As in previous presidential elections, in 2004 Latinos were the focus of considerable early national media attention. The “Latino vote” was variously characterized as “potent” and “pivotal,” and some considered Latinos “swing voters.” As late as mid-October 2004, a CNN headline read, “Hispanics Could Hold Key to a Win” (CNN 2004). Also as in previous presidential elections, however, these early high hopes were dashed on Election Day (Leal et al. 2005). While Latinos were sometimes said to be “up for grabs,” this was certainly not the case in New York State in 2004 (“Most Hispanics Say” 2002).

A key feature of contemporary U.S. presidential elections—and the 2004 contest in particular—is the “battleground state” dynamic. Some states are solidly blue; that is, they are highly likely to support almost any Democratic presidential candidate. The red states are equally likely to support the Republican nominee. The remaining states are the battleground states—a relatively small number (if fifteen or so) that had narrowly gone one way or the other in 2000. These were the electoral targets in 2004; the candidates and their campaigns virtually ignored all others, except for fund-raising, most notably in New York and California.
Latinos were concentrated in several states rich in Electoral College votes, such as California (55), Texas (34), New York (31), Florida (27), and Illinois (21), as well as in Arizona (10) and New Mexico (5). Of these, only Florida and New Mexico were battleground states. California, New York, and Illinois were virtual locks for John Kerry, whereas Texas and Arizona were strongly for President George W. Bush. The claim that Latinos constituted an up-for-grabs swing vote was based in large part on their cultural conservatism and Catholic religious affiliation, which would seem to make them receptive to the GOP message on social issues such as abortion. Also, some local and state elections in both New York City and New York State saw an increasing Latino propensity to support Republican candidates. Latinos in New York City, for instance, had increasingly voted Republican in the four mayoral elections from 1989 to 2001. In 2001 Republican Michael Bloomberg received nearly half the Latino vote. In addition, there was a recognition that growing Latino numbers in New York and nationally made them an increasingly potent constituency—a dominant one in some jurisdictions, and one in New York motivated less by party identification than by ethnicity (Mollenkopf and Miranda 2002).

In 2004, as they had four years earlier, the national Republican and Democratic Parties and the presidential candidates pursued a “Latinos southern strategy” that targeted Mexican and Cuban Americans in the Southwest and Southeast. As before, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other Latinos in New York and the Northeast were virtually ignored (Falcon 2005)—but so were whites, blacks, and Asians in these regions. Neither party mounted anything resembling a vigorous campaign in the Empire State. It would have been masochistic for Republicans and a waste of resources for Democrats. John F. Kerry was going to win New York regardless of campaign efforts.

It was not a surprise that neither presidential candidate campaigned in New York State during the 2004 general election. President Bush did fly into New York City in early September to accept his party’s nomination in Madison Square Garden, but even this media event was meant to reach television audiences throughout the United States, not New Yorkers in particular. During the fall “campaign,” there were no television ads, no 527s, no ballot initiatives, and no discussion of important Latino issues. Nada.

What was the effect of Latino voters in New York on the presidential outcome in the state? The same—nada. The “Latino wave” (Ramos 2004) was merely part of the Democratic tsunami in New York State and New York City. The statewide election results, however, do not tell the entire story of the impact of Latino voters in New York in 2004. As in California, Latino voters were important contributors to the statewide electoral majority that has kept New York a safe Democratic state, thus affecting Republican and Democratic strategies and spending in more competitive states (see chap. 7, this volume). Also, Latinos expanded their coethnic representation in the state senate and state assembly (by one seat each).

THE 2004 LATINO PRESIDENTIAL VOTE


The state was Democratic and getting more so. At election time registration rolls statewide numbered 5,535,000 Democrats and 3,209,000 Republicans. Democrats had grown by 290,000 and Republicans by fewer than 40,000 since the 2000 election (CPS 2005).

Latinos in New York State voted overwhelmingly for Democrat Kerry—75 percent versus 24 percent for Bush. Surveys by the Hispanic Federation from 1996 to 2004 found at least seven in ten New York City Latinos registered as Democrats (see table 8.1).

The proportion of the Latino voting-age population that voted in New York State increased slightly in 2004 from four years earlier: 31 percent cast a ballot in 2004, up from 29.4 percent of the voting-age Latino population in 2000. Latino turnout in New York City grew 4.5 points, to 32.8 percent (CPS 2005). This increased Latino voter turnout seemed to reflect a greater public interest in the Bush/Kerry campaign than the Bush/Gore 2000 contest (Wattenberg 2005). It does not reflect a greater effort by political parties and political action groups to mobilize Latino voters, as the state and the city were safely Democratic in both elections.
Table 8.1. NYC Latino Voter and Party Registration, 1996–2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Registered</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Hispanic Federation surveys.

In 2000 Gore received 81 percent of the state’s Latino vote (and 90 percent of New York City’s Latino vote), while Bush received 16 percent statewide. Although Bush narrowed the gap in 2004, New York State Latinos still voted for Kerry three to one (rather than the five to one for Gore). Exit polling showed that Latinos constituted 12 percent of Kerry’s overall New York State vote and 5 percent of Bush’s. The earliest preelection polls predicted Kerry’s big win, both overall and among Latinos, which is why the state was not contested.

In 2004 the state’s Hispanic voters were in between whites and blacks in their presidential choice. White New York State voters split their ballots—50 percent for Bush, 49 percent for Kerry. Blacks, the most loyal element of the New York City, New York State, and national Democratic “base,” gave 90 percent of their votes to Kerry. Again, the presidential preferences of Latinos, whites, and blacks were previewed in the early preelection polls.

