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degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli**

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**The Changing Ethnic/Racial
Composition of the US Electorate:
Will Hispanics Change the Face
of American Politics?**

Arianna Onori

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The Changing Ethnic/Racial Composition of the US Electorate: Will Hispanics Change the Face of American Politics?

By Arianna Onori

One of the most common images in relation to the Latino community in the United States is that of a “sleeping giant”. Although there are those who have mentioned that this image is far from any reality, that it is nothing more than an illusion to which Latinos themselves frequently resort in search of political motivation, the truth is that the awakening of the giant continues to be a topic of discussion among political scientists and cause for concern among Democratic and Republican politicians. Certainly, the Latino population is the fastest-growing minority group in recent years; however, this growth has not been reflected in a greater political presence. The United States is a classic immigration destination; from its founding to the present, it has been the recipient of many migration patterns that have varied through time. From the first European migratory waves to the most current ones, made up mainly of nationals from Latin American countries, the United States has been emerging as a great melting pot of cultures, the popular country of the “melting pot”. The persistence of Latin American migration flows in recent years has highlighted the plight of undocumented immigrants living in the United States and contributed to spark discussion about the country’s existing integration paradigm. Organizations of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans rallied throughout the second part of the 20th century to attain equality, put an end to discrimination, and enhance their socio-economic possibilities in their communities. Thus, from the 1940s until the 1980s, the founders of these organizations participated in an associative process in which they envisioned a “Hispanic” community in the United States.

This dissertation aims at examining whether Latinos will have a significant impact on American political landscape, thus, capable of changing the face of American politics. In doing so, it investigates how the pan-ethnic terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” came to be used to gather together many ethnic groups under the same name and emphasize their alleged common origins, cultural connections, and linguistic diversity. As can be shown, the terminologies develop in such a manner that, depending on the geographic location of the nation, the socio-economic status of the population, the racial view of the group, the number of generations of settlement in the area, as well as their legal immigration status, will have different meanings and will include a greater or lesser number of people. As a result, the populations of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans start to see themselves as being a part of a bigger group that has similarities and differences with other populations who speak languages other than Spanish and originate from other parts of the globe. These mostly Mexican-

American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban communities, who are also regarded by American culture as “Spanish speakers”, band together to increase their numbers and political representation. During the 1950s and 1970s, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans became more politically active, and this engagement originally sparked the emergence of an ethnic identity based on place of origin. This thesis will contend that the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” have a variety of meanings depending on the group’s members’ internal and external racial perceptions, political struggles in the past to combat racial inequality and discrimination, geographical location within the United States, and the number of generations. To better understand the polysemy of these two terms, this contribution begins by outlining the social movements of the Chicanos and the Puerto Ricans, who, together with the Cubans, will have a central role in the creation of terminology. These mobilizations will lead to the adoption of the term “Hispanic” in the 1980 Census by the US government.

Chapter 1 is devoted precisely to the investigation of the decades before “Latino politics” and their subsequent political organizing in order to show the political groupings that would have the biggest influence on shaping the “Latino vote”. From its birth to the present, the United States has been the destination of innumerable migratory flows, which have changed throughout history. Because we can only understand the current process of Latino political inclusion by looking at the historical evolution of each national-origin group, an analysis of this US participation is necessary in order to understand Latino immigration to the United States. Numerous experts and politically engaged Latinos have claimed that the roots of the Latino vote can be traced back in 1960s, since Kennedy was the first to recognize the significance of the Hispanic voting bloc, and many other presidential contenders adopted his position after his campaign. In attempt to increase its support among Latino voters, Kennedy sought the backing of Latino public officials. It could be argued that, although it was still too early to categorize “Latino politics” per se, Latino politics and Latino politicians were born in the United States with the help of four men from three distinct states, such as Henry B. Gonzalez, chosen to represent a mainly Hispanic district in San Antonio (Texas), in the United States Congress in 1960 (Barreto, 2010). Gonzalez had both a significant and little impact being the only elected official of Hispanic or Latino heritage in the House of Representatives. He quickly rose to fame among the Chicano community as the leading voice on Mexican American politics, but he struggled to be heard in Washington, D.C. as one of only 435 representatives. Gonzalez was soon followed in Congress by Edward Roybal, who was elected from California in 1962, and by Eligio “Kika” de la Garza, who was elected from Texas in 1964, and lastly, Herman Badillo, who was elected from New York in 1970. Kennedy’s outreach was primarily successful because of the Viva Kennedy Clubs. These community-based groups were established to inform Latinos about the electoral process and encourage Mexican Americans to underpin the Democratic candidate (Abra-jano, 2010). During the presidential campaign, Kennedy hired Carlos McCormick, a specialist in Spanish-language public relations, to be a member of his staff. He founded the Viva Kennedy Clubs, which grew across the nation and provided millions of Spanish-speaking Americans with a direct channel for electoral involvement.

Kennedy's sympathy for Latin America and the underprivileged, as well as his liberal beliefs, served as these associations' key selling points (Abrajano, 2010). In relation to Latino politics in the US, Kennedy's presidential campaign also represented a significant turning point in political communication. His campaign included the debut of the first Spanish-language television commercial in 1960, where Jacqueline Kennedy, his wife, emphasized the candidate's character values and his devotion to disadvantaged groups like Latinos (Abrajano, 2010). Therefore, Kennedy converted Latinos in a significant national issue, since he was the first to mention the Hispanic community in the first televised presidential debate in addition to creating the first Spanish-language advertisement. Additionally, the media's endorsement of his campaign was crucial. McCormick persuaded Spanish-language newspapers like *El Diario*, *La Prensa*, or *La Opinión* to back the registration drive and endorse the candidate, even by paying for buses that would transport voters to the registration spot where campaign monitors were stationed (Francis-Fallon, 2019). Some academics believe that the Latino community's backing for Kennedy helped him win the tight 1960 election. He received 85% of the votes among Mexican Americans, the highest percentage of any ethnic or racial group, including Irish ancestors who supported the same candidate for president (Francis-Fallon, 2019; Wallace, 2012). Undoubtedly, Latinos have established themselves as an important component of the Democratic base since this election, and it is now understood that candidates for the presidency must reach out to this group. Thus, the Latino vote was meticulously developed over the course of more than twenty years, and this dissertation proceeds in chronological order to present the events that lead to the formation of a Latino minority constituency, which was not categorized until 1970 by the US Census Bureau. The understanding of Latino integration must begin with an examination of the global structural context that influences immigration decisions. The ease or difficulty of the legal components of the migration process is greatly influenced by the nation of origin and the relationship the US government has with that country at the time of migration. As a result, US foreign and economic policy is closely tied to not only the immigrants' legal and economic situation upon arrival but also their propensity to originate from specific countries and their decision to migrate to the United States (Bedolla & Hosam, 2021). Then, if we recall the long relationship between Latin American and the United States, we surely should point that it has been affected by two important US principles. The first one, is the idea of manifest destiny, which expresses the belief that the United States is a nation chosen and destined to expand from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is an attitude that led to justify the US territorial expansion through the US-Mexico War or, for instance, the war against Spain to seize Puerto Rico and intervene in Cuba. This doctrine is also used by supporters to justify other territorial acquisitions and believe that expansion is not only good, but obvious and certain. The second principle is the Monroe Doctrine, formulated by John Quincy Adams when he was President James Monroe's Secretary of State in 1823. It established that any intervention by Europeans in America would be seen as an act of aggression that would require the intervention of the United States, since the country feared a possible recolonization of the western hemisphere from the im-

perial European powers. The message was stand clear: United States would not interfere in Europeans internal affairs or wars and expected Europe to do the same. The Monroe Doctrine was expanded upon by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, adding the “Roosevelt corollary”, which deemed US interference in the internal affairs of countries in Latin America as essential for US national security, and it was only reversed in 1934 with the introduction of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “good neighbor” policy. The idea that Latin American interests are connected to those of the United States has persisted (Bedolla & Hosam, 2021) and economic interests of the United States were crucial to the growth of Latin American issues throughout the 20th century. Indeed, a flurry of migrants were employed by US companies in their home countries or were specifically invited to immigrate to the US by those companies, and those businesses frequently pushed the US Congress to ensure that these migratory flows would continue. It is clear that, understanding Latino immigration to the United States requires consideration of this US engagement and we can only comprehend the current process of Latino political inclusion by examining the historical development of each national-origin group. According to Rodriguez (2014), the history of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans in the United States is very dynamic and complex, and when considering the history of these three ethnic groups, three things come into play: conquest, colonialism, and exile. Indeed, Chicano experience is referred to as conquest, Puerto Rican experience is referred to as colonization, and Cuban experience is referred to as exile (Rodriguez, 2014). To give a better understanding, the historical and social experiences of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans are more similar than those of Cubans. With regard to conquest and colonialism, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans were brought into the United States, they were demoted to the lowest levels of the working class and were subjected to racial and gender discrimination in addition to economic exploitation. On the contrary, Cubans benefited from the fact that they arrived in the mainland after the start of the Civil Rights Movements, and were not subject to segregation and exclusion in the same ways Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans had been (Bedolla & Hosam, 2021). Overall, compared to prior immigrations, the pattern of Hispanic immigration to the United States was significantly different. It was vital to describe how these three groups were organized since it clarifies the reasons for the political mobilizations of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans from their inception. If the term “Latino” is associated with grassroots organizations led by Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans because of this history of battling for recognition and rights, the leaders of grassroots organizations will comprehend the term “Hispanic” as one that the US government supports, and not one that they choose. Precisely, it was at the start of the second half of the 20th century, organizations of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans organized to achieve fundamental rights, and from the 1940s until the 1980s, their founders participated in an associative process in which they envisioned a “Hispanic” community in the United States. The organizational structure of these three groups is crucial because it reveals the driving forces behind the political mobilizations of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans from their inception. While the term “Hispanic” will be considered as a term supported only by the US government and

not chosen by them, the history of fighting for rights and respect generates an association between the term “Latino” and organizations led by Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans (Lacomba, 2020).

