

Substance and Symbolism:  
Race, Ethnicity and Campaign Appeals in the United States

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FORTHCOMING AT *POLITICAL COMMUNICATION*

Abstract: Using data from the 2002 Wisconsin Advertising Project and a Democratic direct mailing firm we ask if candidates publicly court African American and Hispanic voters through the inclusion of these groups in their campaign advertisements or through appeals to their substantive policy interests. We find evidence that Democratic and Republican candidates make symbolic and substantive appeals only when these appeals are very unlikely to be viewed by white voters. These findings lend credence to studies that conclude that candidates are hesitant to publicly court minority voters due to concerns that such activities may harm their existing electoral coalitions, particularly their standing with white voters.



Much of the literature on race and electoral competition has focused on the manner in which both the Republican and Democratic parties have actively distanced themselves from African Americans in order to ensure electoral victory (Walton 1975; Glazer, Grofman, and Owens 1998; Mendelberg 2001). Most notably, Frymer's theory of electoral capture (1999) argues that candidates from both the Democratic and Republican parties have shied away from courting African American voters, for fear of alienating working class, middle class, and Southern whites who not only express antipathy toward African Americans, but also make up the bulk of swing voters in national elections. Thus, appeals to African American voters by political candidates are viewed by many as deleterious to attempts to mobilize white voters and more importantly to winning elections.

While this literature has illuminated a number of key campaign strategies undertaken by Democratic and Republican candidates at the presidential level, little work has explored the utility of this theory in predicting campaign appeals to African Americans in subnational elections, an arena in which the electoral calculus facing candidates may differ. Frymer (1999) in justifying his focus on national party politics says, "I do not address this area (statewide/local elections) in detail because it would entail a discussion of different electoral structures, different constituencies, and, hence, party leaders responding to a different set of electoral incentives" (24). Additionally, it remains unclear if this theory "travels" in accounting for the manner in which both political parties react to Hispanic voters, the largest minority group in the U.S. and the purported "sleeping giant" of American politics due to their weaker partisan attachments (Suro 2005; Hajnal & Lee 2011; DeSipio 1996; Leal et al 2008; Abrajano & Alvarez 2010).

Given these unexplored avenues of inquiry we seek to expand the boundaries of the theory of electoral capture by examining the nature and incidence of campaign appeals to African

Americans and Hispanics in gubernatorial, senatorial, and congressional elections in the U.S.

We argue that appeals to minority voters can take many forms, and some may not be as costly as others. In particular, we focus on two factors that influence how costly a minority appeal may be for a candidate—the content of the message and the media in which that message appears. With regard to message content, we note that an appeal can be either substantive or symbolic.

Symbolic appeals may be less costly as they simply involve changing the images of a message to attempt to show that the candidate identifies with the minority group she is targeting. Symbolic appeals may also be particularly useful for Republican candidates given the small number of issues upon which issue-based appeals can be made (Philpot 2007). On the other hand, substantive appeals are those in which the candidates change the issue foci of their messages when appealing to minority voters; as such, these appeals have the potential to be more costly when it comes to winning white support.

In opposition to the expectations of the theory of electoral capture, we argue that candidates do make campaign appeals to minority voters, but that these appeals are made outside the gaze of white voters. More specifically, we hypothesize that candidates are more likely to make *both* symbolic and substantive appeals to minorities when these appeals are least likely to be viewed by whites (i.e. when those appeals are narrowcast) and are less likely to make similar appeals when these appeals are more likely to be viewed by whites (i.e. when those appeals are broadcast).

To test our expectations, we examine two sources of data on candidate appeals. First, we incorporate data from the 2002 Wisconsin Advertising Project to determine the types of campaign appeals made in television ads. Here we compare the incidence of symbolic and substantive campaign appeals appearing on television programs and stations tailored to African

American or Hispanic audiences to campaign appeals that appear on mainstream media outlets. Second, we draw on a unique dataset cataloging the content of over 3,000 direct mail pieces produced by a direct mail vendor for Democratic candidates from 2000-2006. This dataset includes information about the intended target for each mailer, therefore allowing us to determine how mailers designed for minority voters differed from those produced for other groups

We find consistent support for our hypotheses; our analysis of televised campaign advertisements shows that Democratic and Republican candidates are no more likely to make substantive or symbolic appeals to African Americans when there is a remote chance that white voters may be exposed to a campaign appeal directed at African Americans. On the other hand, we find that when candidates are assured that campaign appeals to minorities will not be viewed by whites, these candidates are more likely to make symbolic and substantive appeals to minority voters.

### **Targeting Minority Voters**

During election campaigns candidates formulate strategies that allow them to use their limited resources efficiently to promote successful messages (Simon 2002). When creating these strategies, candidates make two important decisions. First, they determine which segments of the population to target with their messages. Second, after determining which groups to target, candidates decide which messages will be most effective for persuading these groups to support their candidacy. We discuss each decision below.

In determining which groups to target during a campaign, candidates may consider three important factors: the ease with which the group can be reached with campaign

communications; the extent to which the group can be persuaded by campaign appeals; and whether targeting the group may adversely affect the candidate's existing electoral coalition. With regard to the first factor, the fragmented nature of contemporary television provides candidates with some opportunities to reach minority voters with television advertisements. For example, according to a 2005 Nielsen report, seven of the top ten programs for African Americans appeared on the UPN, with six of these programs appearing on UPN's Monday night schedule. African American households were, on average, seven times more likely to watch these programs than a national sample of television viewers (Steadman 2005). Similarly, according to a more recent Nielsen report, the top ten television programs among all Hispanics appeared on the Spanish language networks Univision & Telemundo (Pardo & Dreas 2011). Thus, candidates interested in targeting either African American or Hispanic voters could run ads during television programs that are uniquely popular among these minority groups. Targeting minority voters becomes even easier when candidates turn to direct mail, as voter file lists provide candidates with the information necessary to send particular pieces of mail to voters that match a particular demographic profile (Hillygus and Shields 2008).

Second, even if candidates can easily reach a group, they may decide not to make appeals to that group if they are not susceptible to campaign effects. As a result, candidates may view African American and Hispanic voting blocs differently. African American support for the Democratic Party and Democratic candidates has remained fairly consistent over time and across different contexts. Despite intermittent attempts by Republican candidates to court African American voters, African American support for Republicans rarely exceeds 30 percent, and is more commonly between 10 and 20 percent. Given the consistent and overwhelming support that African Americans have given to Democratic candidates during the past several decades,

candidates may not view them as a segment of the population that is likely to respond to campaign appeals (Tate 1993; Dawson 1994; Philpot 2007). Democratic candidates may take their support for granted and Republicans may find any attempt to court these voters as resources wasted. Thus, even in areas where the African American population is significant, candidates from both parties may choose not to spend campaign resources appealing to these voters (Frymer 1999).

On the other hand, candidates may find Hispanic voters to be more fertile ground for their campaign communications. According to Lee and Hajnal (2011) more Hispanics identify as independents than any other racial group in the U.S. While Democratic presidential candidates have consistently won a majority of Hispanic support over the past several decades, Hispanic support for Democrats has never been as overwhelming as that from African Americans (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010). Furthermore, this support has often fluctuated significantly, seemingly in response to candidate or campaign specific factors. For example, moral issues and national security concerns appeared to undermine some of the Hispanic support for John Kerry and other Democratic candidates in 2004 (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler 2008). On the other hand, in 2006, Hispanic support for Democratic congressional candidates rebounded to nearly 70 percent following the debate over immigration reform during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (Pew Hispanic Center 2006). Accordingly, the parties have often viewed Hispanic support as more fluid and reachable/attainable; indeed, Republicans in western states have often made serious efforts at capturing the support of Hispanic voters (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003). Thus, when Hispanics comprise a significant portion of the electorate, candidates from both parties are likely to spend campaign resources appealing to these voters (Abrajano 2010; Soto et al. 2006; Fraga & Leal 2004; Nuno 2007; Ramirez 2005).