In 2000 New York also had been a blue state that was little contested by Gore and Bush. In that year, however, the presidential race was overshadowed by the far more interesting and competitive Clinton/Lazio U.S. Senate election (Falcon 2005). Hillary Rodham Clinton campaigned heavily among Latinos statewide, winning over 80 percent of their votes. In 2004 there was for all practical purposes no U.S. Senate race. Incumbent first-term senior senator, Charles Schumer, was reelected in a historic landslide—71 percent to 25 percent—against unknown and underfunded Republican upstate assemblyman, Howard Mills.

Latinos statewide gave Schumer an even bigger margin—79 versus 19 percent. During his first Senate win in 1998 (against three-term Republican incumbent Alfonse D’Amato), Schumer had vigorously sought the votes of Hispanics, ultimately receiving 86 percent.

**Big Democratic/Kerry Win Not in Doubt**

Pre-election polling largely predicted John Kerry’s big win in New York—and even bigger margin among New York State Latinos. The most notable poll was the June 2004 survey conducted by the Hispanic Federation in New York City, where 62 percent of Hispanics who would vote in November resided. John Kerry, the certain Democratic nominee, beat George Bush in a hypothetical horse race by 58 percent to 17 percent. This is a better than 3 to 1 ratio among New York City Hispanics who were registered to vote: only 17 percent were undecided with five months remaining before the election. Among those making a candidate choice, 74 percent of New York City Latinos surveyed by the Hispanic Federation were for Kerry, which is almost exactly what he received in the November election, and 22 percent supported Bush, which is very close to his actual vote count. For New York State generally, a Quinnipiac University Poll conducted from August 3 to 9 found that Kerry would beat Bush 53 percent to 35 percent among registered voters if the election were held then, while 7 percent were undecided; four months earlier (April 5–12), the results were nearly identical: 53 percent Kerry versus 36 percent Bush, with 9 percent undecided.

Anticipating concerns expressed on Election Day, New York City Latinos provided very negative assessments of George Bush in the late spring–early summer Hispanic Federation poll. Two-thirds characterized his overall job performance as either “poor” (32 percent) or “not so good” (34 percent). Bush did even worse among Latino New Yorkers in regard to how he had served the Hispanic community. Fully 7 in 10 called his service to Latinos either “poor” (38 percent) or “not so good” (32 percent).
The survey also revealed that the economy and jobs and the Iraq war and national security were the top two issues that New York City Latinos said would determine their presidential vote choices. They felt that Bush was mishandling both: fully three-fourths disapproved of Bush's handling of the war, and 7 in 10 disapproved of Bush's stewardship of the economy. These sentiments are similar to those Latinos expressed when they voted in the November election.

2004 Latino New Yorker Voter

On Election Day 2004 the National Election Pool (NEP)—a consortium comprising ABC, AP, CBS, CNN, Fox, and NBC—surveyed 1,452 New York State voters, including 148 self-described Hispanics, as they left the polls. Because the Latino subsample is small, the maximum error margin is large (±8 percent); consequently, the analysis that follows is meant to be evocative, certainly not exact. It is true that the sample of Latinos is frustratingly small, but we feel, even with its deficiencies, the 2004 NEP exit poll is useful.

In terms of vote share, the NEP found that Hispanics constituted 9 percent of the 2004 New York State presidential election voters (with a maximum error margin of ±–3 percent, or approximately 620,000 voters). These results essentially reflect the U.S. Census Bureau's November 2004 "Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey," which estimated 613,000 Latino voters with a margin of error of ±–4.6 percent (CPS 2005). In 2000, according to exit polls, Hispanics made up 8 percent of the state electorate, or about 545,000 voters.

Geographically, Latino voters primarily lived downtown in the New York City metropolitan area. Sixty-two percent of those exit polled lived in New York City (75.3 percent of New York State Latinos lived in the city [U.S. Census 2001]), 21 percent in Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, and 12 percent in the Lower Hudson Valley, which consists of Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange, Dutchess, Ulster, and Sullivan Counties. Only 1 in 20 New York State Latino voters lived in upstate urban and rural areas.

THE 2001 NEW YORK CITY MAYORAL ELECTION

The most important factor in increased Latino turnout was the energizing and mobilizing effect of the 2001 New York City mayoral campaign of Fernando Ferrer, the former Bronx borough president. Around the time of the 2004 election, it was widely assumed that Ferrer would run for mayor in 2005. He was the Democratic frontrunner, leading incumbent Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg in the polls. Ferrer's candidacy resulted in a record Latino turnout, bringing tens of thousands of Latinos to the polls for the first time and registering additional tens of thousands of others. His was the strongest mayoral campaign by a Latino since then-Bronx congressman and former Bronx borough president Herman Badillo's losing mayoral runoff against Abraham Beame in 1973 (McNickle 1993). Indeed, among the conditions that have been found to stimulate heightened political attention and involvement among Latinos is the presence of a Latino candidate (Barreto 2007; Cruz 2005).

Ferrer was a product of the Bronx County Democratic organization and a protégé of the Bronx County Democratic chair, assemblyman Roberto Ramirez. In 2004 the political center of Latino politics in New York City remained in the South Bronx, with Puerto Ricans such as Ferrer and Ramirez still chief Latino players in New York City politics (Falcon 2005).

In the September 25 Democratic mayoral primary (moved back two weeks after the originally scheduled 9/11 primary was canceled), Hispanics were a historically high 23 percent share of the vote. They cast 72 percent of their ballots for Ferrer against three opponents. Ferrer, somewhat surprisingly, came in first overall with 35.6 percent of the vote. Public Advocate Mark Green came in second with 31 percent, followed by New York City Council Speaker Peter Vallone with 19.8 percent, and New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi with 12.1 percent.

Ferrer did not reach the 40 percent threshold necessary to avoid a runoff with second-place finisher Green. In the October 11 runoff, Latinos were 24 percent of a slightly larger electorate (787,000 vs. 781,000), with Ferrer receiving 84 percent of the Latino vote and Green 16 percent. The Hispanic Federation's Latino Political Participation report (Mollenkopf and Miranda 2002) documented the overwhelming support that Ferrer received in predominantly Hispanic election districts (EDS), receiving 71 percent in the first primary and increasing to 82 percent in the runoff.

