

THE MIAMI BEACH LANDMARK ELECTIONS  
OF NOVEMBER 1997:  
A BIVARIATE ECOLOGICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS  
OF ETHNIC VOTING

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Background

On November 4, 1997, Miami Beach, Florida, had an election for mayor and four commissioners. Commissioner Nancy Liebman was reelected with a majority of 50.2% (5,616 votes to her two opponents' combined 5,576 votes) on November 4. In the race for mayor and the other three commissioners, no candidate received a majority on November 4, so a runoff election was held on November 13, 1997. In the runoff election, Commissioner Neisen Kasdin, who had served on the city commission since 1991, was elected mayor. The three commissioners elected on November 13 were Jose Smith, David Dermer, and Simon Cruz. All three were newcomers to the city commission, none having previously served on the commission.

The election on November 13, 1997, was a landmark election for Miami Beach because, for the first time in the city's history, a Cuban-born candidate was elected to the commission. Not only was the previous barrier broken, but it was doubly broken as two Cuban-born candidates, Simon Cruz and Jose Smith, were elected. Two other commissioners, Martin Shapiro and Susan Gottlieb, did not face election in 1997 because their terms continue until 1999, so the seven-person commission (including the mayor) had two Hispanic members out of seven.

As recently as November 1995, strong ethnic voting patterns had characterized elections in Miami Beach. For example, in 1995, in one race with a non-Hispanic candidate (Susan Gottlieb) and a Hispanic candidate (Ada Llerandi), the non-Hispanic candidate received 90.8% of the non-Hispanic vote and only 2.6% of the Hispanic vote while the Hispanic candidate received 97.4% of the Hispanic vote and only 9.2% of the non-Hispanic vote. In another race with a non-Hispanic candidate (Marty Shapiro) and a Hispanic candidate (Matti Herrera Bower), the non-Hispanic candidate received 74.2% of the non-Hispanic vote and 22.8% of the non-Hispanic vote while the Hispanic candidate received 77.2% of the Hispanic vote and 25.8% of the non-Hispanic vote. The 1995 vote was not unique. In the one race in 1993, three non-Hispanic candidates

(Nancy Liebman, Eva Kaplan, and Frederick R. Von Langen) received 80.5% of the non-Hispanic vote and only 13.2% of the Hispanic vote, while the one Hispanic candidate (Miguel Karpel) received 86.8% of the Hispanic vote and 19.5% of the non-Hispanic vote (Lavender and Girard, January 1996).

Even when elections have not been between non-Hispanic and Hispanic candidates, and elections have involved issues instead of candidates, there frequently have been strong differences between non-Hispanic and Hispanic voting patterns in Miami Beach and in Miami-Dade County in general (e.g., Lavender, 1994; Filkins, 1993). In June 1997, for example, Miami Beach voters decided by a vote of 57.4% to 42.6% to limit the height of waterfront highrises. Non-Hispanic voters voted for the building limitation by 82.7% to 17.3% while Hispanic voters against the limitations by 68.3% to 31.7% (Lavender and Girard, September 1997). In the November 1995 election for mayor in Miami Beach, when both candidates were non-Hispanic, the non-Hispanic vote was divided overwhelmingly with 83.6% for the incumbent mayor (Seymour Gelber) and 16.4% for the challenger (Andrew Delaplaine) while the Hispanic vote was almost evenly divided with 54.7% for the incumbent and 45.3% for the challenger. Also in the November 1995 election in Miami Beach there was an issue as to whether or not a park in the South Beach area should be renamed for Mrs. Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Non-Hispanic voters voted 62.5% to name the park after Mrs. Douglas and 37.5% against the name change, but Hispanic voters voted only 30.7% for the name change and 69.3% against the name change (Lavender and Girard, January 1996).

#### The 1997 Elections

Statistical analyzes of the ethnic voting patterns for Miami Beach in November 1997 are shown on the following pages. The results are shown for November 4 and for November 13, showing how the ethnic patterns varied from the first election to the runoff. Regression analyzes show graphically the relationships between candidates and ethnic voting.

I note below how the non-Hispanic votes and Hispanic votes changed from the first election to the runoff election. It must be noted, however, that these were not always the same voters. As noted in an earlier publication, of the 12,765 voters analyzed from November 4, 3,397 (26.6%) did not vote on November 13. In other words, one in four of the people who voted on November 4 did not vote nine days later in the runoff. On the other hand, of the 11,259 voters analyzed from November 13, 1,891 (16.8%) had not voted on November 4. In other words, one in six of the people who voted in the runoff on November 13 had not voted nine days earlier (Lavender, February 1998).

