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# Incorporation of Latino Immigrants into the American Party System



DAVID O. SEARS, FELIX DANBOLD, AND  
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*Are Latinos, especially immigrants, less partisan than other American ethnic groups? In the 2012 Latino Immigrant National Election Study and American National Election Studies datasets, a greater proportion of Latinos self-categorize as partisans on the standard measure of party identification than previously theorized. Only non-naturalized Latino immigrants showed unusual nonincorporation into the party system. Both continuing subjective engagement in the politics of their country of origin and nonpolitical assimilation in the United States were associated with greater partisan self-categorization, even controlling for relevant demographics. However, self-categorization may underestimate incorporation into the party system by overlooking latent partisan preferences. Indeed, Latino immigrants show quite crystallized attitudes toward the parties and their candidates, even those who did not self-categorize as Democrats or Republicans. Only non-naturalized immigrants show notably low levels of partisan crystallization. Most seemingly unincorporated Latino immigrants may simply be in the early stages of developing partisan identities rather than deliberately standing outside the party system.*

**Keywords:** Latino party identification, Latino immigrants, partisan self-categorization, partisan crystallization, latent preferences, assimilation

In 2012, Barack Obama received between 71 and 75 percent of the Latino vote, according to the Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project (2012) and Latino Decisions (2012). That was an increase from 67 percent in 2008, and an even larger increase for the Democratic ticket from the 53 percent that John Kerry arguably received in 2004 (Preston 2008). News stories following the Obama victories emphasized not only the size of his margin among Latinos but that they are the fastest-growing ethnic subgroup in the country. The subtext of these reports was that such demographic

changes were inevitably moving the nation in the direction of the Democrats. That has led some to conclude that the Latino vote is a "sleeping giant" now beginning to stir.

Given that about one in three of the Latino population are foreign born, about half the U.S. total (Krogstad and Lopez 2014), the outcomes of these elections also raised anew questions about the incorporation of new immigrant groups into the American party system. In this paper, we seek to examine the degree of incorporation of Latino immigrants into the party system; which party, if any, Latino immi-

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grants are joining in the United States; and begin to explore the determinants of their adoption of a partisan identity.

### **LATINOS AND THE PARTY SYSTEM**

Beyond statistics from the voting booth, questions about Latino immigrants' ultimate partisan loyalties remain somewhat unresolved. Many have predicted that Latinos' predominantly working-class status would lead them to economic liberalism and the Democratic Party, as has been true of many immigrant groups in the past. Carole Uhlaner and Chris Garcia (2005) find that Mexican American immigrants who have spent higher proportions of their lives in the United States, and older U.S.-born Mexican Americans, were more likely to be Democrats. They argue that longer tenure in the United States promotes Democratic partisanship, though the class explanation for that preference is less clear in their analyses, because the link between the direction of partisan preferences and socioeconomic status (SES) varies across various indicators of class. Shaun Bowler, Stephen Nicholson, and Gary Segura (2006) suggest that the political hostility displayed by Republicans toward minorities in recent years has driven Latinos even more toward the Democrats. On the other hand, it has long been argued that many Latinos are "natural Republicans," both because of their widespread social conservatism and their upward-mobility aspirations (Alvarez and García Bedolla 2003; DeSipio 1996). The ire of many Latino immigrant groups at the increased rates of deportation of undocumented immigrants under the Obama administration may also have loosened support for the Democratic Party among Latinos (Serrano 2014).

An important third possibility is that many Latinos, especially immigrants, remain largely free of partisan commitments. As Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler say, "recent immigrants constitute one of the largest groups of unaligned citizens in the United States, but parties have been slow in recruiting them" (2002, 227–28). Janelle Wong also argues that a wide variety of other civic institutions could, but often do not, facilitate incorporation of immigrants into the political system (2006). Among the consequences may

be that many adopt an apolitical "none of the above" stance toward the parties rather than a strong partisan attachment.

However, Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee have made perhaps the most systematic case for the claim that many Latinos are "choosing to remain on the sidelines" of the party system (2011, 87–88). They argue that the existing literature "misses what is perhaps most distinctive about the party identification of immigrant-based groups, namely, the relative absence of any relationship to parties." They cite surveys of Latino and Asian Americans that show a "distinct lack of enthusiasm for the major parties," as reflected in the classic self-categorization measures of party identification featured in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). The authors argue that "a clear majority" (55 percent of the 2006 Latino National Survey) are nonpartisans, not affiliated with either of the two major parties. The single largest group (38 percent) are what they call nonidentifiers, whose responses to the initial party identification question are coded as not sure, don't know, refused, something else, no preference, or do not think in those terms; another 17 percent call themselves Independent rather than Democrat or Republican (Hajnal and Lee 2011, 4–5, 88, 148; see also Wong et al. 2011). Their Independent category appears to include those who self-categorized as leaning toward one party or the other, a category of Independents who have been shown in the past to behave more like weak partisans than pure Independents, who are self-declared Independents declining to indicate any partisan "leaning" (Lewis-Beck et al. 2007; Keith et al. 1992).

The contrast between these three views has obvious political importance in terms of current partisan debates over a "pathway to citizenship" for immigrants who have not obtained citizenship. If in fact many noncitizen Latino immigrants are predisposed toward being Democrats, one could readily understand Republican anxieties about flooding the electorate with millions of new Democratic voters. On the other hand, Democrats might have every reason to emphasize noncitizen Latinos' current explicit nonpartisanship, perhaps strategically arguing that Republicans should have

nothing to worry about were the electorate to be expanded to incorporate many new apolitical, nonpartisan Latinos.

### THEORIES OF PARTISANSHIP

How might extant theories of partisanship help explain the likelihood and direction of incorporation among Latinos into the party system? One conception has its ancestry in Anthony Downs's early (1957) version of rational choice theories. In this view, voters are sufficiently informed about politics, adequately understand their own interests, and engage in enough instrumental reasoning linking the two to produce sensible ideologies and policy preferences, and ultimately rational proximity voting. A later variant, following V. O. Key's (1966) admonition that voters are not fools, viewed voters as adjusting their partisanship according to their perceptions of party performance. Party identification therefore becomes a "running tally" adjusted as the voter adapts it to his or her perceptions of party competence (Fiorina 1981). If Latinos feel that both parties are indifferent to their interests, they may have little incentive to favor either one.

Others argue that many Latinos will never even be firmly committed to the United States, much less to one or the other political party. Because the great majority of Latino immigrants come from adjacent or nearby nations (nearly two-thirds are from Mexico) characterized by porous borders and frequent reverse migration, some scholars predict that many Latino immigrants will opt to remain Spanish-fluent, moving freely back and forth between the two nations, and perhaps preferring to vote in the elections of their original nations rather than in the United States (Huntington 2004). Critical race theorists like Rogers Smith (1997, 2011) take a surprisingly similar view, noting the obstacles facing immigrants in the many inegalitarian exceptions to the openness of American society to newcomers, especially people of color. Racial hierarchy theorists formalize such views, depicting most Latinos as stuck in a subordinate position in a largely stable and inflexible hierarchy of racial groups (for example, Bonilla-Silva 2006; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Sidanius and Pratto 1999).

Hajnal and Lee (2011) explain the high rates

of nonpartisanship they observed among Latinos in similarly rational terms. Immigrants' lack of information or information uncertainty means they are likely to distance themselves from the parties as an "affirmation of rational skepticism" about institutions they know little about and mistrust (82). Latinos also are "ideologically ambivalent" about both of the two main parties, given that neither consistently represents immigrants' interests. The rational choice approach would therefore seem compatible with an expectation that high rates of nonpartisanship are emerging in a group that receives few convincing overtures from either party.

