

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

“Nuestra Senadora:

Catherine Cortez Masto’s Appeals to Latino Voters from 2005 to 2016”

By

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Introduction

On September 13th, 2016, Catherine Cortez Masto, the Democratic nominee for Senate in Nevada, had a packed day of campaigning. She started the day at a breakfast meeting with faith leaders at a Cuban restaurant. From here, she darted to a Mexican restaurant to meet with small-business owners and then attended a memorial for the recently deceased Mexican pop star Juan Gabriel. After, she conducted a session on immigration policy at Rancho High School, where many students are undocumented. To end her night, she attended a concert of the Mexican rock band Maná with two of her supporters. Maná, as she frequently noted on the campaign trail, is Cortez Masto's favorite band (Catherine Cortez Masto for Senate [CCMfS], 2016e). This hectic day was in many ways typical of a major Senatorial campaign. Cortez Masto used her stops to meet with a variety of voters, highlight aspects of her platform, and raise money.

What distinguished Cortez Masto's day from other Senatorial campaigns was that her schedule was crafted specifically to appeal to the Latino community. Cortez Masto is Latina herself—the granddaughter of a Mexican immigrant. Campaigning as the first Latina Senator in American history, Cortez Masto saw mobilizing the Latino community as the key to beating Republican Congressman Joe Heck. Cortez Masto's public embrace of her Latina identity became only the more significant amidst the political rise of Donald Trump. It appeared as a direct affront to his anti-immigrant, racially charged rhetoric.

During the Senate race, Cortez Masto's campaign employed a wide array of appeals to Latino voters. She used personal appeals, like talking about her Latina identity, using imagery that would identify her as Latina, speaking Spanish, and appearing with other Latinos. And, she utilized issue-based appeals: discussing how she would help

the Latinos community and focusing on issues that Latinos rank as of high importance, like immigration and education.

During the race, Nevada Republicans questioned the authenticity of Cortez Masto's appeals to Latinos. They accused her of *hispandering*, or playing up her Latina identity as a ploy to win votes (Messerly, 2016). In response, Cortez Masto admitted that as a third-generation, mixed race Latina who does not speak Spanish, her heritage had been questioned before (Moreno, 2016). Indeed, Cortez Masto was not a traditional Latina politician. Most prominent Latina politicians build their political resumes through work with Latino political groups before running for office (Hardy-Fanta, 1993). Cortez Masto had no record of working with Latino civic organizations prior to her Senate run, and during her prior two runs for public office, there is little evidence that she talked about being Latina. As Nevada Attorney General, she also did not mention that certain issues have a disproportionate impact on Latinos (Ralston, personal communication, April 17, 2018). To voters, it seemed Cortez Masto went through a transformation with her relationship to her own ethnicity.

The charge of *hispandering* raises legitimate questions about what precipitated Cortez Masto's shift towards accentuating her Latina identity in her Senate campaign. There is the possibility that Cortez Masto simply became more comfortable with expressing her identity. However, tracking Cortez Masto's personal feelings is difficult without a direct interview. And, in high-level campaigns, the candidate has reduced agency over how they are presented to voters. Cortez Masto's expression of her Latina identity in her campaigns was crafted by several actors, including her campaign staff and

political consultants. Analyzing her shift beyond the personal level allows for discussion of larger political trends around women of color running for office.

It is most likely that differences in Cortez Masto's expression of her Latina identity reflect the importance of Latino voters in each of her elections. In the 2016 Senate race in Nevada, winning Latino voters was central to Cortez Masto's campaign strategy. In the 2006 and 2010 Nevada Attorney General races, Cortez Masto's campaign strategy did not prioritize persuading Latino voters. This raises the question: Why were Latinos valued so differently between the 2016 Nevada Senate race and both the 2006 and 2010 Nevada Attorney General races?

Mainly, Nevada's political environment rapidly changed throughout the 2000s and 2010s. The state is the fastest growing in the country. A majority of new residents are Latino, disrupting Nevada's status as a once predominantly white state. Residents are increasingly clustering in Las Vegas, dwarfing the importance of Nevada's rural north (Damore, Tuman, & Agreda, 2013). This dramatically altered the political environment. To triumph in an election, candidates now have several groups they can focus on persuading and turning-out, including Latinos, who are now critical to winning any statewide race in Nevada.

Further, Cortez Masto's three campaigns were each run by different personnel, who had their own ideas of how to win an election in the state. In Cortez Masto's two Nevada Attorney General races, she employed Nevada-based staff and consultants affiliated with the state's gaming industry. Alternatively, her Senate race was staffed by non-Nevada Democrats, affiliated with the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. The campaign was also advised by political consultancies known for their Latino

mobilization strategy (Roarty, 2015). The different backgrounds and experiences of these actors affected how they structured Cortez Masto's campaigns.

Further, Nevada Attorney General and United States Senator are different positions with particular issue portfolios and duties. The Nevada Attorney General deals with issues related to criminal justice in Nevada. Voters seek a state Attorney General that they feel will protect them and has a competency in legal affairs. A United States Senator deals with state, federal, and international issues. Cortez Masto's public persona and platform in each campaign were constructed to convince voters she was the most qualified candidate for the specific requirements of the position. These positional differences created varying opportunities for her to make appeals towards Latino voters.

Further, the positions have different relationships with the national political environment. Nevada Attorney General is a state position, so campaigning towards national political trends is uncommon. US Senator is a federal position, connecting it directly to national politics. In 2016, Donald Trump's candidacy dictated the American political environment with his inflammatory rhetoric on race and gender. Questions about the role of immigrants in America's future dominated voters' minds. This opened up a space for Cortez Masto to make direct appeals to concerned Latino voters. She spoke about how her heritage would allow her to serve as a counterweight to a potential Trump presidency. In her previous two races, held in 2006 and 2010, there were no foreboding federal political issues that would have enabled her to hold such a dialogue on her ethnicity.

Scholar James McLeod construes American elections as "ritual sociodramas." During each, the divisions of American society are laid bare and aggravated. Candidates

engage in “competitive political language, rhetoric, and performance” to persuade voters (Jefferies, 2015, p. 247). In constructing her public persona, Cortez Masto’s campaign navigated a minefield of conventional wisdom of how voters will respond to both a woman and a Latina. This was unprecedented, as Cortez Masto was the first Latina to run for US Senate—though Loretta Sanchez, also Latina, ran simultaneously for US Senate in California. Within the intense drama of the 2016 election, Cortez Masto’s campaign attempted to convince a wide coalition of voters—women, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, Veterans, and students—to support her. Her campaign presents the first opportunity to witness how the intersectional identity of a Latina is handled in a high-level campaign that seeks to appeal to a variety of demographics.

Jeffrey Alexander explains that successful politicians, “become a broad expression of the moods and meanings of the nation’s democratic life, not only of the civil sphere but also of some of the extracivil realms that form its boundaries, realms organized around issues such as gender, family, religion, class, ethnicity, and race [...] Winning power depends on creating performances that successfully breach these supposedly great divides” (2012, p. 18). Elected on the same night as Donald Trump, Cortez Masto was viewed by many as a political heroine. She became more than simply the first Latina Senator. She represented a watershed moment for women of color in politics, as her double minority identity was viewed as an asset, not a liability, in a high-level race. She became *Nuestra Senadora*.

Literature Review

This project seeks to build on a growing body of literature that studies Latina politicians. Much of the literature in the 20th century does not distinguish Latina politics

and politicians from Latinos, ignoring obvious gender differences in participation. The first work to explore the particular binds Latina politicians face is *Latina Politics, Latino Politics*, published in 1993 by Carol Hardy-Fanta. In the book, Hardy-Fanta provides a detailed description about how Latina political candidates and activists operate within Boston's Latino community. Scholars have built on Hardy-Fanta's research, constructing rich profiles of Latina politicians operating in American cities at the municipal level (Hardy-Fanta, 1997; Pardo, 1998; Navarro, 2008). These profiles have led to a body of literature that looks at how a politician's Latina identity affects how they view and approach politics (Pardo, 1990; Hardy-Fanta, 1993; Cruz-Takash, 1993).

Most of this literature focuses on Latina politicians at the municipal or state level. This is partially because of the dearth of Latinas in federal politics. There have only been twelve Latina Congresswoman and the first, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, was elected in 1989. Catherine Cortez Masto, the subject of this paper, is the first Latina Senator in United States history. The recentness of Cortez Masto's election and the small number of Latinas to have campaigned for federal office has limited the ability of scholars to analyze these women.

The most prominent existing literature on how Latina women operate at the federal level is *Latinas in American Politics: Changing and Embracing Political Tradition*, edited by Sharon Navarro, Samantha Hernandez, and Leslie Navarro (2016). The book contains ten chapters that examine Latina politicians, mostly at the state and federal level. Chapter Seven, written by Julia Marin Hellwege and Christine Marie Sierra, focuses on two preeminent Latina politicians both from New Mexico: Susana Martinez and Michelle Lujan Grisham. The chapter contrasts the women based on how they

present their Latina identity, how they tackle Latino-coded issues, and how they manage their families amidst a career in public service. Marin Hellwege and Sierra discuss how discrepancies between the women can be attributed to partisan differences (Democrat versus Republican), differences in position (Congresswoman/Federal versus Governor/State), and differences in district (Congressional District versus New Mexico) (Navarro, Hernandez, & Navarro 2016).

