

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENTS OF ADVERTISING/PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SPANISH, ITALIAN
AND PORTUGUESE

LATINO POLITICAL BLOGGERS: HOW THEY RESPONDED TO THE CAMPAIGN
PLATFORMS OF BARACK OBAMA AND MITT ROMNEY IN THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION

MARIEL ECHEMENDIA
FALL 2013

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Advertising/Public Relations and Spanish
with interdisciplinary honors in Advertising/Public Relations and Spanish

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Michelle Rodino-Colocino
Associate Professor, Media Studies
Thesis Supervisor

John Lipski
Professor, Spanish and Linguistics
Honors Advisor

Susan Strohm
Senior Lecturer, Advertising/Public Relations
Honors Advisor

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College

Abstract

The following analysis explores the confluence of two trends: the growing significance of Latinos in US elections and the contributions of Latino bloggers to United States electoral discourse. Latinos are the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, and as such, constitute an important constituency that can have a significant impact on election results. Blogging has become a popular and informative vehicle for social and political discourse. This paper examines how Latino bloggers reacted to the campaign platforms of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in the 2012 president election, thereby providing some insight into the effectiveness of each campaign in gaining Latino support. Specifically, I analyze Latino blogs published during the influential late campaign weeks between September 1 and November 6, 2012 and attend to how candidates targeted Latino groups and how intended audiences responded. I compare and contrast blogs' support for Obama and Romney and evaluate how well each candidate reached Latinos and Latinas in the United States.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the 2012 presidential election Latinos enjoyed opportunities to register their opinion and impact campaign discourse. Latino's electoral significance is plain to see. With a population of 52 million, Hispanic¹ Americans constitute the largest ethnic minority in the United States, accounting for 16.7% of the nation's population, giving them an important voice in the 2012 presidential elections (U.S Census Bureau). Additionally, although data indicate that many Latinos had clear preferences for either Barack Obama or Mitt Romney, Latinos were far from being a unified voting block; there were more "undecided" voters among Latinos than any other ethnic or racial group in the US. Furthermore, Latinos impacted the 2012 election through their sheer numbers in crucial swing states, such as Colorado, Nevada, Florida and New Mexico (Navarrette 2012). Barack Obama carried these states, an outcome that contributed him amassing 71% of the Latino vote (2012 Presidential General Election Results). However, in order to understand why each candidate received their respective percentage of the Latino vote, it is necessary to analyze the measures each of them took to reach this growing population.

Political blogs became a key source of campaign information for thousands of Latinos during the 2012 elections. This is not surprising since the very phenomenon of blogging was already well established by the 2012 elections. Blogging is now a developed and influential component of social media. Through the blogosphere a broad range of information can be disseminated, opinions put forth, and positions debated. In many respects, the blogosphere has

¹ The term "Hispanic" is used by the US Census and others to refer to a broad range of cultures and peoples that share in common the Spanish language. Whenever the term is specifically used by authors or institutions it will be retained. However, some groups within this broad amalgam object to the term Hispanic because it connotes the forced colonization of North and South America by Spain. Consequently, the term "Latino" will be used by me throughout this paper to refer to Spanish-speaking Americans.

become more important than traditional newspapers in providing a forum for public discourse. This is demonstrated by the fact that many people feel that blogging is a form of political participation with some of them citing specific instances where they have had an effect on politics in their communities (Pole, 2007). Thus, blogs are an important vehicle for politicians and their supporters to spread a candidate's message and an accessible medium to gauge the response and reactions of the target audience.

Latinos may be relatively new to the blogging scene, but they are trying to use their voices online to discuss important political issues and foster political participation. Despite their late entry into the blogosphere, many Latinos are blogging about politics and current events with common topics of interest including immigration and the war in Iraq from a unique Latino perspective. Interestingly, Latinos reflect the same demographic profile as other ethnicities in the blogosphere, with the majority of bloggers being male and educated. Although blogs are meant to give voice to anyone with an Internet connection, one recent study found that Latino bloggers feel disenfranchised such that their presence online is similar to real life, where they struggle to be heard (Hispanic Bloggers in the Blogosphere: Politics and Participation, 2012).

In light of the importance of the Latino voting community and the presence of the blogosphere, the goal of this project is to examine the activity of Latino bloggers in order to provide greater insight into how they reacted to speeches, actions and campaign appearances by each candidate. These blogs are a representation of the needs of the Latino community, which political candidates must address if they want to secure the Latino vote. Specifically, my thesis will explore how, and how well, each candidate impacted the Latino population during the months leading up to the 2012 election.

The political landscape

The Latino community appeared to have ambivalent feelings toward President Obama as the 2012 presidential election approached. In many ways the Latino community felt that Obama had not kept his campaign promises on some of the key issues that were important to them. Given the strength of the Latino vote, Obama had to secure the support of Latinos by making up for his lack of progress on issues since 2008 and moving forward taking action on issues Latinos deemed important in 2012. Despite Obama's success with the Latinos in 2008, where he garnered roughly 67% of the vote, he failed to bring about much of the change he promised on immigration reform during his first term (First-Term Promises, 2013). Instead, Obama deported illegal immigrants in record numbers during his first term. Thus, he needed a way to regain the support of Latinos. Legislation such as the "hardship waiver," which permitted illegal immigrants to remain with their families in the United States while they filed immigration paperwork, worked to demonstrate that Obama remained dedicated to changes in immigration reform policy despite his lack of success in creating comprehensive immigration reform since 2008 (Nicholas 2012). Another controversial step Obama took to try to secure the Latino vote was to issue an executive order temporarily allowing young people to remain in the United States without fear of deportation if they enrolled in college or the military (Preston 2012). These two actions exemplify the platform Obama developed win support among Latinos and the ways in which he contrasted himself against Mitt Romney's efforts.

While both of these actions generated new enthusiasm for Obama among Latinos, Obama also made efforts on a smaller scale to micro-target the population and gather support on a more personal level. Obama, in other words, was on a mission to win Latinos' hearts and minds. He recruited thousands of Spanish-speaking volunteers who went to homes, festivals and churches

in Latino communities in hopes of securing votes. This effort was particularly strong in the swing states of Colorado, Florida and Nevada (Obama Courts Hispanic Vote in Swing States, 2012).

