voters, potentially hastening Democratic gains in Sun Belt states, which, over time, could reconfigure the map in advantageous ways in future national elections.

This time around, demographic destiny did not materialize for Democrats. But demographic change marches on. While that is by no means alone a guarantee of future success, the party's big challenge going forward will be to work to maintain its position on the right side of it—while also speaking more effectively to the anxieties of those who feel it is leaving them behind.

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8

Latinos and the 2016 Election

Matt Barreto, Thomas Schaller, and Gary Segura

For Latinos, the 2016 presidential election cycle effectively began the same day it did for every other American: June 16, 2015, the day Donald Trump declared his candidacy. That morning, Trump descended the escalators at Trump Tower in Manhattan to announce he would seek the Republican nomination for president. His announcement attracted about as much attention as expected for a businessman-turned-reality-TV-star deemed to be a long shot to win the GOP nomination in a crowded field of far more experienced Republican contenders.

But later that afternoon, Trump made the first of what became daily, front-page headlines when he bluntly insulted and denigrated Mexican-American immigrants. "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best," said Trump. "They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

The media seized upon Trump's comments, with pundits climbing over each other to declare Trump's candidacy dead on arrival. "I'm going to go out on a limb and predict that Trump will not be the next president of the United States or even the GOP nominee," Jonathan Capehart wrote in *The Washington Post*. "[H]is harsh rhetoric and the way his opponents respond (not well, I suspect) to the xenophobic zingers he will hurl on the debate stage will hobble the next Republican nominee's effort to secure the keys to the White House."[1]

Capehart was hardly alone in his condemnation of Trump's rapists-and-murderers statement, nor in predicting that Trump and any fellow Republicans who embraced such inflammatory rhetoric were doomed. After all, a few months after Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential defeat, the Republican National Committee published a self-diagnosis in which the RNC called for greater inclusiveness, and specifically a renewed appeal to Latino voters. The party promised to expand its reach, not demean and exclude large swaths of the electorate.

Prior to 2016, Latino politics—including but not limited to immigration and border issues—had never been so salient, so front and center during a U.S. presidential election. Nor had such unusual and offensive attacks ever been leveled so directly on American Latinos, immigrant or otherwise. In this chapter, we examine how Latinos voted in 2016. We specifically consider: Latino turnout in 2016; the partisan preferences of Latino voters in the presidential contest and key, down-ballot races; and the attitudes expressed by Latinos on the eve and day of the 2016 election.

In contrast to national media exit poll results we believe were severely flawed, we show that Latinos were in fact mobilized by opposition to Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's candidacy. They voted in record numbers and in record shares for Hillary Clinton. And, yes, Trump's comments and behavior during the 2016 campaign offended Latinos and soured their perceptions of him and the Republican Party generally.

LATINO POLITICS IN THE 2016 ELECTION CYCLE

Latino politics are emergent, and Latino electoral power is rising. Politicians have been forced to respond to Latino voices and inputs. A bit of context is needed to fully understand the state of Latino politics by the start of the 2016 presidential contest.

In the 2008 Democratic primary race, by roughly a two-to-one ratio Latino Democrats preferred then-New York Senator Hillary Clinton to then-Illinois Senator Barack Obama. During that very competitive primary, Obama promised that, if nominated and elected, he would push for comprehensive immigration reform during his first year in office. In the 2008 general election, 67 percent of Latinos voted for Obama. Since the Latino vote began to be tracked in presidential elections, only Democrat Bill Clinton had received a higher share, 72 percent.

During Barack Obama's presidency, immigration in particular posed significant challenges for both parties. In Washington, where polarization and gridlock prevail and cooperation is rare, immigration served as a flashpoint

for some of the more notable confrontations between President Obama and Congress, and between Democrats and Republicans. By the end of 2009, it was clear that the new president had already abandoned his pledge to reform immigration policy.

Although Obama had many competing domestic and economic problems to address during his first two years in office, his broken promise set the stage for the remainder of his first term. If Latinos were disappointed by the administration's passive advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform, they were further angered by the administration's active support for increased deportations of undocumented immigrants. The number of deportations in 2009 and 2010 exceeded even the highest number of deportations during the preceding Bush administration.

