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Chapter Author(s): ANGELO FALCÓN

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Book Editor(s): SHERRIE BAVER, ANGELO FALCÓN and GABRIEL HASLIP-VIERA

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Latino Politics in New York City

Challenges in the Twenty-First Century

ANGELO FALCÓN

As the Latino population in New York City grows, so does its potential role in shaping the politics of the city. However, the Latino political experience in New York raises serious challenges to the notion that demography is destiny. This chapter attempts to critically and comprehensively analyze the issues confronting the Latino community as it engages the city's political structures and processes. Much of the chapter is descriptive in an effort to provide some baseline data and identify elements that need to be incorporated in future research on the subject. It closes with some preliminary observations about the relationship of the Mayor Bill de Blasio Administration to the Latino community during his first term in office.

THE LATINO ELECTORATE IN NEW YORK

Much of the existing literature on Latino politics in New York focuses on one ethnic group or a specific neighborhood or borough and fails to examine the

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broader citywide community (Aparicio 2006; Cruz and Bloom 2009; Haslip-Viera and Baver 1996; Jones-Correa 1998; Laó-Montes and Dávila 2001; Marwell 2007; Muzzio and Cortina 2010; Remeseira 2010); Ricourt and Danta 2003; Sanchez 2007; Smith 2006; Torres 1995; Torres-Saillant and Hernández 1998). This essay aims to close that gap in the scholarship and thereby begin to connect some of the political dots of what constitutes Latino politics in New York.

Latino Voters in New York City

Although New York City's 2.4 million Latinos make up 29% its population, the 2005–9 American Community Survey (ACS) of the Census Bureau estimates that Latinos make up 23.1% of the Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) of New York City (CLACLS 2011), and it is estimated that they make up 21% of the city's actual voters (Roberts 2009). This is in comparison to 40.9% that is white, 23.7% that is black, 9.9% that is Asian, and 2.3% that is other. As a percent of the CVAP for the city's five boroughs (counties), Latinos represent 46% of eligible voters in the Bronx, 22% in Queens, 20% in Manhattan, 17% in Brooklyn, and 12% in Staten Island.

The national-origin composition of the Latino-citizenship voting-age population has changed dramatically over the last few decades. In 1990, Puerto Ricans made up 70% of the city's total eligible Latino voters in New York City, a proportion that declined to 44% in 2005–9. This resulted from the decline in the Puerto Rican population and increased US births and naturalization rates for other Latino groups, except Mexicans.

This Puerto Rican portion, 44% of the total Latino CVAP, is more than the 23% of eligible Latino voters who are Dominican and 33% who are from other Latino national-origin groups. However, Puerto Ricans remain a majority of the citizen voting-age populations in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island; are the largest proportion in Queens; and in Manhattan, make up about the same percentage as Dominicans, the two being the largest groups of eligible Latino voters (CLACLS 2011).

Role and Impact of Local Races

The epicenter of New York Puerto Rican politics had long been the Bronx (where the majority of the city's Latinos reside) and the Bronx Democratic County Committee. However, in 2008, Puerto Ricans lost control of this key local party organization when a coalition of Puerto Rican and black legislators calling themselves the "Rainbow Rebels" (a group that some viewed as

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more of a split among the borough's Latino politicians) challenged the committee's leadership and appointed an African American as its head. This effectively divided the Bronx Latino elected officials and rendered the former Puerto Rican Democratic county leader weaker than ever before. This development has had the profound effect of significantly marginalizing the Bronx Latino political class, thereby affecting Latinos throughout the city and state. With other factors, it set the stage for the election of a renegade Puerto Rican state senator in the Bronx, Pedro Espada, who was to defect from the Democratic Party in a way that created political havoc in the state senate for that party and the governor, and who was sentenced to five years in prison for corruption (Hakim and Peters 2009; Gonzalez 2011). In March 2015, a Puerto Rican assemblyman, Marcos Crespo, resumed chairmanship of the Bronx Democratic County Organization as a result of the corruption charges that caused Assemblyman Stanley Silver to step down as assembly speaker; Silver was replaced as speaker by Carl Heastie, who had been the Bronx Party chair (Slattery 2015).

The Structure of Latino Politics in New York

As diverse as New York's population is, so have been its linkages to the city's Democratic Party in recent years. The power center of Latino politics is in the Bronx, where Puerto Ricans have been in control of the county's party committee; it is also the borough with the largest number of, and the most senior, Latino elected officials at all levels of government, including the office of the borough president. The next-strongest power center is in Brooklyn, which is represented by the second Puerto Rican congressperson and whose county organization was, until recently, headed by an Italian with a Spanish surname who presented himself at times as a Hispanic. The other two Puerto Rican power centers—East Harlem (El Barrio) and the Lower East Side—have lost much of their original Puerto Rican population and, in the process, lost influence, to blacks in the case of East Harlem (Dávila 2004) and to Jewish whites in the case of the Lower East Side.

The Dominican power center is in Manhattan's Washington Heights, which has Dominican elected officials in the city council, state assembly, and state senate. Dominican political influence has been moving away from Washington Heights to the western Bronx as the Dominican population has been increasingly shifting into that area; the Bronx now has the largest concentration of Dominicans in the city. In 2008, the first Dominican to hold elective office in the Bronx was elected to the state assembly. The Dominican

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population has also achieved elective posts in Brooklyn's Williamsburg-Bushwick sections and in Queen's Corona and East Elmhurst sections.

