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Thema:

**Latino Politics in the United States –  
A Diverse Minority and its Growing Influence**

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**CANF:** Cuban American National Foundation

**CSO:** Community Service Organization

**DNC:** Democratic National Committee

**LULAC:** League of United Latin American Citizens

**LRUP:** La Raza Unida Party

**MALDEF:** Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund

**MAYO:** Mexican American Youth Organization

**MINP:** National Puerto Rican Leftist Movement

**MPI:** Movement for Independence

**NAACP:** National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

**NALEO:** National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

**NCLR:** National Council of La Raza

**NFA:** National Farm Workers Association

**NDN:** New Democratic Network

**NPRC:** National Puerto Rican Coalition

**PRLDEF:** Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund

**PSP:** Puerto Rican Socialist Party

**UFW:** United Farm Workers Union

**USHCC:** United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

## Foreword

The topic of *Latino Politics* in this study requires explanation of its most significant terms in advance. To adequately understand how comprehensive this subject is it is essential to discuss meanings and use of the terms *Latino* and *Hispanic*.

The term *Hispanic* was first used by immigrants from Latin America in the nineteenth century, to emphasize their pride and heritage.<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s the U.S. Bureau of the Census adopted this term, making it the official designator for people of Latin American and Spanish descent living in the United States. “The federal government defines *Hispanic* or *Latino* as a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Thus, Hispanics may be of any race.”<sup>2</sup> In that way the Spanish-speaking minority was supposed to be separated from other minorities such as African Americans or Asians.

The term *Latino* first appeared during the 1980s and was generally used by the Spanish-speaking population as an “unofficial” term to emphasize its heritage from Latin America. It was primarily used by people living in urban areas such as Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago where there are now significant numbers of people from various Latin American nations.

In fact, ‘Latino’ is simply a truncated form of a nineteenth-century romantic nationalist idea that has its origins in the French Second Empire of Napoleon III. The phrase ‘Latin America’ has been traced to an 1856 speech by the Chilean author Francisco Bilbao and around the same time (and apparently independently) an essay by the Uruguayan José María Torres Caicedo, both of whom were then in exile in Paris.<sup>3</sup>

Officially, the term *Latino* appeared for the first time on the census form of 2000. Yet, the vast majority of Latinos probably knows little or nothing of the terms’ origin and uses it only because it dislikes the term *Hispanic*, widely considered to be the government’s description. Both terms, however, are meant to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> See: Dávila, Arlene: *Latinos Inc.*, University of California, Berkeley, 2001; 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ramirez, Roberto R.: *We the people: Hispanics in the United States*, U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-18.pdf>, 2004; 1.

<sup>3</sup> Fox, Geoffrey: *Hispanic Nation-Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1996; 13.



same people. Latinos account for more than 40 million people who trace their roots to the Spanish-speaking regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Given this extensive diversity, the use of terms such as *Latino* or *Hispanic* offers the possibility to draw a much simpler picture of who these persons are. “Rather than examine and assess each national-origin group in terms of ‘its own political needs and status,’ it converts them from a diverse and complex mix of groups to a simplified and a more manageable package of a new ‘ethnic group.’”<sup>4</sup> This not only helps policymakers and demographers to deal with complex political issues, but also makes it easier for the society as a whole to arrange its components.

Both terms fail to adequately reflect the richness of racial identity of the people from more than twenty countries; a logical consequence when it comes to the classification of a population.

It is important to note that ethnic labels, like all names, are by their very nature abstractions of a reality – in many ways, a necessity of speech in a society as large and complex as the United States. As such, their usage perhaps inevitably includes singling out particular socially constructed attributes, whether related to race, gender, class, or language.<sup>5</sup>

However, both terms are used in academic discourse and will be used interchangeably in this work. Whenever one of the terms comes up it refers to all individuals originally from a Spanish-speaking country of Latin America or the Caribbean. In this context the actual language proficiency of the individual is unimportant. When going into more detail describing different groups under the broader ethnic labels *Latino/Hispanic*, the more specific terms Mexican American, Cuban American, and Puerto Rican will be used.

The term *Latino Politics* is used as Kim Geron does in his book *Latino Political Power*. It refers “to the broad array of efforts by Latinos in politics, whether they are joint efforts by several national-origin groups working together in one group or political activity or the efforts simply of one national-origin group.”<sup>6</sup> This includes voting as well as non-electoral activities such as supporting publicly organized initiatives or actively engaging in community organizations.

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<sup>4</sup> García, John A.: *Latino Politics in America – Community, Culture, and Interests*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, 2003; 5.

<sup>5</sup> Oboler, Suzanne: *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives – Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995; XV.

<sup>6</sup> Geron, Kim: *Latino Political Power*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 2005; 3.

The study at hand is predominantly based upon four sources that have no direct connection to each other. The book *Latino Political Power* by Kim Geron constitutes the most important – and concurrently – the most up-to-date source. Geron offers an overview of the development of Latino Politics beginning with Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821. It served as a model for the composition of the study and provided basic knowledge. Geron works as Assistant Professor at California State University, East Bay in the political science department. His research interests embrace race and ethnic politics as well as immigration policy.

*Latino Politics in America – Community, Culture, and Interests* by John A. García identifies prerequisites that are essential for Latino political participation. Particularly, it addresses the dichotomy of diversity and similarity among Latinos. García argues that Latinos do represent a political community to a certain extent, but that their complexity must not be disregarded. John A. García is professor in the department of political science at the University of Arizona. Much of his research efforts have concentrated upon the Mexican origin community and other Latino groups, in relation to political community, mobilization and participation, political behaviors, and local politics. García is a member of the American Political Science Association (APSA).

Geoffrey Fox's book *Hispanic Nation – Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity*, provides an insight in Latino diversity. It rejects the model of a common Latino agenda and the composition of a Latino Nation within the United States. Fox refers to the complexity of Latinos and argues that these people only use the labels *Latino* and *Hispanic* to find their place within U.S. society. Geoffrey Fox is a freelance writer, editor and translator specializing in Latin American culture and politics. He published several books and articles about Latin America and Latinos in the United States.

Lastly, reports and studies by the *Pew Hispanic Center* provided up-to-date numbers of Latino demographics and election results. They serve as important indicators of recent developments and outline upcoming political, economic, and cultural trends. The Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit research organization, and therefore does not advocate for or take positions on policy issues. It is a project of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan “think tank” in

Washington, DC. All research and publications are freely accessible via the center's homepage.

## 1. Introduction

A June 13<sup>th</sup> 2003 press release by the Census Bureau officially confirmed what many observers long had predicted: Latinos in the United States had become the biggest minority passing African Americans by increasing from 35.3 million on April 1, 2000, to 38.8 million on July 1, 2002.<sup>7</sup> In 2004 the total Latino population increased to 41.3 million.<sup>8</sup> The two main reasons for this growth are high birth rates and large-scale immigration from Latin America, mainly Mexico. A substantial share of the growth of the Latino population is due to illegal immigration. Demographers estimate that around 10 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States. "Roughly 60% are believed to come from Mexico and another 20% from the rest of Latin America, bringing the Hispanic share of that total to 80%, or 8 million."<sup>9</sup>

In December 2005, given these numbers, Republican senators pushed for a law in the U.S. Congress that would make illegal immigration a crime and even punish people who help illegal aliens. Thus, doctors, nurses, and social workers, as well as other professionals who might help illegal immigrants, would be penalized. This bill, for the first time in U.S. history, caused widespread opposition by Latinos. Throughout the country, millions of Latino citizens and illegal immigrants took to the streets in cities like Los Angeles and New York City to protest the legislation. Although Latinos of Mexican descent comprised the vast majority, protests were supported by all Latino national-origin groups, as well as Asian and African Americans.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: *Hispanic Population Reaches All-Time High of 38.8 Million, New Census Bureau Estimates Show*, [http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/hispanic\\_origin\\_population/001130.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/hispanic_origin_population/001130.html), 2003.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: *Hispanic Population passes 40 million, Census Bureau Reports*, <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/005164.html>, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Pew Hispanic Center: *Hispanics-A People in Motion*, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/40.pdf>; 2.

The proposed law by Republican Senators was driven by the public concern toward Latinos which has come about as Latinos grow in number and influence. Unwillingness to fully integrate and therefore dilute the American core culture are well-established objections by critics of the growing Latino population. One of the most well known critics is Harvard Professor Samuel P. Huntington who only recently published his book “Who are We”, discussing the impact other civilizations and their values have on America’s culture. Huntington in particular points out the Latino population which he considers as a threat to America’s core values and identity due to the numbers and common Spanish language.

This perception, however, misses one fundamental point: what is called the Latino population in the United States is far from being a uniform entity. Consisting of more than twenty nationalities with different economic and legal premises, Latinos are highly heterogeneous. The study at hand will research how this heterogeneity outcrops and which factors thereto contribute using the example of Latino political engagement in the United States. Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans – the three largest Latino national-origin groups – will serve as examples.

Speaking Spanish is one attribute used to differentiate Latinos from other groups, even though especially second and later generation Latinos tend to be English dominant. A similar misperception concerns skin color of Latinos who are white, brown, and black; thus racially constituting an incredibly diverse minority.

Popular (mis) conceptions about [...] specific characteristics attributed to a particular group often serve to explain a particular ethnic label and to justify differentiating the group from others in the society. In the process the obvious diversity of individual people’s lives, social experiences, and political beliefs are set aside.<sup>10</sup>

Growing attention is given to the Latino population by media and academics due to its rapid growth and the subsequent increasing influence. However, public discourse often fails to make clear why one talks of one minority when persons whose ancestry is tied to Mexico are associated with persons whose ancestry is connected to Puerto Rico. Postcolonial history and culture of these two countries – despite some parallels – have been substantially diverse from each other, thus shaping their population differently. Both countries obviously share Spanish as

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<sup>10</sup> Oboler, xvi.

the official language but when it comes to their political and social situation within the United States, significant differences abound.

Whereas Puerto Ricans hold U.S. citizenship by birth, thus being able to legally enter the United States and live there, Mexicans do not, and as mentioned before, account for about 60% of illegal immigrants. Additionally, significant differences exist in the economic situation of national-origin groups belonging to what is called the Latino population. Cuban Americans are widely considered to be well educated and economically middle-class when they enter the United States. Furthermore, their political views are mostly different from Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans. Since many Cuban Americans left their island for political reasons, they tend to support the Republican Party, long considered to take a tougher stand toward Fidel Castro and his socialist regime than the Democrats.

In contrast, Mexican Americans tend to support the Democratic Party for its welfare and social security policy, which aims to support the poor and the middle-class. Yet, Mexican American voter turnout is rather low due to their high percentage of illegal immigrants who do not hold U.S. citizenship and thus are not eligible to vote. As people from Latin America do not automatically share social, economic, or historical backgrounds, it would be unreasonable to expect a common identity or objective when coming to the United States.

It is important to clarify that the homogenization under the label *Latino* does not correspond with the fact that this minority is highly heterogeneous. The terms *Latino* and *Hispanic* fail to recognize the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of the people they are intended to describe. In fact, most Latinos regard themselves less as such and rather in terms of their own national-origin group (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican). They call themselves Mexican, when emigrated from Guadalajara or Puerto Rican when born on the island.

Yet, as recent protests against the new immigration law show, common actions by Latinos are powerful and increasing impact on decision makers due to the sheer numbers. In this context, classification under one label may become advantageous for Latinos, a theory outlined in the concept of *pan-ethnicity* by John A. García.

[A] sense of pan-ethnicity, or seeing themselves not only in national-origin terms but also as part of a broader community is a more recent development. The Hispanic or Latino label can serve as an important dimension in the formation of a Latino community. Yet, it is the meaning

beyond the use of the label that establishes a sense of working community and identifies common concerns, interests, and situations.<sup>11</sup>

Despite heterogeneity, *pan-ethnicity* is important in the process of gaining political influence. Aggregation of various Latino national-origin groups offers more chances to increase influence due to number and power of the affiliated groups. Common goals may be more easily achieved due to a larger population base. Bilingual education, immigration laws, and social security policy are topics of great interest to many Latinos across all nationalities.

Historically, political participation has been quite difficult for Latinos and other minorities in the United States. For decades, minorities were kept out of elective, appointive, and civil service positions. The Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s led by African Americans and their leader Martin Luther King Jr., allowed minorities to, for the first time, campaign collectively for their rights to full citizenship and voting eligibility. The resulting political consciousness led to Jesse Jackson's "Rainbow Coalition" in the 1980s, constructed to support his candidacy for President. Jackson sought to unite several minority groups in order to form a broad coalition of the underprivileged.

Latinos constituted the second largest minority behind African Americans, overwhelmingly supporting Jackson in his campaign to become the Democratic nominee for the presidential election. "In 1984, Jackson, who had been largely unknown in the Latino community, except in Chicago, captured 33 percent of the Puerto Rican vote and 17 percent of the Mexican American vote."<sup>12</sup> Grassroots organizations in New York and other states formed "Latinos for Jackson" committees to show their support.

In the light of United States civil rights history, examining Latino political participation may also serve as a method to judge the American democratic system. Since almost every seventh person in the United States is considered to be

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<sup>11</sup> García, John A.; 3. "Pan-ethnicity refers to a sense of group affinity and identification that transcends one's own national-origin group. A pan-ethnic identity does not necessarily replace national-origin affinity, but it includes a broader configuration in defining the group. Latinos or Hispanics include several national origins."(García, 15.)

<sup>12</sup> Geron, 74.

Latino, political participation by this segment of society is an integral part of the quality of American democracy.

If democracy is interpreted as rule by the people, then the question of who participates in political decisions becomes the question of the nature of democracy in a society. Where few take part in decisions there is little democracy; the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is. Such a definition of democracy is crude, because it says little about elections, or free speech, or guarantees of minority rights, or majority rule; yet it may get at the heart of the matter, since all other institutions associated with democracy can be related to the general question of who participates or is able to participate in political life.<sup>13</sup>

Besides analyzing Latino political efforts in order to assess the quality of American democracy, it also behooves us to stay abreast of demographic and societal changes. The Latino population grows rapidly and thus increasingly shapes not only American political life, but the culture and economy as well. Latinos are considered to be a significant economic market with an exceptional rate of growth. “[T]he buying power of Latinos has risen 65 percent since 1990 to \$348 billion today, or more than the GNP of Mexico. The buying power of California alone increases by \$1 billion every six weeks.<sup>14</sup>” Considering these numbers, it becomes apparent that Latinos are a noteworthy economic and political factor due to their ability to financially contribute to political campaigns and candidates, thereby shaping U.S. policy. Hence, this presupposes a political strategy, which takes into account the interests and issues of Latinos in general and their over twenty national-origin groups in particular. Latino politics take place in many social contexts, including societal institutions such as schools, clubs, private and publicly organized initiatives, referenda, community organizations, and political representation at all levels.

This paper is intended to show how Latinos in general and Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans in particular, engage politically in the United States. Latinos execute their influence by voting or in non-electoral

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<sup>13</sup> Verba, Sidney/ Nie, Norman H.: *Participation in America – Political Democracy and Social Equality*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1972; 1.

<sup>14</sup> Economist, The: *The Keenest Recruits to the Dream*, 153-157, in: Wilson III, Ernest J.: *Diversity and U.S. Foreign Policy – A Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2004; 154.

activities like campaign work or financial contributions. As an individual, one participates as a member of society and possibly as a member of an interest group, i.e. a party. Thus, to be successful, it is necessary to combine one's personal interest with that of others in order to form an alliance that, due to its size, may have an impact on the political stage.

To win elective office, two conditions need to be fulfilled: personal will of an individual, and the effort of a group, who supports this person. The "winner-takes-it-all"<sup>15</sup> principle of the U.S. political system requires a broad and strong base of support. Therefore, if different national-origin groups who are described as Latinos want to campaign for the interests of the Latino population, "it can be expected that Latinos will seek to participate in the political system as voters, volunteers, activists, and candidates for office."<sup>16</sup>

Participation becomes more successful the broader the common platform is, meaning encompassing as many national-origin groups as possible. Thus, Latinos may profit from the concept of *pan-ethnicity*. An alliance of the various national-origin groups may be strong enough to elect Latino candidates to office. In the past however, Latinos' strength often was diluted by many differences becoming apparent through self-perception and various nationalities.

This study will show which factors are necessary and which steps were taken to gain and enhance Latino political influence. In doing so, it will become clear that Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans all started their struggle from diverse backgrounds and possess significantly different goals. Although common language unites these three national-origin groups, they do not have the same political and economic resources at their disposal. Decisive differences in immigration politics, naturalization, and economic opportunities become visible and will prove a distinct heterogeneity of Latinos concerning political behavior and goals.

Political activities of Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans will be outlined as well as how they differ from each other. In doing so, it is necessary to take notice of their specific histories and legal experiences upon

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<sup>15</sup> The "winner-takes-it-all" principle is based on the plurality voting system of the United States. This system only allows the voter to cast his ballot for one candidate. Whichever candidate receives the most votes is the winner, thus, all votes cast for the opponent lapse which is subject of heavy criticism by opponents of this system. On the other hand the plurality voting system is one of the simplest of all voting systems.

<sup>16</sup> Geron, 93.



arrival in the United States. Furthermore, different demographic factors of the three national-origin groups additionally affect political participation.

An understanding of Latino political participation should be in the interest of the U.S. public as well as scholars engaging in American Studies. This biggest minority increasingly makes its presence felt in the electoral arena, especially at the state level. In states such as California, Texas, Florida and New Mexico Latinos constitute decisive voting blocs. But also, Latinos nationwide enlarge their political clout, due to cumulative numbers and a more developed political consciousness. With this national and state level significance of the Latino electorate, examining their policy preferences and goals has become progressively more important to the understanding of the U.S. political scene.

The approach here is twofold. First, political participation of the Latino population as a whole will be researched; using numbers and results from the presidential election 2004. In this part of the paper, the concept of *pan-ethnicity* using the label *Latino* will be used to sum up Spanish-speaking nationalities and their political efforts. In order to be eligible to vote, certain legal requirements are to be met, so factors that account for voting will be outlined first. In accordance with the large share of non-citizens among the Latino population, it is also necessary to examine their non-electoral political activities.

The second part will portray Latinos in more detail, examining the three largest national-origin groups. By demonstrating their specific histories and varied experiences and opportunities in U.S. politics, it will become clear that when talking about *Latino Politics*, it is indispensable to bear in mind the heterogeneity of America's biggest minority and the side effects this has.

## **2. The Latino Population – An Overview**

The Latino population neither constitutes a racial group nor does it share a common culture. What all Latinos do have in common though, is a connection by ancestry to Latin America where Spanish is spoken. Immigrants, who just recently arrived in the United States, are considered to be Latinos as well as

people who have been living there for generations. Children of immigrants who are, on the one hand, shaped by their parents' set of values and traditions, and on the other hand influenced by United States culture, might not have much in common with illegal immigrants who just recently crossed the border and perform blue-collar work. Latinos come from twenty-two countries as diverse as Cuba and Mexico with different cultures and histories and thus varying perceptions of their new environment.

The following chapter provides an overview of the Latino population in general, only partially being responsive to its national-origin groups. By this means, a broader picture is given before going into more detail in the second part of this study. The minority is analyzed on the basis of demography, socioeconomic status, and characteristics of the labor force.

