

Explaining the Difference in Support for President Trump and Senator Rubio in the 2016 Election in Florida

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EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCE IN SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND SENATOR RUBIO IN THE 2016 ELECTION IN FLORIDA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science
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ABSTRACT

What explains the difference between the county level vote received by President Donald Trump and U.S. Senator Marco Rubio in the 2016 Florida general election? Over the last couple of decades, Florida has earned a reputation for being a highly competitive state that impacts control of the White House and congress. As Florida's electorate becomes increasingly diverse, will the Democratic Party begin to win more often as their usual base grows, or will the Republican Party figure out a way to remain competitive? The 2016 general election presents an opportunity to analyze the structure of support for two Republican candidates who represent different paths for the future of the Republican Party: Trump, who won Florida by just one percent, and seemingly alienated Hispanics and women with his comments and policy proposals; or Rubio, who won by about eight percent, a Cuban-American thought to be a fresh voice for the GOP and a bridge to Hispanic voters. Regression analysis is used to examine support for Trump and Rubio and also the difference in support between the candidates. The results indicate Trump did better in counties with larger percentages of lower educated whites, lower income households, and higher unemployment rate. Rubio performed better than Trump in counties with larger numbers of Cuban and non-Cuban Hispanics, women, and voters not registered with either major party. These results suggest that Democrats may gain ground in Florida over time if the Trump wing of the GOP takes over the party and if current population trends continue.

DEDICATION

For my parents,

Thank you for helping me follow my dreams. I love you.

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Their guidance throughout this project made this work better.

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2016 GENERAL ELECTION IN FLORIDA: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

In 2016 Floridians voted for Republican President Donald Trump and for Republican Senator Marco Rubio. However, while Trump eked out a victory over Hillary Clinton by about 1 percent (49 to 47.8), Rubio won by a more comfortable margin of almost 8 percent over Patrick Murphy (52 to 44.3). What explains these victories and, even more importantly, what explains the difference in their margin of victory? These are important questions given that many political analysts and researchers did not expect Trump to win nationwide or in the Sunshine State. Trump took an unorthodox path to victory in terms of campaign strategy, rhetoric, and issues that seemed to alienate some groups (immigrants, minorities and women) while seeking to mobilize others (working class whites, those strongly opposed to illegal immigration, and people fed up with establishment politics and economics – “the Swamp”). Meanwhile, Rubio engaged in a more orthodox campaign that sought to broaden the appeal of the traditional conservative establishment Republican brand to groups outside the usual base: Hispanics, immigrants, and women among others. Analyzing the 2016 Florida results can provide information on the impact of these strategies and about future political parties and candidates as they seek to position themselves with a changing electorate and win upcoming elections in Florida and nationwide.

Florida is the quintessential battleground state. The state is frequently seen as crucial by campaign strategists, and its reputation as a kingmaker might stem from the historical fact that since the 1964 election, only one candidate managed to win the presidency despite losing in

Florida (Bishin and Klofstad 2009, 571). In addition, the state's population growth has made it more influential over the years, as it has gained more force in the Electoral College (MacManus and Penberthy 2004, 1). The state's population is an accurate representation of the country's overall racial and ethnic composition, which not only makes it easy for campaign strategists to test messages, but it makes elections competitive (MacManus and Penberthy 2004,1). Some authors suggest that in light of Florida's increasingly diverse population, the state might begin to lean Democratic. This environment explains why both campaigns devoted more resources – both in terms of time and money – to Florida than to any other state (Knuckey and Jewett 2018).

In particular, Republican strategists might wonder about the ideal qualities that a candidate should have in order to win Florida's prized electoral votes. The 2016 election gives us an opportunity to compare how two seemingly different types of Republican candidates perform in a battleground state like Florida. In order to understand the factors that explain the difference in support for President Trump and Senator Rubio in the 2016 general election in Florida, this study starts with a literature review that gives a historic overview of recent elections in the state, followed by a review of studies that shed light into which variables might affect vote choice. The study relies on bivariate and multivariate regression to analyze the effect of these variables on the level of support for each candidate, followed by two models that analyze the actual difference in the level of support for the candidates.

Literature review

The 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections in Florida were among the closest in the country; and in 2012 the .09-point difference between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama represented the closest contest in any of the 50 states (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 116).

However, Florida was not always a decisive state. During the earliest years as a state, candidates had a tendency to win by comfortable margins (the average margin was about 14%) but the state had a high rate of “accuracy:” the winner of the election carried the state in 6 out of 7 elections during the “Statehood to Reconstruction” period (Jewett 2017). The state’s most important or influential role during this period came in the election of Rutherford Hayes, in which Florida was one of the decisive states (Jewett 2017). Following Reconstruction, the state became solidly Democratic until 1948, the only exception being the presidential election of 1928 (Jewett 2017). Starting with the 1952 election, Florida sided with the Republican candidate in 9 out of 11 elections with exceptions only when Southern Democrats were at the top of the ballot (Jewett 2017). This period is known as “the Presidential Republican Era” because even though the state was reliably Republican at the presidential level, the Democratic Party was still dominant in other statewide and local races (Jewett 2017). Beginning in 1996, the GOP began being successful at the state level, when Republicans gained control of the State House and held on to their Senate majority (Jewett 2017). In 1998, Jeb Bush became Governor and went on to be the first Republican Governor to win reelection in 2002 (Jewett 2017). During this time the average margin of victory for presidential candidates began to decrease: during the Post-Reconstruction era the mean margin of victory in the state was 38.2%, in the Presidential Republican era, it was 14.6%, and during the Competitive era, a mere 2.6% (Jewett 2017).

At the heart of this increase in competitiveness in the state we find explosive population growth, which has made Florida “one of the most diverse states in the country in terms of race, ethnicity, immigration, religion, and age” (Jewett 2017, 7). Republicans are catching up with Democrats in terms of party registration, with a meager 2.5 point gap separating the parties and

opinion polls show that ideology is evenly split, with 36% self-identifying as conservatives, 35% as moderates, and 23% as liberals (Jewett). Because campaigns perceive Florida to be a highly competitive state, they devote a significant portion of their resources to the state, which creates a self-fulfilling prophecy: voters become more engaged, turnout increases, and the election becomes more competitive (Jewett 2017).

The 2000 presidential election in Florida gained worldwide attention and faced legal challenges, with President Bush emerging victorious with a 537-vote margin (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 117). The closeness of this election was surprising because many observers had forecasted that Bush would easily win Florida and as of late 1999, the Texas Governor enjoyed a 15-point lead over Vice President Gore in the state (Tauber and Hulbray 2002, 149). While Republicans had seemingly gained an advantage over the 1990s – Florida was even described as “the most Republican of the 10 largest states” following the 1998 mid-term elections – Republicans lost ground following the Clinton impeachment and Governor Jeb Bush’s decision to end affirmative action, a choice that alienated many African-Americans in the state (Tauber and Hulbray 2002, 150-151).

The issue that dominated the 2004 election in Florida was terrorism, in a year when morality was the most important issue to voters nationally (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 167). Nevertheless, social issues still contributed greatly to Bush’s success in Florida: 34% of voters were conservative and they overwhelmingly supported the incumbent President (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 168). The 2004 election brought reform to elections in the state, as well as media and campaign attention: both candidates, then-President Bush and Senator John Kerry spent more than \$40 million dollar on advertising in the state, and visited the state repeatedly

(MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 117). Bush went on to win the state by a comfortable margin: 52% compared to Kerry's 47% (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 118). In this election, Democrats attempted to mobilize the "under-performing Democratic base," namely non-Cuban Hispanics and African Americans, while Republicans tried to mobilize a coalition of "seniors, veterans, social conservatives, Hispanics, Jewish groups" (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 156-157). In addition, both campaigns hoped that a highly-contested, open Senate race would increase turnout (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 157). During this campaign season, advertising became much more targeted, and both campaigns clearly segmented the electorate based on several factors and characteristics; the Bush campaign and Republican groups were particularly effective in this effort (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 162-163). In addition, the Bush campaign was more proactive in terms of reaching Hispanic voters in Spanish-language media than the Kerry campaign, something that many Hispanic Democrats were critical of (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 163). The 2004 election marked the first time that Hispanics represented a larger proportion of the Florida electorate than African American voters (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 170).

The 2008 election created a lot of excitement among voters and during the final months was dominated by the economic recession. In the end, Barack Obama's superior fundraising efforts coupled with better organization in the state, allowed him to beat Senator John McCain by a 3-point margin - 51% to McCain's 48% (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 118-120). This outcome seemed almost impossible to Democrats following the 2004 election, when many Democrats in the state felt hopeless about the future; State Senator Skip Campbell, from Broward, declared, "we're dead. Need CPR" (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 179). Others, like

the State Party Chairman, were more optimistic and acknowledged Florida's reputation as a swing state: "the pendulum always swings back" (MacManus, Everett, et al. 2005, 180).