While as recently as 2008 all of the twenty-nine Latino elected officials in New York City were Puerto Rican or Dominican, by 2014 this had changed. The thirty Latino elected officials in the city in positions from the US Congress to city council included an Ecuadorean, a Cuban-Greek, and an Israeli-Argentinean. This reflected, in general, the size and length of residence of these national-origin groups in all of the boroughs that had Latino elected officials.

These Latino political power centers suffered major stresses during 2008. The Puerto Rican chair of the Bronx Democratic County Committee lost his post to an African American after a challenge by a new black-Latino coalition, the Rainbow Rebels. The Latino power centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx were all experiencing different levels of internal conflicts. At the same time, political corruption began to take its toll as a good number of Latino elected officials throughout the city were under investigation, on trial, or in prison. In early 2012, for example, a major corruption trial of State Senator Pedro Espada and his son increased cynicism about the political process in the Latino community. In 2015, of thirty-five New York State legislators convicted of corruption, Latinos made up 17% although they constituted only 10% of state legislators (Craig, Rashbaum, and Kaplan 2015).

There were mechanisms beyond the Democratic county organizations to coordinate the efforts of these elected officials. The most high-profile is the New York State Puerto Rican / Hispanic Legislative Task Force, which sponsors statewide "Somos El Futuro" (We are the future) conferences in Albany, the state's capital, and Puerto Rico. This body was established at the initiative of white state assembly leaders, some have speculated, to weaken an earlier New York State Black and Hispanic Legislative Caucus, which was created in 1966 and which Latinos complained was too dominated by African Americans. The Puerto Rican / Hispanic Task Force was established at the initiation of a late Puerto Rican state assemblyman from East Harlem, Angelo del Toro, in response to this perceived Afrocentric predisposition of the state's so-called Black and Hispanic Legislative Caucus. In addition, the New York City Council has established a Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus (BLAC) (originally called the Black and Hispanic Legislative Caucus).

Despite the size of New York's Latino population and the number of Latino elected officials, the influence of this Latino component of the city political class is very limited. One indicator of this is the persistent legitimate

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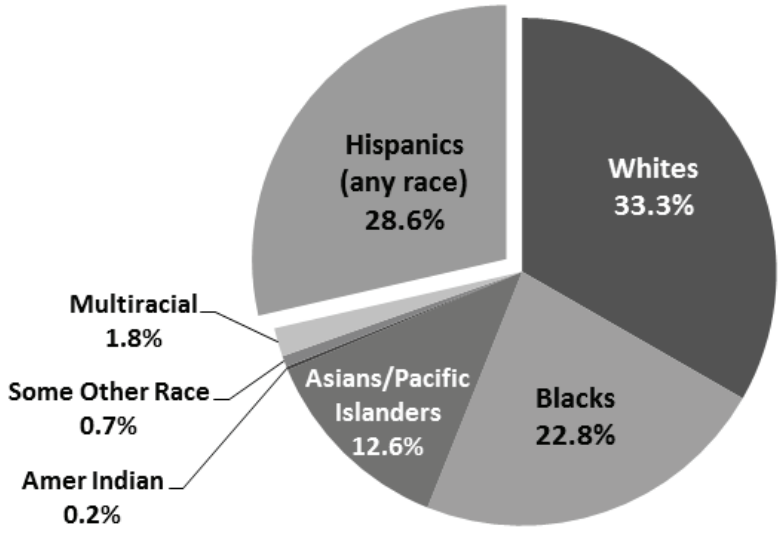

Figure 15.1 Racial-Ethnic Breakdown of New York City Population, 2010
Source: US Census 2010.

complaint among Latino political leaders that the Democratic Party has failed to groom and support Latino candidates for citywide and statewide office (Nahmias 2011). Another development that underscored what some saw as the unresponsiveness of the Democratic Party to Latino elected officials was the informal defection in the summer of 2008 of two Puerto Rican state senators from the party, a move that shifted power temporarily to the Republicans in the state senate, which previously had a one-vote Democratic majority (Hakim and Peters 2009).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LATINO POPULATION IN NEW YORK

The 2010 census conservatively counted 2,336,076 Latinos in New York City, representing 28.6% of the city's total population. Between 2000 and 2010, New York City's Latino population grew by 8.1%, considerably lower than its 21.1% growth in the previous decade. Together with the black and Asian populations, Latinos have been part of New York as a "majority minority" city since the early 1980s (Falcón 1988). (See figure 15.1.)

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Political Party Linkages

While the Republican Party fielded the first serious Puerto Rican political candidates in New York City beginning in the 1920s, following World War II the Democratic Party became the dominant party among Latinos (Falcón 1984). While the relationship of the Democratic Party to the African American community was longer and deeper due to a different history and a more national political context that included the impact of the civil rights movement, the Latino relationship to that party was much thinner.

For most of the twentieth century, Latino politics in New York was defined as largely Puerto Rican, while at the national level it was dominated by Mexican Americans. This specifically Puerto Rican focus not only marginalized Latinos' relationship to the national parties because of the relatively small size and high poverty levels of the Puerto Rican population, but was further complicated by the role played by the politics of Puerto Rico, which until the late 1960s played an intermediate role in the relationship of New York's Puerto Rican community to American political elites (Sanchez 2007; Thomas 2010). It was in the context of the radical nationalist revitalization movements of the sixties and seventies that the New York Puerto Rican political leadership asserted its role as the representative of this community in opposition to the government of Puerto Rico (Falcón 1984). It did so in a manner that presented a highly cynical view of mainstream electoral politics and defined a division between an authentic community activism and a coopted electoral politics of "poverty pimps" and the like.