The best-known major alternative to a rational choice approach is *The American Voter* view that preadult socialization, especially from parents, is the crucial ingredient in developing Americans' party identifications (Campbell et al. 1960; also see Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). It depicted a psychological process in which affective attachments toward the explicit symbols of the parties were acquired without much information. What information was available, or that became available later in adulthood, was often used in the service of post hoc rationalization of prior partisanship, a point later developed in more detail by Milton Lodge and Charles Taber (2014).

That canonical theory about the origins of partisan attachments might point to some specific obstacles to the acquisition of strong partisanship among immigrants. Almost all immigrants had parents who had spent their own formative years, or their adult lives, or both, in another nation's political system. Those parents probably had little information and few strong attitudes toward the American political parties. As a result, immigrants would therefore be unlikely to inherit strong preferences about the American parties from their parents. Even naturalized first-generation immigrants, lacking that crucial parental influence in their own preadult lives, might be slow to acquire an American party identification. U.S.-born Latinos in the second generation may receive more preadult socialization, but mostly again from immigrant parents who had little of that experience themselves. The second generation might also receive weak partisan socialization

from other possible agents, such as peers and schools, given that low-income immigrants to America are often quite residentially segregated (Iceland and Scopilliti 2008). So even the second generation might also tend to be only indifferent partisans.

However, subsequent research has developed some elaborations and modifications of this classical account that may be more favorable to developing strong partisan identities in adulthood after immigration. Although contemporary writers range from subtle revisions of that original theory (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008) to more fundamental ones (Hajnal and Lee 2011), supporters and critics have reached consensus on a few points. Most relevant, acquisition of partisanship is now recognized as promoted by a broader set of experiences than just exposure to one's parents, and as evolving over a longer period of the life course than just the preadult years. Indeed, in the United States' steady-state party system, party identification generally continues to strengthen with age through the life course, not just plateauing as offspring leave adolescence (for reviews, see Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Sears and Brown 2013). Even adults can be converted if the parties change positions on key issues, such as when white southerners moved to the Republican Party starting in the 1960s after the Democrats began to support civil rights more forthrightly (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Osborne, Sears, and Valentino 2011).

This revisionist socialization theory might suggest that, rather than rationally deciding not to enter a party system with unappealing options, the numerous nonpartisans in the heavily immigrant Latino population may merely be in the early stages of adopting a partisan identity. A straight-line assimilation process (Gordon 1964) argues that each successive generation after immigration acculturates to American society more, in language, residential integration, intermarriage, institutional engagement, subjective attachment to the nation, and weakened ethnic ties (Alba and Nee 2003; Citrin and Sears 2014). By that logic, Latino immigrants should become steadily more incorporated into the party system over time. In fact, some of Hajnal and Lee's (2011) em-

pirical findings about Latino nonpartisanship seem to show just that, partisan identification increasing as a function of both years in the United States and higher socioeconomic status. They describe the development of Latino partisanship as also being guided in part by processes of straight-line assimilation, following a sequential process of, first, choosing to identify with a party, and then determining which party to identify with.

This proposed process of integration may have been overlooked in part due to the almost universal reliance on the conventional Michigan self-categorization measure of party identification ("Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?"). Recent developments in psychology suggest that this conventional measure may underestimate the presence of real partisan preferences acquired earlier. Dual-process theories suggest a distinction between explicit and implicit measures of attitudes. The former involve conscious self-categorization, as in the Michigan measure. The latter reflect more automatic affective associations that the individual may or may not be fully aware of. A prominent advocate of such a distinction is Daniel Kahneman (2003), who contrasts conscious deliberate choices (System 2) with more affective, automatic, and less conscious associations (System 1). Social psychologists find that implicit attitudes are pervasive and detectable even when the individual is not consciously aware of them or is responding to subliminal stimuli. However, the case for widespread implicit attitudes does not hinge on their being wholly unconscious (Banaji and Greenwald 2013).

Are most Latinos outside the party system by choice, "rational skepticism" keeping them "on the sidelines?" Or are many simply in the early stages of incorporation because of weak prior socialization, given their recent immigration or that of their families, that early stage present primarily in terms of latent preferences, and so often not detected by the conventional self-categorization measure? We find widespread partisan affective preferences that frequently coexist with self-categorization as nonpartisan. We develop measures of attitude crystallization that we believe reflect reliable

latent partisan preferences that often emerge prior to self-categorization as a partisan, during earlier stages of incorporation into the party system.

### RESEARCH GOALS

Our aim in this paper, then, is to produce an up-to-date assessment of how incorporated Latinos are in the American party system, particularly Latino immigrants. Our hypothesis is that Latino immigrants may be developing partisan preferences more commonly, as well as earlier in the assimilation process, than is often appreciated. We address some determinants of partisan incorporation that seem to be more consistent with the socialization than the rational choice approach to partisanship. Finally, we suggest that the incorporation of Latinos into the American party system has been underestimated because its psychology has been specified too narrowly. We suggest that reliance on the relatively demanding criterion of conscious partisan self-categorization needs to be supplemented by recognition of the more pervasive implicit partisan preferences that we call latent preferences.

We have four goals. First, using more current data than available in previous research, we reassess Latinos' level of incorporation into the party system. We find far lower levels of nonpartisanship among Latinos as a whole than in previous work. We also find that high levels of nonpartisanship are limited primarily to Latinos who are non-naturalized immigrants, who perhaps not incidentally are prevented from voting. We also find that Latinos are as fully incorporated into the party system as whites of comparably low levels of income and education. We conclude from these analyses that Latino nonpartisanship is less a conscious decision to remain aloof from distrusted political parties than a result of their being at an early stage in the long process of integration into American society.

Second, to explain differences in self-categorization into partisan identities beyond these factors, we examine the influence of Latino immigrants' continuing political engagement with their country of origin on their incorporation into the American party system. Immigrants are unlikely to arrive as political

blank slates. Political engagement in countries of origin may carry over into political lives in America, analogous to the influence of early political socialization on the more general U.S. population. But what kind of impact might it have? Most obviously, it might impede immigrants' abilities to switch gears to the U.S. system, though previous research has not uncovered such a negative impact (Wong 2006; Wong et al. 2011). Alternatively, prior political interests and experiences may be transferable to life in America, actually facilitating incorporation into the American party system. For example, Bruce Cain, Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole Uhlaner (1991) find that refugees from formerly communist nations wound up predominantly as Republicans, attracted to that party as more vigorously anticommunist than the Democrats. Earlier studies of immigrant partisanship have typically relied on reports of post-immigration experiences with American politics. Instead, we broaden our search to include data about Latino immigrants' involvement in the politics of their nation of origin.

Third, the partisan incorporation of new immigrants may be a piece of a broader process of assimilation into their new nation. Immigrants' efforts to become more subjectively and culturally invested in America even in ostensibly nonpolitical domains may contribute to their political incorporation as well. For example, once in the United States, English fluency might facilitate exposure to the mainstream media and news about elections. Indeed, Wong (2000) finds that English-language skills were linked to the acquisition of partisanship among Latino and Asian immigrants. Similarly, Karthick Ramakrishnan (2005) finds that being married or employed or having a stable residence also predicted stronger party identification. Alternatively, it could be that the adoption of a partisan identity can occur independently of nonpolitical acculturation. The benefits of being able to communicate fluently in English across contexts or being able to drive are more immediate than, and may not necessarily predict, the more abstract benefits of political incorporation and engagement. To test this, we examine ostensibly nonpolitical acculturation experiences in American society, such as intentions to stay in



America and possessing English fluency, as potential facilitators of immigrants' political incorporation.