The economy was a central focus of the presidential campaign in 2012, as the state was still facing the aftermath of the great recession, and both campaigns poured a great deal of resources into the state (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 120-121). Almost \$80 million dollars were spent either by the Obama campaign or allied groups, trailing behind Romney's total - \$95 million; in addition, Florida was second only to Ohio in terms of candidate and surrogate visits (Knuckey and Branz 2014). In the end, the election was the closest in the country, and was almost subject to an automatic recount, but President Obama carried the state, and won four more years in the White House (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 120-121).

In 2016, both presidential campaigns made Florida a central element of their strategy: while Florida has been a "luxury" to some Democratic candidates in the past (they could have won the Electoral College without Florida's electors), many people thought that a Clinton victory in Florida would have made it exceedingly hard for Donald Trump to reach 270 electors (Knuckey and Jewett 2018). The general election campaign started immediately following the conventions, with the Clinton campaign trying to inflict so much damage to Donald Trump's image among voters that it would be virtually impossible for him to recover – Clinton efforts began in August, when the Trump campaign had not yet aired a single TV ad (Knuckey and Jewett 2018). The Clinton campaign also devoted significant resources to their "ground game" and opened 14 offices throughout the state; the Trump campaign only opened one office in Sarasota (Knuckey and Jewett 2018). The Trump campaign believed that mass rallies (which many cable news channels carried live to a much broader audience) and Trump's status as a part-

time Floridian would help him win Florida's 29 Electoral College votes (Knuckey and Jewett 2018).

Senate races in Florida have been competitive in the last few years, especially when there have been open seats following the retirement of a Senator, a condition that prompts very qualified candidates to run (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 135). But Senate races in Florida have not always been competitive: before the 1968 election, Democrats had enjoyed a stronghold in the state since the Reconstruction Era. Edward Gurney's election to the U.S. Senate in 1968, therefore, marked the first Republican victory in a Senatorial race in the state since Reconstruction (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 135).

The state's demographic trends might lead us to expect Democratic dominance – in fact, following the 2012 election, some observers suggested that Florida was “emerging as a state that now leans Democratic” due to the changed political environment born out of increased diversity and the increased importance of Hispanic voters (Knuckey and Branz). The state's non-Hispanic White population has declined significantly over the last two decades, from 65% in 2000 to 56% in 2015 (Khim 2015, 50). Moreover, the ideological preferences of younger Cuban Americans have shifted away from the Republican Party, and new Hispanic immigrants like Puerto Ricans tend to lean Democratic (Khim 2015). Obama even carried the Cuban-American vote in 2012, by a 2-point margin (49% to Romney's 47%) (Knuckey and Branz 2014). While Obama's success in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections relied on a "coalition of young and minority voters" reminiscent of the prediction made by Judis and Teixeira in *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, many political analysts, including Judis himself, have noted that demographics are not destiny, while suggesting that Republicans could be successful in light of increasing diversity by

forming a coalition of "middle-income voters across racial groups" (Khimmm 2015, 50, 53). In other words, the economic voter might trump the racial voter.

For years, conventional wisdom has dictated that to win in Florida, it was important to engage Hispanic voters. In 2012, for example, a central element of both presidential campaigns in Florida was to target Hispanic voters (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 121). Following the Democratic National Convention in 2012, then-President Obama's first campaign stop in Florida was in Osceola County, where he aimed to gain the support of Puerto Rican immigrants by highlighting the anti-immigrant stances of many Republicans (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 121). The President highlighted how his proposals to deal with national issues like the economy, education, or health care reform aligned with their interests, and voiced support for proposals such as the DREAM Act (Knuckey and Branz 2014). Republicans also made a point of courting the Puerto Rican vote in the Central Florida area, but chose to highlight the bad economic conditions created by Democrats, because the economy was the most important issue to most Hispanic-Americans according to polls (MacManus, Jewett, et al. 2015, 121). Much of Romney's efforts were hurt by the "tough line" he adopted during the Republican primary, suggesting that undocumented immigrants should self-deport; but during the general election campaign the Republican candidate softened his stance to a certain extent by noting he supported Senator Rubio's plan to grant lawful permanent residency to immigrants who served in the military (Knuckey and Branz 2014). In addition, President Bush's success in the state in the 2004 election can be partly explained because he significantly outspent Kerry in the Tampa, Orlando, and Miami media markets in terms of advertising targeting Hispanic voters (Bishin and Klofstad 2009, 575).

Yet Trump's campaign seems to have ignored these precedents. His rhetoric angered many Hispanics and it led to a surge in registration among members of these groups in the state, something that undoubtedly worried Republicans (Knuckey and Jewett 2018). In addition, Trump decided to run an English-only campaign (Goldmacher 2016).

While Hispanic voters might be increasing in numbers, their political influence may not increase proportionally. First, Hispanic voters are often grouped into a single group, but it is important to remember that individuals within the same ethnic or racial background often disagree (Bishin and Klofstad 2009, 572). While panethnicity – the belief that members of a certain demographic group behave in similar ways when it comes to political behavior – is a common assumption in political analysis, it is not correct to assume that ethnic and racial groups behave in a homogenous manner (Bishin and Klofstad 2009, 572). Hispanics "have roots in more than 19 countries" and many Hispanics identify with the identity of their country of origin (e.g., Colombian-American) rather than with the Hispanic or Latino group (Bishin and Klofstad 2009, 572-573). In addition, ethnicity and race by themselves do not define elections. For example, Puerto Ricans appear to have been crucial to President Bush's success in Florida in the 2004 election (Bishin and Klofstad 2009). Bishin and Klofstad demonstrate that the results of their study can be explained by the mobilization efforts by the Bush campaign targeting recent Puerto Rican immigrants who do not have strong attachments to either party (574-575).

Indeed, research on political behavior has long sustained the idea that social characteristics only affect vote choice indirectly (Flanigan and Zingale 2010). In *The American Voter*, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes presented the concept of the funnel of causality to explain all the different factors that affect vote choice and to what extent they do so (Flanigan

and Zingale 2010, 209-210). At the widest end of this funnel, we would find social characteristics such as "race, gender, social class, and levels of education" which, while affecting political attitudes, have the least direct effect on vote choice. Long-term predispositions, such as partisanship and ideology, do have a more significant influence on vote choice than social characteristics, but these predispositions are hardly the sole factor or the most important influence on vote choice. It is also important to remember that social characteristics affect partisan affiliation and ideology. Opinions about issues, parties, and candidates are affected by both social characteristics and long-term predispositions, and these attitudes are the ones more closely linked to vote choice as they are short-term forces (Flanigan and Zingale 2010). If there are enough short-term forces and voters have access to information about them, these forces will have a more substantial impact on vote choice than partisanship and ideology. Therefore, if a very important situation, issue, or candidate characteristic is present in a given election cycle, a strong partisan might switch her vote to another party (Flanigan and Zingale 2010, 214-216).

Some studies suggest that in 2016, voting was more influenced by attitudes than demographic characteristics (Smith and Hanley 2018, 197). The authors argue that explaining Trump's victory in terms of "the white working class" is erroneous because Trump voters were unlikely to be unemployed or sub-employed: they earn more than the average American, they tend to have little contact with immigrant workers, and only 10% are employed by the manufacturing industry (Smith and Hanley 2018, 197). In addition, the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES) found that Trump voters felt secure economically (Smith and Hanley 2018, 198). While demographic factors – "education, gender, age, marital status, and income" – affected vote choice, attitudes were the most important factor according to the authors (Smith

and Hanley 2018, 198). For example, a one-point increase in a scale of attitudes favorable to a dominant leader made it 16.2% more likely for a voter to support Trump; for a negative prejudice against immigrants the figure was 22%, and against African-Americans 19.4% (Smith and Hanley 2018, 199). The eight attitudes that predict Trump support are “conservative identification; support for domineering leaders; fundamentalism; prejudice against immigrants, African Americans, Muslims, and women; and pessimism about the economy” (Smith and Hanley 2018, 206). These attitudes were more common among older voters, those with lower levels of educational attainment, and male voters (Smith and Hanley 2018, 206).

Political campaigns devote a lot of time and resources to change political views, but political scholars have researched for decades now if campaigns have an effect at all on public opinion and vote choice given, for example, that some forecasting models that rely on economic data alone have been able to accurately predict who could win long before campaigning begins (Flanigan and Zingale 2010, 173, 190-191). However, political operatives still trust in the power of campaigns, perhaps because weak partisans and independents are more likely to be undecided by the time the general campaign starts; this means that around 10 to 15% of voters could potentially be persuaded (Flanigan and Zingale 2010, 191).

Many Americans associate the idea of presidential campaigning with campaign visits, a type of strategy “irresistible” to campaigns and the press corps (Wood 2016, 110). Campaign strategists like campaign visits because the travel itself provides a way to bond with members of the national press, which might in turn soften their coverage and present the candidate in a better light to the public (Wood 2016, 111). In addition, campaign visits provide an opportunity for the candidate to discuss local and state issues and gain local press coverage (Wood 2016, 111). If the

visit is successful, it might inspire attendees to participate in the campaign by contributing their money or their time (Wood 2016, 111). The presidential and vice-presidential candidates made a historic number of visits to Florida in the 2016 presidential cycle: 71 – the belief that Florida was crucial forced campaigns to devote more of their resources to the Sunshine state than any other state (Jewett 2017) (Knuckey and Jewett 2018).

