Latino Influence in the 2016 Presidential Election

Beyond All or Nothing

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Every four years, the speculation game begins anew: Will this be the election in which Latinos finally become the electoral juggernaut that forever changes the political calculus of presidential campaigns? When it comes to Latino influence on presidential elections, journalists and academics alike are prone to all-or-nothing thinking. Depending on who you ask, either they will be the decisive factor or they are completely "irrelevant," a "myth" even (Yanez 2008; Zoellner 2012). The 2016 presidential contest was supposed to be a tipping-point election: the Republicans could no longer win the presidency while alienating the vast majority of Latino voters. Scant months after Romney's loss in 2012, the GOP released its so-called autopsy, calling for, among other things, a more inclusive approach that would avoid alienating Latino, Black, Asian American, and other groups of voters who felt unwelcome in the party. At the very least, the reasoning went, they would need to avoid explicit or even implicit appeals to nativism and racism if they wished to have any chance of winning; with the White, non-Latino proportion of the electorate continuing to shrink, they could no longer afford to settle for less than one-third of the Latino vote.[1] Yet Mitt Romney's talk of

"self-deportation" (Madison 2012) and his praise for Arizona's SB1070 in 2012 seem almost mild in comparison to what we witnessed in the run up to the 2016 presidential election. Donald Trump—who launched his candidacy with a speech that included the claim that Mexican immigrants were "bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists"[2]—appeared at times to revel in antagonizing Latinos. For instance, he made the call-and-response of "We're going to build a wall! And who's gonna pay for the wall? Mexico!"[3] a favorite routine at his rallies. He repeatedly insisted that U.S. District Judge Gonzalo P. Curiel, a federal judge, could not rule impartially on a civil case against Trump due to the judge's Mexican heritage[4]: "I've been treated very unfairly by this judge. Now, this judge is of Mexican heritage. I'm building a wall, OK?" (Kertscher 2016). And past slurs—such as his repeated references to Miss Universe Alicia Machado as "Miss Housekeeping" (Ross 2016)—attracted increased scrutiny over the course of the campaign. If anyone could mobilize Latino voters via antipathy, this was surely the candidate.

Indeed, it is clear from the Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll that "Latino consciousness" surged during the most recent election cycle, with a large number of Latino voters citing support for the Latino community as the reason why they went out to vote in 2016. No doubt, the Trump factor was a major reason why; a full 55% identified Trump as "hostile" toward Latinos (Sanchez and Barreto 2016), compared to just 18% who said the same about Romney on the eve of the 2012 election. And yet it wasn't enough. The conventional wisdom that Latinos could no longer be safely ignored and certainly not openly antagonized by a candidate who had any chance of winning seems to have been incorrect. After all, if the candidate overwhelmingly preferred by a group of voters loses the election, then this group must not have been all that influential, right? Yet, as a number of authors (e.g., Fraga and Ramirez 2004; Barreto et al. 2010; Ramírez 2013; Gross and Barreto 2015) have convincingly argued, such all-or-nothing notions of group influence offer only limited insight, leading analysts to mistake random fluctuations for meaningful trends. As an antidote to such simplistic assessments, we offer an analysis of the 2016 presidential election that considers multiple aspects of influence while recognizing the inherent randomness that leads to any observed outcome in a single election. The

complex dynamics of group influence are especially apparent in U.S. presidential elections, due to the role of the Electoral College and the uneven distribution of eligible voters by race and ethnicity throughout the nation. Overall, it is important to remember that every electoral outcome is the result of myriad systematic and random forces. It is tempting, especially in close elections, to fixate on some unforeseeable minor phenomenon as "decisive." Our goal is to measure systematic influence without being led astray by random fluctuation.

Consider, by way of analogy, a fanciful scenario in which an election result is to be determined by a single draw from a deck of playing cards. In the first "election," imagine that I, the candidate, will win if any card showing the suit of clubs is drawn. I have a 25% chance of winning. Suppose I draw an eight of clubs—I win the election. In the next election, imagine a slightly different scenario: I will win if a card of either black suit (clubs or spades) is drawn. This time, I have a 50% chance of winning. Now suppose I draw the jack of hearts, losing the election. Were I to fixate on the particular results, I would claim incorrectly that the former game was more advantageous to my candidacy. It would be similarly naive for us to jump to the conclusion that Latinos were less influential in the 2016 presidential election than in 2012 simply because the candidate preferred by a majority of Latinos won in 2012 and lost in 2016. Our goal is to measure Latinos' role in affecting the odds of a given outcome, as well as in the public perception of their power to change these odds. With this in mind, we shall employ computer simulations using information from the Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll, Census data, and state-by-state election results in order to ascertain Latino electoral power as a probability of being relevant to the outcome. First, however, we turn our attention to a few other indicators of Latino electoral influence: media attention, outreach efforts by campaigns, and demographic trends.