Fourth, because the partisanship of Latinos is the central focus of this paper, the traditional self-categorization measure of party identification drawn from *The American Voter* is crucial for our initial analyses. However, we also argue that it may understate Latino incorporation into the party system. In recent years, social psychologists have distinguished such conscious, explicit attitudes from implicit attitudes that reflect automatic, often nonconscious, affective associations. Furthermore, researchers have shown that strong implicit attitudes can be held even in the absence of strong explicit attitudes (for example, Banaji and Greenwald 2013). Even with minimal political information and some ambivalence toward the Democratic Party, most Latinos, even putative nonpartisans, may nonetheless have clear latent preferences for it over the Republican Party.

To test for such latent preferences, we assess the crystallization of partisanship using the associations between relevant affectively loaded political concepts. We operationalize crystallization, borrowing from Philip Converse's (1964) classic three-part conceptualization of belief systems, in terms of the stability of party and candidate evaluations over time, consistency of party and candidate evaluations with presidential preferences, and power of party evaluations over evaluations of the parties' presidential nominees (for precedents, see Sears, Haley, and Henry 2008; Sears and Valentino 1997). We hypothesize that strong and highly crystallized latent preferences for one party over the other may exist even among those who are defined as nonpartisans according to their conscious self-categorizations, and even among many immigrants who are not citizens.

## METHODS

We rely primarily on the Latino Immigrant National Election Study (LINES) conducted in 2012. As explained elsewhere in this issue (McCann and Jones-Correa), a national sample of naturalized and non-naturalized Latino immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries in

Latin America was recruited to participate in telephone interviews during the two months before the November 2012 presidential election or two months after ( $n = 418$  pre-only,  $n = 435$  both pre- and post, and  $n = 451$  post-only; overall sample size was 1,304).

A second source of data comes from black ( $n = 511$ ), white ( $n = 918$ ), and Latino ( $n = 472$ ) adult U.S. citizens interviewed in the preelection and postelection surveys conducted by the 2012 American National Election Study (ANES). We analyzed data only from respondents in the Time Series face-to-face (FTF) subsample because of non-negligible differences between it and the online subsample (WEB) in the question structure of the party identification items that are at the heart of our analyses.

## Measures

### *Party Identification*

Partisanship was assessed similarly across the ANES and LINES datasets with the standard Michigan party identification items. In the preelection survey, participants were asked, "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?" If they responded with either Republican or Democrat, they were then asked, "Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat/Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat/Republican]?" However, if they had responded with Independent, other party, no preference, don't know, or refused to answer the former question, they were then asked, "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?" From these two items, we computed two partisanship indices.

The first included eight categories of partisanship: Strong Democrat, not very strong Democrat, leaning Democrat, pure Independent, leaning Republican, not very strong Republican, strong Republican, and nonidentifiers. Leaning Democrats and leaning Republicans had identified as Independents to the first question and "closer" to one party or the other to the second. Pure Independents were coded as those who identified as Independents to the first question, then volunteered neither to the second. Nonidentifiers included

all who refused to answer the first question or responded to it as Other, don't know, or no preference. Nonidentifiers also included those who responded to the first question as Independent and then refused to answer or answered don't know to the second question. (The online questions were somewhat different, providing more opportunities to identify as pure Independents and fewer to identify as nonidentifiers).

The second index pooled categories from the first index, reducing it to four categories: Democrat (strong Democrat and not very strong Democrat), Republican (strong Republican and not very strong Republican), Independent (pure Independents, leaning Democrat, leaning Republican), and nonidentifiers.

### *Naturalization*

In the LINES 2012, respondents were asked, "Are you a naturalized citizen in the United States?" (yes or no). The ANES 2012 included only U.S. citizens. Respondents who had not been born in the United States indicated their immigration status in terms of the year they became naturalized U.S. citizens.

### *Continuing Political Engagement in Country of Origin*

Continuing engagement of Latino immigrants in the politics of their country of origin was measured in the LINES 2012 only, based on four indicators: "How often did you vote in presidential elections in [country of origin]?" "Have you voted in an election in [country of origin] while being in the United States?" "Talking now about [your country of origin], in general how much interest do you have in politics in that country?" "How much attention would you say you pay to politics in [country of origin, or if COO unknown: the country where you were born]?" These four items were keyed such that higher scores indicated higher levels of political involvement in the country of origin. They all loaded on a single factor and so were combined to form a *continuing political engagement index*. That index has modest reliability ( $\alpha = 0.54$ ), despite being made up of quite different constructs rather than being alternate indicators of a common latent variable.

It was rescaled to 0 to 1, and mean scores were trichotomized, to compare the least continually engaged third of the Latino immigrants with the most engaged third.

### *Nonpolitical Assimilation*

An index of assimilation into the U.S. mainstream outside of politics was based on six indicators in the LINES 2012. Respondents were asked, "Are you a naturalized citizen in the United States?"; "How often do you send money to friends or family in [country of origin]?" (reverse keyed); "Do you have plans to return to [country of origin] to live there permanently?" (reverse keyed); "Do you have a non-expired driver's license?"; "What language do you primarily speak at home with your family? Is it only English, mostly English, only Spanish, mostly Spanish, or both languages equally?"; and "For information about politics would you say you get the most information from Spanish-language television, radio, and newspapers, or from English-language TV, radio, and newspapers?" (reverse keyed). These six items were keyed such that higher numbers indicated higher assimilation into the United States and were scaled into our *assimilation index* ( $\alpha = 0.53$ ). Mean scores were then trichotomized, as with the previous scale.

### *Demographic Controls*

Regression analyses were run on the LINES data predicting partisanship from continuing political engagement and assimilation. They included the following demographic controls: age of respondent on arrival to the United States, years in the United States, highest level of education, and gender. Age of arrival to the United States ranged from less than one year to seventy-four ( $M = 49$ ,  $SD = 15$ ; median age of arrival = 24; median years in the United States = 22). Highest level of education was coded into five categories: less than high school graduate (62 percent), high school diploma or GED (20 percent), some post-high school education (12 percent), bachelor's degree (4 percent), and graduate degree (2 percent;  $M = 1.66$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). Gender was coded dichotomously: 0 = male (44 percent), 1 = female (56 percent).



### Crystallization of Partisanship

Crystallization of partisanship was evaluated in terms of three types of correlations, following Converse (1964), and Sears and Valentino (1997) and Sears, Haley, and Henry (2008): stability of party and candidate evaluations over time; consistency of presidential preferences with evaluations of the parties and individual candidates; and power of party evaluations over evaluations of the parties' presidential nominees. Significant positive correlations between two items were defined as indicative of significant crystallization. One caution is that some of the correlations are based on relatively small sample sizes due to the lower number of Latino participants who were nonidentifiers, or who self-identified as pure Independents or as Republicans, or because most respondents participated in only one wave (pre- or postelection only).

Most of the correlations were based on feeling thermometers in the LINES 2012 dataset that asked respondents how they felt about the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, using 0 (cold) to 100 (warm) scales. Like-dislike ratings of the parties on 0 to 10 scales appeared on the postelection interview only. In all cases the pro-Democratic or pro-Obama responses were keyed high, and pro-Republican or pro-Romney responses keyed low.