## **2.1. Latino Demography**

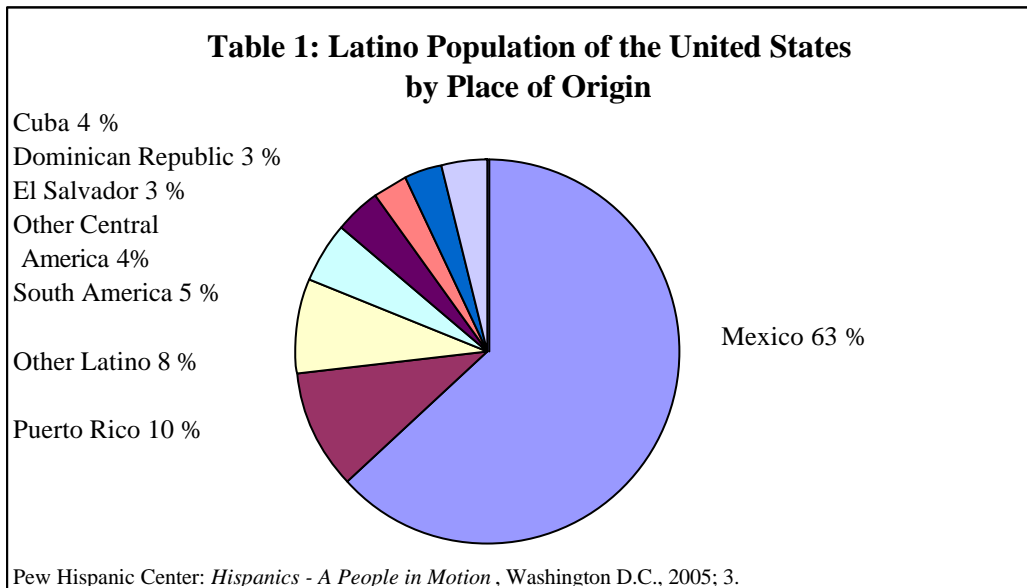
Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino population increased 58 percent, while the total U.S. population increased 13 percent.<sup>17</sup> Within the Latino population Mexicans remained the largest national-origin group, constituting for two-thirds of all Latinos, followed by Puerto Ricans and Cubans. Due to the proximity of their home country and an almost 3000 miles long borderline, it is self-evident why Mexicans enter the United States, especially after taking into account the economic differences between the two countries.

Since the 1980's, significant numbers of Latino immigrants have come from Central America and settle in areas with established Mexican, Cuban, or Puerto Rican majorities. "Hispanics who reported other origins increased by 96.9 percent, from 5.1 million to 10.0 million."<sup>18</sup> These "other Hispanics" are to a large extent from El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. As a result of increased immigration from these countries the proportionate distribution of the Latino population changes. It becomes more diverse in terms of national-origin groups, and thus in culture and habits.

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<sup>17</sup> Guzmán, Betsy: *The Hispanic Population 2000*, U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>; 2.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: *The Hispanic Population 2000*, 2001, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>; 2.



Nearly 70 percent of the Latino population live in only five states: California, Texas, New York, New Jersey, and Florida.<sup>19</sup> Whereas Mexican Americans constitute the vast majority in Texas (83%) and California (84%) the Latino population in New York, New Jersey, and Florida is more diverse. Dominicans and Puerto Ricans mainly populate New York, especially the metropolitan area of New York City. Florida is home to almost the entire Cuban population residing in the United States, constituting 41 percent of Latinos there.<sup>20</sup>

The more than 40 million Latinos living in the United States are almost equally divided by those native born and foreign born, indicating high immigration rates. As the Pew Hispanic Center asserts,

the number of migrants coming to the United States each year, legally and illegally, grew very rapidly starting in the mid-1990s, hit a peak at the end of the decade, and then declined substantially after 2001. By 2004, the annual inflow of foreign-born persons was down 24% from its all-time high in 2000.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, Latinos still constitute the leading ethnic group of immigrants coming to the United States, well ahead of Asians.

<sup>19</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation/ Pew Hispanic Center: *Latinos in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and New Jersey*, 2004, <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/7056.cfm>; 1.

<sup>20</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation/ Pew Hispanic Center: *Latinos in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and New Jersey*, 2004, <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/7056.cfm>; 1.

<sup>21</sup> Passel, Jeffrey S. / Suro, Roberto: *Rise, Peak, and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992-2004*, Pew Hispanic Center, 2005, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/53.pdf>; i.

## **2.2. Latino Labor Force and Socioeconomic Status**

Due to its brisk growth, Latinos are the second leading labor force behind whites. “Latinos now make up 13 % of the U.S. labor force, but they are expected to account for about one half of the growth in the labor force between now and 2020.”<sup>22</sup> Large-scale immigration and high birth rates are the main reasons for this prediction.

**Table 2: The U.S. Labor Force: A Racial and Ethnic Breakdown**

	<b>All Workers</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>
Population (age 16+)	223,653,344	28,240,747
Labor Force	148,612,727	19,501,923
Employment	140,554,632	18,169,653
Unemployment	8,058,095	1,332,270
Labor Force participation rate (%)	66.4	69.1
Employment-to-population ratio (%)	62.8	64.3
Unemployment rate (%)	5.4	6.8

Source: Pew Hispanic Center: *Hispanics-A People in Motion*, Washington D.C., 2005; 8.

„In the third quarter of 2004, there were 28 million Latinos of working age (16 or older).”<sup>23</sup> Even though the unemployment rate amounts to only 6.8 %, Latinos in general are less educated and experienced than workers of other races due to a high percentage of immigrants, thereby explaining their heavy concentration in relatively low-skilled jobs. “Latinos account for more than 30% of workers in private household services and about 20% of workers in construction, agriculture, forestry and fishing, non-durable manufacturing, and eating, drinking and lodging services.”<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Latinos are rarely represented in high-skilled occupations such as architecture or computer science.

“In Los Angeles County, a center of postindustrial America, it is estimated that 50 percent of manufacturing workers are Latinos, both legal and undocumented workers from Latin America.”<sup>25</sup> Given the high number of working-class Latinos, and their impact on the economy they are canvassed by the labor movement to organize, which offers them opportunities to influence working conditions and make their voices heard. As Latinos predominantly work in low-skilled jobs, their

<sup>22</sup> Pew Hispanic Center: *Hispanics-A People in Motion*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Pew Hispanic Center: *Hispanics-A People in Motion*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Pew Hispanic Center: *Hispanics-A People in Motion*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Geron, 97.

median income is less than that of whites, explaining why one-fifth of the Latino population in the United States lives below the poverty line.<sup>26</sup> About one quarter of Latinos do not own assets other than “a car or unsecured debt. Most Hispanics [...] fall into the lowest category of wealth and the size of their middle-class is relatively small in itself and in comparison to whites.”<sup>27</sup> The gap between Latinos and whites in terms of wealth is much higher than in terms of income.

Even though the median income of Latino [...] households is two-thirds as high as that of White households their wealth is only one-tenth as much. The reasons for this disparity include the facts that minorities have more limited access to financial markets and face greater barriers to homeownership.<sup>28</sup>

To own a home concurrently connotes more own capital of a household giving them an advantage in financial opportunities over renters and other households. Effectively, Latino homeowners have a net worth that is half as much as the wealth of non-Latino homeowners.<sup>29</sup> Given these economic conditions many Latinos rely on social welfare programs. Since they are not accessible for illegal immigrants the debate over the future of Social Security is of special interest to Latinos.

In the State of the Union address on February 2, 2005, President Bush proposed a reformation of the Social Security system. The plan envisions the possibility for persons under the age of 55 to either use new individual investment accounts or to remain in the current system. Benefits for both current recipients and for persons older than 55 years would remain unchanged. To finance his plan, President Bush accepts that assured Social Security benefits may be less than under current law for those under age 55. Thus, the president’s proposal splits the population into two groups. “Persons age 55 or older will experience no change in the determination of their Social Security benefits and will not have access to

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<sup>26</sup>U.S. Census Bureau: *Income Stable, Poverty Rate Increases, Percentage of Americans Without Health Insurance Unchanged*, August 30, 2005, [http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income\\_wealth/005647.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income_wealth/005647.html).

The Office of Management and Budget at the Census Bureau defined the poverty threshold in 2004 as \$19,307 for a family of four; \$15,067 for a family of three; \$12,334 for a family of two; and \$9,645 for an individual.

<sup>27</sup> Kochhar, Rakesh: *The Wealth of Hispanic Households: 1996 to 2002*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington D.C., 2004, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/34.pdf>; 1.

<sup>28</sup> Kochhar, 1.

<sup>29</sup> See: Kochhar, 1.

voluntary personal investment accounts. Those age 54 or under would be in the new system with the option of personal investment accounts.”<sup>30</sup>

Not only do Latinos, currently over the age of 65, rely heavily on Social Security retirement benefits as a source of income, but future generations will as well since, as aforementioned, many Latinos tend to hold low-paying jobs and are therefore less likely to receive an employment based pension. Furthermore, low accumulation of wealth during their years as active workers contributes to the need of Social Security retirement benefits. Considering the median age of 36 years, the majority of the Latino population will be affected in the case that the benefits are reduced. Furthermore, given the relative youthfulness of Latinos they soon will constitute the largest base contributing to Social Security. Thus, they do not only profit but also represent an important factor in maintaining the system.

Considering the above-mentioned demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, Latino sway on societal developments in general and politics in particular becomes apparent. The overview was intentionally brief to offer some necessary background information but to not deviating from the actual topic of this study. The debate about the Social Security system reveals that due to the general economic status of Latinos this issue is of strong interest. In the following part, Latino political options and engagement will be analyzed thereby paying attention to the factors that are fundamental to be politically active.

## **I. Latinos and U.S. Politics**

Latino politics in the United States expanded substantially after World War II and especially during the civil rights era. Achievements during this time, including the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the extension of voting rights legislation to language minorities in 1975, improved conditions for political engagement. The post civil rights era of the 1980s and 1990s generated a rapid ascent of Latinos to

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<sup>30</sup> Fry, Richard/ Kochhar, Rakesh/ Passel, Jeffrey/ Suro, Roberto: *Hispanics and the Social Security Debate*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington D.C., 2005, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/43.pdf>; 1.

elected office. “In 2004, there were 4,853 Latino elected officials, 29 percent of them Latinas.”<sup>31</sup> Despite this indication of strong political engagement, Latinos still do not even come close in accounting for as many elected officials as Anglos or African Americans relative to their total population.

Political activities in which Latinos engage range from voting in presidential elections to community engagement on local school boards. While voting is restricted to citizens, non-electoral engagement is open to anyone, which is especially important to Latinos due to their high percentage of non-citizens. Community organizations as well as Latino civil rights groups do not require citizenship in order to be active within their structures. In fact, they support Latinos in receiving U.S. citizenship and guide them through the application process.

Yet, holding U.S. citizenship does not necessarily lead to political activism. It serves as a prerequisite to participate within the electoral system but other factors also play a decisive role for Latinos to vote. In the following, crucial factors for Latino political engagement will be evaluated. The 2004 presidential election and examination of party affiliation will serve as latest instances for Latino politics in the electoral arena and their perception by the political elite. In addition, on the basis of high rates of non-citizens among the Latino population, it is essential to examine non-electoral opportunities and activities to engage politically. In this context, Latino civil rights and interest groups comprise significant entities that account for increasing political engagement among Latinos by reason of extensive grassroots activities.

### **3. Factors for Voting**

Several factors influence a group’s ability to gain political impact, whether identified by race, gender, ethnicity, age, or issue. Political and economic resources, level of organization, and knowledge of how the system functions are essential in order to maximize a group’s sway.

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<sup>31</sup> Geron, 6.

Regarded as a collective effort, voting is the most powerful action of political participation since it generates a definite outcome. There are a number of factors that elucidate voting behavior. “The best-established empirical generalization is that participation rates increase with income and education levels or, combining these variables, socioeconomic status (SES). [...] It is especially strong in the United States.”<sup>32</sup> Being a member in political organizations such as political parties further increases the probability to vote or to be politically active in some other way, although it is not a prerequisite.

Formal organizational membership does not appear to be necessary in order for a group to increase participation. Informal group affiliation suffices, especially when it takes the form of ‘group consciousness’. Group consciousness exists when a person combines identity with a group with a sense of unfair treatment by the political system and with a sense that something can be done about the treatment.<sup>33</sup>

Nonetheless, besides socioeconomic status and group consciousness there are additional factors which need to be addressed in order to understand Latino voting behavior. Demographic, structural, and situational factors play a significant role in Latino political activity and its relevance for U.S. politics in general.

### **3.1. Voting Eligibility**

Even though restrictions such as the poll tax<sup>34</sup> do not exist anymore there are other formal requirements that have to be fulfilled in order to be eligible to vote. Anyone seeking to participate in the democratic process through voting must, at a minimum, be a United States citizen, 18 years old, and registered to vote. For the foreign-born Latino population in the United States, meeting the eligibility criteria requires affirmative steps. The first step is the naturalization petition, which

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<sup>32</sup> Uhlaner, Carole Jean: *Political Activity and Preferences of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans*, in: Jaynes, Gerald D. (Ed.): *Immigration and Race*, Yale University Press, Yale, 2000; 220.

<sup>33</sup> Uhlaner, 220.

<sup>34</sup> In the United States, the poll tax has been attributed to voting rights. Poll taxes enacted in Southern states between 1889 and 1910 disenfranchised many blacks as well as poor whites, since payment of the tax was a prerequisite for voting. By the 1940s some of these taxes had been abolished, and in 1964 the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibited the poll tax as a requirement for voting in federal elections. In 1966 this prohibition was extended to all elections by the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that such a tax violated the “equal protection” clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.



requires five years of U.S. legal residence, interviews with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the paying of filing and application fees, and passing of an English language and U.S. civics examination.

The second step is registration to vote. Registration requirements differ among the states, each having its own laws about who may register and vote. However, all states require U.S. citizenship in order to be eligible to vote in federal and state elections. Additionally, citizens are not allowed to be registered in more than one state.

While the States of Maine, Minnesota, and Wisconsin allow for registration on Election Day 46 states and the District of Columbia require registration between 10 and 50 days in advance. Only North Dakota does not require registration asking instead for presentation of personal identification at the polls.<sup>35</sup> Thirty States and the District of Columbia require that voters be residents for a period between 1 and 50 days prior to Election Day. Additionally, most States deny registration and voting to convicted felons and those judged mentally incompetent.<sup>36</sup>

Only after U.S. citizens fill out the “National Voter Registration Form” and send it to the respective state authority are they eligible to vote. With the exception of New Hampshire and Wyoming, who do not accept this form, and North Dakota, which does not have registration, this is the most common method.

Registration applications may be obtained from either the local election official, or through registration outreach programs sponsored by civil rights groups. It is also possible to register when applying for a driver’s license or identity card. In 1993, Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act (also known as the “Motor Voter Act”). The act is designed to enhance voting opportunities for every American by making it easier for all Americans to exercise their fundamental right to vote. “Motor Voter”-Registration connotes that voter registration must be available at the same time when people apply for a driver's license or its renewal. The act also secures voter registration opportunities when an individual applies for services, service renewal, or address change at a state institution.

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<sup>35</sup> See: 106<sup>th</sup> Congress 2<sup>nd</sup> Session: *Our American Government (2000 Edition)*, Washington D.C. [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=106\\_cong\\_documents&docid=f:hd216\\_106](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=106_cong_documents&docid=f:hd216_106).

<sup>36</sup> See: United States Election Assistance Commission, <http://www.eac.gov/docs/NVRA%20FINAL%20UPDATE%2003-13-06.pdf>.

Even though information on how to register and the registration form itself are also available in Spanish, many Latinos consider registration a challenge due to its complexity.

### **3.2. Structural Factors**

Structural factors indicate how political institutions function, thereby “focusing on access, an individual’s or group’s legal standing, rights and protections, and the formal requirements for participation.”<sup>37</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century southern states enacted poll tax laws, which often included a *grandfather clause* that allowed any adult male whose father or grandfather had voted to vote without paying the tax. These laws achieved the desired effect of disenfranchising African and Native Americans, as well as whites of non-British descent. With the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 imposition of such laws was declared unlawful.

Today it is rather a matter of access to information than legal restrictions. Political institutions such as civil rights and lobby groups play an important role in attracting new voters and serve as sources for information. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century several organizations have been founded in order to represent the interests of the growing Latino population. In 1929 the *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)* was formed, and in 1968, created the *Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)*. The *National Council of La Raza (NCLR)* was founded the same year, the *Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF)* followed in 1972.

Each aims to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health, and civil rights of the Hispanic population by serving as interfaces between the Latino population and elected officials in order to secure adequate representation. They also conduct applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in academic discourse.

Even though *MALDEF* and *PRLDEF* were founded as specific national-origin group organizations, over the years they changed to become representatives for all

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<sup>37</sup> García, John A.; 123.

Latinos in the United States. In chapter 5 these organizations will be examined more closely.

Economically, the *United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC)* advocates and promotes the success of Hispanic owned businesses. The *USHCC* aims to implement and strengthen national programs that support the economic development of Hispanic firms and provides technical assistance for Hispanic business associations and entrepreneurs. It also promotes international trade between Latino businesses in the United States and Latin America. Thus, the Latino population disposes of an economic institution tailor-made for their needs. Nevertheless, Latinos still may call upon the services of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Even think-tanks such as the *Pew Research Center* reacted to the ethnic changes in the United States and founded the *Pew Hispanic Center* in 2001.<sup>38</sup> Access to political information and issues is another very important structural factor to attract Latino votes, with TV as the most important medium. Two Spanish-language networks, *Univision* and *Telemundo*, are available throughout the country. Both networks are produced in the United States but their programs are exclusively in Spanish. Thus, Latinos, who do not speak English, may receive information on political, cultural, and economic issues in the United States. With these two networks the Latino population is not only visible but also disposes of a medium to reach almost every household throughout the country, thereby distributing its point of view.

Following television, Spanish-language newspapers are the most influential medium for Latinos to create political awareness. Six large daily newspapers are published in the United States. Two are published on the West Coast, two in the Southeast, and two in New York City. With a circulation of 120,000, the largest is *La Opinión*, which is released in Los Angeles. Like television, the newspapers need to address a highly heterogeneous community whose demographics changed significantly within the last twenty years. Nevertheless, the big daily papers such as *La Opinión* or *El Daily News*, which is a separately edited and sold bilingual product of the *New York Daily News*, dedicate sections to various national-origin groups in order to address their demands.

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<sup>38</sup> See: page 3.

Given the various Spanish-language interest and civil rights groups as well as the large media market, Latinos with low or non English proficiency are given the possibility to gather information on U.S. issues. Thus, they may follow recent developments and politics involving them into U.S. society.

### **3.3. Demographic Factors**

Even though the Latino population continues to grow faster than any other group in the United States, demographic growth does not necessarily result in broader political influence. In order to be able to increase Latino political participation on a nationwide level, which primarily means voting, it is necessary to understand “different dimensions of the Latino population: first, the total population of Latinos; second, the Latino voting-age population (those over eighteen); third, the *citizen* voting-age population; fourth, the *registered* voting-age population; and fifth, the turnout of Latino voters.”<sup>39</sup>

Of the 41.3 million Latinos in 2004 only 16 million were eligible to vote in the Presidential election. Eligibility in this case means that the 16 million were U.S. citizens above the age of eighteen years. Of the eligible voters, however, only 9.3 million were registered and 7.5 million actually voted.<sup>40</sup> The large difference between the size of the Latino population and of the Latino electorate is mainly the result of two factors: on the one hand, Latinos are overwhelmingly young. A quarter of the Latino Population is under the age of eighteen,<sup>41</sup> and thus not eligible to vote. On the other hand, immigrants make up more than half the voting-age population and only a small share of them have become citizens. In total, around 60 percent of Latinos are not eligible to vote.

Additionally, voter registration and turnout rates are historically low among Latino citizens in comparison to other ethnic and racial groups.<sup>42</sup> Low registration and turnout rates are mainly due to lower income attainment levels, higher rates of

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<sup>39</sup> Geron, 97.

<sup>40</sup> Suro, Roberto/Fry, Richard/Passel, Jeffrey: *Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, DC, 2005, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/48.pdf>; 2.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: *The Hispanic Population in the United States: 2004*, Table 1.2, [http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hispanic/ASEC2004/2004CPS\\_tab1.2a.html](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hispanic/ASEC2004/2004CPS_tab1.2a.html).

