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NAVIGATING THROUGH TURBULENCE AND TROUBLESOME TIMES
Latinos, Election 2016, Partisan Politics, and Salient Public Policies

John A. Garcia

The road toward equality of freedom is not easy and great cost and danger march alongside us. We are committed to peaceful and nonviolent change, and that is important for all to understand—though all change is unsettling. Still, even in the turbulence of protest and struggle is greater hope for the future, as men learn to claim and achieve for themselves the rights formerly petitioned from others.

— Robert Kennedy

In a world that I have known through family and close friends, it has given me a foundation of home and vision for a better world. Yet living in times with very strong emotions that is dominated with fear, anger, hatred, suspicion and unfriendliness toward me, my family and close friends; then I am challenged to not be a stranger in my own land.

— John A. Garcia

An apt description for the 2016 election cycle can be characterized as “an election unlike any other.” Some unlikely features included the least positive view of the major party’s candidates from previous elections; starkness of rhetoric and statements directed to the immigrants, non-Christians, members of communities of color, women, LGBTQ and disability communities; and heightened emotions (i.e. anger, fear, anxiety, etc.). This chapter provides an analytical narrative how Latinos, in their continued efforts to expand their political impact and influence to the 2016 election outcomes, navigated an emotionally charged election period in which this community was the “target” of policy changes and castigated aspersions about their character and value to this nation. This analysis will include four parts: a)
critical political dynamics affecting this election; b) update of the Latino electorate with its strengths and challenges; c) the partisan domains and Latino fit; and d) Latinos’ views and assessments of about Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump and critical issues. Then I will end with the outcomes for Latinos in this election cycle, with a view toward the near future.

The 2016 elections were marked by a campaign tenor filled with charged emotions, heightened polarization, and a presidential upset victory for Donald Trump and Mike Pence. At the same time, the Latino community was engaged in another series of presidential year elections in which they were trying expand their political influence via supporting Latino/a candidates, engaging in partisan politics (especially the Democratic party), advocating policy priorities and preferences, and mobilizing support for the election of Hillary Clinton. Latinos have faced, for some time, the improvement of registration and turnout levels comparable to other groups. In addition, Latinos continue to seek effective political mobilization and outreach efforts, and to ensure greater responsiveness by the major political parties and their candidates by being responsive to issues important to this community. Finally, contemporary political dynamics and the choices Latinos make operate in more turbulent and rancorous times.

Thus, this chapter places emphasis on Latino communities, their leadership and behaviors working through a turbulent political world and analyzing their political attitudes and behaviors. More specifically, the organization of this chapter will include a short discussion of the major developments occurring in American politics and elections. Secondly, we will look at the developments among the Latino electorate in terms of growth, advancements, and challenges. Then we shall continue with an extensive discussion of changes occurring in the major political parties and their intersection with Latinos (i.e. affiliation, assessments and support). Then, we will examine Latinos’ views about Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump and their choices for the presidency. Finally, we will discuss the short- and long-term implications of this “round” of Latino political engagement for its political future and the American political system.

Some Major Political Developments in America’s Landscape

Presidential campaigns have become a much longer extended period of activities such as announcements, campaigning, and fundraising beginning more than a year in advance of the election date. The major political parties (i.e. Democrats and Republicans) still provide the dominant candidates, with minor parties like the Green party and Libertarian party making attempts to expand their electoral bases. The crowded field of Republican presidential aspirants provided a full spectrum of ideological emphases,
active segments of the party, two Latino candidates (Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz), and relative political newcomers (i.e. Ben Carson, Carly Fiorina, and Donald Trump). The primary battle in the Democratic primary centered on Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton. For Latina/os, early support lined up with the familiar and connected ties with the Clinton candidacy. At the same time, several Latino progressives announced their support for Bernie Sanders, which made for a more contested primary contest.

Latino/as continue to be an expanding segment of the U.S. population and electorate. The 2016 elections represented another opportunity to increase their representation at all levels of government, affect presidential campaigns and policy directions, and influence the presidential and other office outcomes. Before pursuing Latino political engagement, it is noteworthy to highlight key developments occurring in this election cycle. That is, demographic changes happening in this country and political undercurrents in terms of polarization and ideological divides are dynamics that are affecting this election and Latinos’ mix in the 2016 electoral arena.

The first major development (or continuing pattern) is the racial/ethnic composition of the United States, which is becoming more of a majority-minority nation. For example, the states of California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas are already majority-minority states; with New York, New Jersey, Nevada, Mississippi, Maryland, Georgia, and Arizona expected to follow suit in the next 5–10 years. This trend is reflected by the groups that are the major contributors to this country’s population growth (Ortman and Guarneri 2009). For example, the Census Bureau projects that Latinos represent over 50 percent of the nation’s population growth through 2060 (Ortman and Guarneri 2009); while whites represent a 17 percent decline from 2015–2060 (Table 7.1). The realities of a more diverse racial and ethnic population (also diverse religiously) mark some significant changes that have created a range of emotions and assessments about the future uncertainties, anxieties, and fears about national identities, power relations, and policy priorities.