Since the 1990s, the city's Latino community has begun to effectively use the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, its continuing dramatic population growth, and other mechanisms to increase its representation in elected office significantly. By 2015, Latinos held two congressional seats, the Bronx borough presidency, six state senate seats, thirteen state assembly seats, and eleven city council seats, largely Democrats (one Republican) and mostly Puerto Rican and Dominican. By 2010, a Hispanic Republican had also been elected to the state assembly from Staten Island, as well as one elected to an upstate assembly district. This community had finally achieved representation in proportion to its share of the city's electorate, and had thus achieved parity. (See table 15.1 for 2014 representation.) However, this "parity" has proven to be of limited political impact. A recurring complaint among the Latino political class has been that despite their numbers and increasing seniority, the city's and state's political parties were not promoting Latino

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Table 15.1 Number of Latino Elected Officials in New York City by Borough and Position, 2014

Borough/ County	2010 Latino Voting Age Population*	City Council	State Assembly	State Senate	Borough President	Congress	Totals
Bronx	51.2%	4	3	3	1	1	**12**
Brooklyn	18.8%	3	2	1	0	1**	**7**
Manhattan	23.3%	3	2	1***	0	0	**6**
Queens	26.0%	1	2	1	0	0	**4**
Staten Island	15.2%	0	1****	0	0	0	**1**
NYC Totals	**26.7%**	**11**	**10**	**6**	**1**	**2**	**30**

* per 2010 Census

** includes parts of Queens and Manhattan

*** includes part of the Bronx

**** the only Republican

Source: Compiled by the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP).

candidates for citywide and statewide office, with the exception of Fernando Ferrer, a Puerto Rican nominated by the Democratic Party as its unsuccessful 2005 candidate for mayor (Nahmias 2011). This reflected the marginal role that Latino elected officials played in the Democratic Party at both the state and local levels (as well as the absence of any significant role in the Republican Party).

This political marginalization was also reflected in the significant underrepresentation of Latinos in public-sector employment at both the municipal and state levels of government. Despite being 29% of the New York City population, Latinos only accounted for 20% of the city government work force (New York City 2013); at the state level, despite being 17.6% of the state's population, they were only 5% of state government workers (New York State 2014; Falcón 2009a). The relationship between a community's ties to the dominant political party and its representation in the public bureaucracy is historically an important indicator of power in New York.

Even with the election of the progressive mayoral administration of Bill de Blasio in 2013, this pattern continued in terms of his appointments. By the end of the first year of this new administration, Latinos had only accounted for 11% of de Blasio appointments, a figure that reflected an already declining rate of Latino appointments up to that point (Reyes 2014).

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Besides resulting in a weak record of legislative accomplishments by Latino elected officials as a group, this marginalization had other negative effects. One is the high degree of official corruption that this Latino political class has exhibited, with a significant number behind bars or under investigation. The other is the growing pattern of political nepotism, practiced especially by the more senior Puerto Rican elected officials. In 2011, of the thirty-five Latino officials in New York City, eleven (31%) were related family members. Although this phenomenon, which I refer to as the "Boricua Game of Thrones" (Falcón 2012b), exists in other communities, it has appeared at a higher rate among the Latino political class. These characteristics have greatly undermined the legitimacy of New York's Latino politicians.

Hyperdiversity

The Latino population in New York City is perhaps unique nationally in being the most diverse in terms of national origin. (See table 15.2 for 2010 data.) Until the 1980s, Puerto Ricans were the majority of the city's Latino population, at one point representing 80% of the total; today, although still the largest Latino group, Puerto Ricans are about 30% of the total (Falcón 2004a). They are closely followed by Dominicans (who may have already surpassed them in size), and then Mexicans, Ecuadoreans, and Colombians. The growth of the Mexican population has been and continues to be dramatic, while that of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Colombians has slowed or declined.

This ethnic "hyperdiversity" has important political implications. First, it relates to legal status, with the only group that arrives as US citizens, Puerto Ricans, becoming a smaller share of the total Latino electorate. Second, the various Latino national-origin groups have different political cultures, a different structure, and different priorities, all of which challenge the development of a unified Latino agenda, such as different key political institutions and the role and nature of homeland politics. Third, these various communities have developed to different degrees politically, based on their time of arrival, location in the city, settlement patterns, and other factors that affect intergroup communication and coordination. Fourth, the groups sometimes compete with each other politically and economically in different forms and levels, from church congregations to workplaces. These conditions certainly exist elsewhere, but not to the same extent or on the same scale as in New York City.

In terms of elected officials, this Latino population diversity has slowly begun to be reflected in their numbers. As recently as 2008, all Latino elected

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Table 15.2 NYC Latino Population by National Origin, 2010

	Number	Percent
Total Hispanic	2,336,076	100.0%
Mexican	319,263	13.7%
Puerto Rican	723,621	31.0%
Cuban	40,840	1.7%
Dominican Republic	576,701	24.7%
Total Central American	151,378	6.5%
Costa Rican	6,673	0.3%
Guatemalan	30,420	1.3%
Honduran	42,400	1.8%
Nicaraguan	9,346	0.4%
Panamanian	22,353	1.0%
Salvadoran	38,559	1.7%
Other Central American	1,627	0.1%
Total South American	343,468	14.7%
Argentinean	15,169	0.6%
Bolivian	4,488	0.2%
Chilean	7,026	0.3%
Colombian	94,723	4.1%
Ecuadorian	167,209	7.2%
Paraguayan	3,534	0.2%
Peruvian	36,018	1.5%
Uruguayan	3,004	0.1%
Venezuelan	9,619	0.4%
Other South American	2,678	0.1%
Total Other Hispanic	180,805	7.7%
Spaniard	17,793	0.8%
Spanish	11,935	0.5%
Spanish American	1,110	0.0%
All Other Hispanic	149,967	6.4%

Source: 2010 Census.