<sup>42</sup> Suro/Fry/Passel, 1.

poverty, and lower levels of education attainment. “Hispanics are more likely to be poor than other groups in American society,”<sup>43</sup> even though they comprise 13 percent of the U.S. labor force, the second-biggest ethnic group behind whites. As above-mentioned, Latinos, mostly recent immigrants, are mainly employed in low-skilled occupations where they earn less than the average worker.

Low education levels contribute to the problematic economic situation of many Latinos. “Thirty six percent of Hispanic workers lack a high school degree,” and only 12.5 received a College degree.<sup>44</sup> These numbers are mainly due to the large percentage of Mexican American immigrants who lack a sufficient level of English proficiency and are therefore relegated to work in low-skilled jobs.

The proportion of Latino adults who are U.S. citizens varies widely among Latino national-origin groups. Puerto Ricans are native-born U.S. citizens regardless of whether they were born on the island of Puerto Rico or the U.S. mainland. About 72 percent of Latinos of Cuban origin are U.S. citizens and only 58 percent of Mexican origin.<sup>45</sup> The low number of citizens with Mexican origin is due to the vast proportion of Mexican immigrants illegally crossing the border every year.

### **3.4. Situational factors**

Situational factors are considered to be “issues, controversies, charismatic candidates, and the like, which stir interest in specific elections, office races, and propositions.”<sup>46</sup> Decisive situational factors to increase Latino political awareness were Propositions 187 and 227 in California in the 1990’s.

On November 9, 1994, the California electorate passed Proposition 187 with 60 percent support, banning illegal immigrants from public education, welfare benefits, as well as other social services provided by the state. Proposition 187 was designed to restrict the inflow of Latino immigrants, mainly from Mexico, and to facilitate the deportation of illegal aliens to their home country. It also required that teachers, doctors, welfare workers, and police officers report to the

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<sup>43</sup> San Juan Cafferty, Pastora/ Engstrom, David W.: *Hispanics in the United States – An Agenda for the Twenty-First Century*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2000; xv.

<sup>44</sup> Pew Hispanic Center: *Hispanics-A people in Motion*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation: *The Latino Population and the Latino Electorate: The Numbers differ*, 2002, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/5.pdf>; 2.

<sup>46</sup> García, John A.; 123.

Office of Immigration and Naturalization Services any knowledge of illegal immigrants, so that they may be deported.

With Proposition 187 Latinos in general and Mexicans in particular were viewed

as the sources of a range of economic and social problems in the state. These factors included designating all immigrants as a burden, characterizing the ‘culprits’ as Latinos who negatively impact the economy, increasing social service budget expenditures and overcrowding health facilities.<sup>47</sup>

Then-governor Pete Wilson, a Republican, endorsed Proposition 187 in the midst of a reelection campaign. Wilson “needed an issue to promote his candidacy and propel himself into a run for President in 1996.”<sup>48</sup> This political strategy mobilized Latinos and Latino-based organizations, which organized voter registration campaigns and mass demonstrations. High School and middle school students began protesting throughout California. Labor unions, social service organizations, and elected officials also publicly demonstrated against the Proposition. Even the Mexican Consul of Los Angeles publicly articulated his concerns regarding this initiative.<sup>49</sup> Shortly before the November election, Latinos demonstrated in large numbers in downtown Los Angeles against the bill.

“The initiative split the electorate along partisan, racial, and ethnic lines. While the majority of non-Hispanic whites saw this as an honest attempt to deal with the illegal immigrant problem, most Latinos saw the initiative as ‘anti-Latino’<sup>50</sup>, and Governor Wilson as a demagogue.

**Table 3: Voter Support for Proposition 187**

Ethnicity/Race of Voters	Percent of Voters by Group	Percent Who Voted For Proposition 187	Percent Who Voted Against Proposition 187
White	81	63	37
Black	5	47	53
Latino	8	23	77
Asian	4	47	53

Source: Los Angeles Times exit poll, Nov. 10, 1994 in: Geron, Kim: *Latino Political Power*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 2005; 85.

<sup>47</sup> García, John A.; 125.

<sup>48</sup> Geron, 85.

<sup>49</sup> García, John A.; 125.

<sup>50</sup> Pantoja, Adrian A./ Ramirez, Ricardo/ Segura, Gary M.: *Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos*, Political Research Quarterly 54, No. 4 (December): 729-750, 2001; 730.

This clear ethnic and racial split may be explained by using the *Ethnic In-group Favoritism Hypothesis*.

From this perspective motivation to maintain a positive sense of social identity leads members of different racial or ethnic groups to view their own subculture in more favorable terms than other subcultures. Shared threat among group members can increase the salience of group identity, promote a more cohesive and homogenous view of the in-group, and thereby magnify this tendency.<sup>51</sup>

The hypothesis assumes that Latinos in general are more favorable towards Mexicans in California than non-Hispanic whites, which also has an impact on attitudes toward Proposition 187. “Perceptions of fairness are maximized when evaluation of a group is congruent with the valence of outcomes allocated to that group.”<sup>52</sup> Since Proposition 187 contains negative effects for Latinos, mainly Mexicans, it is more likely to be considered fair by non-Hispanic whites than Latinos. Thus, rejection of Proposition 187 is regarded to be more common among Latinos than non-Hispanic whites.

Cohesive opposition by the Latino community in California demonstrated a notable racial divide in regard to the rights of illegal immigrants, but also marked a turning point for Latino politics. Before Proposition 187, naturalization rates among Latinos were quite low. Many viewed their stay in the United States as temporary and believed they sought to return to their home country when they had earned enough money. After the California electorate accepted Proposition 187, however, naturalization applications sky rocked.

Between 1994 to 1997 citizenship applications to the Immigration and Naturalization Services grew from 540,000 to 1.4 million, and most were Latinos. Between 1990 and 1996, 876,000 Latinos naturalized, and their voting behavior has changed the nature of the Latino electorate. Because of Proposition 187’s presence on the ballot in 1994, first-generation immigrants in California were twice as likely to have voted as their counterparts in states that did not have a similar anti-immigrant measure on the ballot. Second-generation immigrants in California were 83 percent more likely to have voted as their peers elsewhere.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Lee, Yueh-Ting/ Ottati, Victor/Hussain, Imtaz: *Attitudes Toward “Illegal” Immigration into the United States: California Proposition 187*, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, Vol. 23 No. 4, (November): 430-443, 2001, <http://hjb.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/23/4/430>; 431.

<sup>52</sup> Lee et al., 432.

<sup>53</sup> Geron, 86.

Since 31 percent of Latinos in the United States live in California, the Proposition and its political concomitants directly affected one-third of the Latino community. With this experience in mind, especially newly naturalized Latinos used their recently acquired right to cast their vote. As a result, Proposition 187 became one of the most important situational factors for Latinos to vote.

Furthermore, Latino political awareness was increased by Proposition 227. It required all public school instruction to be conducted in English. This ballot initiative that restructured education for language minority students was approved by a majority of the electorate in the primary election of June 2, 1998. The new law became part of the Education Code in August, just before the beginning of the 1998-99 academic year. The State Department of Education created guidelines for the development of local "limited English proficient" (LEP) programs due to a high percentage (25 percent) of students who cannot understand English well enough to keep up in school.

Advocates of Proposition 227 said bilingual education has failed in actual practice and effectively turned out to be Spanish-only for most of California's non-English speaking students. Opponents of the proposition, however, argued that it puts limited English speaking children of all ages and languages into one classroom and that it takes away parents' rights to choose what is best for their children.

Like Proposition 187, Proposition 227 also served as a catalyst to increase Latino political involvement. Latino participation not only directly affected these initiatives; it also served as a fundamental foundation for growing political influence of Latinos on a statewide level in California. With the election of Cruz Bustamante as Lieutenant Governor in 2000 the number of Latinos in the state assembly and senate increased. Policy initiatives, particularly those negatively directed toward Latinos, forced Latino organizations and leaders to mobilize broader parts of their communities.

Besides demographic, structural, and situational factors, the perception of how valuable political participation appears is an important factor for voting. "The more worthwhile political activity appears to be and the more benefit is to be derived from encouraging it, the more participation one would expect."<sup>54</sup> Indicators for this thesis are the above-mentioned Propositions in California,

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<sup>54</sup> Uhlaner, 240.



which led to a noteworthy increase of Latino political participation. In addition, charismatic candidates and leaders may bias a possible voters view of the role of politics and convince the person to actively participate. When a candidate is able to make political action appear important to the interest of a group probability of active engagement increases. This, however, also depends partly on the relation between those interests and the political agenda. It also depends on the candidate's skill in either changing the "group's concerns or the political agenda so that they match more closely or at least are perceived to."<sup>55</sup>

As analyzed above, charismatic leaders are not the only factors influencing Latino political participation. Propositions 187 and 227 in California exemplified situational factors but obviously were not the only ones. Since they were widely recognized and caused media attention throughout the country both Propositions served as examples. Likewise, the organizations mentioned as important structural factors are the largest but do not display all of Latino interest and civil rights groups. Nevertheless, the aforementioned factors and examples are essential to analyze and understand Latino political engagement in the United States.

#### **4. The 2004 Presidential Election and Latino Party Affiliation**

Party affiliation has long been a strong indicator of political behavior in the United States. According to a 1999 survey, 48 percent of all Latinos identified themselves as Democrats, 23 percent as Independents, and only 19 percent as Republicans.<sup>56</sup> In the 2000 presidential election, 62 percent of the Latino vote went to Al Gore and only 35 percent to George W. Bush.<sup>57</sup> Regarding these figures party affiliation seems to suggest voting behavior of the Latino electorate. Recent figures of the 2004 presidential election, however, indicate that factors other than party affiliation influence Latino voting behavior.

In a 2004 survey, 45 percent of registered Latinos considered themselves to be Democrats, only 20 percent said they were Republicans and 21 percent

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<sup>55</sup> Uhlaner, 241.

<sup>56</sup> Washington Post/ Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University: *National Survey on Latinos in America, 2000*; <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/3023-index.cfm>.

<sup>57</sup> Geron, 105.

Independents.<sup>58</sup> Data of various exit polls concluded, however, that President Bush received around 40 percent of all Latino votes cast suggesting that party affiliation does not necessarily translate into voting behavior.<sup>59</sup> In 2000, the *National Council of La Raza* stated that Latino voters “look at individual candidates rather than party affiliations.”<sup>60</sup> This was primarily due to former President Clinton who managed to attract the vast majority of Latinos because of his charisma and the way he addressed their concerns. Although, issues are mostly decisive in converting voters from one party to another it is significant to understand “that in some cases, particularly with Latinos, it is the people, rather than the issues, that have been the axis of struggle in political party identification.”<sup>61</sup>

Besides charismatic candidates, factors such as acculturation<sup>62</sup> and traditionalism play a significant role for Latinos to engage with one party or the other. The longer Latino immigrants live in the United States and grow accustomed to the way of life “the more likely they are to identify as Democrats and to have strong party preferences.”<sup>63</sup>

In earlier research, different theories of party identification emerged, claiming that personal circumstances and education are fundamental in developing a certain political view. The *Early Socialization Model*, which regards party identification to be instilled “in early childhood, primarily from parental influence,”<sup>64</sup> is supplemented by the *Stability Model*, which claims that “individuals obtain a

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<sup>58</sup> Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*; 2.

<sup>59</sup> See: Geron, 106. The definite percentage of Latino votes cast for President Bush in the 2004 presidential election is subject of enduring controversy between different polling institutes. The National Election Pool (NEP) – a consortium of the TV networks CNN, ABC, NBC, FOX, CBS and the press agency AP – released in its exit poll that President Bush gained 44 percent of the Latino vote, which led to considerable disagreement among Latino and other institutions. See: NCLR: *How did Latinos Really Vote in 2004?* <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/download/28218>.

<sup>60</sup> Joge, Carmen T.: *The Latino Vote in the 1990's*, National Council of La Raza, 2000, <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/1395/>.

<sup>61</sup> Dutwin, David/ Brodie, Mollyann/ Herrmann, Melissa/ Levin, Rebecca: *Latinos and Political Party Affiliation*, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, Vol 27 No. 2, May 2005, 135-160; 136.

<sup>62</sup> “Acculturation occurs when different cultural groups intermingle with one another thereby leading to a change in the behaviors and/or attitudes of one or both groups.” (Dutwin et al., p. 140)

<sup>63</sup> Cain, Bruce E./ Kiewiet, D. Roderick/ Uhlaner, Carole J.: *The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans*, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35 No. 2, May 1991, 390-422; 390.

<sup>64</sup> Dutwin et al., 137.

party identification early in life and retain that identification for the long term.<sup>65</sup> The latter model assumes that, despite some exceptions, neither women nor men are likely to cross party lines to vote in presidential elections. Instead it argues that “party voting in the 1980s was every bit as common – or uncommon – as it had been in the 1950s. Voting in line with one’s party in 1984 and 1988 was as common as it had been in 1952 and 1956.”<sup>66</sup>

Besides these theories, there are three determinants of partisanship that exert a strong impact on voting patterns. These are party perception, policy preferences, and socio-economic forces.<sup>67</sup> To understand Latino voting behavior these factors need to be examined.

Party perception is the most important determinant, given the fact that only around 10 percent believe that the Republican Party shows concern for Latinos.<sup>68</sup> Approaches like those in California in the 1990’s are important to this perception. TV advertisements sponsored by Republican Governor Pete Wilson showing Mexicans streaming across the border, caused great unrest among Latinos. In contrast, in Florida, party perception caused strong support for Republicans by Cuban Americans. After fleeing the Castro Regime in the 1960s for political and economic reasons, most Cubans living in Florida perceived the Republican Party as more militant anti-communists than the Democrats. The failure of the Bay of Pigs Invasion of 1961 by exiled Cubans, after President Kennedy denied U.S. Air Force support confirmed this attitude. Younger Cubans, however, are entering the electorate with no direct experience of the 1959 Revolution and its consequences, and therefore are generally more responsive to policy voting.

Policy preference is the second critical determinant. Among Latinos Education (54 %) and Health Care and Medicare (51%) were ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> as extremely important in determining their vote for president in 2004.<sup>69</sup> Both issues are widely perceived to belong to the core of the Democratic Party, which advocates more supportive government policies than the Republicans. Research has shown that the Democratic Party attracts Latinos because they care about the expansion of

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<sup>65</sup> Dutwin et al., 137.

<sup>66</sup> Miller, Warren E.: *Party Identification, Realignment and Party Voting: Back to the Basics*, American Political Science Review, Vol. 85, No.2, June 1991, 557-568; 565.

<sup>67</sup> Coffin, Malcolm: *The Latino Vote: Shaping America’s Electoral Future*, The Political Quarterly, Vol. 74 Issue 2, April 2003, 214-222; 214.

<sup>68</sup> See: Coffin, 215.

<sup>69</sup> See: Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, chart 7.

health care and social insurance programs.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, Republicans tend to take a tough stand against immigration, especially illegal immigration, an important issue for Latinos.

As part of a comprehensive immigration reform, in 2004 President Bush proposed the creation of a new Temporary Worker Program. To match foreign workers with American employers for jobs that no American is willing to do, temporary workers will be able to register for legal status for a fixed time period and then be required to return home. Thus, the Republican Party addresses the needs of the majority of Latinos and may be perceived more positively. Critics, however, argue this to be a waste of time. Gimpel and Kaufmann allege that the Republicans' "time may be better spent on trying to close the gender gap, or attracting the loyalties of white working-class voters who have regularly shown an independent streak."<sup>71</sup>

In contrast to the first two determinants, Coffin views socio-economic forces as "not critical in determining Latino partisanship. In theory, poorer constituencies are thought more likely to align with the Democrats, given the perception of the party's support for disadvantaged groups and their association with more activist government programs."<sup>72</sup> In the case of Latino voters, however, this is only partially true. In 1999, 36 percent of Latinos who earned more than \$100,000 a year considered themselves to be Democrats, in comparison to only 26 percent, who said they would vote republican.<sup>73</sup> Other research agrees, "that income does not have a significant effect on Latino partisanship."<sup>74</sup> However, high-income Latinos tend to describe themselves significantly as Independents instead of Democrats.

Since party perception and policy preferences are influenced by short-term factors and are thus quite easy to change, Latino partisanship may be subject to change. This means that Democratic candidates cannot rely on unquestionable Latino support, but must work on attracting this important constituency.

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<sup>70</sup> Alvarez, R. Michael/ Garcia Bedolla, Lisa: *The Foundations of Latino Voter Participation: Evidence from the 2000 Election*, Society for Political Methodology, 2001, <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/workingpapers.php?year=2001>.

<sup>71</sup> Gimpel, James G./ Kaufmann, Karen: *Impossible Dream or Distant Reality – Republican Efforts to Attract Latino Voters*, Center for Immigration Studies Backgrounder, Washington D.C., 2001, <http://www.cis.org/articles/2001/back901.pdf>; 8.

<sup>72</sup> Coffin, 216.

<sup>73</sup> Washington Post/ Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University: *National Survey on Latinos in America*.

<sup>74</sup> Alvarez/ Garcia Bedolla, 16.

These approaches may explain party affiliation and voting behavior for Latinos in general, but do not consider differences between national-origin groups. Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans tend to both vote predominantly democratic, whereas most Cubans support the Republican Party. In July 2004, 50 percent of registered Puerto Ricans and 47 percent of Mexican Americans said they consider themselves as Democrats, whereas 52 percent of Cuban Americans regarded themselves as Republicans.<sup>75</sup>

With the growing Latino population and subsequent increase of potential voters, both parties acknowledged the necessity of courting Hispanics. Traditionally Latinos tended to support the Democratic Party by large margins. Democrats “used the past to bolster its present relationship with Latinos, asked Latinos to think about issues, imagined Latinos as a diverse group, and reminded Latinos – although subtly that it had their allegiances in the past. By doing so, it represents itself as thinking like Latinos [...].”<sup>76</sup>

Hence, during the last years presidential candidates of the Republican Party gained increasing numbers of Latino votes. The approximately 40 percent of George W. Bush in 2004 constitute the best result for a Republican nominee among Latinos so far. This can be explained with changing demography of Latinos, and with Bush’s and the Republicans’ exceptional effort to court Latinos. “The Republican Party attempted to envision a future with Latinos, to express values and emotions that they believe the Party and Latinos share, to articulate Latinos’ similarities with each other and with all Americans, and to proclaim that the party wants Latinos.”<sup>77</sup> By doing so, Republican strategists and campaign managers aimed to present their party as similar to Latinos and aware of its needs. It emphasizes its willingness to pay attention to issues important to Latinos and represents itself as interested in the minority.

Given the aforementioned reasons, an understanding of Latino party preference is in the interest of political leaders of both major parties. This is reflected by their recent campaigns for the presidential election in 2004. Both, President Bush and Senator Kerry, made unprecedented efforts to court the Latino electorate by running Spanish-language commercials and campaigning heavily in Latino

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<sup>75</sup> Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, chart 2.

<sup>76</sup> Connaughton, Stacey L.: *Inviting Latino Voters – Party Messages and Latino Party Identification*, Routledge, New York, 2005; 58.

<sup>77</sup> Connaughton, 58.

communities. In fact, each candidate even went so far as to promise to appoint Latinos to their cabinet to demonstrate their commitment to the minority.

Discourse concerning Latino policy positions is more up-to-date than ever. For years, most experts saw a decisive majority of Latinos voting democratic, since the Democrats have been more sensitive to Latino interests than Republicans. Within the last decade, however, this perception has changed as Republican candidates for state and national offices continue to receive increasing support from Latinos. This circumstance illustrates a larger Latino heterogeneity than many previously believed. Although the vast majority still identifies with and votes for the Democratic Party, there are variations within the Latino electorate.

