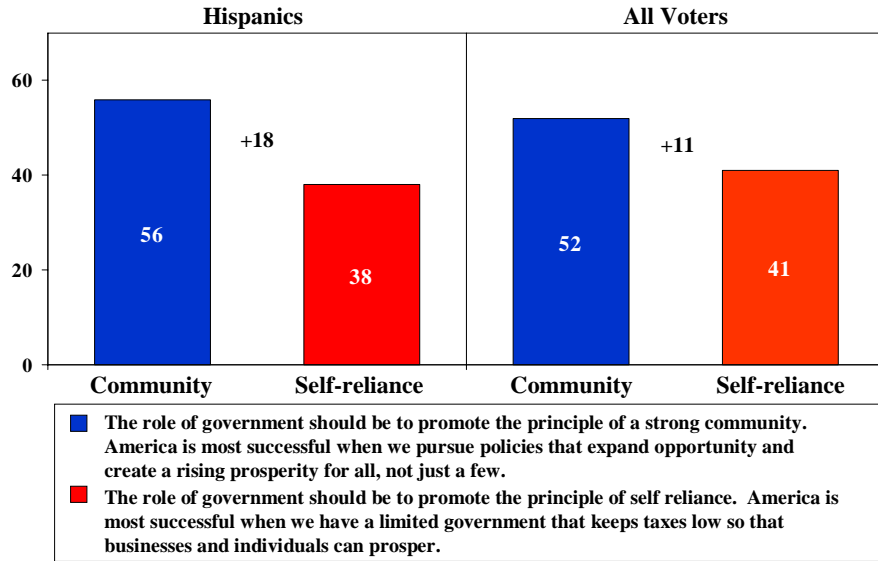
On Iraq, Hispanic voters have become strongly discontented with the cost in lives and dollars: 64 percent deny that Iraq was worth it, including a stunning 55 percent who believe this strongly. Opposition to the war is considerably greater among Hispanics than voters overall.

This is not an economy that works for Hispanics, despite the president's reassurance about economic progress: instead, 64 percent say this economy is not good for the middle class, which faces scarce jobs, stagnant incomes and rising prices. Indeed, 70 percent rate the economy negatively (only fair or poor). Almost 60 percent say the same about their own personal financial situation. (That contrasts with the most recent NPR survey in which voters respond negatively to facts about the economy when focused on the national economy, but positively, when focused on themselves.)

More concretely, we found that two thirds of Hispanic voters (47 percent strongly) said they were more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate who committed to repeal Bush's tax cuts for those earning over \$200,000 and use the funds to support education and health care.

Community and moral concerns. The strong predisposition for the Democrats is rooted in the values and sense of community that permeate this largely Catholic voting bloc. The starting point is the sense that America will be stronger when we promote the principle of community and when government plays an important role expanding opportunity for all, not just a few. That is much more powerful than an alternative view centered on self-reliance and limited government (56 to 38 percent). The commitment to community and the role of government, as seen below, is considerably stronger than in the country as a whole, where community is still a strong concept.