In contrast, Mitt Romney lacked the benefits of the office of the president, and therefore, had to rely more on promises than did his opponent. Romney made the issue of the poor economy the focal point of his campaign platform, which was also the number one issue that likely Latino voters said they cared about according to *Fox News Latino*. In addition to the economy, Romney spoke to Latino audiences, such as the one at the Latino Coalition's annual economic summit, about his goals to improve education for children from low-income families. Education for low-income children is the second most important issue to Latinos according to the polls, a position that is understandable given that Latinos have the highest high school drop out rate of any ethnicity (Fast Facts, 2013).

Romney also had to wrestle with the fact that many in the Latino community felt that the Republican Party was out of touch with Latino concerns or more pointedly, were antagonistic to the concerns of Latinos. In recognition of this gap, when speaking to Latino audiences Romney made it a point to show pictures of influential Latinos and mention the names of many Republican Latinos in the government. At the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Romney focused on telling his Latino audience that the Republican Party is the right party for them and talked about how Latinos have positively impacted the United States.

In addition to making an effort to boost his approval rating among Latinos by gearing his platform toward issues of importance to Latinos and demonstrating a personal connection to them, part of Romney's strategy was also to fault Obama for many of the things that were causing dissatisfaction among Latinos. Romney blamed Obama for the lack of immigration

reform, the economy, and the troubles with education knowing that many Latinos were unhappy with Obama's lack of progress during his first term in office.

Thus, the representation of Latinos is a key aspect of the presidential elections of 2012. The goal of this project is to examine the blogging activity of Latinos in order to provide greater insight into how Latinos are represented in speeches, actions, and campaign appearances by Obama and Romney, the candidates who won the Democratic and Republican nominations, during the 2012 United States presidential elections.

Introduction to the methodology and organization of the following study

In order to determine the means, and the effectiveness of these means, used by the candidates with the Latino population during the months leading up to the 2012 election I will content analyze blogs across different areas of the country, as well as logs that were written by people in the different sub-cultures within the greater Spanish-American population, (for example, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, Central American and South American). Next, I categorized each blog based on whether it favors Obama, Romney, or is candidate neutral. I proceeded by keeping track of the number of times that the blog entry agrees, or disagrees with a statement made, action taken, or legislation proposed by the candidate. I then organized entries by demographic information, such as state and blogger's origin, in order to provide a more in depth analysis of how different sectors of the Latino population viewed each candidate. After I classified the blogs, I used the data to develop a conclusive statement about how Latinos responded to the candidates in the 2012 presidential election.

For the purpose of this paper, blogs will be analyzed as they respond to speeches given by the candidates that target Latino audiences, and actions and decisions made by the candidates that address issues perceived as vital by Latinos. Some of the issues critical to the Latino

population during the 2012 election were immigration policies, the economy and healthcare. Before the Latino Americans' response to each candidate can be analyzed it is necessary to look at how the two platforms were geared toward the Latino population and understand what Barack Obama and Mitt Romney were trying to achieve, respectively.

The above information has given insight to the goals that this paper sets out to achieve through gathering blogs and performing a content analysis on their information. Prior to discussing these insights however, I share a literature review in Chapter 2 that examines some of the existing information about political blogs, Latino discourse and Latino political blogs. This chapter provides an understanding of the extant research that has been conducted on this topic and what is missing in the research so far. Chapter 3 offers a step-by-step description of the methodology used to perform this study. An understanding of the research process is necessary to understand the validity of the findings of the study. The following chapter will include tables and graphs that depict the content categories that will be used and how specific blogs are placed into each category. This section will also discuss the results qualitatively and make some real-world connections between the current study and the 2012 presidential election. There will also be a brief look into the differences among the Latino subcultures in relation to voting patterns and important political issues. Finally, the discussion in Chapter 5 will restate the purposes, methods and findings of this study. It will also introduce the limitations of the research and discusses how future researchers can improve upon the research performed in this study. A supplement (Appendix A) appears after the discussion that includes the names, publication dates, category and keynotes from all of the blogs included in the sample.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Importance of understanding Latino political blogs

Latinos are the fastest growing minority in the United States so it is crucial for the political figures that represent them to understand their community and culture; Latino political blogs provide a vital mechanism for gaining this understanding. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 53 million Latinos in the UNITED STATES in 2012, which was 17% of the overall population (Brown, 2013). It seems reasonable that a group of people that make up almost one fifth of the nation's population will have a strong voice in selecting the political leaders of this country and have significant influence on legislation and policies enacted. Furthermore, the Latinos population accounted for 56% of the national population growth between the years 2000 and 2010 (Passel, 2011), making it even more critical to understand the issues that are important to them. Latino bloggers illuminate these issues when they talk about them in their blogs, thereby helping politicians and lawmakers to learn about and target this rapidly growing segment of the population. With this knowledge in hand politicians can adapt their platforms according to the specific needs and desires of Latinos.

Another reason that it is crucial to understand Latino political blogs is that they represent the many subcultures that make up the Latino population as a whole. One of the most common misconceptions about Latinos is that they are one unified group. Blogs that break down the demographics of Latinos and show how different issues or opinions are more likely to be associated with a specific subculture will provide political figures with a greater understanding of Latinos. Furthermore, if Latinos feel that a candidate, or person, understands their culture they are more inclined to give that person their support.

Research about political blogs

Kevin Wallsten's, *Political Blogs and the Bloggers Who Blog Them: Is the Political Blogosphere and Echochamber?*, avoids the typical format of analyzing "A-list" blogs and examines 25 lesser-known blogs. Since most research has focused on well-known blogs, there is little information about how ordinary people use blogging. Wallsten's goal in analyzing these blogs was to explore the relationship between mainstream media coverage and political blog discussions to determine if the world of blogging is simply an "echo chamber" for the messages of the political elite as seen in the mainstream media, or if it is actually a source for original political ideas that reflect the opinions of ordinary people. Wallsten hypothesized that the relationship between mainstream media coverage and the number of the blog posts would be positive, strong and tight. However, the results showed that "Overall, . . . mainstream media sources are not an entirely dominant influence in the political blogosphere", as there is a great deal of variation depending on the nature of the blogger and the individual blogger. In addition, although there appears to be no significant difference in the relationship between domestic versus foreign policy issues, there are certain issues, domestic (e.g., abortion) and foreign policy-related (e.g., the hunt for Osama bin Laden) that are more likely to be represented in blog posts after they have been covered in a mainstream media story.

