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# Immigrants, Immigrant Policy, and Foundation of the Next Century's Latino Politics: The Declining Salience of the Civil Rights Agenda in an Era of High Immigration

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Often lost in the discussion of the initiation of federal civil rights policies in the 1960s is the passage of a major reform in U.S. immigration policy. This law—the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (79 Statutes at Large 911, enacted October 3, 1965)—was no less revolutionary than the Civil Rights Act of the same year and found its intellectual foundation in the same national effort to eliminate barriers based on race. In the case of the Immigration Act, the "national-origin quotas" first enacted in the 1920s were eliminated and replaced with legislation that was less sensitive to nationality (maximum country and regional quotas were enacted). The national-origin quotas had sought to retain the nationality mix of immigrants of the turn-of-the-century. In their place, the 1965 Act based immigration to the United States on family reunification (favoring potential immigrants with immediate family members in the United States) and labor market skills (favoring potential immigrants with needed or specialized job skills). The impact of the 1965 immigration law was to profoundly alter the ethnic mix of immigrants and to provide the foundation for a surge in immigration that continues today.

Two ethnic populations have most benefited from these changes—Latinos and Asians. Each of these immigrant/ethnic populations had been present in large numbers prior to 1965 and both had been the targets of ongoing discrimination that targeted not just immigrants, but also generation after generation of the U.S.-born. Major civil rights legislation, often originally designed to redress violations of African American rights, was rapidly expanded in the late 1960s and 1970s to include Latinos and Asian Americans, though we have argued elsewhere that these extensions—at least, in the case of the Latino community—may have incorrectly assumed that the content of the discrimination against African Americans and Latinos was similar and hence the remedies should be the same (de la Garza and DeSipio 1993).

This foundation of this coverage for Latinos and Asian Americans (a case that we know less well and do not presume to speak to in this paper) in civil rights legislation was the experience of public- and private-sector discrimination against U.S. and foreign-born Latinos. This pattern of discrimination based on ethnicity and ancestry has been extensively documented in the Mexican American and Puerto Rican populations and does not need repeating here (Grebler, Moore, and Guzman 1970; Lacuna 1981; San Miguel 1987; Sánchez-Korrol 1994). The effort to fight this pervasive discrimination and to demand equal rights as citizens shaped Mexican American and Puerto Rican politics in the twentieth century (Jennings and Rivera 1984; Hammerback, Jensen, and Gutierrez 1985; Marquez 1993; Pycior 1997) and offered a unifying theme as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and other Latinos began to examine their common experiences and needs in the process of building a Latino politics (Padilla 1985; Moreno 1996). Thus, as Latino politics began to emerge in the 1970s, it was a politics shaped by the civil rights agenda.

The fundamental question that we ask in this paper is whether the public policy needs of immigrant Latinos can be understood as part of the civil rights agenda. Our tentative answer is

that they are distinct. If this is the case, we indicate that the policy needs of immigrants will steadily eclipse the civil rights issues that have galvanized Latino elites and, to a lesser extent, Latinos as a whole from the 1960s to the present.

We find that the perception of discrimination that spurs demands for civil rights protections is declining. In part, they are declining in salience because the patterns of exclusion and manipulation that spurred the creation of civil rights policies have declined in frequency and pervasiveness (de la Garza, Menchaca, and DeSipio 1994; de la Garza 1997). Equally importantly, they are declining because immigrants do not structure their demands on American society based on remediating past discrimination. Instead, their politics, as it emerges, will be shaped by demands for assistance with settlement. Thus, the question that shapes our inquiry here is whether settlement can be understood as a civil rights policy.

By the civil rights agenda, we mean issues of civil and voting rights, affirmative action, and targeted remedial programmatic services that emerged in legislation in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the Civil Rights Movement and, to a lesser degree, the Chicano movement. We will contrast these civil rights issues to an agenda based on the needs of immigrants (not to be confused with immigration policy-the regulation of international frontiers and the determination of who may cross them and in what numbers). This immigrant settlement policy agenda involves some of the same issues as the civil rights agenda, though with different rationales, as well as issues unique to immigrants. At its core, the immigrant rights agenda involves providing sufficient state resources to assist in the transition from immigrant to citizen. It involves equal protection issues, but based on the claim of residence, not equal rights as U.S. citizens.

The evidence of declining salience can be seen in several vignettes from the 1996 elections. The major issues that connected Latino communities to the national elections had to do with the rights of immigrants, e.g. the provisions in the Welfare Reform bill that denied social welfare benefits to immigrants, proposals to deny children of undocumented immigrants public education, provisions in the immigration reform bill to restrict undocumented migration, and bilingual education. The major Latino mobilization-the October march on Washington-focused almost exclusively on immigrant rights. The final outcome of the major electoral surprise in which Latinos played a role-the election of Loretta Sanchez from an Orange County Congressional district-now hinges on the number of non-citizens who voted and whether any evidence can be found that the Sanchez campaign orchestrated the votes of ineligible voters.