#### **4.1. Latinos and the Republican Party**

George W. Bush attracted a substantial and increasing share of the Latino vote both in 2000 and 2004, compared to previous Republican presidential candidates. Latino support for Bush increased roughly 5 percent from the 2000 election, when he received 35 percent, to 2004, receiving around 40 percent. This remarkable increase can be partly explained by Bush's numerous efforts to court Latino voters. The Bush-Cheney re-election committee officially launched its Latino outreach efforts at an April 2004 rally in Orlando, Florida. By founding "Viva Bush Coalitions" in various states Bush's campaign team explicitly targeted the biggest minority in the country. "Viva Bush Coalitions" were tasked with recruiting and energizing Bush supporters across their respective state and serving as messengers of the President's agenda. John Sanchez, Regional Director of New Mexico's "Viva Bush Coalition", stated "we are going to work hard to make sure that Hispanics play a key role in delivering New Mexico to President Bush."<sup>78</sup> Advertisements on Spanish-language television were produced, as were voter registration drives orchestrated in New Mexico and California due to the large Latino population. On their Spanish-language website, Republicans posted an initiative called "Abriendo Caminos" (Forging New Paths), which served as the

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<sup>78</sup> ABC News: *Bush-Cheney '04 launches New Mexico's Viva Bush Coalition*, <http://www.kcautv.com/Global/story.asp?S=1835465>.

party's platform for publishing what they believed were President Bush's efforts to aid Latinos.

In June 2004 the Bush Administration unveiled rigorous measures intended to cut off the flow of cash to Cuba; a policy aimed mainly at conservative Cuban Americans in Florida, who constitute a core bloc of voters. Critics often portended that the money exile Cubans send home to their families indirectly helps the regime of Fidel Castro. Now, new restrictions limited trips to Havana and the flow of gifts and money send to relatives.

Yet, Cuban Americans broadly opposed this measure. "Fidel Castro is not a good man, but I get very, very offended when someone tells me how to engage with my family,"<sup>79</sup> an exile Cuban said, indicating what many thought. "Indeed, 64 percent of younger Cuban Americans – those who arrived after 1985 or were born in the U.S. – favor unrestricted travel between the U.S. and Cuba versus 32 percent of the old guard."<sup>80</sup>

Even though this measure did not bring the expected success others did and led to Bush victories in Democratic strongholds such as Cameron County in southern Texas, a largely Mexican American municipality. "Bush won it 50 to 49 percent. Al Gore had carried it by nine percentage points in 2000, and Clinton by 29 percentage points in 1996."<sup>81</sup> Part of Republicans' success in general and Bush's in particular may be attributed to cultural conservatism among Catholic Latinos. Abortion constituted a major issue for Latinos why President Bush's strong stand against abortion appealed to many Latinos, mirroring their family and social values. Thus, the Bush-Cheney reelection campaign managed to attract Latinos primarily on the basis of moral values and only circumstantially through political issues. Since Latino Republicans primarily identify as Americans maintaining traditional values of their home country this strategy was successful. Even though Latino Republicans are not

more likely to believe that Latinos share a single culture or be acculturated in American society, they have nevertheless accepted, or agree with, the quintessential conservative American identity by again strongly identifying themselves as Americans and as Americans who believe in the sanctity of traditional family values and mores.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Starr, Alexandra/ Magnusson, Paul: *It takes more than a little Espanol*, Business Week, Issue 3891, July 12, 2004, 58-59; 58.

<sup>80</sup> Starr/ Magnusson, 58.

<sup>81</sup> Judis, John B.: *Organic Chemistry*, The New Republic, Vol. 232 Issue 6, February 21, 2005; 34.

<sup>82</sup> Dutwin et al., 155.

George W. Bush's effort to attract support from Latinos dates back to his re-election campaign as governor of Texas in 1998. His then-strategist Lionel Sosa explained what Bush had said to him: "Bush told me three things, I want to be the first Republican candidate for governor to win the Hispanic vote. I want Hispanics to know that they are part of this state. And I want this to be a model for the presidential campaign."<sup>83</sup>

Bush started early to secure Latino support and often had to face opposition within his own party. Even though many Republicans, especially representatives of big businesses, endorse pro-immigration reforms, there is still remarkable resistance among party members. During the campaigns for the 2002 mid-term elections, several Republican candidates explicitly endorsed anti-immigration reforms aimed at illegal immigrants primarily from Mexico. Jon Kyl, a member of the Senate subcommittee on immigration, was a leading sponsor of the bill to ban racial quotas and preferences, and to develop federal control to track legal immigrants who outstay their visas. Elton Gallegly from California demanded a constitutional amendment to deny citizenship to the babies of illegal immigrants.<sup>84</sup>

Regarding this policy, portraying themselves as the party, who represents Latinos, seemed to be quite difficult for Republicans. Nevertheless, the Bush administration did manage to succeed among Latino voters in the elections of 2000 and especially 2004. Significant reasons for Bush's relative popularity among Latinos are shared values and mores such as family and religion. Family tends to have a much more important meaning among Latinos than for Anglo Americans. "From a values perspective, Latinos are also more traditionally religious and socially conservative than their White American counterparts."<sup>85</sup> This circumstance makes it important to analyze to what extent traditional Latino values have an impact on voting behavior.

Figures released after the election document the central role religion played as a motivator for Latinos to vote for President Bush. In 2000, Latino Protestants made up 25 percent of the Latino vote, whereas four years later their share was up to 32 percent. "In addition, this segment of the Latino electorate tilted more heavily for Bush in 2004, giving him 56 percent of their votes compared to 44 percent in

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<sup>83</sup> Coffin, 217.

<sup>84</sup> Coffin, 219.

<sup>85</sup> Dutwin et al., 140.



2000. Thus, Hispanic Protestants were both a growing and increasingly pro-Republican constituency between the two elections.”<sup>86</sup> Latino Catholics’ support for Bush remained the same as in 2000 with 33 percent of their votes for the Republican candidate. By highlighting religion’s central role for his policy, President Bush managed to convince a considerable share of the Latino electorate to vote for him. His “No Child Left Behind Act”<sup>87</sup> additionally stated that Latino issues are not only perceived by Republicans but also addressed .

The longer Latinos live in the United States and adapt specific habits and patterns of life, the more likely they will loosen their traditional values. This can be observed with second and third generation Latinos, who are predominantly English speaking rather than Spanish, as are first generation immigrants. Acculturation also leads to the breakdown of family ties and social values. Yet, it is the subject of much dispute whether these circumstances benefit the Republican or the Democratic Party. If Latinos trust government in general and to provide promised services in particular, they are more likely to identify as Republicans.<sup>88</sup>

#### **4.2. Latinos and the Democratic Party**

In contrast to the Republican Party, Democrats dispose of a long tradition with racial minorities. Ties between the Democratic Party and Latinos date back to 1960, with the organization of “Viva Kennedy Clubs”, which were originally partisan groups of Mexican Americans who supported the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency. Besides that, voter registration and the organization of Latino voters were major concerns of the “Viva Kennedy Clubs”. Latinos supported Kennedy because the Democratic National Convention of 1960 endorsed issues which were of great concern to them: civil rights, fair housing, school desegregation, equal opportunity, and voting rights. The Convention’s proposal included comprehensive legislation for migrant workers, the first such commitment by Democrats.

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<sup>86</sup> Suro et al., 14.

<sup>87</sup> This law aims at the advancement of the public school system in the United States and was enacted in 2002. It represents a part of President Bush’s agenda for education reform including higher expenditures for bilingual education. Although education is primarily a state and local responsibility, the federal government seeks to improve education especially of immigrant children.

<sup>88</sup> Dutwin et al., 154.

“The Viva Kennedy movement arose out of efforts by middle-class Mexican American leaders and organizations to gain more visible and effective participation in Democratic Party politics and that year’s presidential campaign.”<sup>89</sup> The Clubs were the first systematically organized effort to attract Latinos for the party and mainly spread throughout the southwest. They also united different national-origin groups as Latinos, thus presenting them as a significant constituency.

In spite of this long tradition, Democrats have to work hard to secure Latino votes in the future. Although Latinos have traditionally voted at a ratio of 2:1 for the Democratic Party, they also share plenty of the values advocated by Republicans, such as family, religion, and opposition to abortion. Bill Richardson, Democratic Governor of New Mexico and bilingual son of a Mexican mother, admitted, “the problem with Democrats is that they take our people for granted.”<sup>90</sup> In 2003, the Democratic party held its first debate of candidates for president in New Mexico, where one third of voters are Latinos, outlining the significance of the Latino vote to Democrats to counteract these tendencies. Holding its first primary debate in a heavily Latino populated state was supposed to serve as an indicator of actions to come. However, the Kerry campaign and the *Democratic National Committee (DNC)* lacked a national strategy for Latinos and neither spent enough money on advertising nor enough time campaigning in Hispanic communities. Furthermore Democrats failed to employ enough people to increase voter participation.

*Hispanic Outreach for the Democratic National Committee* followed a strategy, built around the theme “Juntos Podemos” (Together We Can). With this strategy, Democrats hoped to expand their traditional support from Latinos. It included holding leadership summits to reach out to Latino leaders. On a summit in May 2004 in Orlando, Florida, John Kerry came together with Democratic Latino elected officials and party activists. It was supposed to send out the message that Latinos back Kerry and strongly support his candidacy. But whereas the Republicans followed a national strategy with its “Viva Bush Coalitions”, designed from the example of the “Viva Kennedy Clubs”, John Kerry’s campaign team lacked such a tactic. The Kerry campaign mistakenly assumed Latinos would be part of their base vote, while this fast-growing community is

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<sup>89</sup> Geron, 41.

<sup>90</sup> The Economist: *Every four years, the Anglos return*, Vol. 372 Issue 8382, July 3, 2004, 24-25; 24.

increasingly a swing voter group. “The growing Latino electorate has demonstrated its willingness to cross party lines and vote more independently for candidates who appeal for reasons other than party affiliations.”<sup>91</sup>

Tony Welch, a spokesman for the *Democratic National Committee*, said the DNC had its most extensive outreach to Latinos in its history in 2004. Nevertheless, John Kerry only gained around 58 percent of their votes,<sup>92</sup> representing a 4 percent decrease in comparison to 2000. Welch added, “as we saw in the election results, Democrats are going to have to work even harder for Hispanic voters because they are a key part of any winning Democratic formula.”<sup>93</sup>

Independent groups such as the *New Democrat Network (NDN)*, *MoveOn.org*, *People for the American Way* and the *National Council of La Raza* that were critical of President George W. Bush’s policies, spent millions on Spanish-language TV and radio ads, in order to attract Latinos for the Democratic Party. *NDN* engaged significantly in this effort, launching Spanish-language television commercials in various states, featuring five Latino politicians explaining what it means to them to be Democratic leaders. The message that, under Democrats Latinos will “have a better life”, was supposed to rally Latinos behind Democrats. The commercials, a 30-second spot and a 60-second spot, featured testimonials by Representative Bob Menendez of New Jersey, Representative Loretta Sanchez of California, Raul Martinez, mayor of Hialeah, Florida, Adolfo Carrion, county executive of the Bronx borough in New York City, and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson.

The Democratic Party itself, though, failed to adequately address Latino voters and their concerns. Despite support of independent groups, Democrats did not succeed in increasing their lead among Latinos. This appears to be dwindling

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<sup>91</sup> NALEO Educational Fund: *National Town Halls – A report on issues concerning Latino voters in 2004*, [http://www.naleo.org/press\\_releases/Voces\\_Report/Analysis.pdf](http://www.naleo.org/press_releases/Voces_Report/Analysis.pdf); 17.

<sup>92</sup> As is the outcome of President Bush’s support among Latinos, numbers for John Kerry were subject of dispute as well. In the National Election Pool Exit Polls, which were published on November 3, Kerry received 53 percent of the Latino vote. The William C. Velásquez Institute, however, found in an national exit poll, conducted on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, that 65.4 percent of Latinos voted for Kerry. Eventually, on December 3<sup>rd</sup> NBC News, which belongs to the National Election Pool Consortium, admitted that it “overestimated President George W. Bush’s support among Latino voters, downwardly revising its estimated support for President Bush to 40 percent from 44 percent among Hispanics, and increasing challenger John Kerry’s support among Hispanics to 58 percent from 53 percent.” <http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/news/newsbyid.asp?id=19561>.

<sup>93</sup> Segal, Adam J.: *Courting the Hispanic Vote*, Hispanic Trends, August 2004, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/latinos/courting.htm>.

even more considering policy issues Latinos ranked extremely important. Education (54 %), Economy and Jobs and Health Care and Medicare (both 51 %) were ranked the first three priorities of Latinos in determining their vote for president in 2004.<sup>94</sup> All of these three issues are considered to be core competences of the Democratic Party, who stand for a larger government, providing the people with basic social services. Although John Kerry consistently promised during his campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$7 an hour and pledged to sign legislation to provide immigrants with a path to citizenship, he was not able to rally more Latinos behind him than Al Gore in 2000.

With the “No Child Left Behind Act” President Bush obviously managed to challenge a former field of Democratic domination. Republicans’ success among Latinos was significant enough to bring about a warning to Democratic Party officials by leaders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC)<sup>95</sup>, who said there has been a “continuing pattern of neglect” of the nation’s fastest-growing minority group by the party. “Republicans have been committed, methodical and are clearly winning the battle for the Hispanic voters. If Democrats do not undertake a major paradigm shift in how they deal with the Latino vote, the future of the party is in serious jeopardy,”<sup>96</sup> caucus leaders wrote.

This assessment corresponds with findings of the *National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO)* published in June 2004:

Traditionally, political observers and academics have characterized the Latino electorate as Democratic leaning. However, high rates of naturalization, the aging of Latino youth into adults, and the increase in outreach by Republicans in the Latino community, have made the Latino vote less predictable.<sup>97</sup>

Even though Latinos are recognized by both major parties as an important constituency, many voters feel that leading politicians do not adequately address their interests. “In Houston, voters expressed a level of frustration with campaigns, citing their perception that candidates see Latino voters as numbers

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<sup>94</sup> Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, chart 7.

<sup>95</sup> The CHC is an informal group of Latino members of Congress. It is dedicated to voicing and advancing issues affecting Latinos in the United States.

<sup>96</sup> Balz, Dan: *DNC Chief advises learning from GOP*, Washington Post, Saturday, December 11, 2004; A02.

<sup>97</sup> NALEO Educational Fund: *National Town Halls – A report on issues concerning Latino voters in 2004*; 17.

and not with a sincere interest in their progress.”<sup>98</sup> Both major parties need to work on this perception mediating Latinos that they are willing to struggle for their needs. Otherwise, it is likely that Latinos rather stay away from the polls instead of voting for either party.

## **5. Political Activity other than voting**

Besides understanding Latino participation in electoral politics, it is essential to examine Latino engagement in unconventional activities in order to allow for the high numbers of unregistered and illegal Latino immigrants living in the United States. For them, political acts other than voting represent the only possibilities to lobby for specific demands and change their present status, thus allowing for unrestricted engagement in U.S. politics.

“The history of such organizing dates back to when Mexicans were first denied access to political process as Anglos became the dominant population in the Southwest.”<sup>99</sup> In 1898, after the Mexican-American War, thousands of Mexicans became U.S. citizens but faced overt discrimination and prejudicial attitudes that resulted in the limitation of their civil rights and opportunities to work. To counter these developments, organizations were founded which, unfortunately, were too small and ineffective to secure Mexican Americans’ civil rights. With the establishment of the *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)* in 1929 Mexicans and other Latinos living in the United States received their first organization strong enough to advocate for their demands. Other Latino organizations were to follow, constituting a vital force for political education and advocating the interests of more than 40 million people living in the United States.

The *2004 National Survey of Latinos* conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation found that non-electoral political activity is mainly exercised by citizens who are registered. Latino non-citizens engage in

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<sup>98</sup> NALEO Educational Fund: *National Town Halls – A report on issues concerning Latino voters in 2004*; 16.

<sup>99</sup> Geron, 80.

significantly lower numbers than do citizens. There is also a difference between registered and non-registered Latinos.<sup>100</sup> Activities such as attending a public meeting or demonstration, contacting an elected official, money contributions to a political campaign, and attending a party meeting are the most common actions undertaken by Latinos.

Flamboyant in this context are low participation rates of non-citizen Latinos in comparison to their citizen and registered counterparts. As it is expected that non-electoral activities are exceedingly attractive to non-citizens since they represent the only way to engage politically, they are only marginally used. Latino non-citizens engage in much larger numbers in church or religious groups and school or tutoring programs,<sup>101</sup> thereby demonstrating a distinct concern for their immediate surrounding over local or state politics.

In their work *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* Verba et al. identify several political acts other than voting,

including working in and contributing to electoral campaigns and organizations; contacting government officials; attending protests, marches, or demonstrations; working informally with others to solve some community problem; serving without pay on local elected and appointed boards; being active politically through the intermediation of voluntary associations; and contributing money to political causes in response to mail solicitations.<sup>102</sup>

In the case of financial contributions federal law restrains non-citizen activities. “Recent congressional hearings pointed out that federal law prohibits campaign contributions by foreign nationals to federal campaigns, although permanent residents of the United States may contribute money.”<sup>103</sup> Admittedly, campaign contributions are of secondary importance in political acts by Latinos; therefore, this limitation only slightly affects them.

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<sup>100</sup> See: Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, chart 34.

<sup>101</sup> See: Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, chart 36.

<sup>102</sup> Verba, Sidney/ Lehman Schlozman, Kay/ Brady, Henry E.: *Voice and Equality – Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2001; 42.

<sup>103</sup> Leal, David L.: *Political Participation by Latino Non-Citizens in the United States*, British Journal of Political Sciences, Vol. 32, Issue 2, 2002, 353-370; 355.

**Table 4: Political Activities by Race (percent active)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Anglo Whites</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	<b>Latino Citizens</b>
Vote	73	65	41	52
Campaign Work	8	12	7	8
Campaign Contributions	25	22	11	12
Contact	37	24	14	17
Protest	5	9	4	4
Informal Community Activity	17	19	12	14
Board Membership	4	2	4	5
Affiliated with a Political Organization	52	38	24	27

Source: Verba, Sidney/Lehman Schlozman, Kay/Brady, Henry E.: *Voice and Equality - Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 3rd Ed., 2001; 233.

The aforementioned acts differ in a variety of ways, including requirements necessary to execute them. All of the aforementioned forms of political participation necessitate certain quantities of time, money, and skills.<sup>104</sup> For instance, serving without pay in an elected position or contributing money to a political campaign or organization requires a stable financial basis, which allows for this action. Attending marches or demonstrations and being active in an organization primarily requires time to do so, additionally presupposing the will to dedicate it for a cause, which seems to be worth it. In this context, required skills are primarily a distinct political consciousness and the intellectual ability to know how and where to be active. Any political participation – including voting – demands certain knowledge of the political system and possibilities for an individual to be active within this system.

In the case of non-citizen Latinos, this knowledge often is not given, accompanied by the lack of sufficient money and time resources. Many non-citizen Latinos are illegal immigrants and additionally lack sufficient English proficiency. Their time is confined due to long working days, which – in many cases – may last up to sixteen hours a day. Fear of being discovered as illegal immigrants when having contact with officials further restrains many from becoming politically active. Therefore, non-citizen Latinos only restrictively exercise participation other than voting, while registered Latinos may fully engage in non-electoral politics. In

<sup>104</sup> See: Verba et al., 44.

comparison to Anglo and African Americans, Latino participation in general is distinctively lower based upon voting turnout.