However, do campaign visits truly affect vote choice? In terms of affecting local media coverage, Wood's research found that the effects were very modest, with a slightly more significant impact on print media rather than on television; the net effect was typically “no more than three extra stories following a visit” (Wood 2016, 119). Wood's research, however, did not account for the tone of the coverage – it certainly could have been more positive following the visit (Wood 2016, 119). An interesting finding is that within battleground states, key, pivotal areas were not the most frequently visited, suggesting that the intent of campaigns is to influence national press coverage (Wood 2016, 123). When it comes to the effect of campaign visits on mass attitudes, Wood found “very strong partisan effects on respondents' perceptions of recent candidate visits” (Wood 2016, 120). Partisans were likely to report a visit of their preferred candidate, even if the candidate had not visited (Wood 2016, 121). Wood also found that “within a battleground state, but outside of the specific visited market, coverage of a visit is indistinguishable from generic campaign coverage from across the presidential battleground;” the effects of visits, therefore, are “strongly geographically contained” (Wood 2016, 121, 124). Independent voters were the ones most affected by campaign visits – a visit by Governor Romney, for example, increased an independent voter's probability of voting for the Republican candidate by 5% - and independents were the only group affected by visits for more than two

days (Wood 2016, 123). Other studies have found more significant effects. Heersink and Peterson studied the effects of campaign visits in the 1948 election, and found that Truman's visits improved his election outcomes in the counties where he made appearances – the mean improvement was 3.06 percentage points – which could have affected the result in Ohio (50). The authors also found that Dewey's visits did not significantly improve his performance, and had little effect, perhaps even a negative one (Heersink and Peterson 2017, 50). The authors posit that this difference is due to the quality of the visits, and the different stump styles of each candidate (Heersink and Peterson 2017, 50). Truman was able to connect with the crowds more effectively – he tended to make references to local sports teams, for example, as a way to connect with the locals – while Dewey's style was flat (Heersink and Peterson 2017, 52-53). While the results suggest that campaign visits can have a positive effect, they “do not guarantee improved performance” because candidate quality is an important factor in the effectiveness of campaign visits (Heersink and Peterson 2017, 63).

In addition, other studies have found that in battleground states, such as Florida, where political activity is most intense, campaigning can "activate factors such as race, ideology, partisanship, and presidential approval" (McClurg and Holbrook 2009, 495). While all voters are exposed to campaign messages, voters in battleground states get to experience campaigning directly, without the media or other actors interfering; there is less noise and there is more room for the message to be received as expected by campaign strategists (McClurg and Holbrook 2009, 497). McClurg and Holbrook's study found that campaigning "activates" certain tendencies among voters; for example, the relationship between ideology and vote choice was much stronger in battleground states than in non-competitive states, and the authors noted that the

explanation lies in the fact that campaign messages aim to target and activate certain attitudes voters already have, as previously described by Campbell in 2000 and Gelman and King in 1993 (McClurg and Holbrook 2009, 498-499).

Moreover, McClurg and Holbrook found that economic voting is less common in battleground states, and the authors posit two explanations: because the evaluation of presidential performance is a key determinant of vote choice in battleground states, the economic evaluation is implicit in that evaluation (i.e.: if a voter approves of the economy's direction, it is more likely he will approve of the President's performance overall). A second explanation is a complex relationship between several variables such as partisan affiliation, approval of presidential performance, and economic evaluation.

Despite several high-profile events that shook up the presidential race (Hillary Clinton's collapse during a 9/11 memorial event, the Access Hollywood tape in which Donald Trump made crude comments about women, and James Comey's statement about re-opening the investigation on Clinton's emails, among others) public opinion polls remained relatively stable throughout the race, and the final poll in the state forecasted a small lead for Clinton (Knuckey and Jewett 2018). This might suggest that the campaign did not have a strong effect on vote choice and that the fundamentals, such as the state of the economy, might have played an important role.

McClurg and Holbrook cite Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee's 1954 study on the 1948 presidential election, which gives credence to the idea that campaigns can give more salience to certain issues in voters' minds (501). This point could be relevant because much of Trump's message focused on immigration, "unfair trade deals" as the source of economic malaise; issues

that otherwise, probably would not have been at the center of the election. Just like Truman was able to shift the focus from foreign policy to "class-related issues" Trump might have been able to activate certain sentiments in voters, such as the notion of feeling like an outsider in your own country.

And that activation process might explain Trump's success. Victor Devinatz, notes that the 2016 election marked the first time since the New Deal was passed when members of organized labor did not follow the advice of union leaders and opted to vote for Donald Trump instead of labor-endorsed Hillary Clinton (Devinatz 2017, 233). Trump's message might have been able to overcome not only \$100 million in labor spending but the effort of volunteers from this sector who devoted many hours to make phone calls and other efforts to support Clinton; in the end Clinton's performance was the worst of any Democratic candidate in terms of union member support (Devinatz 2017, 233-234). While the support of the white working class to a candidate who was not endorsed by union leaders may surprise some observers, it is not unprecedented: George Wallace received the support of the white working class in the 1968 presidential election, and both candidates relied on a similar campaign message (Devinatz 2017, 234). What can the Wallace experience teach us about Trump? Wallace earned the support of people with less educational attainment and lower income levels, and his support was higher among "manual workers" (Devinatz 2017, 235). Devinatz explains Clinton's lackluster performance by noting that she did not target union members as workers, but instead chose to focus on racial and ethnic issues, which could have alienated white workers (236). In addition, while labor organizations were able to "make significant inroads in Wallace's backing among union members in 1986," they could not do the same in 2016 because economic conditions have

changed significantly, and the quality of jobs has decreased substantially, and many workers might have placed the blame on trade agreements, a centerpiece of Trump's campaign message (Devinatz 2017, 236).

Inglehart and Norris argue that times of economic instability or insecurity create political conditions in which "authoritarian xenophobic" candidates may be able to succeed, while economic prosperity leads to more willingness to accept foreigners and openness (443). The increasing economic inequality has created an environment that fosters populism in many Western countries, including the United States; and while these parties and candidates are not a new feature of politics in these countries, they have been especially successful in the last few years (Inglehart and Norris 2017, 444-445).

Robert Erikson (1989) notes that political scientists have found significant evidence that suggests that the economy is a major factor that explains vote choice, and that income change, in particular, is a peculiarly good predictor of presidential vote (567). Erikson relied on partial correlation to analyze the relationship between vote choice and income change and found a value of .89 (568). Erikson notes that other factors such as candidate quality and campaigns do have an effect, but economic conditions do have a significant influence on election outcomes (569). In addition, he notes that the economy could also have indirect effects on elections: low-quality candidates might emerge to represent an incumbent President's party if the economy is in poor shape, because more qualified candidates might not be willing to run under those challenging conditions, or voters could evaluate candidates based on the state of the economy instead of their own personal qualities and qualifications (570).

And while some elections, like the 2000 presidential elections, might seem like an outlier (a problem when we are considering few cases), some studies have found that economic fundamentals are nevertheless a significant factor that explains presidential vote choice. While economic growth itself may not explain vote choice, income growth, measured as "percent change in real disposable income per capita in 12 months prior to the election" is a relevant factor in vote choice, with an R squared value of .54 (Bartels and Zaller 2001, 10). The authors examined the effect of other variables on vote choice, and conclude that economic variables can be so dominant in research because they are the ones that politicians cannot easily control: they have a measure of control over other factors, such as messaging and campaign strategy, and note that their "results provide little support for simple-minded economic determinism" (Bartels and Zaller 2001, 17). In a close election, a factor like ideological moderation, for example, can be decisive: the authors found that a candidate who was perceived as ideologically extreme when contrasted with their opponent could lose up to "three percentage points of the popular vote" (Bartels and Zaller 2001, 16).

However, can the rise of populism be explained by economic factors alone? Inglehart and Norris found that cultural factors are more likely to explain the success of populist candidates such as Trump than economic factors (446). The authors also found that economic factors are "weak predictors" of the populist vote, which is why exit polls showed that Clinton received the support of voters who were worried about the economy, while voters who thought that immigration was the most crucial problem facing the country cast their votes for Trump (Inglehart and Norris 2017, 446). That being said, economic factors can make cultural considerations more salient: negative feelings about immigrants are more common during times

of economic uncertainty, something the country is experiencing despite high growth, as real income is declining and inequality is rising (Inglehart and Norris 2017, 447).

Inglehart and Norris argue that economic factors were superseded by a "powerful emotional reaction" and cite Arlie Hochschild's book *Strangers in Their Own Land* to explain what's behind this feeling: the transition to an Artificial Intelligence society has left many less-educated Americans behind, and they feel like some groups are benefiting at their expense; the authors note that Donald Trump's rhetoric provided "emotional support" as he validated their feelings instead of merely dismissing them as "bigots," and provided their concerns with a platform (Inglehart and Norris 2017, 452).