Polled in late May and early June 2011, Latinos expressed conflicted feelings about the president's inaction on immigration. A slight plurality of Latinos, 46 percent, said it was "understandable" that the administration did not prioritize immigration reform, given the pressing economic concerns. But another 42 percent said Obama "should have prioritized" reform.[2] At that point, fewer than half of Latinos polled said they were certain to vote for the president's reelection. A Pew Hispanic Center poll taken six months later, in December 2011, similarly pegged the president's approval level among Latinos below half, at 49 percent. According to Pew, by a margin of more than two-to-one, 59 percent to 27 percent, Latinos disapproved of the administration's deportation policies.[3]

Despite growing wariness among Latinos toward the Obama administration's immigration policies, Latinos viewed Republicans with equal if not greater suspicion. Specifically, Latinos said Republicans too often focus on border security as a diversion or to stall accomplishing comprehensive reform. "Republicans will have to do more than change their tone to connect with these voters, and Democrats will have to fulfill the promises they made, or they will have a harder time mobilizing the vote in 2012," said Frank Sharry, president of the pro-immigration reform group America's Voice, in describing the partisan stakes in the upcoming presidential cycle.[4]

By the time his 2012 reelection campaign got underway, however, it became clear to President Obama's reelection team that the administration's decision to shelve immigration reform had jeopardized his support among Latinos and potentially his reelection. With Latinos wavering, on June 15, 2012, the Obama administration announced the executive action on Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The DACA ruling instructed the Department of Homeland Security to defer action on deporting the children born to undocumented parents living in the United States.

Obama's Latino support immediately surged. By sheer coincidence, Latino Decisions happened to be in the field polling Latinos about their support for Obama when the president announced the DACA order. The natural experiment created a pre- and post-announcement split-sample, and the results were clear: enthusiasm among Latinos for Obama immediately spiked 35 percent following the DACA announcement. "The announcement on June 15 appears to have clearly erased Obama's enthusiasm deficit among Latinos," we wrote at the time.[5] According to national exit polls, five months later 71 percent of Latinos voters supported Obama during reelection, and their votes provided sufficient support to ensure he captured the electoral votes in enough states that, without them, he would otherwise have failed to amass the required minimum of 270 electors.

Immigration and border issues were yet again hotly contested issues early during Obama's second term. In 2013, the U.S. Senate's so-called "Gang of Eight"—a group featuring both former GOP presidential nominee John McCain and 2016 Republican presidential hopeful Marco Rubio—began to fashion what they hoped would be an immigration reform plan that could attract the support of a filibuster-proof, bipartisan majority of at least sixty senators. But President Obama hedged again. In the middle of the 2014 midterm cycle, and supposedly under intense pressure from national party officials to not force Democratic Senate candidates to take a public stance on the issue, Obama delayed signing any new executive orders related to the administration's deportation policy for undocumented adults. Given the Democrats' loss of their Senate majority that November, the president's choice to wait until after the election probably helped his fellow Democrats little, if at all.

As the invisible primary season of 2015 opened and the two parties' presidential aspirants began preparing their campaigns, policy fights over immigration and the broader battle for Latino voters were mostly dormant. Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz were expected to declare their presidential ambitions, making them the two most serious Latino contenders for a major-party presidential nomination in history. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, the son and brother of former presidents and husband to a Mexican-American wife, was the early frontrunner and held a slim lead among a crowded and growing field of expected Republican contenders. Few other Republican contenders seemed likely to stake out their identity within the GOP field on issues like immigration.

Then came Donald Trump.

As the Republican primary unfolded, Trump escalated his anti-immigrant rhetoric far beyond his rapists-and-murderers announcement day statement —a comment, we should note, that helped immediately catapult him to a lead

in the GOP primary polls he never relinquished.[6] Indeed, Trump's signature campaign pledge was his promise to construct a massive wall along the U.S-Mexico border and force Mexico to pay for it. At Trump campaign rallies, "build the wall!" chants quickly became a crowd favorite. Soon Rubio and Cruz began attacking each other during Republican debates as too soft on border and immigration issues. In short order, Trump had changed not only the tenor of the 2016 campaign, but the Republican Party's posture toward Latinos and positions on immigration policy.