Chapter 2 was interested in unravelling the reason why the development of a Hispanic political identity is a dynamic process. According to the 2000 Census, and ten years ahead of demographers’ predictions, the population of Hispanic origin displaced the population of African origin as the first minority in the United States. Thus, a population that only began to be classified as such in 1970, in just thirty years displaces Afro-Americans as the first American minority. This fact was extensively highlighted by the North American press and its electoral and commercial repercussions did not go unnoticed in the journalistic comments. What significance does this important demographic figure have for ethnic/racial relationships that are at the center of the sociopolitical dynamics of the United States? In this sense, we could sustain, without fear of being mistaken, that in the construction of the United States as a nation, the relationship with the “others” occupies a privileged place. Thus, the “greatness” of the United States was built by advancing on the lands of the American Indians initially, the territories of the north of Mexico and Puerto Rico in the 19th century and taking advantage of the slave labor of the natives of the African continent. The U.S Hispanics population in the United States reached 62.1 million in 2020, increasing 23% from the last Census in 2010 (Passel et al., 2022). People of Mexican origin represent the biggest group of the nation’s Latinos, followed by Puerto Ricans. In addition, five other groups of Hispanics have a representation of more than one million people each: Cubans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, Guatemalans and Colombians. There is general agreement that the Immigration and Nationality Act’s passage in 1965 had a significant role in the present demographic shift. However, the decrease of the native population’s birth rate, together with general population ageing is another trend that should be considered carefully. Certainly, the higher birth rate of the population of foreign-born people has consequently gained even greater relevance, and the second generation is now acting as the main driver of this population growth (Brown-Gort, 2016). The March 5, 2012 cover of Time magazine committed to clarify “Why Latinos will pick the next president”, stating the necessity to pay most of our attention to the role that Latinos could play in the presidential election. Indeed, for decades, a flurry of journalists and activists have imagined Latinos as “people poised to transform the country” (Francis-Fallon, 2019, p. 1). According to Samuel Huntington, the massive and ongoing immigration from Latin America, notably Mexico, poses the single most urgent and significant threat to America’s historic identity, since they do not really care about assimilating. Thus, the presence of Latinos, particularly Mexicans, poses the so-called “Hispanic Challenge”, which is actually shaping America (Oboler, 2007). In fact, there is no such thing as a “Hispanic” or “Latino”, in the sense that is a pan-ethnic identifier created by the U.S. Census in 1970 for people of Latin American origin and their descendants. More importantly, its existence as a demographic group, and the resulting political importance, demonstrates how difficult it is to understand the American political system without exploring the role that the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity” play in that so-

ciety. Overall, we are witnessing an increased attention regarding the nature of Latino identity in the United States. In particular, there have been discussions about the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” and which is more appropriate, who these two terms refer to, whether Latino/Hispanic identity should be considered an ethnic identity or a racial identity, and whether the use of these labels promotes political and social empowerment or if, on the contrary, it contributes to racialization and marginalization (Leeman, 2013). Parallel to discussions about the nature of Latino identity, very intense debates have developed about immigration and its effects on the nation. As already mentioned, Latino immigrants are likely to have varied historical experiences before arriving in the United States depending on their ancestral origin group. As a result, these groupings are likely to have had varying degrees of societal integration as well as unique opinions on what it means to be American. That is why it appears fundamental to emphasize the diversity and variety of identities unique to the Latino experience, despite the general tendency in US political discourse and in political science to racialize all Hispanics, ignoring the numerous diversities of Latino life. Due to the increase in the number and proportion of immigrants who are from Latin America, public apprehension about immigration has focused on this segment of the population. Throughout the history of the United States, the representation of more recent immigrants as inherently different from those of previous generations, as well as anxiety about their ability and intention to assimilate, has been a recurrent reaction to periods of increasing immigration, so the public discourse on Latin American immigration echoes the negative reaction to immigration from southern and eastern Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. However, the same critical eye has not been applied to the ideological role of language. For example, despite the fact that the percentage of Latinos in the United States who are either monolingual in English or predominantly bilingual in English is increasing, an essential relationship between Spanish and Latinos continues to be taken for granted, indicating the need to explore the linguistic ideologies embodied in official categories. While certain themes recur and resonate over and over again, the specific concerns about immigration, and how those concerns are manifested, depend on the sociohistorical context. Thus, while debates about immigration often focus on the possible impact of the phenomenon on national identity, the changing understanding of the complex interrelationships between language, race and nation makes concerns about this impact articulated differently at different historical moments. In the early 20th century, nativists portrayed certain immigrants, especially Asians, but also Europeans arriving from the South or East, as racially unassimilable, speaking explicitly of biological or genetic differences. Today, by contrast, anti-immigrant discourse tends to foreground linguistic difference as the basis for the alterity of speakers of minority languages in general and of Spanish speakers in particular. Despite the fact that since the 1960s panethnicity has increased among all Latino national origin groups, many academics have made a concerted effort to acknowledge Latino heterogeneity and explore the ethnic differences among Latino groupings. Politicians might therefore have a harder time predicting the political beliefs, sentiments, and behavior of Hispanics. According to their ancestry, Latino immigrants are likely to have had a va-

riety of historical experiences before coming to the United States. These groups are therefore likely to have experienced differing levels of societal integration and to have had different perspectives on what it means to be an American. Although there has been a tendency in US political discourse and in political science to racialize all Latinos, ignoring the numerous diversities of Latino life and defining the group in strictly racial terms, the Census Bureau is not exaggerating when it reminds users of official racial and ethnic data that “Hispanic” itself is not a “race”. However, these simplistic societal stereotypes appear incorrect, since it would be better underlying the variety of identities that are particular to the Latino experience. Given this premise, the dissertation then examines the Census classification system, which highlights the ambiguous and historically unstable position of Latinos in the country’s racial hierarchies. Prior to selecting one or more options from a list that corresponds to the five races that are officially recognized by the US Office of Management and Budget, all individuals who are residents of the United States are asked to indicate whether they are of Hispanic descent, and those who choose to indicate that they are of another race should write their name. According to the official categorization system, which categorizes “Hispanic or Latino” as an ethnicity and not a race, the instructions for the race question on the 2010 Census form clearly noted that “for this Census, Hispanic origin is not a race”, while a population sample was used to test the two-question categorization in 1970, later approved in the 1980 Census. Nevertheless, the Census Bureau has just lately started utilizing the Hispanic origin question as one of the main ways to classify the population’s ethnoracial makeup. The Census Bureau has historically used a variety of alternate categorization techniques to estimate the Hispanic population, including adding a “Mexican” option to the race question, compiling statistics on people whose mother language is Spanish, and identifying people with Spanish surnames. In this dissertation, the crucial role that language has played is emphasized, throughout the evolution of the racial categorization system used by the US Census. In particular, information is provided on the historical use of languages in Census surveys, concepts of difference, and efforts to limit immigration, which allowed me to demonstrate how attitudes toward recent immigrants gradually changed, from being viewed as racially inadmissible to being viewed as linguistically foreign. Indeed, while formerly believed to be markers of race, languages are now usually shown as a matter of personal taste. Thus, it is claimed that those who opt to speak a language other than English in the United States do so in order to reject assimilation. In no case is this ideological duality of the language more visible than in that of Latinos. From one side, Hispanic origin is constructed as a quasi-racial category that is closely linked to the Spanish language. On the other hand, the supposed preference to speak Spanish suggests a reluctance to learning English, integrating to the mainstream culture, and adopting American ideals. Finding an answer to the question of what it means to be Latino in the United States and whether or not one can speak of a true Latino identity has been a subject of strong and protracted debate in regard to this theme. The inclusion of the category “Hispanic/Latino” in the US Census inquiry has raised awareness of this population’s explosive population growth as well as of its economic and cultural importance. Similar to this,

there has been much discussion on whether to use the name “Hispano” or “Latino” to refer to this group, which has frequently been exogenously influenced by political factors. The term “Hispanic” has been the most rejected by the people it tries to define, derived from the English word Hispanics. It was created by the federal government in the early 1970s for purposes of political manipulation and with a marked assimilationist character. It is still used today for political and Census purposes, taking this population into account in numerical terms and hiding the diversity that characterizes this group and the cultural and diverse differences that exist within it, by presenting them as a homogeneous block. The term just mentioned was used for a long time to generically designate “Spanish-speaking people”; however, many of these people do not speak Spanish or do not speak Spanish fluently, as these ethnic groups include not only immigrants, but also their descendants up to the third and fourth generations. As for the word “Latino”, for those who have not participated in this historical experience, the terms have a mainly geographical connotation, that is, they denote someone who comes from Latin America and is detached from the struggle for equality, either due to ignorance or because they do not they identify with them. Identification that highlights geographic origin is more abundant among newcomers, first-generation immigrants. However, it has not always worked as a label imposed from the outside, it was also the result of the claim of Latinos themselves to be called in a different way than “Hispanics”. In addition, since the 1970s there has been an intention to build a new language or a new interpretation of Latino identity on the part of political and social movements organized by Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, although with the purpose of including to all Latin Americans, impregnating the term “Latino” with a radical connotation that it barely retains today for a few. These two words were originated in the United States as a result of internal conflict about which characteristics should be highlighted, and the difficulty in identifying a group that is extremely diverse. Furthermore, the constancy of flows from Latin America have led to open a discussion about the existing integration model in the United States. The assimilationist paradigm, the melting pot theory, and those of cultural pluralism stand out among the several theoretical theories that have developed in North American social sciences in an attempt to explain the process of incorporation of immigrants into American society. The Sociological School of Chicago and Robert Park, a pioneer in this sociological field, developed a model of assimilation in the 1920s that depicts it as a one-way process of adaptation of new population groups to the social environment, with immigrants being expected to give up their linguistic, social, and cultural traits in favor of total assimilation into the host society. It was Milton Gordon, in 1964, who first discussed acculturation in detail as a process through which a minority group adopts traits from the dominant group’s culture and behavior during the first stage of intergroup contact. However, acculturation allows immigrants to maintain their own culture while adjusting to dominant society’s norms and they are not required to fully give up all traditional qualities and values. Criticism of this so-called classical theory and developments in sociological thought, have led to a methodological reversal: research has ended up focusing no longer on the characteristics and degrees of assimilation, but on the reasons for the