Finally, it is important to note the conditions where a candidate may consciously decide against appealing to a particular group. Candidates may ignore a group of voters when public appeals to that group are thought to damage a candidate's existing electoral coalition of voters or alienate swing voters necessary to a candidate's electoral victory. Frymer (1999) argues that the interests of African American voters have consistently been ignored by both major parties in the United States because party elites believe that any public appeals by the parties to court African American voters will alienate large percentages of white voters who view African Americans and their interests negatively (see also Walton 1975; Glazer, Grofman, and Owens 1998; Mendelberg 2001; Philpot 2007; Fraga and Leal 2004). As a result of these assumptions, leaders in the Republican Party have consistently made little to no effort to appeal to African American interests or to attract their votes. On the other hand, leaders of the Democratic Party, the party which the large majority of African Americans identify, have consistently neglected African American political interests and taken for granted the African American vote in electoral contests.

### *Substantive Appeals*

Once a candidate has decided to target minority voters, the second step is determining the types of appeals that will be most effective for winning support from that group. Candidates often use campaign messages to focus voters' attention toward some issues and away from others (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Weaver 1981; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; West 2001). But how do candidates decide which messages and appeals to use and which to avoid? Campaign themes often emphasize issues on which a candidate has an advantage because of their party or their own policy record (Franklin 1991; Petrocik 1996; Sellers 1998). As noted above, candidates may also



use their campaigns to draw support from particular demographic groups or to avoid losing support from such groups. But which issues are most likely to lead African Americans and Hispanics to support a particular candidate? For African American voters, issues dealing with civil rights and social welfare tend to be top priorities. Not surprisingly, African Americans are far more supportive of policies designed to assure racial equality than whites (Tate 1993; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Winter 2001). However, civil rights issues have largely given way to concern among African Americans concerning social welfare policies such as aid to families with dependent children, education, and health care (Tate 1993; Platt 2008). Social welfare issues also provide more fertile ground for candidates since such policies are often favored by poor and middle class whites, allowing the candidates to appeal to African American voters without alienating other parts of their constituency (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Streb 2002).

Social welfare issues are also an important policy area to many segments of the Hispanic population. Hispanic voters, like African American voters, are more likely than whites to favor liberal government policies in areas of welfare, health care, and education (Ebeling, King, and Gregg 1988). According to the Pew Hispanic Center, the three of top issues for Hispanic registered voters in 2008, 2010, and 2012 were jobs, education, health care, and immigration (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Motel 2011). Thus, based on existing research, we focus specifically on the issues of jobs, health care, and education as issues that are likely to generate African American and Hispanic support.

Social welfare issues provide an opportunity for candidates to attract support from African American and Hispanic voters without losing significant support from whites. Unlike with civil rights issues, campaigning on social welfare issues also allows candidates to “reach beyond race” and appeal to significant proportions of white voters as well (Sniderman and

Carmines 1997; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989; Streb 2002). However, it is important to note that the Democratic candidates, relative to the Republican candidates, are more likely to use social welfare issues to attract minority support. This strategic advantage reflects the perception that not only do Democrats “own” social welfare issues in the minds of most Americans (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al 2003), but that given the demographic and ideological makeup of both parties that appeals to minority voters may not alienate white Democratic identifiers in the same way as such appeals may alienate white Republicans (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Edsall and Edsall 1992; Black and Black 2002; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Thus, when Democrats decide to appeal to African American and Hispanic voters, we expect them to use social welfare issues as the substantive basis for these appeals.

Republicans, on the other hand, may turn to values issues to appeal to minority voters. While minority voters tend to be more liberal than whites on social welfare issues, their views on values issues are generally somewhat more conservative. For instance, in a 2002 Pew Hispanic Center survey African Americans and Hispanics (30% and 24% respectively) were almost twice as likely than whites (14%) to believe that abortion should be illegal in all cases (2002 Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Latinos). In addition, African Americans and Hispanics (66% and 81% respectively) are more opposed to sex between two adults of the same sex when compared to whites (38%). Thus, Republicans may attempt to court minority voters by appealing to their conservative views on value-based issues like abortion and same sex marriage.

In addition to a focus on the issues of jobs, health care and education as measures of substantive campaign appeals to African Americans and Hispanics, we also include immigration as a substantive issue concern for Hispanics. As noted by a 2010 census report, 54% of the

nation's foreign born population was born in Latin America, more than doubling the size of the Asian foreign born population (26%) and quadrupling the size of the European foreign born population (13%) (Grieco 2010). Given the large size of the Hispanic foreign-born population and the concomitant debate concerning America's immigration policies, it comes as no surprise that Hispanics view the issue of immigration among the most important political issues facing their community. Since 2008, the issue of immigration has been among the top five issues that Hispanics voters view as "extremely important" according to Pew Hispanic Center surveys (Lopez & Minushkin 2008; Lopez 2010; Lopez et al 2011).

Finally, we also endeavored to include the issue of civil rights as a measure of substantive campaign appeals for both African Americans and Hispanics. However, based on the coding completed by the Wisconsin Advertising Project as well as our own content analysis of a sample of televised campaign advertisements, we found that no candidate aired an ad that touched on civil rights issues. As a result, we focus attention on the four substantive issues of jobs, education, health care, and immigration.

### *Symbolic Appeals*

Candidates may also use symbolic gestures, such as the inclusion of minorities in campaign advertisements, in order to appeal to racial and ethnic minorities. Take, for example, three direct mail advertisements produced for Tim Kaine's (D) 2005 gubernatorial campaign in Virginia. The primary direct mail piece was intended for a general audience and included a portrait of Kaine and text comparing Kaine to his opponent on fiscal responsibility, education, and crime. A second piece was designed to target African American voters. This piece included the exact same text as the first mailer with the only difference being that this mailer included

pictures of Kaine with African Americans. A third version of the same mailer was created for a Hispanic audience, with the only change in this case being the translation of much of the text into Spanish. Thus, the substance of the message in each mailer remained the same despite the candidate making symbolic changes to appeal to African Americans and Hispanics.<sup>1</sup>

Republicans may also find it beneficial to make symbolic appeals to minority groups, particularly since the range of issues on which they can make substantive appeals is limited. For example, the Republican Party incorporated minority speakers and entertainers into its presidential convention in 2000 to attempt to alter its image and appeal to more minority voters. These efforts did affect the perceptions of whites who watched the convention, but African Americans were largely unaffected by the symbolism (Philpot 2004; 2007). The failure of this strategy in appealing to African Americans likely resulted from the fact that “preexisting party images were so strongly rooted” (Philpot 2004:265). However, given the Democratic Party’s record on civil rights issues, such symbolic appeals may be more effective for Democratic candidates seeking to remind minority voters, particularly African American voters, of the party’s record on race issues in an attempt to solidify support among this population.

In most cases, candidates will likely view symbolic appeals as less risky than substantive ones. Therefore, we expect symbolic appeals to be more prevalent when candidates are targeting minority voters, particularly when the appeals are being aired in television advertisements, which can be seen by a wider audience.