Once Trump won the nomination, his anti-Latino rhetoric continued unabated. In a statement Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan characterized as the "textbook definition" of racism, Trump charged an American-born, Latino federal judge of being incapable of ruling fairly in a lawsuit filed against Trump University because of his ethnicity. The former owner of the Miss Universe pageant, Trump falsely claimed that Alicia Machado, a Latina Miss Universe he publicly humiliated two decades earlier for gaining weight, had starred in a sex tape. A prominent Trump supporter, Marco Gutierrez, warned that if America didn't do something about immigration there would soon be "taco trucks on every corner." Even after Trump won an Electoral College victory on November 8, he and some of his supporters continued to assert that Trump had been deprived from winning the national popular vote because millions of noncitizens had illegally cast votes for Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton was again the prohibitive favorite to be the party's nominee. Seven years after losing to Obama despite receiving the lion's share of the Latino vote, Latinos continued to express strong support for the former first lady and secretary of state. In a post-midterm November poll conducted by Latino Decisions for Presente.org, the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALAAC), and Mi Familia Vota, a combined 85 percent of Latinos indicated they were either very likely (68 percent) or somewhat likely (17 percent) to support Clinton for president. But their support was conditional on Clinton endorsing Obama's executive action on deportation.[7]

Clinton did, in fact, later announce she supported President Obama's executive action on immigration and that, if elected, she would renew it. (The order is temporary, and unless Congress passes permanent reform President Trump has the power to renew, alter, or even reverse DACA.) In December 2015—just six weeks before formal voting began in the 2016 Democratic primary—Clinton delivered a major speech on immigration in which she pledged to uphold and even extend Obama's immigration protections. "America was built by immigrants," Clinton said. "Our future will be always written in part by immigrants and every single one of us, no matter how long

ago our ancestors arrived in this land, whether they came by foot or boat or plane, across the Pacific or the Atlantic or the Rio Grande."

If ever there were a clear contrast on Latino politics generally, and immigration policy specifically, the 2016 general election provided it. In 2008, the differences between the two major parties were slight: Democrat Barack Obama—who to that point continued to mostly pay lip service to comprehensive immigration reform—ran against "Gang of Eight" Republican John McCain. In 2012, the candidate gap widened slightly, as DACA-convert Obama ran against "self-deportation" Republican nominee Mitt Romney. But by late 2015, on issues of importance to Latino voters the candidate and partisan gap between Clinton and Trump had grown into a chasm.

ELECTION RESULTS AND POLLING CONTROVERSY

Donald Trump carried thirty states, winning 304 electoral votes. He held all of the states fellow Republican Mitt Romney won four years earlier, and flipped another six states from blue to red: Florida (twenty-nine electoral votes), Iowa (six), Michigan (sixteen), Ohio (eighteen), Pennsylvania (twenty), and Wisconsin (ten). Trump amassed an Electoral College majority despite losing the popular vote to Hillary Clinton by more than two percentage points.

Exit polls confirmed what pundits predicted all along: Trump won based on his strength of support among white voters (57 percent to Clinton's 37 percent), particularly white men (62 percent to 31 percent), and more specifically whites without a college degree (66 percent to 29 percent). According to exit polls, Trump also won 28 percent of Latino voters, better than Mitt Romney—a seemingly shocking result, given his issue positions and statements.[8]

This figure is demonstrably wrong. For eight weeks prior to the election, Latino Decisions' tracking poll never showed Trump above 18 percent; meanwhile, Clinton steadily grew her share from 74 percent to 79 percent by the final week before the election. That 79 percent matched exactly the results from Latino Decisions' separate Election Eve Poll, which also pegged Clinton's support among Latinos at 79 percent, to just 18 percent for Donald Trump.