survival of the ethnicity among immigrants. A model that has accompanied, at times superimposed on the assimilationist paradigm is that of the “melting pot”. According to which, the United States was in charge of a mission to forge one particular type of man, the American. However, both models, assimilation and melting pot, have therefore progressively proved inadequate, at least partially, to describe the forms of ethnic relations that have taken place in the American context. Recently, some researchers have gone further in the questioning of integration of Hispanics. According to Samuel Huntington, American identity would indeed be in danger under the shock of the massive arrival of Hispanic immigrants who, under the effect of their number, would prove incapable of integrating, or rather, in the American “WASP” tradition, of assimilating into their host nation. We also saw how, at the very least, the assimilationist model should be reexamined in light of the new immigration as a descriptive model of the present situation. In fact, it appears that fresh immigration is creating different ethnic groupings with a high level of internal complexity rather than homogeneous ethnic groups heading towards assimilation into the American majority. Throughout its pages, we argued that understanding these differences is essential because it demonstrates that the Latino community is not made up of a single coherent group but rather comprises of various national origin groups, each of which has a unique history and its own set of social, political, and economic challenges. In other words, one cannot speak of the existence of a unique Latin American identity, but rather there is a multiplicity of identity expressions determined by the action of a set of factors and variables. The types of public policies each group supports, their partisan allegiances, and their participation in politics can and do change as a result of those distinctions. In general, members of the three groups, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, prefer to refer to themselves in terms of their national origin, and only a small minority chooses to use pan-ethnic terms like Latino or Hispanic. More importantly, its existence as a demographic group, and the resulting political importance, demonstrates how difficult it is to understand the American political system without exploring the role that the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity” play in that society, in fact Latinos demonstrated a strong sense of ethnic identification, which has evolved into a prominent political identity. A diverse population should be able to explain why they have not been able to fully integrate into the American political system, since they are less likely to vote in unison, or “*en bloque*”, and consequently their national importance may appear minimized. However, election after election will aim to comprehend its electoral significant and the way in which the political agenda includes its demands due to its continuous expansion. Additionally, we maintained that despite their diversity, the lives of all US Latinos are connected by their standing in the nation’s racial hierarchy. We have seen that the state’s imposition of racial classifications reveals the potential significance and relevance of race and racial identities, even though Latinos may identify primarily and preferentially with their ethnicity, particularly their national origin. The understanding of one’s racial position, sentiments, and identification is fundamentally influenced by the recognition of discrimination. It should not be shocking that Hispanics have and still experience discrimination in the United States. They are frequently stereotyped as being filthy, ig-

norant, poor, illegal immigrants, and prone to teenage pregnancies. Interactions between non-Hispanics and those who are thought to be Hispanics will undoubtedly be influenced by these pervasive misconceptions about the traits of Hispanics. The interesting question of why Latino immigrants are still not generally regarded as “White”, but rather as belonging to a different “ethnic origin” is a good example of how this resistance manifests itself. The response is connected to the historical impacts of the political and social discussion surrounding immigration and its repercussions on the racial social order, as well as its contemporary reflection, which appears to be predominated by worry over the consequences of demographic change. Many White locals still believe that all Latinos are immigrants and, moreover, are essentially “illegal”. It is in the light of their different pattern of assimilation and experiences that we should understand why some Latinos want to self-identify as Americans, some other prefer the pan-ethnic identity, and some are clinging onto their national origin identifiers and refusing to hyphenate themselves. The significance of racial group identity is related to ideas of similarity, linked fate and perceived discrimination, particularly when discussing African American politics. However, it is important to think carefully before attempting to apply the idea of linked fate to Hispanics, due in large part to the fact that “Hispanic” or “Latino” is a socially constructed panethnic designation created by the US Census, and the main problem is that Hispanics do not share a linked fate based on a similar history that is easily comparable to the experiences of slavery and legal segregation of Blacks. As a result, the way that Hispanic political identity is developed may differ from the way that Black political identity is established.

The dissertation goes on by understanding the new Hispanic voter, exploring turnout and participation in politics, views on important political issues, their partisanship and the manner in which Hispanics get their information and political cues. As for the partisanship, the political orientation of Hispanics, with the exception of Cubans, comes favoring, as in the rest of the ethnic minorities, the Democratic Party, which has been collecting the largest number of votes, and has been characterized for remarkable loyalty. However, the goal of Chapter 3 was to demonstrate that a certain partisan ambivalence is beginning to be noticed, while the sector declaring itself “independent” is increasing in recent years, which is reflected in greater mobility in the vote that usually favors the Republican option. The diversity within and between groups, the less inclination towards the Democrats that can be seen in the most recent flows, the socio-economic progress of some segments (frequently linked to more conservative positions) and the growing weight of this population, have managed to awaken the interest of some to expand their electoral base, and the fear of others, who see that the land they tended to take for granted may not be so much. All of this has now devolved into a tight contest between the two parties for the votes of this electorate. Both parties have created a specific action group aimed at Hispanics, they maintain web pages and weekly hearings in Spanish, they are a routine presence at citizenship ceremonies, they promote voter registration programs, their leaders often appear at the conferences convened by the Latinos organizations and support candidates of that origin, the best asset to attract votes. Both are advertised as

the natural destination of Hispanic votes: The Democrats, for their traditional defense of minority rights; the Republicans, for embodying the family and traditional values that are usually attributed to Hispanics. Both criticize and dismiss the efforts of the opposing side to the one they accuse, either of putting all their energy and resources into a pure marketing campaign or of relying too much on a supposed natural bond that guarantees them the vote. Both address this population as a particular and unitary group, with differentiated interests, separated in some way from the general population and whose peculiarity demands specific attention. Implicitly or explicitly, there is always an emphasis on ethnicity which, in practice, becomes a celebration of it. The slogan among Republicans is to launch a message of "inclusion" away from the extreme positions represented, for example, by Colorado Congressman T. Tancredo, who advocates the elimination of bilingual education and a moratorium on immigration. They do not want to repeat the experience of Pete Wilson, governor of California and promoter in 1994 of Proposition 187, which denied basic public services to undocumented immigrants and their children. Although it was never implemented, and it was revoked in 1998 as unconstitutional by a federal judge, it promoted naturalizations and voting among Hispanics. For their part, the Democrats reiterate their traditional alignment with the demands of minorities and immigrant concerns. Thus, Richard Andrew Gephardt, leader in the Lower House until the electoral disaster of November 2002, announced at the annual meeting of La Raza (Miami, July 2002) the presentation of a bill that, if approved, would have led to the legalization of three to four million undocumented immigrants, most of which would be Hispanic. Outlined as a set of principles, rather than a specific project, the plan was committed to the classic temporary worker option. A few weeks after Bush announced his proposal, the working group on immigration of the Democratic Caucus of the Lower House presented its reform alternative, more inclusive, in which, together with the regularization of undocumented immigrants, it was committed to a program for temporary workers that guaranteed them to apply for permanent residence. In addition to the various offers of immigration reform, the desire to reach the Hispanic electorate is also reflected in the development of ethnically targeted campaigns. This can be noticed in the increase in spending on advertising on Spanish-language television, and the growing use of Spanish in electoral campaigns. Thus, if the 2002 elections witnessed the first political debate in Spanish between candidates for governor in the history of the United States (Texas, March 1, 2002), in September 2003 the candidates for the Democratic primary inaugurated the round of debates scheduled for the presidential election campaign with the first bilingual. Moderated by a journalist from Univisión, who asked them questions in Spanish and English indistinctly, and a journalist from the public channel PBS, practically all the candidates read or they said, with more or less success, some phrases in Spanish. The use of Spanish is justified not only by the clear preference revealed by the polls. It also helps to neutralize the hostility that many Hispanics have suffered, and still suffer, against their language, and that continues to arouse strong misgivings. The prohibition to use it, which prevailed for decades in many schools, persists in dozens of companies, institutions and the administration of a good number of states, spurred

on by movements such as English Only, and is also reflected in the virtual elimination of bilingual education. This supposed a strong psychological impact and conveys various meanings. It is not only a sign of deference or “respect”, it also sends a message of “normality” about the use of one’s own language, and informs of the interest in communicating and establishing bridges. Hispanic organizations are, on the other hand, fully aware of the power that their votes are acquiring and increasingly demand concrete proposals while warning of the coincidence in priorities with the general population. This is reflected in the feverish activity carried out by all sectors aimed at promoting interest in political participation, either as voters or as leaders. The political arena now extends over national borders. Thus, North American politicians are beginning to include the countries of origin of the dominant Latino minorities in their itineraries, just as visits by leaders and public officials from these countries to the areas where the emigrant groups are concentrated. The positive effect of the trips of “Anglo” politicians, widely covered by the media of both languages, to the places of origin of immigrant minorities, is evident. As for the sending countries, the growing importance of emigrants, the influence on the vote of fellow countrymen and the financial support for campaigns and parties makes them relevant actors in domestic politics, which adds the potential value as allies and mediators. This has prompted a change in orientation towards them, that is reflected in a series of actions and programs aimed at strengthening their ties with the countries and communities of origin. The role of mass media at constructing the role of Latinos, thus helping to shape partisan identities and partisanship among them, is shown in this chapter, together with the many efforts at Latino outreach by both political parties. Given that not all Hispanics hold the same views on the most crucial topics, it is highly likely that Democrats and Republicans will compete for the Hispanic vote on this level playing field in the future. Although Latinos went through a different socialization process that led them to mainly support the Democratic Party, it is also true that their partisanship is constantly influenced by their national origin and as a result, is subject to change. Thus, party identification is now presented as a dynamic process and a powerful mobilizing force that is impacted by a number of factors rather than a long-term and permanent political allegiance. Despite the substantial amount of study on party affiliation, there is still disagreement regarding the definition and nature of partisanship. Partisanship was frequently conceptualized in the past as a successful, early-life connection to a political party that is largely stable. According to this theory of the formation of partisanship, the family, and parents in particular, serve as the main institutions for political socialization (Campbell et. al, 1960). While some academics think this association is exaggerated, others assert that there is still a high degree of partisan congruence between parents and children. This traditionalist approach, sometimes known as the “Michigan school”, is associated with the influential book *The American Voter* (1960) by Campbell. This partisanship theory contends that party identification has no bearing on partisanship. The “Downsian” perspective or “revisionist” method, on the other hand, sees partisanship as considerably more pliable and something that is constantly adjusted to consider party viewpoints on topics as well as individual assessments of political figures and political

