

**Department of Sociology and
Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society
Welcome**

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***Figures of the Future:
Temporal Politics and Latino Demographic Demonstrations
in the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election***

**3:30 pm Thursday, December 18, 2014
KSISR 100**

Recent demographic projections have provoked significant public and scholarly debate about the future of the U.S. ethnoracial order. While sociologists have examined the social causes and potential consequences of population trends, little attention has been directed to the politicization of demographic futures. As part of a larger study, my talk explores the “temporal politics” of national Latino civil rights leaders during the 2012 presidential election. Conceptualizing temporal politics as the explicit production and mobilization of temporal representations for political ends, I examine the deployment of three statistics about the *growing* “Latino vote.” The first figure was the projection that 12.2 million Latino voters would participate in the election. The second expressed that 50,000 Latino citizens turn 18 every month and would continue to do so into the foreseeable future. The third figure claimed that for the first time in U.S. history Latino voters accounted for 10% of cast ballots, a number that came to validate the idea that the “Latino vote” was “decisive” on Election Day. Drawing on the sociology of quantification, I show how these statistics—coupled with an expansive civic engagement campaign—were mobilized to publicly *demonstrate* a future in which the Latino “sleeping giant” had realized its political potential. This analysis, however, reveals that the aims of this temporal project proved elusive for various reasons, not the least of which were the vulnerabilities of the statistics themselves and the temporal disjunctures they indexed. My talk concludes with a discussion of the performativity of statistics and debates about the so-called “Browning of America.”

Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at Brown University. His research interests include knowledge, science, culture, politics, and race and ethnicity. He has published work on pan-Latino identity formation within Chicago’s immigrant rights movement and recently co-edited a special issue of *Qualitative Sociology* on Actor-Network Theory (December, 2013). Based on eighteen months of qualitative and ethnographic research, his dissertation examines the cultural politics of demographic change among national Latino civil rights organizations and spokespersons. This research has received support from the National Science Foundation and the Ford Foundation.