Power through Attention I: Media Coverage

The 2016 presidential race began in earnest with Cuban American Senator Ted Cruz of Texas announcing his bid for the Republican nomination

on March 23, 2015, making him the first major candidate of either party to formally announce. Another Cuban American, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, announced his own run for the GOP nomination less than a month later. Their two candidacies sparked early media speculation regarding the potential for Republican candidates to peel away some of the strong Latino support typically enjoyed by Democrats. Candidates Cruz and Rubio thus found themselves compared on their "Latino-ness" and on their ability to garner support from Latino voters across the United States (Attanasio 2016). Lost in much of this speculation was the fact that neither had attracted overwhelming Latino support in their previous elections. Cruz earned just 35% of the Latino vote in Texas while winning his Senate seat in 2012.[5] Rubio, on the other hand, did manage to garner 62% of Latino votes when he first ran for the Senate in 2010, but this was in Florida, which traditionally housed the most Republican-friendly Latino voters, many themselves of Cuban heritage.[6] Nationwide, Latinos' mixed feelings about these two Republicans made their candidacies a less obvious opportunity to attract new voters to their party. Their prominence did, however, ensure that media-led conversations about Latino voters—and their ethnic and regional diversity—started early.

During the primary election season, journalists regularly noted the growth in the population of eligible Latino voters since 2012, but were divided on whether their participation at the polls would follow suit. As it became evident that Donald Trump would secure the Republican nomination, articles discussing the Latino electorate increasingly turned to the theme of their overwhelming antipathy for Trump, frequently providing anecdotes of Latinos registering to vote for the first time specifically to cast their votes against Trump. Such reports characterized him—correctly, for the most part—as a mobilizing figure, primarily due to his anti-immigrant and specifically anti-Mexican rhetoric. Taking advantage of the apparent opportunity, Univision, the most-watched Spanish language network, created programming to promote voter registration among Spanish-speaking Latinos. Such participation by a Spanish-language media organization was hardly unprecedented. Univision itself had previously partnered with political advocacy organizations such as NCLR and NALEO, as in its "Ya Es

Hora" mobilization effort of 2012 and an election-oriented naturalization campaign in 2008, and its competitor Telemundo even planted election and Census-related plotlines in its soap operas during its 2012 "Vota por Tu Futuro" campaign (Ali 2012). Even more than in previous years, though, the personal stakes were clear and attempts at journalistic impartiality had become strained. Dramatic footage of Univision's longtime Spanish-language news anchor Jorge Ramos being physically removed by security from a Trump press conference in Iowa in August 2015 (Gabriel 2015) drew early attention to growing tensions between the Trump campaign and Latinos. A number of high-profile Spanish-speaking supporters of previous Republican presidential candidates, such as Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Republican political consultant Ana Navarro, refused to endorse candidate Trump. The few prominent Latinos to back him tended to be reserved in their support; Representative Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), for example, avoided referring to Trump by name while acknowledging that he would vote for "the Republican nominee" (Mazzei 2016). Univision's Ramos and his evening news co-host Maria Elena Salinas frequently reminded viewers of their unsuccessful attempts to get anyone from the Trump campaign to agree to an interview with the network during the course of the long campaign, a snub Ramos claimed would not likely be repeated, regardless of the election results (Stelter 2016).

In the final stretch leading up to the general election, the press emphasized the importance of Latino voters to Clinton's potential victory, including reports of increased registration of Latino voters and a surge in early voting by Latinos (Levitz 2016). The press reported on Latinos' extremely high rates of support for Clinton's candidacy, further feeding into the "Latino influence" narrative. Largely missed was the possibility that an increase in White, non-Latino voters and a decrease in African American turnout might change the group influence calculus enough to make a difference in the outcome.

The media seem to have paid at least as much attention to Latino voters in 2016 as they had in 2012 and likely slightly more. We selected eleven high-circulation newspapers and compared their election coverage during five comparable periods in each election (August, September, October, the week

before Election Day, and the week after Election Day).[7] Although this was a purposive sample, chosen to reflect prominence and regional diversity, the choices were made independently of any obvious factors that might lead results to be systematically different from a randomly selected set of prominent newspapers. Within the selected set of newspapers, we searched for all stories designated by LexisNexis as pertaining to the subject "elections" and counted the proportion of these that additionally contained either the word "Latino" or "Hispanic" within the article text. In four of the five comparison periods—all but the week following Election Day—most of these newspapers increased their proportional coverage of Latinos in election stories from 2012 to 2016, including ten of eleven in October. In these same four periods, the average difference represented an increase in 2016.

Overall, we observe a small but statistically detectable increase in media coverage of Latinos in election coverage from 2012 to 2016. In table 1, there are eleven rows (one per newspaper) and five pairs of columns, with each pair indicating the percentage of election articles mentioning Latinos in corresponding time periods during 2012 versus 2016—fifty-five pairwise comparisons in all (or fifty-four if we disregard the August *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, which had no discernible Latino election coverage in August of either election year). All but one of eleven newspapers showed an average increase in Latino-related election coverage over the three months leading up to Election Day in 2016 compared to 2012. On average, we observe a small increase in proportional Latino election coverage over corresponding periods within a newspaper (+1.19% across all eleven newspapers and +2.35% over just the three full months measured, August through October). If we restrict our attention to the comparison periods prior to Election Day, before the election outcome is known, we note a statistically distinguishable but modest increase in attention to Latinos in election coverage. Thirty-one of forty-three valid newspaper-period pairs registered an increase (table 1, first eight columns—the unshaded cells represent an increase in coverage of Latinos in electoral stories). Were there in fact no change in any of the underlying rates of mention within any newspaper at corresponding periods in 2012 versus 2016, the probability of observing at least this many increases in the data by chance would be less than one in a thousand.[8]