Clearly, these immigrant rights issues could be eclipsing civil rights issues that are also important to Latino communities. Instead, we will argue that the Civil Rights agenda is declining in relative importance. Some of the issues that mobilized Latinos in the 1960s and 1970s have diminished in importance or even largely disappeared. For example, the political manipulation that characterized voting prior to 1975 has diminished. While majority-minority districting strategies are under judicial challenge, the rapid growth of the Latino community ensures that the impact of *Shaw v. Reno* and its progeny will be felt less in Latino areas than in African American areas and that the number of Latino elected officials will continue to grow (though more slowly if race can not be considered in the districting process).

Probably the greater challenge to the civil rights agenda posed by large scale immigration is that the justification for some of the civil rights programs is being muddied by the presence of large numbers of immigrants among their beneficiaries. For example, affirmative action and minority contracting programs were designed to redress past discrimination against blacks, native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Among these latter two groups now, however, many

of the recipients are immigrants or their children who trace their residence in the United States to the period after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, when the state's treatment of these populations began to improve. While it is quite likely that these immigrant Latinos and Asian Americans faced discrimination, their claims on these programs are arguably weaker than are those of Latinos and Asian Americans with longer histories in the United States.

As these civil rights issues are declining in importance, the nation faces the ongoing challenge of incorporating between 1.0 and 1.3 million immigrants each year; this number includes between eight hundred thousand and one million immigrants to permanent residence who arrive each year and the estimated 300,000 undocumented immigrants who migrate to the United States and stay each year. They require housing, job training, health care, language skills, and their children need educational services. The impact of these needs is felt disproportionately by Latinos and Asian Americans. Leaders in these communities organize around these needs and seek to ensure that the process of immigrant settlement can proceed, at a minimum, without hindrance from the state, and, depending on the policy area, with state assistance.

The possible eclipse of the civil rights agenda by issues related to the rights of immigrants could be short-lived. If today's immigrants are not successfully incorporated into U.S. society, their children and grand children will likely face the intergenerational denial of equal participation in American society that characterized Latinos prior to 1975. If this were to happen, then the demand for civil rights and remedial programs will again be heard from U.S. citizens whose opportunity and social mobility are impaired by state policies that slow the settlement prospects of their immigrant ancestors and the absence of state policies to remedy the disadvantages that result from the failure of immigrant settlement.

### **Immigrant-Native Tensions in Latino Communities**

Immigrants from Latin America have long been a part of the immigrant stream to the United States. In the 1820s, the first decade for which there are reliable immigration data, immigrants from Latin America made up slightly less than seven percent of immigrants to the United States (see Table One). While their numbers grew in subsequent decades in the nineteenth century, their share of total immigration declined. This nineteenth century immigration is important for several reasons. First, its numbers are low, indicating that, contrary to contemporary popular wisdom, the U.S. border with Mexico can be controlled. In this era, it was controlled in part by nature (the Northern Mexican desert was difficult to cross), in part by poor transportation, and in part by the Mexican government that sought to keep peasants on the land. In fact, much of the migration from Latin America in this era was migration from the Caribbean. These nineteenth century Latino immigrants are important for a second reason. They indicate that the U.S.-born (including those former Mexican subjects granted U.S. citizenship under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) dominated the Mexican American and other Latino populations in this era. It was in these native populations that the political organization of the twentieth century emerged and it was these native populations that sought to distance U.S. citizens of Mexican origin or ancestry from Mexican immigrants.

**Table One. Latino Immigration to the United States 1821-1996.**

<b>Immigration Period</b>	<b>Latin America Immigration</b>	<b>Percent Latin American of Total Immigration</b>
1821-1830	9,287	6.5
1831-1840	19,800	3.3
1841-1850	20,746	1.2
1851-1860	15,411	0.6
1861-1870	12,729	0.5
1871-1880	20,404	0.7
1881-1890	33,663	0.6
1891-1900	35,661	1.0
1901-1910	182,662	2.1
1911-1920	401,486	7.0
1921-1930	592,201	14.4
1931-1940	51,319	9.7
1941-1950	10,457	0.1
1951-1960	605,681	24.1
1961-1970	1,193,645	35.9
1971-1980	1,618,884	36.0
1981-1990	3,111,760	42.4
1991-1996	2,689,757	43.8

*Notes:* This table reports on immigrants to permanent resident status. No reliable source of data exists on annual levels of undocumented immigration.

The table also excludes immigrants from Latin America who arrive with temporary visas, such as Braceros in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, or, more recently temporary agricultural workers.

The 1991-1996 category includes immigrants from earlier decades who legalized their status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

*Source:* Author's compilation based on U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: Table 2.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, immigration from Latin America and, particularly, Mexico ballooned. The presence of these immigrants offered a challenge to the small economic and political gains that the Latino population had made and provided the foundation for a new and, perhaps, more virulent form of racism (Montejano 1987). Early Mexican American political organization sought to distinguish Mexican Americans from Mexican immigrants and to associate the values of Mexican Americans with those of the dominant society (Marquez 1993). The focus of these organizations, then, was equal rights for citizens and the opportunity for immigrants to join the American polity as naturalized citizens.