Teigen, Shaw, and McKee examined the "relationship between population density, racial context, and the preferences of black and white voters in the 2008 and 2012 elections" and the result of their analysis provides more evidence of the cultural element involved in voting. The authors found that both density and racial composition of a given area (they studied ZIP codes) affect vote choice, and that white voters, in particular, are susceptible to these factors (Teigen, Shaw and McKee 2017, 2). The authors also found support for the racial threat and contact hypothesis (as described by Sigelman and Welch in 1993): their study showed that in rural areas with a high concentration of minority residents, white voters were less likely to vote for Obama while in contrast, white voters who lived in urban areas with high levels of minority residents were more likely to vote for Obama (Teigen, Shaw and McKee 2017, 4). They explain that white voters in rural areas are less likely to have contact with minority residents because population density is low, whereas in areas with higher population density, it is more likely that people will have contact with others from a wider variety of backgrounds (Teigen, Shaw and McKee 2017,

5). As a result, we might see disproportionate support for Donald Trump in Florida's most rural counties.

The purpose of this thesis is to compare Trump's results in the 2016 presidential election in Florida with those of another Republican candidate who ran in a statewide race: Senator Marco Rubio. There are obviously differences between Presidential and Senatorial elections. It is easier for voters to obtain information in a presidential race, and that makes it easier for short-term forces to become more important than long-term attitudes like partisanship, and as a result, it is possible that some partisans may vote for another party's candidate at the presidential level, but not as likely in a legislative race (Flanigan and Zingale 2010, 233). This is particularly true in U.S. House of Representatives races, in which it is difficult for voters to find information about candidates, in particular about challenges, which forces voters to rely on "shortcuts" such as partisan affiliation; incumbency, therefore, becomes an important factor (Flanigan and Zingale 2010, 233). Senate races, are more visible, and we see more use of TV advertising, for example, which means that a challenger with a good plan and enough money might be able to get enough information to voters and be able to overcome partisanship and name recognition; in fact, incumbency in the Senate can become a problem if the Senator has a controversial voting record (Flanigan and Zingale 2010, 233).

Senate elections tend to be more contested than House races (Jacobson and Carson). Challengers tend to have more experience which makes them stronger candidates; this was true of Marco Rubio's challenger in the general election: Patrick Murphy was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives (Jacobson and Carson 2016, 134). Because challengers have experience and have more chances of winning, they tend to find fundraising easier, too; not to

mention that interest groups are more interested in access to members of the Senate than the House, which means that more money is up for grabs in Senatorial races (Jacobson and Carson 2016, 135). In addition, Senate races receive more media coverage than House races, which means that candidates get access to more free or earned media (Jacobson and Carson 2016, 135). These factors, which make a Senate race more competitive than a House race, also explain why comparing Donald Trump and Marco Rubio's outcomes make sense: while a Senate race may not receive as much attention as a presidential race, voters still have access to a significant amount of information.

Because Senate elections are almost as visible as presidential elections, there is an interesting question regarding the effect that they have on each other. Campbell and Sumners examined whether Senate races are "subject to the influence of presidential coattails" and whether the opposite could be true as well (Campbell and Sumners 1990, 514, 517). The authors examined Senate races held in presidential election years from 1972 to 1988 and found a positive correlation between Senate and Presidential election vote choice (Campbell and Sumners 1990, 517). While the coattail effect is not determinant or the strongest factor in Senate elections, it is a relevant variable, and the authors also found that, although Senate elections can in some cases be as visible as presidential races, there is no "reverse coattail" effect (Campbell and Sumners 1990, 517). The authors also cite Abramowitz, Stewart and other researchers who identified factors that affect Senate election outcomes: some of these only affect Senatorial races, while others affect both Senatorial and Presidential elections (Campbell and Sumners 1990, 514). Party affiliation, ideology, and the "trend of greater support for Republican candidates" during the period they studied were common variables in both types of races (Campbell and Sumners 1990, 515).

Incumbency, along with spending, divisiveness of the election, and prior electoral results in the state were factors that affected the Senate election only (Campbell and Sumners 1990, 515).

While many things have changed since Campbell and Sumners' study was published in 1990 – the authors note, for example, the “diminished importance of partisanship,” a characteristic that does not necessarily apply to the 2016 elections – their results suggest that Trump and Rubio's election results should be similar.

Donald Trump performed well in traditionally Republican areas; Knuckey and Jewett found “an almost perfect relationship” between Trump and Romney's performance in Florida's 67 counties (Pearson's $r = .97$) and that Donald Trump did not win in Democratic enclaves; he only won four “Obama counties:” Indian River, Jefferson, Monroe, and Pinellas. In addition, the authors' regression analysis found that the variables that explained why Trump over performed (or underperformed) relative to Romney were percentage of Hispanic residents in a county, level of educational attainment (“percentage with a college degree”) and median income (Knuckey and Jewett 2018).

Table 1 displays selected Florida exit poll results from 2016 for President Trump and Senator Rubio. Rubio received 5 percent or higher support than Trump from the following groups: Cubans, Non-Cuban Hispanics, high school or less, income under \$50,000, independents, urban voters and from people that thought that the economy was the most important issue, the condition of the economy was good, and whose financial situation was about the same as four years ago. Rubio received substantially less support than Trump from people who thought that illegal immigrants should be deported.

Table 1: Selected Florida 2016 General Election Exit Poll Results

Category	Trump	Rubio	Difference
Female	46%	50%	4%
65 and older	57%	55%	2%
White	64%	62%	2%
Cuban	54%	68%	14%
Non-Cuban Hispanic	26%	39%	13%
High school or less	46%	53%	7%
Whites, no degree	66%	62%	4%
Income under \$50k	42%	51%	9%
Income between \$50k and \$100k	52%	54%	2%
Income greater than \$100k	56%	58%	2%
Republicans	89%	91%	2%
Democrats	8%	12%	4%
Independents	47%	52%	5%
Immigration most important issue	69%	70%	1%
Economy most important issue	46%	51%	5%
Illegal immigrants should be offered legal status	33%	36%	3%
Illegal immigrants should be deported	92%	84%	8%
Immigrants hurt the country	87%	84%	3%
Trade takes away U.S. jobs	70%	66%	4%
Condition of national economy: good	14%	19%	5%
Condition of national economy: poor	67%	70%	3%
Financial situation compared to four years ago: better	20%	24%	4%
Financial situation compared to four years ago: worse	70%	70%	0%
Financial situation compared to four years ago: about the same	51%	57%	6%
Life for the next generation of Americans will be: worse than today	65%	68%	3%
Urban voters	41%	47%	6%
Suburban voters	53%	54%	1%
Rural voters	61%	64%	3%

Source: CNN.

Categories in which the difference in support for Trump and Rubio is equal or greater than five are highlighted.

THEORIES EXPLAINING VOTE CHOICE IN PRESIDENTIAL AND SENATORIAL ELECTIONS

Economic voting: economic voting suggests that the performance of the economy is a major factor that influences vote choice. This theory holds that voters evaluate politicians from an economics-based perspective: they are more likely to support a candidate from the incumbent president's party if the economy is doing well and just as likely to seek change if they believe the economy is performing poorly. In particular, several studies have found income change to be a particularly good predictor of vote choice. In addition, we know that people vote based on their own self-interest: voters will support candidates they perceive will benefit people in their income group. In terms of economic voting, we should see very little difference between Trump and Rubio. Economic considerations cloud all other variables; for example, evaluation of candidate characteristics depends on performance of the economy. Since both Trump and Rubio are members of the Republican Party, the opposition party, they should have performed better in counties with lower income growth, higher unemployment rate, lower median household income, and higher percentage in poverty. If economic voting applies to the 2016 election in Florida, then we'd see little to no difference in the voting patterns of Trump and Rubio despite their different campaign messages: they'd perform as well as any other generic Republican. This theory includes variables like: median household income, real income change, unemployment rate, and percent of population in poverty.

Cultural voting: cultural voting suggests that attitudes and prejudices are the driving force behind vote choice or political behavior. Cultural voting theory holds that voting can be a highly

emotional act, responsive to fears about the future, increased automation in the workforce, and changing cultural norms as a result of immigration patterns. This theory includes variables like: percent of foreign-born population, percent of population that speaks a language other than English at home, and population density. Because Trump's message appealed to emotions about immigration, its effects on American culture, and the changing economy in a way that other candidates – even from his own party – could not, then these variables should be strongly related to his level of support. In addition, because these variables affected Trump's level of support more than Rubio's, these variables should also be strongly related to the difference in support for the Republican candidates.

Demographic voting: Demographic voting theory holds that social characteristics are the major determinant of vote choice. It includes variables like: race, gender, age, and level of educational attainment.

Campaign/political communication: This theory holds that campaigns and events affect vote choice. It includes variables like campaign visits and amount of advertising spending.

HYPOTHESES

Based on previous literature, exit polls, and theory a number of hypotheses are proposed. The first set seeks explanations for the Republican victories in the 2016 presidential race and senate race in Florida. The second set suggests plausible reasons why Rubio won by more than Trump.

Hypotheses that apply to both Trump and Rubio

H1: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and unemployment rate. The higher the unemployment rate, the higher his share of the vote. Voters will often blame candidates from the incumbent President's party for adverse economic conditions, so if the unemployment rate is higher, it's less likely that they'll support Democratic candidates. In addition, Donald Trump made jobs and the economy a central focus of his campaign.