We computed two *stability* coefficients, correlations between pre- and postelection evaluations of the political parties and of the presidential candidates. In each case we used the difference scores, between the Democrats and Republicans, and between the Obama and Romney items. In the tables, we refer to these as *Party Pre \* Party Post* and *Candidate Pre \* Candidate Post*, respectively.

We computed two *consistency* coefficients (*Candidate Pre \* President Preference*; *Party Pre \* President Preference*) reflecting correlations between presidential preference and candidate thermometers and party thermometers, using questions from the preelection survey. The presidential candidate preference scale (*President Preference*) was based on three items. The first asked respondents, "Talking about the

elections for president in the United States, do you have a preference for one of the presidential candidates?" If respondents answered yes to that item, they were then asked, "Which candidate do you prefer? Barack Obama, Mitt Romney [randomize order], or another candidate?" and "Would you say that your preference for this candidate is strong or not so strong?" Among those who stated they did have a presidential candidate preference, their answers were recoded into a single item (1 = Strong preference for Romney to 4 = Strong preference for Obama).

Finally, we computed two *power* coefficients, reflecting the correlations between the preelection thermometer items of each party and of their respective candidates (*Republican Party Pre \* Romney Pre*; *Democratic Party Pre \* Obama Pre*).

### RESULTS

Our first question was whether, in 2012, an exceptionally large percentage of Latinos were still unincorporated in the American party system. Specifically, when asked for their party identification, were Latinos substantially more likely to self-categorize as nonidentifiers or Independents than whites or blacks were?

Following Hajnal and Lee (2011), we start with the most expansive definition of nonincorporation, made up of all nonidentifiers and Independents (both leaning and pure Independents). As seen in the penultimate row of table 1, 46 percent of the Latino immigrants in the LINES and 40 percent of the Latino citizens in the ANES were classified as nonincorporated using this approach. Both these percentages were substantially lower than the earlier estimate of a majority (55 percent) of Latinos categorized as nonincorporated in the 2006 Latino National Survey (Hajnal and Lee 2011, 159). Moreover, both of these 2012 estimates of Latino nonincorporation are a little below the figure for whites (48 percent in the 2012 ANES). This is an early warning signal that Latinos may not be as nonincorporated as originally thought, and perhaps not as unique, either.

However, we have reservations about such an expansive method of estimating the extent of Latino nonpartisanship. It treats leaning In-

**Table 1.** Partisan Self-Categorization by Ethnicity

	Latino		White	Black
	LINES 2012	ANES 2012	ANES 2012	ANES 2012
Democrat	45	49	26	74
Lean Democrat <sup>a</sup>	13	15	14	16
Pure Independent <sup>a, b</sup>	8	7	6	2
Lean Republican <sup>a</sup>	4	5	16	2
Republican	9	11	27	2
Nonidentifier <sup>a, b</sup>	21	13	12	4
Total percent	100%	100%	101%	100%
Total N	847	471	915	509
Total nonincorporated including leaning Independents <sup>a</sup>	46	40	48	24
Total nonincorporated excluding leaning Independents <sup>b</sup>	29	20	18	6

Source: Authors’ calculations based on ANES 2012 (FTF only), McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: The categories included in each of the total nonincorporated rows are indicated by superscripts.

dependents as nonpartisans despite the substantial evidence in previous research cited earlier that they are generally about as partisan as so-called weak partisans. The final row summarizing nonincorporation in table 1 takes the more conservative, and customary, approach of excluding these leaners in calculations of the nonincorporated, leaving only the pure Independents and nonidentifiers. By this index, 29 percent of Latinos in the LINES and 20 percent of Latinos in the ANES were classified as nonincorporated. The Latinos in the ANES, all citizens, did not show significantly higher rates of nonincorporation than whites did (18 percent). This again suggests that Latino nonincorporation may be neither as widespread nor as unique to Latinos as previously thought.

In the remainder of the paper, we exclude leaning Independents from our estimates of the nonincorporated, given prior evidence that their partisanship rivals that of those who self-categorize as Democrats or Republicans, though “not very strong.” The general findings of the following analyses replicate with either treatment, however.

**NATURALIZATION AND IMMIGRATION STATUS**

The Latinos in the LINES show a relatively high percentage of nonincorporated, though far

from a majority. The high number, however, may be due primarily to the many non-naturalized immigrants in that sample. Therefore, we break down Latinos in both surveys by naturalization and immigration status. Table 2 shows that nonincorporation among Latinos was by far the highest and highly divergent from whites only among non-naturalized immigrants. Among Latinos, noncitizen immigrants were about twice as likely to be nonidentifiers (28 percent) as either naturalized immigrants (12 and 15 percent) or U.S.-born citizens (12 percent). To estimate total nonincorporation, we pooled nonidentifiers only with pure Independents. Again the non-naturalized immigrants are the outliers. In the LINES, 36 percent were either nonidentifiers or pure Independents, whereas all samples of Latino citizens showed far less nonincorporation (naturalized immigrants, 19 percent in the LINES and 24 percent in the ANES; and U.S. born, 19 percent in the ANES). These rates of incorporation among Latino citizens were very similar to those of whites in the ANES (18 percent). It seems clear, then, that the higher rates of nonincorporation seen in table 1 among Latino immigrants in the LINES were driven by non-naturalized immigrants, not Latino citizens.

To be sure, blacks in the ANES are substan-

**Table 2.** Partisan Self-Categorization by Naturalization

	Non-naturalized			U.S.-Born		
	Latino	Naturalized Latino		Latino	All White	All Black
	LINES 2012	LINES 2012	ANES 2012	ANES 2012	ANES 2012	ANES 2012
Democrat	38	55	50	48	26	74
Lean Democrat	16	10	14	15	14	16
Pure Independent <sup>a</sup>	8	7	9	7	6	2
Lean Republican	4	4	4	6	16	2
Republican	6	12	9	12	28	2
Nonidentifier <sup>a</sup>	28	12	15	12	12	4
Total percent	100%	100%	101%	100%	102%	100%
Total N	509	338	141	324	915	509
Total nonincorporated <sup>a</sup>	36	19	24	19	18	6

Source: Authors' calculations based on ANES 2012 (FTF only), McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Total nonincorporated is composed of the superscripted categories (pure Independent and non-identifier).

tially less likely to be nonincorporated (6 percent) than Latinos or whites were (20 and 18 percent, respectively), using the narrower definition excluding leaners. That whites differ from blacks at about the same rate as do Latinos emphasizes that Latinos, especially Latino citizens, are not exceptionally weakly incorporated into the party system. The distinctively strong partisanship of blacks is a phenomenon that goes beyond the scope of this paper.

### Class or Ethnicity?

We followed up these analyses by looking for additional subsets of the Latino population that might show especially weak incorporation. Hajnal and Lee (2011) show that it occurred significantly more often among Latinos with less income and education. Using the ANES dataset, we attempted to replicate this finding, as well as to elaborate on it in two ways. First, we used more moderate partitions of income and education levels than Hajnal and Lee, who contrasted only the extremes of each category. Second, we ran parallel analyses among whites to see whether Latinos' generally lower SES, as opposed to their ethnicity, might produce unusually high levels of nonincorporation relative to whites.