### **Minority Appeals in Television Advertising**

Candidates make numerous appeals during campaigns, making it difficult to determine which appeals are directed at particular groups like racial and ethnic minorities. To deal with this

challenge, we use two different approaches to understand whether and how candidates appeal to minorities—an analysis of television advertising and an examination of direct mail advertising. Our analysis of television advertising examines whether candidates air different types of ads when they appear to be targeting African American or Latino voters. To do this, we rely on the 2002 Wisconsin Advertising Project data (Goldstein and Rivlin 2005). Campaign advertising provides a useful measure of the types of appeals candidates make because campaign advertisements are expensive to produce and air, so candidates want to focus their ads on issues and themes that are central to their campaigns (West 2001). The advertising data we utilize includes information about each senatorial, gubernatorial, and congressional advertisement that aired on network or cable television in the top 100 media markets during the 2002 campaign.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike with the analysis of direct mail advertising that we present below, the Wisconsin Advertising Project data do not include information about whether a candidate was using a particular advertisement to target minority voters. Thus, the first step we must take in this analysis is to make a reasonable inference about which advertisements were most likely to be aimed at minorities. Of course, television advertisements are broadcast, which makes it more difficult for candidates to use them to target particular subsets of voters; but it is possible for candidates to reach a predominantly Latino or African American audience by buying airtime on certain channels or during certain programs. Because of the existence of two Spanish-language television networks in the United States, it is relatively straightforward to identify a subset of advertising aimed specifically at Hispanic voters. In 2002, the Wisconsin Advertising Project identified 18,400 campaign advertisements that appeared on either Univision or Telemundo.<sup>3</sup> Given that the audience for these networks is almost entirely comprised of Hispanics, candidates airing those ads must have assumed that they would be seen by a largely Hispanic audience.

Thus, we assume that ads that appeared on Univision or Telemundo were more likely to be aimed at Hispanic voters than those that appeared on other television stations.

While the cable network BET might be treated similarly for African Americans, in 2002 the Wisconsin Advertising Project did not track advertising appearing on that network. Nevertheless, during this period, UPN was attempting to cater to the African American audience by creating a lineup of shows airing on Monday nights that attracted a mostly black audience. In fact, an analysis of Nielsen data from the 2002-2003 television season found that the four Monday night sitcoms airing on UPN were the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> rated shows among African Americans while they were ranked 111<sup>th</sup> through 114<sup>th</sup> among the white audience (Elliott 2003). On average, the African American percent of the audience for these shows was 76% indicating that the overwhelmingly majority of viewers of these programs were African American (Steadman 2005). Thus, candidates could easily make use of the UPN Monday night lineup to reach African American voters with advertising that would be seen by few whites. Accordingly, we identify advertising that appeared on UPN on Monday nights between 7pm to 10pm as more likely to be intended for the African American audience.<sup>4</sup>

After identifying the channels and programs on which minority-targeted advertising was most likely to appear, we turned to identifying every candidate who aired at least one advertisement on one of the Hispanic television stations or during Monday nights on UPN. Candidates who did not air at least one such advertisement were excluded from our analysis. The reason for excluding these candidates was because they provided no variance on our variable of interest—minority targeted ads. Our analysis is limited to comparing whether candidates changed their appeals when airing ads to mostly minority audiences. In 2002, 46 Democratic and

28 Republican candidates for governor, the U.S. Senate, or the U.S. Houser aired at least one advertisement on minority television stations/programs (see Appendix 1 for a detailed list).

Figure 1 shows the proportion of Republican and Democratic ads that appeared on programs or channels targeting minorities. Two points are worth noting from this figure. First, candidates aired a greater proportion of their ads on Hispanic television stations than they did on the UPN Monday night lineup. This finding may not be particularly surprising since the window of time is much smaller for the latter group; nevertheless, under half a percent of Democratic and Republican ads were aired during what was frequently described as “black night” in prime time (Hunt 2003). Candidates from both parties aired more than 5% of their ads on the two Spanish-speaking television stations. Also noteworthy is that there are no clear partisan differences in the proportion of Hispanic-targeted ads aired. While 5.2% of all Democratic advertisements by this group of candidates appeared on Telemundo or Univision, 5.1% of all Republican ads were aired on those stations.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The crucial comparison for our analysis will be between the content of advertisements aired on these minority-centered channels and programs and the content of ads aired on other programs or stations. The particular area of emphasis for this comparison is the symbolic and substantive content of the ads. To construct these measures, we rely on both the coding of the advertisements conducted by the Wisconsin Advertising Project and supplementary coding conducted by our own research assistants. In coding the substance of the advertisements, we focus specifically on the types of issues emphasized. The Wisconsin Advertising Project coded up to four different issues for each unique advertisement. We utilize these codes to analyze the

proportion of advertisements that candidates aired on five different issues—education, health care, jobs, immigration, and values.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to using the issue codes provided by the Wisconsin Advertising Project, we also rely on coding of the advertising storyboards conducted by our own research assistants. Two research assistants coded storyboards for each of the 757 unique advertisements aired by these candidates. This round of coding focused on several items, but two were particularly important for our analysis. First, the coders were instructed to count the total number of white, Hispanic, and African American individuals appearing in each advertisement. These counts were then used to determine the percentage of individuals appearing in each unique advertisement that were Hispanic or African American. Second, our research assistants were also asked to identify advertisements that made a specific appeal to either Hispanics or African Americans. One example of such an appeal comes from an advertisement in support of California Governor Gray Davis (D). The ad ends with the narrator stating, “Gray Davis: Never before have Latinos had such a good friend as Governor.” This advertisement was coded as an explicit appeal to Latinos because of the clear claim made about how Davis was working on behalf of that group.

Appendix 2 presents information about inter-coder agreement for this supplementary coding of storyboards. However, it is important to note that whenever our coders did not agree, we always used the more conservative value. For example, if one coder indicated that there were three Hispanics in an advertisement and the second coder saw only two, we used the lower value. Likewise, if one coder believed an advertisement made an explicit appeal to a minority group while the other coder did not see such an appeal, we coded the advertisement as making no such appeal. This conservative approach means that any differences we find in the content of the advertising on these measures is likely to be under-stating the actual differences in these ads.<sup>6</sup>



## *Results*

Figure 2 presents the comparison of targeted and non-targeted advertisements on our main symbolic measure—the extent to which minorities appear in the advertisements.<sup>7</sup> The first item of note from the figure is that African Americans are largely absent from candidates' advertisements regardless of whether those ads were aired during the UPN Monday night lineup. Democrats featured African Americans more than Republicans, but the average percentage of African Americans in Democratic advertisement was still less than 10%. Democrats also failed to feature African Americans more frequently in advertising that appeared during UPN's Monday night lineup. Republicans did appear to adjust the symbolic content of their advertisements that aired on the Monday UPN lineup, but this change was relatively small. Republican ads appearing on UPN Monday nights had about 3 percentage points more African Americans compared to other Republican ads.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

While we found few symbolic differences in advertisements that were most likely to be intended for African American voters, Figure 2 shows substantial differences when it comes to advertisements that appeared on Spanish television stations. Hispanics comprised less than 3% of people appearing in Republican ads that did not appear on Spanish television, but they comprised over one-third of all people in ads that did appear on those stations. While this difference is substantial, it is dwarfed by the difference for ads aired by Democratic candidates. Democratic ads that appeared on Spanish television included Hispanics as more than 70% of all the people appearing in their ads, compared to just 7% for ads not airing on Univision or Telemundo.