In the article, *Exploring the Political Blogosphere: Perceptions of Political Bloggers About Their Sphere*, the question of how bloggers fit into the world of media is at the center of the discussion (Tomaszeski & Proffitt, McClung, 2009). The study used an online questionnaire to determine the demographics of bloggers, what they think about the "blogosphere" and how they feel they relate to the mainstream media. The results revealed that bloggers view themselves as an extension of the mainstream media and they pride themselves on having the same values as

those held by traditional journalists: accuracy, reliability, and independence. Furthermore, the bloggers believe that they influence others and provide accurate information and analysis for their readers (Tomaszeski et al., 2009).

Similar to Wallsten, Tomaszeski et al. (2009) proposes that there may be parallels between what is seen in the mainstream media and what is read in blogs. This idea that bloggers extend from mainstream journalists suggests that the information seen in the blogosphere should be considered credible, as bloggers hold themselves to the same standards as traditional journalists. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that bloggers writing the entries that are the subject of the analyses used in the present study hold their work to an equally high standard and try to ensure that the information they disseminate is accurate and reliable.

Contemporary Latino political discourse

The article, *Latinos Express Growing Confidence In Personal Finances, Nation's Direction* (Lopez & Motel 2012) discusses survey results as part of the *PewResearch, Hispanic Trends Project*. The two surveys they analyzed were the 2012 National Survey of Latinos and the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, which discuss the Latino point of view about economics, personal finance and the general direction of the country. The first survey was used to gauge the economic attitudes and experiences of Hispanics and determined that 51% of Hispanics are pleased with the general direction in which our country is headed. This number is 13% higher than it was for Hispanics in 2011 and 20% higher than for the population as a whole at the same point in time. The second survey was used to report on the unemployment rates for Hispanics, which was 9.9% in the third quarter of 2012 and 11.2% in the third quarter of 2011. These facts and poll percentages relate to the questions raised in the blog analysis, in that they demonstrate the impact that a candidate's campaign platform can have on their reputation with

the Latino population. They also show that Obama's efforts to pay attention to the Latino community, their values, and the issues that were important to them leading up to the election improved his popularity with that population. I would expect these findings to be evident in the analysis of the blog sample.

The Pew Research Center and *USA Today* collaborated to conduct a survey measuring the attitudes of Americans about major political issues just prior to the March 1 Sequester deadline. The corresponding article, *If No Deal is Struck, Four-in-Ten Say Let the Sequester Happen*, pays specific attention to Latinos' views of the major issues and their opinions about how Obama has handled them. One of the key points of the article is that Obama's approval rate among Latinos skyrocketed from 48% at the end of 2011 to 75% at the end of 2012. The issue that seemed to cause the huge turn around for Latino citizens was Obama's immigration policy. By the end of 2012, Latino approval of Obama's immigration policy was 68%, up from just 27% at the end of 2011.

This collaborative study holds interest for the current study, because it shows that something dramatic occurred in Obama's handling of immigration policy in 2012 to cause Latino support to significantly increase. One would expect that shift to be apparent in the content of the blogs sampled as well. Specifically, the blogs should reveal that Obama's proposed immigration policy more accurately reflects the values of the Latino population values than it had in the past. If this theme is reflected in the blogs, then there will be support for the idea that the blogs are representative of the Latino population.

A look at Latino political blogs

In her study, *Hispanic Bloggers in the Blogosphere: Politics and Participation*, by Antoinette Pole, observed that the traditional blogger is typically a white man, but then discussed the purpose of Hispanic political bloggers within the broader blogging community. Pole analyzed whether or not blogging causes people to become more engaged in political activity. Pole conducted 20 in-depth interviews with Hispanic bloggers who focus on politics. She was particularly interested in what the bloggers discussed and whether (a) they felt left out because of their ethnicity or (b) experienced any prejudice from other bloggers. The results revealed that these Hispanic political bloggers do attempt to get their readers to participate in various forms of political activity. The study also revealed that the bloggers did not report feeling any discrimination or exclusion from other bloggers (Pole, 2007).

Pole's research is relevant because it demonstrates that political bloggers can impact their readers beyond just making them think about politics. If bloggers are able to get their audience to become more politically active then that audience will be moving from thought to action. Therefore, bloggers could potentially have a role in shaping how people vote or engage in politics. The study also mirrors the discussion that the Latino influence is growing along with their population, because it recognizes that their discussions and opinions deserve to be studied even though they do not fit the traditional profile of a mainstream blogger.

Gaining an understanding of this prior research that exists about Latino political blogs, it is possible to formulate four critical questions that this study hopes to address. First, *How did Latino political bloggers respond to Obama and Romney's campaign platforms?* Second, *Why did each blogger respond in the way they did?* Third, *Is there a connection between the Latino blogging opinions in this study and the voter results of the 2012 presidential election?* Finally,

Are there differences among the subcultures of the Latino population in terms of support for Obama and Romney? The results and discussions will be discussed toward the end of the paper, but first, it is necessary to understand the procedure that will be used to gather and analyze the data.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Data Collection

The first step in this study involved deciding on the parameters for selecting blogs both in terms of the nature of the blogs and the time frame during which they occurred.

In order to obtain a manageable sample size of blogs, I selected the two-month time frame ranging from September 1 – November 5, 2012. I selected this time frame because the two month period just prior to the United States presidential election tends to be the most active time of the campaign; as an election draws closer, candidates seek to sway the vote of undecided citizens with last minute campaign strategies based on the demographics of undecided voters. According to a poll released by Latino Decisions, on October 1, 2012, about 8% of Latino voters were still undecided about the candidate for whom they would cast their vote. Thus, it was hypothesized that this time frame would yield the most informative blogs reflecting the most up-to-date opinions of Latino bloggers just prior to the election.

To find blogs with appropriate information, I entered the keywords “Latino, political, and blogs” into the Google search engine. The keywords were varied slightly in order to ensure that all blogs with any relevant information came up in the search. “Hispanic” was substituted for “Latino” on some occasions and “bloggers” was substituted for “blogs.” Often times the most successful way to find related blogs was to click on the links that bloggers listed under their “blogroll” section. These are blogs that the blogger believes their audience will also find appealing as well.