Literature exists that explores how each of these factors impacts politicians. There is a large body of literature on Latino voters opinions on each political party (Jackson, 2011; Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, Krogstad, & Lopez, 2016, etc.). Kim Fridkin Kahn's book, *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman*, explores how women fare when running for various levels of office. She finds that women are most likely to be successful running for state positions, like state legislature or governor, versus for Congress or the presidency. Finally, literature has examined how the racial composition of a district affects its politicians, (Lublin, 1997; Barreto, Segura, & Wood, 2004).

However, much of this literature cannot be applied to Cortez Masto's election. To start, much of the existing literature compares different women, rather examining how one woman changes in response to political shifts. Fridkin Kahn, for example, does not perform analysis of a single woman who maneuvers from the state level to the federal level. Fridkin Kahn also does not discuss differences in how a woman's campaign is structured on the state to federal level, including staff and consultants. She also does not discuss ethnicity as a confounding factor in her study.

Further, there has not been literature that examines how changing racial demographics at the state level affect a single candidate's campaign in several statewide

elections. Finally, while Marin Hellwege and Sierra's work offers a useful template for the type of profile I seek to construct, New Mexico has a long and exceptional history of Hispanic inclusion in politics (2016). Latina politicians operating in any other state, like Nevada, face different conditions and obstacles than Latina politicians in New Mexico.

There is work on the composition and history of Latino community in Nevada and Las Vegas. Literature has focused on demographics trends (Damore, 2012a; Damore, Tuman, Agreda 2013) and the organization of Latino community groups in the state (Tuman, 2009; Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, 2010). Collectively, this literature acknowledges how the transformation of Las Vegas' Latino population has impacted Latino political organizations, state politics, and political parties. It has not examined how it has affected individual politicians like Cortez Masto.

Importantly, most of the work done on Latina politicians is focused on Latinas who have strong Latina family backgrounds and built their political careers through work for Latino groups. Increasingly, there is a group of Latina politicians who have had little to no involvement with Latino political groups before they were elected to office. Many of these politicians are mixed race, so their family life may be more dictated by white rather than Latino norms. This include politicians like Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, Congresswoman Jaime Herrera-Beutler, and Congressional candidate Marilinda Garcia. Much of the existing literature about Latinas politicians cannot be fully applied to them.

This work builds upon scholarship on electoral code switching. In *Obama, Jay Z, and the Science of Code Switching*, Michael P. Jefferies explains that electoral code switching occurs when politicians alter their language or style of self-presentation to appear authentic and capable to various constituencies (2005). It can be argued that many

of Cortez Masto's appeals are a form of electoral code switching. However, most of the literature on electoral code switching in American politics focuses on African Americans, namely in relation to President Barack Obama (Preston, 2010; Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Gosa & Nielson, 2015). There has been some work on aspects of electoral code switching among Latinos—like speaking Spanish or wearing traditional Latin American clothing— however it is not termed as such in the literature (Navarro, Hernandez, & Navarro 2016). Electoral code among Latino politicians presents a rich opportunity for scholarship in the future but is beyond the scope of this project.

Cortez Masto's election to the United States Senate was an unprecedented moment for minority representation in politics. As one of only two Latinas to ever run for federal office as a major party candidate, Cortez Masto provides a pioneering case study in how a woman of color navigates her gender and ethnicity in a high-level campaign. The amount of attention, money, and resources Cortez Masto had in 2016 is singular for a woman of color in United States history. It is also significant that she is woman of color whose identity has not always been a central part of her political persona.

Political strategists tend to be highly empirical. They will repeat successful campaign strategies. Certainly, they can use polls to see what voters respond well to. However, they will be more apt to look a previous successful campaigns when crafting the strategies of a campaign. Cortez Masto's election will serve as a reference point for any woman of color who runs for office in the future.

Methodology

My analysis of Cortez Masto's campaigns relies on both primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, I examined two categories of materials directly produced by Cortez Masto's campaign: television advertisements and press releases.

Cortez Masto's campaign released eighteen television advertisements from March 8, 2016 to October 13, 2016. I transcribed each advertisement and then analyzed the language. I also denoted the imagery used.

The Cortez Masto's campaign put out 263 press releases from April 8, 2015 to November 2, 2016. Election Day was November 8, 2016. I do not know why there are no press releases online for last day six days of the campaign. It is possible these press releases were removed from the website. More likely though, the communication staff were reassigned to focus on voter mobilization for the last few days of the campaign. For each press release, I demarcated the date of the release and what the main topic was. Most press releases were issue-focused. There were press releases on the following topics: immigration, women's issues, environmental issues, economics, the Supreme Court, veterans' issues, education, criminal justice, healthcare, gun control, and Social Security. Non-issue-focused press releases were categorized as an organizational launch, an endorsement, or a campaign event. There were also press releases mainly about Trump and Heck. Aside from tracking the topic of the releases, I also noted if they mentioned Trump, Heck, immigration, or Cortez Masto's Latina identity/family history.

I conducted a short email interview with Jon Ralston, founder of The Nevada Independent, on April 16, 2018. Ralston is largely considered the authority on contemporary Nevada politics.

For secondary sources, I rely on news articles. I mainly utilize Nevada-based newspapers like the Las Vegas Sun, the Las Vegas Review Journal, and the Las Vegas Independent. I also look to Spanish-language newspapers in Las Vegas like El Mundo and El Tiempo. Some national newspapers are also used when speaking of Cortez Masto's relevance to the national political environment. News articles from 2005 to 2011 were retrieved from Factiva, an online database.

At the start of this project, I had hoped to interview several members of Cortez Masto's campaign staff, including the Senator herself. However, after many calls to her office, it proved unfeasible. Perhaps because campaigns tend to replicate successful strategies, campaign staff members were fearful of having Cortez Masto's campaign strategy recorded.

Nevada's Electoral Transformation

In the years between Cortez Masto's two Nevada Attorney General races and her Senate race, Nevada underwent a significant demographic transition that increased the importance of Latino voters. Nevada is the fastest growing state in the country. Between 2000 and 2010, its population increased by 35%. The main driver of this growth is urbanization, mainly in the Las Vegas area. Three out of four Nevadans now reside in its metropolitan area. Many of these new residents are Latino and young, living in the urban core of the city. In fact, 48% of all Latinos in Nevada are 24 years old or younger (Damore, Tuman, & Agreda, 2013). They mainly come to Las Vegas seeking work in the expansive gaming and hospitality industries. The arrival and integration of these new Latino residents into Nevada has triggered a rapid shift in the state's political environment.

Latino Political Organization in Las Vegas

The explosion in Las Vegas' Latino population has left Latino political institutions in the state underdeveloped compared to other major US cities. As is common across the country, churches and homeowners groups constitute the most common avenues of Latino organization in Las Vegas. These organizations provide key services to new members of the Latino community to help them acclimate. They often serve as centers for Latino political organization, registering voters and driving turnout. However, in Las Vegas, many of these underfunded and understaffed organizations have struggled to accommodate the influx of Latino immigrants. The Catholic Church, a stalwart of Latino community building, has an especially low profile in Las Vegas (Bada, 2010). This has left many Latino immigrants in Nevada without traditional avenues to engage politically in their new community.

In the face of weak community organization, Latinos in Las Vegas are more apt to use unions for political engagement. Many of Las Vegas' recent Latino immigrants have come to state in search of jobs, often in unionized sectors. The most prominent union is the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 [CWU], which represents the workers of the gaming and hospitality industries. The CWU has about 31,920 Latino members (CWU, 2018). These members use the Union to engage in politics. During elections, the CWU runs voter mobilization campaigns, where they send unionized workers door-to-door to persuade and register voters. The CWU has supplanted traditional Latino political organization in Las Vegas. This is consistent with research by Francia and Orr found that shows, "Union affiliation not only increases Latino voter registration and turnout but also has an especially strong effect on Latinos when compared with non-Latinos" (2014).

Unions have helped increase Latinos influence by helping immigrants formally enter the political process. According to Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, “Unions in Las Vegas have provided a critical link to politics for many immigrant citizens” (2010). Indeed, the CWU consistently holds programs to help members learn English and navigate the naturalization process. These activities usually peak during election years. By helping immigrants naturalize, the CWU numerically increases the importance of Latino voters.