This general population pattern is reflected in the changing composition of the American electorate. The portion of whites has fallen from 87 percent in 1992 to 69 percent in 2016 (Pew Research Center 2015a). At the same time, the minority proportion has increased from 13 percent in 1992 to 31 percent in 2016 with Latinos having the largest gain (8 percent to 13 percent). This trend will continue into future elections and has some of the following implications: conversion of an expanding eligible electoral minorities’ bases into a larger share of the registered and voting electorate, partisan alignments of racial and ethnic groups into the major political parties, redistribution of partisan and political leadership, and potential for polarization along racial and ethnic “lines.” In the case of the latter, a racial divide can be manifested in policy priorities and preferences,
## TABLE 7.1 Hispanics Will Continue to Account for Over 50% of Future U.S. Population Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6,593</td>
<td>7,678</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13,089</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20,376</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>16,978</td>
<td>19,225</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28,756</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37,879</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>39,782</td>
<td>41,594</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48,162</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>54,028</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>56,754</td>
<td>63,551</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>91,626</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>119,044</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>198,354</td>
<td>199,400</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>195,197</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>181,930</td>
<td>-17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: All figures are in thousands.

*Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014. Compiled by author.*
further demarcation of inside vs. outside groups, and increased cynicism and alienation from the political system.

Another significant development in the American political landscape is the rise of polarization among the electorate along ideological and partisan lines. Ideological “polar” positions are evident in the content of party platforms (Layman 1999), ratings of interest groups of legislators (Stonecash, Brewer and Mariani 2003), and surveys of partisan activists (Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006). One of the consequences is that policy making takes on the character of one party imposing its will on the other and the opposition party engaged in persistent “delegitimization” (Mann and Ornstein 2013). Political trust in the institutions and processes has declined to record lows. Another manifestation of this polarization is the expansion of ideological “echo chambers” (Pew Research Center 2014a). That is, 28 percent of respondents overall indicated that it is important to live in a place where most people share similar political views, and 30 percent of close friends share their political views. This pattern is more the case among consistently conservatives (50 percent and 63 percent, respectively) in comparison to consistently liberals (35 percent and 46 percent, respectively).

The literature on polarization focuses on both ideological and partisan divisions as well as elite vs. mass polarization (Bartels 2016; Yphtach 2016). The partisan divide is clearly evident over the past two decades such that there have been dramatic shifts to the farther right and left by Republicans and Democrats. From 1994–2014, 92 percent of Republicans are more conservative than the median Democrat; while 94 percent of Democrats are more liberal than the median Republican (Pew Research Center 2014a). This partisan gap has reinforced perceptions of polarization being driven by partisanship and creating a more pronounced “hostility” between one another (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). When it comes to presidential trait portrayals, partisans perceive the other party’s candidate as extreme and very negative (Hetherington, Long and Rudolph 2016). Racial attitudes among Republications have become more conservative and moral values among Democrats have become more liberal; while Republicans’ moral views are a more influential predictor of trait evaluations (Hetherington, Long and Rudolph 2016; Mangum 2013). Finally, there is the role of elite party polarization serving as a primary cue to expedite mass partisanship (Davis and Dunaway 2016), which can activate segments of the electorate to heighten their motivation to vote.

This brief discussion about the demographic changes and growing polarization in the American political system has a direct bearing on Latinos in this election cycle. Perceptions about this community (i.e. their authenticity as true Americans, primarily immigration status and as disproportionately undocumented, more partisan Democrats, etc.) have
affected their partisan preferences, presidential candidate support, and emotional stimuli of anger, threat, and fear as contributing to motivations about their political engagement. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the developments regarding the Latino electorate, their relationships with the major political parties, and then the presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

The Latino Electorate: Developments and Challenges

In 2016, characterizations about the Latino electorate could include a growing electoral share, long term prospects of an even greater proportion of voters, continuing challenges of converting a growing voter eligible base into active registered voters, expanding and increasing the efficiency of voter outreach and mobilization, and navigating limited options among the major political parties. In 2016, Latinos represented about 13 percent of the total electorate, which was a 62.5 percent increase since 1992. At the same time, approximately one-half of the eligible Latino electorate is registered (i.e. 27.5 million total vs. 13.5 registered) which leaves an even greater share of the electorate with higher registration levels. The main source of Latino voter growth lies with its youthful segment (or millennials) and potential naturalized citizens. For example, from 2012 to 2016, 3.2 million Latinos became eligible to vote as they turned 18 years old and another 3.2 Latino immigrants became citizens (Pew Research Center 2016b). The former contributor is quite significant for Latinos as 44 percent of Latino adults are millennials (Pew Research Center 2016a), which is 13 percent higher the national figure.