H2: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and real income growth. The larger the increase in income, the more likely it is that voters will perceive that the economy is performing well, thus making them more likely to support the incumbent party.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and median household income. Exit polls found that there was a positive relationship between income level and the likelihood of supporting Trump. Alternatively, it might be the case that if voters are to make evaluations about the state of the economy, they might take into account how much their relatives, neighbors, and other members of their community are earning, and the lower the median household income, the lower their approval of

the performance of the economy will be, making them more likely to vote for candidates of the opposition party.

H4: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of the population in poverty. While poorer people were more likely to support Clinton and Murphy, the number of people living with incomes below the poverty line might affect voters' perception of the economy regardless of their own income level; therefore, the higher the poverty rate, the more likely voters were to support Republican candidates.

H5: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of white voters in a county. Exit polls found that white voters overwhelmingly supported Trump (64%), while a similar number expressed support for Rubio (62%).

H6: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents in a county. Exit polls show that Clinton overwhelmingly won the support of non-Cuban Hispanic voters (62%) and that Murphy had a slight edge over Rubio among voters in this demographic group (50% to Rubio's 48%).

H7: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of Cuban residents in a county. Exit polls found that Cuban voters supported Trump (54%) and Rubio (68%).

H8: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of African-American voters in a county. African-

Americans strongly favored Clinton, with 84% of blacks casting a vote for her, while 8% supported Trump. In the Senate race, African-Americans strongly favored Murphy, with 80% of blacks casting a vote for Murphy, while 17% supported Rubio.

H9: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of female residents in a county. Exit polls found that Democratic candidates received a greater level of support than the Republican candidates (46% of women supported Trump while 50% of women voted for Rubio).

H10: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of residents aged 65 and older. Both Republican candidates received significant support from this demographic group according to exit polls: 57% of these voters supported Trump, and 55% voted for Rubio.

H11: There is positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of whites with a high school diploma or less. Because these voters are the ones most likely to be “left behind” by the changes occurring in the economy, it’s likely that their evaluation of the economy was more negative, making them more likely to seek change.

H12: There is a positive relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the number of Trump visits to a county. The Trump campaign relied on massive rallies as a way to mobilize their base, and Senator Rubio might have benefited from a coattail effect.

H13: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of foreign-born residents in a county. Given the anti-

immigrant rhetoric of the Trump campaign, it's likely that voters in counties with a high proportion of foreign-born residents will vote for Democrats: even if some of these foreign-born residents are not naturalized citizens, contact with immigrants might make voters less responsive to anti-immigration rhetoric.

H14: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and the percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home. As in the previous hypothesis, contact with people from different cultural backgrounds might make voters more likely to support legal immigration, thus making them less likely to support Republican candidates.

H15: There is a negative relationship between the Republican percentage of the vote (President and Senate) and population per square mile. Urban voters are more likely to support Democratic candidates, while suburban and rural voters tend to support Republican candidates.

Hypotheses that apply to the difference between Trump and Rubio¹:

H16: There is a negative relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and county unemployment rate. Since Trump campaigned on pursuing a different course for the economy, and made that a central part of his campaign, counties with high unemployment may show more support for Trump than for Rubio.

H17: There is a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and county economic growth rate. Trump's promise of economic policy change may resonate less with voters who live in counties already experiencing strong economic growth.

¹ As discussed below, this is measured as the Rubio percent of vote minus the Trump percent of vote in a county.

H18: There is a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents in a county. While exit polls indicate neither Republican received majority support from non-Cuban Hispanics who tend to vote Democratic, Trump did significantly worse than Rubio. This may be due to Trump's harsh language concerning illegal immigration from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

H19: There is a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of Cuban residents in a county. Exit polls show that both candidates received a majority of Cuban votes in Florida. However, Rubio polled better than Trump among Floridians who identify as Cuban. Rubio's parents fled Cuban after the Castro takeover and Rubio has deep roots and friendships in the Cuban community in South Florida.

H20: There is a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of female voters in a county. Trump's crude private comments about women became a major national story and thus women on average may vote for Rubio more than they vote for Trump.

H21: There is a negative relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of white residents in a county with less than a high school diploma. Trump's rhetoric targeting low educated whites, left behind by automation and international trade and fearful of illegal immigration, should result in a higher vote for him among these voters compared to Rubio. Exit polls show that Rubio outperformed Trump among all voters without a high school degree but that Trump did better than Rubio among white voters with no degree.

H22: There is a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of residents who make less than \$50,000 a year. Exit polls found a 9-

point difference in support for Trump and Rubio among voters in this category (Rubio 51%, Trump 42%).

H23: There is a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of voters registered with no party affiliation or a minor party. Exit polls found that Rubio won the support of 52% of voters who identified as independents, while Trump obtained the support of 47% of these voters. While identifying as independent is not the same as registering with no party affiliation or supporting a minor party, it's likely that self-identification and registration overlap.

Table 2: Hypotheses Summary

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Relationship
Hypotheses that apply to both Trump and Rubio (Dependent variable: Republican percentage of the vote)		
1	Unemployment rate	Positive
2	Income growth	Negative
3	Median household income	Positive
4	Percentage of the population in poverty	Positive
5	Percentage of white voters	Positive
6	Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	Negative
7	Percentage of Cuban residents	Positive
8	Percentage of African-American voters	Negative
9	Percentage of female residents	Negative
10	Percentage of residents aged 65 and older	Positive
11	Percentage of whites with a less than a High School diploma	Positive
12	Number of Trump visits to a county	Positive
13	Percentage of foreign-born residents in a county	Negative
14	Percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home	Negative
15	Population per square mile	Negative
Hypotheses that apply to the difference between Trump and Rubio (Dependent variable: Rubio support minus Trump support)		
16	County unemployment rate	Negative
17	County income growth	Positive
18	Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	Positive
19	Percentage of Cuban residents	Positive
20	Percentage of female residents	Positive
21	Percentage of residents with a high school diploma or less	Negative
22	Percentage of residents who make less than \$50k	Positive
23	Percentage of voters registered with no party affiliation	Positive

METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

In order to answer the research question, I will use regression analysis for a cross section of data from the 2016 general election in Florida. The unit of analysis will be each of Florida's 67 counties. Information about the following variables will be collected to explain the variables that affected Trump's level of support, Rubio's level of support, and the differences between their respective levels of support.

Dependent Variables

Trump's percentage of the vote – Trump's percentage of the vote represents the proportion of the vote received by Trump in a county, expressed as a percentage of total votes casted in the presidential election. This information can be obtained from the "Election Results" website published by the Florida Department of State.

Rubio's percentage of the vote – Rubio's percentage of the vote represents the proportion of the vote received by Rubio in a county, expressed as a percentage of total votes casted in the Senate election. This information can be obtained from the "Election Results" website published by the Florida Department of State.

Difference in support for Trump and Rubio – this is the net difference between the percentage of the vote received by Trump and Rubio. This value is calculated by subtracting Trump's percentage of the vote from Rubio's percentage of the vote (Rubio's percentage of the vote minus Trump's percentage).

Economic variables:

Unemployment rate – the Bureau of Labor Statistics' definition of unemployment includes people who do not "have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior four weeks, and are

currently available for work.” The unemployment rate “reflects the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force.” This statistic is provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Real income growth – this variable represents the net change of income from one period (year) to the next. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Median household income – the median household income for each county is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Percentage of population in poverty – this variable represents the proportion of the population in a county that earns an amount of money below the poverty line. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Cultural variables:

Percentage of foreign-born population – this variable represents the proportion of population in a county that wasn’t born in the United States. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Percentage of people that speaks a language other than English at home – this variable represents the proportion of population in a county whose primary language isn’t English. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Population density – this variable represents the number of people living in a set area (i.e.: square mile). This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Demographic variables:

Percentage of white voters in a county – this variables represents the proportion of voters whose race is white, and whose ethnicity is not Hispanic. This data is collected by the Division of Elections of the Florida Department of State.

Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents in a county – this variable represents the proportion of residents whose ethnicity is Hispanic, and who are not of Cuban descent. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Percentage of Cuban residents in a county – this variable represents the proportion of residents whose ethnicity is Cuban, and who are descendants of Cuban immigrants or immigrants themselves. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Percentage of African-American voters in a county – this variable represents the proportion of voters whose race is black. This data is collected by the Division of Elections of the Florida Department of State.

Percentage of female residents in a county – this variable represents the proportion of residents in a county who are women. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Percentage of residents aged 65 and older – this variable represents the proportion of residents in a county who are older than 65. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Whites who did not finish high school – this variable represents the level of educational attainment, reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in terms of percentage of white residents in a county, aged 25 and older, who have not earned a high school diploma.

Independents – this variable represents the number of voters who registered with no party affiliation or with a Minor Party. To obtain this value, the number of registered Democrats and Republicans will be subtracted from the value of registered voters in a county.