campaigns. These two prominent partisanship theories have often said nothing about how a person's party affiliation may be influenced by their immediate surroundings. We believe that the extent of parental impact and the stability of partisan attachments will vary depending on whatever generation one is looking at, because immigrants, children of immigrants, and later generations of Latinos may have very diverse political experiences. The environment may be particularly important for the political development of more recent Latino generations as they do not usually acquire partisanship in the typical methods (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010). This is due to the likelihood that an immigrant's parents have little to no involvement with the American political system. Since their foreign-born parents might not have strong ties to any one political party, the children of immigrants may also be affected by this diminished impact of parental socialization on partisan choice (Hajnal and Lee, 2011). Numerous studies have investigated the connection between partisanship and political environment, but they often focus on how the environment affects attitudes toward different topics without considering how such circumstances affect partisan loyalties. Generally speaking, Latino partisanship has not been explored in the scant research that do investigate how local circumstances influence partisanship. Remembering that Latinos have a recent family history of migration and considering any particular Latino experiences that may have an impact on how they engage with the two major political parties are essential considerations when looking at partisanship and Latinos. In actuality, parties have just recently begun emphasizing the registration of Latino voters, and immigrant parents and peers frequently have less knowledge of American politics and parties. In fact, Latinos are different from the general population in the United States since most of them were born abroad. As a result, they are less familiar with American politics than people who were born here. Given that these labels are exclusive to the American political system, immigrants are likely to conceptualize liberal and conservative or Democrats and Republicans differently from native-born Americans. As a result, Latinos are still politically "up for grabs" and have not shown as much consistency in their political and ideological choices. This explains why they have comparatively low rates of voting, voter registration, and party identification (Hajnal and Lee, 2011). Since "socialization into American politics follow a different path" (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010, p.65) that it does for native-born Americans, and Latino partisanship changes with time, young Latinos have substantially weaker partisanship than older Latinos do, and as a result younger Latinos appear to trend toward independence, whereas older Latinos have more firmly established partisan affiliations. Because of this, Latino politics is not a closed system where falling support for one party automatically results in rising support for the other. Instead, it seems that Latino politics enables leakage to the nonpartisan category, thus recent elections have revealed Latinos' lack of partisan rootedness. On the other hand, as Latino voters become more accustomed to the political system, they tend to turn away from independence and toward Democrats for Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, and Republican for Cuban Americans. As a result, until the parties alter their stance on the subject, these Latinos' identification with those parties ought to stay mostly steady. But as we have seen partisanship may

be significantly influenced by a person's socialization process, which starts in childhood and considers influences from their family and social surroundings (Campbell et al. 1960). Although little is known about how Latinos come to be partisan, it is argued that social group identity does influence party identification. Many have suggested that a variety of factors, including national origin, education, issue positions, and political ideology, have a separate impact on Latino party identification. Therefore, a group's national origin serves as a stand-in for its political integration process. Because they come from such a variety of origins, they do not fit into people's preconceived notions of what constitutes a "typical" minority group (Rouse, 2013). It is possible that Latinos "learn" politics through experience over time in the United States, replacing parental socialization as a means of passing partisanship down the generations (Niemi & Jennings, 1991). The intergenerational transmission of that attachment will likely operate similarly to how it works in other communities once the parent has been socialized into a certain identity, making Latino partisanship less flexible over time and across generations. As a result, I made the case that party identification is today thought of as a dynamic process and a potent mobilizing force that is influenced by a multitude of factors rather than a long-term and permanent political commitment. This thesis then evaluated the potential impact of this segment of the voters in the swing states of the so-called Sun Belt, or that belt of Southern States that encompasses Florida, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada, where a few tens of thousands of votes can alter the outcome of an election. Republicans want to persuade them to vote for the Republican nominee in order to stop Democrats from winning, because they see Latinos as swing voters who are prone to support either party depending on which is doing or promising to do the most to advance the interests of the Latino community. However, the idea that Latinos are swing voters is still being contested, since Latinos have been referred to as issue voters, suggesting that they may be less able to apply their ideological convictions and issue stances when making political judgments, but it appears that they will choose the candidate who is most in line with their own position on the issues. In order to define and comprehend what matters to them, it was necessary to investigate whether the two issues that are significant to or have an effect on the Latino population as a whole in order to adapt the messages and boost support for the party, namely immigration and education. There is no guarantee that the expanding Latino population will result in Democratic presidential majority because the two most important patterns that contribute to the explanation of why Latino partisanship is changing are party perception and policy preferences. All of this boils down to a tight competition between the two parties to pique the interest of this voter through the creation of ethnically specific campaigns. This is evident in the rise in spending on television advertising in Spanish and the expanding use of Spanish in political campaigns. Therefore, it is believed that the mass media's involvement in building Latinos' roles is crucial for forming partisan identities and partisanship. Both parties are keen to battle for the Latino vote given that not all Hispanics share the same opinions on the most important issues. After examining the historical development of Latino media on American soil, I felt it was necessary to present the various media that are currently in use and analyze

their various roles through their implications, which are exercised on a number of levels: on the socio-economic level through the demographic and social situation of the Hispanic community in the nation, on the political level through the incidence of Latino media. The press, the movie theater, the radio, the television, and the internet are the five basic forms of existing media that can be categorized. Radio and television undoubtedly play a significant part in the expansion of the Spanish language, with Telemundo and Univisión among the major US networks that offer programming in the language. I discovered that radio listening is a very common behavior among Hispanics that can have beneficial effects on linguistic preservation. On the other hand, Spanish is less prevalent in the television landscape, likely as a result of the fact that new channels in this industry are almost always launched in partnership with major networks, while local independent radio programs are more prevalent. Of course, the Hispanic community, which shares the Spanish language as its primary bond, provides a significant potential audience for the media because it has millions of consumers. Therefore, it is the objective of Hispanic media to win over this audience, and there are significant financial stakes involved, particularly in the area of advertising. History has demonstrated how crucial it was for Univisión and Telemundo, the two largest Hispanic networks, to demonstrate to advertisers that they had a sizable viewership. In general, I argued that the media serve two purposes: one is to integrate Latinos into American society, and the other is to uphold Hispanic customs and culture. Because of this, it is very conceivable that these media will gain more significance in the future, potentially even competing with the Anglo-Saxon media at some point and see their role of minority media to become the role of the majority media. In any event, the major organizational and propagandist tools for the mobilizations of Hispanic immigrants were Spanish-language television and radio, the best mass-culture transmitters. In this instance, the most adaptable and powerful tool for the planning and propagandizing of the largest mobilizations that took place in the United States in 2006 was popular culture in the electronic media, symbolized by the most well-known radio presenters who spoke Spanish. However, advertising is not the only strategy being used to reach the expanding Hispanic population in the United States. Additionally, politicians are looking more and more on them for their support in elections. Investigating how Latinos are portrayed in the media and whether their voting behavior may have had an impact on the most recent presidential elections seemed relevant. It was vital to focus on how the presidential contenders from both major parties develop outreach initiatives for Latinos. According to Abrajano (2010), since candidates target ethnic minorities in a different way from the rest of the electorate and because the majority of Latinos is new to American political, the campaign messaging utilized to influence this ethnic group tend to be straightforward and symbolic, focusing more on cultural cues and references than on candidates' policies and issue positions. Due to their limited ability to assess candidates based on their policy positions and proposals, Spanish-speaking Latinos who are targeted with non-policy messages and simple policy appeals are less likely to behave as completely informed issue voters and may be less able to participate in the political process (Abrajano, 2010). Contrarily, the English-speaking

