

# The Latina/o Gender Gap in the 2016 Election

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As the largest minority group in the United States, Hispanics are playing an increasingly influential role in national politics (Barreto and Segura 2014).<sup>1</sup> This population is only expected to grow, and much of that growth will be US-born. By 2060, the US Census Bureau projects that Hispanics will make up 29 percent of the population in what by then will be a majority-minority nation. At the same time, Hispanics' demographic power historically has been offset by their low turnout on election day. For example, in presidential years since 2000, Hispanics have barely edged out Asian American voters at the polls, even though Asian Americans are just 5 percent of the US population while Hispanics are about 17 percent. Forty-eight percent of eligible Latina/o voters showed up at the polls on election day in 2012 (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013). Meanwhile, 67 percent of blacks and 64 percent of whites came out to cast a vote.

During the 2016 presidential election there was much talk about the role of identity, specifically as it relates to ethnicity, immigration, and gender. Republican candidate Donald Trump kicked off his campaign by squarely targeting Mexicans and undocumented immigrants: he promised to build a border wall and force Mexico to pay for it and called for massive deportations. Framing immigrants as a national security threat became a centerpiece of his campaign. Overall, his primary and general election campaigns were hypermasculine in tone, and there were several major issues around gender, from his treatment of female journalists and candidates to accusations of sexual assault in his past. Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton's historic campaign for the Democratic nomination and then for president placed her identity as a woman front and center. Her role as a mother and grandmother and her many years of working on behalf of women and

children were often cited alongside her years of legislative and foreign policy experience. In addition to highlighting the status of women, Clinton campaigned on the importance of immigration reform, including a pathway to citizenship for undocumented workers.

As a result of these election season trends, much was made of the anticipated reaction of Latina/o voters and female voters on election day. For example, political analyst Charlie Cook, noting Trump's negative comments about immigrants, proclaimed, "The 2016 election is going to be a test of the character of the Latino community." He continued, "When someone engages in demagoguery at your expense, do you pull back or do you double your efforts?" (Levy 2015). Record-breaking Latino voter registration and mobilization efforts took place in Latina/o communities, and a tsunami of Latina/o turnout was expected. The media also focused on the power of the female vote in 2016. For instance, Leah Askarinam (2016) wrote the following in an *Atlantic* article:

Hillary Clinton became the first truly viable woman presidential nominee the nation had ever seen—and used Trump's alleged behavior toward women as a weapon against him . . . thanks to a collision of cultural and demographic change that's occurred this election cycle, this voting bloc, representing half the country, could be more influential over an election's outcome than ever before.

Despite the attention paid to Latina/os and women voters during the campaigns, little was said or written about the population that stands at the intersection of these ethnic and gender identities: Latinas. Over the last century, Hispanic women have been agents of change in their communities, in elective office, as campaign staff, and as voters.<sup>2</sup> In this essay I examine the intersection of gender and ethnicity in the 2016 presidential election, looking specifically at whether a gender gap existed among Hispanic voters. Using theories of intersectionality and the concept of the Latina/o gender gap, this essay highlights the importance of gender and country of origin

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as contextualizing variables that help us better understand Latina/o public opinion and political behavior.

### **Mind la Brecha: The Importance of Latina Voter Turnout**

Studies have shown that Latinas' levels of participation, political preferences, and motivations for engaging in the political arena are distinct from those of both Latino men and white women (García Bedolla, Lavariega Monforti, and Pantoja 2007; Montoya 1996). In particular, there is a gender gap—*una brecha de género*—among Hispanics in terms of voter registration, voting, and vote choice. Luis R. Fraga et al. (2005) and Patricia A. Jaramillo (2010) posit that Latina elected officials have a distinctive approach to politics as a result of their intersecting identities as women and Hispanics. That is, the intersection of ethnorace and gender, along with other sociopolitical aspects of identity such as language, immigration status, and history, shape their political worldviews and behavior. As a result, Latinas may favor policies and ideas that others do not. When a Latina/o gender gap in public opinion is evident, however, the size of the gap has also varied by national-origin group (García Bedolla, Lavariega Monforti, and Pantoja 2007; Montoya 1996).

Let's begin with an examination of political engagement, specifically voter turnout, in 2016. The electorate that year was the most diverse in US history. Approximately one-third of eligible voters were from racial and ethnic minorities, representing a net increase of 7.5 million eligible minority voters since the 2012 presidential election. In particular, Latina/os increased their number by 4 million to reach a record-setting 27.3 million eligible voters, the largest increase of any racial/ethnic group (Bejarano 2016).