Having established that candidates make symbolic appeals to Hispanics in their advertisements, but not to African Americans, we now turn to our analysis of the substance of the advertisements. Figure 3 presents the comparisons for each of the issue categories we focus on. First, we focus on advertisements that were most likely to be targeted for African Americans. With regard to issue focus, advertising targeted for an African American audience looked much like advertising aired in other contexts. Very few of Republican or Democratic ads focused on values issues, though Democrats and Republicans were slightly more likely to talk about these issues in ads that appeared on UPN's Monday night lineup than they were to do so in other venues. Both Republicans and Democrats were less likely to focus on issues related to jobs when those ads appeared on UPN Monday nights, a finding that is opposite from our expectations. Democrats were about 3 percentage points more likely to focus on health care in ads that appeared on UPN Monday nights while there was no statistically significant difference in the extent to which Republicans focused on that issue. Republicans were actually more likely to focus on education in their UPN Monday night ads than they were in other venues, while Democrats were no more or less likely to do so.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

When it came to a comparison of advertisements likely targeted for Hispanics (Figure 4), the differences were more striking. We observed a similar avoidance of values issues in campaign ads, though Democrats and Republicans became even less likely to focus on these issues in ads aimed at Hispanic voters. Republicans were actually more likely to focus on health care in their Spanish language television advertisements than they were in other venues while Democrats were less likely to focus on health care in those ads. But the largest differences evident in Figure 4 come for Democratic ads on the issues of jobs and immigration. One out of

every four advertisements aired by Democratic candidates on Hispanic television stations focused on the issue of immigration, while almost no ads that did not appear on those stations did so. Additionally, approximately half of all Democratic ads aired on Telemundo or Univision focused on the issue of jobs, while that issue was the focus of just 15% of Democratic ads aired on other channels. Thus, when targeting their ads to Hispanic voters, Democrats appeared to focus much more attention on issues of importance to that group.

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

While the issue emphasis of the advertising aired by Democrats changed significantly when those ads were targeted for a Hispanic audience, the differences were much smaller for Republicans. While there were statistically significant differences in the extent to which Republicans focused on each of the issues in Figure 4, the size of those differences were generally small. In fact, none of the differences exceeded eight percentage points. Thus, Republicans did much less than Democrats to change the issue content of their advertising that was aimed for Hispanic voters. Furthermore, Republicans actually focused less on values issues in ads aired on Hispanic television stations, despite our expectation that they would increase their attention to this issue.

Finally, our research assistants coded whether each advertisement made a direct explicit appeal to either African Americans or Hispanics. Notably, none of the advertisements aired by the candidates in our study (including the ads appearing on UPN Monday nights) explicitly appealed to African Americans. However, some advertisements were identified as making an explicit appeal to Hispanic voters. Figure 5 shows data indicating that these advertisements were much more common on Hispanic television stations than on other stations. In fact, almost none of the advertisements aired on other stations featured an explicit appeal to Hispanics, but nearly

one-in-four Republican ads on Spanish television and almost half of Democratic ads made such an appeal.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Overall, the results from this section suggest that candidates use a subset of their advertisements to target Hispanic voters with both symbolic and substantive content. Advertisements that appeared on Spanish television included more Hispanics in the ad and were also more likely to make an explicit appeal to Hispanics. These tendencies were more pronounced for ads aired by Democratic candidates. In addition, Democratic ads targeting Hispanics were much more likely to focus on the issues of jobs and immigration. However, while candidates clearly changed the presentation of their advertising for the Hispanic audience, they did not appear to do the same for ads that appeared during programming with largely African American audiences. Ads aired during these programs were no more likely to feature African Americans, did not make explicit appeals to African American voters, and did not differ significantly with regard to the issue content of the ads. Thus, candidates did appear to tailor the symbolic and substantive content of television advertising to Hispanic audiences where appropriate, but did not do the same for African Americans.

### **Minority Appeals in Direct Mail Advertising**

While television ads provide one potential forum for observing appeals to minority voters, direct mail is a venue where such appeals may be even more prevalent. Systematic information on direct mail has generally been elusive for scholars of campaigns; however, the second stage of our analysis utilizes a unique dataset of all campaign mailers prepared by a single Democratic direct mail firm for campaigns held from 2000 to 2006. This dataset was

maintained by the direct mail firm and donated to an academic institution following the 2006 election. The mailers were produced by the firm for a wide range of campaigns including John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign, campaigns for the U.S. House and Senate, gubernatorial campaigns, state legislative races, and judicial and mayoral campaigns.<sup>8</sup> In all, the dataset includes information on over 2,800 unique campaign mailers produced for distribution nationally as well as in 49 different states.

For each mailer, the database includes information about the group that was being targeted with the mailing, the top issues mentioned in the piece, and a description of the photos appearing in the mailer. Overall, 52% of the mailers archived in the dataset were targeted for the general population of registered voters. An additional 22% were targeted toward union members, 5.9% were designed for parents, and 5% targeted senior citizens. Only a small number of mailers were designed to target minority voters—49 (1.7%) were targeted for African Americans and 69 (2.4%) were targeted toward Hispanics. Of course, since these data by no means constitute a probability sample of direct mail, we caution against drawing any conclusions based on these frequencies. Nevertheless, the direct mail data do provide a useful supplement to our analysis by providing a window into what types of appeals some Democratic candidates made in direct mail pieces when they were targeting minority voters. As we note above, it should be less costly for candidates to appeal to minority voters via narrowcast direct mail than it is to do so with broadcast television ads. These data are also particularly useful because unlike the television advertising data, the direct mail dataset indicates which group was being targeted with the mailer, allowing us to more directly associate the content of a mailer with the intentions behind the mailer.

## *Results*

Table 1 compares the content of direct mail pieces targeted for the general population of voters to those targeted for African Americans and Hispanics. The table reveals significant differences in the substantive and symbolic content of pieces designed for minority audiences compared to those aimed at voters more generally. For example, mailers designed to target African Americans were significantly more likely to focus on education issues than those intended for voters in general. This finding is consistent with our expectations since African Americans tend to place more importance on education issues and hold positions on those issues that are consistent with those promoted by Democrats. On the other hand, pieces targeting African Americans focused less on health care issues, despite the fact that this issue is another on which Democratic candidates should be able to attract African American support.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

While the evidence was mixed when it came to direct mail pieces targeting African Americans, the results for pieces targeting Hispanics were consistent. Direct mail pieces targeting Hispanics were more likely to focus on jobs, education, and healthcare than those created for voters in general (no direct mail pieces were coded as focusing on immigration). Similar to our findings with the television advertising, the biggest difference was for the issue of jobs; direct mailers targeting Hispanics were more than twice as likely to focus on jobs as those intended for all voters. Mailers designed for Hispanic audiences were about 13 percentage points more likely to focus on education and 9 points more likely to discuss health care than those intended for a general audience. Thus, when Democrats designed mailers for a Hispanic audience, those mailers appeared to have a significantly different issue focus than those they designed for voters in general.

Table 1 also presents the percentage of direct mail pieces that included an African American or Hispanic in a photograph included on the mailer. The findings from the table indicate that fewer than 10% of mailers targeted for a general group of voters included a picture of a minority, but about half of those targeted for minority voters did so. Direct mail pieces designed to target African Americans or Hispanics were about five times more likely to feature pictures of that minority group compared to mailers designed for voters in general. This finding is similar to what we found for Latinos in the realm of television advertising, but the fact that the symbolic (and to a lesser extent substantive) content of direct mail targeted for African Americans was distinct from that of mail sent to the general population differs from our analysis of television advertising where few meaningful differences existed. To the extent that Democratic candidates make unique appeals to African American voters, it appears that they do so through direct mail more than television advertisements.