The “track record for the Latino electorate is one of a 15–18 percent turnout gap with African American and Anglo voters over the past three decades (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003). The slippage occurs in achieving higher registration rates as over 85 percent of Latino registered voters do cast their ballots. An examination of presidential elections since 1980 shows that Latino voter turnout for the Democratic candidate increased from 56 percent (Carter) to 71 percent (Obama) (Figure 7.1). Only Republicans Reagan and George W. Bush exceeded 35 percent of the Latino vote. This pattern of voting for the Democratic candidate is also reflected in their partisan affiliation. Pew Research Center (2014b) reported that in 2012, 63 percent of Latinos affiliated with the Democratic party, while 27 percent identified as Republicans. The percentages of Latino Republicans have been declining since 2000; yet the shift has been more in the independent category or in those leaning Democratic.

Even though Latinos have regularly supported Democrats, there are indications that increased access to leadership positions and advocacy of Latinos’ policy priorities remain an important concern. For example,
when Latino respondents were asked which party is more concerned about Latinos (2000–2014), the percentage indicating the Republican party remained at 10 percent over this period; while the range for Democrats was 45 percent to 50 percent (Pew Research Center 2016c). It should be noted that a range from 40 percent to 35 percent (from 2000–2014) indicated no difference between the two parties. Similarly when Latinos were asked about the outreach efforts by the major parties, the modal responses about the Republican party (from 2012–2016) were from 46 percent to 27 percent, respectively, as not caring about Latinos; and moving from 19 percent to 43 percent as characterizing the Republican party as hostile toward Latinos (Latino Decisions 2016c). Concomitantly, the responses went from 55 percent to 59 percent for the Democratic party doing a good job and from 23 percent to 21 percent as not caring. Finally, when asked whether both parties should be doing more to be responsive to Latinos, they indicated 71 percent and 59 percent, respectively, for Republican and Democratic parties that such efforts are needed (Figure 7.2).

This relationship between Latinos and the major political parties serves as an important backdrop for Latinos’ engagement in the 2016 national
and local elections. Following the 2012 presidential election, the Republican party national committee assessed its strength and liabilities among segments of the electorate. As a result, the Growth and Opportunity Project (GOP) report (2014) outlines a detailed plan to reach out to African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos. Strident political stances, elite and mass rhetoric had the “de facto” effect of halting serious attempts to implement aspects of the GOP report. With longstanding and established engagement in the Democratic party, the matter of which party’s candidate to support was less in question; but the extent of voter enthusiasm and active and effective mobilization would be a central partisan question for this round of the 2016 presidential election (Table 7.2).

Election 2016: Interplay of Candidates, Parties and Issues

The road to the major parties’ nominations was filled with surprises, a rise of vocal and strong emotions among the electorate, strong personalities as a paramount element, heightened identity politics, targeted population segments, and a push for change from the “established” political elites. Bernie Sanders represented the progressive segment of the Democratic party and promoted issues of reducing income inequality, immediate comprehensive
### TABLE 7.2 Party Affiliation, by Ethnicity (Percentage of each group that identifies with each political party)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups That Tilt Republican</th>
<th>Democrat/Lean Democrat</th>
<th>Republican/Lean Republican</th>
<th>Advantage Republican</th>
<th>Advantage Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>+48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White evangelical Protestant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White southerners</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>+21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White men, some college or less</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>+21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent generation (ages 69–86)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups That Tilt Democratic</th>
<th>Democrat/Lean Democrat</th>
<th>Republican/Lean Republican</th>
<th>Advantage Republican</th>
<th>Advantage Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiously unaffiliated</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>+36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate women</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>+35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial generation (ages 18–33)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>+16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race; Asians are non-Hispanic and English-speaking only [SW1].

*Source:* Data from Pew Research Center (2015b).
immigration reform, higher living wage levels, workers’ rights, empowerment of under-represented communities, health care access and affordability, etc. Over the course of his primary campaign, Bernie Sanders gained Latino support and endorsements. On the other hand, Hillary Clinton (and Bill Clinton) had established long standing connections with Latino leaders, especially congressional elected officials and Hillary Clinton’s resources built upon her past and policy preferences. Despite almost a two to one lead over Sanders, the enthusiasm and policy positions were more on the Sanders side. Once Hillary Clinton’s nomination was secured, she did shift some of her policy stances more in line with Bernie Sanders’ campaign themes, especially economic issues.

The Republican primary had over 15 aspirants and represented a full spectrum of party sub-groups, ideological camps, and political newcomers like Ben Carson, Carly Fiorina and Donald Trump. Strong personalities, partisan polarizing rhetoric and counter-Obama policies (i.e. repealing the Affordable Care Act, heightening border security and removal of undocumented immigrants, challenging climate change, etc.) made the partisan “divide” more attenuated. The eventual nominations of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump marked a clear delineation for a very significant portion of the Latino electorate. The remainder of this analysis will center on the Latino community’s engagement in the 2016 election.