Green beat Ferrer 51 percent to 49 percent overall, however. In the general election between Green and billionaire businessman Bloomberg,
Latinos made up 18 percent of the electorate and essentially split their vote—47 percent for Bloomberg, 49 percent for Green. The New York Times headline read, “City’s Hispanic Shift, Moving Toward the G.O.P” (Ojito 2004).

Perhaps less a move to the Republicans than a sign of their displeasure with the conduct and outcome of the runoff, Latino voters either stayed home or voted for Bloomberg in response to what they saw as an ethnically/racially charged Green runoff campaign (Ojito 2004). The Green campaign had distributed literature showing a New York Post cartoon portraying Ferrer kissing Al Sharpton’s posterior.

The hostilities between the Ferrer and Green camps were damaging to both candidates only weeks before the general election. The conflict precipitated a meeting of local state and national Democratic leaders, including the Democratic national chairman, Terry McAuliffe, to call a ceasefire. At that meeting, Green stated that although he needed Hispanics to govern the city, he did not need them to win an election against Bloomberg. Latino leaders were incensed and left determined to prove the second part of Green’s proposition wrong.9

General election turnout in majority-Hispanic election districts sagged heavily, most notably in the Bronx, where it appears that the Latino-dominated Bronx County Democratic organization (out of which Ferrer had come) sat on their hands on Election Day. Thus, while turnout in majority-Hispanic election districts was 1.1 percentage points above the citywide average in the runoff, it was 12 points below the citywide average in the general election.

The 2001 Democratic mayoral primary elections were, according to Mollenkopf and Miranda (2002: 16), “a watershed for closing the gap between turnout among Latinos and the overall turnout rate.” The effect proved short-lived, as it collapsed in the general election, with falloff universal but varying across Latino neighborhoods. Had Ferrer been the Democratic nominee, it is almost certain that Hispanics would have turned out in record numbers. The 2001 Democratic mayoral primary, runoff, and general election support the notion that “shared ethnicity directly influences Latino vote choice” (Barreto 2007: 438).

Latinos in New York City, like Latinos in other American cities, are unlikely to have high levels of turnout when no Latino candidate is running. “The presence of a viable Latino candidate uniformly results in increased voter turnout in Latino precincts” (Barreto 2007: 439). There may be a downside of this upsurge—a backlash in response to the Latino candidate. Turnout in majority-white districts increased in the runoff election (Mollenkopf and Miranda 2002: 15); white voters may have turned out to vote against Ferrer.

The ethnic composition of Ferrer’s support among Latinos ran counter to the belief of some analysts, including Latinos, that Ferrer, a Puerto Rican, faced a challenge in assembling a coalition across the many Latino nationality groups. The Hispanic Federation’s 2001 annual survey had suggested otherwise.10 In spring 2001 Ferrer’s 74 percent support among Dominicans, for instance, was higher than that among any other Latino group, including Puerto Ricans (62 percent) and “other Hispanics” (61 percent).

The outpouring of support for Ferrer by Hispanics and the splitting of Latino ballots between Republican Bloomberg and Democrat Green suggested that Latinos had emerged as a potent and pivotal actor in New York City politics. Indeed, from 1989 to 1997, ABC News exit poll data show that the Latino share of the total New York City electorate grew from 8 percent in 1989 to 13 percent in 1993 to 21 percent in 1997, then fell, as noted, to 18 percent in the 2001 general election (table 8.2).

Furthermore, the proportion of Latinos voting for a Republican candidate—Rudy Giuliani in 1989, 1993, and 1997 and Michael Bloomberg in 2001—steadily rose from about one-fourth in 1989, according to ABC News, to nearly one-half in 2001. The Republican candidate received an increasing share of the Hispanic vote with each succeeding election. Such figures help to explain the perception that the Hispanic vote was up for grabs.

THE 2002 STATE ELECTIONS

According to a 2002 series in Newday, Latino voters held “the potential to swing statewide and local races” (Mertz 2002; Rau 2002a; see also Rau 2002b). Republican Governor George Pataki assiduously courted Latinos in his 2002 reelection campaign, supported by Amigos for Pataki in the state. Four years earlier, Pataki had received 24 percent of
Table 8.2. Latino Voting in NYC Mayoral General Elections, 1989–2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Percent of Latino Share (Source)</th>
<th>No. of Latino Voters / Total No. of Voters</th>
<th>Vote Choices and Percent of Latino Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>8 (ABC)</td>
<td>152,000 / 1,899,845</td>
<td>Dinkins 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Giuliani 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>13 (VNS)</td>
<td>245,570 / 1,889,003</td>
<td>Dinkins 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Giuliani 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>21 (VNS)</td>
<td>285,000 / 1,357,249</td>
<td>Messenger 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Giuliani 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>18 (EMR)</td>
<td>267,000 / 1,480,914</td>
<td>Green 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bloomberg 47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: "Hispanic Share" and "Vote Choices" drawn from exit polls conducted by ABC News and CBS/New York Times, Voter News Service, and Edison Media Research. "No. of Latino Voters" computed by multiplying the Latino share by the certified vote count of the New York City Board of Elections and rounded to nearest 1,000.

Pataki received 51 percent of the vote. In the Seventy-second Assembly District in Washington Heights, the capital of New York City's Dominican community (where Pataki campaigned hardest), his share of the vote more than doubled: to 36 percent from 17 percent four years earlier (PrimeNY 2002).