### **Conclusion**

The theory of electoral capture posits that Democratic and Republican candidates will ignore the substantive interests of African Americans in order to ensure that such appeals will not alienate key segments of their electoral coalition, most notably racially intolerant white voters (Frymer 1999). Using unique data provided by the 2002 Wisconsin Advertising Project and a Democratic direct mailing firm, we sought to test the utility of this theory by examining the nature and incidence of campaign appeals directed at African Americans and Hispanics by Democratic and Republican candidates for congressional and statewide offices.

We find confirmatory evidence for our hypothesis that candidates will make both symbolic and substantive appeals to minorities when such appeals are least likely to reach white

voters. More specifically, we uncover that Democratic and Republican candidates are no more likely to include African Americans in their campaign ads or to focus on issues of importance to the African American community when these ads appear on programs uniquely popular among African Americans, but potentially accessible to whites. On the other hand, candidates from both parties are more likely to include Hispanics in their campaign ads and to focus on issues that Hispanics deem important when these ads appear on Spanish language networks, venues in which whites are almost assuredly not watching. Our hypothesis is further confirmed in our analysis of direct mailing data for Democratic candidates from 2000-2006 as discover that when the primary audiences of campaign advertisements are minority voters, Democratic candidates are more likely to make substantive *and* symbolic appeals to *both* African American and Latino voters.

What then accounts for the divergent strategies of Democratic and Republican candidates as it relates to televised campaign appeals to African Americans and Hispanics? These divergent campaign strategies may reflect the recognition by both parties of the growing political power of Hispanics relative to African Americans. In 2003, Hispanics overtook African Americans as the largest minority group in the U.S., and between 2000 and 2010 the Latino population grew by 43%, accounting for close to half of the total population growth in the decade. According to demographic estimations by 2050, Latinos are projected to account for 24% of the population and as such will wield significant electoral power.

Not only are Hispanics growing in numbers relative to African Americans, but as noted above, Hispanics are less likely than African Americans to exhibit clear partisan preferences making Hispanics particularly attractive to Democratic and Republican candidates (Hajanal and Lee 2011). The different effects for Hispanics and African Americans are also not surprising



given the perception that African Americans allegiance for Democratic candidates cannot be easily changed by campaign factors (Philpot 2007) while Hispanic support tends to be far more variant and susceptible to campaign influence (Abrajano 2010). Thus, candidates from both parties by making symbolic and substantive appeals to Hispanics (and not to African Americans) are reacting to the electoral opportunity offered by the growth in the Hispanic population (Suro 2005; Aizenman 2006; Hajnal & Lee 2011; DeSipio 1996; Fraga and Ramirez 2003-04; Leal et al 2005; Leal et al 2008; Abrajano & Alvarez 2010).

Our findings can also be interpreted as evidence that Democratic and Republican candidates continue to be concerned that *public* support for issues associated with African Americans and Hispanics may alienate working class, middle class, or Southern whites, who are viewed by candidates as not only opposed to minority interests but integral to the electoral success of these candidates (Frymer 1999). Our results indicate that Democratic and Republican candidates will avoid making symbolic and substantive campaign appeals to ethnic and racial minorities when there is even a remote chance that white voters may be watching, thus explaining the lack of symbolic or substantive appeals to African Americans during programs appearing on UPN's Monday night lineup. However, when candidates can be assured that white voters will not be exposed in any real fashion to these types of campaign appeals, they are more likely to aggressively court minority voters through both symbolic and substantive appeals, thus accounting for the increased likelihood of symbolic and substantive appeals to Hispanics.<sup>9</sup>

What significance do these results hold for how minority citizens experience modern political campaigns? On one hand, our findings may provide some solace regarding the role of minority voters in contemporary campaign dialogue. After all, in the modern communications environment, it has become easier than ever before for candidates to target appeals to specific

demographic audiences and be relatively confident that the messages contained in those communications will not be widely seen. As a result, candidates can now afford to reach out to minority voters in a way that was perceived to be too costly in previous years. Accordingly, minority voters may now be exposed to an increasing number of campaign messages that speak more directly to their interests compared to those they received in previous campaigns.

On the other hand, new strategies involving highly targeted campaign appeals may actually serve to reduce the overall level of reliable information about candidates. After all, formal models of signaling often predict that messages that are less costly to send are more likely to be “cheap talk” (Austen-Smith 1988; Banks 1987; Harrington 1989). If candidates are able to appeal to minority voters out of view from the rest of the electorate, the messages they send may be inaccurate representations of their policy priorities. For example, the fact that half of all Democratic ads appearing on Spanish language television stations in 2002 focused on the issue of immigration might lead Latinos to assume that the issue was a priority for those candidates. Yet, the fact that the issue was almost entirely absent from advertisements aired by these candidates on other stations suggests otherwise. Thus, targeted media may provide candidates with an increased ability to talk directly to minority voters, but those messages may amount to little more than “cheap talk.”

## Appendix 1: Candidates Included in Analysis of Television Ads

<b>Race</b>	<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Latino TV Ads</b>	<b>UPN Mon. Night Ads</b>	<b>Total Ads</b>
AZ-4	D	14	0	62
AR-Gov	D	0	10	1731
CA-20	R	62	0	104
CA-23	R	133	0	133
CA-39	D	34	0	34
CA-39	R	9	0	9
CA-Gov	D	2519	78	20333
CA-Gov	R	135	11	6383
CO-7	D	0	13	1538
CO-Sen	D	153	21	6524
CO-Sen	R	250	4	8076
CO-Gov	R	102	0	2635
CT-2	D	0	5	843
FL-3	D	0	1	154
FL-7	D	0	22	4060
FL-7	R	0	11	1895
FL-8	D	33	0	165
FL-22	D	0	10	1379
FL-25	R	38	1	254
FL-Gov	D	250	28	8463
FL-Gov	R	1125	93	16176
GA-11	D	0	8	881
GA-13	D	0	2	145
GA-Sen	D	0	29	5754
ID-Gov	D	0	4	496
IL-Gov	D	97	2	7087
IL-Gov	R	35	0	3570
IN-7	D	0	12	1314
IA-3	D	0	10	1537
IA-3	R	0	6	1004
IA-4	D	0	26	2130
MD-Gov	D	0	31	4095
MD-Gov	R	0	53	4497
MA-Gov	R	0	22	3245
MI-9	D	0	8	837
MI-9	R	0	4	753
MI-10	D	0	2	305
MI-11	D	0	2	263
MI-Gov	D	0	31	5692
MN-2	D	0	20	2492

MN-Sen	D	0	22	2926
MN-Gov	D	0	3	537
MO-3	D	0	1	138
NV-3	D	115	0	1819
NM-1	D	55	0	2803
NM-1	R	454	0	3779
NM-2	D	169	0	2687
NM-2	R	219	0	3520
NM-Sen	D	17	0	213
NM-Sen	R	775	0	1615
NM-Gov	D	375	0	3078
NY-1	R	0	2	246
NY-Gov	D	463	17	5950
NY-Gov	R	308	20	13273
OH-3	D	0	7	636
OH-3	R	0	10	404
OR-5	D	0	4	259
OR-Sen	D	0	5	559
OR-Sen	R	0	22	2184
OR-Gov	D	0	15	2191
OR-Gov	R	0	18	1939
PA-4	R	0	1	192
PA-18	R	0	2	387
RI-1	D	0	12	1197
RI-Gov	R	0	10	1663
TX-18	D	19	0	19
TX-21	R	0	1	61
TX-24	D	126	0	274
TX-25	D	0	5	653
TX-Sen	D	780	18	9295
TX-Gov	D	1706	28	16236
TX-Gov	R	906	11	9671
UT-2	R	0	8	1143
WV-2	D	0	32	4413

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## Appendix 2: Coding of Wisconsin Advertising Project Storyboards

The advertisements collected by the Wisconsin Advertising Project are already coded for issue content, favored candidate, and the date, time, and station during which the ad appeared. Our additional coding was designed to determine how prevalent racial and ethnic minorities were in the advertisement, whether the advertisement made an explicit appeal to Latinos or African Americans, and whether the issues mentioned in the advertisement were raised in a positive or negative way.