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officials in New York City were Puerto Rican and Dominican. By 2014, the first Ecuadorean, first Mexican, first Israeli-Argentinean, and first Cuban-Greek (the only Republican) had been added to the mix of thirty Latino elected officials. Of this current group of Latino elected officials, the majority (56.7%) are Puerto Rican, 30.0% are Dominican, and the others make up the remaining 13.3%.

Amidst all of this racial and national-origin differentiation within the Latino community of New York, strong pan-Latino forces are still at work, with a New York accent (Kasinitz et al. 2008). Current Latino elected officials (mostly Puerto Rican and Dominican at this point) need to appeal to broader Latino constituencies than those of simply their national-origin group. Then there is a growing array of Spanish-language media driven increasingly to a pan-Latino audience that it caters to and, in the process, helps to create (Subvervi-Velez 2008). Moreover, the increasingly intense anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment in the country also promotes a greater pan-Latino consciousness. The degree of inter-Latino subgroup interaction is not as strong today as one would assume; and the eventual impact that these forces will have on the degree and nature of Latino political unity in New York City is not entirely clear yet.

Multiple Barrios/Regional Dispersion

New York's Latino population is unique in its spatial dimensions as well. In most other locations with large Latino populations, these populations are concentrated in one or a few *barrios* or *colonias*, usually under one local governmental structure. In New York City, in contrast, the Latino population is spread out in over twenty neighborhoods located in five different borough (or county) governments. Each one of these neighborhoods is the size of a small to medium city in population, and each has its political history, structures, and leadership, which are overlaid by state, city, and borough governments. This contributes to the problem of achieving some degree of political cohesiveness citywide and even at the borough level.

Another difference between Latino settlement patterns in New York and those in the Southwest and South Florida is the generally lower percentage of the population made up of Latinos in New York (and other parts of the Northeast and Midwest). Whereas 29% of the population of New York City are Latinos, that percentage is generally much higher in cities such as Laredo, Texas (94%), El Paso, Texas (80%), Santa Ana, California (79%), Miami (69%), and Los Angeles (48%). This obviously affects the nature of

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Latino politics, which in New York City was in part compensated for by its large Puerto Rican population, which arrived in the city already as US citizens eligible to vote.

The scale and complexity of the Latino population's spatial configuration is generally ignored or downplayed in discussions of Latino politics at the citywide level, although some analyses at the neighborhood level have begun to emerge (Dávila 2004; Marwell 2007). For another perspective on how New York City's political structures affect participation of immigrants, in general, in comparison to Los Angeles, see Mollenkopf, Olson, and Ross 2001. The dispersal of the Latino population throughout New York City has historically been a political issue. Compared to other Latino settlements patterns, especially in the Southwest, the pattern in New York has been that the Latino population has been more dispersed and less concentrated. In the 1960s during the federal War on Poverty, when antipoverty programs were being designed in New York, Puerto Ricans had to make the case for the creation of citywide and ethnic-specific programs like the Puerto Rican Community Development Project (PRCDP) and Aspira (Fitzpatrick 1971, 68). This resulted in a structure of community-based organizations in the Puerto Rican community that was significantly different from a more neighborhood-focused and less explicitly racially organizational naming approach adopted by the African American community. Given the important role that these nonprofits played in the political development of these two communities, this difference had an effect on how each of these communities was organized politically.

New York City remains one of the more racially segregated cities in the country, a pattern replicated within the Latino areas of residence as well along national-origin group lines. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are the major Latino groups in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. Queens has predominantly South and Central American populations. While in the black community large geographic areas are occupied by high concentrations of blacks, in Latino areas, the concentrations are generally lower and the level of segregation is more detailed in the sense that it exists in increasingly smaller spaces than standard segregation indices utilize—such as census tracts—and in smaller spaces than are seen in the black community. This relatively lower concentration of the Latino population in small areas as well as citywide also distinguishes it from much greater concentrations of Latinos in the Southwest.

The political effects of the regional dispersal of the Latino community have also not been adequately analyzed. Of the members of New York's

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Latino population who have moved beyond the city's borders into Long Island, upstate New York, New Jersey, and beyond, many have been Puerto Ricans, whose departure decreases the number of the city's eligible voters. For a broader discussion of the regional aspects of urban politics, see Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom (2001).

Racial Characteristics and Relations

Most Latinos in New York City, as in most of the Northeast, are Caribbeans with working-class origins, and as a result New York's Latino population differs in many respects from Latino populations in other parts of the country. The strong nonwhite influence among Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and most Latino national-origin groups has a potentially significant impact on the racial aspects of the political process. In addition, the largest of these communities, the Puerto Ricans and the Dominicans, have largely grown in closer contact with African American and other black neighborhoods than have the Latino populations in many other cities with large Latino populations. Some advocates of stronger Afro-Latino identities have argued that these characteristics would create greater Latino solidarity with Caribbean and African blacks within the United States (Jiménez-Román and Flores 2010). Others have found that Puerto Rican racial self-identification affects levels of residential segregation in this community (Massey and Denton 1993). If this is the case, New York could be a major example of such an effect, more so possibly than in Latino communities in other parts of the country (Burns 2006; Foley 2010; Jennings 1994; June and Maynie 2008; Nelson and Lavariega Monforti 2005).