Voter turnout, the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot, was approximately 58 percent for the electorate overall in 2016, a record high (McDonald 2016). In recent elections, voter turnout rates for women have equaled or exceeded the rates for men, regardless of ethnicity. Women, who constitute more than half the population, have cast between 4 million and 7 million more votes than men in prior elections (Presidential Gender Watch 2016). According to the 2016 Edison Exit Poll, which provides data to national media outlets, women were 52 percent of those who turned out to vote and men were 48 percent, a 4 percentage point margin in favor of women (*Washington Post* 2016).

Latina/o voter turnout also was up significantly compared with 2012. Using data from the 2016 Election Eve Poll conducted by Latino Decisions,

a firm specializing in Latino political opinion research, Gabriel Sanchez and Matt Barreto (2016) projected that 13.1 million to 14.7 million Latina/os of both sexes would cast ballots in the 2016 election. This marked a significant increase from the 11.2 million Latina/o votes cast in 2012 and an all-time high for Latina/o voters nationwide. Moreover, 20 percent of Latina/o voters in 2016 were exercising the franchise for the first time (Bejarano 2016), many of them probably young people coming of age. Examining the intersection of gender, ethnorace, and age, Mark Lopez and Emily Kirby (2003) find that historically, young Hispanic women have turned out to vote at higher rates than their male counterparts. This pattern held across age groups in the 2016 election, when Latinas turned out to vote at a higher rate than their male co-ethnics (CNN 2016). Latinas therefore played a critical role in the historic 2016 election.

### **Policy, Policy, and More Policy**

In the United States since the 1980s, women generally have held more liberal policy positions than men. Women are often more supportive of an activist role for government, of affirmative action and efforts to achieve racial equality, and of programs to guarantee quality health care and meet basic human needs (CAWP 2012).

Latina/o voters of both sexes generally support more liberal policy views than their non-Latina/o counterparts, and in keeping with cross-ethnic patterns, Latinas are generally more liberal than Latino men. For example, the majority of Latina/os, 78 percent, favor raising the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour. On the environment, 84 percent of Latina/os believe it is important for the federal government to take measures to reduce carbon pollution that is causing global warming. In both cases, Latinas report higher levels of support than do their male co-ethnics for liberal policy preferences. Additionally, more Latinas (70 percent) than Latino males (62 percent) agree that the government should ensure access to health insurance (Bejarano 2013).<sup>3</sup> Additional support is provided by Sylvia Manzano (2012), who found that polling of Latina/os in the 2012 and 2014 election cycles demonstrated a significant gender gap in support of more liberal public policies. For example, when asked which party respondents trust on “women’s issues,” Latinas expressed overwhelming support for Democrats over Republicans in 2012, by 78 percent to 13 percent. Based on these ethnoracial and gendered trends, I would expect Latina/o voters to demonstrate a contemporary

gender gap in the new millennium, with Latinas having more liberal political views than their male counterparts.

The Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll provides us with information about policy preferences among Latina/o voters in the most recent election cycle. In the days before November 8, likely Latina/o voters were asked, “Thinking about the 2016 election, what are the most important issues facing the (Hispanic/Latino) community that our politicians should address?” Respondents were invited to name two issues. The top response, chosen by 39.4 percent as one of their two issues, was immigration reform/deportations, followed by fixing the economy/jobs/unemployment with 32.7 percent and education reform/schools with 28.6 percent.

I want to examine whether adding gender, and interacting gender with national origin, changes our results. I find that the general order of importance of these three policy issues remains unchanged when the data are broken out by gender, that is, for Latina women and Latino men. While there is a gap of 5.9 percentage points between the sexes on immigration reform/deportations, the difference is not significant. However, more men than women indicated that fixing the economy/jobs/unemployment is a top issue, by almost 9 percentage points, while more women than men indicated that education reform/schools is a top issue, also by 9 points. These two differences are statistically significant.<sup>4</sup>

The picture becomes more nuanced when national origin is added to the puzzle. The top three issues vary across the four largest national-origin subgroups within the US Latina/o population (these subgroups include US-born persons as well as those born abroad). The top three policy concerns for respondents who trace their roots to Mexico or the Dominican Republic, respectively, are as follows: (1) immigration reform/deportations, (2) fix the economy/jobs/unemployment, and (3) education reform/schools. For Puerto Rican respondents, the economy is at the top of the list, followed by immigration reform/deportations and “stop Trump/make sure Trump is not president.” Finally, respondents of Cuban origin reported their top issues to be (1) fix the economy/jobs/unemployment, (2) immigration reform/deportations, and (3) terrorism/ISIS/national security.