Latinos and Political Media

Media sources, like television, newspapers, and radio, provide an avenue for the dissemination of information regarding politics. English speaking Latinos can get their news from mainstream English-language sources. However, non-English speaking Latinos are reliant on Spanish-language media to receive information. While there are no figures for Las Vegas specifically, twenty to thirty percent of Latinos get their news in Spanish nationally (Pedraza & Wilcox-Archuleta, 2017). According to Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, “Providing coverage of local, national, and international events, ethnic language media offer Spanish-dominant Latino immigrants opportunities to become aware of the current issues and debates that are affecting them in places of origin and destination” (2010). Comparable to other major US cities, Las Vegas has few Spanish language newspapers or radio stations. Its first Spanish-language newspaper was launched in 1980 and, only in 2007 was there a local Las Vegas television news program in Spanish (Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, 2010). Prior to the establishment of this program, some candidates relied on ran Spanish-language television advertisements during English-language programs. It is more expensive to advertise during these

programs, as they have high viewership. This limited candidates' ability to reach Spanish-speaking voters. Now, with several Spanish-language newspapers and television stations, it is easier and cheaper for candidates to reach Spanish speakers in Nevada.

Immigration and Nevada Latino Political Activism

Two political moments helped accelerate the development of Latino political organizations in Nevada. First, Nevada was granted an extra seat in Congress after the 2010 Census. Latino activists aggressively pushed for the new district to be drawn to elevate Latino representation. The newly drawn districts feature Latino representation from between 16% and 37% (Damore, 2012a). In his work *The Paradox of Representation*, David Lublin discusses how districts redrawn with higher minority representation tend to cause representatives to become more liberal, regardless of party affiliation. Lublin identifies that when a district becomes 40% minority residents, minority interests play a dominant role in determining who the representative is (Lublin, 1997). While all of the new districts are near but under 40%, wooing Latino voters is now a necessary campaign strategy in any Nevada Congressional race (Damore, 2012b).

Second, the 2006 immigration protests helped galvanize Latino voters and formalize their relationship with the Democratic Party. The protests were a response to House Resolution 4437, which would raise penalties for illegal immigration and classify undocumented immigrants as felons. While the Bill applied to all immigrant groups, Latino immigrants were specifically mentioned in the text (Rim, 2009). Latino organizers and civic groups mobilized their communities in opposition to the Bill. It is predicted that in cities across the United States, 3.5 to 5.1 million protesters took to the streets.

Las Vegas, with its large population of undocumented immigrants, was a major site for protests. The first protest in the city occurred on March 31st when 3,000 students walked out of their classrooms (Roberts, 2006). Then on April 10th, nearly 3,000 protesters marched from Jaycee Park to the Federal Courthouse in Las Vegas. Protests in Nevada did not only occur in Las Vegas. On April 11th, there were demonstrations held across the state. These protests provided a space for Latino civic group to conduct activities. At each rally, there was a push to register immigrants and Latinos to vote (Tuman, 2009).

The immigration protests increased Latinos partisan affiliation with Democrats. It was the Republican Party that largely supported House Resolution 4437. Rallies across Nevada featured speeches by major Democratic politicians. In the next legislative session, Nevada's most prominent Democratic politician, Senator Harry Reid, was the sole sponsor of a comprehensive immigration reform bill. The Bill was met warmly by many of the activists involved in the 2006 protests. Latinos showed their support for Reid's efforts in 2010, when he was re-elected with 69% of the Latino vote (Damore, Tuman, Agreda 2013). Interestingly, the immigration protest did not have much of an effect of the 2006 Nevada Attorney General race, which Cortez Masto won. This was partially because immigration is not an issue the Nevada Attorney General traditionally oversees. Kathy Rim also contends that Latino activists have an easier time mobilizing around issue advocacy rather than elections because many of their participants are noncitizens (2009). Thus, affecting the 2006 Nevada Attorney General race may have been prohibitively difficult for immigration activists.

Nevada Latinos in Political Parties

Political parties made some small efforts to integrate Latinos into their organization from the 1990s to the early 2000s. The first efforts occurred in the late 1990s, shockingly late considering that Nevada had a substantial Latino population for decades. During this time, the Nevada Democratic Party began engaging organized labor and groups like the Latin Chamber of Commerce and Hispanics in Politics to register and turnout Latino voters (Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, 2010). Latinos in Nevada were by no means bound to the Democratic Party in the 1990s and the early 2000s. They were willing to work with whichever party promised to value their interests. Generally, Nevada is consistently with national trends that have seen Latinos increasingly identify with the Democrats (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, Krogstad, & Lopez, 2016). The loyalty of Latinos to the Democrats was solidified in the 2008 Presidential election. A stunning 80% of Latinos voted for Barack Obama (Damore, Tuman, Agreda 2013).

Latino partisan identification with Democrats in Nevada is steadily rising, but the group's engagement during elections is not guaranteed. The Latino voter turnout rate has climbed steadily since 2000. During presidential election years, registered voters turnout at rates in the high 90s. However, it still displays heavy variance. In non-presidential elections, the numbers hover in the 50s and 60s. While Latino registration rates have continuously increased, there is still plenty of work to be done. In 2012, only 52% of Latino voters were registered (Damore, Tuman, & Agreda, 2013). For Democrats, elections with phenomenal turnout demonstrated that a strategy that prioritized Latinos could turn Nevada reliable blue (Damore, 2012a). This piqued the interest of national Democratic organizations, who pledged to devote attention and resources to the state. By

2016, the Nevada Democratic Party and National Democratic Party were inclined to strongly support a candidate and a campaign strategy they felt could win Latinos.

The growth in Nevada's Latino population has altered the political calculus for both Republicans and Democrats. Looking towards the 2016 Presidential and Senatorial race, Nevada political experts identified that either party had routes to win the state. David Damore speaks of the "Three Nevadas": Clark County (where Las Vegas is located), Washoe County (where Reno is located), and the rural northern counties. Either party could win each "Nevada" through different strategies (Damore, 2012c). And, a strong performance in Washoe and rural Nevada could override a victory in Clark County, the most populous of the three "Nevadas." Essentially, by 2016, Nevada was seen as highly winnable by either political party.

Nevada Attorney General to US Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto has successfully run for political offices three times: Nevada Attorney General in 2006, Nevada Attorney General in 2010, and US Senate in 2016. In this section, I will contrast her two Attorney General campaigns to her Senate campaign. Rather than compare the campaigns point-by-point, I choose to retain their chronological narratives. This allows for a thorough examination of how a number of factors, including the political environment and the opponents' campaign, affect the campaign as it progresses. Throughout, I seek to highlight how various factors in the campaigns enabled and encouraged Cortez Masto to appeal towards Latinos.

The Nevada Attorney General Races

Cortez Masto's campaigns for Nevada Attorney General in 2006 and 2010 reveal that making appeals to Latinos was not used in her early political career. In neither race was winning Latinos by wide margins a central component of her campaign strategy. Instead, she was able to use her connections to Las Vegas' powerful gaming elite to win over a coalition of mostly white swing voters in Nevada's northern rural counties.

Nevada's political culture is highly shaped by politically active gaming elites. Gaming makes up 29% of Las Vegas' economy (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Each of Las Vegas' city-sized hotels and casinos is run by gaming magnates. These individuals are incredibly active in politics, as they understand that regulations from the government's Gaming Division can affect their profits. The Gaming Division is overseen by the Nevada Attorney General, making this race highly important.

Cortez Masto leveraged her family and career connections to win support from Las Vegas' gaming elite. Her father, Manny Cortez, was the powerful head of Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (Nelson, 2006). Her connection to her father predominated coverage of her campaign announcement. Jane Ann Morrison, a political columnist for the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, trumpeted, "She's Manny Cortez's kid!" (2006). As a member of the Cortez family, Cortez Masto had a natural familiarity with the gaming elite. She built on her family ties during her early career. From 1995 to 1999, she worked as Chief of Staff to Nevada Governor Bob Miller. Then, she was Assistant Manager of Clark County, which includes Las Vegas. In both of these positions, Cortez Masto cultivated personal relationships with gaming elites.

Cortez Masto's 2006 campaign for Nevada Attorney General was dictated by her connections to the gaming industry. From the start, Cortez Masto focused on high-level fundraising among the gaming elite rather than grassroots donors. Her campaign was staffed by political adversaries of the gaming elite. Her campaign managers were Sig Rogich and Jim Ferrence, known for their work on behalf of pro-gaming candidates. Rogich is a Republican, demonstrating how gaming alliances blur traditional partisan lines (Coolican, 2005). These seasoned political consultants were likely to employ political strategies that had been previous successful.

Cortez Masto's 2006 Nevada Attorney General campaign was centered on broad, cross-cutting issues. She frequently repeated that her top priorities were "prosecuting identity theft, domestic violence, elder abuse and juvenile cases. She promised to improve education and resources for victims" (Hennessey, 2006). Cortez Masto's campaign may have selected these issues because, as research by Fridkin Kahn shows, voters view female candidates as stronger on helping children, the disabled, and the aged than their male counterparts (2006). They are also common issues that any state Attorney General candidate faces.