The national exit poll estimate of 28 percent Latino support for Trump was a clear outlier that diverged dramatically from other high-quality, large sample pre-election polls. All of these polls showed Trump's percentage much closer to what Latino Decisions found throughout the pre-election tracking or election eve polls: *Univision/Washington Post*, 19 percent; *NBC/Telemundo* oversample, 17 percent: NALEO/*Telemundo* Tracking Poll; 14 percent; and FIU/New Latino Voice, 13 percent.

Ample circumstantial evidence further suggests that Latinos voted for Clinton at the same if not higher rates than they did for Obama four years earlier. Consider the data from table 8.1, which shows the two-party vote shares for both Clinton in 2016 and Obama in 2012 in the seven largest Latino population states.

The impact of third-party candidates Gary Johnson and Jill Stein mask the rather remarkable fact that Clinton's national two-party vote share (51.1 percent) wasn't much lower than Obama's (52.0 percent) four years earlier. Yet in five of the seven large Latino states—Florida and Nevada excepted—Clinton *over*performed her national, two-party decline of 0.9 percent relative to Obama. In three of those five overperforming states, Clinton bested Obama's two-party margin outright. Not coincidentally, those three states—Arizona, California, and Texas—alone account for about 60 percent of Latinos nationwide; the two states where she bettered Obama's two-party share by the widest margins, California and Texas, are home to roughly half of all U.S. Latinos.

Precinct-level analyses conducted by political scientists Stephen A. Nuño and Bryan Wilcox-Archuleta of all 1,288 Arizona voting precincts confirm that Clinton carried closer to 80 percent of Latino voters in the Grand Canyon State. "Relying on a social-science analysis called ecological inference developed by Harvard political scientist Gary King, our precinct analysis shows Latinos in Arizona voted at rates greater than 80 percent for Hillary Clinton in 2016," Nuño and Wilcox-Archuleta conclude. "An estimated 550,000 Latino voters providing record support for the Democratic candidate is likely why Arizona was a narrow 4-point margin in 2016." Their analysis pegged

Table 8.1. Obama versus Clinton Two-Party Vote Shares in Key Latino States

State	*Obama 2012*	*Clinton 2016*	*Difference*
Nevada	53.4	51.3	−2.1
Florida	50.4	49.4	−1.1
US Average	**52.0**	**51.1**	**−0.9**
New Mexico	55.3	54.7	−0.6
Colorado	52.7	52.7	−0.1
Arizona	45.4	48.1	2.7
Texas	42.0	45.3	3.3
California	61.9	66.1	4.3

Source: Dave Leip's US Election Atlas
Note: Due to rounding, difference column may not add up.

Trump's Latino support at 15 percent, a figure perfectly in line with all the pre-election and tracking polls cited above.[9]

In a similar, ecological inference analysis of precinct-level data, Wilcox-Archuleta and Francisco Pedraza found that, contrary to state exit poll results, Clinton clearly outperformed Obama in Texas. Looking at the 864 precincts with at least 75 percent Latino population share, Pedraza and Wilcox-Archuleta conclude: "If we compare Clinton's vote margin over Trump to Obama's margin over Mitt Romney four years ago, Clinton had a higher margin than Obama in 692 of these 864 precincts—or 80 percent. The claim that Clinton somehow 'ran behind' Obama among Texas Hispanics is not consistent with the actual precinct data."[10]

Ditto for Florida: In their precinct-level ecological inference analyses of that state's results, political scientists Ali Valenzuela and Tyler Reny found that, in 88 percent of Florida precincts with at least 75 percent Latinos, Clinton won more net votes than Obama did four years ago. They also estimated that Clinton turned a 11.2 percent Latino deficit for Obama against Romney in Miami-Dade County in 2012 into a two-point victory over Trump in 2016. Echoing the results in Arizona and Texas, Valenzuela and Reny conclude that the statewide exit polls in Florida underestimated Clinton's Latino support. "When compared to the exit polls and Latino Decisions election eve poll, our overall estimate of 66.9 percent is a match to the [Latino Decisions] estimate of 67 percent for Clinton, while the exit poll estimate of 62 percent appears too low."[11]