In the 1930s, people of Mexican ancestry and origin, more than any other population faced abrogation of their rights and this experience showed Mexican Americans the cost of being too closely associated with Mexican immigrants. Massive deportations included not just immigrants who had used public assistance (and could, thus, be legally deported as "public charges"), but also U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry (Balderrama and Rodriguez 1995). These deportations returned the demographic composition of the Mexican American communities to that of an earlier period in the century, with an overwhelming dominance of the U.S.-born. It was just after this period that sociologists noticed a first in this population-the emergence of a "second generation" (Mazon 1984; Sanchez 1993).

Again in the 1950s, immigration surged and tensions rose between Mexican American political organizations and the needs of Mexican immigrants (Gutierrez 1995). After World War II, legal immigration from the Americas grew. More importantly, though, the Bracero program brought short-term agricultural workers from Mexico to the United States. This program unintentionally provided the foundation initially for seasonal undocumented agricultural migration and, subsequently for long-term undocumented migration to the cities (Calavita 1992). Again, Mexican American political and organizational leaders were faced with a dilemma. Overwhelmingly, they united with organized labor to oppose the Bracero program and, when national concerns about undocumented workers rose, they supported immigration controls (Pycior 1997: chapter 5; Ruiz 1987).

The radicalism of the 1960s Chicano Movement organizations obscured this pattern of difference between civil rights politics and immigration/immigrant rights politics, but did not reverse it. The issues that unified the Chicano Movement organizations were civil rights based. The leaders of the movement U.S.-born and, in many cases, multi-generation U.S.-born. While they held a symbolic attachment to Aztlán and the mythical indigenous roots of the Mexican American people, Atlas was frequently located in people's minds in the Southwest, not in Mexico. The universalistic approach of the movement certainly included immigrants (and, for that matter, potential immigrants), but the movement never spoke specifically to immigration policy or an immigrant agenda.

In the period since the Chicano Movement, pluralist Mexican American and Latino organizations have taken a somewhat different approach than did their predecessors. These organizations have not shunned the immigrants and, instead, have sought to link the needs of immigrants, particularly the undocumented immigrant, to those of the U.S.-born. Their approach to the public policy needs of immigrants, however, indicates a fundamental change from the pre-civil rights era. Immigrant needs are understood in terms of their civil rights and Latino organizations have sought to eliminate legal distinctions between immigrants (regardless of status) and citizens. The high point of these efforts was the enactment of the legalization program as part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which provided for legalization of long-term undocumented immigrants.

Among Latinos as a whole in this same period, there has been greater respect for the rights of immigrants once in the United States than there were in earlier eras. This concern, however, is tempered by an ongoing concern among Latinos about levels of immigration that could serve as a foundation for U.S. citizen Latinos to return to the pattern of the 1910s through the 1960s. Contrary to the assumptions of many, Latinos oppose immigration at current levels and advocate increased enforcement of immigration laws and, in many cases, the implementation of more restrictive enforcement strategies, such as national identification cards (de la Garza and DeSipio forthcoming). The example of the mobilization surrounding California's Proposition 187 demonstrates that U.S. citizen Latinos can be mobilized to protect the rights of immigrants,

though arguably this mobilization required elite leadership (which only appeared in the final month of the election) and a blurring of the distinction between immigrants and U.S. citizens in the campaign in support of 187. The campaign in favor of 187 reminded many U.S.-born Latinos of the discrimination that their immigrant ancestors had experienced and this mass experience switched what had been an even split among potential Latino voters one month before the election to a solid Latino opposition to 187 and increased Latino turnout on election day (Tomas Rivera Center 1996a).

The post-Chicano Movement era tolerance of Latino immigrants by the U.S.-born Latinos may be slowly changing. While immigration and immigrant policy have not been particularly salient issues in Latino communities (de la Garza et al. 1992: Tables 7.1, 7.2, and 9.16), one recent poll indicates that it is becoming more important. From a list of 18 issues, Latinos in California and Florida were more likely to identify "illegal immigration" as the most important issue facing Latinos than they were any other issue; among Texas Latinos "illegal immigration" was the fourth most likely issue to be mentioned (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, unpublished data). These results could indicate that concern about immigration, particularly undocumented immigration is on the rise among Latinos. If this is the case, the pattern seen until the 1970s may return in which U.S. Latinos seek to distance themselves and their public policy needs from those of immigrants or, at least, from those of the undocumented.

In sum, the immigration-driven growth in the Mexican American and Latino populations in the twentieth century has created a continuing challenge for political organizations in these communities. These organizations, often elite-driven and dominated by the U.S.-born, sought to distinguish their needs from those of the immigrants often fearing that the immigrants would undermine their demands for civil rights. The pluralist organizations that grew from the 1960s radicalism spoke more to immigrant rights than had their predecessors, but their primary focus remained civil rights. When these pluralist organizations spoke to immigrant issues in the 1970s and 1980s, they continued to focus on questions of rights, particularly for undocumented immigrants-equal protection for the undocumented, non-discrimination in the workforce, procedural controls on the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and legalization for the undocumented.