A weak opponent allowed Cortez Masto's campaign to conduct limited voter persuasion activities. Originally, Cortez Masto thought she would face incumbent Nevada Attorney General George Chanos. Early polls projected Cortez Masto with a slight advantage among decided voters, but Chanos had much higher name recognition (Ralston, 2006). In light of these polls, Cortez Masto focused on fundraising early in her campaign. Her campaign would need to spend heavily on television advertisements to boost her notoriety. However, in mid-March, Chanos announced he would not run for re-

election, causing confusion in the Republican field. Many potential candidates felt they did not have the time to mount a campaign against Cortez Masto (Riley, 2006). Former Clark County District Court judge Don Chairez was eventually selected. He was not a highly competitive candidate. He lost prior bids for Congress and the state Supreme Court. His Nevada Attorney General campaign was focused almost solely on the issue of eminent domain. Republican donors were more likely to donate to Cortez Masto, who they presumed would win, over Chairez.

Cortez Masto's victory in 2006 is largely attributed to her success in Nevada's rural northern counties. These counties are traditionally Republican. However in 2004, Democratic Senator Harry Reid won a large share votes here, enabling his victory. Cortez Masto's campaign followed the same strategy. To win these voters, Cortez Masto focused her campaign on her endorsements from law enforcement groups, like the Nevada Conference of Police and Sheriffs (Griffiths, 2006). Moderate and conservative voters highly value these groups' endorsements. Cortez Masto's campaign spent \$1.3 million of the \$1.4 million fundraised to run advertisements that touted these endorsements. This strategy accomplished its goal, as she "won all but five counties, including huge victories in voter-rich Clark and Washoe. She lost [rural Northern counties like] Elko, Esmeralda, Eureka, Lander and Lincoln counties by a total of just 3,015 votes" (Neff, 2006). This allowed her to win 52.8% of the vote to Chairez's 35.6%. For Nevada's political elite, Cortez Masto's victory was further evidence that these rural counties were the key to Democrats winning in Nevada.

Cortez Masto did not explore her identity as a woman or a Latina in the 2006 Attorney General race. Upon her election, Cortez Masto did become the first Latina to

serve in the post. However, she was neither the first woman nor first person of Latino descent to serve As Nevada Attorney. Frankie Sue Del Papa, who is a woman, served from 1991 to 2003, and Brian Sandoval, who is of Mexican descent, served from 2003 to 2005 (Office of the Nevada Attorney General, 2018). Cortez Masto's opponent, Chairez, was Latino himself, making the 2006 Nevada Attorney General race the first between two Latino candidates (Kanigher, 2006). In these circumstances, it was difficult for Cortez Masto's campaign to use her identities as a differentiating or noteworthy factor. There was potential for Cortez Masto to highlight how criminal justice issues disproportionately affect Latino communities. However, Cortez Masto did not make such appeals towards Latinos (Ralston, personal communication, April 17, 2018). Cortez Masto's lack of targeting Latinos through either personal appeals or issue appeals was apparent in the results of the election. Cortez Masto received 40% of the Hispanic vote to Chairez's 30%, a low spread in a partisan race (Neff, 2006).

Cortez Masto's 2010 race provided even less of an opportunity for her to explore her heritage publically, as she faced an extraordinarily weak opponent. Incumbents have an inherent political advantage and Cortez Masto was well liked as Nevada Attorney General. Republicans were reticent to run a competitive candidate against her re-election. They eventually nominated Travis Barrick, who never held public office. He only became a lawyer seven years prior to the election and lived in Nevada for a measly five years. Most damning, Barrick served time in jail for trespassing into an abortion clinic in San Diego (Vogel, 2010). It was not difficult for Cortez Masto's campaign to portray her as the stronger candidate to most voters.

Cortez Masto's campaign used a similar strategy in 2010 as she did in 2006—focusing on television advertisements. Cortez Masto raised \$410,505 and overspent \$544,000 on advertisements. Most of the advertisements highlighted Barrick's criminal record. One stated, "[Barrick] served jail time in Southern California for harassing women" (Vogel, 2010). Barrick was unable to retaliate, as he had just \$14,648 to spend. In this campaign, Cortez Masto was able to leverage her identity as a woman to talk about how she was personally offended by Barrick's anti-choice activism. Her Latina identity, however, was again not mentioned. Even with limited campaign activities, she won a commanding 53% of the vote to Barrick's 36%.

Cortez Masto's Selection as a Federal Candidate

In a primary, partisan voters consider both which candidate they prefer and which candidate they think has the best chance at winning in the general election. A primary for US Senator sees the party specifically consider who is the most viable to win a statewide election for federal office. The primaries Cortez Masto was considered in expose how state and national actors pictured her as a candidate for federal office.

Traditionally, Nevada's Democratic Party uses a highly brokered primary process. When there is no incumbent, party elites select a single candidate they prefer. This candidate is usually the only option on the ballot during the primary. The state's primary process reveals the state party elite's preference more than the electorate's (Hamby, 2015).

The 2012 Senate primary in Nevada largely followed Nevada's highly brokered format. In early 2011, Senator John Ensign resigned. Governor Sandoval appointed Congressman Dean Heller, who represented the northern rural counties of the state, to the

seat. This initiated an early primary process for the Democrats. As had become typical, the most senior Democrat in the state was automatically given the first right of refusal. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, who represented Las Vegas in Congress since 1993, was the assumed candidate.

During this primary, there was discussion about Cortez Masto being a stronger nominee than Berkley. While Berkley was wildly popular in Las Vegas, she had never run statewide. There was worry her "flamboyant Vegascentric personality" would alienate upstate voters who were already looking to be strong supporters of Heller (Kraushaar, 2011). The only Democrat who performed strongly in these counties in the past was Cortez Masto. According to Jon Ralston, both the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) and Senator Harry Reid expressed their preference for Cortez Masto.

National Democrats and Senator Reid express that Cortez Masto's Latina identity significantly increased her electability. They believed she could "energize the state's critical Hispanic vote and bring in national Latino money" (Ralston, 2011). Indeed, it has been observed that having a Latino candidate on the ballot mobilizes Latinos. Latino candidates also tend to garner higher percentage of the Latino vote than white candidates (Barreto, 2007). As a Latina, Cortez Masto would automatically access this electoral boost. Amidst nascent discussion about this advantage, Berkley announced her intention to run. Keeping with Nevada's tradition, Cortez Masto did not to challenge her in the primary. Still, Reid and the DSCC's notice and advocacy of Cortez Masto helped establish her as the frontrunner for the 2016 Senatorial primary.

Four years later, Senator Harry Reid cleared the field for Cortez Masto to run for his Senate seat. In *Shattered, Cracked, or Firmly Intact?*, Farida Jalalzai argues that most successful female politicians have a male counterpart who helps them break into higher levels of government (2013). For Cortez Masto, Harry Reid served this role. Reid was a longtime friend of Cortez Masto's father, Manny Cortez. He maintained a relationship with Cortez Masto throughout her time in state government and as Nevada Attorney General. On March 27 of 2015, Reid announced his retirement after 30 years in the Senate. In a radio interview with Nevada Public Radio that day, he stated that he had already spoken with the woman he wished to replace him: Catherine Cortez Masto (Naylor, 2015).

Upon announcing their support for a Cortez Masto candidacy, Reid and national Democrats highlighted her electability, which included the advantage of her Latina identity. Reid pledged to provide her with his campaign and fundraising operations (Cillizza, 2015). He spoke heavily about how Cortez Masto had more of a chance of winning than Congresswoman Dina Titus, who technically had seniority in Nevada's Democratic Party. National political organizations also quickly rallied behind Cortez. Before Cortez Masto could even announce her candidacy, EMILY's List endorsed her:

While today is about celebrating the work Sen. Reid has done on behalf of the middle class, we are excited about the opportunity to fill this seat with a strong, Democratic woman leader – which would be a first for Nevada. Catherine Cortez Masto has been a fighter for Nevada women and families. She has a bright future and it's past time to elect the first Latina to the U.S. Senate. (Drusch, 2015)

This endorsement is the first to make reference to the fact that Cortez Masto would be the first Latina in the Senate. Using similar claims, The Latino Victory Fund, progressive Latino-focused political action committee, also endorsed Cortez Masto days after Reid's announcement:

[Cortez Masto] represents the future of the country, she's incredibly brilliant, has a great story, and in a state where, really, Latinos will make the difference in the election. [She is] precisely the type of candidate that Latino Victory Fund is excited about. (Drusch, 2015)

These two organizations are focused on minority representation in federal politics. They value Cortez Masto's potential to be the first Latina Senator higher than non-minority oriented political organizations. Both EMILY's List and The Latino Victory Fund prioritize electability in their endorsement, pointing out the factors that would help Cortez Masto win like her Latina identity. National news sources also focused on Cortez Masto's heritage, explaining Nevada's shifting demographics before speaking about her candidacy (Hamby, 2015; Drusch, 2015).

In light of national pressure, Nevada's Democratic Party abandoned the importance of seniority in its primary process. Days after Reid's endorsement, Cortez Masto announced she was running (CCMfS, 2015a). Titus decided not to run shortly afterward. Cortez Masto used the rest of the primary season to shape her campaign.