Ecological inference analysis of voting results relies upon unusually uniform data points. Our own study of key precincts with very high if not uniformly Latino populations reinforce the precinct-level findings in Arizona, Florida, and Texas.[12] Table 8.2 shows specific precincts in Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and Wisconsin where both the presidential vote results and the Latino share of the population are known. Notice that even where the Latino population falls below 90 percent, Clinton's vote share is routinely above 80 percent, and sometimes closer to 90 percent. In the New Mexico and Texas precincts where nearly every voter is Latino—the closest case to pairing a pure Latino voter universe directly with partisan voting results—Clinton's shares are consistently in the high 70 percent to mid-80 percent range.

Down-ballot polling results affirm the partisan splits among Latinos in the presidential contest. In U.S. House contests, Latino Decisions' election eve poll showed 84 percent of Latinos voted for the Democratic candidate, just 15 percent for Republican House candidates. With the exception of Arizona, Florida, and Ohio, and the unusual case of California's blanket-primary contest, in all twelve of the poll's oversampled states with U.S. Senate races

Table 8.2. Partisan Results from Overwhelmingly Latino Precincts in Four States

Precinct	Latino%	Clinton%	Trump%
Las Cruces (#80), NM	99	85	9
Las Cruces (#13), NM	99	87	7
Starr County, TX	96	79	19
Las Cruces (#97), NM	96	85	10
Valencia (#24), NM	94	72	16
Jim Hogg County, TX	94	77	20
Maverick County, TX	94	77	21
Zavala County, TX	93	78	20
Kissimmee, (#210), FL	78	80	17
Milwaukee (12–232), WI	78	87	9
Milwaukee (12–233), WI	77	88	9
Kissimmee (#411), FL	71	80	18
Milwaukee (12–321), WI	72	90	8
Kissimmee (#200), FL	69	78	18

Source: Election results gathered by authors from county registrars of voters, November 9, 2016.

Latino support for Democratic Senate candidates also reached or exceeded 80 percent.

All of these results raise a rather thorny question: Does it really make sense that Hillary Clinton exceeded her national two-party margin difference in five of the seven most populous Latino states, and did better at the precinct level among Latinos in three of the biggest Latino states plus selected precincts in New Mexico and Wisconsin, yet she somehow captured a *smaller* share of Latino votes nationwide than Obama? To believe that requires the companion belief that Clinton made up the loss of Latino voters by compensating with higher support from among some combination of white, African-American, and, perhaps in the case of California, Asian-American voters. Believing that Donald Trump captured 28 percent of the Latino vote defies most everything that partisan demographers know, not to mention the exit poll results for non-Latino voters.

So, what explains why the national exit poll estimates indicate Latino support for Trump a full ten points higher than all other pre-election and election eve polls? The short answer is that the exit polls contain a variety of sampling problems for smaller and geographically concentrated populations like Latino voters.

First, exit pollsters interview too few respondents in Spanish. According to Census data, about 30 percent of Latino voters are foreign born; the share of Spanish-speaking respondents should be close to 30 percent. But during recent cycles, only about 6 percent to 7 percent of exit poll Latinos were

interviewed in Spanish. Second, and overlapping with the English-language oversampling, exit polls had roughly 12 percent more Latino college graduates than the share indicated by the Current Population Survey, and 5 percent more Latinos with above-median incomes. Taken together, because the Latino sample skews toward more affluent, better educated, English-speaking respondents, of course the results will tilt more Republican—just as they would for a white voter sample that includes larger shares of high-income, college-educated, and English-speaking respondents.

OTHER 2016 RESULTS

Non-presidential results provide further compelling evidence of the record levels of Democratic support from Latinos in 2016—or, rather, record deterioration of the Republican brand under Donald Trump's stewardship in the eyes of American Latinos.