In an attempt to attract more Latino voters, the GOP nominated the first Latino statewide major party candidate, former judge Dora Irizarry (who also ran on the line of the Conservative Party in the New York State multiple-line fusion system). In her run against incumbent Democratic Attorney General Eliot Spitzer (who ran also as the candidate of the Independence, Liberal, and Working Families Parties), she was soundly defeated, winning only 29.8 percent against Spitzer's 66.4 percent.

2003–2004: NEW YORK CITY AND BEYOND

Most Latino elected officials have come from New York City because most of the state's Hispanic population has traditionally been concentrated there. Nonetheless, in 2004 more than 700,000 Latinos resided outside the city, with the largest number in the Long Island counties of Nassau and Suffolk, followed by the Rochester, Buffalo-Niagara Falls, and Albany-Schenectady-Troy metropolitan statistical areas (U.S. Census Bureau 2003). As the state's Hispanic population outside the city has grown, so too has the number of Hispanic public officials. In 2003, 24 percent of Latino state elected officials represented jurisdictions outside the city. Overall, the state had 89 Latino officials in 2003, including 2 U.S. representatives, 15 state legislators, and 72 local elected officials. Four years earlier, in 2000, there were 73 Latino elected officials in the state; in 1973 there were just 10 Spanish-surnamed persons elected to any level of government in New York (NALEO 2003; Barreto 2007).

In Rochester, the state's third largest city, Latinos constituted 13 percent of the total population of more than two hundred thousand in 2002. Hispanics were elected to the positions of councilwoman, county legislator, school board member, and judge. In Syracuse, voters elected a Latino city councilwoman and a school board member (Metz 2002).
2004 NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL RACES

In the 2004 elections both Latino U.S. representatives (Democrats from New York City, Nydia Valasquez of Brooklyn and Jose Serrano of the Bronx) and fourteen of fifteen incumbent state legislators (four state senators and eleven assembly members)—all of them Democrats except for the party-switching Senator Olga Mendez (who was defeated, see below) and all but one of them from New York City—were comfortably reelected. A nonincumbent Latina won an assembly seat in the Bronx vacated by a non-Latino. Thus Latino representation grew by one member in each house (with the Mendez seat becoming Democratic again). Hispanic challengers on Long Island—one Democrat and two Republicans—were defeated. Non-Latino incumbents defeated the Democrat and one Republican. The second Republican lost to an incumbent Latino, the only Latino state legislator to represent a district wholly outside New York City, Suffolk County’s Sixth Assembly District.

El Barrio: Bellweather? No!

One New York race that received a great deal of attention in 2004 was for senate District 28, which covered East Harlem’s El Barrio and the South Bronx. The election featured the twenty-six-year incumbent state senator, Olga Mendez, the first Puerto Rican woman elected to a state legislature on the U.S. mainland and the longest-serving member of any state legislature, who defected to the GOP a month after her 2002 victory as a Democrat. She had supported incumbent Republican governor, George Pataki, for reelection in 2002 and was widely criticized by her Democratic colleagues. She knew there would be consequences. “I know when I’m not wanted,” she reasoned (Jordan 2003). She justified the switch by arguing that she had a better chance of passing legislation and receiving money for her district if she were a member of the senate majority. Critics contended that her motives were more personal, that she would receive an extra $12,500 as a committee chair (her reward for defecting). Indeed, in June 2004 Mendez became the first woman to chair the senate Labor Committee (Ramirez 2004).

Her challenger was Democratic City Councilman Jose Serrano Jr., son of a U.S. congressman representing a Bronx district. Observers saw the race as a possible harbinger of Republican electoral inroads into the Hispanic community (Chernikoff and Dougherty 2005).

El Barrio is New York City’s quintessential Latino neighborhood; Latinos make up 52.1 percent of the total population and 50.2 percent of the voting age population. The neighborhood is “the cradle of the Puerto Rican community” in the United States and a point of entry for many new arrivals (Goris and Pedraza 1994). Recently, El Barrio has become home to the second largest Mexican immigrant community in the city, approximately eight thousand persons (Department of City Planning 2004), who have been arriving in the neighborhood at a steady pace since the mid-1990s. El Barrio is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Manhattan and getting poorer. In 2000 almost 37 percent of its total population received income support such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid; in 2004 almost 49 percent of the population received such aid.

Republicans believed that the Mendez/Serrano contest provided an opportunity for residents and civic leaders in El Barrio to act on a presumed frustration with the Democratic Party and support Mendez. Invoking El Barrio’s needs, she justified her defection by saying her constituents would benefit from having a representative in the majority. She similarly highlighted the likely difficulties that Serrano would face as a Democratic newcomer in a Republican-dominated senate.

According to the New York State Board of Elections Financial Disclosure Report, the committee to reelect state senator Olga Mendez received $100,000 from the state senate Republican Campaign Committee. In contrast, the senate Democratic Campaign Committee gave only $15,000 to Serrano. The large difference between each party’s contributions to its candidates may be indicative of the commitment of the GOP to win one of the city’s historic Latino Democratic bastions (and the Democrats’ belief that the district would vote overwhelmingly for Serrano). Such financial support might have seemed like a good bet for the GOP given her past electoral performance. Mendez had an impressive electoral record, having won eleven previous elections, never polling less than 89 percent, and winning 95 percent of the vote in 2002.
(Chernikoff and Dougherty 2005). To win in 2004, however, Mendez would have had to convince thousands of Democrats to cross party lines. In senate District 28, there were 77,881 voters registered as Democrats in the Bronx and 55,361 in Manhattan; there were only 12,691 registered Republicans in the entire district. Mendez’s situation was made worse by district boundaries redrawn in 2002 that put 60 percent of the district’s voters in the Bronx, where Serrano’s family name and his work as a council member would have greater effect on voters.