Table 1. Media Attention on Latino Voters: Proportion of Stories in Each Newspaper Period Mentioning Elections That Also Mention the Term "Latino" or "Hispanic" (LexisNexis)

	3 months before election		2 months before election		1 month before election		1 week before Election		1 week after election	
	Aug. 2012	Aug. 2016	Sept. 2012	Sept. 2016	Oct. 2012	Oct. 2016	Oct. 30–Nov. 5, 2012	Nov. 1–7, 2016	Nov. 7–13, 2012	Nov. 9–15, 2016
USA Today (US)	8.59%	6.33%	5.06%	6.92%	5.41%	8.85%	7.25%	8.96%	12.61%	14.53%
New York Times (NY)	6.61%	11.55%	7.64%	7.31%	6.00%	9.73%	6.56%	12.25%	15.28%	11.67%
Tampa Bay Times (FL)	5.64%	7.38%	8.24%	9.84%	6.72%	10.70%	5.10%	14.12%	11.51%	10.20%
Philadelphia Inquirer (PA)	2.82%	6.25%	4.24%	3.92%	4.71%	4.17%	11.76%	4.60%	17.50%	23.40%
Washington Post (DC)	3.59%	11.35%	3.67%	7.45%	3.46%	7.71%	4.93%	11.83%	11.40%	9.86%
Las Cruces Sun-News (NM)	8.93%	8.33%	9.33%	3.33%	4.46%	6.98%	9.09%	5.88%	25.00%	18.18%
Minneapolis Star-Tribune (MN)	0.00%	0.00%	2.25%	1.67%	2.88%	4.24%	2.50%	2.38%	0.00%	4.00%
Christian Science Monitor (US)	11.59%	9.38%	4.80%	14.09%	5.96%	8.60%	15.91%	7.55%	18.64%	14.29%
Wisconsin State Journal (WI)	0.75%	2.78%	1.22%	3.85%	0.00%	3.52%	0.00%	2.33%	0.00%	6.52%
Durham Herald-Sun (NC)	6.61%	9.09%	2.13%	13.73%	2.44%	4.35%	5.88%	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%
Denver Post (CO)	7.80%	10.94%	7.28%	10.37%	2.72%	6.42%	8.82%	11.36%	21.25%	11.71%

Note: For each newspaper, the proportion of election coverage mentioning the term "Hispanic" or "Latino" in a particular month or week in 2012 (measured relative to Election Day) is compared to the corresponding month or week in 2016. Paired observations in which this estimated coverage dropped in 2016 appear in gray.

Treating the newspapers as distinct, seven out of ten papers registering a change in August saw an increase in proportional coverage of Latinos, as well as seven out of eleven in September, ten out of eleven in October, and seven of eleven in the final week before Election Day. If there were no change in underlying reporting rates at each newspaper, the probability of observing at least this much of a shift by chance would be just 0.0066.[9] During the week immediately after the election, however, the upward trend is absent from the data. Six of eleven newspapers had fewer mentions of Latinos in election coverage in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 election than in 2012, with an average drop of 1.5% in our sample—statistically indistinguishable from no change. Were Hillary Clinton the victor, one anticipates a narrative emphasizing realized Latino influence. Instead, the coverage in the immediate aftermath focused on the shock of the outcome, the possible problems with polling, campaign missteps, and possible reasons behind the shifts in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Power through Attention II: The Presidential Campaigns

When it comes to campaign indicators of group influence, perception is reality. That is, if a candidate and his or her team pay particular attention to a specific subset of voters, using scarce resources to win their support and/or mobilize them to show up to vote, it is because they believe the group is an important component of a winning strategy. They recognize the group's potentially pivotal role in a number of plausible paths to 270 Electoral College votes and acknowledge the importance of motivating these voters. Moreover, this means that the candidate will be loath to take any policy positions or public stands that would likely alienate such voters. Thus, for example, we witnessed a number of uncomfortable moments for both Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton during the primaries, as African American activists affiliated with Black Lives Matter heckled them at campaign rallies, pushing the candidates to more vocally support their cause. Despite long-standing concerns among Black voters that Democrats take their support for granted, surely the recognition that strong Black turnout would be essential to a

Democratic victory helped push candidates to increasingly embrace these activists and become more outspoken on their behalf. The fact that they did so—rather than, say, dismissing them as too radical—was a clear indication of latent African American voting power. What then of campaign overtures to Latino voting power?