Despite arguments that unconventional politics is a tool for groups that want to challenge the political establishment and who feel the need to go beyond conventional politics to make their views known, Latinos were shown to be an exceptional case in that they are less likely to protest relative to their non-Latino counterparts.<sup>105</sup>

There are also differences in activity rates among Latinos: “Latinos of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent are more likely to protest than their Cuban counterparts.”<sup>106</sup> These findings are contradictory to theoretical approaches, which emphasize that individuals with a greater share of resources are more likely to be politically active. Since generally, Cubans dispose of a higher educational level and better economic conditions than do Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, the findings are astonishing. Yet, the following explanation seems to be plausible.

The ethnicity gap in protest may be attributed to the fact that, because of their different migration and settlement experiences, Cubans are better situated to take advantage of individual and community resources so that they need not resort to unconventional political tactics to bring about change. In other words, Cubans may not be as politically disenfranchised as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, making protest unnecessary.<sup>107</sup>

Disparities between Anglo Americans and Latinos also exist in organizational involvement. “[...] Latinos as a group, belong to fewer organizations than their Anglo counterparts. As a matter of fact, more than two out of five Latinos (42.9 percent) do not belong to any organization.”<sup>108</sup> However, in the history of Latino politics in the United States organizations and civil rights groups played a significant role in developing a common agenda and shaping Latino political consciousness.

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<sup>105</sup> Martinez, Lisa M.: *Yes We Can: Latino Participation in Unconventional Politics*, Social Forces, Vol. 84 No.1, September 2005, 135-155; 146.

<sup>106</sup> Martinez, 135.

<sup>107</sup> Martinez, 144.

<sup>108</sup> García, John A., 102.



### **5.1. Latino Civil Rights and Interest Groups**

Nongovernmental organizations provide non-citizens and recently arrived immigrants with the opportunity to exercise political activism, since they usually set aside citizenship requirements. Civil rights groups and church organizations provide Latinos with the possibility to act politically within the United States for the first time constituting a significant step in civic engagement for a segment of the immigrant population. Latinos are enabled to participate in community affairs and are familiarized with the U.S. political system. By this means undocumented immigrants may lose the fear of taking part in American society and their “role and value as contributing members of barrios and community and labor organizations”<sup>109</sup> is acknowledged.

As mentioned before, the *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)* was the first Latino organization dedicated to advancing the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, and civil rights of the Latino – then mostly Mexican – population in the United States. Today it is not only the oldest, but it is the biggest Latino organization in the United States, claiming to have approximately 115,000 members.<sup>110</sup> Starting out as a civil rights organization in 1929, today *LULAC* is influential in lobbying for Latino interests on a nationwide level, maintaining its national office in Washington D.C.

By holding town hall meetings throughout the country, *LULAC* strives for the inclusion of its base in recognizing the issues that are of most concern. In this way, it follows that *LULAC* addresses issues that are important to Latinos throughout the country. In 2005 *LULAC* heavily opposed plans to privatise parts of the social security system, since Latinos rely more heavily on the present system than any other group. In addition to economic issues, *LULAC* continuously holds voter registration drives and offers information and consultation regarding the U.S. political system, thus being an important actor in political education.

In 1968, the *Mexican American Legal Defence and Education Fund (MALDEF)* was established, having emerged from *LULAC* and the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*. Unlike the name suggests, this organization does not primarily target Mexican Americans but Latinos in general.

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<sup>109</sup> Geron, 100.

<sup>110</sup> See: *LULAC* Homepage: <http://www.lulac.org/about.html> .

In contrast to *LULAC*, *MALDEF* focuses on legal support for Latinos by employing attorneys who offer judicial advice and assistance. “*MALDEF* works to secure and safeguard the rights of Latinos by focusing on employment, education, immigrants’ rights, political access, and public resource equity.”<sup>111</sup>

*MALDEF*’s most significant accomplishment was the case *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982, which focused on a move by the Texas legislature in 1975 “to exclude the children of undocumented immigrants from public schools by amending the education code to restrict public schools to ‘citizens of the United States or legally admitted aliens’.”<sup>112</sup> *MALDEF* filed a lawsuit against this measure eventually being justified by the Supreme Court in 1982. This decision marked an important success for *MALDEF*, making it the most significant civil rights advocacy group for Latinos.

After September 11, 2001 and the resulting stricter laws and measures for the defense of terrorist attacks, *MALDEF* has mainly engaged in immigration law and civil liberty struggles. When President Bush proposed his immigration reform plan in 2003, *MALDEF* released information on the plan in order to provide Latinos with necessary background knowledge. After the 2004 presidential election *MALDEF* challenged “Arizona’s Proposition 200, a measure that would prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving government services. *MALDEF* won a temporary restraining order in federal court against the state,”<sup>113</sup> thus demonstrating once again its abilities regarding legal affairs and importance of the protection of Latino civil rights.

In addition to the aforementioned organizations, there are several more civil rights groups who are of great importance to Latino politics. The *National Council of La Raza (NCLR)*, founded in 1968, belongs to the largest and most influential civil rights groups in the United States. As a community based organization it oversees almost 300 local groups all over the country, fighting to give the average Latino a chance to voice his concerns. The *Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF)* was originally founded in 1972 as a civil rights group addressing specifically Puerto Rican issues. Over the years, however, it broadened its

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<sup>111</sup> Badillo, David A.: *MALDEF and the Evolution of Latino Civil Rights*, University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies Research Reports Vol. 2005/2, Notre Dame, 2005; 4.

<sup>112</sup> Badillo, 10.

<sup>113</sup> Badillo, 15.

approach to include all Latinos, thus becoming more influential. With increasing success in elections the *National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)* was founded in 1981. It strives to empower Latinos to actively engage in the political process and promote the integration of Latino immigrants. Furthermore, it provides assistance and training to elected officials.

There are many more civil rights organizations engaging in the empowerment of Latinos on local, state, and nationwide levels. They all serve as agents of Latino citizens as well as non-citizens. Due to many grassroots organizations, a base oriented policy agenda is possible. However, because of the multiplicity of agents, they mostly do not lobby concertedly, owing to the circumstance that Latino issues are exceedingly diverse. A Puerto Rican factory worker in New York City prioritizes differently than a Cuban businessman in Miami.

Despite these distinctions, Latino civil rights and interest groups represent a fundamental part of Latino political engagement in the United States. They offer the feasibility of political engagement for non-citizens who make up a large part of the Latino population. Moreover, they provide political education by offering courses and consulting services, and assist in legal questions like those in the case of *MALDEF*. They are much closer to the Latino population due to their organizational structure and their goals than are the two major parties, making them important mediators between the political establishment and Latinos. In light of these factors, Latino civil rights and interest groups are important in the making and execution of Latino politics.

## **II The diverse Minority**

What is widely called the Latino population is a part of American society consisting of more than twenty national-origin groups. A criterion for the subsumption under one label was the common Spanish language. Obviously, these nationalities differ, not only when considered in their home countries but also when they come to the United States. Perception by other U.S. citizens and opportunities for Latinos in the United States greatly depend on their nationality

and socioeconomic status. The latter may vary extensively among the three largest national-origin groups. When we talk about Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans one has to remember that these ethnic groups come from differential historical backgrounds and face unequal judicial barriers.

In this context, “an ethnic group is the reference group with whom people share a common history, physical features, and culture, and it is through interaction with reference group members that people identify themselves as members of a given group and incorporate an ethnic identity.”<sup>114</sup> But even within an ethnic group, differences exist that not only affect cultural behavior but political participation as well.

**Table 5: Socioeconomic Status of Latinos (percent)**

	White Non- Hispanic	Hispanic	Mexican	Puerto Rican	Cuban
Full-time year-round workers with annual earnings of \$35,000 or more	49.3	23.3	20.6	29.6	34.4
Below poverty line	7.7	22.8	24.1	25.8	17.3
With at least high school Education	88.4	57.0	51.0	64.3	73.0

Source: Therrien, Melissa/ Ramirez, Roberto R.: *Current Population Reports*, P20-535, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington D.C., 2000 in: Castro, Max J.: *The New Cuban Immigration in Context*, North-South Center University of Miami, Miami, No.58, 2002; 12.

In the following the three largest Latino ethnic groups’ specific historical backgrounds and experiences in the United States will be examined. By doing so their political participation and interests will be analyzed. Whereas in the first part of this work, the emphasis was laid on the Latino population as a whole, this part now goes into more detail and proves the assertion that Latinos constitute a highly diverse minority. The following case of the three national-origin groups was not only chosen because they constitute the biggest ethnicities among Latinos; they

<sup>114</sup> Flores Niemann, Yolanda/ Romero, Andrea J./ Arredondo, Jorge/ Rodriguez, Victor: *What does it mean to be ‘Mexican’? Social Construction of an Ethnic Identity*, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 21 No 1, February 1999, p. 47-60; 47.

also serve as good examples of the range of possibilities available to Latinos and their varying political intentions.

## **6. Mexican Americans**

Not only is the Mexican-origin population consistently the largest of the Latino subgroups, constituting 63 percent of the Latino population, it also disposes of the longest tradition on U.S. soil. Only Mexicans can claim to be both early settlers in the United States and the largest group of new arrivals. The history of Mexican-origin people in the territory what now belongs to the United States reaches back several hundred years. Mexican politics in the United States date back to 1821, when Mexico obtained independence from Spain. Back then Mexicans changed the governmental structure, established by the Spanish occupiers, and governed themselves in large parts of Texas and California. Accordingly, Mexicans may be regarded as pioneers of Latino politics in the United States and it is this specific role that shapes Mexican American political engagement.

### **6.1. Historical Background**

When the Mexican-American War was officially ended in 1848, Mexico lost almost half of its national territory to the United States. The *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*<sup>115</sup> provided that Mexico cede New Mexico and California and recognize the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas. The United States paid Mexico fifteen million dollars for California and New Mexico and assumed any claims of American citizens against Mexico.

The war with Mexico and the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* were logical consequences of what John L. O'Sullivan in 1839 and again in 1845 called "Manifest Destiny". He was convinced that the United States had "the right... to

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<sup>115</sup> On February 2, 1848 the Treaty was signed in Guadalupe Hidalgo, a city north of the capital where the Mexican government had fled as U.S. troops advanced. Its conditions called for Mexico to cede 55% of its territory (today Arizona, California, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado, Nevada and Utah) in exchange for fifteen million dollars in compensation for war-related damage to Mexican property.

overspread and to possess the whole of the [American] continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.”<sup>116</sup>

In adding Texas, California, and New Mexico to its territory, the United States absorbed the people living in these areas as well. “[T]he Mexicans who decided to remain in the United States became U.S. citizens, and those who held public office continued to serve where they were allowed to do so.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, Mexicans legally belong to United States society for more than 150 years, shaping its culture by adding their fashions and language. Since then Mexican Americans have participated, more or less, politically. Only members of the educated and landowner classes, however, held political positions and were running for and elected to office. Through adjustment to the U.S. government and alliances with those in power they were mostly able to secure their positions and influence.

In the territories of New Mexico and Arizona and the states of Texas, California, and Colorado there were numerous Mexican American elected officials, including city and county officials, district judges, and marshals, who accommodated themselves to the Anglo power structure. As the Anglo population grew with continued migration into the region, the Mexican community’s influence declined everywhere in the Southwest except for New Mexico.<sup>118</sup>

As long as Mexicans were the majority, they were able to influence local politics. Yet, the continued migration of Anglos caused increasing oppression of Mexican Americans in every day life, including political activity. In California and Texas, where there did not exist an upper class of Mexicans as was the case in New Mexico, the Spanish-speaking population struggled hard to make their voices heard. No Mexican held statewide office, instead they were active in local positions, mostly in areas where there still existed a majority of Mexicans.

The Mexican Revolution (1910-20) greatly increased the numbers of Mexicans in the United States, although it did not increase their political influence. Restrictive political practices such as the poll tax<sup>119</sup> limited Mexican American political participation, as did the fact that many did not hold U.S. citizenship. Until World

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<sup>116</sup> Maier, Pauline/ Roe Smith, Merritt/ Keyssar, Alexander/ Kevles, Daniel J.: *Inventing America - A History of the United States*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2003, 436.

<sup>117</sup> Geron, 20.

<sup>118</sup> Geron, 23.

<sup>119</sup> See Fn. 34, 17.

War II Mexican American politics occurred almost exclusively on a local level, manifesting in mutual aid associations and civil rights groups. With modified conditions after the war, Mexican American expectations and actions changed.

## **6.2. Mexican Politics and the Chicano Movement**

After World War II, Latino politics, especially Mexican American, proceeded in an entirely new context. Thousands of Mexican Americans had fought in the U.S. Army, contributing to the worldwide fight against fascism and for democracy. Fighting side by side with Anglo Americans overseas and being treated equally gave Mexican Americans hope for improved possibilities at home. Yet, not much changed for Mexican Americans after the war. They still faced the same obstacles as before, though now they were ready to actively fight for their rights. Due to their much more developed political consciousness, injustices and discrimination at home were responded to by the founding of civil rights organizations.

As millions of veterans returned home, many counted on the G.I. Bill of Rights, which guaranteed educational, medical, housing and other basic benefits. But these benefits were being denied in large part to Americans of Mexican descent and other Latinos throughout the United States. When Mexican Americans returned to the United States they worked in low-wage jobs and had to live in segregated housing. They predominantly populated the Southwest and Midwest, where their labor was required in the postwar economic boom. In 1948 a group of Mexican American war veterans founded the America G.I. Forum in order to enforce their rights. The Forum was dedicated to combat discrimination and improve the status of Mexican Americans in Texas.

“By 1949, the G.I. Forum had established over 100 forums in Texas. Although it was officially nonpartisan, the organization’s members were encouraged to participate in politics.”<sup>120</sup> During the 1950’s, when McCarthyism and the anticommunist hysteria intimidated many critics, the Forum used its military background and the veteran status of its members to struggle against charges that the organization would advocate leftist programs. The Forum’s efforts laid the foundation for what came to be known the *Chicano Movement* in the 1960s.

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<sup>120</sup> Geron, 37.

Efforts were intensified to elect Mexican Americans to city councils, including electoral campaigns catered to Latinos, especially Mexicans.

There were efforts that directly challenged the two-party political system and capitalism. There were numerous nontraditional organizing projects in various parts of the Southwest that changed the image of Mexican Americans in society and raised Chicanos' expectations about their right and ability to achieve sweeping political changes.<sup>121</sup>

Two efforts, one in the electoral arena, the other in the field of worker rights, became symbols for the Chicano Movement. Efforts to improve working conditions and wages for Latinos and the founding of a specific Latino party were the most significant pushes towards equal rights and the perception of Latinos as an important political constituency.

### **6.2.1. La Raza Unida Party**

The idea of founding a Chicano Party originated from a congress held by the *Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO)*, which was formed in 1967 by a group of student activists in San Antonio. *MAYO* worked on the improvement of political education for Chicanos and campaigned for Mexican American political representation in Texas. After several successful actions to reach their goals, organizers decided to found a Chicano party.

In 1970, establishing *La Raza Unida Party (LRUP)* was supposed to draw Latino, especially Chicano, voters from the two major parties and unite them in an independent third party, giving Latinos a voice nationwide. Led by José Angel Gutiérrez, some 300 Chicanos organized *La Raza Unida*. The party's name came from a phrase coined by Juan Nepomuceno Cortina in 1848, which meant "the United People". Raza in this context, however, has a slightly different denotation than the English word "race".

What the Chicanos imagined was an amalgam of Spanish, Aztec, and other cultural strains that have gone into the making of people like them, reflected more in their spirits or ways of thinking than in their genes. A person did not

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<sup>121</sup> Geron, 43.



have to be brown-skinned to be part of the *raza* as long as his or her mentality was Chicano.<sup>122</sup>

First, the party had to campaign on the local level and won a majority of the school board and city council of Crystal City, Texas, where Anglos were a minority but had always dominated these institutions. Besides Crystal City *La Raza Unida Party* managed to win seats of county and school boards in other towns of Texas and other states. In California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona committees were formed, providing for a strong basis for *LRUP* in the Southwest. However,

efforts to build it into a significant political force outside the Río Grande Valley, especially in the more urban areas of California, made little headway. Although campaigning strenuously for its candidate for the California state assembly, the party got only 7 percent of the vote in its best year, 1971.<sup>123</sup>

The party did not manage to grow significantly for the most part because it competed with the better equipped and organized Democratic Party for voters and fought internal battles over the strategies and tactics for building the movement. Although *LRUP* was founded as a political party, it was not adequately organized or funded to challenge the two party system. In Texas and some areas of California it functioned as a party, nominating candidates for elective office. In other parts of the Southwest, however, it was more like a civil rights group, mobilizing Chicanos to register and vote. Besides the lack of unified political strategy, other internal factors contributed to the failure of *LRUP*.

The main reason was division of support for *LRUP*. Some leaders followed a radical strategy whereby Anglo Americans were to be considered an enemy who had to be fought. This faction consisted of some radicals and was widely supported by younger members. Older generations, in contrast, generally supported a more liberal strategy, mobilizing as many people as possible for their cause, in order to increase their influence as a political party.

Restrictive electoral structures in the United States, such as the winner-takes-it-all system<sup>124</sup>, additionally contributed to *LRUP*'s eventual demise in 1981. *La Raza Unida* did not manage to raise sufficient money to fund campaigns and send its

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<sup>122</sup> Fox, 122.

<sup>123</sup> Fox, 122.

<sup>124</sup> See Fn. 15, 9.

political message out to the people. The Democratic Party, from which they mainly sought to attract voters, was far better equipped and structured. Despite short-lived political success, *LRUP* “set the foundation for subsequent political efforts and organizational development”<sup>125</sup> among Mexican Americans in particular and Latinos in general. “The Raza Unida Party inspired a whole generation of Mexican Americans to participate in the electoral process on a scale never before attempted.”<sup>126</sup>

Besides efforts to build a strong political party Mexican Americans were also active outside the electoral arena. The 1960’s marked a turning point in Mexican American politics generating charismatic leaders such as César Chávez, who fought for the poorest of Mexican workers.

### **6.2.2. César Chávez and the United Farm Workers Union**

César Chávez was one of many thousand Mexican Americans who fought in the U.S. Army during World War II. After his return he became a farm worker, picking fruits and vegetables and began to engage with the *Community Service Organization (CSO)*, a prominent Latino civil rights group. In 1962, Chávez left *CSO* to found the labor union *National Farm Workers Association (NFA)*. He was “one of the first to recognize the new opportunities and limits and to craft new strategies to seize them.”<sup>127</sup> Although Chávez was aware of earlier failed attempts to found labor organizations, he organized the poorest Mexican-American workers. The *NFA* was soon renamed in *United Farm Workers Union (UFW)*.

In 1965, the organization called its first strike, in an effort to improve working conditions and labor rights of Filipino field workers in California. For several reasons, *La Huelga*<sup>128</sup>, the organization’s first strike, was fundamentally different from previous ones.

First, it was not directed at a single employer or set of demands, hence it never really ended. “*La Huelga* was more of a prolonged social movement to change a

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<sup>125</sup> García, John A., 55.

<sup>126</sup> García, Ignacio M.: *United we Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1989, in: Geron, Kim; 231.

<sup>127</sup> Fox, 116.

<sup>128</sup> La huelga (span.) = strike

whole series of conditions, and then to change some more.”<sup>129</sup> Secondly, Chávez insisted on nonviolence, thus breaking with Mexican American labor tradition. He urged the workers to stay calm and under no circumstance to fight back, even when they were physically attacked by growers’ agents or the growers themselves. Attacks occurred quite frequently, in attempts to intimidate the workers and break their will to organize.

Chávez also was able to touch the consciousness of the American public. He did so by involving as many people as possible into the union’s project, including students, priests, and ministers. By doing so the whole country was acquainted with Chávez’s cause and a plurality supported him. All of the above-mentioned measures worked together to secure public support.