Again, let’s add gender, this time to our calculations based on country of origin. Examining the intersection of gender and national origin may provide us with a clearer picture of policy preferences across Latina/o communities. All of the variables in table 1 are dichotomous, coded 0 for no and 1 for yes. I use a difference of proportions test to determine whether the differences between Latinas and Latinos within each group are statistically

**Table 1. Opinions on Most Important Issues Facing the Latina/o Community, by Gender and National-Origin Group**

Issue chosen as one of two most important	All Latina/os		Mexican origin		Puerto Rican origin		Dominican origin		Cuban origin	
	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)
Fix economy/jobs/unemployment	<b>28.5</b> (734)	<b>37.4</b> (845)	26.5 (84)	30.2 (78)	<b>26.2</b> (72)	<b>42.0</b> (92)	43.9 (43)	43.0 (44)	42.4 (42)	41.4 (48)
Immigration reform/deportations	40.3 (1,038)	34.4 (863)	<b>34.6</b> (89)	<b>25.5</b> (80)	26.9 (74)	24.2 (53)	31.8 (34)	40.6 (41)	34.3 (34)	35.9 (42)
Education reform/schools	<b>30.3</b> (779)	<b>26.7</b> (603)	22.4 (71)	23.7 (61)	<b>25.8</b> (71)	<b>18.2</b> (40)	27.1 (29)	23.5 (24)	20.2 (20)	25.0 (29)
Stop Trump					<b>11.6</b> (32)	<b>18.6</b> (41)				
Terrorism/ISIS/national security									18.0 (18)	17.2 (20)

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll.

Note: Respondents were asked, "Thinking about the 2016 election, what are the most important issues facing the (Hispanic/Latino) community that our politicians should address?" Respondents could choose two issues. Statistically significant coefficients are shown in bold italics.

significant. The bold italicized numbers highlight statistically significant differences within each country-of-origin group.

I do not find a consistent gender gap across national-origin subgroups in terms of their choices of the most important issues facing their communities. Rather, I find gender gaps within specific subgroups on specific issues. For example, among Mexican-origin respondents, a significantly higher percentage of women than men (by 9 percentage points) said that immigration reform/deportations is a top issue. This result is consistent with previous research that finds that Latinas tend to be more ideologically liberal in terms of their policy preferences than their male counterparts across country-of-origin subgroups (García Bedolla, Lavariega Monforti, and Pantoja 2007). I also find that overall, Puerto Ricans are more divided by gender than respondents of Cuban, Dominican, and Mexican origin in terms of their top policy concerns. For example, Puerto Rican men support the economy as a top issue by a margin of almost 16 percentage points over Puerto Rican women. On the issue of stopping Trump from becoming president, the margin was 7 percentage points higher for men. Puerto Rican women showed more support than men for education reform/schools as a top issue, by almost 8 percentage points. For Dominican- and Cuban-origin

populations, no statistically significant gender gap exists across the top three issues for Latina/o respondents overall or for the top three issues within each of these national-origin groups. Note that the Cuba-origin subsample is small, and this finding may be due to a sampling issue.

Given the consistency of immigration reform as a top issue across Hispanic subgroups, it is worth taking a deeper look into this topic. The Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll asked respondents three additional questions on immigration: (1) Do you support or oppose President Obama's 2012 executive action on immigration, sometimes called DACA, that currently provides undocumented youth, called Dreamers, with legal work permits and temporary relief from deportation? And is that strongly or just somewhat? (2) President Obama announced executive actions on immigration in 2012 and 2014 that would allow a small proportion of the undocumented immigrant population to obtain legal work permits and temporary relief from deportation. Republican governors and attorneys general from twenty-six states, with the support of Republicans in Congress, sued the Obama administration to stop some of these policies from taking effect. Do you support or oppose the Republican effort that has, for now, stopped some of President Obama's executive actions on immigration? (3) How important is the issue of immigration in your decision to vote, and whom to vote for in this election? Is it the top, most important issue, one of the important issues, somewhat important, or not really important to your voting decision? All three are ordinal variables. For the first two questions, the responses are coded on a scale ranging from 1 for "strongly support" to 4 for "strongly oppose." The mean score for the question about DACA is 1.6, and the mean for the question about immigration reforms is 3.1. The third question is coded on a scale from 1 for "top issue" to 4 for "not really important," with a mean of 2.2. So the average respondent strongly supports DACA, strongly opposes Republican efforts against it, and perceives immigration as a fairly important policy in the vote decision.