Because the sample data contained blogs within a certain date range the results from the keyword search had to be further filtered in order to comply with the inclusion criteria. The

results were reduced so that only items categorized as “blogs” occurred between September 1, 2012 and November 5, 2012. Blog entries that were written on Election Day or later were not included in the date range because the purpose of the study was to analyze how the Latino blogging population felt about the candidates based on their campaign platform, rather than how they voted.

I selected only one blog entry per blog because if multiple entries from the same author were included then that author’s opinion would be counted multiple times and thereby over represent his or her influence.

Organizing the Data

After collecting 30 blog entries I analyzed and placed them into categories that reflected the bloggers’ opinions of each candidate’s platform. To accomplish this, I conducted a content analysis on each entry selected by looking for any statements that conveyed the blogger’s opinion regarding either or both candidates. According to one scholar, content analysis refers to “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context.” The data used for content analysis are any text to which meaning can be attributed and the mass media is one of the common sources for which this is used (Krippendorff 1989).

Once analyzed, I summarized the content of each entry in a table organized by the bloggers’ stance. There were seven categories that were chosen in order to ensure that no blog entry was double counted or would fit into two categories. The selection of the categories was also made in hopes of including as many of the bloggers opinions as possible. Initially, there were only five categories: “Favor Obama,” “Favor Romney,” “Oppose Obama,” “Oppose Romney” and “Does Not Favor/Oppose Either Candidate.” However, only having categories for favoring or opposing one of the candidates ignored the fact that a blogger could favor one

candidate and oppose the other. The categories were then revised as follows: “Favor Obama and Oppose Romney,” “Favor Romney and Oppose Obama,” “Favor Obama Only,” “Favor Romney Only,” “Oppose Obama Only,” “Oppose Romney Only,” and “Does Not Favor/Oppose Either Candidate.” This final category includes those bloggers that had either a neutral stance on the presidential election or had not yet decided which candidate was most representative of their needs as a voter.

Each row of the table contained the name of the blog entry, the date it was written, its view of the candidates’ platforms toward Latinos, and key points reflected in the entry’s content. Keeping all of the blog entries in one succinct table allowed for a more efficient analysis of the data. I then used the information in the table to conduct a detailed analysis of how the Latino blogging community viewed the efforts of Obama and Romney to secure the Latino vote. I will discuss the political leanings reflected in the blogs in addition to the patterns reflected in the key comments in order to shed light on why the Latino bloggers felt the way they did about each candidate.

Throughout the process of data collection, I was surprised not to find more entries on this topic within the specific date range. In addition, many of the blogs that did come up did not express an opinion about the candidates’ actions or statements, but simply reported the poll results for that given week or pondered whether or not the Latino vote would play an important role in the election outcome. With that said, the methods described above produced 30 blogs that became the data were analyzed herein.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

This chapter will begin with a quantitative analysis of the blog entries and their relationship to the actual election results. Next, I will examine the reasons underlying the bloggers' responses to each candidate with a particular focus on describing the rationale underlying bloggers' opinions in an effort to understand why bloggers responded the way that they did to each candidate. A discussion of why Latino bloggers favored Obama will be addressed first, followed by a discussion of how Romney failed to capitalize on the Latino vote. Finally, the results of this study will be compared to the results of the 2012 presidential election and the voting patterns of the different Latino subcultures.

Interpreting the data

As demonstrated in Table 1 below, the content analysis from the blogs reveals that the majority of the Latino blogging community was not overwhelmingly supportive of either candidate's appeal to the Latino population. The most striking result is that the plurality of blogs fell into the "oppose Romney" category at 23.3%. The next largest grouping of blogs favors Obama and opposes Romney (20%). Adding the two categories together, we see that 43.3% of blogs opposed Romney. The opposition that the Latino bloggers felt toward Romney is noteworthy. It is not simply that Latino bloggers supported Obama, but they actively opposed Romney. One possible explanation for the antipathy towards Romney is that his campaign ads often went "negative," attacking Obama personally, not just his policies. Nevertheless, all was not well for Obama. While Obama's support rating at 33.3% was higher than Romney's 9.9% favorability rating, having only one third of the blogs in support of Obama's platform does not suggest a strong performance. In short, the data suggest that Latino bloggers were not overly

pleased with either candidate’s platform but Romney’s negative campaigning potentially led Latino bloggers to strongly oppose him.

The three categories that favor Obama or oppose Romney totaled 56.6% and provided a sharp contrast to the three categories that favor Romney or oppose Obama, which received the three lowest percentages with a total of only 16.6%. This pattern lends further support to the observation that there were far more Latinos who opposed Romney than support him.

There are, however, two important categories that revealed lack of support for either candidate. The first is the category representing bloggers that opposed both candidates, which interestingly had a higher percentage than all of the categories supporting Romney/opposing Obama, but a lower percentage than any of the categories supporting Obama/opposing Romney. Finally, the “Does not favor/oppose either candidate” category contained 16.6% of the blogs. Unlike the other categories, bloggers were reporting factual information rather than providing their own views or reactions to the candidate’s position.

Table 1

Categorization of Blogs Based on Content Analysis

	Favor Obama	Favor Romney	Oppose Obama	Oppose Romney	Favor Obama, oppose Romney	Favor Romney, oppose Obama	Oppose both candidates	Does not favor/oppose either candidate
Number of blogs	4	1	2	7	6	2	3	5
Percentage of blogs	13.3	3.3	6.6	23.3	20	6.6	10	16.6

Overall, the results of the content analysis were consistent with the expectation that the Latino blogging population favored Obama more than it favored Romney and opposed Romney more than it opposed Obama. It was surprising, however, that the percentage of blogs favoring Obama was not higher since he received 67% of the Latino vote in 2008 and he has historically been exceptionally popular with the Latino population.

Why did Latinos favor President Obama? Results from the qualitative analysis

Table 2, seen below, quantifies bloggers' support for Obama.