Latino electorate, which makes up the majority of the electorate of Latinos who are likely to vote, is more influenced by substantive, policy-oriented messages than by cultural ones. “Every four years, Republicans and Democrats alike seem to rediscover us [Latinos], then forget about us until the next election” (Ramos, 2020). The Christopher Columbus syndrome is the term used by Jorge Ramos (2020), a Mexican American journalist and news anchor for Univisión who is regarded as one of the most important Latinos in the United States. Given the growing Hispanic population in the US, particularly in key battleground and swing states, presidential candidates have made a concerted effort to court the Latino community from the middle of the 20th century. There was no exception during the most recent 2020 elections. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden won the 2020 US elections, while Republican incumbent Donald Trump lost. The Coronavirus outbreak and racial concerns played a significant influence in the controversy and unpredictability that surrounding these elections. Both presidential contenders ran extensive political campaigns in the months leading up to the elections in an effort to gain enough support to win. Regardless of the method either candidate used to spread their message and win over the public, both tried to win over the constituencies that were crucial to the election’s outcome. In this context, the Hispanic population is particularly significant. Hispanics made up 13% of the electorate overall in the recent 2020 elections, and this demographic shift was especially noticeable in key states like Arizona, Florida, and Pennsylvania as well as other large states like California and Texas (Igielnik & Budiman, 2020). The Latino vote in the 2020 elections had a significant impact on the result. On the one hand, Trump was able to appeal to Florida’s Hispanic population, a typical “swing state” with a significant Latino electorate and won the 29 votes in the state. On the other hand, the rising Hispanic population could also be credited with Biden’s victory in newly declared battleground states with new demographic patterns like Arizona and Pennsylvania. Therefore, it can be said that this ethnic group had a significant impact not only in the 2020 election but also in the previous presidential elections. As previously discussed, despite the fact that minorities tend to support the Democratic Party, candidates from both parties have stepped up their outreach to the Hispanic community to the point where it is now an essential component of any presidential campaign, whether Republican or Democrat. Thus, it seems necessary to review the research on the Latino vote in US political elections, including how the community has been targeted and what the key tactics, debate topics, and candidate interests have been. We have seen that Kennedy was the first national politician to speak to the Latinos and his outreach activities were primarily successful thanks to the Viva Kennedy Clubs. In relation to Latino politics in the United States, Kennedy’s presidential campaign also represented a significant turning point in political communication, indeed Kennedy was the first to mention the Hispanic community in the first televised presidential debate in addition to creating the first Spanish-language advertisement. Furthermore, the media’s assistance was crucial to his campaign, since McCormick persuaded Spanish-language publications like *El Diario*, *La Prensa*, or *La Opinión* to support the Democratic candidate. As a result, the Latino community’s support contributed to Kennedy’s victory in 1960. On the contrary, Nixon is re-

garded as the first Republican presidential contender to sincerely court the Latino vote in 1971 and he was also the first to elect Latinos to his administration. As a result, he received 30% of the Hispanic vote (Cavada, 2020). Regarding Reagan's approach, there is a phrase sometimes ascribed to him that describes his strategy: "Latinos are Republican; they just don't know it yet" (Ramos, 2020). Reagan focused his campaign in the 1980 elections on Latinos, particularly Cuban Americans in Florida, but he received only 29% of support among the Hispanic Electorate (Rúas Araújo, 2012). Thus, he decided to reach out to this community during his presidency, in preparation for the 1984 elections, creating the "Hispanic Victory Initiative '84: A proposed strategy for the Reagan-Bush '84 Hispanic Campaign" (Abrajano, 2010). Two Spanish-language advertisements were published in which the message was that although Hispanics had previously backed Democrats, they may want to reconsider in light of Reagan's leadership skills. As a consequence, he won 37% of the Latino vote in 1984, also because he put emphasis on anticommunism and other essential characteristic to appeal to the Hispanic community, such as family, religion and jobs. In terms of Democratic history, the 1996 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton is seen as a turning point for Latino-focused communication strategies and themes. Republicans might be argued to have outperformed the Democrats in the creation of specialized strategies and techniques to court the Hispanic community, despite the fact that they did not win the Hispanic population's vote throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Rúas Araújo, 2012). Before the 1996 elections, Democrats concentrated on grassroots mobilization and the promotion of several issues via sporadic messaging, but Republicans' strategies were more planned and targeted different Latino publics (Rúas Araújo, 2012). In contrast to his previous campaign, Clinton spent \$1 million on advertising in competitive states in 1996 (Abrajano, 2010), gaining states such as New Mexico and Florida. George W. Bush won 44% of the Latino vote in 2004, surpassing the previous record for Hispanic support for a Republican candidate set by Ronald Reagan (Leal et al., 2005). According to Abrajano et al. (2008), Bush won the 2004 Latino vote for at least two reasons. First off, his campaign heavily emphasized "moral issues" such as gay marriage and abortion, which helped energize the Hispanic vote. Second, national security concerns, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, may help to explain the change in Latino support toward the Republican candidate. Abrajano et al. (2008) emphasize this, by evaluating how "bread and butter" issues that typically benefit Democrats, such healthcare and education, were eclipsed by security and moral convictions. Additionally, the impact of television advertising increased, since he spent more than \$75 million on them compared to the other contenders, combining \$4 million for Spanish-language ads, which is the highest amount ever spent by a presidential candidate (Abrajano, 2010). Spanish-language advertisements were more likely than English-language ones to stress the candidate's advantages, have shorter policy declarations, and include pictures of Latinos, according to Abrajano's (2010) analysis of the election's television advertising. In fact, compared to the Spanish-language ads, the English-language ones placed a greater emphasis on policy-informing topics. For instance, the total percentage of explained policy and problematic policy statements in English-language advertising was 5 and 11%,

respectively, higher than that in Spanish-language advertisements (Abrajano, 2010). Thus, English-speaking Latinos could only increase their political knowledge via advertisements carrying useful policy messaging, but Spanish-speaking Latinos had to depend on the newspaper or direct contact with a campaign worker to learn about the candidates and their policy positions. Obama had historically high levels of success and support from the Latino population in both of the presidential elections, thanks to the efforts placed on Spanish-language advertising, his pro-immigrant rhetoric, and advocacy of immigration laws. In the 2008 elections, this Democratic candidate was effective in energizing the Latino electorate, which led to a noticeably higher turnout and the registration of record numbers of Hispanic voters. This triumph among the Hispanic population was primarily the result of his election campaign, which invested \$20 million in Latino outreach activities, more than twice as much as Kerry and Bush's campaigns combined in 2004 (Abrajano, 2010; Rías Araújo, 2012). He won 72% of the Latino vote by promoting change and optimism, utilizing catchphrases like "Change We Can Believe In" and "Yes We Can", as well as campaign posters featuring himself and the words "change", "progress", or "hope". Political TV advertising were the main form of communication, particularly in swing states, and they were made using a negative strategy. For instance, Obama's TV advertisements challenged McCain's economic plans in light of the present economic crisis in reaction to McCain's comments on immigration (Abrajano & Alvarez, 2010). Obama made a point of emphasizing his humble upbringing as an immigrant, providing education and medical care for the Latino Community in his campaign speech (Abrajano, 2010), and he established his own Viva Obama Clubs. Wallace (2012) said that one of the most important aspects of the previous administration's campaign was "La Promesa de Obama" or Obama's promises for immigration reform. Paradoxically, during his administration, there were a record number of deportations and higher unemployment rates. But this has not stopped Latinos to vote for him in the 2012 election, confirming for a second time his presidency. In fact, Latinos were essential to his victory, the decrease of his popularity. The highest proportion of any Democrat and a rise over the results of the 2008 election, he earned 75% of the votes among Latino voters (Collingwood et al., 2014) thanks to the three immigration-related moves he took during his campaign, such as the DREAM Act, the sign of the deportation relief memorandum, and the Arizona SB 1070, a legislation that employed racial profiling in its enforcement, which he brought to court (Barreto & García-Rios, 2012). In 2016, Trump utilized blatantly anti-immigration language for his concerns, and despite this, he received a third of the Latino vote share, which was an unexpected result for the Republican candidate after conducting a campaign centered on harsh language towards Latinos and minorities (Galbraith & Callister, 2020). His campaign specifically targeted immigrants with his policy ideas, like as building a wall, and attacked other GOP candidates who had links to prominent Hispanic political leaders and families. The election results showed that despite his vociferous anti-immigration rhetoric and posture, democratic Hispanics were unable to support the Republican candidate. His speech really succeeded in disenfranchising the Latino population, as seen by the fact that Hispanic voter participation fell from 49.9% in 2012 to 47%

in 2020 (US Census Bureau, 2017). Two main factors contributed to Trump's "success" among Hispanic voters (Galbraith and Callister, 2020). To begin with, there were differences between the 2016 Hispanic voters and the Hispanic population as a whole. Second, Latinos' choices were influenced by issues other than immigration, deportation, and minorities. In fact, the Hispanic voting population in 2016 was mostly composed of male citizens, spoke English as their first language, and had a higher proportion of US-born voters, and held more conservative political views. Additionally, rather than immigration, the economy, health care, and education were Latinos' top concerns throughout the election. Finally, politicians and their parties must rethink their advertising strategies in order to appeal to Spanish-speaking Latino voters and boost party loyalty. In actuality, the majority of them declare their party affiliation as "unknown" or that they identify as independents (Abrajano, 2010). This lack of partisan rootedness can be attributed to Spanish-speaking Latinos' ambiguity regarding their ideological positions on the major party candidates or to their lack of familiarity with American politics. Therefore, politicians might reduce this uncertainty by being as explicit as possible in their political advertising about their issue viewpoints and ideological orientations. They could also do better if they push both racial appeals and more enlightening policy issues in their election commercials by speaking Spanish. Many immigrants are unfamiliar with the American political system, thus commercials that incorporate both sorts of messaging should be beneficial for educating them about the candidates, political parties, and the US system. These commercials could also inspire Latinos to participate more actively in politics. In actuality, the Hispanic vote is increasing with every election and will continue to increase, becoming much stronger and having a greater influence on the outcome. I concluded that a party must unavoidably have a Hispanic strategy if it hopes to become the majority party in the future.