First, let's examine country-of-origin differences in means across these three questions. In figure 1, I observe that Dominican-origin respondents most strongly support DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), followed by those of Mexican and then Puerto Rican origin. Cuban-origin respondents, while still supportive, voiced their support least intensively. On the question about the immigration reform efforts of 2012 and 2014, the data in table 2 demonstrate that Mexican-origin respondents more strongly oppose restrictions, followed by a tie between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. Again, Cuban-origin respondents oppose the restrictions

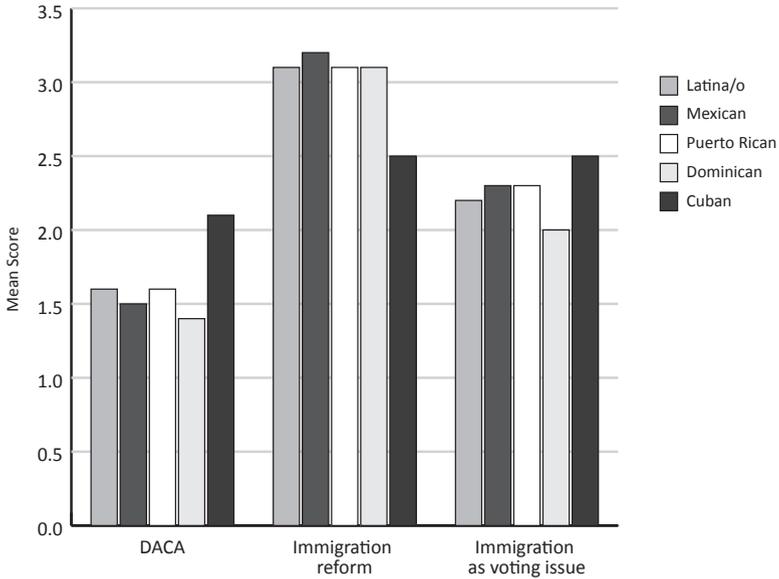


Figure 1. Immigration Policy Support by Country of Origin

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll.

Note: On DACA and immigration reforms, 1 = “strongly support” and 4 = “strongly oppose.” On immigration as a voting issue, 1 = “top issue” and 4 = “not really important.”

Table 2. Mean Scores on Immigration Policy Questions, by Gender and National-Origin Group

Question	All Latina/os		Mexican origin		Puerto Rican origin		Dominican origin		Cuban origin	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
DACA	<b>1.42</b> (.76)	<b>1.77</b> (1.10)	<b>1.48</b> (.97)	<b>1.88</b> (1.10)	<b>1.46</b> (.87)	<b>1.74</b> (1.10)	1.30 (.50)	1.50 (.76)	2.10 (1.16)	2.10 (1.17)
Immigration reform	<b>3.15</b> (1.14)	<b>3.03</b> (1.22)	<b>3.16</b> (1.16)	<b>2.59</b> (1.33)	3.12 (1.15)	3.03 (1.26)	3.10 (1.00)	3.20 (1.16)	2.50 (1.30)	2.50 (1.20)
Immigration as voting issue	<b>2.15</b> (.86)	<b>2.28</b> (.88)	<b>2.17</b> (.85)	<b>2.37</b> (.97)	<b>2.43</b> (.80)	<b>2.23</b> (.80)	<b>1.80</b> (.84)	<b>2.16</b> (.92)	2.30 (.90)	2.50 (.92)

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll.

Note: Statistically significant results are shown in bold italics. Numbers in parentheses show standard deviation.

but less strongly than other groups. Finally, on the question about the importance of immigration to respondents' voting decisions, the data show that the issue was most important to Dominicans, somewhat less to Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, and least of all to Cuban-origin respondents.

When I add gender to the analysis, I find a gender gap across all three questions on immigration. I utilize a difference of means test to investigate the relationship between intersectional identities and immigration policy preferences in table 2. Overall, Latinas support DACA and immigration reform efforts more strongly than do their male counterparts, and to a statistically significant degree, yet immigration was slightly less important to their vote decision in this election. Based on the country of origin and gender differences I found, I expect to find differences across and between subgroups when I examine the intersection of gender and country of origin.

The results for Mexican-origin respondents by gender mirror those of the entire sample, and the gender differences are statistically significant. For Puerto Rican respondents there is a significant gender gap only on the questions about DACA and the importance of immigration to voting. Puerto Rican women support DACA more strongly than do Puerto Rican men, and they were also more likely than men to say that immigration entered into their voting calculus. For Dominican-origin respondents, a gender gap on the third question was statistically significant, with more women than men saying that immigration issue would affect their vote. There is no statistically significant gender gap for Cuban-origin respondents on any of the questions; however, as the Cuban subsample is small, it may be subject to sampling issues in terms of age and location.