## **Changing the Mix: Latin American Immigration Since 1965**

Demography isn't destiny. In the Latino community this truism is demonstrated every election season when claims made about the potential impact of Latino votes resulting from the increasing size of the Latino population are not met on election day. With this caution in mind, however, it is important to observe a sea change in the composition of the Latino population over the past thirty years. The Latino population as a whole and the Latino adult population, in particular, have increasingly come to be made up of immigrants. While some of these immigrant Latinos have naturalized, many remain non-U.S. citizens and many of these are ineligible to naturalize. It is this non-U.S. citizen population in part that explains the inability to meet expectations for political influence (DeSipio 1996a).

Between the late 1960s and the mid-1990s, the immigrant share of the Latino population has approximately doubled (see Table Two). The Census has never been particularly accurate in counting this population, particularly the immigrant Latino population, so it is not possible to say with certainty the foreign-born share of the Latino population in 1970. Two estimates from this period suggest that it made up between 15.6 and 20.7 percent of the population. By 1994, this share had grown to 39 percent.

**Table Two. Immigrants as a Share of the Latino Population, 1969-1994**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>
1969	9,230,000	7,318,000	1,912,000	20.7
1970	9,294,509	7,840,428	1,454,081	15.6
1980	14,603,683	10,430,832	4,172,851	32.3
1990	21,900,089	14,058,439	7,841,650	35.8
1994				39

*Note:* Undercounts (for decennial census data) and sampling weaknesses (for Current Population Surveys) make it likely that the population figures reported here are lower than the true population, so the authors advise readers to examine trends rather than specific numbers.

*Sources:*

1969 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1971. *Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: November 1969*. Series P-20 #213; 1970, 1980, and 1990 data, Various decennial Census publications; 1994 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1997. *Hispanics-Latinos: Diverse People in a Multicultural Society. A Special Report* (Second Edition). Population Characteristics, Current Population Reports 1995.

The increasing share of the foreign-born among Latinos is seen in most Latino national-origin groups (see Table Three). Only among Cuban Americans has the share of the U.S.-born increased, reflecting, in part, the very high share of the foreign-born in 1969 and, in part, controls of emigration from Cuba. Among other Latino populations, the number and share of the foreign-born has increased in the last thirty years, often dramatically. Among the Mexican-origin and ancestry population, for example, just one in six were foreign-born in 1969. By 1994 that share had grown to more than one in three. Because they are U.S citizens by birth, nativity is a less salient divide in terms of Puerto Rican political organization.

**Table Three. Nativity for Latino National-Origin Groups, 1969-1994**

*Mexican-origin and ancestry*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>
1969	5,073,000	4,207,000	866,000	17.1
1980	8,678,632	6,479,411	2,199,221	25.3
1990	13,393,208	8,933,371	4,459,837	33.3
1994				36

*Cuban-origin and ancestry*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>
1969	565,000	99,000	466,000	82.5
1980	806,223	198,409	607,814	75.4
1990	1,053,197	298,481	754,716	71.7
1994				71



*Dominican-origin or ancestry*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>
1970			61,228	
1980			169,147	
1990	520,151	153,078	367,073	70.6

*Central and South American-origin and ancestry*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>
1969	556,000	201,000	354,000	63.7
1990	2,359,432	537,297	1,822,135	77.2
1994				70

*Notes:*

The Census Bureau has not consistently reported nativity data and total population data for Latino national-origin populations.

Undercounts (for decennial census data) and sampling weaknesses (for Current Population Surveys) make it likely that the population figures reported here are lower than the true population, so the authors advise readers to examine trends rather than specific numbers.

*Sources:*

1969 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1971. *Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: November 1969*. Series P-20 #213; 1970, 1980, and 1990 data, Various decennial Census publications; 1994 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1997. *Hispanics-Latinos: Diverse People in a Multicultural Society. A Special Report* (Second Edition). Population Characteristics, Current Population Reports 1995.

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Because many immigrants arrive as adults and all children born in the United States are U.S. citizens, the immigrant share of the adult population tends to be higher than the population as a whole. Between 1976 and 1992, the non-citizen share of the adult population increased from less than thirty percent to more than forty percent (see Table Four). When naturalized Latino citizens are added to these non-naturalized immigrants, the share of foreign-born among Latino adults may well exceed 50 percent.

**Table Four. Non-U.S. Citizens as a Share of the *Adult* Latino Population, 1976-1992**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Latino Adults</b>	<b>Non-U.S. Citizens</b>	<b>Percentage Non U.S. Citizen'</b>
1976	6,594,000	1,876,000	28.5
1980	8,210,000	2,645,000	32.2
1984	9,471,000	3,027,000	32.0
1988	12,893,000	4,815,000	37.3
1992	14,688,000	5,910,000	40.2

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Various Years. *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 19XX*. Current Population Survey, Series P-20.