The Democratic and Republican presidential campaigns diverged in their approach to mobilizing Latino voters in 2016. Hillary Rodham Clinton's presidential campaign made Latino outreach an important feature of her run for the White House. This was demonstrated in many dimensions of the campaign, including hiring of key staff, selection of the vice presidential candidate, its online platforms, and ad campaigns (Beckel 2016). For starters, Amanda Rentería, the daughter of a former farm worker, became the national political director of the Hillary for America campaign in March 2015; moreover, she became the first Latina to take on such a role for a major party candidate. A few months later a DREAMer,[10] Lorella Praeli, was hired to head Latino outreach for the campaign. Having secured the nomination in June 2016, Clinton selected Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, a person who has spent significant time in Latin America and speaks fluent Spanish, as her running mate. During the campaign, Senator Kaine made several appearances in which he was interviewed in Spanish or made full speeches in Spanish. Latino supporters could access a Spanish-language version of the campaign's official website, which also included a link to "Latinos for Hillary."[11] Furthermore, the campaign itself and the political action committees (PACs) supporting the Clinton–Kaine ticket ran many advertisements in both Spanish and English, referencing Trump's remarks about Mexican immigrants. This is not to say the Clinton campaign avoided all missteps with the Latino community. Most notable was the backlash to a blog post written during the primary campaign by a Latina staffer comparing Hillary Clinton to "your abuela," Spanish for grandmother (Luisi 2015), sparking widespread use of the hashtag #NotMyAbuela (Easley 2015).

The Trump presidential campaign relied almost completely on the Republican National Committee (RNC) for Latino outreach. No official efforts were made by the Trump campaign to reach Latino voters other than convening with the RNC and a National Latino Advisory Committee formed of

"business, civic, and faith-based Latino leaders" in August 2016 (Collins 2016). The committee had the purpose of serving as an intermediary between the Trump campaign and the Latino community. A week or so after the Trump campaign met with this committee, several of its members either resigned or considered resigning from their posts because of disagreements with Trump's proposed immigration policies. Though an organization named "Latinos for Trump" was active during the election, it was an independently organized group, not sponsored by the Trump campaign. Additionally, the press characterized the campaign as an English-only campaign, in that the campaign was run entirely in the English language (Goldmacher 2016).

The only Spanish-language ads aired in late October 2016, and even these were created and funded by a PAC supporting Trump's candidacy rather than by the campaign itself. Such weak efforts to reach Latinos and Spanish-speaking voters were typified by the ubiquitous signs at rallies reading "Latinos para Trump," a grammatically incorrect translation of "Latinos for Trump" (Rupert 2016; Saxena 2016). By way of contrast, the 2012 Romney campaign actively engaged Latino voters, creating a Latino outreach team named "Juntos with Romney" (Together with Romney); membership in this team was almost entirely made of current or former Latino Republican politicians from state governments and Congress. The Romney campaign had a Spanish-language website and ran ad campaigns and Web videos targeting Latinos voters, while having full-time Latino outreach staffers in Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Colorado, and New Mexico.

A number of high-profile Latino Republicans either declined to endorse Trump or publicly opposed him. Prominent Republican strategist Ana Navarro, despite a long history of supporting Republican candidates—including stints as National Latino Co-Chair for the John McCain and John Huntsman presidential campaigns—quickly became a passionate critic of candidate Trump. The Republican nominee's offensive characterization of Mexican immigrants in the announcement of his presidential bid may have been the initial catalyst for her staunch opposition to his run, but the reasons she provides for her grudging decision to actually vote for Hillary Clinton include concern for the members of the intersecting communities of which she is a part—immigrants, Latinos, women, and Republicans—as

well as those that count her friends and family among its members—for example, Jews, veterans, African Americans, and disabled people (Navarro 2016). Navarro's account highlights the opportunities for members of different aggrieved groups to leverage their joint voting power.

The Changing Electorate: Demographics and Ethnic Diversity

According to Barreto et al. (2010), "A prerequisite for group influence is a minimum group size, and preferably one that is cohesive or mobilized" (913). Demographic trends can contribute to changes in cohesion and thus to variation in group voting influence, not only through relative population growth, but also via ethnic and ideological diversity. For instance, the distinctiveness of Florida subsides as Cuban American voters become less dominant in the state (Cordeiro 2016) and overall Latino voting patterns there begin to more closely mirror that in the rest of the country. Additionally, the shared perception of animosity directed at all Latino communities, without ethnic or regional distinction, provides an incentive for development of a shared pan-ethnic Latino identity. Indeed, the continuing rise in the number of Latinos naming "immigration reform" as the most important issue facing the Latino community—a plurality of 39% in the LD 2016 Election Eve poll—is a sign that candidate Trump's rhetoric—his promises of mass deportations, of building a border wall while demanding that Mexico foot the bill, and derogatory statements about Mexican American Judge Gonzalo Curiel and Venezuelan American former Miss Universe Alicia Machado—may have had the unintended consequence of bringing together Latinos of different ethnicities. Indeed, in 2016, immigration reform became the most important issue for Latinos in all twelve states included in Latino Decisions' 2016 Election Eve Poll. This is quite a change from 2012, when Arizona was the only state out of the eleven polled demonstrating a similar pattern.