Clearly, the results in tables 1 and 2 reveal important differences between the opinions of Latino men and Latina women on a variety of issues, as well as national-origin differences, lending support for previous work (Bejarano 2013; García Bedolla, Lavariega Monforti, and Pantoja 2007; Manzano 2012; Montoya 1996). The variance found across national origin and gender in previous research means that we need to examine subgroups beyond pan-ethnic labels like Hispanic and/or Latino. García Bedolla and colleagues suggest that national origin, perhaps operating as a proxy for ideology, geography, socialization, and racialization, interacts with gender in important ways, affecting its impact in different policy issue areas. Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that, using contemporary data, we still cannot have a discussion about a US Latina/o community that is united based on the issues. We cannot gloss over the existence of significant gendered and national-origin differences, even in the wake of

a unique election year that put Latina/o communities and immigration policy issues front and center.

### The Gender Gap in Latina/o Vote Choices

As a result of Latinas’ increased support for more liberal public policies, historically and in the 2016 presidential election, they have also been more likely than Latino males to support the Democratic Party and its candidates. Figure 2 provides a historical review of Latina/o voting patterns and the gender gap among Latina/o voters since 1980. In every presidential election I reviewed, the majority of Latina/o voters supported the Democratic nominee for president. The margin of support ranges from a low of 18 percentage points in favor of John Kerry in 2004 to a high of a 62 percentage points in favor of Hillary Clinton in 2016. Figure 2 also indicates a gender gap in

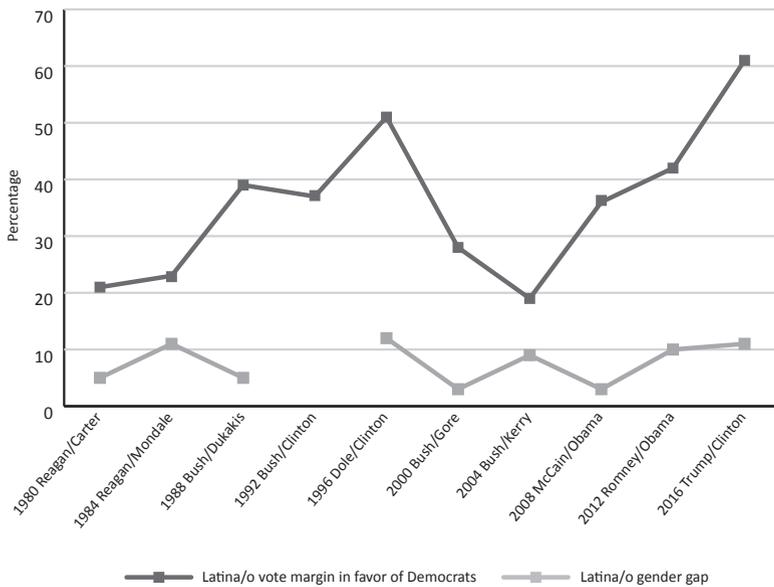


Figure 2. *The Latina/o Vote and Gender Gap in Presidential Elections, 1980–2016*

Sources: Data compiled from Lopez and Taylor 2012, Welch and Sigelman 1992, Hardy Fanta 1997, and Suro, Frye, and Passel 2005.

Note: The Latina/o vote line shows the percentage point margin by which Latina/o voters as a group supported the Democratic presidential candidate. The Latina/o gender gap line shows the margin by which Latina female support exceeded Latino male support for the Democratic candidate. The gender gap was estimated at 9–16 percent in 1984 and 2–8 percent in 1988.

Latina/o voting in presidential elections, with Latinas showing even more support for Democratic candidates than their male co-ethnics.

So, what causes Latinas to vote differently than Latinos? Among Latina/os, “issue-focused studies have found that women and men have distinct positions on ‘use of force issues’ such as capital punishment, military spending, and gun control” (García Bedolla, Lavariega Monforti, and Pantoja 2007). Additionally, they have different views on “‘compassion issues’ such as increases in social welfare spending and other programs designed to help the elderly, children, and the poor” (149). Furthermore, “it appears that there is something about the gendered experiences of women that impacts these views” (154). Women more than men participate in their children’s education, deal with issues that affect their families, and dedicate themselves to solving the problems of their communities. Women, accordingly, are going to have different reasons than men for becoming informed citizens, participating in politics, and encouraging others in the community to become involved. This is supported by our analysis on policy preferences and priorities above.

For more context let’s review the most recent presidential elections. A clear gender gap in vote choice was found in the 2008 and 2012 elections. In 2008, in the electorate overall, a higher percentage of women than men supported Democrat Barack Obama, by a 7-point margin, while a higher percentage of men than women supported Republican John McCain, by a 5-point margin (CAWP 2017). Incorporating ethnicity into the picture, there is still a noticeable gender gap: in 2008, 68 percent of Latinas supported Obama while 30 percent supported McCain, and among Latino men 64 percent supported Obama while 33 percent supported McCain. These figures demonstrate that voting tendencies of women do differ from those of men, and that this trend holds for Latina/o voters.