Initial Campaign Strategy

National Democrats, rather than Nevada's gaming elite, were selected to manage Cortez Masto's 2016 Senate campaign. Her campaign manager in the race was Scott

Fairchild, the national campaign director for the League of Conservation Voters. Before 2016, Fairchild had never worked in Nevada. Eben DuRoss was hired as Cortez Masto's Finance Director. DuRoss had previously served as a regional fundraiser for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and for Planned Parenthood. And, Fred Yang, a longtime DC-based consultant, was the campaign's main pollster. There were some Nevada politicians hired. The two Deputy Finance Directors were both native to Nevada (Roarty, 2015). However, most of her staff had no prior experience in the state. Cortez Masto's full pivot away from allying with the political network of the gaming elite was evident when Las Vegas mayor and gaming advocate Carolyn Goodman announced she would be endorsing the yet-to-be-selected Republican candidate (Associated Press, 2015).

Until Cortez Masto knew who her opponent would be, her campaign focused on fundraising. The Republicans had a tense primary. Despite the wishes of national Republicans, Governor Brian Sandoval refused to run. The Republicans' second choices, Congressmen Joe Heck and Mark Amodei, were both reticent to run (Terkel, 2015). Cortez Masto capitalized on the empty field by beginning an aggressive fundraising schedule. In the first fundraising quarter (April to July of 2015), Cortez Masto raised \$1.1 million from 6,000 donors. Roughly 36% of this money came from within Nevada (CCMfS, 2015b). Non-Nevadan donors gave a majority of the money, as the campaign gained the attention of national donors through the efforts of the DSCC and EMILY'S List. As non-Nevadans, these donors cared more for the potential for Cortez Masto to influence federal legislation rather than advocate for Nevada.

Cortez Masto's campaign announcement, given just days after Reid's retirement announcement, gives a preview into how she was initially framed as a candidate in the campaign. The announcement focused on her time as Nevada Attorney General. She spoke about her work with law enforcement to stop drug and sex trafficking, to protect consumers, and help battered women and seniors. Notably, she did mention her Latina identity. She notes, "I was proud to be the first Latina elected to serve as Attorney General. To be the first Latina elected to the United States Senate would be an honor, and an incredible opportunity for me to fight for all Nevadans" (Sebelius, 2015). To some, this statement was unexpected. Cortez Masto never publicly trumpeted being the first Latina Nevada Attorney General in either her 2006 or 2010 campaign (Ralston, personal communication, April 17, 2018). In an email sent out to supporters after the speech, there was no mention of her Latina identity (CCMfS, 2015a). From the onset, Cortez Masto's Latina identity and her potential historic place in the Senate would play a moderately important role in her campaign.

Cortez Masto's initial framing can also be seen in her first television advertisement, which introduced her to voters. The advertisement was called 'Big Family' and heavily emphasizes Cortez Masto's family and heritage. It starts by introducing Cortez Masto's immigrant grandparents and father, who is a familiar figure to many Nevadans. Then, her family members elaborate on her accomplishments as Nevada Attorney General and how she helped marginalized population like women, elders, and the poor (Catherine Cortez Masto [CCM], 2016a). As mentioned, voters respond well to female candidates who work with these populations (Fridkin Kahn, 2006). Generally, this ad introduces Cortez Masto as family-oriented to voters, which is a

common technique among women and Latina candidates (Navarro, Hernandez, & Navarro, 2016). Cortez Masto's Latina identity is made clear in this advertisement. This is important as Latinos tend to vote in higher percentages for Latino candidates (Barreto, 2007). While 'Cortez' is a recognizable Hispanic name, Cortez Masto would need to make her Latina identity clear to fully access this advantage.

Opponent's Strategy

Cortez Masto's initial campaign strategy was highly tailored to combatting her Republican opponent, Joe Heck. The 2006 and 2010 Nevada Attorney General races demonstrated that the quality of the opponent highly influences campaign strategy. Unlike Cortez Masto's previous opponents, in 2016, she faced a strong challenger in Congressman Joe Heck. Before entering politics, Heck was a physician and a veteran of the Iraq War. A three-term Congressman, he was a mainstream Republican known for his sponsorship of bills on the military. In each of his Congressional elections in suburban Las Vegas, he won resounding majorities (Everett, 2016).

Heck framed the early race as a referendum on Senator Harry Reid. Reid's high name recognition and longtime association with national Democrats made him an easy target. Heck was able to use Reid's name to fundraise against Cortez Masto. For example, Heck's first five fundraising emails contained subjects like "Replace Harry Reid/Undo his legacy" and "Harry Reid – PAYBACK." In these emails, Cortez Masto was simply called "Harry Reid's handpicked successor," giving no boost to her name recognition. According to Eric Herzik, "I think you'll watch the campaign and the ads and think Harry Reid is running for re-election" (Arkin, 2015).

Cortez Masto also centered the race around Reid by utilizing his network early in her campaign. Through this summer, she held fundraising events with major Reid donors. And, she relied on Reid's connections to other politicians to raise her profile and credibility. For example, in August of 2015, President Obama spoke about clean energy in Las Vegas, as "a retirement gift to the outgoing Reid" (Restuccia, 2015). Afterward, Obama went to a Cortez Masto fundraiser at the home of Las Vegas Sun publisher Brian Greenspun (Roerink, 2015).

Both candidates focused their early campaign efforts on Nevada's northern rural counties, casting them as the critical constituency in the election. Prior to the election, political analysts predicted that, to win Nevada, Republicans would have to win the north by large margins, especially in Washoe County (Damore, 2012c). These were the same counties Cortez Masto performed usually in during her Nevada Attorney General races. Both candidates began their campaigns with significant outreach efforts in northern Nevada. Heck kicked-off his campaign with a tour of rural Nevada (Hagar, 2015). Cortez Masto did several early events in the North. She spoke, for example, at the "First in the West Rural Blue Dinner" in Minden, Nevada in January of 2016 (CCMfS, 2016k). Winning northern Nevada, both campaigns believed, would determine who would win the race

Latino Outreach

In her early campaign, Cortez Masto connected with Nevada Latino political groups, but they were not central to her campaign outreach. Her campaign focused on recruiting Latino leaders in the state to be campaign surrogates. For example, in April of 2015, Cortez Masto's campaign launched a coalition of state leaders called "Nevadans

for Cortez Masto. There was strong representation of Latino leaders in this group, including the publisher of the Spanish-language newspaper *El Mundo* and the Vice-President of the Latino Leadership Council. The announcement of the group prominently features a quotation from one of the state's foremost Latino business leaders, Otto Merida, who served as the CEO of the Las Vegas Latin Chamber of Commerce. He stated:

The Latino community is excited about electing Catherine to be the first Latina ever elected to the United States Senate. Catherine will be a strong advocate for the issues that matter to our community: creating jobs, improving education, and passing comprehensive immigration reform. (CCMfS, 2016d)

Throughout her early campaign, Cortez Masto engaged with Latino political organizations at rates comparable to most candidates in Nevada. In April, she participated in requisite breakfasts with both Hispanics in Politics and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Heck also met with both organizations. This contrasts Cortez Masto with most Latina politicians who built their campaigns through early support from Latino organizations (Montoya et al., 2000).

Cortez Masto's campaign's early outreach to Latinos was comparable to her outreach to other minority groups. Her campaign set an advisory board for most minority groups. Each advisory board was comprised of prominent leaders from that community, who would help Cortez Masto fundraise and mobilize voters. "African Americans for Cortez Masto" was announced on January 25, 2016. It was followed by "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for Cortez Masto" on March 14th, "Women for Cortez

Masto” on March 18th, “Veterans for Cortez Masto” on April 6th, and “Students for Cortez Masto” on April 14th. The last group to have an advisory board was Latinos. “Latinos for Cortez Masto” was announced months later in September. This group may have come later than the rest, but it was the largest, consisting of 200 members. Most other groups had membership around 50.

Cortez Masto’s most prominent form of early engagement with Latinos was an introductory television advertisement in Spanish called ‘*La Familia* [The Family].’ The ad was extremely similar to its English language counterpart, ‘Big Family,’ which began to run just six days earlier. ‘*La Familia*’ uses almost identical imagery to ‘Big Family.’ However, there are tweaks to the script, revealing subtle differences in how Cortez Masto was presented to Spanish-language versus English-language voters. In this advertisement, Cortez Masto’s work as Nevada Attorney General is framed as in service of the Latino community. For example, in English, she is said to have helped pass laws “to keep seniors safe from crooked scams.” In Spanish, she is said to have “protected our grandmothers from scams” (CCM, 2016g). The use of ‘*nuestra* [our]’ comes up frequently in Cortez Masto’s Spanish materials. Cortez Masto’s campaign produced signs that said ‘*Nuestra Senadora* [Our Senator]’ and ‘*Una de Las Nuestras* [One of Ours]’ This use of the word ‘*nuestra*’ emphasizes Cortez Masto’s belonging to the Latino community and suggests that she will advocate especially for Latinos if elected Senator.