From the offset, Latinos indicated a clear level of support for Hillary Clinton, whereas the issues centered on enthusiasm, motivation to vote, interest, organizational mobilization effectiveness, and assessment of policy congruence of Latinos and the Clinton agenda. Latino Decisions’ polls (2016a, 2016b) in the summer and fall of 2016 indicated that Latinos were more enthusiastic about participating in this election (51 percent vs. 37 percent in 2012). In addition, Pew Research Center (2016c) shows that 68 percent of registered Latino voters were more attentive; 67 percent indicated it mattered who won the election; 63 expressed more interest than the previous election; and 67 percent were following this election via the news media. The saliency of this election for Latinos was the result of their continuing efforts to expand their political influence, partisan investment in the Democratic party, a prioritized policy agenda, and operating in a heightened polarized environment along party, racial, cultural, and nativism divides.

The top issues for Latinos (in rank order) are: education (45 percent extremely important—EI, and 49 percent very important—VI), jobs/economy (39 percent EI and 51 percent VI); health care (35 percent EI and 52 percent VI), and immigration (29 percent EI and 45 percent VI) (Pew Research Center 2014b). In contrast, there are some variations in prioritization with Latinos and the general electorate, but a greater difference is apparent in the policy preferences. That is, jobs and the economy
among Latinos meant workers’ rights and protection, unionization, and job benefits to include health care access. For the immigration area, reform needed to include pathways to citizenship, human rights for undocumented immigrants, continuation of the immigration policies Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Actions for Parents of Americans (DAPA), and greater recognition of the value that immigrants add to this country. So the intersection of identified issues and the kinds of policies preferences played a key role for Latino engagement. In 2014, Latinos acknowledged that the main reason to vote was support the Latino community (46 percent) followed by supporting the Democratic candidate (39 percent) (Latino Decisions 2016d).

While immigration was ranked fourth, the combined responses of extremely and very important were 75 percent, and the Trump campaign emphasis on immigration placed this area at the forefront. The Trump immigration solutions included greater border security and added personnel, building a wall across the entire southern U.S. border, and mass deportation of undocumented immigrants. The saliency of this policy area was magnified by candidate Trump’s characterization of “illegals” as murderers, rapists, drug dealers, and gang members (Oliver and Rahn 2016). A Pew Center survey (2014b) differentiated the Latino community by nativity, gender, language, generational status, and education. Overall, 73 percent of all Latino adults viewed immigration as an important issue. Variation by segments was minor, as 86 percent of the foreign-born, 80 percent ofLatinas, 72 percent of registered voters, and 61 percent of second generation Latinos designated immigration as an important issue. Again, Latinos’ policy preference critically advocated for a pathway to citizenship, as 75 percent indicated this aspect as central to immigration reform (Latino Decisions 2016c). This sentiment had strengthened over time (from 2013 to 2016) for increased support for a pathway to citizenship (71 percent to 75 percent) and opposition to the “wall” was at 83 percent. When asked about the saliency of immigration reform as a basis to vote, 67 percent indicated it was the most important factor or one of the most key considerations. Another key element playing out this policy dynamic is the “minimal degrees of separation within the Latino community.” That is, 62 percent of Latino adults know at least someone who is undocumented and 32 percent know someone who has been deported. Of the 62 percent who know undocumented persons, over 90 percent were either friends or family members (Latino Decisions 2016c).

A transition to the partisan aspect of this election was the kind of immigration reform policy that might be passed. The Republican party would be blamed by 45 percent of Latinos but the Democratic party would be blamed by 34 percent of Latinos (Latino Decisions 2016c) if no immigration legislation is passed with a pathway to citizenship (Hajnal and Rivera
As indicated earlier in this chapter, Latinos are primarily affiliated with the Democratic party with some internal variation so that Latinas have higher Democratic affiliation (70 percent vs. 54 percent of males), as well as 71 percent Spanish-speakers and bilinguals, and 60 percent of Latinos over 30 years old. At the same time, the relatively stagnant level for the percentage of Latino Republicans does mark a shift toward more independent leanings. A majority (46 percent to 62 percent) of Latinos who identify as independent tend to lean to the Democratic party (i.e. across language groups) (Harris Polls 2016; Hajnal and Lee 2004).

The partisan preference among Latinos is affected by their views of the Republican party, which is unfavorable. A Latino Decisions poll (2015b) had Latinos characterizing the Republican party as not caring about Latinos (39 percent) or as hostile to this community (45 percent), and only 16 percent as caring about Latinos. This evaluative dimension will be examined further with the presidential candidates’ impact on both who they support and views about the major parties. As described earlier, this partisan divide has not only been exacerbated by ideological and elite rhetoric and policy stances, but by increasingly racial/ethnic aggregation in the two parties. A Pew Research Center study (2015c) identified racial/ethnic affiliation, religious affiliation, and regional origins of party affiliation. The analysis showed that 68 percent of white evangelical Protestants, 55 percent of white Southerners and 54 percent of white males with some college or less identified with or leaned Republican; while 80 percent of African Americans, 65 percent of Asian Americans, 61 percent of unaffiliated religious persons, and 64 percent of post-graduate women tilted Democratic. The combination of these developments placed Latinos with limited choices of candidate and party. An old cliché—“a house is not a home”—might be one way to portrayed Latinos’ electoral options such that the Democratic party remains is partisan “house” to live in; yet expectations of policy advocacy and leadership initiative fall short of identified Latinos’ interests. We will return to this analysis at the summary and future implications of this chapter.

**Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump and Latinos**

The 2016 Presidential race had placed Hillary Clinton as the clear choice among Latinos. The choice was the combination of her established connections with this community, their Democratic party affiliation, generally congruent policy directions, and the Trump candidacy. In the case of the later, Trump’s rhetoric and policy positions served more to distance any Latino support. His emphasis on “illegal immigration” and the accentuated negative impacts placed immigration at the head of Latinos’ radar. Ironically, in previous presidential elections, immigration was submerged
as a major campaign focus due to its volatility among the general electorate and anticipated polarization as to policy solutions. It was the Trump campaign that made this a central issue concomitantly targeting immigrants and refugees, Muslims and, to some degree, raising authenticity as to who are the “real Americans,” which served to drive many Latinos away from supporting his candidacy.

A Latino Decisions poll (2016c) asked Latinos how Donald Trump’s statement affected their impression of the Republican party (Figure 7.3). Sixty-eight percent indicated an unfavorable view of the Republican party and another 12 percent responded somewhat unfavorably (totaling four-fifths of Latino respondents). There was a net −60 percent unfavorable difference from the smaller percentages that had favorable views. By the summer of 2016, the Latino voters’ preference ran 70 percent for Hillary Clinton and 19 percent for Donald Trump. There was little variation among Latino/a segments. For example: Latinas, 73 percent; English speakers, 65 percent; foreign-born naturalized, 77 percent; native-born, 68 percent; over 40 years old, 74 percent; and under 40 years, 68 percent (Latino Decisions 2016e).

A Gallup poll (2016) reported favorability ratings for all Latinos and Latino Republicans. In the case of the former, Clinton had a 59 percent

![Net -60 Unfavorable GOP](Image)
vs. 26 percent favorability-unfavorability breakdown in comparison to Trump’s 12 percent vs. 77 percent breakdown. Among Latino Republicans, the breakdown was 39 percent vs. 50 percent for Clinton (favorable-unfavorable) in comparison to Trump’s 31 percent vs. 60 percent. As a result, Latino voters had dual motivations to vote for Hillary Clinton. That is, they had a preference for her candidacy and an eagerness to vote against Donald Trump. A Latino Decisions poll (August 2016) indicated that the Trump unfavorability rating had risen to 87 percent and his favorability declined to 9 percent. Similarly, Latinos’ enthusiasm for Clinton and to vote went from 37 percent in 2012 to 51 percent in 2016 (Latino Decisions 2016). So when Donald Trump was declared the winner of the 2016 presidential election (306–232 in electoral votes), Latinos were on the losing side. Yet an integral part of this discussion of the election and Latinos’ electoral engagement requires examination of the patterns of their participation and choices in 2016, as well as continual impacts into the next election cycles.

Latinos, 2016 Elections and Post-Obama Politics

As indicated from the previous discussion, Latinos’ preference for Hillary Clinton’s candidacy was not in doubt, but more so was their enthusiasm, levels of voter turnout, and impact on vote totals in both key battleground states and in red states. The post-election exit polls reintroduced both the predictability and accuracy of poll outcome estimates. In the case of Latinos, the difference in Latinos’ vote for the major candidates varies by 11 percent. The National Election Pool (consortium of the major networks) analysis conducted by Edison Research reported that 29 percent of Latinos cast their votes for Trump. On the other hand, Latino Decisions reported an 18 percent vote for Trump. This raises persistent issues of exit polling sampling designs, collection of early and Election Day votes, and coverage of sufficient diverse voters to make projections by sociodemographic groups.

Works in 2012 by Nate Silver (2012) and more recently, Barreto and Segura (2016) discuss the significance of exit polls in the context of tracking voters over a period of time prior to the election date, “tapping” early voters, and sufficient sample size and selection of precincts to represent the voting groups reported. Latino Decisions, which specializes in polling this community, polled 5,600 high-propensity Latino voters, which represents a much larger sample than Edison Research. In addition, other exists polls had the following results of Latino vote for Trump: Univision/Washington Post, 18 percent; NBC/Telemundo, 17 percent; NALEO/ Telemundo tracking poll, 14 percent; and Florida International University/New Latino voice, 13 percent. Previous discussion about exit polls
and minority communities has included the degree of reliable estimates for minority samples and necessary sample size and selection. For example, among the Edison Research sample, 44 percent of non-white voters had college degrees in comparison to 15 percent Latino college graduates nationally (Chavez 2016).