In 2008, at a time of great dissatisfaction with the Republican Party, Obama’s well-organized grassroots campaign mobilized communities to support him. The issues that Obama chose to emphasize motivated Latinas to participate in the 2008 election, and they did. In the run-up to the 2012 election, Latino Decisions tracking polls asked Hispanic respondents which party was better equipped to address issues important to women. Overall, Latina/o voters agreed that Democrats were better on women’s issues, but in keeping with prior research findings, Latina women expressed this view by a larger margin (65 percentage points) than did Latino men (49 percentage points) (Manzano 2012). This again highlights the importance of the gender gap within Hispanic communities in terms of both public

policy preferences and vote choice. In the 2012 election, we see a trend that echoes previous elections. In the Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll, 77 percent of Latinas expressed support for President Obama compared to 21 percent for Romney, a 56-point gap (Bejarano 2014). Among Latino male voters polled seven weeks before the election, 61 percent supported Obama and 32 percent Romney (Manzano 2012). In the end, this leads to a 16 percentage point gender gap in vote choice that favored Obama.

Now let's turn to the 2016 election. According to the Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll, 81 percent of Latina/o voters overall planned to support the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton.<sup>5</sup> Comparatively, 86 percent of Latina women planned to support Clinton (18 points higher than the Edison Exit Poll, which reported that only 68 percent of Latinas voted for Clinton). In the Latino Decisions pre-election poll in 2012, 77 percent of Latinas expressed support for President Obama, so the 2016 results represent a 9 percentage point gain for the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee.

Latinas are a core constituency for the Democratic Party, and as voters they have been key to Democratic candidates' success on the national stage (Dittmar 2016). We know they also represent a growing electorate that will have an increasing impact on US politics. So, when we talk about the modern gender gap in support of Democratic candidates, we need to focus on the growing role of Latinas along with all women of color. While Latina/o voters are generally Democratic voters, Latinas should be targeted for mobilization as part of the Democratic Party's core.

## Multivariate Analyses

Having identified relationships between country of origin, gender, and voting preferences, our next step was to test these relationships using multivariate analyses. Multivariate estimations allow us to determine whether the gender gaps in public opinion among various Latina/o groups are the result of gender differences rather than differences in socioeconomic status, age, ideology, or other factors. In short, through a multivariate analysis I can assess the extent to which gender is a significant factor that structures Latina/o vote choice. The vote choice of Latina/o voters in 2016 between Clinton (coded 0) and Trump (coded 1) is the dependent variable. It includes seven control variables commonly found in gender gap studies, such as gender, religion (being "born-again"), partisanship, marital status, age, income, and nativity.

The primary exogenous variable is *gender*, coded 1 for female and 0 for male. The models include the variable *born again*, a dichotomous measure, for respondents who consider themselves as born-again or evangelical Christians. These Christians are noted for their theological, social, and political conservatism (Jelen, Smidt, and Wilcox 1993), and I anticipate that the variable may play an important role in structuring Latina/o attitudes, especially those related to traditional women’s roles.

Marital status is also anticipated to have an effect on political attitudes, as married women historically have been less likely than single women to identify as Democrats (Plutzer and McBurnett 1991). The variable *married* is dichotomous, coded 1 for married and 0 for not married. Finally, the models include the demographic controls *age*, *income*, *political ideology*, and *US born*. *Age* is a categorical variable with six categories ranging from 18 years to 65+ years. *Education* is a categorical variable with categories ranging from “grades 1–8” to “postgraduate/professional degree.” *Income* is coded as a dichotomous variable, with 1 for annual household income below \$60,000 and 2 for income above \$60,000. *Ideology* is a categorical variable with four values. Finally, because the Latina/o population includes both foreign-born and US-born individuals, I include the variable *US born*, a dichotomous variable with 1 for persons born in the United States and 0 for persons born outside. (In the case of Puerto Ricans, the former category refers to people born in one of the fifty states.)