When the ballots were counted, voters in District 28 remained loyal to the Democratic Party, as Serrano crushed Mendez 82 percent to 18 percent. Latino registered voter turnout was estimated at 26 percent, almost 7 percent lower than the average citywide Latino turnout. The district’s low turnout rate may be attributable to the disappearance of community organizations in El Barrio (de la Garza and DeSipio 1994), the lack of competitive races at the local and state levels, and elected officials’ complacency in taking their constituents for granted, in addition to the widely held expectation that Serrano would win easily. Whatever the reasons for the low turnout, those who voted were Democrats; Kerry received 97 percent and Bush received 2 percent of the Latino vote in the district.

The 2004 Election Season

The 2004 election season in New York began in the weeks preceding the March 2 Democratic presidential primary (President Bush was unopposed in the Republican primary), followed by the Republican National Convention held in New York City from August 30 to September 2. On September 14 Democratic and Republican primaries were held for U.S. senator, both houses of the state legislature, and hundreds of local offices. The general election was on November 2.

The story on the Republican side began in July 2003, when Republican National Chairman Marc Racicot, along with top Republican National Committee officials and Republican Governor George Pataki, opened, to much fanfare, an office in Washington Heights, located in northern Manhattan and the political center of Dominican politics. The Hispanic Outreach Center, a branch of the New York Republican Committee, was meant to signal Republican seriousness in courting the Latino vote (Sargent 2003).

The date of the presidential primary was moved up to enhance the state’s role in selecting the major party nominees. New York offered the largest delegate pool of the ten Super Tuesday states that were holding presidential contests that day. John Kerry, with his wins in Iowa and New Hampshire, went on to win all but two of the next primary contests and entered New York with a commanding lead among delegates and in the polls. Kerry’s only real competition came from U.S. Senator John Edwards (D-NC), who had never registered above 3 percent in New York statewide polls before February 2004. The black activist Al Sharpton also campaigned actively, focusing on New York City.

On primary day Kerry decisively defeated Edwards, 61 percent to 24 percent, with Sharpton garnering 8 percent. According to exit polls, Kerry won every major demographic and ideological group. He did especially well among voters over sixty-five, Jewish voters, and Latino voters. Kerry won 71 percent of the Latino vote, 62 percent of the white vote, and 54 percent of the black vote. One-third of blacks voted for Sharpton.

Latino leaders and public officials split in their support of Kerry and Sharpton. Al Sharpton was one of the leaders of the “black-Republican coalition” in New York City, and he actively supported and was embraced by Fernando Ferrer in the 2001 New York City Democratic mayoral primary and runoff. Ferrer and most Latino elected officials supported Kerry (after some had backed Howard Dean). Assemblyman Jose Rivera, the Bronx Democratic Party chair, U.S. Representative Jose Serrano, and Assemblyman Ruben Diaz Jr., both also of the Bronx, backed Sharpton.

The New York primary was, as the New York Times characterized it, a “make or break contest” for Edwards (Slackman 2004). Kerry’s big win in New York, coupled with eight of nine Super Tuesday victories, drove Edwards out of the race the next day. The rest of the primary season was a prelude to Kerry’s nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Boston in July. New York Latino leaders and officials actively campaigned outside of New York for Kerry both before and after his nomination.

At the convention, two Latinos played prominent roles. Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico was the first Latino national convention chairman, and Congressman Robert Menéndez, chair of the House Democratic Caucus, addressed the convention on opening night, partly
in Spanish. Latinos made up about 11 percent of the nearly 4,300 convention delegates in Boston. Ferrer addressed the convention on its third day. Did Latinos flex the political muscle many had forecast? No. Furthermore, no compelling Latino figure emerged at the convention in the manner of Barack Obama of Illinois.

The Republican National Convention in New York did not dance to salsa either. Indeed, the Latino Coalition’s featured politician was Senator John McCain (R-AZ). No Hispanic politicians or officials were included in the prominent portions of the formal program (Tejeda 2004). Theresa Santiago, chair of the New York State Consumer Protection Board, who had headed Amigos for Pataki in the 2002 gubernatorial campaign, led the delegation. About 6 percent of the more than 4,800 delegates were Latino, a single percentage point more than at the 2000 convention. Latinos did provide benedictions and music, however. The only New York Latino to address the Republican faithful was Fernando Marcro, president of Hispanics Across America and head of the New York City taxi drivers’ union.

One of the obstacles for New York City Latinos in translating population percentages into political power (most notably, to achieve greater coethnic representation) is that, unlike other U.S. cities, they are “more dispersed and politically complex for institutional and demographic reasons” (Falcon 2005: 205; Cruz 2005).

Latino voting in 2004 in New York City suggests a “concentration effect”: the greater the proportion of Latinos in an election district (the equivalent of a precinct in other states) with at least one hundred voters, the better Kerry did against Bush. Such concentration effects have been noted by Cruz, Ferradino, and Friedman (2006), who found, using ecological inference techniques (King 1997) on 2004 voting data for the 150 districts composing the New York state assembly, that the proportion of Latinos voting Democratic declined where Latinos were less concentrated. A 1 percent increase in the proportion of Latino voters is associated with a 0.27 percent increase in the Democratic vote and a statistically significant decrease of 0.34 percent in the Republican vote (Cruz, Ferradino, and Friedman 2006).

What are the consequences of such a finding? It depends on several factors, including, most notably, how competitive the election is and the relative turnout of other racial or ethnic groups in comparison to that of Latinos.

Hispanics leaving the polls in New York 2004 overwhelmingly described themselves as Democrats—68 percent versus the 16 percent who “usually think of themselves” as Republicans—similar to the Hispanic Federation poll results in June. Twelve percent thought of themselves as Independents. Ideologically, nearly half (47 percent) of New York State Latinos considered themselves moderates, 31 percent said they were liberals, and 24 percent called themselves conservatives. Even considering the large error margins, Latinos were decidedly Democratic in their presidential vote and liberal-to-moderate in their political ideology.