Further, ‘*La Familia*’ is more focused on platitudes than issues. When discussing Cortez Masto’s immigrant roots, the advertisement claims, “Catherine Cortez never misses a hug and knows in this life, we don’t walk alone.” This line is repeated at the end of the advertisement. In her book *Campaigning to the New American Electorate*, Marisa

Abrajano states that Spanish-language political advertisements are more likely to feature personal appeals rather than policy appeals (2010). Solidarity Strategies, the firm that produced the advertisement, likely believed this logic and that Latinos would respond more strongly to messages of family unity and community rather than policy appeals.

Cortez Masto's use of Spanish-language advertisements was not unique. Abrajano finds that most candidates in majority Latino districts use Spanish-language ads.

However, she does note that there is a partisan divide— Democrats are more likely than Republicans to employ such advertisements (2010). This proved true of Heck, who did not air ads in Spanish. Cortez Masto's Spanish-language advertisements had a massive positive impact on her campaign. According to Matt Barreto: "The data for the Nevada Senate indicate that Cortez Masto started [placing Spanish-language TV ads] in March 2016 and advertised consistently through November 2016, and this correlated with an increase in her favorability ratings among Latino voters." Further, Latino turnout in the Las Vegas media market, where Spanish-language advertisements were aired, was 72%. Outside of Las Vegas, turnout was around 56% (Pedraza & Wilcox-Archuleta, 2017). This demonstrates that airing Spanish-language advertisements had a direct correlation with Latino turnout.

As the campaign progressed, Cortez Masto's campaign placed increased value on communicating with Spanish-language media. When her campaign released their proposal for the Senate debates, they requested one of the three debates be hosted by a Spanish-language television station. Scott Fairchild, Cortez Masto's campaign manager, accompanied the invitation with the following quotation: "As someone who would be the first Latina Senator in American history, Catherine Cortez Masto strongly believes that

Nevada's Latino community deserves to hear directly from the candidates who hope to represent them in the Senate" (CCMfS, 2016f). Heck countered by proposing the first debate be on an English-language station but get broadcast by Spanish-language platforms. He also proposed two other debates in Reno and Elko, demonstrating his campaign's persistent belief that appealing to rural voters would be key to his victory (Richardson, 2016a). In the end, there was not a debate on a Spanish-language station. Instead, Univision anchor, Tsi-Tsi-Ki Félix, was a moderator in the first debate, and the debate was translated and aired on Spanish-language sources as per Heck's request (Botkin & Davidson, 2016). Still, in September, close to Election Day, Cortez Masto participated in a roundtable with several Hispanic media sources to discuss her campaign (Beltran, 2016). Cortez Masto's outreach to Spanish-language media demonstrates that reaching out to Spanish-language voters was a priority for Cortez Masto's campaign.

Campaign Issues

Initially, Cortez Masto's team structured her campaign around a wide array of issues with no one issue predominating. If there was an emphasis, it was on women's rights. As Nevada Attorney General, Cortez Masto received national attention for passing a law to make sex trafficking a crime at the state level. She used this accomplishment to frame herself as a champion of women's rights in her early campaign. Of the twenty issue-focused press releases published before Hillary Clinton's visit (which I will argue shifted the agenda setting of the campaign), the most frequent topic was women's rights, which was mentioned seven times. Cortez Masto's early television advertisements also focus on women's rights. Advertisements like 'No Way,' 'Proudest,' 'Serious Crisis,' and 'These Streets,' trumpet Cortez Masto's work to fight against sex trafficking (CCM,

2016h; CCM, 2016i; CCM, 2016l; CCM, 2016n). Other early advertisements, like ‘Cookie’ and ‘Karen,’ feature breast cancer survivors speaking out against Heck’s votes to defund Planned Parenthood. Each ends with the phrase: “I hope the women of Nevada remember that when it’s time to vote” (CCM, 2016b; CCM, 2016f). By selecting women’s rights as an important campaign issue, Cortez Masto’s campaign created opportunities for Cortez Masto to discuss her identity as a woman.

There are several reason Cortez Masto’s campaign may have chosen to emphasize women’s rights in her early campaign. At the time, Cortez Masto’s campaign may have felt that winning large margins among women, rather than Latinos or rural voters, would be the key to winning the election. It is also possible that Cortez Masto’s campaign was motivated by the heavy fundraising boost she had received from EMILY’s List and other women’s rights national groups. Lastly, in her book *The Latina Advantage*, Christina Bejarano explains that minority women can use their gender to “‘soften’ their ethnicity by posturing themselves as women, mothers, and community advocates in ways that limit race-based white backlash” (Bejarano, 2013, Kindle Locations 579-580). Cortez Masto’s campaign may have wanted to play up her role as a protector of young women to amplify the perception that she was caring and motherly.

The Presidential Trickle Down

The dramatic presidential race between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump dominated the political atmosphere in 2016, influencing every down ballot race. Senatorial races are highly connected to Presidential races. US Senator is a federal position, so they address the same issues as the President. Campbell and Sumners find that Senate races are heavily influenced by the Presidential coattails, or likelihood

for voters supporting the President to also support the down ballot candidates of the same party (1990). Thus, Senate campaigns often try to coordinate their strategies with their party's Presidential candidate to amplify the coattail effect. Senate races are also susceptible to the priming phenomenon. It suggests that voters will evaluate candidates based on issues that receive high coverage in the media (Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2009). If a Presidential candidate pushes an issue to high importance in the news, voters will value it more. Senate candidates would then increase the importance of that issue in their own campaign.

Immigration and Clinton's Visit

A visit from Hillary Clinton pushed immigration to become the most important issue in Cortez Masto's campaign. Before Hillary's visit, immigration was an issue Cortez Masto campaigned on, but it was not her focus. Only four of the twenty issue-focused press releases published before Clinton's visit were on immigration. Clinton visited the state in February, leading up the Democratic Caucus on the 20th. She had just suffered a substantial loss in New Hampshire to Bernie Sanders. Clinton's campaign blamed the loss on New Hampshire's mostly white voting population (Nagourney, 2016). They felt Nevada's diversity would favor a Clinton victory.

Clinton campaigned heavily towards Latinos in the state with her plan for comprehensive immigration reform. Latinos are not politically monolithic and care about a wide array of issues. Still, studies have shown high levels of support among Latinos for immigration reform. In one survey, 82% of Latinos felt strongly (Bejarano, 2016). Before arriving in Nevada, Hillary Clinton's campaign aired advertisements in the state featuring a young Latina girl speaking about her fear that her parents would be deported. Clinton

hugs the child, flanked by signs that say “*Estoy Contigo* [I’m with You]” (Gass, 2012).

On February 11th, Clinton hosted a rally featuring prominent Nevada and national politicians. Here, Cortez Masto announced her endorsement of Hillary Clinton for President. She stated:

When she launched her candidacy for President, Hillary came to Nevada and immediately focused on comprehensive immigration reform – highlighting an issue that is a centerpiece of her campaign – and an issue that is deeply personal for me. My grandfather emigrated here from Chihuahua, Mexico, and because of his hard work – and the hard work of my parents – my sister and I were the first in our family to graduate from college. Everyone should have that opportunity to succeed – here in Nevada and across the country. (CCMfS, 2016a)

In this endorsement, Cortez Masto directly connects her Latina heritage to her passion for immigration reform. Later in the speech, she lists the issues Clinton will fight for: “comprehensive immigration reform, raising the minimum wage, ensuring women receive equal pay for equal work, and preserving a woman’s access to basic, affordable – and at times lifesaving – health care” (CCMfS, 2016a). This list includes Cortez Masto’s central issues, women’s rights, but it is preceded by immigration. Beginning lists of campaign issues with immigration became standard in Cortez Masto’s subsequent press releases and speeches. Clearly, Cortez Masto’s campaign wanted to amplify the effect of Clinton’s coattails. In early 2016, Clinton was the presumptive favorite to win the Democratic nomination and the presidency. If Cortez Masto’s team thought Clinton

would win in Nevada, they would want to maximize this alignment between their campaigns.

Press releases reveal the extent to which immigration quickly became a central issue in Cortez Masto's campaign. After Clinton's visit, 30 of the 88 issue-focused press releases were on immigration. The next most prominent issues were criminal justice, with thirteen, and women's rights with nine. The prominence of criminal justice is mostly due to a series of advertisements that questioned Cortez Masto's record as Nevada Attorney General (Associated Press, 2016). The abruptness of Cortez Masto's focus on immigration surprised some. Jon Ralston said, "They have tried to make it seem like she's a lifelong supporter of immigration reform and DACA and DAPA, but she really said nothing about it as Attorney General" (Martin, 2016).

Cortez Masto's stance on immigration was vague, allowing her to avoid policy criticisms. Despite immigration's newfound importance in Cortez Masto's campaign, she never released an immigration plan that explained her stances on issues like the DREAM Act or worker visas. Telemundo anchor Tsi-Tsi-Ki Felix stated, "We hear a lot of general statements, such as 'Bring people out of the shadows,' and 'Keep families together,' but not a lot of specifics" (Glick, 2016). Cortez Masto's vagueness is apparent in the list of 'Issues' on the 'About' section of her campaign website. It read:

I support comprehensive immigration reform that secures our borders and allows millions of undocumented immigrants to come out of the shadows to earn a path to citizenship. Congress needs to do its job and pass immigration reform to keep families together. (CCMfS, 2018)

There are goals listed here but no actual proposals. Cortez Masto's television advertisements are also unclear on her stances. In the Spanish-language advertisement '*Riesgo* [Risk],' a voiceover states, "*Una Comunidad Unida* [A United Community]" after a mention of how Heck would deport DREAMer families" (CCM, 2016k). The implication here is that Cortez Masto would not deport immigrant families, but there is no elaboration on how exactly she would help keep families together.