While most Latinos in New York identify racially as nonwhite, there is considerable variation among the Latino national-origin groups in this regard. (See table 15.3.) Those most not identifying as white are the larger Latino communities primarily from the Caribbean and Central America, while those most identifying as white are smaller groups largely from South America and Spain. However, the main nonwhite racial reference is to the "some other race" category in the census, while for Panamanians it is in the majority-black or African American (59.3%). Race is a major factor in the Latino community, but not for the most part in simple black-white terms. It is interesting, for example, to see that the least politically mobilized Latino subgroups appear to be the smaller South American communities (primarily in Queens), who most identify racially as white.

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Table 15.3 Racial Self-Identification of Selected Latino National-Origin Groups, New York City, 2014

	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Mexican	Colombian	Ecuadorian	Honduran	Panamanian	Salvadoran	Argentinean
White	40.0%	22.4%	30.8%	55.4%	51.5%	27.2%	14.4%	32.9%	79.8%
Black	10.2%	9.0%	1.5%	1.6%	2.1%	20.5%	58.1%	2.0%	1.2%
Asian/Pacific Isl.	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
American Indian	0.8%	0.5%	1.5%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Multi-Racial	5.3%	6.5%	3.4%	2.4%	6.1%	4.0%	2.6%	1.9%	9.9%
Some Other Race	43.4%	61.5%	62.7%	39.7%	39.8%	47.7%	24.3%	63.0%	9.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: 2014 American Community Survey (ACS).

The recent growing awareness of Latino nonwhite identities and long-term efforts at black-Latino coalition-building has helped define New York City politics in important ways. It played, for example, an important role in the election of David Dinkins, the city's first African-American mayor, in 1989 and in Jesse Jackson's primary run for president in New York in 1988, and it remains an important factor, both in its unifying as well as its competitive aspects. But this is an effect that is complex, as ambiguous racial-ethnic census categories like "some other race" and "more than one race" dominate the racial self-identification of Latinos as opposed to that of African Americans, Africans, and non-Spanish-speaking Caribbeans in the United States. Little research, however, has been done into this aspect of the effects of racial identification within Latino communities and their politics (Torres 1995; Opie 2014; Stokes-Brown 2012).

Socioeconomic Status and Integration

The Latino population in New York City has long been among the poorest in the country in a city with one of the largest indices of income inequality. Coupled with this population's youthfulness, this low Latino socioeconomic status has obvious effects that depress political participation in this community and affects the political priorities of this part of the city's electorate (Crissey and File [n.d.]). Latinos had the highest poverty rate in New York City in 2010 at 28%, compared to 24% for blacks, 19% for Asians, and 13% for whites. Among Latinos, Mexicans had the highest poverty rate at 33%, closely followed by Puerto Ricans at 32%, 30% for Dominicans, 18% for Ecuadoreans, and 15% for Colombians (census 2011). Although 29% of New York City's population, Latinos make up over 40% of the city's poor people. In addition, the median age for Latinos in the city was thirty-one years, compared to thirty-seven for Asians, thirty-eight for blacks, and forty-three for whites.

However, it is intriguing that it appears that levels of political participation among two similarly socially situated Latino subgroups, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, appear to be different. While both communities exhibit relatively low levels of voter participation, this appears to be, counterintuitively, more the case with the one with the longest history of political involvement in the city, Puerto Ricans, than with the other, Dominicans, with a more recent political history in the city. Has the longer exposure to American politics by Puerto Ricans dampened their interest in participating? Is the greater nationalism of a first- and second-generation Dominican

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community promoting greater participation in this community? The basis of this difference and its implications clearly require further analysis.

The spatial concentration of Latino poverty in segregated neighborhoods and subneighborhood areas is a major obstacle to the social and political integration of Latino communities into the city's main structures. The phenomenon of so-called disconnected youth in these communities is a growing concern that recently prompted the former Bloomberg administration to establish a Young Men's Initiative to address this problem specifically among black and Latino youth (Barbaro and Santos 2011). The lack of full integration by large segments of the Latino population into the city's labor and educational systems has very clear political consequences. It is ironic that this is more true of Puerto Ricans, who arrive with US citizenship and have the longest history in the city, than of other Latinos who have large numbers of undocumented and are more recently arrived (Treschan 2010). In some senses, this seems paradoxical, but it is quite possibly an ominous predictor for the broader Latino community.

In addition, the Puerto Rican case raises questions about the inevitability of the dampening effects of local socioeconomic status on political participation that defines Latino politics in New York. In Puerto Rico, the level of voter participation is significantly higher—consistently around 80% regardless of socioeconomic status—than among Puerto Ricans and the general electorate in New York (Falcón 1983; Cámara Fuertes 2004). Explanations for this range from differences in electoral structures and practices to differences in mobilization strategies. Since Puerto Ricans participate in both settings within the same general American political system, a full examination of the factors stimulating these higher political participation rates in Puerto Rico could yield important lessons for expanding the general American electorate as well as the number of active voters among stateside Puerto Ricans and other Latinos.