For reasons explained in the paper, we began by identifying which candidates aired at least one advertisement either on Telemundo or Univision or on UPN between the hours of 7pm and 10pm on Monday nights. For any candidates who aired at least one advertisement that met one of those conditions, we collected the storyboards for all advertisements that those candidates aired during the general election campaign. This amounted to 757 unique storyboards for 74 different candidates.

We had two research assistants code each of the 757 storyboards on several measures. However, the measures we analyze in the paper are:

- 1) The number of African Americans appearing in the ad
- 2) The number of Latinos appearing in the ad
- 3) The number of Whites appearing in the ad
- 4) Whether the ad made an explicit appeal to either Latinos or African Americans

In most cases, inter-coder agreement was quite high. The coders agreed exactly on the number of African Americans featured in the advertisement 86.5% of the time and their entries were within one of each other 95% of the time. The number of Latinos in an advertisement were somewhat

more difficult to discern, but the coders still entered the same number for this variable 81% of the time and 93% of the time they were within 1 of being exactly in agreement. Information on the number of whites in an ad was only used in the denominator of the measures we use in the paper. Since this was the most common group appearing in an ad, disagreement was more common. The coders only entered the exact same figure 58.9% of the time; but they were within one of each other's entry 84.5% of the time (and within 2 of each other 92.3% of the time).

The other variables we use extensively in our analysis are those indicating whether an advertisement made an explicit appeal to African Americans or Latinos. The coders agreed on the former code 99.5% of the time and on the latter code they were in agreement 96.6% of the time.

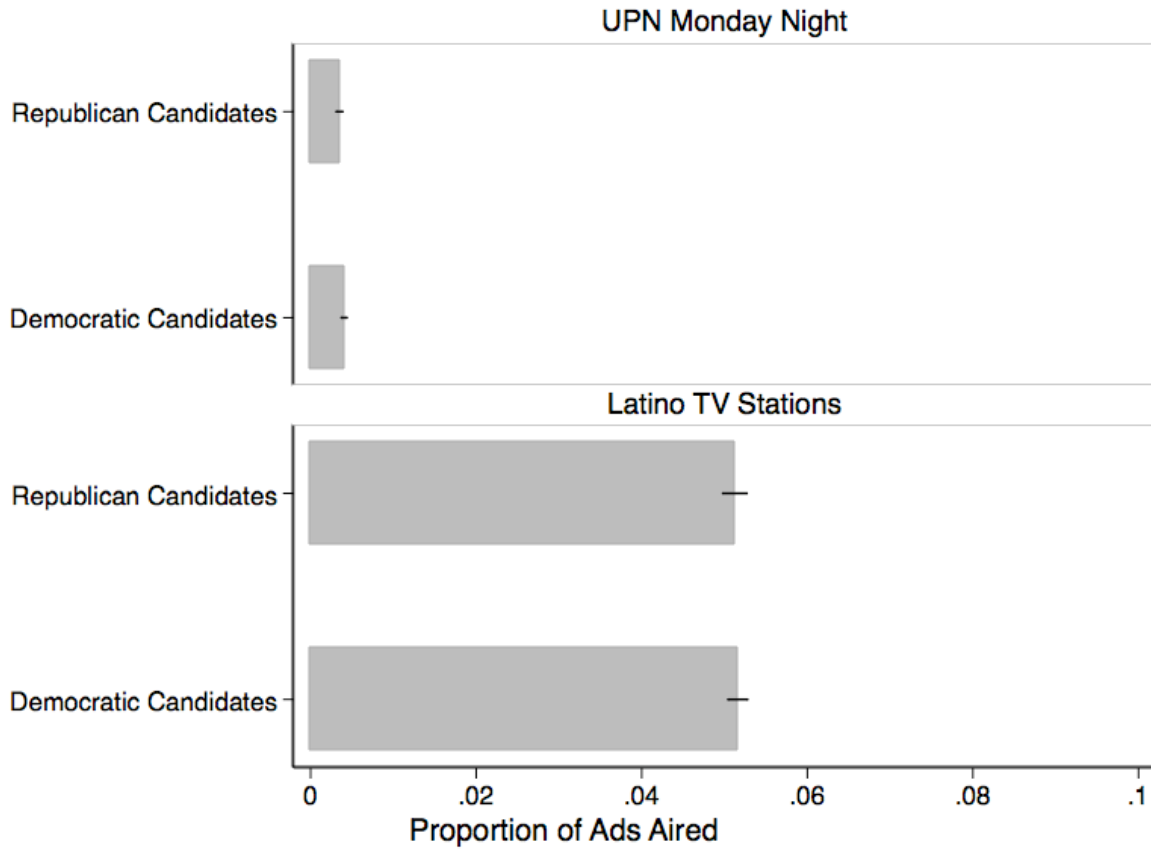
As noted in the paper, disagreements between the coders were reconciled by using the more conservative code in the analysis. For example, if one coder saw four Latinos in an advertisement and another coder saw three, we used three as the correct figure. Likewise, if one coder thought the advertisement made an explicit appeal to Latinos and the other did not, then we coded the ad as not making an explicit appeal. The reason for this approach is because if an appeal was not sufficiently explicit to be seen as such by two different individuals, then it is likely that the appeal was too subtle. Similarly, if an individual in the ad was not clearly enough Hispanic for both coders to see the individual as Latino, then the symbolic value of including that individual is not likely to be as influential. Nevertheless, when we erred on the other side (by using the less conservative coding), our substantive results were unaltered.

Table 1: Differences in Direct Mail Content Depending on Group Being Targeted

Content	ID'd Voters	Mail Targeted For...	
		African Americans	Hispanics
Substantive Appeals			
Jobs	17.7%	18.4%	36.2%***
Education	30.1%	42.9%*	43.5%**
Healthcare	18.5%	6.1%**	27.5%*
Symbolic Appeals			
AA/Hispanic Pictured	9.7%	57.1%***	46.4%***
N	1,444	49	69

\*p<.1, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01 two-tailed difference of proportions test between the starred proportion and the proportion in the first column (ID'd voters).