The tracking polls can provide some additional insight into the exit poll estimates of the Latino presidential vote. For example, the tracking results from Latino Decisions (2016) from September to November 6 indicated a range of 71–73 percent intent to vote for Clinton and a range of 16–18 percent for Trump. Ancillary information in these polls indicated a rising degree of enthusiasm for Clinton, and higher unfavorability for Donald Trump. Based upon multiple sources of exit polls and relative strengths and shortcomings of the exit polls firms, the higher level of Latino vote for Trump—27 percent—seems to be inconsistent with pre-election levels. If so, Trump support represents a lower percentage of Latino support than that of previous Republican nominees in the last half-century. The question at hand is how both the Republican party and President Trump go forward with their relationship with the Latino community (Latino Decisions 2016f).

The impact of Latinos in the 2016 elections had broader implications beyond their presidential vote. The demographic imperative of population growth being fueled in the United States by minorities is best illustrated by the Latino community. With their rise as a proportion of the electorate, the 2016 election also evidences an increase in turnout—a persistent challenge for this community—so that 5–12 percent voter turnout increase has been projected (Latino Decisions and Gross 2016). Other indicators of greater Latino voter engagement is reflected in their early voting turnout rates in states like Florida, Nevada, Arizona, and Colorado.

These turnout increases also played a role in the increase in numbers of Latinos in Congress with a gain of five more in the House (from 29 to 34) and a Latina (Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada) to the U.S. Senate. Some new members of Congress include Darren Soto of Florida as the first Puerto Rican elected outside of the northeast, Adriano Espaillat of New York as the first Dominican elected, three new Latino/as from California—Salud Carbajal, Nanette Barragan, and Lou Correa—Vicente Gonzalez of Texas, and Ruben Kihuen of Nevada. Actually, there are seven new Latina/os in the House of Representatives, where a couple replaced incumbent Latinos. At the state level, four newly elected Latinos joined state senates (from 73 to 77), with Arizona adding three state senators. Ten more Latinos were elected to state houses of representatives (from 234 to 244), of which 194 are Democrats and 50 are Republicans. The biggest gains were in California (plus-4), Arizona, Colorado, Florida and Texas (plus-2 each). States traditionally with little Latino population like
Rhode Island, Oklahoma, and West Virginia also elected Latino state legislators (NALEO 2016). Thus, Latino electoral engagement continues to make progress in terms of greater rates of electoral participation, increasing political representation, and advocating on behalf of Latino saliency issues and policy preferences.

Another implication of the intersection of demographic trend and political partisan voter support is the current configuration of red and blue states. The increase in Latino population and their location throughout the United States—especially recent locations in the South and Rocky Mountain and Midwest regions—has a direct partisan consequence. The Latino vote either continued the pattern of deepening the blueness of a state (i.e. Virginia and Colorado) or altering the state’s red hue to more purple. Examples of the latter are the more competitive partisan nature of Arizona, Texas, Florida, and Nevada. The significant influx of Puerto Ricans into central Florida, along with more Mexican origin and Central Americans into the state, has made it more Democratic. The difference in the margin of victory for Romney against Trump in Texas, Arizona, and Georgia diminished. This pattern could continue as these states become more majority-minority populations. This demographic shift, along with the continued tendency of Latinos to support Democratic candidates, has a serious consequence for party politics and representatives.

The Growth Opportunity Project (2013)—the Republican party’s blueprint to expand its base into communities of color written in 2012—was not implemented to any significant degree, and the actions of party elites/leaders, policy stances, and rise of nativism and nationalism has placed greater distance between the Republican party and communities of color. By making illegal immigration a keystone issue and placing emphasis on the “negative effects” of undocumented persons and the sharp and negative rhetoric directed toward immigrants—especially Latinos—the Trump campaign created the perception by Latinos of a more hostile and less caring Republican party. The future of Latinos and the major political parties will require serious assessment of the Latino community’s interests and the extent of discernable responses by either or both of the major parties.

In the case of the Republican party, moving to enact policies like mass deportations, building a wall along the southern border, dismantling the Affordable Care Act, moving away from climate change initiatives, and tax reform with minimal benefits to working and middle class segments run counter to Latinos’ policy preferences and desired actions. The additional policy areas of voting rights (i.e. voter identification laws, shorter early voting periods, greater state discretion on voting changes) and forthcoming redistricting processes accent the growing disconnect to a closer working relationship between elements of the Latino community and the Republican party.
How the Republican party responds to this community as a more congruent partner in the party will depend on the actions of its leadership and the Trump administration, as well as any changes to the hostility directed at immigrants, minorities and non-mainline Christian religious groups, and the like by vocal rhetoric and in-vs.-out-group attitudes. An earlier research finding indicated that Latinos’ political support for candidates and their parties will be driven more by positions and actions that support and advance Latino interests. Demographically, it has been suggested that if the Republican party can garner 35–48 percent of the Latino vote in national elections, it provides them a working “majority” along with its current core base (Latino Decisions 2015a). The shift of white working-class voters voting for Donald Trump can become more enduring and may reduce the need to actively seek out segments of the Latino community and other communities of color by the Republican party. In any event, the Republican party side of the partisan configuration will—in—part, factor in the Latino community’s assessment of this party as a viable option in light of its policy and political interests.