Furthermore, Chapter 4 assesses how Hispanics' integration into the American public sphere has reached a turning point as a result of the qualitative shift in their political voice, whether in election participation or protest mobilizations during civil rights struggles. Latinos have come out of the shadows with an increase in voters, candidates, and elected officials. This new participatory framework has been made possible by the rising influence of pan-ethnic interest groups as well as the fresh chances for political engagement brought about by the emergence of transnational strategies. As a result, elections in the US are changing as a result of the rise in the number of Hispanics with the right to vote and the number of Hispanic candidates running for public office, where the Hispanic minority has started to have its own voice. Indeed, the Hispanic vote has become in recent years decisive for the candidates who aspire to reach the White House. Indeed, the 2020 election saw a record number of voters register and cast ballots, with 61.1% of all Latino citizens ages 18 to 44 doing so (Gamboa, 2021). In addition, whereas until 2020 the percentage of eligible voters who actually cast ballots had never reached 50%, it did so in 2020 at 53.7%. In fact, the figures are higher than the highest registration of 59.4% in 2008, the year Obama was elected president (Gamboa, 2021). Despite this, the electoral and political weight of the Hispanic population does not match its demographic, economic, social, or cul-

tural significance, nor has it attained the level of real influence that millions of Hispanics with voting rights may have. Two factors that explain this situation are the community's customary low turnout in presidential and midterm elections, as well as its poor representation in the so-called "key" states. Each election sees an increase in both the number of voters and, albeit at a slower rate, the number of candidates of Hispanic origin who hope to be elected to a position at any level of the administration. This fact foreshadows the possibility of electing the nation's first Hispanic president in the near future. As a result, the Hispanic electorate has tremendous potential for participation but has also frequently been accused of being apathetic toward politics. Hispanic voting turnout is still a crucial issue for American democracy. The main reasons for the low Hispanic engagement in the nation's politics appear to be the features of the Hispanic group, such as their relative impermeability to acculturation and their poorly acknowledged heterogeneity. This separation between American politics and the Hispanic community is therefore primarily the result of a weak national and patriotic feeling among Hispanics, especially compared to those of other minorities, and leads to a detachment from politics. It is also likely that this low participation is explained by the lack of connections and political history of Latinos. This is the thesis developed by Carol Cassel (2002, p.398), who argues that Hispanics vote less than Whites and African Americans in elections "because they are younger, less educated, poorer, and less often contacted by a party or candidate". These factors, echoed by James Cohen, quoting the National Council of La Raza, seem to be indeed important reasons for the abstention of Hispanics, mainly in the midterm elections. Finally, the concept of ethnicity covers a political reality that tends to explain this low participation. It appeared that the presence of candidates of the same ethnic group improved the participation of Hispanics. In each election the number of Hispanic voters grows and the number of candidates of Hispanic origin reaches new records. A sign that, little by little, in the US Hispanic influence is increasing throughout society and, of course, also in politics. Thus, while the impact of the presence in the upper echelons of the state, and among the candidates, particularly in the presidential elections, of predominantly White candidates is not inevitably a foil for Latinos, the presence of Hispanics in these same spheres, on the other hand, creates a burst of participation in this population (Barreto, 2007). Support for politicians is likely to be stronger the higher the representativeness of the candidates. In other words, this theory of the mirror voter affirms that the similarity between voters and elected officials reinforces the support of the former for the latter. Thus, Matt Barreto (2007) notes that, during the municipal elections of five large cities (Los Angeles, Houston, New York, Denver and San Francisco) between 2001 and 2003, on the whole, the Latino candidates received strong support from Latino voters, regardless of their partisanship. Estimates show that Latino voters overwhelmingly preferred Latino candidates in all five cities, while support from non-Latinos was more mixed (Barreto, 2007). Thus, the support of Hispanics for the Latino candidate is very important. The secondary but essential piece of information provided by Barreto (2007) is that to this support is added increased participation: between an election in which a Latino candidate is running and another in which no candidate is Hispanic, the in-

crease in this participation varies between 4 and 15%. Thus, the presence of Hispanics among the candidates proves to be a springboard for the participation of the ethnic group then effectively represented by their leaders. Other elements can increase the mobilization of Hispanic voters. Daniel J. Hopkins, for example, conducted a study on the effect of assistance measures for exclusively Spanish-speaking voters implemented in the counties covered by section 203 of the Voting Rights Act on voter turnout (Hopkins, 2011). By analyzing the Hispanic vote for the 2004 elections and in the Proposition 227 vote in California in 1998, the author discovered an increased participation of Hispanics in the counties providing these bilingual ballots. In addition, the data and estimates related to the Californian ballot lead him to advance the influence of this measure on the outcome of the vote. The low participation of Hispanics is therefore not inevitable. In the US, except in North Dakota, it is necessary to register to vote. In some states this registration must be done a month before the election, as is the case of Mississippi, which has closed the registration period 31 days before, or on the day of the election, a possibility that exists in Wisconsin, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho and Minnesota. However, the lack of information in Spanish, lack of interest or ignorance of this requirement among the Hispanic community reduces the number of people with the right to vote who can finally exercise it on election day. As for the youth of the voters, although this factor is also the reason why each election the number of Hispanic voters is greater, it is another of the reasons that are considered to explain why the voters of the Latino community do not vote. The general lack of interest and, therefore, participation of young people, means that this community does not reach great records of participation. However, thanks to these young people, it is estimated that, by 2030, more than 40 million Hispanics will have the right to vote. This giant to be awakened also causes certain changes in the US political agenda. Issues related to immigration, education, security or the economy take on more importance in states where Hispanic representation is greater and the opinions of the community often differ from those of Americans as a whole. It thus seems more accurate to consider the Hispanic vote not as a term designating the reality of a "Latino" electoral bloc in the United States but more as one of the essential elements of the negotiations at work in the American political game. Despite the group's internal diversity, income inequalities, varied geographical origins, differences in political behavior, the idea of a Hispanic "voting bloc" influences the way in which political problems are considered in the parties. The spring 2006 movement was often perceived as the emergence of a giant whose social unity was enough to found collective action. In fact, it has been demonstrated that having a collective identity is a prerequisite to engaging in collective action, since it helps people see themselves as linked by interests, values, or common histories. Here, the concepts of group consciousness and linked fate appear to be fundamental to understand this phenomenon. For Latinos, group consciousness is even more accentuated when they experience group discrimination, in particular in relation to immigration. Indeed, they are actually depicted as an "illegal alien threat". As a result, "rising anti-immigrant sentiment, repressive immigration and border enforcement, and the public portrayal of Latino immigrants as criminals, invaders, and terrorists" (Zepeda-Millan, 2017,

p. 16, as cited in Massey and Sanchez, 2010), has contributed to the growth of a pan-Latino identity. This has led millions of Latinos, particularly those of Mexican descent, as well as, to a lesser extent, members of other minority groups with large immigrant populations, to be more receptive to calls for mass mobilization as a result of H.R. 4437, which actually sparked feelings of linked fate and racial group consciousness (Zepeda-Millán, 2017). Undoubtedly these protests impacted the policymaking process and electoral politics from 2006 to 2008 (Zepeda-Millán, 2017), since activists responded by refocusing their efforts on the forthcoming 2008 presidential election. As a result, the election of the country's first African-American president was significantly influenced by the immigrant rights movement and Latino votes. Indeed, Latinos were inspired to become citizens, register to vote, and turn out in record numbers for the 2008 election (Zepeda-Millán, 2017). However, it is not clear whether this protest could be considered as a political moment or part of a greater social movement destined to continue. What is known, however, is that this significant mobilization sparked a backlash, from the Obama administration's era of rising mass deportations to Trump's election in 2016, who embraced a stridently anti-immigrant discourse. These demonstrations sparked a powerful anti-Latino immigrant political involvement that continues to this day, and were unable to convince politicians to adopt a comprehensive immigration reform. We can argue that participating in this kind of protest is very different from casting a ballot, but it is obvious that involvement in the immigrant rights movement actually helped to ingratiate Latinos into politics (Bedolla & Hosam, 2021). For instance, this movement took part in the "Today we march, tomorrow we vote" campaign after the marches, which was aimed at registering Latinos to vote and encouraging them to cast ballots in the 2008 and 2012 elections. Analyzing the Hispanic community's demographic trends and stressing their growing electoral weight appeared crucial. Indeed, the growing influence of Latino immigrants on the population is changing the demographics of American voters. The demographic study of the Latino community allows for the observation of the voter profile of this community, which will serve as the foundation for political strategies used by parties and candidates to appeal to and win over their votes in an electorate that is expected to continue to grow and potentially have an impact on election outcomes. Due to its consistent increase in recent years, reinforced by migration flows, the Latino vote was once again in the focus for the 2024 presidential elections. Despite the fact that not all immigrants are US citizens and cannot vote, the Latino population is expanding significantly. It is fundamental to note that the influence of the Latino vote is specifically related to its presence in crucial states, rather than just to the numerical contribution of the group as a whole in the United States. Indeed, depending on how many Latinos voters turn out in the states that are in a tight race, their turnout could have an impact on the outcome. Election after election will aim to comprehend its electoral significance and the manner in which the political agenda includes its demands due to its ongoing growth. Without a doubt, the discussion of Latinos' voting patterns in the most recent presidential elections served as a springboard for understanding the voting patterns of this sizable segment of the electorate. Additionally, it may have helped candidates and their affiliated par-

ties better sway Latino voters. This may be seen in the rise in population growth, electoral turnout, and social mobilization they cause when political marketing strategies are employed in conjunction with instruments like social networks, Spanish-language advertising, or even traditional media. This suggested that Barack Obama's campaign team's tactics in 2008 were successful in attracting a sizable number of Latino votes. Despite this, no political party can assume that this enormous ethnic population will always support them. Hispanic voters forgave President Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential elections for his broken campaign pledge to alter the nation's sweeping immigration laws, and by supporting him at the polls, they helped to ensure his reelection. I made the case that the Democratic Party's sophisticated electoral strategy on immigration problems was the reason they won the Latino vote in these elections. Indeed, Obama pushed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which kept the same condition as the DREAM Act, after serving as the government that had the most deportations. This law consisted of undocumented youth obtaining a temporary residence, as a first step to obtain a permanent green card. They could also pursue higher education, join the army, work, and obtain a renewable driver's license every two years. On the contrary, Donald Trump made it obvious what his stance would be against the Latino population in 2016 from the minute he announced his bid for the presidency of the United States. With insults and referring to immigrants Mexicans and Latin Americans in general as "rapists", "criminals" and people who did not bring anything good to the United States, Trump pretended that he would bring an anti-immigrant and anti-Latino campaign. Furthermore, historically, the Latino vote has increased locally and nationally during periods of anti-immigrant sentiment. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this vote clearly favored Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, Trump defeated her in the electoral college and was elected president of the United States. Unlike Obama throughout his two successful elections, Clinton never took a clear and compelling stance while supporting immigrants and Latinos during her campaign. Instead, Trump's xenophobic rhetoric and hostile plans, including erecting a wall along the Mexican border, revoking the citizenship of children of undocumented migrants, or deporting entire families, conveyed a clear message to Latinos. Because of this, even if Clinton did not win, the Latino vote in the election had significant historical significance. Early analyses following Trump's victory showed that a significant number of Latino voters had backed him, despite the animosity he demonstrated on the campaign trail toward Mexican immigrants and Latinos in general. We must remember that the Latino community is not a homogenous group but rather reflects a diversity of distinctions, thus it should not be surprising that many Latinos continued to support him in spite of his anti-immigrant rhetoric. Therefore, it is important to keep these distinctions in mind while talking about the Latino vote.