Latinos have generally naturalized at rates lower than other ethnic populations (see Table Five). As a result, the high numbers of immigrants have also meant high rates of non-citizenship (DeSipio 1996a). While Latinos will continue to have lower rates of naturalization than other populations (with the exception of Canadians who vie with Mexican immigrants for the lowest naturalization rates), the raw numbers of naturalizees has been steadily increasing since 1993. The reasons for this are several - reactions to anti-immigrant rhetoric, administrative requirements to replace aging green cards, concerns about future loss of social welfare benefits in response to changes in the 1996 Welfare and Immigration Reform bills, a dramatic increase to the pool of eligible citizenship applicants in 1993 due to the beginning of citizenship eligibility of IRCA legalization recipients, and changes in deportation requirements for immigrants convicted of crimes in the United States (DeSipio 1996b). Even with this increasing pace of naturalization, the U.S.-born will continue to make up a majority of the Latino voters for the foreseeable future. In specific localities, however, the naturalized already or will soon dominate the electorate. Miami's Latino voters are predominantly immigrants. This phenomenon may soon occur as well in Los Angeles, at least in city elections.

**Table Five. Naturalization Rates for Regions and Latin American Countries of Origin with 250,000 or more immigrants, 1990**

	Foreign Born 1990	Raw Naturalization Rate %	Rate Among 1980 Naturalization and Later Immigrants %
<b><i>Regions</i></b>			
Europe	4,016,678	64.7	13.6
Asia	4,979,037	40.8	17.4
Africa	363,819	34.1	15.4
Oceania	104,145	34.0	12.6
North America	8,124,257	29.3	12.5
South America	1,037,497	30.8	11.7
<b><i>Selected Latin American and Caribbean Countries</i></b>			
México	4,298,014	22.6	12.7
Caribbean	1,938,348	39.7	15.1
Cuba	736,971	51.0	14.8
Dominican Rep.	347,858	27.6	14.0
Central America	1,133,978	20.7	9.8
El Salvador	465,433	15.4	10.1
Colombia	286,124	29.0	11.2
Worldwide	19,767,316	40.5	14.4

*Note:* The Latin American and Caribbean countries of origin listed are those with 250,000 or more of their former nationals residing in the United States in 1990.

*Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993.

In terms of Latino electoral power, then, the changes in community nativity patterns may not be felt for some time. Increasingly, however, Latino voters will be faced with electoral choices in which the needs of immigrants are paramount. Proposition 187 offered a clear example of this scenario. Initially, Latino potential voters were largely uninformed about the proposition and mildly supportive of its objectives. Only after Latino immigrants and natives were blurred by proponents of the initiative and immigrant organizational leaders joined the campaign to oppose it did the weight of Latino community support move against the proposition. At some level, opponents of the proposition used the rhetoric of civil rights to oppose the proposition. This worked in 1994, but it would be interesting to see if it would work so well against a less nativist group of proponents. A different style of campaign in support of 187 might well have led to more Latino support for the initiative. Regardless of the outcome of Proposition 187, we anticipate that Latino voters will increasingly face electoral choices in which the need of Latino immigrants are the central issue. Thus, while the primarily native-born U.S. citizen population continues to control Latino electoral politics through their votes, the impact of the changing demography of Latino communities will increasingly be felt.

## **Changing Times, Changing Politics**

As we have suggested, demography isn't destiny. These patterns of changing nativity composition in the Latino community have been evident for some time, without a necessary change in the political focus of Latino leaders and organizations. This pattern may have begun to change at the national level in 1996. The major accomplishments of Latino communities in the 1996 elections and the legacy of the election for these communities reflected immigrant politics more than civil rights politics (de la Garza and DeSipio 1997). We examine three aspects of the election - issues, mobilization, and unexpected victories. In each case, the story we tell is one of immigrant politics shaping the Latino agenda.

To the extent that issues of concern to the Latino community entered the national political debate, they involved the rights of immigrants. This was particularly evident in the provisions in the Welfare Reform bill that denied social welfare benefits to immigrants, in Congressional proposals to deny children of undocumented immigrants public education (the Gallegly amendment), in provisions in the immigration reform bill to restrict undocumented migration, and in the beginnings of the discussion of bilingual education that led to the California ballot initiative on this subject in 1998.

Latinos were not able to have much influence in these debates. President Clinton signed both the Immigration and Welfare Reform bills with the promise to soften the impact on of the welfare reform bill on legal immigrants (a goal achieved in part through a 1997 bill to reestablish elderly immigrant eligibility for Supplemental Security Income). Although the president's approval of the immigration and welfare bills caused grumbling among some Latino leaders, Clinton did well among Latino voters. One area in which he gained Latino support-Florida-can be attributed to his less harsh stance on immigrant benefit eligibility than that of Senator Dole. In the end, the Gallegly amendment did not pass, though it did pass in the House of Representatives. Again, Latinos did not have much influence in this debate, although Senator Dole's support for the amendment did provide grist for attacks within the Latino community. Thus the issues of the 1996 campaign that had a uniquely Latino impact were immigrant-related, not civil rights related.