The Trump Effect

The rise of Trump to become the Republican nominee for President in 2016 provided ample opportunities for Cortez Masto to make appeals to Latinos on immigration. One of the focal points of Trump's campaign was his stance that the US immigration system was broken. As he expressed at a rally in Phoenix, "[Immigration] does not serve you the American people. Doesn't serve you" (Trump, 2016). He believed that illegal immigration was undermining all aspects of American society: the economy, national security, and the education system.

Trump targeted Latinos when speaking about his opposition to immigration. At his campaign launch, Trump stated his infamous quotation about Mexican immigrants: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." (Hee Lee, 2015). Many of the immigration policies he singled out as particularly destructive were focused on Mexico. Trump spoke frequently about the United States' border with Mexico. In his opinion, the border was not secure, leading to illegal flows of drugs, guns, and immigrants. Trump also called for the end of both DACA, which provides pathways to citizenship for undocumented youth, and DAPA, which provides pathways to citizenship

for the parents of DACA receipts. Latinos are heavily represented in both programs. Attacks on DACA were seen by Latinos as attacks on their community (Fadel, 2016).

Trump's campaign rhetoric caused him and the Republican Party to have extremely low popularity amongst Latino voters. A poll in September of 2016 by Latino Decisions found that 74% of Latino voters held an unfavorable opinion of Donald Trump, including 67% who had a very unfavorable opinion. In Nevada, 79% of Latinos held an unfavorable opinion. Trump's xenophobic rhetoric and his stances on immigration motivated these Latino's disapproval (America's Voice, 2016). Latino opinions on Trump's immigration stances translated into a generalized distaste for the Republican Party. The same Latino Decisions poll found that 73% of Nevada Latino respondents said that Trump's views on immigrants or immigration made them less likely to vote for Republicans (2016). All Republican running for office in 2016, including Heck, were saddled with responsibility for Trump's rhetoric and policies.

After Trump secured the nomination, the Cortez Masto campaign focused on tying Trump to Heck. Trump clinched the Republican nomination for President on May 3rd of 2016. Shortly after, Heck publicly announced his tentative support for Trump. CNN quoted him as saying, "anybody who wants to restore America's greatness [...] I'm for" (Raju, 2016). Cortez Masto's campaign produced materials that promoted the link between Trump and Heck. In one press release, Trump is simply called "Heck's Candidate for President" (CCMfS, 2016j). When speaking to the press, Cortez Masto's campaign calls Heck "Donald Trump's strongest supporter in Nevada" (Rindels, 2016b). 163 of the 193 press releases produced after Trump won the nomination mention either Trump or Heck. And, 106 of those 163 press releases mention them both. The

advertisements, ‘Duet,’ ‘Speak Out,’ and the Spanish-language ‘*Uña y Mugre* [Inseparable Friends]’ are about the connection. In each advertisement, there is a clip of Heck voicing his support for Trump (CCM, 2016c; CCM, 2016m; CCM, 2016o). Cortez Masto’s campaign hoped to saddle Heck with Trump’s low ratings by making the two seem indistinguishable.

Even when Heck tried to distance himself from Trump, Cortez Masto’s campaign played up the connection. On October 8 of 2016, Heck announced he would no longer be voting for Trump after nine months of support. He stated, “I can no longer look past the pattern of behavior and comments that have been made by Donald Trump” (Schneider, 2016). Cortez Masto’s campaign rejected Heck’s disavowal. Of the 26 press releases published after Heck un-endorsed Trump, 18 mention both Trump and Heck. It certainly did not help that Heck wavered on whether he would vote for Trump. He later stated, “I want to support him, I really do” at a private fundraiser on October 17 (Raju, 2016). Then, he refused to say who he would vote for in the general election (Richardson, 2016b). Amidst this uncertainty, Cortez Masto’s campaign played up Heck’s connection to Trump and called him a “desperate politician” (CCMfS, 2016l).

Cortez Masto’s campaign emphasized the ties between Heck and Trump on immigration to appeal to Latino voters. When Trump won the Republican nomination on May 3rd, Zach Hudson, Cortez Masto’s spokesperson, announced, “Congratulations, [...] Congressman Heck. With Donald Trump becoming your Party’s presumptive nominee, your shared goal of ending DACA and DAPA just became the de facto position of the Republican Party” (CCMfS, 2016h). Later, on July 13, the Cortez Masto campaign released a report highlighting the policy similarities between Heck and Trump.

Immigration is the first section listed, demonstrating its importance (CCMfS, 2016g). Heck voted several times against DACA, a provision that would have allowed children brought to the US illegally at a young age to become naturalized. He also called for the end of birthright citizenship (Everett, 2016). Trump agreed on both issues. Of the 115 press releases that mention Trump, 59 also mention immigration, about 50%. Cortez Masto's campaign thought that Trump's stance on immigration would motivate voters, especially Latinos, to vote against both him and Heck.

Cortez Masto's campaign used Trump's incendiary rhetoric around Latino immigrants to highlight her family background and stance on immigration. Of the 51 press releases that mention Cortez Masto's heritage, 37 of them also discuss immigration. Frequently, Cortez Masto's family story is told following a mention of Trump or Heck's stances on immigration. In fact, 26 of the 51 press releases that mention Cortez Masto's heritage also mention Trump. The strategic use of Cortez Masto's family history is evident in the English-language advertisement 'Grandfather.' Here, Cortez Masto explains that her grandfather emigrated from Chihuahua, Mexico and served in World War II. She explains, "His story isn't unique. America has always been a place where through hard work and perseverance generations have made a better life for themselves and their families. It's what America should still be today" (CCM, 2016d). While speaking, Cortez Masto holds up her grandfather's naturalization certificate, a clear visual cue to voters who are naturalized citizens. Rather than make policy appeals, Cortez Masto focuses on a personal appeal to woo voters.

Cortez Masto articulated that Trump's attacks on immigrant families were attacks on her own family, emphasizing her personal investment in defeating Trump. This was

clearly seen during the scandal around Judge Gonzalo Curiel. In June of 2016, Trump criticized Judge Curiel for ruling against him in a case about Trump University. Trump brought up that Judge Curiel is Mexican when questioning his ability to rule fairly in the case (Ford, 2016). Cortez Masto launched a campaign in protest. She wrote an Op/Ed in Medium highlighting the similarities between her story and Judge Curiel, titled it “I am Judge Gonzalo Curiel.” And, she asked supporters to use the hashtag #JuntosConCortezMasto to unite behind the descendants of immigrants (CCMfS, 2016i). This endeared Cortez Masto to anyone who also felt personally threatened by Trump’s campaign.

Cortez Masto’s campaign used surrogates to substantiate her stance on immigration and rally the Latino community. Surrogates are prominent figures who speak on behalf of a candidate in a campaign rally or advertisement. At events on immigration, Cortez Masto frequently had Latino activists and DACA-recipients speak about their experience with deportation. For example, Astrid Silva, a DREAMer who spoke at the Democratic National Convention, wrote an endorsement of Cortez Masto in Spanish in Univision (Silva, 2016). After DREAMers spoke at her rallies, Cortez Masto always expressed her sympathy and reiterated her personal immigration connection to immigrants. However, she never discusses what pathways DREAMers and their families should utilize to become naturalized. This technique is seen in the television advertisement ‘*Riesgo* [Risk].’ It features several DREAMers discussing their situations (CCM, 2016k). No policy stance is presented and Cortez Masto is not seen. ‘*Riesgo*’ is consistent with research from Connaughton and Jarvis that shows, “Spanish-language ads [...] primarily focus on the Latino community as opposed to the candidate’s policy

positions or personal qualities” (2006). Through surrogates, Cortez Masto was able to take strong stances on immigration without exposing herself to policy criticism. She was also able to use others’ personal appeals to persuade voters.

As the campaign progressed, Cortez Masto shifted to using celebrities as surrogates, signifying the increasing importance of energizing Latino voters. Mexican-American civil rights icon Dolores Huerta helped Cortez Masto launch “Latinos for Cortez Masto” in September of 2016 (CCMfS, 2016d). Then, on October 18th, Cortez Masto hosted a watch party for the presidential debate that included speeches from musician Vicente Fernández, actress Angélica María, and the band Los Tigres Del Norte. Each of these celebrities was born in Mexico and became a naturalized US citizen. They spoke on the importance of having a clean naturalization process in the United States.