Table 2

Total Support and Opposition for Obama

	Favor Obama	Oppose Obama
Number of blogs	10	4
Percentage of blogs	33.3	13.2

The results also suggest two significant reasons that Latino bloggers preferred Obama; bloggers felt as though he truly cared about the Latino population and he directly addressed the issues when answering questions in debates and at forums. Bloggers stated that they felt Obama was successful in convincing voters that he was making an effort to put an end to the deportation of young Latinos and create a pathway to citizenship for Latinos seeking an education in the United States. Demonstrating that he was trying to combat deportation and create legislation that would benefit Latinos appeared to help him win over skeptical voters. In December 2011, 59%

of Latinos disapproved of the way that the Obama administration was handling the deportation of unauthorized immigrants (Lopez 2011). In contrast, the executive order Obama enacted in June of 2012, which gave “temporary legal status to many young illegal immigrants” was well received by many Latinos. One such Latino was 28-year-old Miguel Mendez, from Honduras, who stated that he, “likes what he’s hearing from Democrats on immigration student-loan rates” (Katz, 2012).

Another reason that Latinos supported Obama was that his views on education would benefit the Latino community. The blog, “*Obama and Romney differ on Bilingual Education*” described Obama’s view of education, saying that he supports “transitional bilingual education” because children will be better equipped to learn English if they are proficient in their native language. The article also quotes Obama as saying, in 2008, “Instead of worrying about whether immigrants can learn English -- they’ll learn English -- you need to make sure your child can speak Spanish.” This statement resonates with the view that it is crucial for Latinos to learn Spanish because children will not be able to successfully translate and learn material in English if they do not understand basic educational skills in their native language. According to this view, children who have solid literacy skills in their native language are in the best position to learn a second language (Shoebottom, 1996). In 2010, only 62.2% of Latinos 25 and older had a high school education (Newsroom, 2012). While this article fell into the “neutral” category it explained nicely why many Latinos gravitated toward Obama’s platform on education. Furthermore, Obama endorsed more federal funding for education, which is appealing to Latinos since 23.2% fall below the poverty line and would not otherwise be able to afford an education for their family (Bishaw, Fontenot, & Macartney, 2013).

Similarly, not all Latinos can afford health care, a problem that also accounts for their support of Obama's healthcare plans. Obama promised to create quality, affordable health care for all Americans. The Affordable Healthcare Act or "Obama Care," has been a controversial initiative because it requires almost all Americans to purchase health care. This is a crucial issue for many Latinos since 31.1% are currently without health care (Health of Hispanic or Latino Population, 2013). This viewpoint was represented in a *Dominican Today* blog that quoted a resident of New Jersey with Dominican roots as saying, "Dominicans' values very much align with President Obama's. Our community has challenges with getting access to quality education, [and] affordable health care."

Although Latinos agreed with Obama on the above issues, some Latinos opposed the incumbent. Those who opposed Obama mainly cited his "failures" during his first term as the reasons for not supporting him. Blogger Bob Quasius strongly disagreed with Obama's foreign policy work during his first term, especially his appointment of Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State. On the other hand, one blogger opposed Obama because he felt he was only trying to "smear" Romney rather than promote his (Obama's) policies (Soopermexican, 2012).

Where did Romney go wrong?

As shown in Table 3, almost one out of every 2 Latino blogs included in this study opposed his viewpoints.

Table 3

Total Support and Opposition for Romney

	Favor Romney	Oppose Romney
Number of blogs	3	13
Percentage of blogs	9.9	43.3

While Latinos tended to disagree with Mitt Romney when it came to education and health care, their foremost complaint was that he was insincere toward the Latino people throughout his campaign. Many felt that what he said on the campaign trail was inconsistent with what he actually said and did throughout his political career. Consequently, Latino bloggers viewed Romney as disingenuous.

Romney's Latino-friendly makeover was one component of the disingenuous face he quite literally painted on. Numerous blogs mentioned that Mitt Romney wore bronzer when he spoke to Latinos in an attempt to be more relatable. One blogger commented that, "No one had the heart to inform Sr. Mitt that Latinos aren't orange" (Ortiz, 2012). Some bloggers even called the self-tanning episode patronizing to Latinos. Although, none of the blogs in the sample solely focused on Romney's attempt to be more Latino, many included one or two lines along these lines because it was something that seemed to bother the bloggers, or because they felt it was noteworthy. This may be a small act, but it was perceived by Latinos to reflect a lack of understanding of their culture on Romney's part.

In addition to his appearance, Romney made a few behind-the-scenes blunders that haunted him for the rest of the campaign and his “wishy-washy” remarks did not sit well with Latinos. The first came during a closed-door fundraiser where Romney said that 47% of Americans don’t pay taxes and view themselves as victims. The common sentiment in the blogs was that this statement demonstrated insensitivity to the lower income citizens in the United States who work hard, but struggle to get by. Another one of Romney’s comments that garnered significant attention was his “joke” that he would have a better chance of winning the election if his dad had been born of Mexican parents. These comments led the Latino population to believe that Romney did not care about them at all and was only interested in their votes. Blogger Glenn Llopis argued that Romney used the fact that his father was born in Mexico to try to gain instant loyalty rather than making an effort to understand the needs of the Latino citizens.

With all of the insensitive and ill-conceived behaviors and comments aside, Latinos had trouble getting on board with Romney’s tough stance on immigration, health care, and education. Romney has historically campaigned against bilingual education, which is off putting in and of itself to Latinos, but he also believes that there should be less federal funding to support education. On the immigration front, Romney’s self-deportation policy caught the attention of Latinos because it displays ignorance toward the type of economic situation that faces many Latinos. One blog shows this misunderstanding by joking, “Unlike Mitt, most Latino youth don’t have the opportunity to self-deport to Paris when the going gets tough” (Ortiz, 2012). Once again, this topic represents the disconnect that Latinos felt between themselves and Romney. Finally, universal health care was something Romney campaigned against in the period leading up to the election, which rubbed many Latinos the wrong way. As stated before, almost one out of every four Latinos in the United States lives in poverty and Latinos are constantly seeking an

affordable way to obtain quality health care. Furthermore, 60% of Latinos believe that it is the government’s job to make sure that citizens have access to health care and Latinos are more likely to get diseases such as AIDS and diabetes (Puente, 2012).