In light of this theoretical analysis and general evaluation, in Chapter 5 I approached the case study of Florida, which, among all the states in the country, corresponds to a specific political profile, many aspects of which allow us to argue that it is a microcosm of the United States of America. Through its political role at the national level, it occupies a preponderant position in the nation's electoral deadlines.

Moreover, it is, like American politics, strongly bipolarized but center-right slanted; if its vote is mainly Republican inside the state, the national polls appear more measured and increasingly Democratic. However, the state is not a mirror of the country: its Hispanic population, as well as its composition, denotes an ethnic particularism in relation to the profile of the United States and this specificity manifests itself mainly through the prism of the Miami-Dade County. As we have previously discussed, swing states are the key states in national elections, and of these, Florida ranks first. As a heavily populated state with significant electoral weight, this state is predicted to continue as the third state in terms of national political importance. In addition, its status as a pivotal state makes it a recurring electoral battleground where Democrats and Republicans clash, thereby concentrating a large part of the media attention. We could argue that its political situation is quite unique: Democrat in the presidential elections, more divided for the legislative elections and resolutely Republican in its legislature, it shows a dichotomy that explains both the electoral divisions and the differences in mobilization. This difference in scale is also manifested in the divergent representations of Republicans at the national and local level, mainly on the question of immigration. Florida is indeed very sensitive to the latter, because it is home to a large Hispanic population with very specific characteristics. Florida is also a prism of the national political situation: not only does the number of its inhabitants make it an essential state in the electoral choice of the President and the Congressmen of the United States, but its general partisan position reveals its function as a microcosm of American politics. Its Hispanic population appears however very different from the national profile. While the majority of the Hispanic population in the United States is Mexican, the composition of those in Florida is far more diverse and complex, and dominated by Cuban and Puerto Rican communities. Moreover, Spanish has become one of the most widely spoken languages in the United States and is spoken by practically the entire population of South, Central, and the Caribbean, and it is becoming a common element of everyday life in many places. The usage of the Spanish language in the city of Miami, where I conducted my field research, is what I found to be most fascinating. Indeed, Miami is home to one of the largest Hispanic populations in the whole United States and the Spanish language is not only used by immigrants of Hispanic origin, who are newcomers and who logically know the English language because they have no choice but to speak Spanish while learning English. But, Miami's Hispanic community, who were born and reared there, also speaks Spanish frequently. This language is unquestionably present in every aspect of city life, making it possible for someone who does not speak English to get by quite well. The strength and success of the Hispanic media throughout the United States is a clear indication of this linguistic and cultural persistence in the host nation. The media have also turned to offer their services to the Hispanic population, thus, both radio, television and press, offer a wide service in Spanish. This fact is being a clear reflection of the population of Miami, since the media decide to invest money in offering their programming in Spanish. Moreover, economically it is also a good business for the media to offer their services in Spanish, since the Spanish-speaking public is quite high and advertising agencies invest large amounts of money in making

their advertising campaigns in both languages. The survival of the Spanish language is only a symptom of a general phenomenon, visible in all areas and at all scales. Through their massive influx, Hispanic immigrants transformed the United States to an unprecedented extent. Immigrants from the same origin, live in the same area, and isolate themselves in such a way that they do not have to learn English, and tend to associate with people from the same country of origin. This can slow down assimilation. This minority specificity and its multiculturalism are very strong markers of identity not always well understood by the political class of the country, which logically have repercussions on the political behavior of Hispanics. The fact of being both a minority quite distinct from the others, and a group very more heterogeneous than it seems, induces capital consequences on the interaction of the Hispanic community with American politics. The refusal of too simple messages is prevalent in the Hispanic community, and the purely political maneuvers are starting to get out of breath with it. Partial consequence of this “feeling of being a pawn” (Porras, 2012) and of this relative apathy to politics, the participation of Latinos is much lower than that of other groups, even if specific conditions can remarkably increase their mobilization. During my field work in Miami, where I had the opportunity to live with a Cuban family and get to know many other families, I concluded that the fundamental reason why Cubans choose to continue coming to the city of Miami is because of the relatives who live in the city and because of the use of the Spanish language within the same. The Cuban family protects the use of Spanish, since it is the link with the newcomers who obviously do not speak English. In the same way, the first generations of Cubans who arrived in the city of Miami do not speak English since they had built neighborhoods, which are not marginal but, on the contrary, are the richest in the city. The family also helps newcomers, giving them work and a chance to develop within the city. On the other hand, these first Cubans who arrived in the city of Miami and in the United States in general, always had the hope of returning more or less quickly to their country after the fall of the Castro regime. Undoubtedly, the conditions in which Cuban emigration to the United States occurs are very different from the rest of Latinos, which creates different models of settlement in the city of Miami. The use of English among Cubans begins to occur with the descendants who are born on American soil, and have to attend English courses. However, the family is a great promoter of the maintenance of Spanish, and continuous arrival of Cubans in the city from the 1960s until now, also means that families continue to grow and within this environment, the new arrivals from Cuba who do not know English, continue to reinforce the ties to Spanish within one’s family. In these political puzzles, the county of Miami-Dade occupies a particular and crucial place. The city of Miami appears as a space charged with socio-spatial and ethnic segregation, dominated by the Cuban-American diaspora, and famous for various reasons: first, the metropolis is the first destination of this national group, which makes it a prism expressing the voice of Cuban-Americans from all over the country. Then, the complex diplomatic and military history between the two countries since the harshness of the Castro regime has always made Miami appear as the free annex of the island, “the seventh province of Cuba”, as the Cubans call it. Its inhabitants had become the infor-

mal ambassadors of the Cubans in the United States. Finally, despite their small share among the country's Hispanics, Cubans very quickly became a powerful political and economic community, traditionally Republican, unlike other Latinos. It is therefore necessary to observe this phenomenon to fully understand the political situation in Miami. To begin with, one must understand how Cuban-Americans control a much of Miami's economic and political networks. The Cuban community has gradually penetrated and now dominates the upper reaches of Miami and South Florida. Overall, Florida is a unique state within all the federated states and by its role as a faithful indicator of the presidential result, as well as by its internal political distribution, it nevertheless constitutes an interesting political microcosm of the country whose allegiance changes according to the electoral scale. With a traditionally Republican Cuban-American heartland and many other growing communities, Florida emerges as the most complex and defining electoral ground for national elections. It therefore seems essential to understand how and why Latinos in Florida vote. Through its demographic, cultural, and political developments, the Florida Hispanic community has shown the outdated nature of a portion of the American political system, particularly in terms of its representations. In response to these changes, American politics is evolving on all fronts in an effort to win over this new Hispanic vote in some manner. But depending on the situation, magnitude, and party, these changes proceed at quite different rates. Republican local politics seem to be reflecting Florida's segregationist history in new election discrimination laws, but parties are also attempting to adjust to the state's burgeoning Hispanic population. Barack Hussein Obama twice won Florida and its community traditionally made by Republican Hispanics, in part thanks to its transformations which tended more and more towards the Democrats. Faced with this Hispanic population in upheaval and increase, the candidates had to and still have to adapt, in particularly in the methodology of their campaigns. Two areas in particular are affected by these transformations: the campaign in the field, and the media campaign, two approaches in which the candidates Barack Obama and George W. Bush have shown their tactical superiority. It has been widely claimed that Barack Obama won the vote of Hispanics in Florida, thanks to very important fieldwork, the "ground game" (Martinez, 2012). This overwhelming and widely noticed success was particularly hailed in Florida, and marked the victory of a form of campaigning already known, but massively used by the Democrats. The Democratic campaign's electoral machine has been funded through extremely well-funded campaign accounts. It is obvious that this method of campaigning is not limited to targeting Hispanics. However, known for their high abstention and their Democratic leanings, Latinos have become the main target of a very large part of the Democratic campaign networks which have recently focused on mobilization before propaganda. Pushing the members of a fringe of the Democratic leaning electorate to vote, whatever their final choice, makes it possible both to give an image of defender of democracy and to obtain statistically more votes than the adversary. The Obama campaign in Miami was based on this idea, and the teams on the ground pushed less to vote for Barack Obama than to convince people to register on the lists or to talk about politics with those around them. While the Obama campaign was working in