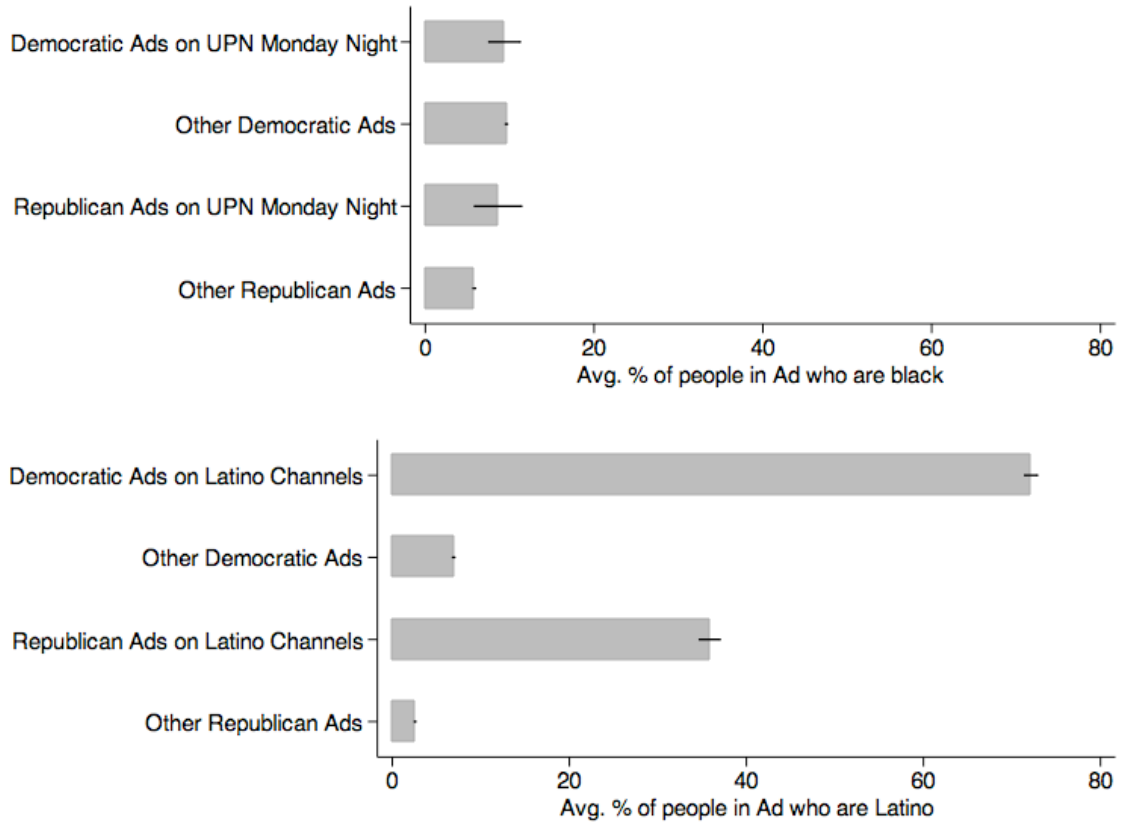
Figure 1: Proportion of Ads Appearing on Stations and Programming Tailored to Minority Audiences by Party of the Sponsoring Candidate



N = 223,008 advertisements. Dark lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

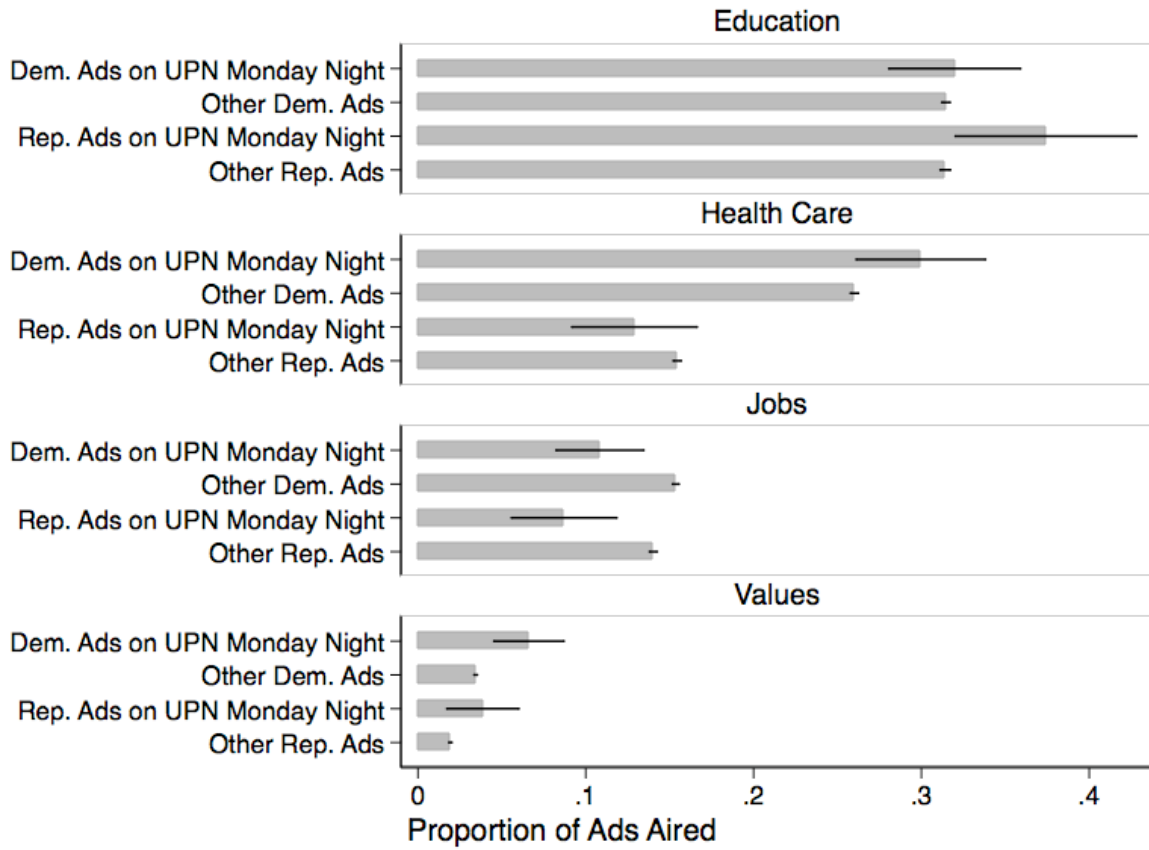


Figure 2: Average Percentage of Minorities Appearing in Advertisements by Party of Candidate and Where Advertisement Aired