Blog results vs. 2012 presidential election results

Table 4

2012 Presidential Election Exit Polls

	Total	Obama	Romney
Male	47%	45%	52%
Female	53%	55%	44%
White	72%	39%	59%
African American	13%	93%	6%
Hispanic	10%	71%	27%
Asian	3%	73%	26%
18-29	19%	60%	37%
30-44	27%	52%	45%
45-64	38%	47%	51%
65 and Older	16%	44%	56%
Democrat	38%	92%	7%
Republican	32%	6%	93%
Independent	29%	45%	50%

It is important to remember that this analysis of the blog sample cannot determine how well the blog content predicted the election results, but it points to the effectiveness of each candidate’s campaign in reaching Latino audiences. Yet, comparing the blog analysis results to the presidential election results is an interesting way to see how well the sample represented the voters’ decisions on Election Day. Caution must be exercised as this comparison is made because there were only two main choices to be made during the election while there were eight categories of opinions presented in this study.

As seen in tables 2 and 3, when you consider the two categories that favored each candidate, 33.3% of bloggers in the sample favored Barack Obama, while 9.9% of them favored

Mitt Romney. In contrast, 71% of Latinos voted for Obama on Election Day and 27% voted for Romney. The Obama to Romney ratio was 3.3:1 based on the blogs when compared to 2.6:1 on Election Day. While these proportions are not extremely close, they both show that Obama earned more support from the Latino population than Romney. One possible reason for the difference observed between the percentages that favored each candidate in the blogs and the percentages that voted for each candidate could be that 16.6% of the blogs did not favor or oppose either candidate; however, if these individuals did actually vote, the proportion voting for each candidate may not have mirrored the proportions who did express a clear preference in the blogs. A second possible reason for the difference is that the blogging sample may not be precisely representative of the entire Latino voting population, but only of those Latinos who blog.

Overall, the opinions represented in the sample of blogs were consistent with the results of the election, which suggests that the candidate with the platform that most appealed to the Latino population translated to the candidate who earned the overwhelming majority of the Latino vote. The percentage of Latinos who voted for Obama increased from 67% in 2008 to 71% in 2012. Although many factors likely contributed to this increase, one of them is the effort Obama put forth to connect with the Latino population and show them that their needs and concerns matter.

The variety among the Latino American subcultures

A common misconception in the United States is that Latino Americans are a unified, homogenous group. On the contrary, the Latino American population is made up of people from many different countries, cultures, beliefs, and socio-economic levels. These differences are just

as evident in their voting patterns as they are in everyday life, as voting behavior varies greatly from subculture to subculture.

Before we can understand their voting patterns, it is important to introduce key aspects of Latino subcultures that are important in the United States. As of 2011, individuals of Latino origin in the United States consisted of 65% Mexican, 9.4% Puerto Rican, 3.8% Salvadoran, 3.6% Cuban, 3.0% Dominican and 2.3% Guatemalan. The remaining population is made up of a combination of different Central and South American, and of Latino cultures. The majority of Latino Americans live in Texas, California, and Florida; however Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York each have Latino populations that exceed 1 million people.

In the 2012 election, Dominicans were Obama's most avid supporters with 78% of them saying they planned on voting for Obama just four days before the election. At the same point in time, 69% of Latinos nationwide said they planned on voting for Obama so this was a substantial difference. Aside from aligning with his political views, there are many bi-racial and multi-racial Dominicans, so this subgroup may have identified more heavily with Obama's mixed-race background (Llorente, 2012).

On the other hand, Cubans, who have traditionally voted Republican, are just now making a shift toward the Democrats. However, the percent of Cubans that voted for Obama in 2012 was still far lower than the total percent of Latinos that voted for Obama in 2012. According to the Latino Decisions, 44% of Cuban-American voters chose Obama (Forio, 2012), which appears to be a significant difference than the 71% of Latinos nationally that voted for Obama. Another interesting note about the Cuban-American population is that there seems to be a difference between those who were born in Cuba and those who were born in the United States.

Cuban-born, Cuban-Americans favored Romney by a vote of 55% - 45%, while United States-born, Cuban-Americans favored Obama with a vote of 60% - 40% (Kephart, 2012).

Dominicans and Cuban-Americans are not the only subgroups that make up the Latino culture and it is important to recognize voting patterns from as many subgroups as possible. Below is a table modified from an interactive website by Latino Decisions that shows a breakdown of voting patterns for different subgroups.

Table 5

2012 Presidential Election Results as a Function of Latino Subculture

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Mexican	78	20
Puerto Rican	83	14
Cuban	44	54
Dominican	96	4
Central American	76	22
South American	79	19

This table shows that although the Latino subgroups (with the exception of Cubans) overwhelmingly supported Obama in the 2012 election, there is a great deal of variability based on the voters' backgrounds. The Dominican population almost unanimously voted for Obama, while roughly three out of four Mexicans, Central Americans and South Americans voted for Obama. Puerto Ricans fell somewhere in between these two categories and the majority of Cubans voted for Mitt Romney.

Chapter 5

Discussion & Conclusion

This study set out to determine how the Latino blogging community responded to the campaign platforms of each of the 2012 presidential candidates. In particular, speeches, forums and statements that were given to, or pertained to, the Latino community were discussed and analyzed. Furthermore, in order to better understand the reactions of the Latino bloggers, this study explored why each blogger responded to the candidates as they did, using evidence from each blog entry.

The Latino political blog sample revealed that the bloggers supported Obama more strongly than they supported Romney, by almost a 3 to 1 ratio. The most common reason reported in the blogs for supporting Obama was that he was perceived to be more genuine in his communication with the Latino community. Latino bloggers felt that he paid attention to the issues that were important to them and took steps to address the complaints that they had about his first three years in office. For example, Obama enacted legislation in 2012 that would allow more young immigrants a path to residency if they were trying to get an education in the United States.

On the other hand, Mitt Romney's unsuccessful attempt to court the Latino vote could be attributed in part to his perceived insincerity. Romney was caught making several comments that were insensitive to the Latino community in addition to trying to appeal to them with awkward miscalculations such as wearing self-tanning bronzer. Many of the blogs mentioned these blunders to explain their rationale for opposing Romney. For these bloggers, Romney did not understand the Latino population, and was making little effort to do so. Additionally, the bloggers felt that Romney distorted his record to make it seem more supportive of Latinos'

public opinion. This caused Romney to appear “wishy-washy” from the perspective of the Latino bloggers as he tried to earn votes in 2012.