Community vs. Self-reliance

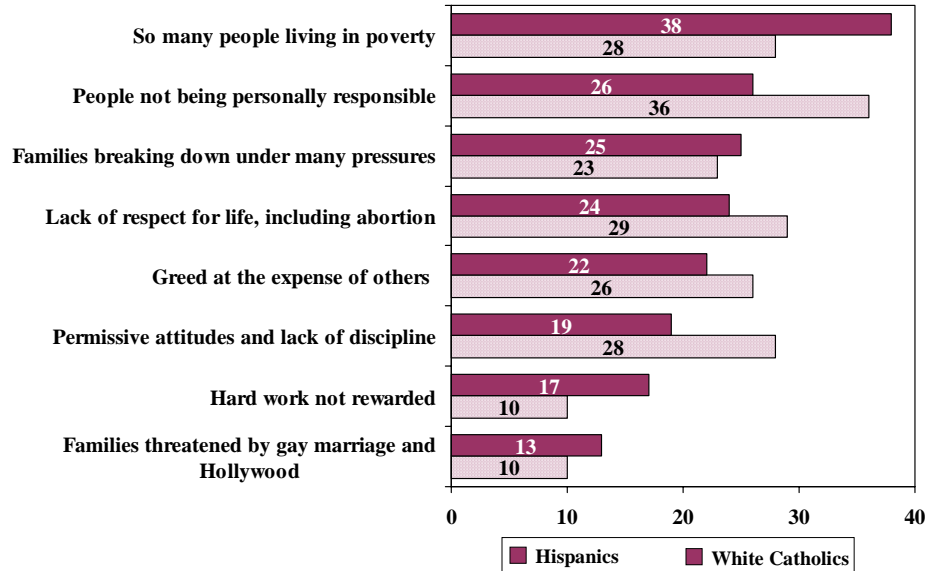


“Now I’m going to read you some pairs of statements. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.”

When we asked white Catholics in another survey to identify their main “moral concerns,” they started with “people not being personally responsible.” But not Hispanic voters. For them, the biggest moral pre-occupation was “so many people living in poverty.” That was cited by nearly 4 in 10 Hispanic voters (38 percent). That was followed by a cluster of moral concerns, each mentioned by about a quarter of respondents, including “people not being responsible” (26 percent), but also “families breaking down under many pressures” (25 percent), “lack of respect for life, including abortion” (24 percent), and “greed at the expense of others” (22 percent).

Moral Concerns

Hispanics and White Catholics



“Let me read you a list of possible moral concerns. Which TWO of the following concern you the most – “

At the heart of the consciousness of Hispanic voters is a strong concern for the poor, as a moral and likely religious pre-occupation. They believe in community and mutual support, using the government to create opportunity for all. These voters are strongly inclined to the Democrats, less because of a partisan history or civil rights past and more because of their current convictions and values.

Distinct Hispanic Progressive Perspective

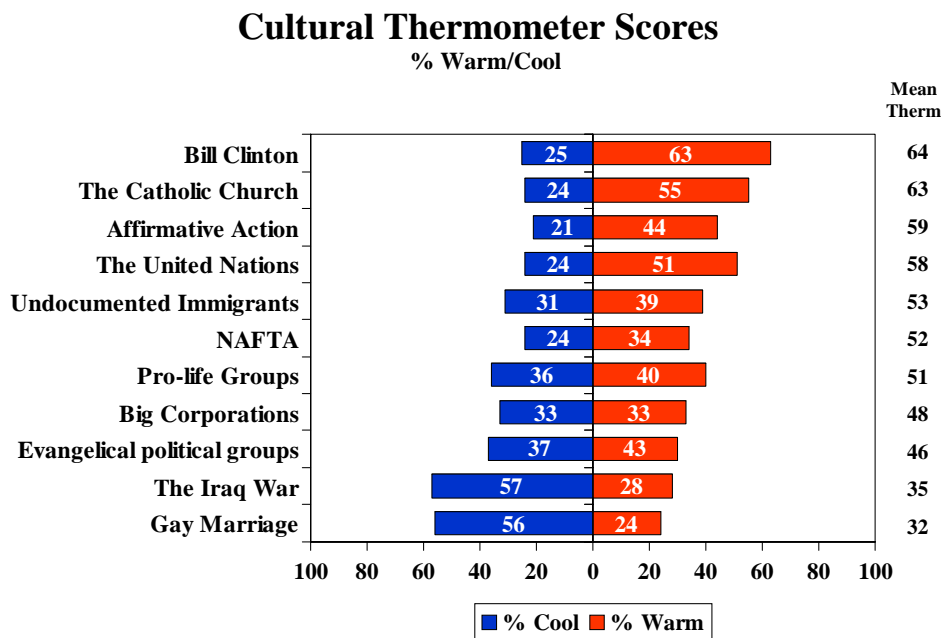
But just as Hispanic voters are not as polarized in partisan terms, they bring a distinct perspective and history to their progressive politics. They are concerned with the state of the middle class and the poor, but are not particularly anti-business. With a distinct and continuing immigrant experience, they are internationalist and open to trade and immigration. They are overwhelmingly Catholic and lean toward pro-life candidates, yet are quite tolerant on social issues.