this direction, Mitt Romney was fighting in the Primaries Republicans, which gave the former a definite advantage. This advantage was increasingly more decisive, as the possibilities that technology offered. So, Andrew Rasiej, founder of Personal Democracy Forum, an organization that works on the interaction between politics and technology, asserts that “in the 21st century, the candidate with the [best] data, merged with the best messages dictated by that data, wins” (Martinez, 2012). This success has also been such for Barack Obama in Florida that the great figures of the Republican Party of the State have included in their reforms the desire to follow the example of the Democratic Party. In the new guidelines to be adopted, the leaders included “learn from Democrats, whose campaign networks, uses of data-driven marketing, social media and other technologies were thought to be more advanced” (Powers, 2013). The fieldwork is not the only one to adapt to the new Hispanic situation. In Florida as elsewhere, the media campaign is evolving rapidly, and if traditional methods are still bearing fruit, as evidenced by the investments in campaign videos, the much faster dissemination of information that the internet allows now has a key role in campaign methodology, and the Democratic Party seems to have a considerable lead. Campaign methodology continuously adapts to the Hispanic community. In this area, the Democratic Party appears to be a precursor. While his grassroots work now focuses heavily on mobilizing and trying to spread political awareness, its media campaign is increasingly leaning towards Hispanic voters, adding to the huge investments in Spanish-language ads, the public image of many celebrities and the use of new media such as social networks, which are very popular with a younger Hispanic population. This new methodology is partly due to the increasingly important place that Hispanics are taking in electoral campaigns. However, this observation is still somewhat limited to the Democratic Party. Methodology is one aspect of the campaign that reveals, however, a deeper transformation of the parties in the face of the upheavals of the Hispanic electorate in Florida. Their objectives, in the light of these changes, are also evolving. Just as campaign methodologies evolve, party ambitions must adapt to the new challenges posed by the Hispanic population and its transformations. Consequently, while the Democratic Party now focuses more on mobilization, the Republican Party tries to reform itself to improve its image but ultimately misses the real reform needed. Observing the work of the Democrats on the ground is revealing of their conception of this new Hispanic electorate. Concentrating on mobilization is indeed proof of their unshakeable confidence in the political obedience of the Latino group towards them. Admitting such assurance can be dangerous, because this feeling of “being a pawn” that we were able to identify with a part of this electorate, as well as this independence assertive about politics, may suggest a negative reaction from Hispanics before the Democratic conviction that their vote is assured to them. However, the Democrats persist in their confidence in this Florida electorate which seems to them more and more acquired. Faced with this development, two trends are available to the Grand Old Party to adapt to the new challenges of the Sunshine State: radicalization and moderation. While the Democrats remain confident in the Latino vote, the Republicans, despite their criticisms, fear that this trend will remain in effect for some time. Driven by anti-im-

migration or even xenophobic theories for the most extreme, or tempted by an electoral strategy focused on the White middle classes for most of the others, some Republicans are advancing on the delicate ground of sidelining Latinos. But, even if the Republicans decide to transform their positions, it is not said that this is enough to catch up with this Hispanic electorate in Florida. The subject of immigration, uniformly cataloged as the main theme of rupture between Republicans and Latinos, offers a good example today. As this headline from *The Atlantic* summarizes, “The GOP doesn’t need Hispanic outreach, it needs a Hispanic takeover” (Cavada, 2013). This assertion highlights the need for essential reform and to shed its harmful image among Hispanics. Despite this, as we will describe later, something has changed in the last years, where Trump was actually able to win Florida in two consecutive elections. However, the difficulties experienced by the national Republican party during the decade, in adapting to the Latino group put it at risk of losing Florida and its rapidly changing electorate. At the state level, on the other hand, the Republican Party reacts more quickly and is more focused on improving its image and transforming itself. But whether we are talking about the Republicans of Washington or those of Florida, a misunderstanding, even a tension, remains between the Hispanics of Florida and the Grand Old Party, which suggests that the Democratic tendency in this population will remain significant. This tension remains palpable because the evolution of the Republican party vis-à-vis this electoral group is apathetic as well as superficial. Florida ultimately appears to be a state in constant upheaval. Its demographic, ethnic, economic and political characteristics have changed profoundly since the end of World War II. This swing state, which has become essential in national elections, and of considerable weight in the country’s assemblies, has recently seen its electoral geopolitical situation upset even more rapidly, resulting in political repercussions initiated recently but lastingly. The state’s diversity and political complexity, due in large part to the presence of a unique Cuban community centered on Miami-Dade, whose economic and political success at the highest levels of the nation has overwhelmed the region, are essential characteristics that define electoral conflicts in this field. With a population of one-quarter Hispanics, Florida sees a momentous political battle every election, and they are increasingly being called upon to determine the state’s future in many ways and from the country. This fight for Florida between Republicans and Democrats, however, is rarely fruitful, because it too often leaves aside the determining aspect of the complex Hispanic identity. This ethnic group, created by the US Census Bureau, is indeed used by the political class and many research centers by putting aside the subtlety of it. If a Latino unit exists in fact, it is far removed from the self-perception of the group, which defines itself as a minority very different from the others and, above all, as a diverse community, far from this monolithic image highlighted by the political circles. The Hispanic community of Florida represents the quintessence of this diversity: two poles oppose it, Cubans and Puerto Ricans, but many other immigrants from all over South and Central America as well as the Caribbean complicate this portrait. These characteristics have major political implications. Weakening progressive conservatism of the Cuban-American group is certainly latent, and still has little concrete impact.

But the ongoing reorganization of the Hispanic community is a major development whose impact is already taking shape and is set to increase further. Thus, the arrival of new immigrants, even Cubans, is bound to tip the balance in Florida between Democratic leanings in national elections and Republican domination at home. Faced with the rapid increase in this Hispanic population, its ethnic and partisan re-composition and the progressive counterbalancing of Cuban domination over the state, the political parties and their representatives are forced to adapt quickly in order to conquer the Latinos of this capital state.

The various strategies put in place proved to be diametrically opposed. The renewed Republican gerrymandering in 2010 affected Latinos in a collateral way, but new discriminations established by the Florida Legislature proved not only ineffective but deplorable for the image of the party. Conversely, the Democratic strategy, certainly not yet completely adapted to this multiple electorate, has made many pragmatic efforts to directly reach Hispanics in Florida. By demonstrating the insufficiency of toughness towards Cuba, and by focusing on campaign methods favoring the field and the new mass media, the Democratic Party managed to better adapt to the new challenges of the electorate. If Hispanics in Florida continue to transform as history and current trends suggest, Republican dominance is on the way to waning. Therefore, the medium-term birth of a new California, a new Democratic stronghold partially driven by Latinos, is not unlikely. The hypothesis according to which a state would turn resolutely to the Democrats because of its Hispanic population, is not limited to Florida. Such possibilities have been considered, even in even more Republican states, such as Texas or Arizona. Julian Castro, the Democratic mayor of San Antonio, thus asserted that the Republican stronghold of Texas could be overthrown within a few years (Spillius, 2012). Arizona, known for the pioneering role of its Republican administration in discriminatory laws against Latinos, faces a constantly growing Hispanic population, and more and more voters, causing concern for Republicans in Washington. The vote of Hispanics in Florida, traditionally perceived as Republican, is undergoing profound changes: demographic transformations are affecting it, which have repercussions on its political allegiance and its statistical profile. On the one hand, a massive influx of Puerto Ricans feeds the center of the state. On the other hand, the Hispanic Republican core of the Cuban community in South Florida is undergoing a profound change in attitude. The new Cuban immigrants are no longer rejected by a communist dictatorship but come, like other South Americans, to seek a better future. These transformations, to which is added the arrival of other immigrants from Central and South America, Peruvians, Salvadorans, Dominicans among others, transform the profile of Hispanics in Florida. Although they remain statistically favored compared to other immigrants, their conditions of arrival, their objectives and their political color bring them closer and closer to the national profile. We could argue that the “Hispanic wave” is blue today. If politics is not made only with demographics, the latter remains a major source of concern for Republicans in the country. Some analysts even go so far as to predict Democratic victories over the next thirty years thanks to this population, or even, finally, an “emergent Democratic majority” that will dominate even longer. Despite the victory of Trump of this state in the lat-

est elections, Florida seems to be driven by its Hispanic population towards a lasting Democratic allegiance that could represent the future of the Latino vote. And if a presidential election could be won by getting the votes of just an entire state, thus both parties should be aware that Florida may represents a decisive one and consider it as the “cradle” of the Hispanic vote that could determine the future of the American vote.

In conclusion, the reality of Latinos in the United States is extremely contradictory: although on the one hand they have promoted a significant demographic transformation in that country, at the same time they have become an important public and their vote is decisive in electoral contests in an increasing number of states, on the other hand, that has not prevented them from continuing to be the object of discrimination, racism and intolerance in American society. Cultural, ethnic, and historical otherness has shaped the identity representations of Latinos in American society. Some specialists on the subject speak of a Latino identity in formation, appealing to cultural elements typical of their origins and in particular to the role of language as a key identity factor, but for now it seems more appropriate to speak of the existence of multiple Latino identities resulting from the intercultural exchange with elements typical of the cultures of origin and the Anglo-Saxon, as well as with others with which Latinos coexist in American society. Due to its consistent increase in recent years, reinforced by migration flows, the Latino vote is once again in the focus for the 2024 presidential elections. Despite the fact that not all immigrants are US citizens and cannot vote, the Latino population is expanding significantly. Indeed, depending on how many Latinos voters turn out in the states that are in a tight race, their turnout could have an impact on the outcome. Election after election will aim to comprehend its electoral significance and the manner in which the political agenda includes its demands due to its ongoing growth. Nevertheless, we should remember that the Hispanic vote appears to be divided, Latinos do not vote “*en bloque*”, and consequently its importance at the national level appears minimized. This ethnic group is used by the political class and many research centers by putting aside the subtlety of it. If a Latino unit exists in fact, it is far removed from the self-perception of the group, which defines itself as a minority very different from the others and, above all, as a diverse community, far from this monolithic image highlighted by the political circles. The “sleeping giant”, as some experts have called the demographic and cultural phenomenon derived from the Latino avalanche in the United States, shows signs of its economic, cultural and political potential that must be followed closely in the coming decades, in which changes and events of interest may occur.

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