Table 3 shows the partisan self-categoriza-

tions of those in the ANES whose annual family incomes fell above or below \$20,000. Indeed, low-income Latinos (24 percent) were more likely to be nonincorporated (that is, non-identifier or pure Independent) than high-income Latinos were (15 percent). However, whites showed a similar but somewhat smaller difference (19 percent versus 15 percent). So low-income Latinos were not much more likely to be nonincorporated than low-income whites were. The more notable difference was that low-income Latinos showed a far stronger preference for the Democrats (47 percent) than did similarly disadvantaged whites (27 percent), and were far less likely to be Republican (9 versus 23 percent). Low-income Latinos differ from whites not so much because they are not incorporated into the party system, but because they are much more likely to be Democrats.

Another indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage is educational level. We compared less-educated Latinos with comparable white respondents from the ANES survey; specifically, those who failed to reach the level of a high school graduate or equivalent. Table 4 shows that less education, like lower income, was associated with lower levels of partisan identification among Latinos: 25 percent of the less educated were nonincorporated, against 16

**Table 3.** Partisan Self-Categorization by Income

	< 20k		≥ 20k	
	Latino	White	Latino	White
Democrat	47	27	49	26
Pure Independent <sup>a</sup>	8	8	7	5
Republican	9	23	12	29
Nonidentifier <sup>a</sup>	16	11	8	10
Total percent	101%	100%	100%	101%
Total N	174	252	298	666
Total nonincorporated <sup>a</sup>	24	19	15	15

*Source:* Authors’ calculations based on ANES 2012 (FTF only).  
*Note:* Leaners classified as Democrats or Republicans. Total nonincorporated is composed of the super-scripted categories (pure Independent and nonidentifier).

**Table 4.** Partisan Self-Categorization by Educational Level

	< HS Graduate		≥ HS Graduate	
	Latino	White	Latino	White
Democrat	51	27	48	26
Pure Independent <sup>a</sup>	8	14	7	5
Republican	6	17	12	29
Nonidentifier <sup>a</sup>	17	14	9	9
Total percent	101%	100%	100%	100%
Total N	108	105	264	813
Total nonincorporated <sup>a</sup>	25	28	16	14

*Source:* Authors’ calculations based on ANES 2012 (FTF only).  
*Note:* Leaners classified as Democrats or Republicans. Total nonincorporated is composed of the super-scripted categories (pure Independent and nonidentifier).

percent of the better educated. Perhaps more interesting is that Latinos and whites again did not differ very much, once education is controlled. Less-educated Latinos were not much more likely to be nonidentifiers than comparable whites (17 versus 14 percent) and were actually less likely than less-educated whites to be self-declared pure Independents (8 versus 14 percent). However, less-educated Latinos, like lower income Latinos, were far more likely to self-categorize as Democrats than comparable whites were (51 versus 27 percent) and less likely to be Republicans (6 versus 17 percent). Using controls on either income or education, then, less-advantaged Latinos did not differ much from comparable whites in their level of incorporation into the party system.

Indeed, the most noteworthy difference is that Latinos are far more likely to be Democrats than whites are.

**Continuing Political Engagement in Country of Origin**

So far, our analyses showed that although present, nonincorporation among Latinos appears to be less common than earlier estimates suggested. Rather, it appears to be primarily characteristic of Latino immigrants lacking citizenship. As a result, we aimed next to identify factors related to immigration that might be predictive of a lack of partisan identification. We begin by examining whether immigrants’ continuing political engagement in their countries of origin affects their incorporation into

**Table 5.** Partisan Self-Categorization Among Latino Immigrants by Continuing Political Engagement in Country of Origin

	Least Cont. Engagement	Middle Third	Most Cont. Engagement	Most-Least % Difference
Democrat	49	58	67	18
Pure Independent <sup>a</sup>	10	7	6	-4
Republican	13	14	12	-1
Nonidentifier <sup>a</sup>	28	21	15	-13
Total percent	100%	100%	100%	
Total N	275	285	286	
Total nonincorporated <sup>a</sup>	38	28	21	-17

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

*Note:* Leaners classified as Democrats or Republicans. Total nonincorporated is composed of the super-scripted categories (pure Independent and nonidentifier).

Continuing engagement was divided into three groups as equally sized as possible.

the American party system. It could signal a lack of interest in becoming a full member of their new nation, or suck more time away from the politics of the United States, and thus be a drag on the acquisition of American-style partisanship. Alternatively, it could be associated with accelerated political engagement in the United States, much as parental political engagement prepares offspring for later political involvement.

Table 5 shows that Latinos' continuing political engagement in their country of origin was actually quite strongly positively associated with partisan self-categorization in the United States, supporting the acceleration rather than the drag hypothesis. The most engaged individuals were about half as likely to be nonidentifiers (15 versus 28 percent) as the least engaged. Combining them with the pure Independents in our total estimate of nonincorporation, those low in continuing political engagement were nearly twice as likely to place themselves outside the party system than the most engaged were (38 versus 21 percent). The most engaged third of Latino immigrants were also about a third more likely to self-identify as Democrats than their least engaged counterparts were. The vast majority of those with continuing political involvement in their nation of origin were incorporated into the American party system, and showed a strong proclivity for the Democratic Party in particular.

### Nonpolitical Assimilation

Our third goal was to see whether nonpolitical forms of assimilation had similarly positive associations with partisan incorporation. Common sense would suggest that greater acculturation to the English language and watching English-language news would be associated with greater subjective involvement in the American party system. However, this is not guaranteed. The more immersed Latino immigrants become in a society with a long history of discrimination against peoples of color, the more disillusioned they might become, including alienation from a party system that may seem ineffective in promoting their group's interests in key areas such as immigration.

In table 6, we find support for the hypothesis that partisan incorporation accompanies assimilation even on dimensions that do not directly relate to politics. Those Latino immigrants who were classified as the least assimilated were twice as likely to be nonidentifiers as the most assimilated were (32 percent versus 14 percent). Combining nonidentifiers with pure Independents shows a decline from 41 percent among the least assimilated, a level that does seem to reflect widespread nonincorporation into the party system, to just 21 percent among the most assimilated, that does not seem to reflect unusual nonincorporation. The most assimilated showed higher identification with the Democrats (by 12 percent), and



**Table 6.** Partisan Self-Categorization Among Latino Immigrants by Nonpolitical Assimilation.

	Least Assimilated	Middle Third	Most Assimilated	Most-Least % Difference
Democrat	50	61	62	12
Pure Independent <sup>a</sup>	9	8	7	-2
Republican	9	12	16	7
Nonidentifier <sup>a</sup>	32	20	14	-18
Total percent	100%	101%	99%	
Total N	254	280	313	
Total nonincorporated <sup>a</sup>	41	28	21	-20

Source: Authors' calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Leaners classified as Democrats or Republicans. Total nonincorporated is comprised of the super-scripted categories (pure Independent and nonidentifier). The nonpolitical assimilation scale was divided to create as equally sized groups as possible.

here also with the Republicans (by 7 percent), than the least assimilated did.

We should also address the question of whether continuing political engagement in one's nation of origin had a zero-sum relationship with even nonpolitical assimilation activities in America. Continuing to vote in elections in the country of origin might seem to run counter to engaging in nonpolitical activities that integrate oneself into America. This was not the case, however; the two factors were not significantly correlated with one another ( $r = -0.03$ ,  $ns$ ). Immigrants' levels of political engagement with their countries of origin seem to be relatively independent of their assimilatory efforts in their new country, contrary to Samuel Huntington's (2004) concerns. Although nonpolitical assimilation and continuing political engagement are both positively associated with incorporation into the party system, not all Latino immigrants are engaging in both sets of behaviors simultaneously.