It should be noted that at the state level, the most important Latino issue was a more traditional civil rights issue, specifically California's Proposition 209. The anti-affirmative action ballot initiative strongly galvanized Latino voters in opposition. Their votes, however, were not strong enough to overcome support for the proposition in the non-Hispanic white (Anglo) community. The evidence is somewhat contradictory as to whether Proposition 209, like Proposition 187 before it, spurred an increase in Latino turnout (Pachon et al. 1997).

The major Latino mobilization-the October march on Washington-focused almost exclusively on immigrant rights. The march's eight point platform included: simplified citizenship procedures, a national seven dollar an hour minimum wage, human and constitutional rights for all, equal opportunities and affirmative action for all, universal free public education from kindergarten through university, expanded health services, citizen police review boards, and reform of labor laws (Gordon 1996). The rhetoric of speakers at the march was even more targeted to the rights of immigrants, often conflating the terms Latino and immigrant. The march's organizers, leadership, and many of the speakers were not from traditional Latino organizations. Instead, they emerged from the immigrant service organizations. The march's organizer, Juan José, Gutierrez, had directed a Los Angeles-based immigration service agency for a number of years and was not, prior to the march, a national Latino leader.

While the march was not as successful as its organizers predicted, it was most prominent effort at autonomous, non-partisan Latino community mobilization in the 1998 campaign. It attracted national media attention and participants from throughout the country. Although the goals of the march have not been realized in the year since its occurrence, its organizers promised to use the march as the foundation for a new national Latino grass roots organization focusing on the march's immigrant rights agenda (Ramos 1996).

Overall the 1996 elections did not lead to many unexpected victories (or defeats) for Latino communities at the national level. The major electoral surprise in which Latinos played a role-the election of Loretta Sanchez from an Orange County Congressional district-now hinges on the number of non-citizens who voted and whether any evidence can be found that the Sanchez campaign orchestrated the votes of ineligible voters. This district was one of three Latino majority congressional districts nationwide that had not elected a Latino to office.

The Latinos in the Orange County district that elected Sanchez are both U.S.-born and immigrants, though with a steadily increasing share of naturalized citizens. While the district was drawn with a Latino majority, it was unable prior to 1996 to elect a Latino due to a high concentration of non-U.S. citizens. Certainly, part of the coalition that elected Sanchez was made up of the newly naturalized though a more important part (because of its size) was moderate Republican women disaffected with incumbent Representative Bob Dornan.

In some ways, this district presages the future for Latino politics. Newly naturalized citizens can be mobilized to elect Latinos to previously unattainable offices (DeSipio 1996a). In the process, they add to the votes of existing voters to elect a Latino to office. If Latinos are increasingly successful in districts such as this, the response to the votes of the newly naturalized seen in Orange County may become a regular part of political debate. The charges of vote fraud that have accompanied this Latino victory may come to be heard in these other districts. While there is evidence of fraudulent votes and orchestration of these votes by a Latino community-based organization (Hermandad Mexicana), there is no evidence that Sanchez or her campaign orchestrated these votes as Congressman Dornan suggests. Yet, Sanchez's political future stands on the popular perception of her complicity in voting by ineligible people. Her ability to

campaign for reelection is limited by the need to defend her initial victory (and to pay for her legal defense). Other Latino victors could face this same form of immigrant bating. To the extent that the charge of fraud is unsubstantiated and the number of ineligible votes insufficient to reverse the election's outcome (as seems to be the case at this writing), what initially appears to be an immigrant issue could become a civil rights issue in the future if the charge of vote fraud is used by opponents of candidates supported by naturalized Latino voters to make it more difficult for Latinos to vote. If charges such as these become more common and efforts to control the votes of the ineligible are implemented, naturalized citizens could become stigmatized in the polity. In an effort to investigate the Sanchez victory, for example, Latino voters are being called and asked to prove their citizenship. This could discourage their participation in the future. If such efforts seek to challenge potential voters at the polls, it could become the basis for widespread intimidation of Latino and Asian voters, in other words immigrants could be the rationale for reestablishing the patterns of intimidation that limited efforts of Latinos to exercise the franchise prior to 1975.

It should be noted that there is no widespread evidence of voter intimidation targeted at Latinos in the 1996 elections. As they had in the past two presidential elections, a network of Latino organizations established a voter intimidation hotline where voters could report challenges to their efforts to exercise their right to vote ("Latinos Set Up Vote Hot Line" 1996). While the hotline received a few calls, it received fewer than in previous years. Thus, while voter intimidation had not completely disappeared in 1996, it was isolated. Yet, at least one outcome of the election-the election of Loretta Sanchez and the charge of non-citizen voting-may lay the foundation for newly orchestrated efforts to make the exercise of the vote more difficult for Latinos eligible to vote.

## **Changing Agendas**

These examples from the 1996 election may well be idiosyncratic to that year's election. Survey data from the 1990s, however, indicate that, at the mass level, Latino concern for the issues of the civil rights agenda are being eclipsed by others, particularly those related to the needs of poor populations and immigrant populations for more complete incorporation into U.S. society. In this section, we examine perceptions of discrimination in Latino communities. We also assess issues that Latinos identify as important to the nation, to their cities, and to their ethnic group. This discussion will suggest the foundation for a politics less focused on civil rights and more focused on immigrant settlement and community development.