In addition to analyzing the content of the blogs themselves, I compared the results of this study to the results of the 2012 presidential election. This allowed me to explore how well Latino political blogging activity correlated with how the Latino community actually voted. The results of this study mirrored the results on Election Day. Support for Obama was even stronger, however, on Election Day than suggested in the blogs. Although this study did not analyze the differences in voting patterns among the Latino subcultures, I conducted a brief comparison between the percentages found in this study and the percentages of different subcultures that voted for Obama. I looked at Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Cubans, Central Americans and South Americans and found that, with the exception of Cubans, more than 75% of each of these populations voted for Obama (Forio, 2012). Dominicans displayed the strongest support with 96% of the United States Dominicans voting for Obama. The Latino subculture that provided the least support was Cubans, with Obama winning just 44% of their vote. This discrepancy between Cubans and other Latino subcultures is not surprising because Cubans have traditionally supported the Republican Party and ideals to a greater extent than other Latino subcultures. This occurs for various reasons, the most notable being the strong anti-Castro sentiment among Cubans coupled with Republican support for the United States embargo against Cuba. Furthermore, Cubans are the wealthiest group within the Latino population (Cuban Americans, 2012) and are therefore more likely to support a party that represents the interests of big business.

In conclusion, this study revealed that the Latino blogging population demonstrated stronger support for President Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential election than Senator Mitt

Romney. The reasons for this viewpoint stemmed largely from the degree to which the Latino community felt each candidate was relatable and sincere.

While this study was designed to examine Latino attitudes of the 2012 presidential candidates through bloggers, one of the limitations is that it focused only on one type of media. If the study had researched the same questions and looked at multiple forms of media the results would potentially be more applicable to the Latino population as a whole.

Another limitation of this study is the number and nature of the blogs obtained through my search; it was difficult to find a large sample of Latino political blogs that provided an in depth understanding of the opinions of Latino citizens. Many of the blogs simply reported on how each candidate was doing in the polls among the Latino voters. While this information would have been helpful if the study aimed to predict election results, the focus was on reactions to the campaign platforms themselves.

Conducting the search over a longer time span could have helped address the issue of limited relevant blogs. The blogs would not have been as timely, however they would have provided pertinent information over a broader campaign context. For future researchers conducting similar studies, I would suggest expanding the sample time period to at least four months given that blogs, and Latino blogs specifically, are still more limited than information from the mainstream media.

The final limitation of this study is that the Latino blogging community analyzed here may not be representative of the Latino population as a whole. In order to determine whether or not this sample is, or is not, representative, one would need to analyze the demographics of Latino bloggers and compare them to the general demographics of Latinos in the United States. Additionally, it would be helpful to determine if the percentage of Democrats and Republicans in

the Latino blogosphere are proportional to the number of Democrats and Republicans in the Latino population. Although there were some limitations to this study, the results mirrored the results of the actual election suggesting that the sentiments of the Latino blogging community were representative of the opinions of the Latino population.

As stated in the introduction, conducting this study was important because of the growing influence that Latinos have in the United States. It is projected that one in every three people in the United States will be of Latino descent by 2060 (Newsroom 2012). A population of this size will be important in determining the results of future elections so it is crucial to understand their culture and how to earn their trust. Furthermore, the presence of blogging and social media will only continue to grow, which means paying attention to these types of sources is just as significant, if not more significant, than analyzing opinions through traditional print sources.

One of the most interesting and useful things I learned is that relatability and sincerity are imperative to earning the Latino vote, a concept related to being “sympatico.” The fact that Romney seemed insincere turned Latinos off very quickly. Through this blog study I also came to understand that politicians will say almost anything if it will earn them a few more votes. Therefore, Latinos, or any population being targeted by a politician, should pay attention not only to campaign platforms, but to each candidate’s past record, as well. This will ensure voters determine whether any given statement is genuine or simply a ploy to win votes.

Future researchers would benefit from using a larger time frame in order to obtain a larger sample of blogs. To take the research one step further, studies should go beyond blogging and analyze all types of news media when evaluating how people respond to political campaigns. Finally, it would be extremely interesting to conduct a similar study that focused more specifically on each Latino subculture. This study briefly explored how the different subcultures

can vary greatly in their opinions of a candidate and what they are looking for in political action.

A study that explored this further would help enlighten candidates, as well as the public, as to how different these populations truly are.

Appendix A

Title	Category	Date	Comments
1. Obama and Romney Are Ignoring Hispanic Voters	Oppose both candidates	10/4/12	<p>Deliver messages that marginalize Hispanics – ignore economic impact of Hispanics as voters, business owners, consumers, leaders rather than focusing so heavily on immigration reform.</p> <p>Obama tries to sell them on his policies rather than talking about their key issues such as Hispanic educational achievement</p> <p>Romney uses family history (father being born in Mexico, fluent son) to try to win votes.</p> <p>Don't value Hispanics; want to buy their vote (e.g., Obama naming home of Cesar Chavez as a national monument)</p>
2. Of Latino Voters, Dominicans lean toward Obama the most	Favor Obama	11/2/12	<p>Cares more about Latinos</p> <p>Better for economy and foreign policy.</p>
3. Is Obama Taking the Latino Vote for Granted? And should we vote for him Anyway?	Favor Obama	10/29/12	<p>Obama thinks that the Republicans have done such a poor job relating to Latinos that he can earn their vote without much effort</p> <p>Actions from his first presidency, deporting people, may hurt him in 2012</p>
4. Barack is back and he kicked Mad Mitt's rear end over and over!!!	Favor Obama, Oppose Romney		<p>Romney lies, didn't answer questions with facts</p> <p>Obama spoke about the issues</p>
5. Mitt Romney courts Latino vote by using skin bronzer – even his tan isn't sincere	Oppose Romney	9/20/12	<p>Attacked Obama's platform without providing ideas of his own</p> <p>Didn't answer questions</p> <p>Wishy-washy</p>