In terms of gender, Latinas made up 60 percent of New York State Latino voters in November 2004 (65 percent four years earlier). Thus, even with the large margin of error (+/-8 percent), Latinas made up a majority of the Latino electorate. Women made up the same proportions of white and black voters in the NEP exit poll, while Asian voters were about evenly divided by gender.

About one in four (26 percent) Latino voters were casting a ballot for the first time in 2004—three times the percentage of whites (8 percent) and blacks (7 percent). Latinos, except for Puerto Ricans, are a “newer” electorate, reflecting their immigrant status and younger than average age in comparison to the typical New Yorker.

The NEP also asked a few questions about President Bush and key policy issues. New York State Latino voters were quite negative in their assessments of his presidency. Fully two-thirds (67 percent) disapproved of his overall job performance, and the same number disapproved of his handling of the Iraq war (and with a near-majority strongly disapproving). Sixty-one percent said the war was a mistake, and 60 percent said the economy was in bad shape and that their financial situation had worsened. Again, even given the large error margin, it is clear that sizable and sometimes overwhelming majorities of Latinos disapproved of George Bush’s job performance and the war in Iraq.

LATINO POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL ELECTORATES IN NEW YORK

It has become a cliché that Latinos nationally, including those in New York, register and turn out in lower proportions than whites, blacks, or Asians (DeSipio 1996; Pachon 1999; Cruz 2005; Barreto 2007). In
New York City, 32 percent of Latinos reported not being registered to vote (Hispanic Federation 2004). It follows that should Latinos register and vote, they will play increasingly influential and sometimes decisive roles in New York City, New York State, and national politics. What, then, are the actual and potential Latino electorates in New York?

Age, citizenship, and registration are the legal gates to electoral participation. Adult citizens must be registered, and these potential voters must actually cast a ballot. Thus four population categories represent different levels of political potential (see Pew 2005): (1) the overall population, which includes people of all ages and citizenship statuses; (2) the electorate, which constitutes individuals who are eligible to vote—those at least eighteen years old and having U.S. citizenship; (3) registered voters, constituting those who are eligible and officially enrolled; and (4) actual voters, that is, individuals who are eligible to vote, registered, and actually cast a ballot. Like Latinos nationally, population growth in New York City and New York State through immigration and high birthrates “yields increases in the number of eligible voters at a slower and potentially diminished rate compared to other groups” (Pew 2005: 2).

Overall Population

The 2000 census found 2,868,000 Latinos residing in New York State, or 15.1 percent of the state’s population of 18,980,000. This was a 12 percent increase from 1990. New York was home to the third largest Latino population in the United States (following California and Texas) and was the eighth largest in terms of percent of the state Latino population. Latinos made up 66 percent of total state population growth from 1990 to 2000. During that decade, the total state population rose 5.5 percent, and the Latino population grew by 29.5 percent.

In New York City, 2,161,000 residents (27 percent of the 8,008,000 New Yorkers) characterized themselves as “Hispanic” in the 2000 census, up from 1,783,511 individuals in 1990 (24.4 percent). By 2004 the population grew to 2,219,000 people of the 7,919,000 total, or 28 percent of the city (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). In addition, according to estimates from the 2004 American Community Survey, the statewide Hispanic population had grown to 3,034,000 individuals of the 18,634,000 total New Yorkers, or 16 percent of the state.

Not only did the number of Latinos increase in the state and in New York City, but so did the national-origin diversity of this population. Most important, Puerto Ricans continued their decline as a proportion of the overall Latino population: in New York City, from 1990 to 2000, by 12.2 percent (108,000 fewer individuals, for a new total of 790,000); in New York State, from 49 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 2000. By contrast, Dominicans and Mexicans dramatically increased in numbers (to 2 percent and 9 percent, respectively, by 2003), and Central and South Americans grew to 25 percent of all New York State Hispanics.

The Electorate

Latino voter eligibility continues to lag overall Latino population growth in both New York City and New York State. While Latinos make up 15 percent of the total state population, they constitute 14 percent of the voting age population (VAP). In New York City, Latinos similarly make up 27 percent of the general population but 25 percent of the VAP.

Because many adult Latinos are not citizens (32 percent), the VAP of Hispanic citizens is lower still. During the 1990s and into 2004, while the overall Hispanic population grew substantially, the growth of the VAP was much smaller. This was due to increased immigration and the aging and emigration of Puerto Ricans, although these factors were partially offset by the surge in naturalization of adult immigrants since 1996, which greatly expanded the pool of potential Hispanic voters (Mollenkopf and Miranda 2002). Though the Hispanic citizen VAP only grew slowly, the city’s overall eligible electorate actually declined, thus increasing the relative Hispanic share.

Registered Voters

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 754,000 Hispanic New York State residents were registered to vote in 2004—only 56 percent of those eligible. White and black New York eligible voters were more likely to register—62 percent and 71 percent, respectively. Only eligible Asian American citizens registered at a lower rate, 47 percent.
Nonetheless, the sheer number of Latinos registered to vote grew substantially in both the state and the city. In New York City, the number of Latino registrants increased by 46 percent, from 450,000 in 1990 to more than 657,000 in 2004. In fact, Latino registration accounted for about a third of the overall growth in registered voters in New York City during the decade. Latino voter registration increased in all boroughs, with the most growth in the Bronx and Queens. In terms of partisanship, approximately 518,000 were registered as Democrats, compared to 57,000 registered as Republicans in 2002. The just over one hundred thousand Independents outnumbered the combined registration of Latinos in all minor parties (Mollenkopf and Miranda 2002).

In 2004 two-thirds (68 percent) of eligible New York City Latinos reported that they had registered to vote.16 They have reported higher registration levels over the past several years, according to the Hispanic Federation's annual surveys (see fig. 8.1). Indeed, from 1996 to 2004 the proportion of registered Latinos increased by 17 points, or by fully one-third. The proportion of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other Latinos among all registered Latino New Yorkers has been fairly stable over the past few years of the Hispanic Federation surveys.