We next tested the robustness of our findings thus far by using these predictors in regressions alongside theoretically and statistically related controls. Not surprisingly, both continuing engagement and nonpolitical assimilation among Latino immigrants were associated with demographic factors that are also usually correlated with acculturation. It was therefore important to show that any effects of these two primary predictors were not

due to their serving as proxies for more relevant demographic factors. For example, both more youthful immigration and longer tenure in the United States might influence continuing engagement and assimilative behaviors by themselves, without the more specific content of those latter variables. Indeed, those older at arrival showed somewhat more continuing political engagement in their nation of origin ( $r = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), presumably having had more opportunities for pre-immigration socialization and experience in politics in the home country. More years in the United States since immigration was more strongly associated with nonpolitical assimilation ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), given more time to acculturate into their new society (the correlations of age of arrival with assimilation and of years in the United States with engagement were not significant).

Using a series of regressions, then, we tested whether the associations of engagement and assimilation with Latinos' partisanship held up with the inclusion of controls on age of arrival, years in the United States, gender, and education. Our first outcome measure was incorporation into the party system (nonidentifiers and pure Independents = 0, leaning Independents and partisans = 1). Table 7 presents two binary logistic regression models using continuing political engagement and nonpolitical assimilation as primary predictors. Model 1 shows that when entered simultane-

**Table 7.** Binary Logistic Regression: Partisan Identification Among Latino Immigrants

Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE		B	SE
Constant	-0.08	0.22	Constant	-0.68	0.42
Continued engagement	1.27**	0.35	Continued engagement	1.04**	0.37
Assimilation	1.43**	0.36	Assimilation	0.88*	0.43
			Age of arrival	0.02'	0.01
			Years in United States	0.02*	0.01
			Gender	-0.38*	0.18
			Education	-0.68	0.42

Source: Authors' calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: 0 = nonidentifier or pure Independent, 1 = any other identification. All coefficients are unstandardized.

Two-tailed: ' $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 8.** Linear Regression: Strength of Party Identification Among Latino Immigrants

Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE		B	SE
Constant	2.50**	0.11	Constant	2.09**	0.19
Continued engagement	0.43**	0.16	Continued engagement	0.41*	0.17
Assimilation	0.57**	0.17	Assimilation	0.41*	0.17
			Age of arrival	0.01**	0.00
			Years in United States	0.01**	0.00
			Gender	0.02	0.08
			Education	-0.01	0.02

Source: Authors' calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: 1 = pure Independent, 2 = lean D/R, 3 = not very strong D/R, 4 = strong D/R. All coefficients are unstandardized.

Two-tailed significance, ' $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

ously, both predictors were still positively and significantly associated with being an identifier. Model 2 shows that these effects persisted with controls, although those longer in the United States were more likely to be incorporated above and beyond the effects of engagement and assimilation. Men were also more likely to be identifiers than were women, consistent with the usual findings about political involvement.

Our second outcome variable was strength of party identification (pure Independents = 1, leaning Independents = 2, not very strong par-

tisans = 3, and strong partisans = 4; nonidentifiers excluded). Table 8 presents two models with the same sets of predictors as in table 7, but using linear regression given a continuous outcome variable. Again, both continuing engagement and assimilation were significantly associated with stronger partisanship among Latino immigrants, even with controls. Here, being older at arrival and having spent more years in the United States were also both related to stronger partisanship above and beyond the effects of engagement and assimilation.

**Table 9.** Crystallization of Partisan Preferences Among Latino Immigrants by Partisan Self-Categorization

	Democrat	Republican	Nonincorporated	Full Sample
<b>Stability</b>				
Candidate Pre * Candidate Post	0.53**	0.87**	0.65**	0.69**
Party Pre * Party Post	0.42**	0.65**	0.33'	0.61**
<b>Consistency</b>				
Candidate Pre * President Preference	0.44**	0.81**	0.56**	0.68**
Party Pre * President Preference	0.31**	0.65**	0.21'	0.56**
<b>Power</b>				
Republican Party Pre * Romney Pre	0.70**	0.71**	0.55**	0.70**
Democratic Party Pre * Obama Pre	0.60**	0.65**	0.39**	0.61**
Sample range	169–466	21–98	36–163	136–725
Overall crystallization means	0.51	0.74	0.46	0.64

Source: Authors' calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Leaners classified as Democrats or Republicans. Nonincorporated classified as pure Independents and nonidentifiers.

Two-tailed significance, 'p < .10; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

### Strongly Crystallized Partisan Preferences

Our analyses thus far have shown that high levels of nonincorporation previously thought to characterize Latinos as a whole are primarily limited to those who are noncitizens, economically and educationally disadvantaged, low in political engagement with their country of origin, and in the early stages of acculturation. Our final set of analyses expands on the notion that nonincorporated Latino immigrants may simply be in the early stages of partisan incorporation. If so, we might find evidence of partisan preferences even among Latinos who do not yet categorize themselves as being within the party system.

To do this, we changed the criterion for partisan incorporation from self-categorization on the traditional measure of party identification, an explicit attitude, to the crystallization of latent partisan preferences, presumably implicit attitudes. Here we depart from the traditional model of partisanship. That would suggest that Latinos' self-categorization as nonidentifiers or pure Independents reflects a lack of interest in the parties or active rejection of them. They therefore would also be unlikely to possess crystallized partisan preferences, in

the form of stable and coherent latent associations between relevant partisan preferences. If, however, a dual-process model of party identification is a good fit, we might see crystallized partisan preferences, reflected in systematic and consistent latent preferences, even among those who seem not to be incorporated into the party system by the standard of self-categorization.

Table 9 shows the strength of these latent preferences within each class of self-categorizers among Latino immigrants in the LINES. Because of small samples, here we combine the two nonpartisan groups, pure Independents and nonidentifiers. Very high and almost uniformly statistically significant correlations emerge even among the nonincorporated on all three types of crystallization. For example, the stability of differential candidate thermometer ratings from pre- to postelection was  $r = 0.65$  among the nonincorporated and the correlation between preelection thermometer ratings of the Democratic Party and of Obama was  $r = 0.33$ . Overall, the mean ( $r$  to  $z$  transformed) crystallization coefficient of the nonincorporated ( $r = 0.46$ ) was quite substantial by the standards Converse originally set for

**Table 10.** Crystallization of Partisan Preferences Among Latino Citizens by Partisan Self-Categorization

	Democrat	Republican	Nonincorporated	Full Sample
<b>Stability</b>				
Candidate Pre * Candidate Post	0.60**	0.87**	0.72**	0.79**
Party Pre * Party Post	0.43**	0.57**	0.56**	0.67**
<b>Consistency</b>				
Candidate Pre * President Preference	0.57**	0.80**	0.74**	0.81**
Party Pre * President Preference	0.32**	0.47**	0.29 <sup>†</sup>	0.63**
<b>Power</b>				
Republican Party Pre * Romney Pre	0.64**	0.63**	0.55**	0.69**
Democratic Party Pre * Obama Pre	0.46**	0.61**	0.56**	0.65**
Sample range	230–298	61–73	44–87	338–459
Overall crystallization means	0.51	0.69	0.59	0.71

Source: Authors' calculations based on ANES 2012 (FTF only).

Note: Leaners classified as Democrats or Republicans. Nonincorporated classified as pure Independents and nonidentifiers.