With that array of attitudes, Hispanic voters are very positive about former President Bill Clinton, with 63 percent giving him “warm” ratings on a thermometer scale. He is a Democratic leader who has spoken for the middle class and the poor, for the right to choose but also for fewer abortions, for diversity and tolerance, and for immigration and international engagement.

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While the country as a whole gives Bill Clinton a mean thermometer rating just above 50 degrees, the mid-point, his score in the Hispanic community stands at 64 degrees.

When looking at the cultural thermometer scores below, we see a community that gives its highest ratings to Bill Clinton and the Catholic Church, with the former somewhat higher. With a commitment to diversity, affirmative action also gets high ratings. It gives positive ratings to the United Nations, undocumented immigrants and NAFTA. Pro-life groups get a net positive rating, with gay marriage viewed quite negatively.



“Now, I’d like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.”

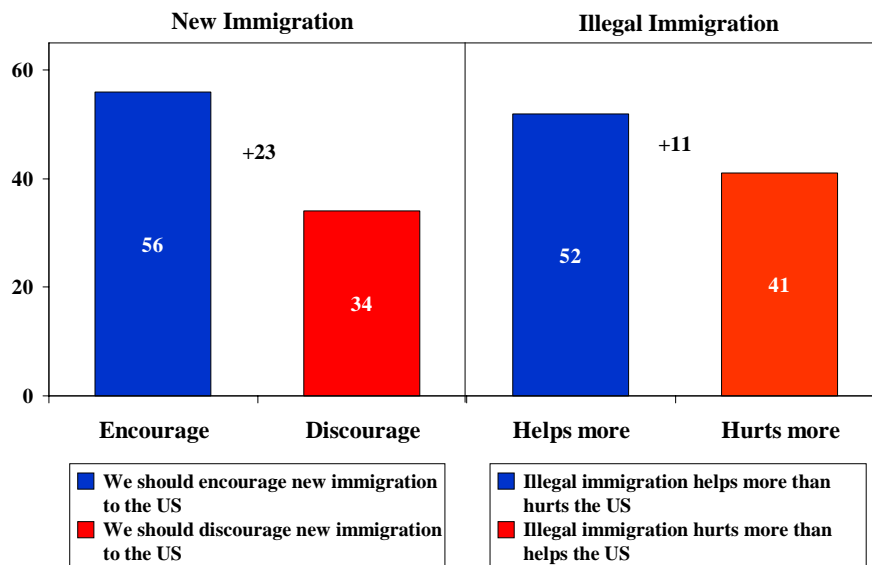
The immigrant experience in the United States apparently does not lead the community to a populist politics, with anger at concentrated power and corporate abuses. Overall, Hispanics are split fairly evenly on big corporations: 33 percent warm and 33 percent cool responses. With a 48-degree mean temperature, that puts Hispanics close to the average for all voters. In fact, that mean is produced by a polarized community – with those not born in the United States giving big corporations a high mean of 57 degrees and those born here offering a strong negative reaction (44 degrees) – much closer to the views of union households and African Americans.

Immigration. Hispanic voters stand out from all other voting groups in their support for immigration. A majority (56 percent) believe that we should encourage immigration to the U.S. Indeed, a majority (52 percent) believe illegal immigration is more helpful than harmful. With

their contemporary and historic experience, Hispanics bring a distinct perspective to America’s relationship with the outside world.

But while support for immigration is high and distinctive, it is not universal, which produces a less certain politics of immigration. Over 40 percent think illegal immigration hurts the country; one-third think we should discourage the entry of new immigrants into the country. In our study, a majority of Hispanics (53 percent) support a Democratic candidate who says the current level of immigration threatens American workers and our national security.¹⁰ Those kinds of responses limit the ability of the immigration issue to become the central symbol of the Democrats’ attentiveness to Hispanic needs and aspirations.

Immigration



“Now I’m going to read you some pairs of statements. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.”