### ***Latino Perceptions of Discrimination***

At the mass level, a majority of Latinos report that they have not been the targets of discrimination. This perception about themselves, and their families, is somewhat confounded by a more widely held perception that their co-ethnics are the targets of discrimination based on national-origin. The consequence of the perception by the majority that they do not experience discrimination as individuals is relatively low numbers who report that racism, discrimination, or the need for affirmative action are the most important issues facing Latino communities. According to the Latino National Political Survey, minorities of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American U.S. citizens reported that they have been the target of national origin-based discrimination (de la Garza et al. 1992: Table 7.5). Mexican Americans were the most likely (38.8 percent) and Cuban Americans were the least likely (17.8 percent). Non-citizen Mexican and Cuban immigrants were even less likely to report that they had experienced national

origin-based discrimination (26.3 and 10.8 percent, respectively) (de la Garza et al. 1992: Table 10.41).

Latinos were, however, more likely to report that their co-ethnics had been the victims of discrimination than they were that they themselves had been discriminated against (de la Garza et al. 1992: Tables 7.10-7.12). Majorities of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans reported that Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans experienced "a lot" or "some" discrimination. Majorities of the Mexican American and Puerto Rican respondents also reported that Cuban Americans experienced a lot or some discrimination. Interestingly, only a minority of Cuban Americans reported either of these levels of discrimination against their co-ethnics. Overwhelmingly, each of these Latino populations reported that African Americans were more likely to have experienced a lot or some discrimination at rates higher than they reported discrimination against any of the Latino national origin groups (de la Garza et al. 1992: Table 7.8).

Latino immigrants follow this same pattern-perceiving discrimination against Latinos as a whole but not against themselves (Pachon and DeSipio 1994: Tables 5.1 and 5.2). The majority of Mexican, Dominican, Central American, and South American immigrants reported that U.S. society discriminated against Latinos. Only a minority of Cuban immigrants (42.5 percent) held this position. When asked, instead, to focus on themselves and their families, only minorities reported experiencing discrimination, ranging from 11.2 percent of Dominican immigrants to 27.5 percent of South American immigrants. Of those who reported personal or familial discrimination, majorities reported that it was rare (Pachon and DeSipio 1994: Table 5.3). In a report that will be released in January, these patterns are repeated for other Latino national-origin groups (NALEO Educational Fund and Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, unpublished data). Among Colombians, Dominicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans (the majority of whom are non-U.S. citizen immigrants), majorities reported that they themselves and their families have not experienced discrimination. Again, the majority reported that that their co-ethnics have been discriminated against.

Latinos are divided in terms of one specific form of civil rights violation. The majority of Texas Latino U.S. citizens reported that the police treated Anglos and Latinos equally (Tomas Rivera Center 1996b). Among non-citizens, however, the majority disagreed with that proposition. In California, on the other hand, the majority Latino citizens and non-citizens agreed with the position that the police do not treat Anglos and Latinos equally (Tomas Rivera Center 1996c). This survey did not assess respondents own experiences with the police.

These perceptions of low levels of national-origin based discrimination, with the possible exception of discrimination by the police, have a consequence in terms of perceptions of policy needs. In a recent survey of more than 1,200 Latino U.S. citizens in Texas, California and Florida, relatively few reported that affirmative action was a particularly important issue for the nation as a whole or for the Latino community. No more than 3 percent reported it as a key issue for Latino communities, with no respondent reporting it to be important to Latinos in Florida (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 1997 Citizen Poll, unpublished data). The more generic "race, race relations, and racism" was more often mentioned as a key problem for the nation and for Latinos. Thirteen percent of Californian Latinos, 9 percent of Tejanos, 4 percent of Floridian Latinos, offered this as the most important issue facing Latinos in the United States.

This most recent survey of Latino attitudes offers a healthy balance in this discussion about Latino perceptions of discrimination. The low rates of perception of having been the target of discrimination is reflected in the relatively low levels of concern about affirmative action. The

recognition of high levels of discrimination against Latinos generally explains the more general concern for "race, race relations, and racism." If the individual perceptions reflected in these several surveys are broadly representative of the reality of the Latino communities then they indicate a decline in the overall levels of discrimination from the pre-Civil Rights era as well as a success of civil rights legislation, but also a continuing problem for the society and for the ethnic group. In the absence of changes in the composition of Latino communities, these concerns, though diminished, could have continued to shape community politics as they have for the past twenty-five years. As we have indicated, however, these demographic changes may be eclipsing civil rights issues.