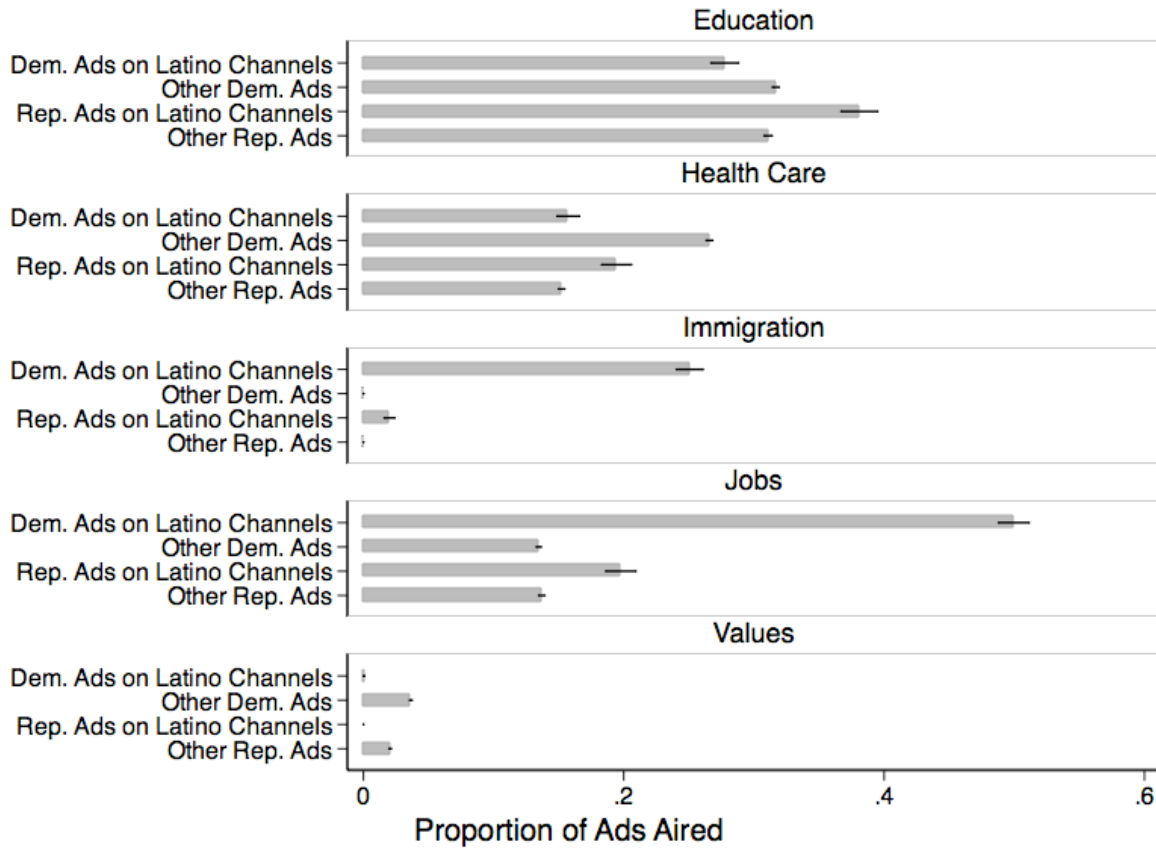
N = 223,008. Dark lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 3: Comparison of Issue Content of Advertising Appearing on UPN Monday Night Lineup versus Advertising Appearing Elsewhere



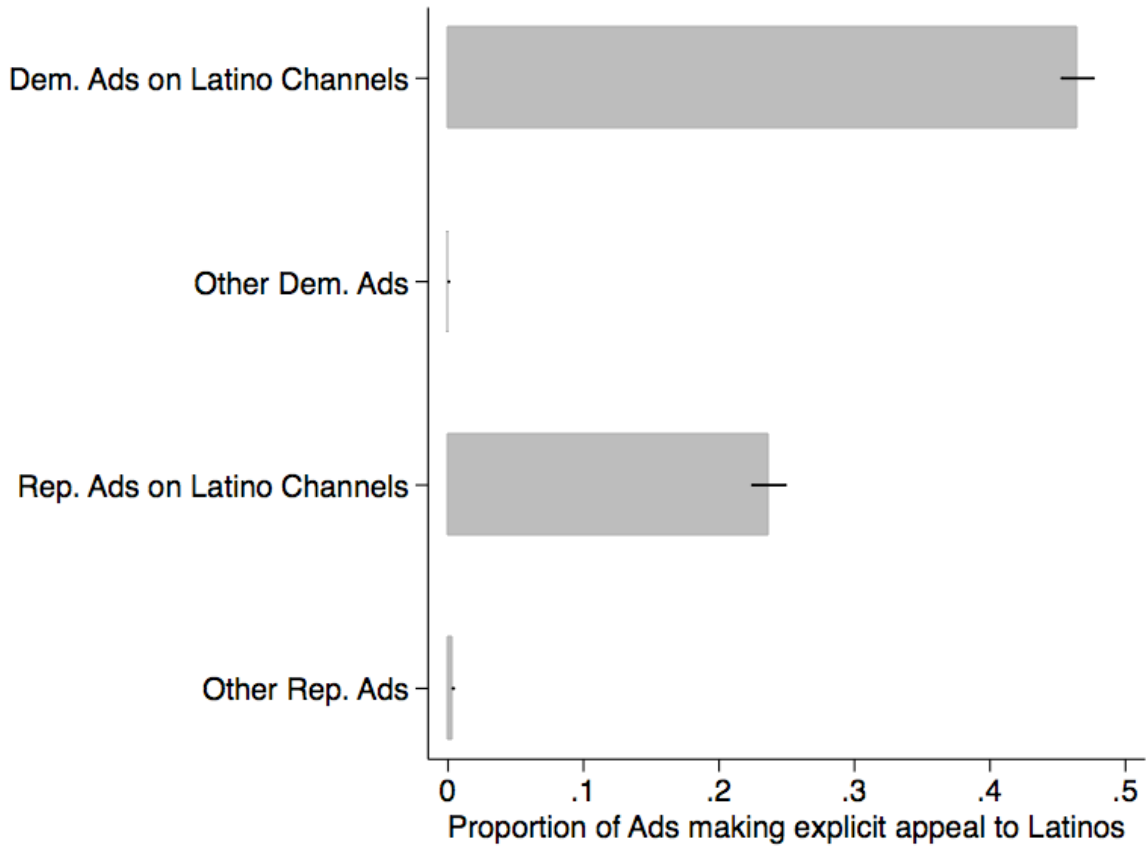
N = 223,008. Dark lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 4: Comparison of Issue Content of Advertising Appearing on Univision and Telemundo versus Advertising Appearing Elsewhere



N = 223,008. Dark lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 5: Proportion of Advertisements Making an Explicit Appeal to Latinos Depending on Where Advertisement was Aired



N = 223,008. Dark lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This example comes from the direct mail dataset that we describe below. The dataset explicitly describes how the mailers intended for the minority audience had the same information as the one designed for all voters, but with only cosmetic changes.

<sup>2</sup> We limit our analysis to advertisements aired during the general election campaign, which we define as September 4<sup>th</sup> through Election Day.

<sup>3</sup> This amounted to 1.6% of all advertisements aired during that year.

<sup>4</sup> While the shows catering to African American audiences were scheduled from 8pm to 10pm, television advertisers often purchase advertising during the hour leading in to prime time to capture audiences waiting for prime time shows to begin.

<sup>5</sup> Values issues were those coded as focusing on abortion, homosexuality/gay and lesbian rights, moral/family/religious values, or creationism. The jobs category was constructed from ads mentioning minimum wage, unions, employment/jobs, poverty, or globalization. Health care issues were those coded either as health care, Medicare, or prescription drugs. There was just a single category for education (education/schools) and immigration.

<sup>6</sup> Our coders also coded more contextual information about each particular issue mention. Specifically, if the advertisement mentioned an issue like immigration, the coders were instructed to code whether the ad was presenting a message that was generally in favor or against immigration. However, neither coder detected any instances where an advertisement was against one of the five issues we examine here.

<sup>7</sup> While we present simple comparisons of proportions and means in this section, we conducted a supplementary analysis to ensure that the findings were robust when candidate fixed effects were

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implemented in a multivariate framework. In each case, the findings presented in this section were unchanged by controlling for differences across candidates.

<sup>8</sup> We have redacted the name of the firm and the institution at which the data are housed to protect anonymity. The final published manuscript would include this information and a link to where the data can be downloaded.

<sup>9</sup> These findings could also point to distinct ways in which Democratic and Republican candidates perceive how appeals to Hispanics may impact white members of the electoral coalition. More precisely, these candidates may believe that symbolic appeals to Hispanics, relative to similar appeals to African Americans, will provoke little ire among key members of their electoral coalition. However, the lack of symbolic and substantive representation of Hispanics in ads appearing on “mainstream” broadcast channels indicates that candidates may also be concerned about the detrimental impact that appeals to Hispanics may also represent.