From social issues to social tolerance. Social issues, like abortion and gay marriage, create a modest crosscurrent in the Hispanic community that contributed perhaps marginally to the erosion of the Hispanic vote – in the absence of Democrats being more expressive about their values and convictions. The dislodged Democrats are slightly more pro-life and slightly more favorable to pro-life groups. More broadly, a significant number of Hispanics voting Democratic for Congress are cross-pressured on the issue, with one-third believing abortion should not be

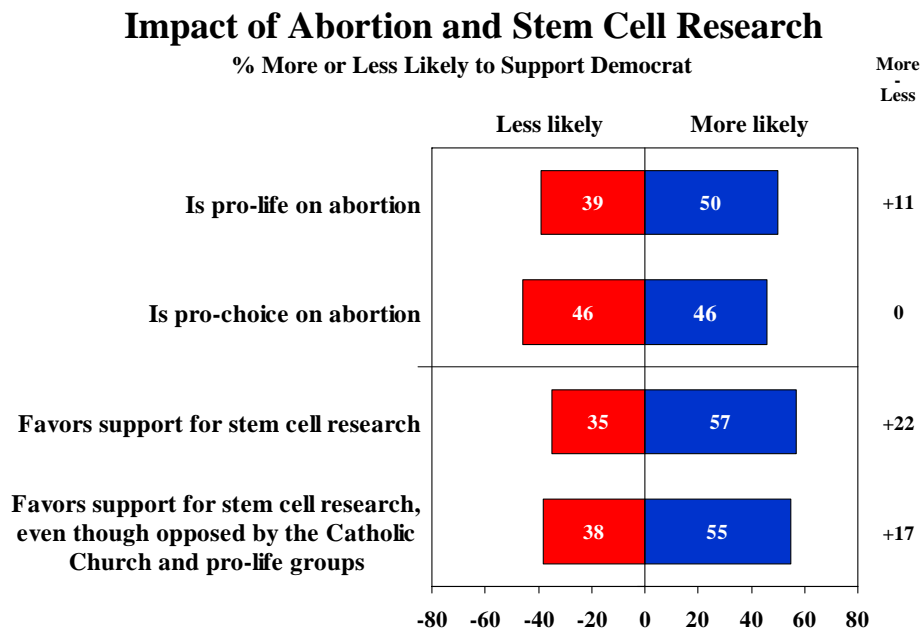
¹⁰ A Democratic candidate who opposes such restrictions also does respectably well, though this is no magic bullet in the Hispanic community: 51 percent say they are more likely to support the candidate and 41 percent less.

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legal. A pro-life Democrat runs better than a pro-choice one, and almost half of Hispanics voters (48 percent) say they would be more likely to support a pro-life Republican.

But a majority of Hispanic voters are pro-choice (51 to 45 percent)¹¹ and an even larger majority (54 to 40 percent) believe “homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society.” Indeed, when it gets to acceptance and exclusion, Hispanics are more socially tolerant than voters overall.¹²

This socially tolerant Hispanic community is open-minded in its thinking about social issues, like stem cell research, even when the Catholic Church weighs in. A large majority of 57 percent is more likely to vote for a Democrat who supports stem cell research, with only 35 percent less likely – a net 22-point positive impact from the issue. That dwarfs the impact of being pro-choice or pro-life. And the power of the stem cell issue holds up, even when we highlight the opposition of the Catholic Church and pro-life groups. Hispanic voters are open-minded and socially tolerant and seemingly not prepared to join the symbolic cultural politics pushed by national conservatives today.



“Now, let me read you some statements from a Democratic candidate for Congress. After each statement please tell me whether it would make you more likely or less likely to support this Democratic candidate.”

¹¹ Among all voters, 55 percent believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases (Quinnipiac survey of 1,104 registered voters, conducted May 18-23, 2005). Among white Catholics the number falls to 48 percent (Democracy Corps survey of 1,033 white Catholic likely voters, conducted February 22-28, 2005).

¹² Among all voters, just 48 percent say homosexuality should be accepted by society (Democracy Corps/Institute for America’s Future post-election survey of 2,000 voters, conducted November 2-3, 2004).