Two-tailed significance, <sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

crystallized belief systems (1964; also see Converse and Markus 1979; Kinder 2006). This was true whether looking at mean crystallization coefficients for pure Independents ( $r = 0.36$ ) and nonidentifiers ( $r = 0.48$ ) individually or combined. On average, they were almost as great as the average crystallization of Democrats ( $r = 0.51$ ), though lower than that of the few Republicans ( $r = 0.74$ ). All coefficients were significant except one that was only marginally significant.

We turned to the ANES sample to replicate these results. As shown in table 10, the average crystallization of the overall sample of Latino citizens was even higher ( $r = 0.71$ ) than it had been in the LINES sample of immigrants ( $r = 0.64$ ; see table 9). Looking again at the nonincorporated, the mean level of crystallization ( $r = 0.59$ ) was roughly comparable to that of either Democrats ( $r = 0.51$ ) or Republicans ( $r = 0.69$ ). Again, this was true for the nonincorporated in the aggregate, or for pure Independents ( $r = 0.55$ ) or nonidentifiers ( $r = 0.59$ ) separately. This reinforces the finding that genuine partisan preferences can be observed even among Latinos who would normally be treated as standing outside the party system, once we turn our attention from

explicit self-categorizations to latent preferences.

Finally, we returned to our previous analyses of the effects of Latinos' immigration status on partisan incorporation, this time using the criterion of crystallization rather than explicit self-categorization. As we saw earlier in table 2, a lack of partisan incorporation appeared to be limited primarily to noncitizen immigrants; partisan identification was relatively high among both naturalized and U.S.-born citizens. Our argument is that latent preferences are acquired earlier than are self-conscious partisan self-categorizations. That would lead us to expect that even non-naturalized immigrants would show strong and statistically significant levels of political crystallization, though lower than their naturalized counterparts.

Indeed, table 11 shows strong latent partisan preferences, even among the non-naturalized Latino immigrants in the LINES survey. For the non-naturalized, coefficients were consistently significant, and high in absolute terms, across all three types of crystallization, ranging from  $r = 0.36$  to  $r = 0.60$ , and averaging  $r = 0.52$ . To be sure, naturalized immigrants showed higher levels of crystalliza-

tion than did the non-naturalized, ranging from  $r = 0.68$  to  $r = 0.79$ , and averaging  $r = 0.74$ , and the difference was significant in all but one case. However, in the ANES, naturalized immigrants' partisanship was just as crystallized as that of U.S.-born Latinos, averaging  $r = 0.69$  and  $0.73$ , respectively. All but one of the differences between the naturalized and U.S. born for the six indicators of crystallization were trivial in size. This mirrors the conclusion that high levels of partisan nonincorporation among Latinos are characteristic neither of naturalized citizens nor the U.S. born. Only the noncitizen first-generation immigrants show somewhat weaker latent partisan preferences. But even among these noncitizens, statistically significant levels of crystallization were pervasive.

Looking across tables 9, 10, and 11, across all groups, crystallization coefficients are generally higher for candidate-related correlations than those focused on parties. This implies that incorporation into the party system may go through presidential candidates first, later generalizing to the parties. Noncitizen Latinos quickly appreciated that Barack Obama, not Mitt Romney, was their man. Generalizing that to a preference for the Democratic over the Republican Party may take more experience.

## DISCUSSION

The phenomenon we address in this paper is the question of Latino incorporation into the American party system, or lack of it. The role of Latinos in electoral politics, especially new immigrants, is a piece of the larger conversation about their integration into American society. One large question we raise is about the accuracy of the image of Latinos as a sleeping giant, making relatively slow movement through the stages of naturalization, voter registration, and voting turnout, and so not as incorporated into the American party system as other ethnic groups. A second large question concerns the explanations for such a putative lack of incorporation into the party system. The traditional story about immigrants to America is one of straight-line assimilation (Gordon 1964). That takes time, however. The development of a partisan attachment within

immigrant families, as with some other political predispositions, may be more likely to occur across generations than within them (Citrin and Sears 2014). A contrasting interpretation of Latinos' supposedly slow partisan incorporation is that they are maintaining their subjective distance from the political parties. They are said to be reluctant to identify with either party or even to self-categorize as an Independent, viewing the party system with some suspicion, perhaps viewing both parties and their candidates as seeming not to have Latinos' interests at heart (Hajnal and Lee 2011).

We first reappraise the extent to which Latinos truly are less incorporated into the party system than are other ethnic groups. We find little evidence that Latinos in general are, in fact, opting out of the American party system at unusually high levels. We use data collected in 2012, which is more recent than published so far, based on interviews with a sample of Latino immigrants as well as with the most comparable subsample of U.S. citizens in the standard ANES. Following Hajnal and Lee (2011), we initially defined nonpartisanship in terms of either nonidentification (failing to self-categorize as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent) or self-categorization as Independent. The proportion of Latinos so defined as nonpartisans fell well below the estimate derived earlier by Hajnal and Lee (2011) from the 2006 Latino National Survey. And Latinos did not especially stand out as failing to incorporate into the party system by this definition, actually falling short of the nonpartisan proportion of whites in the ANES.

However, we believe that definition of nonpartisanship is far too inclusive. The great majority of Latinos who self-classified as Independents leaned toward one party or the other. Considering such leaning Independents as not incorporated into the party system flies in the face of much evidence that they in fact behave much like weak partisans. Consequently, in the remainder of the paper we limit the nonincorporated classification to nonidentifiers and Independents with no partisan leaning. By that standard, only non-naturalized Latino immigrants showed unusually high levels of nonpartisanship (36 percent). The more numerous



**Table 11.** Crystallization of Partisanship by Immigration Status

	LINES 2012		ANES 2012		ANES	
	Non-naturalized	Naturalized	Naturalized	U.S.-Born	Naturalized-Non-naturalized Difference	U.S.-Born-Naturalized Difference
<b>Stability</b>						
Candidate Pre * Candidate Post	0.56**	0.75**	0.72**	0.82**	0.19**	0.10*
Party Pre * Party Post	0.52**	0.68**	0.69**	0.67**	0.14'	-0.02
<b>Consistency</b>						
Candidate Pre * President Preference	0.52**	0.78**	0.78**	0.82**	0.26**	0.04
Party Pre * President Preference	0.36**	0.70**	0.64**	0.63**	0.34**	-0.01
<b>Power</b>						
Republican Party Pre * Romney Pre	0.53**	0.70**	0.65**	0.70**	0.17**	0.05
Democratic Party Pre * Obama Pre	0.60**	0.79**	0.65**	0.65**	0.19**	0.00
Sample range	120-429	106-312	86-120	252-339		
Overall crystallization means	0.52	0.74	0.69	0.73		

Source: Authors' calculations based on ANES 2012 (FTF only), McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Two-tailed significance, '  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Latinos who were citizens, either naturalized or U.S.-born, yielded far lower levels of nonpartisanship (averaging around 21 percent), and were quite similar to whites (18 percent).

Any greater level of nonpartisanship among Latinos than whites seems to be due to the many Latinos who are recent immigrants, then. Beyond that, even those of generally low levels of income and education were about as incorporated as comparable whites. Nonpartisanship was virtually identical for Latinos and whites at similarly low levels of education and income. In short, Latinos do not show unusually high levels of nonpartisanship except among non-naturalized immigrants, whose lives present obvious obstacles to an active partisan identity (such as lack of citizenship and no opportunity to vote, and only limited access to high-wage jobs and education). In contrast, Latino citizens show high levels of partisan self-categorization, overwhelmingly as Democrats.