Their nonviolence made the farm workers appear more sympathetic, if not simply pathetic, and the aggressions of growers and local police especially grotesque. It also made the movement seem a close parallel to that section of the black civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which had already won support from liberal white Americans across the country.<sup>130</sup>

In the course of the strike, the union convinced several growers in California to sign contracts with their employers and forced the state of California to pass the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA). The act secured farm workers in California the same rights industrial workers enjoyed nationwide under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA)<sup>131</sup>. Previously, growers had pressured the state government to exclude agricultural workers from the NLRA, thus denying workers any guarantees of the right to organize or to strike.

In 1968, backed by his previous success, Chávez launched a nationwide grape boycott, demanding consumers not to buy any grapes from California until the workers were adequately paid and their working conditions improved. Again, the union’s cause was widely recognized and received strong support all over the country. “Chávez viewed the struggle – which he and his followers called *La*

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<sup>129</sup> Fox, 117.

<sup>130</sup> Fox, 118.

<sup>131</sup> In 1935, for the first time in U.S. History, the NLRA guaranteed workers the right to join unions, negotiate a union contract and prohibited employers to adopt unfair labor practices that might discourage membership in a labor organization. To safeguard these rights the act created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), that conducts elections for union representation, and investigates charges of unfair labor practices by employers.

*causa*, ‘the cause’ – as more than a labor dispute. It was a statement of the equal worth of Hispanics as human beings.”<sup>132</sup>

The achievements of *UFW* and Chávez exceeded the mere improvement of working conditions and labor rights originally sought. It marked the beginning of political awareness of Mexican Americans as a political entity in the postwar United States.

From this point forward, in part because of César Chávez’s strategic discoveries and in larger part because of the structural changes that had made his movement possible, the history of Mexican American political consciousness ceases to be a separate story from that of other protesting groups in the United States. And it was about this time, the late 1960s and afterward, that Mexican Americans began to get interested in the histories not only of their own ancestors but of the other Spanish-speaking groups as well, because in order to take maximum advantage of the new economic, political, and technological conditions in this country, they were going to have to work together.<sup>133</sup>

The movement established effective coalitions with other sectors of society generating a public awareness that went far beyond one’s own industrial or ethnic group. Additionally, it served as a role model for the Mexican American and other ethnic communities in actively engaging in U.S. politics.

### **6.3. In-Group Conflict**

With regard to the long history of Mexicans in the United States, this national-origin group is probably the most diverse among Latinos. Some have lived on U.S. soil for generations, tracing their roots back to the 1820s when large parts of Texas and California still belonged to Mexico. Others, in turn, are recent immigrants, crossing the U.S.–Mexican border legally or illegally to find work in the wealthier north.

Therefore, the term *Mexican American* might not be adequate to define people of Mexican ancestry living in the United States. In fact, there are a variety of terms used either by Mexicans themselves or other parts of society. The original Mexican settlers in California are known as *Californios*, and some still use this

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<sup>132</sup> García, John A.; 95.

<sup>133</sup> Fox, 119.

term. They “governed what was called Alta California before it became a state [of the United States] in 1850.”<sup>134</sup> The term *Tejano* originates from Mexicans who lived in Texas before it became part of the United States. By using this label Mexicans proudly refer to the fact that they lived in the territory before Anglo Americans settled there.

*Chicano* was an epithet that Mexican Americans had long used among themselves, at least since the 1920s. It may have started out as an abbreviation of *mexicano*, which some Mexicans pronounced as ‘meh-shi-ca-no’. Or it may have started as a playful extension of *chico*, colloquial for ‘boy’ or ‘buddy’.<sup>135</sup>

These days, *Chicano* is primarily used by the second generation or those who are from several generations of family born in the United States, to emphasize their strong ethnic consciousness of being Mexican American. *Chicanos* are proud of their heritage, but also assimilate into American society and adapt to the country’s culture.

Finally, government authorities, academic literature or other races generally use the terms *Mexican* and *Mexican American*. However, Mexican Americans use this term as well, to concurrently emphasize their heritage and pride of being American. After considering this variety of terms for people tracing their roots to Mexico, the diversity of this national-origin group becomes apparent.

Due to this heterogeneity, it may be assumed that it is rather unlikely that there are many issues the Mexican American population agrees on. In fact, the “Emergency Labor Program” eventually known as the “Bracero Program”<sup>136</sup> became an issue where diverse Mexican interests collided. Under pressure from large agricultural farmers, who lacked workers during World War II, the U.S. government started this official program in 1942, legally sanctioning seasonal workers from Mexico in the United States. “As many as 100,000 Mexicans a year were soon being contracted to work here.”<sup>137</sup> Until its end in 1964, millions of migrants came to the United States for seasonal work and each year many found a way to stay in the country. “Not that most Americans cared. Until the 1960s, few paid attention to the human traffic along the border, least of all the inhabitants of

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<sup>134</sup> Geron, 20.

<sup>135</sup> Fox, 120.

<sup>136</sup> el bracero (span.) = guest/ farm worker.

<sup>137</sup> Gonzalez, Juan: *Harvest of Empire*, Penguin Books, New York, 2001; 103.

the area, for whom the international demarcation line was more a fantasy of the politicians in Washington than an everyday reality.”<sup>138</sup> New farming techniques and growing opposition by organized labor and Chicano groups ended the program. Especially the *United Farm Workers Union (UFW)* with its founder and leader César Chávez successfully protested against the exploitation and discrimination of Mexican farm workers.

From the perspective of farm workers already living in the United States the program undercut their wages and weakened working conditions. Mexicans crossing the border, on the other hand, regarded this as an opportunity to earn good money to send home. They were able to earn a multiple amount of what they would earn in Mexico and additionally saw a chance to remain in the United States indefinitely.

The “Bracero Program” served as one catalyst for inner-Mexican American disputes, however, it was not the only one. Latino interest groups, such as *LULAC* and the *American G.I. Forum*, long had lobbied for restricted immigration from Mexico, claiming that the mass of new arrivals would “undermine the social and economic position of Mexican Americans struggling into the American mainstream.”<sup>139</sup>

Today’s Latino leaders take a more favorable stand towards immigration, although, the Mexican American population is still somewhat divided. Conflict potential exists between Mexicans, recent immigrants, and Chicanos. In a survey on Mexican identity, Mexicans reported “some Chicanas/Chicanos call them ‘wetbacks’<sup>140</sup>, pretend not to speak or understand Spanish, and generally treat them worse than do Anglo-Americans in many situations.”<sup>141</sup> By virtue of the discrimination “from our own kind” Mexicans were stunned, not understanding how such differences can occur among the same ethnicity.

Nevertheless, reasons for this behavior are quite understandable. As more and more Mexican immigrants poured into the United States, they competed with other Latinos for resources such as jobs. Especially the low-skilled sector was, and still is, heavily contested by Latinos due to low education levels and language

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<sup>138</sup> Gonzalez, 103.

<sup>139</sup> Skerry, Peter: *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, The Free Press, New York, 1993; 338.

<sup>140</sup> Operation Wetback denominates the deportation of more than 1 million Mexicans, including U.S. citizens, to Mexico in 1954. This publicity effective action, enforced by the Federal Government, was a result of public protest against the Bracero Program.

<sup>141</sup> Niemann et al., 55.

problems. “Chicanas/Chicanos often express the belief that Mexican immigrants are keeping them from advancing, and they often blame negative stereotypes on these immigrants.”<sup>142</sup> Besides any stereotypes and negative images of immigrants, facts show that there are still differences in income between the native- and foreign-born.

A study found that Mexican Immigrants earn less than their counterparts who were born in the United States.<sup>143</sup> This is mainly due to work experience the native-born have obtained in the United States. Even though “education, occupation, and metropolitan location have a large and significant positive effect on the earnings of native-born Mexican men [...] they do not provide any particular advantage for immigrants.”<sup>144</sup> In their case it is the work experience they gained in the United States widely leaving aside other factors.

Considering these circumstances, the hard-fought contest among native and foreign-born Mexicans for the improvement of their economic situation seems to be understandable. Ethnic ties play a subordinate role when it comes to securing not only their personal but also societal standing. Attitudes towards recent immigrants, however, not only changed among Latino leaders but the Latino population as a whole. In 2004, 60 percent of Latinos believed that undocumented or illegal immigrants would help the economy and 46 percent thought that the U.S. government should allow the same number of Latino immigrants in the future.<sup>145</sup>

#### **6.4. Mexican Americans Today**

Today, Mexican Americans take a more unified stand than they did before and shortly after the war, in order to successfully fight for their interests. Yet, they are still far from acting as a corporate entity. Over the last years four issues became of particular interest for Mexican Americans reflecting recent legislation and their life situation in the United States. Citizenship status, immigration, social security

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<sup>142</sup> Niemann et al., 57.

<sup>143</sup> Padilla, Yolanda C./ Glick, Jennifer E.: *Variations in the Economic Integration of Immigrant and U.S.-Born Mexicans*, Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 22 No. 2, May 2000, 179-193.

<sup>144</sup> Padilla/ Glick, 190.

<sup>145</sup> Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation 2004, chart 13.

benefits, and remittances are of major concern and notably affect them in everyday life.

Mexican American registered voters make up 60 percent of the Latino electorate<sup>146</sup>, constituting a significant part of the electorate as a whole. Even though it is estimated that every fourth Mexican American is an illegal immigrant,<sup>147</sup> thus not holding U.S. citizenship and the right to vote, political awareness and participation are high. In areas of heavy Mexican American concentration, they almost cohesively support Latino candidates or push for legal and societal improvements. In Los Angeles, Mexican American Antonio R. Villaraigosa was elected mayor in 2005, backed by strong support of Mexican Americans. To do so, however, it is necessary to hold U.S. citizenship. Though, the vast majority of Mexican immigrants between the 1960s and 1980s did not bother applying for U.S. citizenship, this now has changed. Due to more restrictive labor conditions and immigration laws, the majority of Mexican immigrants now are poised to seek citizenship.

Due to the high percentage of legal and illegal immigrants coming every year from Mexico to the United States, immigration is one of the most important issues to Mexican Americans. Hundreds of thousands cross the border every year and most find a job in a Mexican dominated neighborhood. The numbers increased dramatically in the past decades. “Between 1960 and 1970, [the Mexican] population grew by only 32 percent, but between 1970 and 1980 it nearly tripled in size, experiencing a 189 percent increase. Between 1980 and 1990, the population more than doubled, increasing by 114 percent.”<sup>148</sup>

Even more try to enter the United States but get caught by government authorities and are sent back. Still, many Mexicans try repeatedly to immigrate until they manage to cross the border successfully. Hence, Mexican Americans closely follow government policies regarding immigration and consistently push for more liberal laws.

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<sup>146</sup> Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Roughly 63 % of the 41 million Latinos currently living in the United States are of Mexican descent, which makes them 26 million. Since it is estimated that six million illegal Mexicans are residing in the U.S. about every fourth Mexican American is an illegal immigrant. See: Hispanics – A people in Motion, 2.

<sup>148</sup> Grieco, Elizabeth M.: *The Foreign-Born from Mexico in the United States: 1960 to 2000*, in: Strum, Philippa / Selee, Andrew (ed.): *The Hispanic Challenge? What we know about Latino Immigration*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2004; 10.



Due to the high percentage of recent immigrants, Mexican Americans are also concerned with social security legislation. As many work blue-collar jobs, government funded social security benefits are vital to many. President Bush's recent announcement to cut social security benefits to offset military spending caused strong criticism by Mexican American political leaders. In his speech concerning the budget for fiscal year 2007, President Bush proclaimed an increase of defense spending by nearly 7 percent and at the same time the cutting of "entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid."<sup>149</sup> Reductions in benefits provided by the government will hurt a large segment of the Mexican American population and will in all likelihood lead to protests.

One of the goals of finding work in the United States is to send money home in order to support relatives. Remittances sent from Mexican Americans to their families total more than 10 billion a year,<sup>150</sup> constituting a significant part of Mexico's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Remittances are flowing to all sectors of Mexican society and to virtually every region making 18 percent of the adult population receivers of such monetary help.<sup>151</sup> As a consequence, Mexican Americans closely follow government policy to promote competition in financial services, especially remittances, to increase the amount of money that reaches the recipient families and to improve payment systems that guarantee fast and secure transactions.

Although their long history on U.S. soil and recent immigration figures make Mexican Americans not only the largest national-origin group of the Latino population but the most diverse as well there are analogies. The four mentioned issues citizenship status, immigration, social security benefits, and remittances are important to the vast majority. As analyzed above, the legacy of Mexican American politics reaches back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, providing this group with a unique background not only among Latinos, but among other minorities as well. Specific history of Mexican American politics and

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<sup>149</sup> White House, The: *Highlights of the President's FY2007 Budget*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/budget/2007/>.

<sup>150</sup> Krauze, Enrique: *You and Us*, in: Selee, Andrew (ed.): *Perceptions and Misconceptions in U.S.-Mexico Relations*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2004; 9.

<sup>151</sup> Suro, Roberto: *Remittance Senders and Receivers: Tracking the Transnational Channels*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington D.C., 2003, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/23.pdf>; 8.

experiences during World War II led to the Chicano Movement, the Latino version of the Civil Rights Movement making Mexican Americans the forerunners of Latino politics as it is exercised today.

## 7. Cuban Americans

Cuban Americans form the third largest Latino national-origin group after Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Although only 1.3 million people trace their roots to Cuba, this ethnicity carries extensive political influence, due to its heavy concentration in Florida and New Jersey. The state of Florida is home to more than 800,000 Cuban Americans, whereas 650,000 live in the area of Miami, turning the city into the second biggest “Cuban” city after Havana.<sup>152</sup> The fact that Cubans are thus heavily concentrated, accounts for their visibility and political clout. The state of Florida, with its 25 Electoral College votes, has long been a so-called *swing state*<sup>153</sup> providing Cuban Americans with an exceptional strong political sway on state and national politics.

No politician can afford to set aside the votes and financial contributions in a state like Florida, whose electorate is almost evenly divided between the two major parties. By virtue of this exposed situation, Cuban American lobby groups and politicians are able to enforce their demands, even if a majority of the U.S. population rejects them. This is the case with the embargo towards Cuba, where 70 percent of U.S. citizens support abolition.<sup>154</sup> Political success of Cuban Americans is predominantly based on goal-oriented actions. The *Cuban American National Foundation (CANF)* and its long-time leader Jorge Mas Canosa are to be mentioned in this context due to their exceptional influence.

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<sup>152</sup> Boswell, Thomas D.: *A Demographic Profile of Cuban Americans*, The Cuban American National Council, Inc., Miami, 2002; 25.

<sup>153</sup> A *swing state* in U.S. presidential elections is a state in which it is not foreseeable which candidate disposes of strong enough support, in order to win the state's electoral college votes. Therefore, the major candidates heavily contest this state.

<sup>154</sup> Artens, Hannes: *Wind of Change in Miami und bald auch in Washington?*, Institut für Iberoamerika-Kunde, Brennpunkt Lateinamerika, Nr. 16-04, 16.August 2004, Hamburg; 174.

Cuban Americans vary sharply from Mexican Americans and other Latino national-origin groups, primarily by virtue of their self-definition as an exile—rather than an immigrant community. Based on this perception, Cuban Americans developed a distinctive political culture fundamentally different from that of other Latinos. “This political culture is stereotypically defined by its right-wing, anti-Castro politics and automatic antipathy toward all things ‘leftist.’”<sup>155</sup> Unlike the vast majority of other Latino national-origin groups, they support the Republican Party in large numbers. More than half of registered voters (52%) who trace their origins to Cuba considered themselves to be Republicans, whereas Mexicans (18%) and Puerto Ricans (17%) vote Republican at a much smaller rate.<sup>156</sup>

Voter registration and voting rates are much higher among Cuban Americans in comparison to other Latinos, possibly due to help by U.S. politics. Unlike Mexican, or any other immigrants, Cubans were not only welcomed but even encouraged to come to the United States. Between 1959 and 1980 “a de facto immigration policy of *open arms* was driven by the Cold War, active U.S. opposition to Fidel Castro’s rule, and humanitarian concerns.”<sup>157</sup> Thus, consecutive U.S. administrations regarded Cuban immigrants as “propaganda tools” during most of the period of the Cold War, supporting emigration from Cuba.

Admittedly, most Cubans coming to the United States were eager to return to their country as soon as Fidel Castro was overthrown. Thus, political objectives of Cuban exiles and U.S. governments corresponded, laying the basis for exceptional political influence of the Cuban American community. Considering the political agenda, Cuban Americans constituted a largely monolithic bloc for several decades. Within the last decade, however, they have increasingly turned into a multi-faceted population. The *Cuban Cause*, ending Castro’s dictatorship, did not remain a top priority and was replaced by domestic (U.S.) issues, signaling a turn in Cuban American cognition.

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<sup>155</sup> Chun, Sung-Chang/ Grenier, Guillermo: *Anti-Castro Political Ideology among Cuban Americans in the Miami Area: Cohort and Generational Differences*, Institute for Latino Studies University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, 2004, Vol. 2, No. 1; <http://www.nd.edu/~latino/research/pubs/Grenchun.pdf>; 1.

<sup>156</sup> Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation (2004), 3.

<sup>157</sup> Castro, Max J.: *The New Cuban Immigration in Context*, North-South Center University of Miami, Miami, No. 58, 2002; 5.

Fundamental to the understanding of the development of Cuban American politics is the historical background of U.S.-Cuban relations and the aftermath of the Cuban revolution.

### **7.1. Historical Background**

Cuban immigration to the United States did not, as is widely assumed, begin after Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959, but instead, more than a century earlier. "The Cuban presence in Florida dates back to the 1830s when Cuban cigar manufacturers, trying to avoid high U.S. tariffs, relocated their operations in Key West."<sup>158</sup> Cigar manufacturing was big business in Cuba and the United States was its most important market. In the 1850s and 1860s, Cuban immigration increased even further. "When the tariffs threatened to put small manufacturers out of business and after the failure of a revolt against Spain in 1868, some of the smart ones moved their production to U.S. soil to avoid the tariffs and took their Cuban workers with them."<sup>159</sup> Besides cigar manufacturers, professionals migrated to the United States, albeit in small numbers. Most Cubans settled in the areas of Key West, Florida and New York City.

The war against Spain in 1898 caused a second wave of migrants to the United States, however, a small one. Over the years, Cuban immigrants did not turn out in significant numbers within the United States. They were by far outnumbered by Mexican immigrants. Massive immigration of Cubans was to start in 1959, shortly after Fidel Castro and his *26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement* successfully overthrew Fulgencio Batista and declared a new political system on the island.

After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, four waves of immigrants arrived in the United States, each having a distinct historical motivation.<sup>160</sup> Between 1959 and 1964 around 270,000 Cubans entered the United States. They were mostly supporters of the Batista regime, as well as members of Cuba's upper class. "The latter, often implicated in Batista's shady deals even if they had not been political supporters, were frightened or enraged by the new regime's assaults on property

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<sup>158</sup> Castro, 3.

<sup>159</sup> Fox, 84.

<sup>160</sup> See: Chun/ Grenier, 2.

(urban reform, which cut rents in half, and agrarian reform, which expropriated land) and by its bad manners.”<sup>161</sup>

Yet, the first Cuban immigrants were not a homogenous group. Disillusioned members of Castro’s regime entered the United States, as did “almost all of the Cuban Jews; by 1983, no more than 750 Jews were left in Cuba out of nearly 15,000 Jews who had lived on the island before the revolution.”<sup>162</sup>

Between 1965 and 1973 the so-called *freedom flights* brought around 300,000 Cubans to the United States. The *freedom flights* were the result of a massive visa enactment for Cubans by the United States government. It paid for and organized the emigration from Cuba of more than 250,000 people. During these years, primarily technical workers arrived with a lower economic standing, thus sharply differing from the first immigrants. “Only 22 percent of the second wave have household incomes of \$50,000 or above, compared to 44 percent of 1959-64 cohort households.”<sup>163</sup> Among them were many liberals and socialists who had fought against the Batista regime in the underground but rejected Castro’s policy.