Title	Category	Date	Comments
6. ¿Para Justicia y Libertad!	Oppose Romney	10/21/12	Romney doesn't care about the Latino people
7. Courting Votes and Taking Notes: The Delicate Act of Appealing to Latino Voters	Favor Obama, Oppose Romney	10/15/12	Obama is genuine when he tries to reach out to Latinos Romney patronizes the Latino population
8. Election 2012: Obama or Romney, who will help Latinos thrive in the economy?	Does not Favor/Oppose either candidate	10/10/12	Obama wants to keep taxes the same Romney wants to reduce taxes and Medicaid
9. Rick Sanchez: A Two-Part Plan for Winning Undecided Latinos	Favor Romney	9/26/12	Involvement of prominent Latinos
10. More on Romney and Latinos	Oppose Romney	9/26/12	Romney only focusing on immigration reform. Not how it will actually affect Latinos
11. Obama Widens Lead Among Hispanic Voters	Oppose both candidates		Obama is at his largest lead in polls but voters are unsure if either candidate will improve conditions, especially cooperation among congress
12. Comentarios from Maria: "Romney's Empty 'Binders Full of Women'"	Favor Obama, Oppose Romney	10/18/12	Romney doesn't understand women and connect with voters. He has not been concerned with diversity in his career Obama is passionate and willing to commit to improving issues for women, as well as many others. Answered questions as a "person" not just a politician
13. Mitt Romney Gives a Major Speech on Foreign Policy	Favor Romney, Oppose Obama	10/8/12	Obama failed in foreign policy – should not have chosen Hillary Clinton for Secretary of State Romney's speech shows he has a good grasp on foreign policy
14. Political Speleothem	Favor Obama, Oppose Romney	10/19/12	Obama was "alive in debate" Romney lied. Republicans doing whatever they can to get ahead

Title	Category	Date	Comments
15. Desperate Obama Team Peddles 5 Month Old Story as Campaign Crumbles	Oppose Obama	10/15/12	Obama desperate for ways to smear Romney and recycling old stories
16. Obama Romney Campaigns Still Fighting it Out For Growing Latino Voter Bloc	Does not Favor/Oppose either candidate	10/29/12	Latinos being bombarded by information, especially in swing states Testimonials from people from both sides – positive on Obama for immigration reform
17. The Year of the Latino Political Celebrity, starring Eva Longoria	Favor Obama	10/5/12	Eva Longoria co-chairwoman for Obama reelection campaign Equal opportunity
18. Obama’s Base and Politics of Disappointment	Does not Favor/Oppose either candidate	10/29/12	Romney doing well with under 30 Obama doing well with minorities and women
19. Mitt Romney's Popularity With Latino Voters Declines As Campaign Pursues Aggressive Outreach	Oppose Romney	9/25/12	Romney’s numbers among Latinos dropping Failed to advertise to Latinos
20. Presidential Campaign opens Latino Celebrity feud	Favor Romney, Oppose Obama	10/20/12	Mitt Romney has a plan to create 12 million jobs, reduce the debt, and reform education. Obama tried and couldn’t
21. OPINION: 2012 Presidential Election “Got Personal” at DNC	Favor Obama	9/12/12	Democrats focusing on “average American” Making it personal by relating to Americans
22. Mitt Romney’s Popularity with Latino Voters Declines as Campaign Pursues Aggressive Outreach	Oppose Romney	9/25/12	Romney’s numbers among Latinos dropping Fail to advertise to Latinos
23. Mitt Romney’s Percentages: 1, 47, or 100?	Oppose Romney	9/21/12	Romney’s 47% comment shows that he is part of the 1% that is unable to relate to the struggles of average Americans.

Title	Category	Date	Comments
24. Why Latinos Support Obama's health care plan	Favor Obama	10/28/12	Latinos support Obama for his health care plan because 1/3 Latinos don't have health care
25. LBC 2012 Day 5 – Romney or Obama	Favor Obama, Oppose Romney	9/23/12	Believes that Obama has done the best he could, after coming into the presidency after Bush. Likes that Obama supports universal healthcare and gay marriage. Does not agree with Romney's policies. Romney is against universal health care and Romney's "47%" comment was a big turn off.
26. Politics 2012: Obama's Debate Performance May Not Translate to Votes	Does not Favor/Oppose either candidate	10/17/12	Romney handled economics better Obama handled social issues better
27. Missing Out: Political Ads, Spanish-Language TV and the Latino Vote	Oppose both candidates	11/5/12	Neither Obama or Romney understand the Hispanic community and failed to see the importance of using Latino print publications to appeal to Latinos
28. As Mitt Romney Woos Latinos, Obama's Team Derides A 'Makeover'	Favor Obama, Oppose Romney	9/17/12	Romney tried to "woo" voters but is still very far behind in the polls, which was not helped by the video of him saying if his father were Mexican he'd have a better chance of winning. Obama continues to try to remind Latinos of the steps he is taking to stop deporting young people.
29. Obama and Romney differ on bilingual education	Does not Favor/Oppose either candidate	10/25/12	Obama believes education should receive federal funding Romney believes it is up to the state and individual to fund education
30. Who is more Latino? Barack Obama	Oppose Romney	9/20/12	Romney is trying to "be Latino" in all the wrong ways. For example, with his appearance and repeating the fact that his father was born in Mexico.

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Marisel A. Echemendia

1929 Lauck St.
State College, PA 16803
(814) 880-1913
mae5166@psu.edu

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Honors College December 2013
Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations with honors in Media Studies
Bachelor of Arts with honors in Spanish
Minor in Business and the Liberal Arts

Universitat de les Illes Balears, Palma de Mallorca, Spain Summer 2013
Courses in Spanish for Business and Tourism and Palma in
the Mediterranean

HONORS

Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant Summer 2013
Dean's List - All semesters
Bunton-Waller Scholarship - All semesters

EXPERIENCE

Nittany Gymnastics Academy, Inc. State College, PA
Girls Team Assistant Coach March 2010 - present

- Coach (15-20 hours per week) children between the ages of 6-12 in competitive gymnastics
- Gained experience in organizing lesson plans and structuring practices
- Worked in a variety of areas within the company including competitive coach, class instructor, birthday party instructor and administrative work

Penn State Men's Hockey State College, PA
Volunteer Intern Summer 2012

- Promoted the Penn State Men's Hockey Team through the planning and execution of events
- Performed research to explore strategies to promote the hockey team and increase fan involvement during games

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Hollister Co., In-store representative State College, PA
2009-2010

ACTIVITIES

Penn State Gymnastics Club, Competitive member State College, PA
Practiced approximately 8 hours per week and competed in national competitions 2011-2013

SKILLS

- **Computer:** Microsoft Word, Excel, Adobe Photoshop, InDesign
- **Languages:** Proficient in speaking, writing, reading Spanish