The strongest opponents of abortion among Hispanics can be found among Protestants (60 percent) and Catholics who attend church every week (57 percent). It is strongest among the more traditional sections – those born abroad (55 percent), speak Spanish (57 percent), older women (56 percent), the high school educated (55 percent) and those earning below \$30,000 (53 percent). However, with the exception of the Protestants, these are the voters most comfortable in the Democratic worldview. The older women, for example, overwhelmingly see poverty as the most important moral concern (48 percent). There are few groups more critical of the Iraq war (68 to 24 percent, not worth it) and the economy (69 to 27 percent, not good) or more supportive of community over self-reliance (57 to 34 percent). Their caution on the social issues is overwhelmed by their receptivity to Democrats on education and health care. These are voters who would pass up the culture war for a Democratic agenda focused on their needs.

At the same time, more integrated sections of the Hispanic community are pro-choice, including 60 percent of those under 30, 62 percent of the one-third with a college education, 58 percent of the one-half who primarily speak English at home, and 56 percent of the third with both parents born in the United States. Thus, integration is bringing increased openness on the social issues, severely limiting the scope of the conservatives' culture war.

Priorities – education and health care and American dream

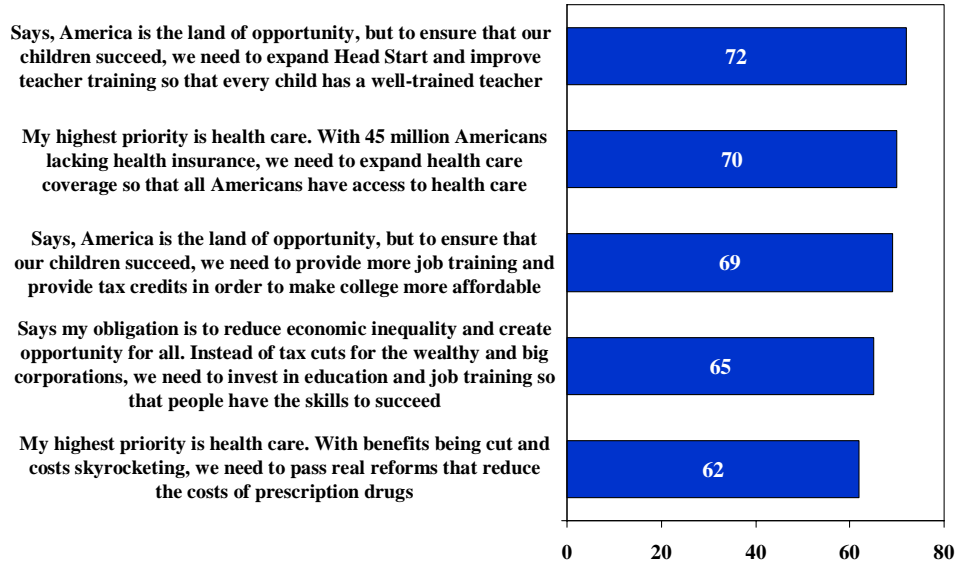
This is a community that thinks poverty is a matter of morality – right and wrong, that the economy is failing the middle class, that the family is under siege and that individuals need community and a government working to expand opportunity. That produces a pretty clear set of priorities, as Hispanic voters respond strongly to an agenda centered on education and health care, investing in people rather than the wealthiest, and realizing the American dream.

Their strongest response is for investment in education, starting with Head Start and well-trained teachers, but also strongly supportive of funding for job training and making college affordable.¹³ On health care, the strongest response, importantly, is on the 45 million uninsured, though also for getting prices down. While more positive than other Democratic base voters on business, they respond strongly to a public obligation to reduce inequality and expand opportunity, by investing in people rather than continuing breaks for the wealthy and corporations. They are clearly focused on expanding opportunity, starting with the neediest.

¹³ The most positive responses to a Republican agenda also center on education: 71 percent are more likely to support a Republican who supports private school vouchers and 69 percent are more likely to support a Republican who supports No Child Left Behind.