Campaign variables:

Campaign visits – a campaign visit is defined as public event such as a rally, in which either the presidential or vice presidential candidate participated. The effect of campaign visits tends to be

geographically contained, but nevertheless they can increase the amount of local media coverage. Therefore, a county receives two points for every visit; a county receives one point if a candidate visited its media market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote for President Trump: Bivariate Regressions

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta (R)	R- square	Hypothesized Direction?
Unemployment rate	.458	1.901	.030	.001	Yes
Income growth	-1.446*	.800	-.219	.048	Yes
Median household income (\$1000s)	-.399**	.197	-.243	.059	No
Percentage of residents in poverty	.575*	.306	.227	.037	Yes
Percentage of white voters	.753***	.067	.814	.663	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	-.647***	.152	-.468	.219	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	-1.111***	.345	-.371	.138	No
Percentage of Black voters	-.784***	.156	-.528	.279	Yes
Percentage of female residents	-1.993***	.377	-.548	.300	Yes
Percentage of white residents 65 and older	.488**	.207	.280	.079	Yes
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school diploma	1.743***	.249	.656	.431	Yes
Number of Trump campaign visits	-2.215***	.644	-.392	.154	No
Percentage of foreign-born residents	-1.024***	.156	-.631	.398	Yes
Percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home	-.632***	.107	-.591	.349	Yes
Population density	-.014	.003	-.551	.304	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

Table 3 displays the results of 15 bivariate regressions with independent variables hypothesized to have an effect on the county level variance in the 2016 Florida presidential vote

for Donald Trump. Thirteen independent variables are statistically significant at .10 or better. Of these, ten variables are in the expected direction. Income growth, the percent of non-Cuban Hispanic residents, black voters, female residents, foreign-born residents, and residents who speak another language at home other than English, all have a negative association with the Trump vote as predicted. Conversely poverty rate, the percent of white voters, white residents over age 65, and white residents with less than a high school education have a positive correlation as anticipated. Three statistically significant independent variables have a negative bivariate correlation with the Trump vote in a county even though hypothesized to have a positive effect: median household income, percentage of Cuban residents, and number of Trump campaign visits.

The percent of white voters has the biggest single impact of all these variables explaining about 2/3 of the variance in the county-level vote for the president. A one percent increase in the percent of white voters correlates with a .75 percent increase in a county's vote for Trump. The percent of white residents with less than a high school diploma explains 43 percent of the variance, and a one percent increase in lower educated whites leads to a 1.7 percent increase in the vote for Trump. Conversely, the percent of foreign-born residents in a county has the largest negative impact on the Trump vote, accounting for about 40 percent of the variance, with a one percent increase in foreign-born population associated with a one percent decrease in the Trump vote. Two variables were in the expected direction but did not achieve statistical significance in a bivariate relationship with the vote for Trump: county unemployment rate and population density. We now turn to multivariate regression in order to test relationships in a more comprehensive fashion.

Table 4: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote for President Trump: Full Model with Multi-Collinearity Problems

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta	VIF	Hypothesized Direction?
Constant	34.783	39.050			
Unemployment rate	2.676**	1.029	.174	2.830	Yes
Income growth	-.651	.420	-.098	2.538	Yes
Median household income	.413**	.177	.252	7.308	No
Percentage of residents in poverty	-.042	.291	-.016	8.299	No
Percentage of white voters	.204	.243	.221	43.416	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	-.099	.402	-.072	52.972	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	.610	.388	.204	10.542	Yes
Percentage of African-American voters	-.510**	.230	-.343	15.025	Yes
Percentage of female residents	-.372	.310	-.102	4.568	Yes
Percentage of white residents 65 and older	-.197	.127	-.113	3.344	No
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school education	1.265***	.253	.476	5.718	Yes
Number of Trump visits	-.072	.355	-.013	2.483	No
Percentage of foreign-born residents	-.287	.464	-.177	51.412	Yes
Percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home	-.266	.648	-.248	230.649	Yes
Population density	-.002	.002	-.069	2.382	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

R-Square = .919 Adj. R-Square = .895 F = 38.486*** DW = 2.051

Table 4 displays the results of the multiple regression analysis of all 15 independent variables hypothesized to affect the 2016 county level vote for Trump in Florida. Unfortunately,

this full model suffers from multi-collinearity and thus the results are not reliable and its explanatory value is questionable. There are only 67 cases (counties) but 15 independent variables. The R-Square is quite high at .919 but only four independent variables are statistically significant. Nine of the 15 variables have a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) greater than five, with six of these variables greater than ten. Correlations greater than +/- .6 exist in the following sets of variables:

- Non-Cuban Hispanic Residents with Foreign Born Residents (.74) and with “Other than English at Home” Residents (.90) suggesting these variables are tapping into a very similar underlying concept and that these groups are clustered in similar counties.
- Cuban Residents with Foreign Born Residents (.80) and with “Other than English at Home” Residents (.73) intimating these variables are tapping into a very similar underlying concept and that these groups are clustered in similar counties. The correlation between Cuban and non-Cuban Hispanics is more modest (.41) and consistent with the observation that different Hispanic subgroups tend to spread out in different parts of Florida (Cubans in southern counties, Puerto Ricans in the central region, and Mexicans in the Panhandle).
- Poverty with Median Household Income (-.85) and with Whites with Less than High School Education (.74) indicating the inverse relationship between high poverty and high income counties and the fact that counties with greater numbers of white residents with low education levels are likely to experience higher rates of poverty.

- White Residents with non-Cuban Hispanic (-.60), Black (-.68), Foreign Born (-.67), and “Other than English at Home” Residents (-.72) demonstrating a strong negative relationship between “White” and these other variables and reflecting Florida’s actual settlement patterns where diverse population groups remain somewhat segregated and not spread evenly among its 67 counties.

Based on this statistical information, previous research, and on the theories and hypotheses deemed most critical to exploring the variance in the 2016 Florida county vote for Trump, the “best” multivariate regression model excludes the following five independent variables: Median Household Income, Poverty, and White, Foreign Born, and “Other than English at Home” Residents. Two demographic variables of longstanding interest in Florida politics and considered crucial to past and future elections stay in the model: Cuban and non-Hispanic Cuban residents. While the model excludes the overall percent of white residents, two other subgroups of white voters crucial to the Trump coalition remain: white seniors and whites without a high school diploma. Finally, while the model now excludes two economic variables, it still includes unemployment rate and income growth: both thought to be extremely important to voter decision-making.

Table 5 displays the “best” multiple regression model containing ten independent variables that help to explain variance in the 2016 vote for President Trump in Florida counties. The model explains 89 percent of the variance, and seven out of ten variables are statistically significant. Unlike the full model, this one does not exhibit signs of multi-collinearity. The highest VIF for any variable is just 3.3 and the other nine VIF values are all less than 3.0. Out of 90 possible correlations between the 10 independent variables, only one is greater than .6

(percent female has a -.69 correlation with the percent of whites with less than a high school education indicating that Florida counties with more women have smaller percentages of whites who failed to graduate from high school).

Table 5: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote for President Trump: Best Model

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta	VIF	Hypothesized Direction?
Constant	88.495***	12.694			
Unemployment rate	1.896*	1.043	.124	2.363	Yes
Income growth	-.825**	.347	-.125	1.404	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	-.645***	.096	-.467	2.484	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	-.180	.156	-.060	1.379	No
Percentage of African-American voters	-.811***	.090	-.546	1.870	Yes
Percentage of female residents	-.504**	.252	-.139	2.452	Yes
Percentage of white residents 65 and older	-.209	.128	-.120	2.776	No
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school education	.866***	.213	.326	3.295	Yes
Number of Trump visits	.167	.345	.030	1.905	Yes
Population density	-.004**	.001	-.155	1.799	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

R-Square = .890 Adj. R-Square = .871 F = 45.454*** DW = 1.925

Seven independent variables attain statistical significance and all seven operate in the hypothesized direction. Counties with high unemployment rates and high percentages of white residents with less than a high school diploma were more likely to vote for Trump. Counties with

better income growth, more people per square mile, and higher percentages of non-Cuban Hispanics, blacks, and women gave Trump a lower share of the vote. According to the standardized regression coefficient (Beta) the African-American variable had the largest impact with each one percent increase in a county's Black voters leading to a .81 decrease in the percent of vote for Trump. The percent of non-Cuban Hispanic population in a county had the second highest effect, with a one percent increase resulting in -.65 decrease in vote share for the president. Among variables with a positive statistically significant relationship, a one percent increase in white residents with less than a high school education correlated with a .87 percent increase in support for Trump (the third largest impact of all variables).

Three variables did not achieve statistical significance. Counties with higher percentages of Cuban voters were no more or less likely to cast a ballot for Trump. Although exit polls indicate that the president won a majority of the Cuban vote at the individual level, the coefficient in this county-level model is negative. Similarly, the percent of white seniors in a county did not attain statistical significance. Again, the direction was opposite from expected as exit polls suggested that whites over the age of 65 were more likely to vote for Trump. Finally, the number of Trump visits to a county had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on voting for Trump. This does not mean these campaign rallies were ineffective, but only that their impact was no greater on the host counties than on any other county in the state in terms of vote margin.