The other relevant demographic is sex. Among the five largest Latino nationalities in New York City, women predominate, except for Mexicans and Ecuadoreans (CLACLS 2011). This was largely the case among the foreign born (and the Puerto Rico–born in the case of Puerto Ricans). However, in terms of the Latino elected officials in 2014, of the total of thirty, eight were women (26.7%). What is striking is that Latina women were represented well at the top and lower levels of representation. Of the two New York Latino congresspersons (both Puerto Rican), one is a woman, Nydia Velázquez. However, more impressive is Latina female representation in the

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city council, where of the eleven Latino council members, five were women (45.5%), and in 2013 a Puerto Rican woman, Melissa Mark-Viverito, was the first person of color to be selected by her colleagues to be city council speaker, and a Dominican woman, Julissa Ferreras, was appointed chair of the powerful finance committee. There was no Latina woman at the borough-president level or in the state senate, and of the ten Latinos serving in the state assembly, only two were women. The only study looking at the role of Latina women in New York City politics was by Ricourt and Danta (2003), which focused on Queens and how Latina politicians were more likely to promote pan-ethnic identity in their communities.

Transnationalism and Legal Status

With the rise in immigration, increasing attention has been paid to the transnational dimension of politics, an important feature of the Latino experience. Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in New York City, given the diversity of its Latino population. In a broad sense, the important role that immigration plays in defining the Latino experience in the United States introduces a certain complexity politically, but also has led to depictions of all Latinos as newcomers, despite the long presence of this community in the United States and New York City. This image, in turn, has reinforced the notion of "otherness/foreignness" as well as weakening Latino complaints of a significant history of discrimination within this country.

Besides New York's place as a global city with historically dynamic population movements, its location as the site of the United Nations—with its foreign consulates, missions, and other international organizations—and as the site of global market institutions makes the transnational nature of the city's Latino population a uniquely important feature of its politics. For example, the growing role of US-based Latino communities as important sources of remittances to their home countries has, over the last decade or so, transformed the relationship between home country governments and economies with these communities. Although Puerto Rico is not technically a foreign country, its government's establishment of an employment office in the 1920s and a migration division of its department of labor in 1948 in New York City prepared the way for a growing transnational relationship of later Latino communities to their homelands; the Puerto Rican model spurred the New York City government and other local institutions to negotiate the relations between local communities and their home countries in the Latino

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case (Thomas 2010; Sanchez 2007; Falcón 1984). Today, the active role that the governments of the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Colombia play in the lives of their New York diasporas is relatively new and politically significant among these foreign countries.

Another way that international immigration directly affects the political situations of these Latino populations is in the different ways it defines their citizenship status. While most New York Latinos are US citizens, many are undocumented. According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, about three-quarters of Latinos in New York City (74%) are US citizens. Levels of citizenship status vary considerably between the different Latino national-origin groups: the noncitizenship rate among Mexicans is 51%, for Ecuadoreans 43%, Dominicans 34%, and Colombians 30%. Lack of citizenship status, of course, precludes their participation in the electoral process. Puerto Ricans, as already noted, are the exceptions to this because they arrive stateside in the United States as American citizens coming from a US territory; therefore, the decline in their numbers disproportionately impacts the number of eligible Latino voters.

This also has created a significant legal hierarchy within the Latino community: at the top, US-born citizens, then naturalized citizens, then legal immigrants, and, in the lowest tier, the undocumented of various kinds. This status hierarchy has profoundly affected the politics of the Latino community. It has made immigration a pervasive political issue, structured the ways that Latinos are integrated into and participate in the political process, and raised a whole host of policy questions that have transformed local government structures in pro-immigrant directions. The case of New York City also shows how the complexities of these status hierarchies in such a diverse Latino population both unify and complicate political agendas and strategies. While, on the surface, immigration appears to be a nonissue for Puerto Ricans as US citizens, Puerto Ricans are among the leaders in New York and nationally advocating comprehensive immigration reform and other pro-immigrant policies. This is but one indicator of the salience of this issue and the impact of the current citizenship-status hierarchy on the nature of Latino politics.

The debate continues about whether home-country political ties and loyalties affect the level of Latino political involvement and interest in the United States (Escobar 2004; Jones-Correa 1998). The increasing use of dual citizenship, home-country-absentee and local voting, local campaigning by home-country political candidates, and support of Spanish-language media and other bilingual practices by countries like Venezuela, the Dominican

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Republic, and Mexico, as well as Puerto Rico, raise questions about whether these activities detract attention from local US politics and concerns, or, in fact, reinforce it (Aparicio 2006). This concern, for example, led to a campaign in the 1990s to promote the use of the term "Dominican American" as opposed to simply "Dominican" among Dominican citizen and noncitizen residents of the United States (Aparicio 2010). It is interesting to see what effect presidential elections in the Dominican Republic have on its diaspora's politics as the candidates campaign in Washington Heights and other Dominican communities in New York and other parts of the United States.

In 2008, the US political party primaries being held in Puerto Rico became surprisingly important when it was noted that because of their late date in the primary season schedule—June—they could potentially determine the outcome of the Democratic presidential primaries if the race were close (Barone 2008). Though this did not happen, it raised the profile of the Puerto Rican vote in general, as well as exposed the colonial paradox of a population without the right to vote for US president directly being in a position to influence the results through participation in a party primary (Falcón 2008). The "transnational" nature of Puerto Rican politics that year was also reflected in the controversial endorsement of Republican John McCain for president by Puerto Rico's *reggeatón* superstar Daddy Yankee, the counterendorsement of Obama by stateside rapper Fat Joe, and the widespread discussion of the presidential race that these endorsements generated among young people in Puerto Rican and other Latino communities in New York and elsewhere (Shear 2008).