The presidential vote choice among Latina/o participants in the 2016 Election Eve Poll, according to national origin and gender, is shown in table 3. Data show that 50 percent or more of Latina/os in each

**Table 3. Presidential Vote Choice among Latina/os in 2016, by Gender and National-Origin Group**

	All Latina/os		Mexican origin		Puerto Rican origin		Dominican origin		Cuban origin	
	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Male % (n)
Clinton	<b>87.9</b> <i>(2,026)</i>	<b>74.6</b> <i>(1,508)</i>	<b>83.7</b> <i>(237)</i>	<b>61.3</b> <i>(136)</i>	<b>83.7</b> <i>(207)</i>	<b>72.2</b> <i>(143)</i>	<b>97.8</b> <i>(87)</i>	<b>85.0</b> <i>(68)</i>	50.0 (47)	52.9 (54)
Trump	<b>12.1</b> <i>(279)</i>	<b>25.4</b> <i>(313)</i>	<b>16.3</b> <i>(46)</i>	<b>38.7</b> <i>(86)</i>	<b>12.7</b> <i>(30)</i>	<b>27.8</b> <i>(55)</i>	<b>2.2</b> <i>(2)</i>	<b>15.0</b> <i>(12)</i>	50.0 (47)	47.1 (48)

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll.

Note: Fewer than 100 gender-identified respondents said they vote for a third-party candidate. Given this small sample size, these respondents were excluded from the analysis. Statistically significant differences are shown in bold italics.

country-of-origin and gender group indicated they would vote for Clinton, from a low of 50 percent of Cuban women to a high of 97.8 percent of Dominican women. The gender gap is statistically significant within each national-origin group except Cubans; this may be the result of oversampling of Cuban-origin men or undersampling Cuban-origin women in the sample. Nevertheless, the data demonstrate gaps across national-origin groups, as well as gender.

The estimations from our multivariate logit analysis are presented in table 4. This contains four multivariate models, one for each national origin, shown in different columns. Logistic regressions are used, given that the dependent variable is dichotomous—that is, vote choice for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. Although some of the control variables play an important role in our models, I do not discuss them at length, as our primary interest is in gender differences. After the introduction of the selected control variables, gender differences among respondents of Mexican, Cuban, and Dominican origin remain significant. Women of Dominican,

**Table 4. Multivariate Logit Analysis of Latina/o Vote Choice in the 2016 Presidential Election**

	Mexican origin	Puerto Rican origin	Dominican origin	Cuban origin
US born	.784** (.267)	14.47*** (.813)	-3.14** (1.598)	
Gender	-13.87** (.210)		-3.64* (1.81)	1.05** (.496)
Born again	.859** (.259)			
Married				1.3** (.528)
Income	.538** (.228)			
Age	-.011** (.005)			
Ideology	-.097*** (.009)	.099*** (.280)	-.15** (.06)	-.134*** (.024)
Constant	3.14*** (.690)	-10.59*** (2.98)		

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Latino Decisions 2016 Election Eve Poll.

Note: Coefficient with  $p$  value and standard error reported for all statistically significant variables in each model.

\*\*\*  $p \leq .000$  \*\*  $p \leq .001$  \*  $p \leq .05$  +  $p \leq .10$

Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Mexican origin were more likely to vote for the Democratic nominee, Clinton, than were their male co-ethnics, but the finding was not statistically significant for Puerto Rican respondents.

I find that vote choice among Mexican-origin respondents is also shaped by nativity, political ideology, age, income, and being a born-again Christian. I calculated the margins for each of the significant independent variables and found that gender is among the strongest. For example, the largest movement is on born again (.09), followed by US born (.08), gender (.06), and then income (.05), in comparison to ideology (.009) and age (.001). Gender, ideology, and nativity shape Dominican-origin vote choice at statistically significant levels. The analysis of margins in this model shows that gender is a powerful factor for Dominican respondents. Here gender (.047) has a more powerful impact than ideology (.011) and US born (.010) on vote choice. For Cuban-origin respondents, I find that gender, marital status, and political ideology shape vote choice. The margins were largest for marital status (.15), then gender (.12), then ideology (.02). For Puerto Ricans, place of birth and ideology are significant predictors of vote choice, but gender is not. All coefficients are in the expected direction across all four models.

Taken together, the multivariate models show evidence of a significant gap between Latino men and Latina women in vote choice among three of the four largest country-of-origin communities. These results suggest that the Latina/o gender gap with regard to vote choice has persisted since Lisa J. Montoya (1996) conducted her landmark study. Differences between our results and Montoya's may derive from differences in the survey instrument or sampling design or from changes in the socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics of respondents. I suspect the latter. Our results clearly demonstrate important attitudinal differences between Latino men and Latina women across different national-origin groups. However, the size and significance of the gender gap clearly vary by national-origin group, suggesting that the Latina/o attitudinal differences result not only from gender differences but also from the unique way in which gender and national origin intersect among these respondents.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This analysis brings us back to our original set of questions about the Latina/o gender gap in the 2016 presidential election. The gap in opinion between Latinas and Latinos overall was statistically significant across all

of the questions I examined, but that was not the case among the four national-origin subgroups I analyzed. Therefore, I do find some support for the idea of a Latina/o gender gap, but I also find important national-origin differences. So, how can these findings inform our understanding of the intersection of national origin and gender in US politics?