Miami became the center of Cuban immigration, undergoing a substantial change. Cuban immigrants created their own society, including Cuban newspapers, radio, and even television. Cuban businesses opened, selling products from the island and offering service in Spanish. The second wave of Cuban immigrants “benefited, however, from the work of previous middle- and upper-class Cuban émigrés of the 1960s. About half of the Cuban immigrants worked in Cuban-owned or managed firms and earned somewhat better wages than those who worked outside this enclave.”<sup>164</sup>

The *Mariel Boatlift* in 1980 brought another 125,000 Cubans to the U.S. After some 10,000 Cubans occupied the Peruvian embassy in Havana, seeking for asylum in the United States, the Castro Government opened the port of the city of Mariel, to secure a well-regulated departure. The Carter Administration, following Cold War policy of its predecessors, declared that the United States would “provide an open heart and open arms for the tens of thousands of refugees

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<sup>161</sup> Fox, 101.

<sup>162</sup> Gann, L.H./ Duignan, Peter, J.: *The Hispanics in the United States – A History*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1986; 102.

<sup>163</sup> Chun/ Grenier, 3.

<sup>164</sup> Gann/ Duignan, 102.

seeking freedom from Communist domination.”<sup>165</sup> Even though the time of rapprochement in Cold War policy had already begun, propaganda was still in the interest of either superpower.

Yet, the boatlift differed significantly from the first two immigration waves. Widely uncontrolled immigration of such a huge number of immigrants within a very short period of time marked significant problems for the United States.

Although the majority of Mariel immigrants have become integrated into U.S. society and the number of hardened criminals was grossly exaggerated, the Cuban government did allow and/or encourage the emigration of a significant number of people who had backgrounds as petty criminals and many who had adjustment problems in Cuba. The Cuban government had previously used immigration as a political and economic escape valve; in 1980, it used it as a weapon as well.<sup>166</sup>

Indeed, criminals accounted for “less than 3 percent of the Mariel Cubans.”<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, immigrants who arrived in the United States in 1980 most probably emigrated for different reasons than those coming with earlier waves. Since they had lived most of their lives in post-revolution Cuba, it may be expected that migration was accelerated by economic considerations.

The period between 1990 and 2000 marked the last significant wave of Cuban immigration, accounting for approximately 130,000 migrants. Collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 led to one of Cuba’s worst economic crises. “In the early 1990s, Cuba experienced a decrease in gross domestic product (GDP) without parallel in the region, with GDP falling more than 40 percent between 1989 and 1993.”<sup>168</sup> Demise of the Cuban economy provided the basis for recent migration from Cuba into the United States.

However, this wave differs fundamentally in its strategic importance to the United States in comparison to earlier Cuban immigration. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost its unique position as a propaganda tool, thus moving the Clinton Government to end its preferential immigration policy towards Cuban immigrants. “The United States introduced the current *wet-foot/dry-foot* policy

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<sup>165</sup> Castro, 6.

<sup>166</sup> Castro, 6.

<sup>167</sup> Chun/ Grenier, 3.

<sup>168</sup> Castro, 4.

(immigrants found at sea are returned to the island while those who make it to land are granted asylum) and equalized the number of annual visas for Cuba to that of other countries of the world at 20,000.”<sup>169</sup> Many Cubans, however, attempting to reach American soil and intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard, were detained at the military base at Guantánamo. This policy change did not stop the flow of migrants, yet, it did create an increasingly problematic situation in Guantánamo, leading to hunger strikes and riots. Consequently, it was dissolved as a reception camp for Cuban refugees in 1994.

Considering the four immigration waves, it becomes apparent that most Cuban immigrants arrived in the United States for political reasons. Their personal motivation led to distinct political consciousness among Cuban Americans, which influences their participation within the political system of the United States.

## **7.2. Cuban Politics**

Political activity by Cuban Americans was long a *single-issue* effort. Whereas other Latino national-origin groups engaged in local politics in order to secure higher living standards and execute their rights, Cuban Americans were perceived as exclusively concerned with overthrowing Castro and returning to their homeland. Anti-Castro hardliners designated Cuban American politics, seeking to influence U.S. policy towards Cuba. “Any tactic was justified in the war against Castro; the exile community was often as repressive and authoritarian as the government they sought to overthrow. There was little tolerance of those who favored an accommodation of the Castro government.”<sup>170</sup>

With every year Castro stayed in charge, return to Cuba became more and more improbable, thus leading to increasing efforts on the improvement of their lives in the United States. As early as the 1970s, with the end of the *freedom flights*, many Cubans became aware that their stay in the United States would be more than just a temporary visit. On the basis of this mind change, Cuban Americans began to engage in their new home. This became evident in several areas. Economic

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<sup>169</sup> Chun/ Grenier, 3.

<sup>170</sup> García, María Cristina: *Havana USA – Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996; 121.

success of the Cuban community by far outnumbered that of other Latino national-origin groups.<sup>171</sup>

By 1980, émigrés in Dade County generated close to \$2.5 billion in income each year. Forty-four percent of the nearly five hundred thousand Cubans living in greater Miami were professionals, company managers, business owners, skilled craftsmen, or retail sales and clerical personnel, and eighteen thousand businesses were Cuban-owned. Sixty-three percent of émigrés owned their own homes.<sup>172</sup>

Albeit economic success of some of the upper and middle class, Cuban net worth in general still remains below of that of Anglo Americans.<sup>173</sup> Nevertheless there are disparities in net worth among Cuban Americans, which caused heavy criticism of some stating that their successful fellow countrymen would sacrifice the Cuban cause for their new comforts. Some perceived economic improvement of the community as a denial of their responsibilities toward Cuba, however, increased engagement in American society also led to the ambition to gain U.S. citizenship.

Naturalization rates increased rapidly, providing for more extended involvement in local, and domestic politics. Whereas many Cubans previously declined the possibility of applying for U.S. citizenship, the 1970s marked a turning point. “The *Miami Herald* reported in 1974 that approximately two hundred thousand Cubans had sought U.S. citizenship. [...] By 1980, 55 percent of the eligible Cubans in Dade County were American citizens, compared to just 25 percent in 1970.”<sup>174</sup>

U.S. citizenship now offered new opportunities to engage in local and statewide politics. In 1965, Cuban businessmen created the *Latin American Chamber of Commerce*, to lobby on behalf of Dade County’s business community. “In 1970, émigrés created the Cuban National Planning Council to study domestic (U.S.) issues that were important to Cubans, including language, education, health care, and employment.”<sup>175</sup> Several attempts of Cuban Americans to win public offices failed until 1973, when Manolo Reboso was elected to the City Commission and Alfredo Duran to the School Board of Dade County.

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<sup>171</sup> See: Kochhar, 31.

<sup>172</sup> García, María Cristina; 108.

<sup>173</sup> See: Kochhar, 32.

<sup>174</sup> García, María Cristina; 113.

<sup>175</sup> García, María Cristina; 114.



To this day, neither Cuban American politicians nor lobby groups entirely abandoned endeavors to overthrow Castro, but within the last thirty years, political orientation grew more diverse. This was partly due to political reality and events, such as the end of the Cold War, partly because of changing demography of the Cuban American population. U.S.-born Cubans tended to follow a broader approach in order to end Castro's dictatorship than did the older generation, which fled the island after 1959. Whereas hardliners of the older generation favored the economic embargo as the most important tool, younger Cubans and liberals suggest that the embargo contributes to the country's widespread poverty, thus, hurting the people they intend to help.

### **7.2.1. Generational Differences in Cuban American Politics**

Cuban American politics are to be examined with close attention paid to time of arrival in the United States. Cuban immigrants arriving within the first fifteen years after the revolution of 1959 were, and still are, almost exclusively concerned with overthrowing Castro. Measures to achieve their goal were assigned by hardliners, who lobbied for an economic and political embargo against the Castro regime. Their incitements come from losses – economical and personal – many had to suffer after Castro came to power. “The economic, social, and political elites in Miami are almost exclusively composed of Cubans from this generation.”<sup>176</sup>

For many years the *Cuban American National Foundation (CANF)* and its leader Jorge Mas Canosa were most important in the guiding of politics of Cuban Americans. His manner of advocating his policy was controversial among Cuban Americans and regularly subject to fierce criticism. Critics perceived Canosa and the other founding members of *CANF* “politically sophisticated extremists with a tight grip on the Cuban American electorate. They direct Cuban Americans to vote overwhelmingly for hand-picked candidates, who purvey hard-line anti-Castro policies in Tallahassee and Washington.”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Schmidt, Philip: *Ignored Majority – The Moderate Cuban-American Community*, Latin America Working Group Education Fund, Washington D.C., 2004, <http://www.lawg.org/docs/IgnoredMajority.pdf>; 3.

<sup>177</sup> Portes, Alejandro: *Morning in Miami*, *The American Prospect*, Vol. 9, No. 38, May 1, 1998 – June 1, 1998, 28-32; 28.

Three issues dominated their political agenda, namely an uncompromising attitude of opposition towards Cuba, strong support for the Republican Party, and intransigent rejection of unrestricted travel to the island. Thus, the *old guard* favored a strict policy, which left no room for reconciliation. For decades they controlled the political orientation of the whole Cuban American community, providing U.S. and international public with a picture of a monolithic political force. “They built the political machine that ensures that all Cuban American office holders loudly voice anti-engagement positions regarding US-Cuba relations.”<sup>178</sup>

Given recent immigration from Cuba and increasing numbers of U.S.-born Cuban Americans, the community did not only change its demographic characteristics but also its political agenda. Cuban immigrants who arrived in the United States with the *Mariel Boatlift* in 1980 or later vary in their political views from the *old guard*. Freeing Cuba of Castro’s dictatorship still remains one of the priorities, yet, other issues become more important. “In a June 2003 survey of Cuban Americans, 62 % of the respondents felt that it was more important to spend time and money improving life in South Florida rather than focusing on changing the government in Cuba.”<sup>179</sup>

The decisive distinction between the two generations lies in the fact that the younger consider Miami, or the United States in general, to be their home. They were born and raised there, internalizing U.S. culture, such as language and manners. Additionally, second generation Cuban Americans dispose of higher education and income levels than do first generation Cubans,<sup>180</sup> which generally involves more contact with non-Cuban Americans. Thus, exchange of varying ideas and opinions commonly leads to a more open-minded attitude towards moderate policies.

Recent immigrants agree with second generation Cuban Americans on liberal measures towards Cuba, since most of them still have family and friends on the island that they want to visit and support financially. Therefore, they oppose restricted travel, high taxes on remittances, and limitation of expenditures while in Cuba, instead favoring dialogue between the two countries. They consider the

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<sup>178</sup> Schmidt, 3.

<sup>179</sup> Schmidt, 4.

<sup>180</sup> Boswell, 38.

embargo policy as failed, since it did not lead to Castro's downfall, despite being in place for more than forty years.

Even though "they comprise more than 50 % of the total Cuban-American community, [...] their voice is heard far less than the old guard. They lack the resources to be as politically powerful as other segments of the community, and their voter registration percentages are far lower."<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, impact of this part of Cuban Americans will grow with time and change the fundamentals of the Cuban American policy agenda.

### **7.2.2. The Cuban American National Foundation (CANF)**

Founding of the *Cuban American National Foundation* in 1981 marked a turning point for Cuban American political efforts. Right-wing activities to overthrow Castro were limited to occasional, poorly planned and executed, commando operations. A structured organization, which directed the efforts, was not existent. The election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980 was to emerge as a stroke of luck for Cuban American hardliners.

From the beginning the Reagan administration emphasized Cuba's role as a security threat to the United States. In the midst of the Cold War Reagan steadily underlined that a communist country being only 90 miles away from the U.S. mainland was not acceptable. "Both the Reagan administration and a Cuban American lobby had much to gain from the other's success in shaping public views about Cuba."<sup>182</sup> Thus, establishment of *CANF* proceeded in close coordination with the Reagan administration. Several versions of exactly how *CANF* was founded are still subject of debate. Whether *CANF* was founded independently by Cuban Americans, or due to the suggestion of Richard Allen, Reagan's first National Security Adviser, still remains unclear.

Nevertheless, *CANF* and the Reagan administration closely collaborated, given their compatible views on Cuba. Shortly after inauguration, President Reagan created the *Presidential Commission on Broadcasting to Cuba*, putting Jorge Mas

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<sup>181</sup> Schmidt, 4.

<sup>182</sup> Haney, Patrick J./ Vanderbush, Walt: *The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Cuban American National Foundation*, *International Studies Quarterly*, No. 43, 1999, 341-361; 347.

Canosa, founding member of *CANF*, on the commission. He supported the idea of a radio program, sending “objective” information to the Cuban people. “In October 1983 President Reagan signed into law the bill that led to the first broadcast by Radio Martí in May 1985. The chair of the Advisory Committee for Cuban Broadcasting at the time was Jorge Mas Canosa.”<sup>183</sup>

Radio Martí became an important tool in *CANF*'s effort to destabilize the Castro regime. It provided investigative news coverage on a variety of topics such as Communist Party Congresses in Havana, AIDS, the defection of high-ranking military and government officials to the U.S., and news stories from around the world. “Listeners also heard readings of suppressed literature, interviews with former political prisoners, and philosophical discussions with various religious leaders [...]”<sup>184</sup>

Despite its analytical news coverage, Radio Martí was still a tool in *CANF*'s effort to overthrow Castro. It was established to support an uprising within Cuba, since previous actions by the exile community did not lead to the desired effect.

Even though the Castro regime tried to jam Radio Martí's signals it was quite successful and listened to in most parts of the country. Close ties between Cuban exiles and the Reagan administration provided the basis for massive influence on the radio's program by *CANF*.

Until 1997, Mas [Canosa] held the chairmanship of the Advisory Committee continuously since his original appointment. Radio Martí's annual budget during those years was in the \$12-15 million range, and one critic sees that money as an example of U.S. taxpayer money funding what is ‘virtually a Cuban exile propaganda organ.’<sup>185</sup>

In 1990, TV Martí was founded, intended to extend the exiles influence on their home country. Jorge Mas Canosa chaired TV Martí as he did with the radio program, thus, practically monopolizing U.S. efforts to counter Castro's propaganda, which is even more worth mentioning, when taking into account that funding was largely drawn from taxes. “Furthermore, a 1992 study by the Government Accounting Office [...] criticized TV Martí for its lack of balance and for promoting the views of the *CANF* too much.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Haney/ Vanderbush, 351.

<sup>184</sup> García, María Cristina; 148.

<sup>185</sup> Haney/ Vanderbush, 351.

<sup>186</sup> Haney/ Vanderbush, 352.

*CANF*'s policy towards Cuba focused on other measures as well. With its Free Cuba Political Action Committee (PAC) extensive lobbying was accomplished. "[T]he Free Cuba PAC rewarded senators and congressmen who supported a tougher policy toward Cuba with substantial donations to their reelection campaigns. From 1983 to 1988, the Free Cuba PAC contributed over \$385,000 to congressmen of both political parties [...]."<sup>187</sup> Efforts resulted in several legislations aimed on isolating Cuba, such as the Cuban Democracy Act, which imposed fines on U.S. corporations whose foreign subsidiaries traded with Cuba. In 1989, Congress passed a bill that was strongly lobbied by *CANF*, "prohibiting ships traveling to or from Cuba from stopping in American ports."<sup>188</sup>

Collaboration between the Reagan administration and *CANF* became a novelty in U.S. history. For the first time ever, the refugee process was privatized by assigning *CANF* with the responsibility of handling Cuban exiles entry from third countries. Even though Mas Canosa claimed that *CANF* would not receive any funding from the government, "in 1991 the organization became eligible to receive \$588 of federal funds for each immigrant. And during the same year, the Department of Human Health and Services authorized \$1.7 million for 2,000 more Cubans under another Cuban Exodus Relief Fund program."<sup>189</sup> Thus, *CANF* not only profited financially and through membership increase, it was also at its height of influence, actively directing U.S. immigration policy.

Jorge Mas Canosa regularly held meetings with President Reagan adjusting further proceedings concerning Cuba. Both sides profited from each other. *CANF*'s foundation and success during the 1980's is closely connected to the political situation at that time. Ronald Reagan provided for a shift to the right, after four years of Democratic policy under Jimmy Carter. Because Reagan's political agenda coincided with that of the Cuban American community in general, and *CANF*'s in particular, Mas Canosa and his organization were able to follow their aims backed by the government. For over a decade the *Cuban American National Foundation* dominated political efforts by Cuban exiles, putting them in the spotlight of U.S. foreign policy.

It consistently faced heavy criticism for violating civil liberties. The *Inter-American Press Association* and *Americas Watch*, a human rights group, accused

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<sup>187</sup> García, María Cristina, 147.

<sup>188</sup> García, María Cristina, 149.

<sup>189</sup> Haney/ Vanderbush, 353.

*CANF* in 1992 of using “its political and financial clout to intimidate more liberal voices.”<sup>190</sup> Trigger for this criticism was *CANF*'s massive propaganda against the Miami Herald, which was viewed as too benevolent towards Castro. The foundation used its political and financial capabilities to start a unique propaganda campaign, including the threat to launch an advertising boycott.

Despite the criticism and questionable actions, *CANF* still remains the most popular and influential Cuban American organization, even after the Reagan years. This may be attributed to the perception of the vast majority of Cuban Americans who feel that *CANF* has done much more than any other organization in the struggle against Castro. Additionally, local efforts to help or improve living standards serve as reasons for strong loyalty.

The role of *CANF* in U.S. foreign policy, especially during the Reagan years, needs to be analyzed against the background of how much influence ethnic groups may execute. The case of *CANF* is unparalleled in U.S. history, demonstrating extensive Cuban American influence on U.S. politics, despite their relatively small numbers.

### **7.3. Cuban Americans Today**

After the end of the Cold War, Cuban American lobbying receded, and traditional voting behavior and political attitudes began to change. Measures by the Bush administration in 2004, shortly before the election, limiting travel between the United States and Cuba and restriction of remittance sending, led to significant protest within the Cuban American community. Starting June 2004, Cuban Americans were only allowed to make one two-week visit every three years, instead of unrestricted annual visits. As well, they are not allowed to send unlimited remittances to friends on the island and none beyond their immediate families. Additionally, all humanitarian visits are prohibited.

These measures caused massive criticism among Cuban Americans and for the first time they founded an organization for the prevention of the reelection of George W. Bush.<sup>191</sup> In the course of his election campaign, John Kerry gladly used this issue to outline his policy. Kerry pointed out that he would not plan any

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<sup>190</sup> García, María Cristina, 151.

<sup>191</sup> See: Artens, 180.

restrictions on remittances, and that he would leave it to Congress to decide on travel limitations. However, Kerry's efforts came too late to draw significant numbers of Cuban American voters from the Republicans.

Already in 2000, government intervention in the Elián González affair led to substantial protest, which revealed that besides their sentiments against Castro, Cuban Americans do not accept such drastic interference in personal affairs. They took to the streets to protest measures by the Clinton administration to send the child back to his father in Cuba.

The seven year-old boy was found floating on an inner tube off the Florida coast. His mother had died attempting to flee Cuba, and he was brought to his great-uncle, who lived in Miami. Cuban American political leaders, such as Miami Mayor Joe Carollo and Miami-Dade County Executive Mayor Alex Penelas, argued that Elián should be permitted to stay in Miami. They regarded unification with his father as synonymous with supporting Castro and his regime. Despite strong resistance and mass protests by some Cuban Americans, the U.S. government returned the child to Cuba, where he was reunited with his father. The case of Elián González caused emotional debates among Cuban Americans about the embargo and its effects. In regard of the boy's fate many started to rethink their standpoint of absolutely supporting the embargo, acknowledging that a different policy might avert such incidents.