The evidence for declining Republican support among Latinos was evident well before Election Day. In a poll sponsored by the Latino Victory Project conducted during the Republican National Convention held in Cleveland in July, Latino Decisions reported how much the GOP brand had already collapsed because of Trump. Although 44 percent of Latinos in the sample reported that they had previously voted for at least one local, state, or national Republican candidate, fully 80 percent said they now had an unfavorable view of Trump: 13 percent "somewhat" unfavorable, and a whopping 67 percent "very" unfavorable. Similarly, 83 percent of Latinos described Trump as "racist," and 81 percent agreed that the "build the wall" chant at Trump rallies was "disturbing and encourages discrimination against immigrants and Latinos."[13]

Likewise, in an August national and battleground oversample poll of 3,729 Latinos conducted by Latino Decisions on behalf of America's Voice, when asked to describe the Republican Party, 45 percent of Latinos agreed with the statement that the GOP "doesn't care too much about Latinos" and another 28 percent described the party as "sometimes hostile" toward them. Fully 70 percent of Latinos agreed that Trump had made the Republican Party "more hostile" to Latinos.[14]

Results from 5,600 Latinos polled by Latino Decisions on the eve of the election also indicated deteriorating support and trust among Latinos for the Republican Party—and that the Trump campaign may have done permanent damage. Asked which statement best described their attitude toward the GOP, 17 percent of Latinos agreed with the statement, "I generally agree with the Republican Party on most issues and am likely to vote for them in future elections"; 33 percent said, "I disagree with the Republican Party on many issues, but I would consider voting for them in the future if they help pass immigration reform with a path to citizenship"; 41 percent agreed with the statement that "the Republican Party has now become so anti-Latino and anti-immigrant that it would be hard for me to ever consider supporting them in the future"; the remaining 9 percent agreed with none of these statements or did not know.[15]

The fact that two in five current Latino voters indicated they would find it hard to support Republicans in the future puts a hard ceiling on the party's Latino support. Donald Trump and his campaign have left an indelible imprint on a very large swath of the Latino electorate, which is much younger that the population overall and will be casting a growing share of votes in the future. Republican leaders will need a bold and concerted effort to change the party's immigration stance and end the party's overtly hostile rhetoric toward Latinos if it hopes to reverse the deepening Latino distrust and suspicion toward the GOP.

As for issues, immigration was the most important issue for Latino voters in 2016: A combined half of all Latinos polls cited either "immigration reform/deportations" (39 percent) or "anti-immigrant/Latino discrimination/race relations" (10 percent) as one of the "most important issues" in their voting calculus this year. In a question allowing multiple responses, immigration-related issues surpassed "fix economy/jobs/unemployment" (33 percent), "education reform/schools" (15 percent), and "health care" (13 percent). Thirteen other issues received single-digit mentions as "most important" issues to Latinos in 2016.

LD's Election Eve Poll also indicated that one in five Latinos cast a presidential vote for the first time in 2016. Relatedly, more than one in three Latinos—35 percent nationally—said they were contacted by a campaign, political party, or community organizations during 2016 and asked to vote or register to vote. Although a much lower contact rate than for white or African American voters, the 35 percent contact rate represents a small increase over the 31 percent figure from LD's 2012 Election Eve Poll. Of the 35 percent of Latinos contacted during the 2016 campaign, 66 percent said they were contacted by a representative of the Democratic Party; 51 percent were contacted by a nonpartisan community organization; and 32 percent reported contact from a member of the Republican Party.

CONCLUSION

Lost amid the incessant focus on Donald Trump and working-class white voters is the fact that a record number of Latinos turned out to vote in 2016.

Flawed exit poll data to the contrary, by a record share—four out of every five—Latino voters supported Democrat Hillary Clinton for president. At similar rates, Latinos supported Democratic candidates for Congress as well. As a result of Donald Trump's anti-immigrant campaign promises and rhetoric, Latinos expressed a growing mistrust toward the Republican Party.

These levels of support make perfect sense in an election year in which Latinos and especially immigration and border policy were front and center, and xenophobic statements and anti-immigrant sentiment were commonplace. From "rapists-and-murderers" to "build the wall" to Alicia Machado, Trump and the Republican Party's response to his racially tinged campaign made for a memorable 2016 election that American Latino voters will not soon forget.

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