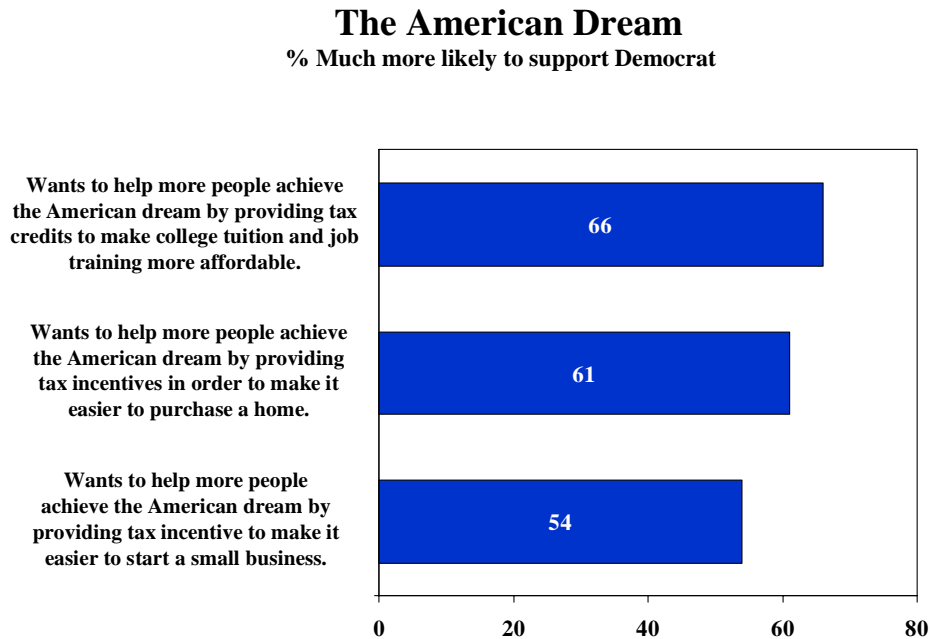
Democratic Policy Directions

% Much more likely to support Democrat



“Now, let me read you some statements from a Democratic candidate for Congress. After each statement please tell me whether it would make you more likely or less likely to support this Democratic candidate.”

These voters are not cynical about the American dream. For them, increased capacity to succeed in the economy (job training and education) is more important than home ownership or owning a small business – but all are obviously integral to an aspiration for expanded opportunity.



“Now, let me read you some statements from a Democratic candidate for Congress. After each statement please tell me whether it would make you more likely or less likely to support this Democratic candidate.”

Hispanic Voters and the Democratic Future

In the immediate aftermath of the 2004 presidential election, many were asking whether the erosion of 2004 put Hispanics outside the Democratic coalition. As Hispanics are a rapidly growing part of American society – and their populations are concentrated in certain electorally significant states – any erosion in Hispanic support is troubling for the long-term success of the Democratic Party.

But in reality, their views on values, family, the economy, the poor, working people and the middle class, community and government, and how best to expand opportunity and realize the American dream put these voters in the center of a Democratic world – if the Democrats would remember what it means to be a Democrat in these times.

The voters of the future seem to get it. Those with two parents born in America support the Democrats for Congress by 31 points (60 to 29 percent).

While Democrats win overwhelmingly with the more traditional – by 40 points with the high school educated and 43 points with older women – they still carry the college educated by an impressive 25 points (58 to 33 percent). Voters in families earning up to \$75,000 a year are as supportive of Democrats as those earning under \$20,000. Mobility reduces Democratic margins but still underscores the Hispanic community’s deep affinity for the Democrats.

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And finally, young Hispanic voters support Democrats by 46 points (70 to 24 percent), rising to a breathtaking 56 points (74 to 19 percent) among Gen Y voters. These younger voters represent all these trends in extreme form – a bloc that believes in community and expanding opportunity but is also multi-cultural, socially tolerant and internationalist.

The Democrats did in fact lose some ground in the election with George Bush and in the hot-house cultural election of 2004, and while that is a warning flag rather an indication of an impending flight of Hispanic voters, Democrats can ill afford to be complacent. Democrats must be vigilant in seizing the opportunity to greatly expand Hispanic support by embracing a Democratic view of the world – perhaps best expressed by the Hispanic community itself.