Switching gears from the presidential race to the senate race, Table 6 displays the results from a series of 15 bivariate regressions seeking to explain the variance in the 2016 Florida county level vote for Republican Senator Marco Rubio.

Table 6: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote for Senator Rubio: Bivariate Regressions

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta (R)	R-square	Hypothesized Direction?
Unemployment rate	-.327	1.625	-.025	.001	No
Income growth	-1.127	.687	-.199	.040	Yes
Median household income (\$1000s)	-.142	.173	-.101	.010	No
Percentage of residents in poverty	.262	.266	.121	.000	Yes
Percentage of white voters	.607***	.063	.768	.590	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	-.476***	.134	-.403	.163	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	-.786**	.302	-.308	.095	No
Percentage of Black voters	-.711***	.130	-.560	.314	Yes
Percentage of female residents	-1.484***	.339	-.478	.228	Yes
Percentage of white residents 65 and older	.386**	.178	.259	.067	Yes
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school diploma	1.240***	.236	.546	.299	Yes
Number of Trump campaign visits	-1.637***	.563	-.339	.115	No
Percentage of foreign-born residents	-.754***	.144	-.544	.296	Yes
Percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home	-.469***	.097	-.513	.263	Yes
Population density	-.011***	.002	-.504	.254	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

Eleven independent variables are statistically significant at .10 or better. Of these, nine variables are in the expected direction. Population density, the number of campaign visits by President Trump, and the percent of Cuban residents, non-Cuban Hispanic residents, black

voters, female residents, foreign-born residents, and residents who speak another language at home other than English, all have a negative association with the Rubio vote. Counties with large numbers people from groups that generally support the Democratic Party, including blacks, women, and non-Cuban Hispanics, all tended to give Rubio smaller shares of the vote.

Two variables had an impact opposite of their hypothesized direction. Traditional campaign strategy suggests that the number of Trump visits to a county should increase votes for Rubio in those counties. This counterintuitive result may stem from the high number of Trump visits to large urban Democratic counties indicating an association between visits and Democratic vote share rather than campaign visits actually causing a decline in vote share. Of course, it is also possible that there was a backlash on candidates associated with Trump and the Republican Party due to Trump's harsh rhetoric. In addition, Cuban population had a negative impact on the Rubio vote rather than a positive effect. At the individual level, exit polls indicate Cubans did support Rubio whose parents were both born in Cuba. However many Cuban residents live in counties that are more Democratic overall which may be the reason for the negative results at the county level.

Three variables associated with white Floridians had a statistically significant positive effect on the county level vote for Rubio. The overall percentage of white residents in a county had the strongest effect of any single variable tested, explaining nearly 60 percent of the variance in the county level Rubio vote. In addition, the percent of white seniors and less-educated whites also had a statistically significant positive effect on a county's support for Rubio.

Interestingly, none of the economic variables achieved statistical significance in these bivariate regressions. County unemployment rate, income growth, median household income,

and poverty rate seemingly had no meaningful correlation with the Rubio vote. Unemployment rate and household income had coefficient signs opposite of expectations.

An examination of a full model (not displayed here) explaining the Rubio county level vote including all 15 independent variables resulted in the same multi-collinearity problems found in the Trump full model regression. The same nine variables that had high VIF scores in the Trump model had high VIF scores in the Rubio model and the same sets of variables again displayed high levels of correlation with each other. This result is not surprising given the exact same independent variables were entered into the full Rubio model with only the dependent variable different. The same solution applies to both models. The best model explaining the county level Rubio vote excludes the same five variables as before: Median Household Income, Poverty, and White, Foreign Born, and “Other than English at Home” Residents. The remaining ten independent variables comprise the multivariate model displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote for Senator Rubio: Best Model

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta	VIF	Hypothesized Direction?
Constant	86.362***	15.993			
Unemployment rate	1.131	1.315	.086	2.363	Yes
Income growth	-.588	.437	-.104	1.404	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	-.483***	.122	-.409	2.484	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	-.098	.196	-.038	1.379	No
Percentage of African-American voters	-.761***	.113	-.600	1.870	Yes
Percentage of female residents	-.344	.317	-.111	2.452	Yes

Percentage of white residents 65 and older	-.234	.162	-.157	2.776	No
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school education	.536*	.269	.236	3.295	Yes
Number of Trump visits	.100	.434	.021	1.905	Yes
Population density	-.004**	.002	-.191	1.799	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

R-Square = .761 Adj. R-Square = .719 F = 17.879*** DW = 2.086

The multivariate model explains 76 percent of the variance in the 2016 Florida county vote for Senator Rubio. Only one variable has a VIF slightly over 3 and the VIF scores for the other nine independent variables are less than 3.0 indicating that multi-collinearity is not an issue. Four variables achieve statistical significance and all four are in the expected direction. A higher percentage of non-Cuban Hispanics and black voters in a county, and more people per square mile, associates with a lower vote total for Senator Rubio. The African-American variable has the strongest impact (Beta = -.60) and the non-Cuban Hispanic variable has the second largest (Beta = -.41). Conversely, a one percent increase in white residents without a college degree in a county correlates with a .54 increase in votes cast for Senator Rubio. Neither unemployment rate nor economic growth attain statistical significance although both have the predicted direction. The percent of female residents and the number of Trump visits to a county had no statistically significant relationship with the county vote for Rubio although both variables were in the expected direction. Finally, the percent of Cuban residents and older white Floridians also did not achieve statistical significance, and neither of these coefficients operated in the hypothesized direction (both were negative).

Table 8 compares the regression results for the best multivariate models for President Trump and Senator Rubio. Four of the variables affected both Trump and Rubio's respective levels of support similarly (same direction, and showing statistical significance): percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents, percentage of African-American voters, percentage of white residents with less than a high school diploma, and population density. While the percentage of non-Cuban residents had a negative effect on the level of support for both Republican candidates, the effect was more pronounced in Trump's case, with a B value of $-.645$ for Trump and $-.483$ for Rubio. In addition, while the percentage of white residents with less than a high school education had a positive effect on the level of support for both candidates, this positive relationship was stronger with Trump's level of support (B value of $.866$ for Trump compared to a B value of $.536$ for Rubio).

Three variables were not statistically significant in both models, but had the same direction: the percentage of Cuban-American residents, the percentage of white residents aged 65 and older, and the number of Trump visits. Finally, three variables showed statistical significance in one model but not the other. Two economic variables – unemployment rate and income growth – were statistically significant in Trump's model but not in Rubio's (the direction of the relationship was the same in both models). A possible explanation might be that economic matters might be more salient in national races than in congressional races, given that members of Congress have the opportunity to work toward re-election through means like casework in an attempt to build closer relationships with constituents, even in statewide offices like Senator. Finally, the percentage of female residents was statistically significant in Trump's model but not in Rubio's.

Table 8: Comparing Multi-variate Regression Results: The 2016 Florida County Vote for Trump and Rubio

Independent Variable	Trump Model B Values	Rubio Model B Values
Constant	88.495***	86.362***
Unemployment rate	1.896*	1.131
Income growth	-.825**	-.588
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	-.645***	-.483***
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	-.180	-.098
Percentage of African-American voters	-.811***	-.761***
Percentage of female residents	-.504**	-.344
Percentage of white residents 65 and older	-.209	-.234
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school education	.866***	.536*
Number of Trump visits	.167	.100
Population density	-.004**	-.004**
R-Square	.890	.761

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

Table 9 shows the bivariate regression results for the model that seeks to explain the difference between the Rubio and Trump vote. As a reminder, the dependent variable is the Rubio percent in each county minus the Trump percent in each county. Thus, there is a positive number for counties where Rubio gained more votes than Trump and a negative number when Trump outperformed Rubio.

Six of the eight variables are statistically significant at .10 or better. Of these, five variables show the expected direction. The percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic, Cuban-American and female residents, and the percentage of voters registered with no party affiliation or a minor party, have a positive effect on the difference in support between Trump and Rubio, as we hypothesized. Conversely, the percentage of white residents with less than a high school diploma and the percentage of residents who make \$50,000 or less had a negative relationship with the difference in support for the candidates. Counties with a high percentage of households earning less than \$50,000 were more likely to vote for Trump than Rubio, contrary to our hypothesis. Neither of the economic variables achieved statistical significance.

The percentage of white voters with less than a high school diploma has the biggest effect among all of the variables included in the model, as it explains about 45% of the variance in the Florida county vote difference between President Trump and Senator Rubio. For every one-point increase of these residents in a county, Trump would do better than Rubio by .503%. The percentage of voters registered with no party affiliation or with a minor party has the largest positive impact on the difference in support between Trump and Rubio, explaining about 31% of the variance. For every one-point increase in the registration of these types of voters, Rubio would outperform Trump by .314%.