The State and Structure of Local Latino Civil Society

As the city's Latino population has dramatically increased in size and diversity, its civil-society institutions have not developed at a scale that can address the needs of this growth. This situation has placed tremendous pressure on the limited social institutions that already existed in the Puerto Rican community and has resulted in a thin infrastructure in other, growing Latino communities (Falcón 2009b). The Great Recession of 2008 and, more recently, the federal budget sequester (especially during 2013), have further limited the resources available because of the governmental fiscal crises that these events have created, because of the limits on the role of private philanthropy, and because of the outflow of income from Latino communities in the form of home-country remittances.

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Beyond the issue of scale, the nature of this nonprofit sector has also changed in the last three or four decades in ways that limit the political-advocacy and social-change roles of many of these institutions. With the growth of the government contracting with these community-based organizations as service providers, their political independence and their role as political actors have been compromised. In addition, as with the city's residential patterns, the functions of social agency and good-government advocacy in the city have been harmed by racial and ethnic segregation to the point where the role of the Latino community in the networks that carry out these functions has been significantly marginalized (Falcón 2009b). This has resulted in limiting this community's capacity to develop effective policy and political agendas as well as to adequately create effective city- and sector-wide advocacy networks. The fact that after decades, Latino social-service providers still need to prioritize improving education, integrating immigrants, expanding living-wage jobs, and increasing affordable housing in Latino neighborhoods underscores the Latino community's continued lack of political clout. In short, the growing numbers of Latinos in the city and in the electorate are not easily translating into policy-relevant results (Hispanic Federation 2013).

Finally, the role of the media has also changed in ways and become less supportive of Latino community interests. The Spanish-language media, once a major force in promoting Latino interests, has become less influential in New York politics, and Latinos continue to be underrepresented in the dominant English-language media. Within the Latino community, although ethnic newspapers have proliferated, their influence has been diffused with the waning of the role of the historically largest and most important, *El Diario–La Prensa*. After many changes in ownership, in 2012 it and impreMedia, its parent company, fell under the majority ownership of a conservative newspaper from Argentina, *La Nación*. After numerous controversies, including with the employees' union, *El Diario–La Prensa* lost a great deal of its historic influence, and no other Spanish-language paper has been able to replace it in this role (Falcón 2012a; Levy 2015). For the most part, Spanish-language radio and television news has also declined in influence after the largest of these, such as Univision and Telemundo, became owned by non-Latinos. The English-language media have made some gains in Latino staffing, but the lack of Latinos with editorial influence has resulted in largely superficial and sporadic coverage of the Latino community and its politics despite the community's size, growth, and increasing diversity. The general

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weakening of print media and the rise of social media have resulted in increasingly fragmented representations of this community.

LATINOS, NYC MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO, AND TRICKLE-DOWN PROGRESSIVISM

The election in November 2013 of Bill de Blasio as the 109th mayor of the City of New York seemed a hopeful sign that the return of Democratic Party control of city hall and the promise of a new progressive politics for the city after twenty years of the Michael Bloomberg and Rudolph Giuliani administrations would finally make city government more inclusive of Latinos. This impression was further supported at the start of 2014 by city council's selection of a Puerto Rican, Melissa Mark-Viverito, as that legislative body's speaker, the first person of color to hold that influential citywide position.

By the beginning of the de Blasio administration's second year, its relationship to the Latino community was, however, mixed. While many of its progressive policies did make the city more deeply immigrant friendly, questions remained about whether Latinos were being adequately incorporated into the administration and whether its policies would actually reach the Latino community, raising warnings of its trickle-down progressivism when it came specifically to Latinos.

Although the effects of this mayoral administration on Latino political influence require a more detailed analysis, at this point, a few initial, broad observations can be made about that administration's relationship with the Latino community:

1. Mayor de Blasio's election was carried by large majorities of Latino (87%) and black (96%) voters, while only a narrow majority of whites (54%) voted for him (*New York Times*, "Election 2013, Exit Polls: Mayor," n.d., http://www.nytimes.com/projects/elections/2013/general/nyc-mayor/exit-polls.html. http://www.nytimes.com/projects/elections/2013/general/nyc-mayor/exit-polls.html). Subsequent polls on de Blasio's job approval also consistently reveal a sharp racial division, with large majorities of Latinos and blacks approving of the job he was doing while less than majorities of whites do.
2. The administration's progressive policies included the introduction of municipal ID cards available to the undocumented, paid sick leave, introducing living-wage requirements for certain jobs, and other policies

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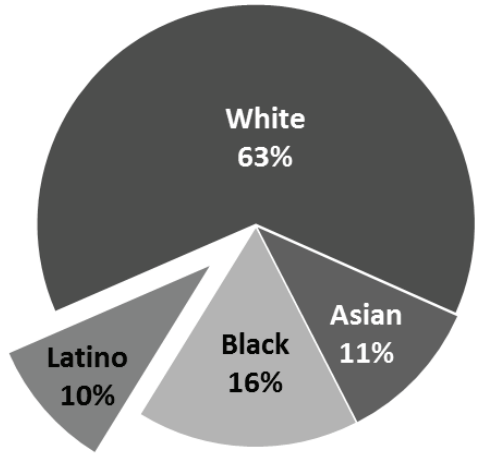

Figure 15.2 Racial-Ethnic Breakdown of New York City Appointments by Mayor de Blasio as of March 18, 2015

Note: N=269.