In this essay I have employed an “intercategorical approach,” described by Leslie McCall (2005, 1785) as “an analysis that treats national origin and gender categories as ‘anchor points.’” These are understood as not static, and the primary concern “is with the nature of the relationships among social groups and, importantly, how they are changing, rather than with the definition or representation of such groups per se.” I acknowledge that there are problems inherent in the representation of gender, a social construct, with a dichotomous variable. The same can be said for operationalizing the concepts of Latina/o ethnic identity and country-of-origin experiences with a series of dichotomous variables. Our intention is not to minimize the complexity of these categories, but rather to use this analysis to highlight the variations, similarities, and complex nuances that exist *within* Latina/o national-origin groups. The ultimate goal is to suggest ways in which gendered marginalization and privilege are operating within US society, and within the context of this analysis, to help shape Latina/o public opinion and political behavior and guide political elites in taking account of these patterns.

These findings contribute to political theory by encouraging scholars to think more deeply about how experiences of ethnicity and gender interact within the United States context, especially in light of the work of Cristina Beltrán (2010), who writes about the simplistic and problematic ways in which *latinidad*, Latina/o identity, is framed. In general, much scholarly work still derives from the proposition that “all the women are White and all the Blacks are men,” or in this case, Latino (Hull, Bell, and Smith 1982). Such a simplistic understanding of marginalization and privilege in the US context, particularly in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, bears little resemblance to empirical reality and does little to advance our theoretical understanding of how systems of racial/ethnic discrimination and patriarchy reinforce and maintain themselves, and how they influence public opinion and policy preferences (Browne and Misra 2003; Gilmore 1996). The intercategorical or intersectional approach employed here constitutes an attempt to move the scholarly debate one step toward that deeper understanding. From an empirical standpoint, on the most basic level, these findings support

what intersection theorists have long argued: that experiences of marginalization intersect within individuals and can have important political consequences (Crenshaw 1991; Cohen 1999; hooks 1984; McCall 2005; Hancock 2007).

In the 2016 presidential election, the political consequences are clear. My findings suggest that many Latinas responded to the rhetoric around identity—the targeting of gender and ethnicity (and their intersection) by candidates, political parties, and the media—in a different way than did their male counterparts across Latina/o subgroups. This is an important point for scholars who are considering the political implications of race/ethnicity, national origin, and gender.

From a policy standpoint, Latina women, because of their experiences of marginalization across multiple dimensions, may have policy priorities and preferences on some issues that are different from those of Latino men. Therefore, it may be possible to identify policy issues or ballot propositions that will particularly motivate Latinas to engage in politics. A report by the University of Massachusetts Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy noted, “Latinas have become increasingly engaged in politics, making up 5 percent of total voter turnout,” while Latinos make up 4 percent (Gonzalez-Rojas 2008). It is imperative that both major political parties devise new strategies to appeal to the very diverse Latina/o electorate and mobilize Latinas as a key group of voters and potential organizers (Bejarano 2014). Latinas, particularly those who are mothers, are a potent organizational and mobilization force within their households and communities (DeFrancesco Soto 2012).

Differences in policy preferences are especially important because Latinas have been outvoting Latinos, going to the polls in higher numbers. If Latinas, through their vigorous participation in politics, manage to seize the interest of political contenders, these contenders may begin paying more attention to the issues that are important to Latinas. This will drive Latina turnout even further and heighten the impact of Latina voters, already established in past elections, on politics in the United States.

## Notes

1. The term *Hispanic* will be used interchangeably with *Latina/o*, as both terms refer to pan-ethnic communities of Latin origin.

2. The terms *Hispanic* women and *Latinas* will be used interchangeably throughout this work, as both terms refer to gendered pan-ethnic communities of Latin origin. I use the term *Latinos* to refer to Latino men.

3. On the other hand, more Latino males than Latinas support the Affordable Care Act continuing as law and expanding the Medicaid program.

4. On the economy, the phi coefficient is  $-.094$  with a significance of  $.000$ . On education, the phi coefficient is  $.020$  with a significance of  $.006$ . For the purposes of this essay, statistically significant means likelihood that a relationship between two or more variables is caused by something other than random chance, using the  $.05$  level or less.

5. There is disagreement among the national polls over the true level of *Latina/o* support for Clinton. I choose to utilize the Latino Decisions polling numbers as the most accurate representation of *Latina/o* support.

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