While Florida continues to stand out as having the lowest rate of Latino support for Democratic presidential candidates, it looks more like other states with each election. Just 67% of Florida's Latinos voted for Clinton in 2016 (compared to around 79% nationwide), but this gap is narrower than

58% (Florida) versus 73% (nationally) for Obama in 2012 or just 44% (Florida) versus 58% (nationally) for Kerry in 2004, according to the Pew Research Center (Suro et al. 2005). Demographic changes in Florida's Latino community over the past twenty years—particularly the influx of Puerto Ricans to Central Florida—appear to have produced an increase in support of Democratic candidates.

One additional sign that pan-Latino identity was on the rise during the 2016 election season was the increase in reports of voting specifically with the "Latino community" in mind. Latino Decisions asked Latino respondents a similar question in 2012 and 2016 on the reason for their decision to vote, allowing them to choose among three alternatives, (1) to support Democratic candidates, (2) to support Republican candidates, and (3) to support (and represent) the Latino community.[12] Forty-two percent of Latinos reported they were voting "to support and represent the Latino community" in 2016, while just 36% said there were voting "to support the Latino community" in 2012, an estimated six-point increase. Thus Latino identity seems to have been at least as salient during this election cycle than the last, with feelings of Latino-linked fate likely a key attitude mobilizing Latinos to vote.

Influence at the Electoral College: Measuring the Probability of Group Relevance

Journalists and bloggers understandably use dramatic language when assessing Latino voting influence. Breathless headlines, such as "Trump Awakens a Sleeping Giant" (Scotti 2016) or "This year, Latino voters . . . really might decide this election" (Cohn 2016), stir excitement and draw attention. Readers would be less likely to click on a headline that reads "Latino Voters Likely to Be Somewhat More Influential This Year." Even ignoring the multifaceted nature of group voting influence discussed earlier, the popular notion of some group or groups having a "decisive" role in an election's outcome is hardly well defined. Counterfactual reasoning makes intuitive sense and we thus often treat electoral voting patterns like physical causal scenarios: Striking the match was decisive in starting the fire because were it not for

this act, the flame would not have erupted; likewise, we may say that college-educated women were decisive in an election because if they hadn't voted, the other candidate would have won. Indeed, it can be interesting to consider such extreme counterfactuals—see, for instance, the various electoral maps showing women-only, men-only, and so on (Gilson 2017).

The problem is that, while they may be of some descriptive value, such scenarios are too implausible to be meaningful in a conversation about electoral influence. It makes more sense to consider counterfactuals that are within the realm of possibility; fanciful scenarios such as an electorate consisting of all Latinos or non-Latinos are irrelevant to decision makers such as eligible voters, actual voters, and campaigns. We take up the modeling and simulation strategy introduced in Gross and Barreto (2015)—which in turn is based on insights by Andrew Gelman and coauthors (2002, 2004)—using data from Latino Decisions' 2016 Election Eve poll and Census voting and registration data to assess the probability of group voting influence.[13] The basic idea is to answer the following question, given our best current information: What was the probability that the election would be decided by a set of states whose electoral votes in turn hinged on the turnout and vote choice of Latinos? That is, we define Latino voting power as the estimated probability of obtaining Electoral College results in which both (1) the winning candidate could be switched by a set of states casting their electoral votes differently and (2) the margins of victory in those pivotal states are close enough that Latinos could have flipped the state victor by a plausibly different turnout and/or vote share per candidate. Our claim is that voting influence is intimately tied to uncertainty; if a group's behavior is too predictable, in terms of either turnout or preference, or lacks the cohesion that allows its members to be reached through a coherent and efficient strategy, the group can exert little influence either on the outcome or on subsequent policy positions by the candidate. In terms of the preceding analogy, we tend to think of striking the match as more influential than the presence of oxygen, although the fire would not have been initiated in the absence of either. Similarly, although it is the case that Obama wouldn't have won the 2012 election if people in cities hadn't voted, we would not typically think of "urban voters" as an influential bloc. There was no plausible threat that

urban voters would abstain en masse (or vote heavily Republican). If urban voters (or women, middle class, etc.) are the oxygen, the question for us is whether Latino voters may serve as the matchstick.

We do not treat Latino votes for each candidate probabilistically—instead, we identify a range of plausible outcomes using Latino Decisions' polling in current and previous elections, together with Census and Exit Poll data, and then treat the non-Latino White vote probabilistically. Although these plausible ranges are somewhat arbitrary, they are far more realistic than considering outcomes with and without the entire Latino electorate, as is commonplace. We presume that Latinos as a percentage of a state's voters will remain close to recent precedent, corrected for known demographic shifts, and that the percentage of Latinos voting for the Republican or Democrat will also not stray beyond a few points below or above polling by state over the past three elections. Where no state information is available (e.g., Michigan, Minnesota, Maine's Second District), we use national figures or neighboring states as a proxy).