Historically and continued partisan affiliation with the Democratic party is unlikely to result in a shift to the Republican party. At the same time, the shift has been to independent leanings with weaker ties for the Democratic party. Primary issues for Latinos have been Democratic party responsiveness to policy advocacy and wider access to party engagement in leadership roles and Latino candidate support. Again the theme in this part of the chapter lies with Latinos’ partisan strategies and, in this case, long established “investment” with the Democratic party. As the Democratic party assesses its post-2016 election strategies, how much further outreach it makes with communities of color—as they are clearly a significant part of the party base—will be an issue. At the same time, “mending” fences with the white working class could result in “perceived trade-offs” of solidifying Latino partisan support with outreach themes to the “white working class.” Ironically this perceived tension reflects the intersection of race and class. That is, on the whole, the majority of Latinos fall into the working and lower middle class strata; yet policy referents do not appear to incorporate race and ethnicity in dealing with the working class.

Continued Democratic engagement among Latinos has been linked to a present and salient identity as Latinos (Huddy et al. 2016). Latinos who identify strongly as Latinos and see pervasive discrimination against Latinos are the strongest Democrats. This dynamic was further deepened during the course of the 2012 election (Huddy et al. 2016). Partisan preference evidences an increased in political campaign activity, although the level was modest overall. Relatively few Latinos had worked on a campaign or given money to a candidate; somewhat larger numbers had tried to convince others about a candidate or worn a button or displayed a
sticker. Finally, some support was evident for an instrumental account. Latino support for government-provided health insurance in 2012 consistently increased support for the Democratic party (Sanchez and Medeiros 2016). There was substantiation of that during the 2016 presidential election. Latinos were energized and compared this election as more important than recent Presidential elections. The dual responses of support for Hillary Clinton and similar policy positions and the heightened emotional antagonism toward Donald Trump were almost equally motivating to the Latino vote (Latino Decisions 2016e).

The relationship between Latinos and political parties following the 2016 national elections represents an opportunity for some deliberative and strategic discussions regarding prioritization of a Latino policy and political agenda and where to direct resources, activities, and organizational targeting. Given the stated policy directions of the Trump administration, immigration and health care polices have a direct bearing on this community. The saliency of immigration reform (i.e. more so in terms of human rights, normalization of the undocumented, pathway to citizenship, etc.) during the 2016 elections has even greater relevance to Latinos. The DACA and DAPA executive orders may be “undone” in early 2017 and its impact extends beyond the “Dreamers” and their parents to a wider circle of family and friends. Potential policies implementing massive deportation efforts will, again, not only affect undocumented persons, but the neighborhoods and work places where many Latino households reside. Some local institutions (i.e. municipalities, counties, universities and colleges, religious organizations) have implemented alternative actions and policies regarding immigrants such as sanctuary designations, protecting DACA students, limiting law enforcement working relations with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other immigration-related law enforcement agencies.

Latino organizations and leaders have already begun to work at the state and local levels to continue or enact policies that are consistent with Latino policy preferences in the area of immigration. Recently, a coalition of universities and colleges in states like New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota, and Texas have begun to explore ways to provide sanctuary to their undocumented students. For example, college administrators in New Mexico—the state with the highest percentage of Latino residents—are looking into proposals that would grant protections to immigrant students living in the country illegally while they pursue their studies (Arizona Daily Star 2016). In addition, supporters in California, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, and Texas are pressing their state and private universities to provide sanctuary to these immigrant students (i.e. Dreamers).

The earlier reporting of the most salient issues and policy domains also included health care. Under the more general category of health care,
matters of access, health insurance coverage and affordability, and dealing with addressing health disparities between Latinos and other populations comprise significant areas of concern (Sanchez and Medeiros 2016). With the ACA targeted for elimination, Latinos’ health policy vulnerability becomes even more pronounced. Latino engagement in this policy area could take place at both the federal and state levels.

One other policy area of importance is that of voters’ rights and protection. The recent court ruling of *Holder vs. Shelby County* and upswing voter identification and other limiting state actions (Garcia 2016; Ybarra, L. Sanchez and G. Sanchez 2015) has placed greater vigilance and legal actions by Latino advocacy organizations—Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), etc.—to challenge disparate effects on Latinos, other minority group members and lower income persons. Under the rationale of eliminating or reducing voter fraud, the Republican party has been actively engaged in passing voting reform laws that are more restrictive in nature. With the recent campaign rhetoric and divisive national mood, voting rights and protection from discrimination will remain a very prominent area of policy activity. Strategically, where do Latinos direct their resources and attention (i.e. the courts, legislative bodies, local jurisdictions) to continued their impact on electoral politics?