Source: "Share of NYC Mayor de Blasio Latino Appointments Continues to Decline, Now Only 10 Percent," *National Institute for Latino Policy & Politics Report*, March 19, 2015. http://www.nilpnetwork.org/NiLP_Datanote_-_de_Blasio_Mar_2015.pdf.

that would benefit the city's immigrant populations. However, the benefits of the administration's policies—such as in terms of affordable housing and police-community relations—for the majority of Latinos who were already US citizens, earning a low income, and/or living in poverty are not at all clear (National Institute for Latino Policy 2015). With its strong focus on immigrant-friendly policies and programs, the city seems to be letting the needs of the more than seven hundred thousand Puerto Ricans in the city, who are entirely US citizens, fall between the cracks (Treschan 2010; Kasinitz et al. 2008).

3. The de Blasio administration has been strongly criticized by the Campaign for Fair Latino Representation (see http://LatinoRepresentation.org; Reyes 2014) for its extreme underrepresentation of Latinos in its appointments. Although Latinos are approximately 29% of the city's population, at the beginning of the second year of his administration they made up only 10% of his appointments. This made Latinos the most underrepresented group in the de Blasio administration, represented poorly even in comparison with blacks and Asians; meanwhile whites continue

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to be greatly overrepresented, making up approximately 63% of his appointments but only 33% of the city's population (see figure 15.2). This public-sector employment underrepresentation is also an issue for Latinos at the state level, where Latinos make up 18% of the state population, but only 5% of the state government workforce (Campanile 2014).

4. Given that eleven Latinos sit on the fifty-one-member city council and a Puerto Rican serves as council speaker, it is assumed that Latino representation in city government is adequate. However, New York City has a strong-mayor system, where the executive sets the city's policy and budgetary priorities, and it is in this branch that Latinos are most underrepresented in policy-level positions. In addition, Mayor de Blasio's role in promoting the selection of Mark-Viverito as council speaker has further weakened the council's role given the resulting strong mayor-speaker relationship. One result of this close relationship between the city's executive and legislative branches in the case of the problem of Latino underrepresentation in mayoral appointments has been that the council speaker and ten other Latino city council members publicly defended the mayor over Latino community critics (Myles 2010).
5. When this new mayoral administration assumed office, it also sought to redefine the city political leadership. In the Democratic primary most of the Latino political establishment had supported one of de Blasio's opponents, Bill Thompson, an African American. Thus, the new mayor promoted a political realignment within the Latino community, catering to newer politicians in the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities while also cultivating newer players from Central and South American immigrant advocacy groups and labor unions. Over time more traditional political leaders from the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities, who hold the majority of Latino elected posts, have begun to reassert themselves. However, what the ultimate political configuration of Latino power distribution within the de Blasio administration will look like has not fully unfolded.
6. In this reshuffling of Latino political leadership, Puerto Ricans, as the largest number of Latino elected officials, continued to dominate in 2015. The ascendency of a Puerto Rican woman, Melissa Mark-Viverito, as the first person of color to assume the role of New York City Council speaker in 2014 was attributed largely to her early support of de Blasio's candidacy for mayor, and she is seen as his close ally and someone at least initially independent of the traditional Latino political leadership.

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In March 2015, another rising Latino political leader, also Puerto Rican, is Bronx assemblyman Marcos Crespo, who became chair of the Bronx Democratic County Committee as well as chair of the Puerto Rican / Hispanic Legislative Task Force. He is a protégé of socially conservative state senator Rubén Díaz Jr. A third rising Latino political star, also a Puerto Rican, is Díaz himself, the Bronx borough president, who served as cochair of the Andrew Cuomo for Governor campaign in 2014. In 2015, Mark-Viverito, at age 45, Crespo, age 34, and Díaz, 41, represent a younger generation of Latino leaders.

7. The de Blasio administration, the city's Democratic Party, and progressive players like the Working Families Party continue to take the Latino electorate largely for granted and appear comfortable approaching Latinos with a trickle-down progressivism (Falcón 2015). This approach continues to marginalize this community's role in city government while promulgating policies that, it is assumed, will flow down automatically to this community in a perverse version of what has come to be known as the Right's trickle-down economics of the Reagan years.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

What is of concern from the analysis in this chapter is the marginalization of Latinos in the politics of New York City and State. The significant and growing Latino political class of elected officials appears increasingly fragmented and disproportionately beset by ethical problems. Its influence on Democratic Party structures is tenuous, limiting its upward mobility and general influence. On the other hand, in 2010, for the first time in New York State, Latinos were elected to public office as Republicans, and in other ways as well the state Republican Party is beginning to pay attention to this community, however slowly (Lindell 2011). Latino political marginality appears to be a function of the preservation of white privilege even when people of color are the majority of New York City's population.

While the impact of the 2012 presidential election on local Latino politics in New York City was minimal, the greater visibility it gave to Latino politics at the national level bestowed, perhaps undeservedly, increased credibility on local Latino political actors. One result was the beginnings of Republican Party interest in attracting local Latino support, but it did not change in any serious way the marginal relationship of Latino politics to the dominant Democratic Party structures.

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Developing a coherent Latino political leadership and effective mechanisms for creating unifying political agendas for this community at city and statewide levels remain major challenges, leaving major gaps in the full integration of Latinos in the city's and state's civic life. It is increasingly clear that an important unaddressed issue for New York's Latinos remains devising strategies to hold the Democratic Party more accountable for supporting political development of Latinos; at this point, the prospect of doing so with the Republican Party is hard to imagine. We continue to live with the irony that Latino political power is problematic at a time when the size of the Latino population and its political class has never been greater in the city, state, and nation.

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