Key to our assessment is the understanding that even after an election has occurred, we must resist the temptation to treat the outcome as predetermined; the inherent randomness of what has transpired must be addressed in the measurement itself. We thus use data on actual voting together with historical information on variability on the national and state level in order to estimate how likely, in retrospect, various electoral college outcomes were and in what proportion of such hypothetical outcomes a plausible change in Latino turnout and/or vote choice would have resulted in a different winner. We use a common statistical approach called random effects modeling. To understand this intuitively, imagine that Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are playing tug-of-war, with states (and their respective electoral votes) dangling from the rope so that the states most supportive of each are closest to them on the rope, from Washington, DC, (on Clinton's end) to West Virginia (on Trump's end), in this past election. The object for each candidate is to pull the rope far enough that states worth more than 270 electoral votes cross the threshold marker placed on the ground between them. Neither campaign knows the exact ordering of states along the rope, but many arrangements are virtually impossible (for example, Massachusetts closer to Trump than

Alabama). We assume there is a nationwide component to the electoral dynamics (the rope, with all states, moving back and forth)—this is called the *national effect* and it varies from election to election or even across polls in the same election. We may assume that certain shocks (e.g., renewed investigations into Clinton's e-mails or a big endorsement) may nudge national support in one direction or the other. However, many dynamics are state specific—represented by *state effects*, akin to individual states leapfrogging one another along the rope. We restrict ourselves to consideration of those states with a nonnegligible chance of voting for either candidate: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin, Maine's statewide vote, and Nebraska's Second District.[14]

The simulation begins with the actual outcome and then uses estimated probability distributions for the nationwide and state-specific random effects to generate different plausible outcomes in proportion to their likelihood. Thus, the overall national voting may move in either direction from the actual outcome, as may the individual state votes per candidate. For ease of comparison, we employ the same normal distributions of random effects used in Gross and Barreto (2015), estimated from hierarchical linear models fit to polling variation in 2012, actual historical electoral outcomes, and variants on these for the purpose of sensitivity analysis. One possible limitation is the lack of regional random effects in the model. In general, this is hard to do well, since regional cohesion ebbs and flows over time, making historical data unreliable for the task. While the lack of independence within particular groups of states is not typically a major concern, the fact that we cannot effectively model regional dynamics means that our assessment will necessarily fail to take account of the rust-belt bump enjoyed by Trump in 2016 (in particular, in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania).

In each of 100,000 simulation runs, Clinton starts with 184 safe electoral votes and Trump with 164 safe electoral votes. The remaining 190 electoral votes from sixteen states in closest contention—and one district, Nebraska's Second District—are awarded according the outcomes of each simulation in the following manner. We begin by fixing Latino turnout based on Census estimates and Latino vote choice (proportion voting for Trump and Clinton,

respectively) based on Latino Decisions Election Eve polling where available (and a combination of past polling, national average, and imputation by similar states where it is not). Using this information and the final vote tallies, we algebraically obtain our starting estimate for non-Latino turnout and vote choice. A nationwide random effect is drawn from a normal distribution with mean zero and standard deviation from each model's parameter estimates, and state-specific random effects are drawn in a similar fashion for each state/district.[15] The common nationwide effect and individual state effect are added to each state's estimate of actual non-Latino vote proportion, resulting in the simulated non-Latino popular vote within each state in contention. Finally, we calculate the Latino vote in each of the states under two scenarios—one most beneficial to Trump and the other most beneficial to Clinton.[16] In each run of this simulation, we record whether each state's electoral votes would change according to scenario—if so, we say that the outcome falls within the range of plausible Latino variation, making this group relevant to the outcome. Most importantly, we calculate the total electoral votes under the Trump-optimal and Clinton-optimal Latino vote and note whether the change results in a different candidate moving past the 270-vote threshold to win the election.

We operationalize Latino voting influence here as the estimated probability that a set of states could together determine the outcome of the election. This probability depends on the Latino turnout and vote choice within plausible limits in each of these states. In table 2, we provide this probability of Latino voting influence (PLVI) under each of four simulations and compare it to the counterpart estimate from 2012 (Gross and Barreto 2015). The featured simulation (column 1), in which the national random effect has standard deviation 0.02 and state random effects have standard deviation 0.01, assumes the same polling variability as existed in the months leading up to the 2012 general election, allowing simulated elections to bounce around in a fashion similar to what we witnessed in those national and state polls. In the simulation that assumes the widest distribution of national and state random effects, based on the Gelman HLM estimates from long-term differences over multiple elections, the PLVI drops to 22%, not too far from the estimate of 19% from 2012. That set of simulations presumes that we had

Table 2. Probability of Group Relevance in the Electoral College 2016

	$\sigma_{nation} = 0.02$ $\sigma_{state} = 0.01$	$\sigma_{nation} = 0.030$ $\sigma_{state} = 0.015$	$\sigma_{nation} = 0.06$ $\sigma_{state} = 0.04$	$\sigma_{nation} = 0.01$ $\sigma_{state} = 0.03$
	Short-term estimates, based on polls	Greater uncertainty	Gelman estimates over a few decades	High uncertainty for states, not overall
Latinos (2016)	0.364	0.368	0.217	0.317
Latinos (2012)	0.167	0.232	0.189	0.138

Note: Proportion of simulations in which Latino voters would have been relevant, in the sense that there was some set of states together determining the outcome of the simulated election, each of which individually had results that could have plausibly been different given realistic variation in Latino turnout and vote choice. The first column estimates uncertainty at the national and state level, where uncertainty over national and state-specific effects is estimated from movement in average polls provided by Real Clear Politics over the three months prior to the 2012 general election. This most naturally captures the short-term variability and a sense of what might have been possible, given the actual final votes within the states. The second column assumes an additional 50% standard deviation in both sets of random effects; this may be considered an allowance for additional uncertainty beyond variation in recent polls. Simulation results in the third column were generated using long-term estimates of variance in state and nation effects, and the final column is based on a hypothetical situation in which the overall nationwide figures are precisely measured, but we are less sure how individual states will vary (100,000 elections simulated).