Table 9: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote Difference between President Trump and Senator Rubio: Bivariate Regressions

(Dependent Variable = Rubio percent – Trump percent)

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta (R)	R-square	Hypothesized Direction?
Unemployment Rate	-.785	.527	-.182	.033	Yes
Income Growth	.319	.228	.171	.029	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	.170***	.043	.437	.191	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	.324***	.097	.384	.148	Yes
Percentage of Female Residents	.509***	.110	.497	.247	Yes
Percentage of white residents with less than a high school diploma	-.503***	.069	-.672	.452	Yes
Percentage of households with income less than \$50,000 a year	-.265***	.046	-.580	.336	No
Percentage of voters registering with no party affiliation or minor party	.314***	.058	.559	.312	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

Table 10 displays the multivariate regression results for the model explaining the difference in the Florida 2016 county level vote between Senator Rubio and President Trump. As a reminder, the dependent variable is the Rubio percent in each county minus the Trump percent in each county. Thus, there is a positive number for counties where Rubio gained more votes than Trump and a negative number when Trump outperformed Rubio. The model displays little evidence of multi-collinearity as all VIFs but one are less than 5.0. The only variable above, whites with less than a high school education, has a VIF of just 5.3 and its high correlation (.78)

with household incomes under \$50,000 does not seem to have an adverse statistical effect on the results. The variables in the model explain 69.9% of the variation in the difference in support between Trump and Rubio.

Seven of the eight variables achieved statistical significance: income growth, the percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic, Cuban, and female residents, the percentage of whites with less than a high school education, the percentage of households with less than \$50,000 in income, and the percentage of voters registered with no party affiliation or a minor party. Unemployment did not attain statistical significance but did have a negative sign as expected.

The model showed a positive relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents and this variable had the most impact (the highest unstandardized regression coefficient .591). The fact that Rubio performed better than Trump among members of this voting bloc is not surprising given Trump's comments concerning Hispanic illegal immigrants. Rubio also did better in counties with higher percentages of female residents indicating that Trump's crude comments about women also hurt him among these voters. As predicted, given Rubio's Cuban ethnicity, Rubio also did better in counties with higher percentages of Cuban voters.

The model showed a negative relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of whites with a high school education or less, households making less than \$50,000 and voters not registered with a major party. Trump's rhetoric aimed at mobilizing working class whites helped him with Florida voters at the county level. Trump also did better in counties with higher percentages of households making less than \$50,000. This result, opposite the hypothesized direction based on exit polls, suggests that again Trump's

specific appeal to lower income voters worked better than Rubio’s traditional campaign.

Although it is possible that the county level unit of analysis simply presents a different result than would be found at the individual level of analysis (an ecological fallacy).

In addition, the model showed a negative relationship between the difference in support for Trump and Rubio and the percentage of voters who registered with no party affiliation or with a minor party. This was contrary to our hypothesis and opposite the findings of the exit polls where Rubio did slightly better than Trump among self-identified independents. One possible explanation is that self-identification as independent in an exit poll does not correspond exactly with registration with no party or a minor party. It could also be that Trump’s unorthodox campaign, unusual stance on some issues, and position as an “outsider” candidate attracted more independents than Rubio’s more conventional Republican conservative candidacy.

Table 10: Explaining the 2016 Florida County Vote Difference between President Trump and Senator Rubio: Multivariate Regression

(Dependent Variable = Rubio percent – Trump percent)

Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta	VIF	Hypothesized Direction?
Constant	-1.496	5.921			
Unemployment Rate	-.671	.423	-.155	1.841	Yes
Income Growth	.415***	.148	.223	1.221	Yes
Percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic residents	.230***	.041	.591	2.160	Yes
Percentage of Cuban-American residents	.118*	.069	.141	1.282	Yes
Percentage of Female Residents	.355***	.129	.346	3.059	Yes

Percentage of white residents with less than a high school diploma	-.253**	.124	-.338	5.308	Yes
Percentage of households with income less than \$50,000 a year	-.134**	.060	-.294	3.344	No
Percentage of voters registering with no party affiliation or minor party	-.252	.084	-.448	4.298	Yes

Statistical Significance Level: * = .10 ** = .05 *** = .01

R-Square = .699 Adj. R-Square = .657 F = 16.804*** DW = 2.172

In addition to the multivariate model shown, another version was estimated that included a dummy variable for Miami Dade County in order to see if Rubio’s home county had an independent effect on the results (Rubio outpolled Trump heavily in Miami Dade). However adding the Miami Dade dummy variable resulted in multi-collinearity. The Miami Dade dummy variable was not statistically significant (.612), had a high VIF (7.1) and was highly correlated (.90) with Cuban population percent. It also increased the VIF of the Cuban variable to unacceptably high levels (8.2), and increased the probability value so that Cuban population was no longer statistically significant (.835). The Miami Dade variable does achieve statistical significance in a model where it replaced the Cuban population variable. All of this evidence suggests that the effect of Miami Dade on the election results largely occurred because of the large Cuban population that resides there rather than a simple “hometown” advantage for Rubio (although impossible to know for sure given the small sample size of 67 counties). Thus, multivariate model excludes the Miami Dade dummy variable and retains the Cuban percent of population.

CONCLUSION

Before this thesis, my expectations were that we would find remarkable differences in the structure of support for these two Republican candidates – after all, during the Republican presidential primaries Trump and Rubio showed not only a different style of campaigning but also different visions of the best road ahead for the country. While Rubio often talked about how his parents were immigrants and had to work incredibly hard for their family to thrive, Trump used harsh rhetoric against undocumented immigrants. While Trump promised to bring back jobs to America, Rubio seemed to accept that the structure of the economy was changing and focused on education as a way to enable people to still be able to succeed in the world of globalization and automation. However, the results of this thesis suggest more similarities between Trump and Rubio than we could have predicted.

First, bivariate regression was used to examine the relationship between the level of support for Trump and Rubio respectively and the variables that were detailed in the methodology section. The bivariate regression models for both candidates were quite similar. In most cases, the direction of the relationships was as hypothesized, with the exception of unemployment rate in the Rubio model, which was not statistically significant. In some instances, the effect of some variables was stronger on Trump's model, notably the percent of white residents with less than a high school education or the percent of white residents aged 65 and older. Conversely, some of the variables that had a negative effect on the levels of support of both candidates didn't have as negative an effect on Rubio's model – for example, a one-point increase in the percentage of non-Cuban residents in a county would lead to a decrease of

Trump's level of support by 0.647% compared to a decrease in support for Rubio of 0.476%.

Even then, that difference is not as large as we could have expected.

Both multivariate regression models were affected by multicollinearity. In order to reduce error that might stem from this problem, five independent variables were dropped from Trump's multivariate regression model. Of the remaining 10 independent variables, 7 showed statistical significance and the direction of their relationship with the dependent variable was as hypothesized. The same solution was applied to Rubio's multivariate regression model. Four variables showed statistical significance and in the expected direction. It is interesting to note that the variables in the best model for Trump accounted for 89% of the variance in his level of support, while the same variables accounted for 76.1% of the variance in the level of support for Rubio.

Next, we examined the actual difference in support between Trump and Rubio (understood as Rubio support minus Trump support). In the case of the multivariate regression, seven variables showed statistical significance: income growth, the percentage of non-Cuban Hispanic, Cuban, and female residents, the percentage of whites with less than a high school education, the percentage of households with less than \$50,000 in income, and the percentage of voters registered with no party affiliation or a minor party.

Rubio did better than Trump in counties with larger percentages of non-Cuban, Cuban and female residents. Trump outperformed Rubio in counties with higher percentages of whites without a high school diploma, households making less than \$50,000, and voters registered with no major party affiliation. Trump won Florida and won the presidency but did not enlarge the Republican base in terms of ethnicity or gender. The harsh rhetoric Trump used to describe

illegal immigrants from Latin Americans hurt him with Hispanic voters. Trump's crass description of women did nothing to shrink the gender gap that often appears in partisan elections.

Trump was able to win by enlarging his share of the white vote, particularly working class white. It remains to be seen if other Republican candidates could adopt a strategy like Trump's and be successful. In addition, other factors such as Democratic fatigue after President Obama's 8 years in the White House along with other elements outside of the control of both campaigns could have led to Trump's victory in Florida and in other key states.

The idea that populism could be a successful strategy for Republicans to broaden their metaphorical tent could lead to more and more Republican candidates embracing Trump's agenda. Every Republican candidate in the 2018 mid-terms – in Florida and across the country – has a choice to make regarding the President, a choice that will undoubtedly be made with the goal of re-election in mind. Based on the success or failure of their strategies, the face of the Republican Party may change forever, or we might see a return to normalcy following the 2018 elections. Democrats, too, have a choice. If enough people feel like President Trump speaks for them, relentless attacks might make some voters feel like they're the ones who are being denigrated by the Democratic Party.

Another possibility is that Trump was able to win in spite of his campaign tactics. This could mean that political operatives overestimate the effect of campaigns on election outcomes and forces outside of their control are more likely to affect who wins. On this note, we weren't able to examine many of the campaign variables that might affect the level of support for Trump and Rubio. Further research could compare the advertising patterns of the Trump campaign with

those of previous Republican presidential candidates in Florida, a state that has been similarly competitive for several election cycles now. Advertising data from the 2016 election will become available following the mid-term elections this fall through the Wesleyan Media Project. Given the other limitation of the study – studying individual behavior at the county level – future research might use regression analysis to explore individual level exit poll results, which are not yet available.

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