Our second major finding is that, surprisingly perhaps, immigrants who maintained a continuing engagement in the politics of their country of origin also showed the greatest incorporation into the American party system. Presumably this is due to socialized political identities, political interests, and general political proclivities. This finding is contrary to Huntington's (2004) expectation that many Mexican Americans will remain politically committed to Mexican society and resist integration into American society. Similarly, the findings of Waldinger and Duquette-Rury in this issue underscore the non-zero-sum nature of political investment in Latino immigrants' countries of origin and in the United States.

Our third major finding is that political incorporation accompanies other, nonpolitical forms of assimilation. Immigrants who watch more English-language television and intend to stay in America show higher levels of partisan identification than those who are less assimilated in those terms. Continuing engagement and assimilation also predicted partisan self-categorization and strength of partisanship over and above relevant controls. This too implies that Latino immigrants are joining, rather than avoiding, the party system. Information uncertainty and reservations about

the Democratic Party may play a role in Latinos' political thinking, but Latinos are more engaged than sometimes characterized. The reliability coefficients for both the continuing engagement and nonpolitical assimilation scales were lower than often seen in studies of public opinion, perhaps adding credibility to the effects we nevertheless found to be significant.

Our fourth major finding goes beyond earlier studies of incorporation into the party system, all of which have used the criterion of self-categorization on the traditional Michigan party identification measure. Contemporary social psychology has suggested that latent affective preferences may often be more extensive than revealed by conscious and explicit choices. Accordingly, we tested for the crystallization of underlying partisan preferences, operationalized in terms of their stability, consistency, and power. The examination of political crystallization allowed us to look inside the minds of Latino immigrants.

We find pervasive and clear partisan preferences, even among those classified as outside the party system in terms of their conscious self-categorization. Not surprisingly, partisan identifiers showed robust levels of crystallization. But even the nonidentifiers and pure Independents, who had not explicitly categorized themselves into a partisan identity, had quite stable and consistent latent partisan preferences. Relatively lower levels of crystallization of latent preferences only seemed to emerge among non-naturalized immigrants, again highlighting this group as the one subset of the Latino population showing an appreciable lack of incorporation into the American party system. However, even they showed highly significant absolute levels of crystallization. This implies that even the least incorporated group of Latinos holds clear partisan preferences. Even if they cannot vote, noncitizens know which side they favor.

Our indicators of crystallization consisted of associations between partisan attitudes. Those attitude objects are quite similar, of course. However, as Converse (1964) showed originally, and as many others have shown since, public opinion frequently shows only modest levels of constraint. To repeatedly get

correlations over  $r = 0.50$  between even identical attitudes measured several weeks apart is impressive, especially in a sample of immigrants with a median educational level below high school graduate, many not fluent in English. The same is true for consistency between affects toward the parties and toward their presidential candidates. Such persistently high correlations would be unlikely unless the respondents had quite consistent partisan preferences. Later research will be required to test how far the crystallization of these latent partisan preferences reaches into the more complex territory of issues and ideologies that do not share the same manifest partisan symbolism as the most vividly partisan attitude objects used here.

This research should help inform our knowledge about the political incorporation of immigrant groups more generally. Latinos are showing patterns of incorporation more in line with the history of the European immigrants of a century ago, who also took several decades to integrate into the party system (see, for example, Andersen 1979; DeSipio 2001; Erie 1988; Sterne 2001). In the contemporary era, given the absence of well-oiled party machines making clear and consistent overtures to incoming immigrants, the idea that Latinos have been hesitant to join the party system makes a great deal of sense. It is probable that a lack of clear political information, scant ideological appeals from both parties, and an ambiguous role in the narrative of American racial tensions have all contributed to making some Latinos ambivalent about or avoidant of the party system. However, we show that many Latinos are forging psychologically robust connections with the party system even in the face of such obstacles. One potential facilitator of such connections is that Spanish-language media may help politicize Latino immigrants (see Garcia-Rios and Barreto, this issue). The active efforts of the Spanish-language news media to increase political awareness and engagement in the Latino immigrant community were largely nonpartisan in 2012. However this exposure to the American political system required Latino immigrants to contend with the party system and may have helped generate the underlying partisan preferences we find here.

Overall, however, the idea that Latino immigrants will gradually join the party system, following a path shaped by a combination of exogenous and endogenous forces, is one that aligns with the socialization approach put forth in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). That Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (this issue) find more converging evidence for the applicability of this classic text to the LINES dataset further bolsters our confidence in the idea that rather than being politically detached outliers, Latino immigrants are merely in the early stages of familiar paths to partisanship.

On the ground, the message is simple: most Latino immigrants quickly develop latent partisan preferences, and when they do they overwhelmingly prefer the Democratic Party. That partisanship increases with naturalization, engagement, and assimilation. We would then expect the continued steady incorporation of Latinos into the party system, specifically into the Democratic Party, as increasing proportions are either U.S. born or become naturalized. This mirrors the findings of Huddy, Mason, and Horwitz in this issue that growing partisanship among Latino immigrants is likely to favor Democrats quite heavily. In addition, the positive association of Democratic preferences with both ethnic group identification and awareness of discrimination may reflect processes that work independently and simultaneously with those we have identified. The associations between partisan incorporation and nonpolitical assimilation may seem to run against the grain of these other effects. However, our findings, and the work of bicultural identity researchers (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005), suggest that Latino immigrants are able to acculturate in America without sacrificing awareness of and investment in their unique ethnic identity.

Increasing Latino incorporation into the party system still further will require overcoming the principal barrier we find to it, lack of naturalization. Furthermore, lack of citizenship is also related to other obstacles we identified, including access to education and income. Thus facilitating naturalization would probably have the largest effects on bringing more into the party system. So, surprisingly enough, would facilitating continued engage-

ment in the politics of countries of origin (such as through enhanced access to international media) as well as facilitating nonpolitical assimilation (such as increased opportunities to learn English and access English-language media).

These strategies would appear to be primarily advantageous to the Democratic Party. Given current restraints on immigration, the Latino electorate in America is poised to become dominated by the heavily Democratic naturalized first-generation and second-generation Latinos we observed in our analyses. Obviously this is not true for all. Some, especially older Cuban Americans, prefer Republicans, but those are in the minority. Future research could usefully examine heterogeneity within the Latino population. Where immigrants come from and where they settle in America is known to influence their partisanship through differences in cultural attitudes toward assimilation and receptivity of the local community. In addition, although examined only briefly here, future research could also usefully examine second- and third-generation Latinos, for whom factors like continuing political engagement may be less relevant, and whose assimilation efforts may plateau early in life.

Our findings indicate that Latino immigrants are considerably more subjectively involved in the party system than sometimes characterized. The partisan nonidentification previously thought to characterize the Latino population as a whole seems to occur primarily under a confluence of several specific obstacles: lack of citizenship, little education and low income, weak continuing political engagement in immigrants' nations of origin, and lower nonpolitical assimilation into the United States. Even among those without citizenship, we found evidence of significant crystallization and the positive effects of both continuing political engagement and assimilation on partisanship. When those obstacles are overcome, a relatively smooth pattern of political incorporation seems to occur among Latino immigrants, with evidence of this process detectable even among non-naturalized immigrants. Instead of avoiding the party system, Latinos clearly seem to be steadily joining it as many

leave the moment of immigration further and further behind.

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