Aside from their advocacy for immigration, these celebrity surrogates served to excite Latino voters and legitimate Cortez Masto’s status as a Latina. In her introductory remarks at the watch party, Cortez Masto stated, “I thank them for using their powerful voices to speak out and urge Latinos to make history this election and vote.” Each of the speakers themselves made a direct appeal to the Latino community in Spanish, a skill Cortez Masto lacks. Luis Hernandez, a member of Los Tigres, encouraged Latinos to get their family members and neighbors to the polls to amplify their numbers (CamarenaAnd TheStars, 2016). Cortez Masto’s use of Latino musicians legitimized her belonging to the Latino community. She continuously referred to the musicians as some of her favorites and they called her their “*amiga* [friend].” By using their celebrity within the Latino community to reach traditionally marginalized voters (such as older Latinos), these surrogates expanded Cortez Masto’s reach and appeal.

Immigration was not the only issue Cortez Masto's campaign used to appeal to Latinos repelled by Trump. In a press release about Cinco de Mayo and Mexican-Americans, the issues Cortez Masto lists as central to her campaign are "passing comprehensive immigration reform, increasing funding for education, and raising the minimum wage" (CCMfS, 2016c). Latino-oriented newspapers, such as the Latin Post, chose to highlight Cortez Masto's positions on "education, immigration reform, and job expansion" (Oleaga, 2016). Some of Cortez Masto's meetings with Latino groups were not focused on immigration. For example, at a meeting with Reno Latin Chamber of Commerce, Cortez Masto only spoke on aiding small businesses (CCMfS, 2016i).

Education was also used by Cortez Masto's campaign to appeal to Latinos. To be clear, it was not a major focus. Only eight out of 108 total issue-focused press releases during the campaign were on education. Still, there were two education issues that Cortez Masto used to appeal specifically to Latinos. The first was college affordability. Cortez Masto held a roundtable on April 26, 2016 with four-year and two-year college students. While the event was not Latino-focused, it did receive significant coverage from Latino-oriented news media like Telemundo (2016). The second education issue Cortez Masto's campaign spotlighted was Governor Sandoval's increase in funding for K-12 education in Nevada. Cortez Masto was a major supporter of the initiative and Heck was not. Cortez Masto's campaign ran a television advertisement, titled 'Ideas,' articulating her support for Sandoval's education plan (CCM, 2016e). The press release for the advertisement includes an article from The Latin Post on why Cortez Masto's stance on education is beneficial to Latinos (CCMfS, 2016b). Had Trump or Clinton focused on education, it

can be expected that education may have played a more prominent role in Cortez Masto's campaign.

Cortez Masto's campaign also coded several other campaign issues as Latino-focused. This was mainly done by reframing Cortez Masto's tenure as Nevada Attorney General. For example, '*Rendición de Cuentas* [Accountability Report]' was a Spanish-language advertisement released in April that discusses Cortez Masto's work fighting against banks during the subprime mortgage crisis. It states, "Nevada Latino families were victims of fraud and greed committed by the big banks" (CCM, 2016j). Cortez Masto substantiates this claim on her campaign website with several articles that explain that, across the country, 1.3 million Latino families lost their homes to foreclosure (Smith, 2012). In Nevada, an article on her website stated, 20% percent of Nevada's foreclosures are Latino (ACLU, 2012). Prior to this advertisement, Cortez Masto had not suggested that her work as state Attorney General was on behalf of Latinos specifically. By framing her many campaign issues as implicitly Latino issues, Cortez Masto's campaign was able to energize Latino voters on a wider array of issues.

Trump's Mobilizing Effect

Trump's political rise had a massive mobilizing effect across America. Minority groups, in particular, reacted to Trump by volunteering for campaigns, donating money, and turning out to vote. In Las Vegas, the epicenter of voter mobilization efforts was the Culinary Workers Union. As described previously, the CWU is a powerful political actor in Nevada elections. However, their engagement is not guaranteed. In 2014, they largely did not participate in the election, leading to heavy Democratic losses (Damore, 2015).

The CWU needs a strong reason to dedicate their resources and member's time to a candidate.

Trump's candidacy helped galvanize the Culinary Workers Union into action. To start, the CWU has roughly 31,920 Latinos in its membership of 57,000. It is also 55% female. Latinos and women were both groups targeted by Trump. The heavy presence of Latinas in the organization, including its political director Yvanna Cancela, undoubtedly motivated it into action. Further, the CWU has many undocumented or recently naturalized citizens in its membership, who were targeted by Trump's attacks on DACA, DAPA, and Mexican immigrants. Further, the CWU had a vendetta against Trump. In December of 2015, the 500 workers at his Las Vegas hotel, the Trump International, voted to join the CWU (Lee, 2016). Trump's lawyers fought throughout his presidential campaign to block unionization. For the CWU, fighting Trump and his supporters, like Joe Heck, became a way to elevate their unionization dispute to the national level.

The Culinary Workers Union unleashed a massive voter mobilization campaign in 2016 targeted at mobilizing Latinos. The CWU dedicated 80% of its political fund to assigning 150 members to full-time political work. These members led daily canvassing operations. By the end of the election, they had knocked on over 350,000 doors and talked to over 75,000 voters (Clawson, 2016). The CWU also aided 2,200 of its members in becoming American citizens in 2016, many of whom were Latino. Starting in October, they began a series of demonstrations aimed at rallying support against Trump. This included a roundtable with Trump Hotel workers, a #BoycottTrump rally, a debate watch party, and early voting rallies (Culinary Workers Union, 2016).

The Culinary Workers Union helped unite other political groups during their anti-Trump demonstrations. Most notably, on October 19th of 2016, the Union led an event that built a “wall” of Taco Trucks around the Trump Hotel. On this effort, the Union partnered with Latino/immigrant-focused groups like Latino Victory Project, iAmerica Action, Center of Community Change Action, America’s Voice and Mi Familia Vote. They also collaborated with many unions, civic groups, and political advocacy groups (CWU, 2016). Cortez Masto tweeted her support for the event, which received national attention (Ortiz, 2016). The Culinary Union also spearheaded events centered on voter mobilization like the “Latino Early Vote Fiesta” held on October 22, 2016. Here, the CWU again partnered with Latino/immigrant-focused groups: Immigrant Voters Win, Nevada’s Voice, and Center of Community Change Action (CWU, 2016). The CWU became the centralizing organizer for the anti-Trump movement in Las Vegas. They helped unite Latino/immigrant-focused groups in mobilizing voters for Catherine Cortez Masto, delivering a massive Latino turnout in the election.

Conclusion

On Election Day, Cortez Masto won 521,994 votes to Heck’s 495,079, a three percentage point victory. Yet, she only won Clark County, home to 70% of the state’s population and most of its Latinos. Cortez Masto won a resounding 88% of Nevada’s Latinos, significantly higher than Obama’s 80% in 2008 (Pedraza & Wilcox-Archuleta, 2017). This validated her campaign’s belief that Latinos, rather than rural Northern voters, would decide the election.

Amidst an election night that saw Donald Trump elevated to the highest office in the country, Cortez Masto was declared a “silver lining” (Schmidt, 2016). She was

showered with praise in national and Spanish-language media for becoming the first Latina Senator. Her election was seen as a historical moment (Rindels, 2016a). Media predicted she would be an inspiration for young Latina girls across the country (Huetteman, 2017). Cortez Masto herself spoke about how she hoped her election would inspire women and women of color to run for office (Gonzalez-Ramirez, 2017).

From her electoral debut in 2006 to her high profile race in 2016, Catherine Cortez Masto's public presentation underwent a transformation. Her Latina identity was not celebrated and rarely mentioned in the early part of her career. As Nevada Attorney General, she did not claim her work was done on behalf of the Latino community. However, while running for Senate, Cortez Masto's Latina heritage became the centerpiece of her campaign. It substantiated her stance on immigration and colored the private life she presented to voters. After her victory, it dominated press coverage.

Cortez Masto accentuation of her Latina identity in 2016 was part of a successful effort to court Latino voters. From 2006 to 2010, Nevada underwent a demographic transformation that elevated the importance of Latinos politically. Cortez Masto's campaign staff knew that winning Latinos would enable a victory in the Senate race. Cortez Masto engaged in electoral code switching while appealing to Latinos. She discussed her family background, used Spanish-language appeals, partnered with Latino-focused political organizations, and discussed Latino-coded issues, such as immigration and education.

While Cortez Masto made such appeals from the onset of her Senate campaign, the rise of Trump amplified their importance and efficacy. Immigration rose to be a central issue in the national political discourse. Trump's anti-Mexican and immigration

rhetoric provided Cortez Masto with an ideal opportunity to brandish her own background. And, Latino-focused political groups across the country were motivated into action. Naturally, they paired with the anti-Trump candidate, Cortez Masto.

Cortez Masto's success at using her heritage to persuade and mobilize Latino voters will undoubtedly affect the way campaigns operate moving forward. It demonstrated that highlighting one's minority status can be an asset rather than a disadvantage. This is consistent with the argument put forth by Christina Bejarano in *The Latina Advantage*. Hopefully, Cortez Masto's victory will inspire women and women of color across the country to run for public office. She proves that electorates are keen for accomplished women of color to ascend to the highest offices in the land.

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