Table 3. Probability of Group Influence by State

	Short-term variability (polling)		Long-term variability (Gelman estimates)	
	P(Latino state influence)	P(state is member of Latino-influence states pivotal in election)	P(Latino state influence)	P(state is member of Latino-influence states pivotal in election)
Arizona	0.960	0.364	0.522	0.174
Florida	0.850	0.364	0.433	0.183
Nevada	0.413	0.304	0.339	0.131
New Mexico	0.288	0.244	0.434	0.139
Pennsylvania	0.201	0.191	0.083	0.042
Wisconsin	0.141	0.135	0.094	0.043
Michigan	0.081	0.080	0.047	0.024
North Carolina	0.278	0.077	0.088	0.033
Nebraska second district	0.071	0.040	0.024	0.008
Virginia	0.022	0.019	0.078	0.037
Georgia	0.236	0.017	0.089	0.027
New Hampshire	0.017	0.017	0.014	0.006
Minnesota	0.011	0.010	0.044	0.020
Iowa	0.111	0.009	0.039	0.011
Colorado	0.012	0.008	0.127	0.048
Maine (at large)	0.006	0.003	0.134	0.044
Ohio	0.083	0.003	0.036	0.010

Note: In 100,000 simulations, centered on actual outcome of 2016 election, assuming nation- and state-level variability normally distributed with given standard deviations, P(Latino state influence) gives the proportion of simulations in which a given state's candidate preference could be flipped based only on realistic variation in Latino turnout and vote choice (i.e., simulated voting puts the state in the interval of Latino voting power). P(state is member of Latino-influence states pivotal in election) gives the proportion of simulations in which Latino voters would have been relevant to the overall national outcome (in the sense of table 2) and in which the given state is in the pivotal set of states.

very little knowledge specific to the 2016 election and that the national vote and state-specific votes might vary as widely as they have over the course of the past several elections.

Concentrating on simulations that best reflect our uncertainty just before the election (i.e., that based on polling variability alone), the PLVI is 36% in 2016, compared to 17% in 2012. A PLVI of 36% means that there was an estimated 36% chance that Latinos would be a relevant voting bloc (compared to 17% in 2012). From the perspective of a campaign, one would be less inclined to take a group for granted if there was a 36% (around 1 in 3) chance that their voting behavior would prove pivotal than if there was only a 17% (or around 1 in 6 chance), though a cautious campaign with sufficient resources would hardly wish to ignore such a group in either scenario. Among the comparisons corresponding to each of four sets of random effect distributions, only those stemming from the third set are somewhat close across the two elections (0.217 in 2016 vs. 0.189 in 2012). Loosely, this reflects the narrow victory by Trump, bringing Latinos and many other groups into positions of influence; various slight differences in voting dynamics would have reversed his victory. A wider distribution on national and state-level random effects is equivalent to allowing greater overall swing of Democratic versus Republican support, as well as greater sorting of individual states relative to one another. The bottom line is that, despite Donald Trump's victory, Latino group relevance to the Electoral College vote was no less and likely a bit greater than in the previous presidential election.

Conclusion: Targeted Voter Suppression as an Indicator of Latino Influence

While we tend to focus on voter mobilization as a component of group electoral influence, attempts at demobilization may also be viewed as indicators of voting power. After all, targeting specific classes of voters and making it more difficult for them to vote is tricky business; not only may it run the risk of a legal response (as when courts have turned back attempts at redistricting and voter ID laws that would have the effect of disenfranchising black

voters), but it may also lead to voter backlash and have the opposite of its intended effect.

Influence of Latinos on the 2016 election is dependent on the existing institutional limitations on their ability to participate in elections. In recent years state governments across the United States have passed legislation that has it made more difficult for Latinos, and people of color in general, to both get registered and vote in elections. Furthermore, the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder* has resulted in a severe wound to the Voting Rights Act (VRA) that may have hampered the electoral power of Latinos in the 2016 election.

A study commissioned by the Leadership Conference Education Fund (2016) found that in the wake of the 2013 Supreme Court decision that eliminated VRA Section 5 coverage of nine full states and some jurisdictions with six other states, in total 868 polling places have been closed in Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas. The state of Texas closed the largest number polling places, with 403 closures, 46% of all closures, followed by Arizona with 212 poll closures, 24% of all closures (Thompson 2016). This means that two of the top ten Latino population states have seen greatest number of poll closures since Shelby County; Texas is the state with the second highest population of Latinos in the United States and Arizona is sixth. Approximately more than 10 million Texas residents are Latinos, 39% of the state population (López and Stepler 2016b), and Arizona has a population of little more than 2 million Latinos, who make up 31% of the total state population (López and Stepler 2016a). Overall, the total poll closures represent a 16% reduction in polling places among counties in the study that were once covered by Section 5 of the VRA, and 46% of the 381 counties in the study have fewer voting locations.