ELECTION FOR MAYOR--NOVEMBER 4, 1997

	Total Number Votes	Non- Hisp. %	His.- panic %	Total % Votes
Neisen Kasdin	5,033	53.7	24.7	40.8
David T. Pearlson	4,464	29.1	45.2	36.2
Other four candidates	2,846	17.2	30.1	23.0
Leslie Martinez Botet	471	0.8	7.5	3.8
Mike Burke	694	5.7	5.5	5.6
Robert P. Kunst	277	1.7	2.9	2.2
Robert Skidell	1,404	9.0	14.2	11.4
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	12,343	100.0	100.0	100.0

RUNOFF ELECTION FOR MAYOR--NOVEMBER 13, 1997

Neisen Kasdin	5,937	60.9	48.1	55.2
David T. Pearlson	4,811	39.1	51.9	44.8
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	10,748	100.0	100.0	100.0

Of the Non-Hispanic votes cast for the other four candidates (Botet, Burke, Kunst, and Skidell) in the first election, 41.5% of these votes were cast for Kasdin and 58.5% for Pearlson in the run-off election.

Of the Hispanic votes cast for the other four candidates in the first election, 77.6% of these votes were cast for Kasdin and 22.4% for Pearlson in the run-off election.

ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP I--NOVEMBER 4, 1997

	Total Number Votes	Non- Hisp. %	His.- panic %	Total % Votes
Jose Smith	3,724	34.2	30.7	32.7
Spencer Friedman Eig	2,910	42.1	5.1	25.6
Other four candidates	2,846	23.7	64.1	41.7
Frank G. Del Toro	1,415	7.0	19.1	12.4
Joe Fontana	1,859	10.1	24.1	16.3
Sid Gersh	565	4.4	5.7	5.0
Bernice Martinez	910	2.2	15.2	8.0
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	11,383	100.0	100.0	100.0

RUNOFF ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP I--NOVEMBER 13, 1997

Jose Smith	6,012	48.0	76.6	61.2
Spencer Friedman Eig	3,808	52.0	23.4	38.8
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	9,820	100.0	100.0	100.0

Of the Non-Hispanic votes cast for the other four candidates (Del Toro, Fontana, Gersh, and Martinez) in the first election, 58.0% of these votes were cast for Smith and 42.0% for Eig in the run-off election.

Of the Hispanic votes cast for the other four candidates in the first election, 71.6% of these votes were cast for Smith and 28.4% for Eig in the run-off election.

ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP II--NOVEMBER 4, 1997

	Total Number Votes	Non- Hisp. %	His.- panic %	Total % Votes
David Dermer	5,576	66.1	28.2	49.5
Ada Llerandi	2,846	1.6	55.3	25.3
Sy Eisenberg	2,840	32.3	16.5	25.2
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	11,262	100.0	100.0	100.0

RUNOFF ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP II--NOVEMBER 13, 1997

David Dermer	6,191	89.0	35.0	64.7
Ada Llerandi	3,376	11.0	65.0	35.3
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	9,567	100.0	100.0	100.0

Of the Non-Hispanic votes cast for Sy Eisenberg in the first election, 71.0% of these votes were cast for Dermer and 29.0% for Llerandi in the run-off election.

Of the Hispanic votes cast for Sy Eisenberg in the first election, 41.6% of these votes were cast for Dermer and 58.4% for Llerandi in the run-off election.

ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP III--NOVEMBER 4, 1997

	Total Number Votes	Non- Hisp. %	His.- panic %	Total % Votes
Nancy Liebman	5,616	49.3	51.5	50.2
Jose Morel	1,808	2.6	33.3	16.1
Warren Stamm	3,768	48.1	15.2	33.7
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	11,192	100.0	100.0	100.0

NO RUN-OFF ELECTION WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE NANCY LIEBMAN RECEIVED A MAJORITY OF VOTES IN THE FIRST ELECTION.

ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP IV--NOVEMBER 4, 1997

	Total Number Votes	Non- Hisp. %	His.- panic %	Total % Votes
Simon Cruz	4,654	26.4	59.8	41.2
Matti Herrera Bower	4,272	47.6	25.3	37.8
Other two candidates	2,372	26.0	14.9	21.0
Larry Napp	1,809	22.2	8.4	16.0
Ray Reilly	563	3.8	6.5	5.0
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	11,298	100.0	100.0	100.0

RUNOFF ELECTION FOR COMMISSIONER GROUP IV--NOVEMBER 13, 1997

Simon Cruz	5,407	52.1	54.5	53.0
Matti Herrera Bower	4,790	47.9	45.5	47.0
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	10,197	100.0	100.0	100.0

Of the Non-Hispanic votes cast for the other two candidates (Napp and Reilly) in the first election, 98.6% of these votes were cast for Cruz and 1.4% for Bower in the run-off election.

Of the Hispanic votes cast for the other two candidates in the first election, basically all were cast for Bower in the run-off election. However, Cruz still won the majority of the Hispanic votes.



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