Why are Hispanic New Yorkers not registered to vote? The 2004 Hispanic Federation Survey found that among those not registered, 40 percent were not citizens, and 18 percent said they intended to register but had not yet done so.

Before the 2004 election, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) NYC Chapter and the Human Services Council (HSC) of NYC, Inc.17 launched a nonpartisan voter registration project that enrolled more than 23,000 new potential voters. The NASW-HSC project was a citywide effort and targeted a wide number of zip codes where Latinos make up a large component of the population, such as the southern Bronx and the Upper East Side of Manhattan (see fig. 8.1).

This project was one of the few that actively registered new Latino voters. None of the most important national registration and mobilization campaigns that target Latinos—such as those conducted by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP) and the New Democrat Network (NDN)—had a significant or strong presence in New York. To some extent, this may explain the low turnout rates experienced in the city, since these campaigns are a direct way of increasing Latino turnout (de la Garza 2004). In contrast, the Hispanic Federation of New York ran a successful Latino voter registration effort in the New York metropolitan area, registering 15,000 Latinos in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, in the three months before the registration deadlines in those states.

Although registration efforts do not increase Latino turnout automatically, registration drives may have other important political effects. For instance, registering new voters may change the nationality/ancestry voter distribution in a particular area. Elected officials would likely be attentive to this demographic change since it has the potential to alter the political alignments in their districts.

According to the 2005 Hispanic Federation Survey, fewer than half (46 percent) of New York City Latinos eligible to vote actually cast ballots in 2004. Among those who were registered, the reported turnout rate was 81 percent. White and black New Yorkers had higher rates of participation: among whites, 65 percent of eligible voters and

Figure 8.1. Total Number of Newly Registered Voters by Zip Code

![NYC's ZIP Codes Map]

Source: Authors with data from Human Services Non-Partisan Registration Project.
91 percent of registered voters voted; among blacks, the numbers were 62 percent and 88 percent, respectively. Asian American participation was most similar to that of Hispanics, as only 39 percent of Asian American eligible voters and 84 percent of registered voters cast a ballot.

Impact of Increased Diversity

Increased diversity of nationality/ancestry appears to affect Latinos’ diversity of participation and partisanship. As the diversity of nationality/ancestry increases, new political, economic, and social circumstances confront Latinos that may affect not only their political participation but also their policy perspectives. In addition, more diverse neighborhoods will increase the likelihood that Latinos socialize with neighbors that have different political allegiances and preferences, thus affecting how they participate and identify politically (Brown 1981; de la Garza and Cortina 2007; Gimpel 1999).

In areas of New York City with sizable immigrant populations, Latino turnout rates and support for Kerry and Bush among registered voters varied. Districts with higher concentrations of specific immigrant groups (e.g., immigrants from the Dominican Republic in senate District 13 and immigrants from Colombia and Ecuador in senate District 13) have turnout rates above the Latino citywide average turnout (45 percent and 42 percent, respectively). In contrast, Latino registered voter turnout among those who live in the northern Bronx, where a number of non-Latino Jamaican immigrants live, was around 36 percent.

Similarly, ethnicity/nationality/ancestry appears to have influenced the voting partisanship of Latino subgroups. For instance, approximately 92 percent of Latino voters in the largely Dominican Washington Heights area supported John Kerry while only 4 percent voted for George Bush. Latino registered voters who lived in Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst, where there was a sizable population of immigrants from Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico, also voted overwhelmingly for Kerry—88 percent, versus 11 percent for Bush.

According to the Hispanic Federation Survey, national-origin group affiliation also affected Latino voter registration rates in 2004. Eighty-nine percent of Puerto Ricans, who are native-born citizens and the longest and most widely settled Latino group, reported being registered to vote, in comparison to 61 percent of Dominicans and 55 percent of all other Hispanics. These figures are all slight improvements over 2001, which saw 86 percent of Puerto Ricans, 56 percent of Dominicans, and 48 percent of other Latinos reporting voter registration.

Voter registration figures also show that registered Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are more Democratic (76 percent and 79 percent, respectively) than are other Latinos (67 percent). These “other Latinos” are not more Republican, however, but more likely to be unaffiliated (11 percent for other Hispanics vs. 5 percent for Puerto Ricans and 4 percent for Dominicans). The Hispanic Federation Survey shows that the overwhelming majority among all Hispanic income groups are Democrats, even among the most affluent ($40,000+); 68 percent identified as Democrats versus 19 percent as Republicans (this is in line with previous research by Gimpel and Kaufmann [2001]).

The increasing number and diversity of the city's Latino population has sometimes produced conflict and electoral competition among Latino subgroups. This is especially the case between the more established Puerto Rican population and the growing number of Dominicans, Central and South Americans, and Mexicans, such as in City Council District 21 in Queens. South and Central Americans tend to be more conservative and somewhat more Republican (though still substantially Democratic). They tend to be somewhat more middle class, with higher income, and more likely to own rather than rent their residences.

Last, as the political science literature would predict, Latino voter registration rates increased with the number of years residing in New York, education, income levels, and age. The registration rate for Latinos making less than $10,000 is 55 percent, but for those making over $40,000 it is 85 percent. Fifty-nine percent of the youngest age group (18 to 24) are registered versus 83 percent of the oldest (65+). 19

FINAL THOUGHTS

The politics of New York City (and New York State) has and will always be shaped by demography—race, ethnicity, and country of origin
or ancestry. These demographic factors do not immediately translate into political destiny, however. General population numbers do not necessarily mean a greater number of voters or additional representation in legislative or executive offices. Socioeconomic status, citizenship status, national origin, length of residency, generation, gender, and age will powerfully affect who votes (and for whom). Decennial redistricting, Voting Rights Act requirements, local term limits, the personalities and issue appeals of candidates, the role of parties, emerging ethnic group leadership, and the idiosyncratic and unpredictable factors that haunt all elections are also important variables.