This discussion of the political future of the Latino community in these “turbulent times” would suggest multiple political arenas, working within political and civic institutions, and building up its internal political base. As our focus has been the electoral arena, the continued growth of Latinos as a proportion of the electorate will occur due to their continued population growth. At the same time, natural growth (i.e. annual contribution of Latinos turning age 18) can be substantially augmented through two major segments. Millennials are becoming a sizeable portion of America. Millennials make up a greater share of Latino eligible voters than any other racial-ethnic group. That is, 44 percent of Latino eligible voters are millennials, in comparison to 27 percent of whites, 35 percent of African Americans and 30 percent of Asian Americans (Pew Research Center 2016a). From 2012 to 2016, Hispanic eligible population growth increased from 23.3 million to 27.3 million (Pew Research Center 2016a). Slightly less than three-fourths of that increase was Latino citizens turning 18.

Thus the challenge for Latino leaders and organizations is not only to increase the proportion of millennials registered to vote, but once registered, to be actively, engaged voters. Mobilization has been a growing activity by the Democratic party and Latino groups (Bedolla and Michelson 2012;
Michelson 2005). Targeted efforts at millennials have both promise and some uncertainty. That is, among those millennials who did vote, the Democratic party was the greater benefactor, especially with their involvement in the Sanders campaign. At the same time, more millennials are not as strongly partisan, even though Democrats hold an edge over Republicans. Overall this age grouping has the lower turnout rate compared to older age groupings. Yet, Latinos working to expand their electoral base would benefit significantly with better efficiency and success of adding more millennials to its electoral base (Bedolla and Michelson 2012).

The second largest contributor to the growth of the Latino electorate is naturalized citizens (Table 7.3). Almost one-fourth of the Latino electorate growth is immigrants who become U.S. citizens. Since the 1980s, Latino organizations (i.e. NALEO and National Council of La Raza, or NCLR) have prioritized efforts to facilitate and encourage Latino “permanent resident aliens” toward naturalization. While there has been a steady increase among Latino origin immigrants, conversion to more naturalized citizens can close the gap between potential and actual numbers of Latino voters. During the 1990s, the anti-immigrant mood, especially in California, served as a catalyst for some Latinos to pursue naturalization to “elevate” their legal protections and rights. Thus a combination of a rising threat of nativism and xenophobia and expanding political impact by Latinos can serve as the mobilizing dynamics to expand the millennial and immigrant segments to register and vote in the near future.

### TABLE 7.3 Youth and Naturalizations Are the Main Sources of Eligible Hispanic Voter Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hispanic Eligible Voters</th>
<th>2012 Hispanic Eligible Voters</th>
<th>23.3 mil.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Citizens/Hispanics Turning Age 18</td>
<td>3.2 mil.</td>
<td>2012 Hispanic Eligible Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrant Hispanics Who Will Become U.S. Citizens</td>
<td>1.2 mil.</td>
<td>2016 Projected Hispanic Eligible Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase Due to Out-Migration from Puerto Rico</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>2016 Projected Hispanic Eligible Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic Eligible Voters Who Pass Away</td>
<td>−537,000</td>
<td>2016 Projected Hispanic Eligible Voters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Those born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens at birth.

Conclusion

In this collection of *Winning the Presidency 2016*, this chapter examines the Latino community’s participation in a most unique election cycle, in which the candidacy of Donald Trump and the levels of negative and antagonistic rhetoric polarized the American electorate along ideological, racial—ethnic, religious, and gender divides in very overt and direct manner. The candidacy of Hillary Clinton as the first female nominee of a major political party and the gender effect was more nuanced, at times, although the level of support from Latinas and other women of color was more evident in terms of women voters in contrast to white women. The turbulence and emotional levels of this election accorded Latinos challenges as to how they could be an important factor in Presidential politics. With the final nominees, there was a clear preference for Hillary Clinton that went beyond traditional Democratic party support. The issues, rhetoric, and policy directions of Donald Trump and a nativist and hostile mood placed Latinos squarely in the Democrats’ camp, but concerns about enthusiasm, saliency of the election, and extent of voter turnout were more their focus.

Evidence to date indicates an increase in the numbers of registered Latino voters and greater numbers of votes cast. Latinos participated at higher rates in early voting states and on Election Day. The major of Latino support is estimated to have exceeded that of President Obama in 2012, and Donald Trump received the lowest Latino voting percentage of Republican presidential candidate over the last half-century. There are clearly partisan implications beyond 2016 which have been discussed in this chapter. Yet the discussion of this round of American elections and Latinos is still grounded in the objectives of weightier influence in the American political system. Goals of empowerment, influencing public policy, more responsiveness to salient concerns and issues to this community, and better political representation continue to motivate Latinos to engage politically. The election outcome will pose serious challenges for the Latino community in terms of directing their political energies and strategies in what is perceived to be a hostile and restrictive environment.

Bibliography