### ***Public Policy Issues of Importance in Latino Communities***

The recent spate of surveys of Latino communities offer previously unavailable insights into mass Latino attitudes about public policy. Several patterns emerge. First, the issues that shape Latino politics are not those of the Latin American and Caribbean nations that send immigrants to United States. Latinos, with the possible exception of Cuban Americans, are primarily focused on domestic politics and have only a passing interest in the issues of concern to their nations of origin or ancestry. In this, they are like most U.S. ethnic populations. Second, their primary interests, like those of the nation as a whole are on social and economic issues. Ethnic issues can be perceived of as important, but, for most Latinos, only when they are probed about specific ethnic concerns. While some surveys contradict others when it comes to specifics, what links these data-and more broadly characterizes the issue focus of Latinos-is concern about domestic policy issues that reflect a desire for economic and social advance in U.S. society. Considering the sociodemographic characteristics of the U.S-born Latino population as well as the needs of the new immigrants, this is not a particularly surprising finding. What is surprising, perhaps, is the low level of concern for affirmative action and other civil rights era programs.

According to the Latino National Political Survey, Latinos are primarily concerned with social issues, such as education, crime, policy-community relations, and drug control. Economic issues, such as jobs, are the second most important type of issue. Only when the focus of the investigation is changed to the most important issues facing their ethnic communities do social and economic issues decline in importance relative to ethnic specific issues, such as the need for ethnic unity (de la Garza et al. 1992: Tables 71., 72. and 9.16).

A more recent survey among Latino citizens in California, Florida, and Texas finds that the issues identified in the Latino National Political Survey continue to drive Latino community politics (see Table Six). Economic issues seem to have taken on added importance since the earlier survey. What is particularly notable about this more recent survey is that the same types of issues appear in both the discussion of the national issues and the Hispanic community issues. The new Hispanic issue agenda, then, is shaped by the economy, the need for jobs, and education. Concerns about illegal immigration as also appears. Only one issue at the core of the civil rights agenda appears, the already discussed race, race relations, and racism.

**Table Six. Four most important national issues and four most important Hispanic community issues according to Latino U.S. citizens in California, Texas, and Florida.**

***National Issues***

California

- 1) The economy (24 percent)
- 2) Crime (12 percent)
- 3) Unemployment/jobs (10 percent)
- 3) Illegal immigration (10 percent)

Texas

- 1) The economy (19 percent)
- 2) Drugs (14 percent)
- 3) Unemployment/jobs (13 percent)
- 4) Crime (10 percent)

Florida

- 1) The economy (20 percent)
- 2) Crime (15 percent)
- 3) Drugs (10 percent)
- 4) Illegal immigration (10 percent)

***Hispanic Community Issues***

California

- 1) The economy (16 percent)
- 1) Unemployment/jobs (16 percent)
- 1) Illegal immigration (16 percent)
- 4) Race/race relations/racism (13 percent)

Texas

- 1) Unemployment/jobs (18 percent)
- 2) Education/public schools (15 percent)
- 3) The economy (12 percent)
- 4) Illegal immigration (10 percent)

*Florida*

- 1) Illegal immigration (21 percent)
- 2) The economy (16 percent)
- 3) Other (12 percent)
- 4) Unemployment/jobs (11 percent)

*Source:* The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 1997 Survey of Latino U.S. citizens, unpublished data.



## Conclusions

The political changes of the 1960s are very much in evidence in discussions of Latino politics and Latino empowerment in the 1990s. The civil rights legislation of that era, particularly the Voting Rights Act and the establishment of affirmative action programs, laid the foundation for political and economic gains of the intervening years. As a result of these changes, Latinos have been able to establish what had been denied them in previous eras—a "second generation" that was not limited to the same reduced economic and educational circumstances of their parents (de la Garza 1997). Preliminary analysis of this post-civil rights legislation second generation indicates that they are achieving educationally, economically, and socially in a manner comparable to Anglo populations. Had the other important legislation of the 1960s—immigration reform—been enacted, the story of this new second generation might be the story of the Latino community, or at least of significant parts.

Instead, however, immigration has increased dramatically since the 1960s and an increasing share of the Latino population is made up of immigrants seeking opportunities in American society. Their presence raises a question for the polity and for policy makers. That is, are the civil rights protections of the 1960s and 1970s the best means to assure their incorporation into U.S. society? At least in terms of mass perceptions among Latinos, their needs (as well as those of Latinos as a whole) can be found more in social and economic policies to spur settlement and community development. While immigrant settlement issues and civil rights policies do not necessarily come into conflict, the nature of political discussion, political compromise, and elections may well be to raise the salience of one versus the other. The 1996 election, for example, showed the degree to which Latino immigrants came to shape the way that Latino voters (most of whom are U.S.-born) had the opportunity to address Latino issues.

As civil rights policies are reshaped for the next century, if they are to continue to include Latinos, they will have to account both for the question of whether immigrants should be protected in the same way that the U.S.-born are and, equally importantly, whether the notion of civil rights is the most effective way of assisting in the transition from immigrant to U.S. citizen. The evidence would suggest that Latinos have no firm opinion on these issues. Latino leaders, then, have a role in shaping mass understandings and mass discussions of how the increasing need for immigrant settlement-driven policies fit into the civil rights agenda that has shaped Latino politics for the past twenty-five years.

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