Historically, shifts in New York’s political topography have been tectonic, not catastrophic—gradual but inexorable. The political landscape of New York City and New York State presents different levels: local (city council and state legislature), boroughwide/countywide, citywide, and statewide. In New York City, other immigrant groups such as the Irish, Jews, and Italians took a generation or two between their arrival in force and their climb to political power. African Americans followed a similar course. So, too, have Latinos, though the specific political contours differ.

While the share of votes cast by Latinos in New York State and New York City general elections is still much lower than their share of the respective population, the voting potential of Latinos is remarkable given that so many (29 percent in the city) were not registered to vote. In addition, the old and new immigrants have produced a large second generation that is now approaching voting age. Like young people from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, however, Latino young adults are less likely to vote than their elders. Only as more of those of voting age, both current citizens and those who will become naturalized, register to vote and then actually cast ballots will the latent power of Latino voters become manifest.

As for the 2004 presidential election, the Latino presence in the state electorate had no discernible influence on the issues raised and emphasized by the campaigns of the Republican and Democratic Parties (or in the U.S. Senate race). The campaigns conducted virtually no meaningful Latino-specific outreach. Nor did the churches or 527s have a discernible effect on Latino voting in New York.

In sum, the 2004 presidential, U.S. Senate, and local elections were “status quo” elections for New York State Latinos. Whether Latinos are an emerging “swing vote” or still a Democratic “hip pocket” group remained unanswered. In 2004 Latinos did not influence the presidential outcome in New York State. They were strongly Democratic voters in a solidly Democratic state. They could be safely ignored by both parties.

Latino voters in New York, while making up a similar proportion of the national electorate, were far more likely to vote for Democrat John Kerry than were Latinos nationally (75 percent to 24 percent for Bush in New York vs. 59 percent to 40 percent nationally). Latinos in New York and throughout the nation have changed U.S. economic, social, cultural, and political life, but they have not had “much political influence in presidential politics” (Shapiro 2005). They did not in New York in 2004.

NOTES

1. Although this chapter generally and much of the literature talks about a “Latino vote,” Latinos, specifically in New York, are not monolithic; they are divided by nativity (U.S. born or not), class, national origin, and geography. There are distinct cultural and historical differences among Latinos. The Latino electorate in New York City is changing, with Puerto Ricans, the longest-residing Latino New Yorkers, declining in absolute numbers as they move out of the city and proportionately as the number of Dominicans and “other” Latinos grow.

2. “Red” and “blue” classifications cannot capture the myriad and complex political dynamics in most states. For example, some states labeled “red” by the media have one or more Democratic statewide officeholders, and some “blue” states do not shy away from electing GOP senators or governors, including three terms for New York Governor George Pataki.

3. The 527 groups are tax-exempt, organized under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code to raise money for political activities, such as voter mobilization efforts and issue advocacy.

4. New York City Latinos gave 78 percent of their votes to Michael Dukakis in 1988, 77 percent to Bill Clinton in 1992, and 90 percent to Clinton in 1996 (Falcon 2005).


6. The survey was conducted by Mirram Global, June 9–30, 2004. The survey reached 800 Hispanic adults living in New York City, with a maximum error margin of +/- 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Muzzio assisted in the development of the questionnaire and with the analysis and reporting of the data.
7. The nationwide NEP poll had George Bush garnering 44 percent of the Latino vote; the result was widely reported but challenged (e.g., Fears 2004). Teixeira’s (2004) and National Council of La Raza’s 2004–5 analyses suggest 39 percent, which has been adopted by other analysts (see Leal et al. 2005 for a detailed discussion of the issue). There is no evidence that the final exit poll did not represent New York State voters, including Latinos.

8. Ferrer did indeed win the Democratic nomination for mayor in 2005 but lost to incumbent Republican Mayor Mike Bloomberg in a 59–39 percent landslide. An Election Day (Nov. 8) telephone survey among 1,105 registered voters who reported having voted that day in New York City conducted by Pace University (error margin of +/−2.9 percent) suggests that Bloomberg got a sizable proportion of the Latino vote—34 percent—against the city’s first Latino mayoral candidate (Trichter and Paige 2005).

9. Muzzio conversation with Fernando Ferrer, Congressman Charles Rangel, and two other participants in the meeting.

10. The survey was conducted by Blum and Weprin Associates between April 22 and May 2001. The survey interviewed 1,001 Hispanic adults living in New York City, with a maximum error margin of +/−3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Muzzio assisted in the development of the questionnaire and with the analysis and reporting of the data.

11. Such data are limited because (1) the assembly districts are not exclusively Hispanic and (2) Hispanics living in other parts of the city are excluded.

12. Dean had been endorsed by U.S. Representative Nydia Velázquez (D-Brooklyn) and four New York City Council members.

13. The Latino vote for each candidate was estimated using New York City’s voter list and the electoral returns for each electoral district. We follow standard approaches of ecological inference following the methodology outlined in King (1997) and King, Rosen, and Tanner (2004).

14. Cruz, Ferradino, and Friedman (2006) also found that the proportion of Latinos voting Democratic declined in areas outside New York City as well as where there are lower concentrations of Latinos (there is overlap). The authors “suggest that when thinking about Latino politics in New York it is inappropriate to see New York State as simply New York City writ large” (1).


16. Reported registration grew to 77 percent of New York City Latinos in summer 2005, according to the 2005 Hispanic Federation survey. This was the largest one-year increase in the thirteen years that the Hispanic Federation has conducted surveys.

17. The authors would like to thank Allison Sesso, associate director of the Human Services Council of New York, for providing registration data.


19. See Mollenkopf and Miranda 2002: table 1 for minor party registration figures.

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