In addition to the hundreds of polling place closures, many other voting restrictions were in place at the time of the 2016 General Election. Fourteen states had new voting restrictions active for the first time in this election, ranging from registration restrictions to limits on early voting; these include Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Eleven of these states have new photo ID or proof of citizenship

requirements for voting, with Texas being one of them. Another six states now have greater registration restrictions, including Illinois, Florida, and Texas, with Illinois being the state with the fifth highest Latino population in the United States and Florida the third. Eight states reduced the time period for early voting, with Florida among them (The Brennan Center for Justice 2016).

Looking ahead, the clearest sign of Latino electoral influence may be, oddly enough, the extent to which it attracts attempts to suppress Latino voters. That newly elected President Trump clings to baseless claims that millions of noncitizen ineligible voters unlawfully voted against him simply as an explanation for his popular vote loss may be a signal that he and his supporters will continue to push aggressively for policies that make voting more difficult, particularly for Latinos and other communities of color. A broad view of group voting influence will allow us to approach externally enforced demobilization as the counterpart to voter mobilization, a sign that minority populations' growing influence is great enough to invite risky countermeasures.

Notes

1. Mitt Romney's presidential campaign declared 38% as the "magic number" of Latino voters needed in order to win the 2012 election (Joseph 2012). In the end, he only managed to get 27%.
2. Washington Post Staff (June 15, 2015). Full text: "Donald Trump Announces Presidential Bid." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid.
3. See, for example, footage here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5YCExZE0rw
4. Totenberg, Nina. "Who Is Judge Gonzalo Curiel, The Man Trump Attacked for His Mexican Heritage?" *NPR: Politics*, June 7.
5. Texas results from the ImpreMedia–Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll at http://www.latinovote2012.com/app/#all-tx-all.
6. He would only earn 40% of the Latino vote when—after losing the presidential nomination to Trump—he won re-election to his Senate seat.
7. We began by identifying top circulation newspapers available through

LexisNexis without including more than one from a single state (http://www.cision.com/us/2014/06/top-10-us-daily-newspapers and https://www.agilitypr.com/resources/top-media-outlets/top-15-daily-american-newspapers). This resulted in the following: *USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Denver Post*, and *Tampa Bay Times*, the final two of which are from swing states Colorado and Florida. (*Los Angeles Times* had to be dropped, as 2012 was not available in the database. We replaced it with the highest circulation California newspaper available: *San Jose Mercury News*.) We then chose the highest circulation newspapers in the database for each of several states, chosen to emphasize potential swing states in different regions, giving us the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Pennsylvania) (a top-twenty national paper), the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* (Minnesota), the *Wisconsin State Journal* (Wisconsin), the *Durham Sun-Herald* (North Carolina), and the *Las Cruces Sun-News* (New Mexico). Finally, we added another national newspaper, the Christian Science Monitor, a highly regarded paper that was one of the first to abandon print completely in favor of online journalism, bringing the total to eleven.

8. Formally, a one-tailed hypothesis test assuming a binomial distribution with probability of increase and probability of decrease both equal to 0.5 yields a p value of 0.00096 (the probability of 31 or more increases in 43 chances), meaning we can reject the null of no difference at all conventional significance levels. This is a simple nonparametric test that considers only direction of observed change, not magnitude.
9. The probability of at least 7 of 10 in one month, 7 of 11 in two months, and 10 of 11 in one month is 0.00055 times 12 ways that these outcomes can be arranged. (The multinomial coefficient corresponding to the number of arrangements is $4!/2!1!1! = 12$)
10. Noncitizens born outside the United States but living here since childhood would be eligible under the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors)—first introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2001—to apply for legal residency. Individuals covered by the bill have come to refer to themselves as DREAMers.
11. https://www.hillaryclinton.com/es
12. The wording in parentheses was added in 2016.
13. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-580.html.
14. Maine and Nebraska are the only states that currently may split their electoral votes. The only ones in contention were the two electoral votes that Maine

allots by popular vote winner and the one Nebraska vote based on the popular vote in their Second Congressional District.

15. We use the term "state" here to indicate each of the fifteen states with all electoral votes at stake, as well as for Maine's two at-large electoral votes awarded to the winner of the statewide vote and the single electoral vote awarded to the winner of Nebraska's Second District.
16. We define the boundaries of plausible Latino turnout as ranging from 35% to 65% of eligible Latino voters within a state, centered on the actual national average of around 50% and encompassing actual state estimates ranging from 36% (Michigan and Minnesota) to 64% (Virginia). We define limits of plausible vote choice based on recent elections, specific to state but generally ranging from around 10% to 34% of Latinos supporting the Republican among those voting for one of the two major-party candidates. (The exception is Florida, with low and high limits assumed to be 17% and 45%, respectively.)

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