Comment on "The Latino Vote in 2004"

I have a comment or two on the article by David Leal et al., "The Latino Vote in 2004" (*PS*, January 2005, 41–49). First, the William C. Velazquez Institute exit poll was not a national exit poll. Their poll was done in only 14 states and in 56 precincts with high concentrations of Hispanics. The Bush vote is an artifact of their sample. A more comprehensive sample would give different results.

The WCVI presidential vote does not represent Hispanic voters, even in their 14 states, who do not live in high concentration Hispanic areas. The limited disclosure of the WCVI methodology said they only sampled high concentration Hispanic areas. One of the surprising things I learned years ago at the Census Bureau is that a majority of all African Americans lived in low density black areas. To put it another way, a majority of blacks lived in precincts that were less than 25% black. The same is true for Hispanics. Whatever the exact percentage, these Hispanics were omitted from the WCVI study.

Also omitted from the WCVI exit poll were votes cast absentee or by early voters. These voters were more for Bush than Kerry and were very different than those Hispanics voting at polling places on Election Day. Election Day Hispanic voters were almost 2-to-1 for Kerry over Bush. A number of the WCVI 14 states have very large absentee votes or votes cast before Election Day at polling places set up for the purpose.

WCVI claims they were in states with 90% of all Hispanics nationwide. This is a slight overstatement of the Hispanics voting in their 14 states. A clearer statement would have been that the WCVI exit poll only targeted 40% of all Hispanics nationwide. The others were excluded for the reasons cited above. This assumes they sampled precincts that were 20% or more Hispanic. If the minimum Hispanic concentration in a precinct was greater, then the targeted population decreases. In these precincts Bush received 31% of the Hispanic vote, which is about what WCVI's exit poll gave him.

The article by Leal on the Hispanic vote only relies in part on the WCVI exit poll, but their argument contradicts not two exit polls as they claim, but three. The NEP poll they cite was a national exit poll of 250 precincts. The *Los Angeles Times* national exit poll sampled 125 precincts. The third exit poll I referred to is a weighted sum across all 50 states and DC from the NEP state exit polls. The state and national exit polls do not represent the same voters. Summing across the 50 states and DC under-represents Hispanics slightly as it omits Hispanics in a few states with a very small Hispanic population. In those states NEP did not ask voters to identify themselves as Hispanic. Even so, the sum across the states produces a Hispanic Republican vote of 40%. However, that 40% vote for Bush is based on over 4,471 Hispanic interviews nationwide. The 44% Bush vote from the national exit poll is based on 250 precincts and 1,037 Hispanic respondents. Both figures include absentee voters. Any estimate of Hispanic vote from an exit poll will have a big variance due to clustering. The 40% figure, when it was announced by NBC at a conference following the election, was taken as a correction to the 44% figure. That is not the case. The 40% and 44% Bush vote figures are based on two different sets of exit polls conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International for NEP. We believe both to be reliable estimates of the Hispanic vote. They both show a significant increase over the Hispanic vote for Bush in 2000. The *Los Angeles Times* exit poll was consistent with these estimates. It had Bush receiving 45% of the Hispanic vote.

The comment in the Leal article about the under-representation of urban areas in the NEP exit polls is an artifact of how urban is defined. There is no standard definition of a suburb. In the NEP exit polls a suburb is the balance of an MSA outside the principle city(s). By any definition suburbs are still part of an urban area. Excluded from the suburbs in the NEP scheme are the central city and other smaller cities in the MSA that might have been considered suburban by many demographers. These smaller cities, when outside the MSA, are classified as rural by NEP. They are only classified as small cities when in an MSA.

I think the article by David Leal et al. is wrong in its conclusion. The *Los Angeles Times* and NEP exit polls were a more appropriate method for estimating the Hispanic vote than the pre-election surveys the authors used as the basis of their arguments. Most of these surveys were taken months before the election. The methods for sampling Hispanic voters are not given. Shall we accept as an article of faith that all these surveys used probability sampling methods to reach Hispanic voters? The vote Leal et al. cite averages 60%-Kerry, 32%-Bush. What did the other 8% of Hispanic voters do? Also overlooked is that there was a campaign in progress. Campaigns sometimes change votes. The article ignores this.

If one wants access to the respondent data from the NEP exit polls they have been archived at ICPSR at the University of Michigan and at the

Table 1

14 states used in WCVI exit poll—Where Hispanics voted	Total	Kerry	Bush
Absentee	23	44	52
Less than 20% Hispanic Precinct	30	58	40
At least 20% Hispanic Precinct	47	68	31
(Number of Interviews = 3,368)	100	60	39

Table 2

Hispanic Voters from 50 States/DC	Total	Kerry	Bush
Hispanics in WCVI Target Population*	40	68	31
Hispanics excluded by WCVI	60	52	45
All Hispanics (n = 4,471)	100	58	40

*Target population includes all Hispanics who voted in precincts where at least 20% of the voters were Hispanic in the 14 states used for the William C. Velazquez Institute exit poll.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096505056271 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Roper Center at the University of Connecticut. The methods statements are available at www.exit-poll.net along with the questionnaires, the completion rates, and an evaluation of the NEP exit polls.

Warren J. Mitofsky
Mitofsky International

Editor's note: David L. Leal, Matt A. Barreto, Jongho Lee, and Rodlofo de la Garza will respond to Mr. Mitofsky's comments in the July issue of *PS*.

In Response to Saltman

Saltman's comment (*PS*, July 2004, 383) simply ignores the bulk of my previous letter (*PS*, January 2004, 1–2) which dealt with Alabama. I gather that there he agrees with Russell and myself. Thus, there is no dispute on the question of whether Nixon or Kennedy had more popular votes in 1960. His criticism concerns my feeling, originally suggested by Russell, that with more political honesty on the part of the Chicago and Texas machines, Nixon might have taken the Electoral College, too. He doesn't specifically dispute my statement that the difference in Illinois was "smaller than the usual number of votes produced by the Chicago machine from graveyards and empty lots."

Although I used to live in Chicago and was familiar with the work of the machine, I had not realized that they had switched to voting machines by the 1960 election. This doesn't really make any difference, however. It is just as easy to add votes on the machine record as to stuff the ballot box. In both cases the people supervising the polling stations, members of the machine, simply permit more votes to be cast than the actual number of voters. Thus, I regret being behind the times on this matter, but I don't think it makes much difference.

He doesn't contest my remarks about Texas either in any direct way. I referred to votes cast by cattle in South Texas. I, of course, did not have the personal knowledge of Texas that I did of Chicago, but my remarks were surely in accord with the prevailing view among students of the problem. His main criticism concerns really the idea introduced by Russell on Nixon's motives.

Lastly, with respect to future biographers of Nixon, I imagine that they will be typical intellectuals and vigorously anti-Nixon. That they would credit him with being politically different before the 1960 election than after seems unlikely. Whether this is a reflection of their prejudice or careful and impartial consideration, I leave to the reader.

Gordon Tullock
University Professor of Law & Economics
George Mason University

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096505056271 Published online by Cambridge University Press