Debate among Cuban Americans about the Elián case and the embargo revealed to the public what long had been reality among Cuban Americans in the Miami area: a multifaceted national-origin group tolerating varying attitudes and opinions. "Where before the only acceptable question was whether one supported military action or just continuing the embargo, 'now people are beginning to openly question the efficacy and morality of the embargo' [...]."<sup>192</sup> This change in political positions may be attributed to political and demographic realities, as elucidated before.

It is foreseeable that a new generation, with different social backgrounds, will take the places of current leaders who are almost exclusively hardliners in terms of political orientation. Cuban American members of Congress such as Ileana Ros-Lethinen and Lincoln Díaz-Balart support and actively lobby for retention

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<sup>192</sup> Schmidt, 10.

and even intensification of the embargo. Both supported the travel and remittance restrictions enacted by the Bush Administration. By taking this position both leaders moved away from their base, loosing the bond, which is necessary for politicians.

Besides alteration among Cuban Americans, the Latino population in Florida as a whole has undergone significant demographic changes. Cuban Americans constitute only a third of the 2.6 million Latinos in the State of Florida, however, they hold “all three of the congressional seats, all three of the State Senate seats, and nearly all of the eleven State House seats in majority Hispanic districts [...]”<sup>193</sup> Nevertheless, the two-thirds of non-Cuban Latinos in the state are growing faster than do Cuban Americans, thus catering for new citizens, who are allowed to vote. In the near future, they will constitute a more significant voting bloc due to their numbers than Cuban Americans, changing politicians’ focus on whom to court.

Three main factors contribute to the decrease of Cuban American influence on U.S. politics, both on a state- and nationwide level. First, generational differences reveal the growing diversity among Cuban Americans and varying political views. Increasing heterogeneity is owed to different socializations among first-, second-, and third-generation Cubans and political reality, as in the case of the failed embargo policy. Secondly, Cuban Americans detached from their former almost unanimous support for the Republican Party, threatening to cast their vote for Democratic candidates. And finally, the fast growing non-Cuban Latino population furthers the decline of the third largest Latino national-origin group.

Despite internal political fragmentation among the once homogenous Cuban American population and receding influence one fact needs to be noticed: the unparalleled political influence on U.S. domestic and foreign policy. No other minority, neither among Latino national-origin groups nor any other disposed or disposes of comparable power.<sup>194</sup> Cuban American political engagement and impact is unique among Latinos clearly distinguishes them from Mexican Americans and even from Puerto Ricans, who themselves dispose of a unique feature.

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<sup>193</sup> Geron, 144.

<sup>194</sup> Jewish Americans are not considered in this context, since they do not represent a minority by definition of the Census Bureau.



## 8. Puerto Ricans

In terms of political status, relations between Puerto Rico and the United States are exceptional. Since 1952, Puerto Rico has been a self-governing island commonwealth associated with the United States. In its constitution, the island is officially termed a “freely associated state”; critics and objective observers call it the world’s last colony. Self-determination is limited; the constitution may only be altered by the commonwealth government assuming it does not conflict with the U.S. constitution or the Puerto Rico-Federal Relations Act that regulates U.S.-Puerto Rican relations.

Around four million Puerto Ricans live in the United States, constituting the second largest national-origin group among Latinos. In contrast to all other Latinos, they dispose of a unique attribute: since 1917, they hold U.S. citizenship by birth, allowing them to enter the country and work there without any legal restrictions. Despite this exclusive advantage, Puerto Ricans are still mostly perceived as foreigners, due to their dark skin and the Spanish language.

The contradiction of being at once citizens and foreigners, when joined with the reality that [it is] a racially mixed population, has made Puerto Rican migrant experience in America profoundly schizophrenic, more similar in some ways to that of African Americans or Native Americans than to any other Latino group.<sup>195</sup>

However, considering the history of Puerto Rican-United States relations, commonalities emerge with Cuban experiences. Both countries were occupied by the U.S. Army in the course of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Whereas Cuba officially gained independence in 1902, the smaller and economically less attractive island of Puerto Rico remains a colonial possession to this day. This political reality with its economic and cultural implications has affected and continues to affect Puerto Rican political engagement in the United States. A lower level of political participation, in comparison to other Latino groups, is ironically attributed to their U.S. citizenship.

For Puerto Ricans [...] citizenship has been portrayed as an obstacle to participation in the United States, orienting them towards the island and rooting them there

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<sup>195</sup> Gonzalez, 82.

psychologically. As a result, Puerto Ricans have been described as apathetic about politics in the United States; their interest is captured by island politics, underscored by the 'ideology of return', disengaging them from political involvement in the United States.<sup>196</sup>

By holding U.S. citizenship, back-and-forth travel between island and mainland does not pose any obstacles but lessens emotional and factual attachment to the United States. In contrast to Mexican and Cuban realities, Puerto Ricans are not necessarily bound or eager to stay in the United States to achieve their objectives, be they economic, political, or cultural. Most Puerto Ricans hold close ties to the island, pursuing a way of life that is equally centred both on the island and on the mainland. These specific factors shape Puerto Rican political engagement in the United States, and may be attributed to the exceptional relation between the two countries.

In consideration of the common history, many Puerto Ricans feel ambivalent toward the United States. "They are resentful that they were never given the chance to rule their own destiny and are indignant over their treatment in this country. This attitude is quite different from that of the great majority of those individuals who flocked to the United States during the great migration,"<sup>197</sup> and must be ascribed to the common history of both countries.

### **8.1. Historical Background**

Intended as a struggle for independence, the Spanish-American war of 1898 only resulted in the change of the colonial power in Puerto Rico. U.S. leaders at that time regarded their intentions to be the best for the island's inhabitants, as the U.S. major general, who directed the invasion, explained: "This is not a war of devastation, but one to give to all within the control of its military and naval forces the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization."<sup>198</sup> In the first

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<sup>196</sup> Vargas-Ramos, Carlos: *The Political Participation of Puerto Ricans in New York City*, Centro Journal, Volume XV No. 1, Spring 2003, 40-71; 47.

<sup>197</sup> Torres, Andrés: *Political Radicalism in the Diaspora – The Puerto Rican Experience*, in: Torres, Andrés/ Velázquez, José E.: *The Puerto Rican Movement – Voices from the Diaspora*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1998; 12.

<sup>198</sup> Morris, Nancy: *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, 1995; 23.

place the concept of “enlightened civilization” envisioned securing U.S. power and influence on the island. It was this self-conception of doing right by U.S. officials that led to the decision to extend the stay on the island and secure close relations in the future.

After eighteen months of military occupation the *Foraker Act*<sup>199</sup> provided for a civil government under U.S. control. Limited self-government was granted to Puerto Ricans without decreasing American influence. In 1917, U.S. Congress passed the *Jones Act*<sup>200</sup> making Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States. Literally over night a Spanish-speaking population became part of the United States, including almost all rights but also the duties of a U.S. citizen. Thus, towards the end of World War I the U.S. Army suddenly disposed of a bigger array for recruitment. The acquired territory also brought new people to the United States. Before the war of 1898 only few Puerto Ricans lived on the U.S. mainland. Puerto Rican immigration started in significant numbers in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and may be classified into three major periods.<sup>201</sup>

Between 1900 and 1945, roughly after annexation and until the end of World War II, first Puerto Rican immigrants arrived and settled almost exclusively in New York City. “Mutual aid societies, social clubs, and community-based and political organizations were created to enhance the socioeconomic status of Puerto Ricans and defend the community against discriminatory acts.”<sup>202</sup> Hence, a base was formed, facilitating further immigration from the island.

The second period, from 1946 to 1964, is called “the great migration” since more than 40,000 migrated from the Caribbean to New York City in 1946 alone.<sup>203</sup> Not only did the communities in New York City increase significantly, but Puerto

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<sup>199</sup> The Foraker Act, named after its sponsor Senator Joseph B. Foraker, was enacted by U.S. Congress as the Organic Act in 1900. It collocated that Puerto Rico would be “run by a governor and an eleven-member Executive Council,” (Morris, 26) and included a provision that Puerto Ricans elect a “resident-commissioner” who would represent the island’s interest in the United States. Yet, the resident-commissioner did not possess voting rights in the House of Representatives.

<sup>200</sup> The Jones Act was signed by President Woodrow Wilson in 1917. It not only gave Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship but also separated the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of Puerto Rican government and provided civil rights to every individual on the island. Nevertheless, self-determination was restricted allowing the President of the United States to veto any law passed by the legislature and the U. S. Congress to stop any action taken by the legislature in Puerto Rico.

<sup>201</sup> See: Rodríguez, Clara E.: *Puerto Ricans-Born in the U.S.A.*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989; 3. and Pérez y González, María E.: *Puerto Ricans in the United States*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2000; 34.

<sup>202</sup> Pérez y González, 35.

<sup>203</sup> See: Gonzalez, 81.

Ricans, who moved to Chicago and New Jersey, also discovered new areas of settlement. “By 1960, more than 1 million were in the country,”<sup>204</sup> making Puerto Ricans the fastest growing Latino national-origin group of that time.

The period from 1965 to the present is termed “the revolving-door migration”<sup>205</sup> indicating high rates of back-and-forth travel between the island and the U.S. mainland. It also stands for a greater dispersion of Puerto Rican immigrants, who still mainly settle in the Northeast, preferably in New York City, but also in other parts of the country, such as Illinois and Florida. These migrants tend to have relatives on the island as well as in the United States, socially and emotionally attaching them to both places.

In contrast to Cuban, but similarly to Mexican immigration, Puerto Ricans mainly came to the United States with the hope of economic improvement. After World War II “an economic boom in the U.S. generated plentiful jobs for unskilled and semiskilled labor. This attracted many Puerto Ricans from their homeland, where chronic unemployment and underemployment remained at high levels, and where wages lagged far behind those in the U.S.”<sup>206</sup>

Before annexation, Puerto Rico’s economy was composed of coffee and tobacco cultivation and export, but this changed with the new colonial power. U.S. companies were able to produce much cheaper on the island than they could on the mainland, and were supported to do so by the government. In 1948 *Operation Bootstrap*<sup>207</sup> was launched, a concept to industrialize the agrarian Puerto Rico. It involved tax incentives and subsidies for companies and was dependent on industrial peace and low wages in labor-intensive industries, especially those of textile and clothing. The tourism industry was also developed at that time turning Puerto Rico into one of Americans’ most favorite holiday destinations.

The constitution of 1952 officially termed Puerto Rico a “free associated state”, providing it with far-reaching internal autonomy, but not challenging sustained sovereignty of the United States over the island. Puerto Ricans were allowed to

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<sup>204</sup> Gonzalez, 81.

<sup>205</sup> Rodríguez, 4/ Pérez y González, 36.

<sup>206</sup> Wagenheim, Kal/ Dunbar, Leslie: *Puerto Ricans in the U.S.*, The Minority Rights Group Report No. 58, London, 1989; 8.

<sup>207</sup> Operation Bootstrap was designed after the Second World War as a development strategy to modernize Puerto Rico. Combination of cheap labor and tax incentives were supposed to attract direct investment in industrial development for the manufacture of goods for export to the United States. Thus, Puerto Rico’s economy shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing and tourism. Through this project, a rural agricultural society was transformed into an industrial working class.

keep U.S. citizenship and continued to be freed from federal taxes. They also could “elect their local officials but have no vote in federal elections and continue to be represented in Congress by their resident commissioner, a nonvoting member of the House of Representatives.”<sup>208</sup>

Besides political progress the United States increasingly invested in the island to meet the needs of a modern economy. “Between 1960 and 1976, tiny Puerto Rico catapulted from sixth to first in Latin America for total direct U.S. investment.”<sup>209</sup> Although the island’s economy rapidly swell, the unemployment rate did not significantly decrease. “A distressing share of the income Puerto Ricans produce never touches Puerto Rican hands. In 1995, nearly four out of every ten dollars made on the island ended up in the bank account of a U.S. firm.”<sup>210</sup> Thus, Puerto Rico’s status as a colony and afterwards as a “free associated state” chiefly served United States interests with little commitment to the people and the development of the island. Puerto Rican political engagement in the United States has to be considered in view of these realities.

## **8.2. Puerto Rican Politics**

Puerto Rican political activity in the U.S. started with the first wave of immigration in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the United States had annexed the island. Political organizations and clubs were formed in the area of New York City, where the vast majority lived, working on a community level in order to help their fellow citizens with everyday problems. “The clubs made provision for health referrals, legal aid, and advice on housing and employment as well as counselling on other working-class problems.”<sup>211</sup>

Obtaining citizenship in 1917 opened up the possibility to register and vote, although most Puerto Ricans did not exercise this new right for two reasons. First,

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<sup>208</sup> Morris, 48.

<sup>209</sup> Gonzalez, 249.

<sup>210</sup> Gonzalez, 250.

<sup>211</sup> Sánchez Korrol, Virginia E.: *From Colonia to Community – The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983; 173.

despite citizenship Puerto Ricans were not supported to register and vote, in fact measures were taken to keep them away from the polls.

The officials submitted the aspirant to an interrogation with the purpose of frightening them and making them abandon their original political persuasions. This only served to keep Puerto Ricans away from the polls. But they [Puerto Ricans] also believed that they had nothing to look for in American politics.<sup>212</sup>

The latter indicates the second and more significant reason for restricted political engagement. Puerto Ricans in general perceived, and still do, their stay in the United States as temporary, intended to earn enough money to return to the island. “The priority for working-class Puerto Ricans was not the achievement of political power but rather jobs and economic rewards.”<sup>213</sup>

In addition, the Office of the Commonwealth, created by the Puerto Rican government, served as an important factor for low political activity. It was intended to represent Puerto Rican interests in the United States. “During the 1950s and 1960s, however, the existence of the Commonwealth office hindered the development of Puerto Rican politics in the United States [...]”<sup>214</sup> Most Puerto Ricans presumed personal political actions to be not only unnecessary but also useless, given the government’s office.

These factors combined account for a weak and disorganized political scene among Puerto Ricans in the United States. In contrast to Cuban American political engagement, Puerto Ricans are not as willing to fight for the independence of their country. Too many advantages apply to the commonwealth status, including U.S. citizenship. Puerto Ricans vote in far smaller numbers than do their fellow Latino citizens, even though they constitute the second biggest national-origin group among registered Latinos.<sup>215</sup>

Although there are Puerto Rican interest groups, such as the *Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF)*, they favor quiet lobbying, instead of publicity effective actions. Additionally, the problematic nature to combine political interests on the island with those on the mainland affects Puerto Rican engagement. “[...T]here is no evidence that mass political mobilization around

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<sup>212</sup> Sánchez Korrol, 183.

<sup>213</sup> Geron, 51.

<sup>214</sup> Geron, 50.

<sup>215</sup> See: Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, 12.

homeland issues ever translated into mass political mobilization focused on mainland empowerment.<sup>216</sup> This thesis is supported by Roberto Ramirez, Puerto Rican civil rights activist and politician in New York City, who denies a connection between Puerto Rican politics on the mainland and the island: “Political leadership in both places has failed miserably to connect the two interests. What we do here and what we do there are totally different, totally separate. In fact, leadership in Puerto Rico has failed to realize the importance of the leadership here.”<sup>217</sup>

Nevertheless, in the 1960s several leftist Puerto Rican groups outside of the political system began to combine island and mainland politics.

### **8.2.1. The Puerto Rican Movement**

Three groups were especially important in what came to be known “The Puerto Rican Movement”: the *Young Lords Party*, *El Comité-Movimiento de Izquierda Nacional Puertorriqueno*, *MINP (National Puerto Rican Leftist Movement)*, and the *Movimiento Pro Independencia, MPI (Movement for Independence)*. These were the core organizations emerging at the end of the great migration when over a million Puerto Ricans lived in the United States, making it a significant political entity. The Puerto Rican Movement as a whole, and the groups in particular, did only partly act within the political system, campaigning as parties for elected offices, but organized outside the parliamentary system.

In the late 1950s, the *Young Lords* formed out of a youth group in Chicago, where a substantial part of Puerto Ricans lived. In 1969, the organization extended its reach to New York City, acknowledging the center of Puerto Rican political action. The *Young Lords* were mainly composed by second generation Puerto Ricans, who stood for a more radical interpretation of Puerto Rican rights on the mainland. “The group’s actions pioneered a breakthrough with the public, effectively bringing attention to the crisis in the Puerto Rican community.”<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Cruz, José E. : *Unfulfilled Promise : Puerto Rican Politics and Poverty*, Centro Journal, Volume XV No. 1, Spring 2003, 152-175; 161.

<sup>217</sup> Matos Rodríguez, Félix V. : *Puerto Rican Politics in New York City: A Conversation with Roberto Ramirez*, Centro Journal, Volume XV No.1, Spring 2003, 196-211; 207.

<sup>218</sup> Torres, 7.

Economic, as well as racial and social issues were on their agenda, but also the independence of Puerto Rico. The *Young Lords* regarded Puerto Ricans as an “oppressed national minority” calling for radical measures to end this status. Using democratic attainments such as free speech in promoting their cause, “[...] the Lords were extremely effective in ‘working’ the mass media. They created an alternative media, including a radio program and a bilingual newspaper, *Pa’lante*,”<sup>219</sup> thus reaching the vast majority of Puerto Ricans in the United States and many on the island.

*MINP* was founded in 1970 in New York City as a community action group, in order to oppose relocation of Puerto Ricans from their homes. Even though Puerto Ricans stood for the majority of members, *MINP* also included other Latinos. It “initially supported bilingual education and community control. Later it evolved into a consciously leftist organization and sought to build support for socialism in the United States.”<sup>220</sup> Similarly to the *Young Lords*, *MINP* did not follow a single-issue strategy but offered a wide-ranging program for the community.

Besides its community organizing, the group organized a student sector and a workers’ organization and initiated a process that eventually led to the formation of the Latin Women’s Collective. Through its publication *Unidad Latina*, it addressed the gamut of issues affecting the community, linking local issues to international forces.<sup>221</sup>

Although founded in 1960, it lasted until 1969 when the *Movement for Independence (MPI)* was publicly recognized in the United States. The older members were startled by the relative success of the *Young Lords*, addressing local issues of concern. Intended to serve as a platform to press ahead the struggle for independence, in the late 1960s *MPI* officials acknowledged the necessity of restructuring its strategy. “Winning independence was inconceivable without organizing the one-third of the nation that lived in the ‘belly of the beast’. And organizing this sector could not be done if the party was divorced from the community’s struggles for economic and social justice.”<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Torres, 7.

<sup>220</sup> Geron, 54.

<sup>221</sup> Torres, 8.

<sup>222</sup> Torres, 8.



A considerable advantage of *MPI* was its status of an island's political party extension, which secured strong support especially among young Puerto Ricans, who were waiting for such a connection. The *Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP)* was well established on the island and supported its U.S. scion in every possible way.

Cooperation among the various organizations, however, was rather complicated, given different priorities and ideological confrontations. They only partially united to address issues of common concern. One such case was the campaign to free five Nationalist prisoners, who opened fire in the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five congressmen. They intended to draw public attention to Puerto Rico's dependence to the United States that they considered to be colonialism. All were imprisoned and convicted to serve life-long sentences. In 1970, the organizations came together at a conference, agreeing to commonly work on freeing the prisoners. When President Carter pardoned the five in 1979, "their release occasioned an emotional outpouring of joy and national pride – something of a cathartic release, as *Boricuas*<sup>223</sup> everywhere saw these national heroes returned to their homeland."<sup>224</sup>

By the late 1970s, however, this positive experience did not push aside internal problems, which led to the breakup of all organizations and the movement as a whole. Although the Puerto Rican Movement failed its central objective of independence for the island, it nevertheless marked an important episode in Puerto Rican political engagement in the United States. It broke new grounds of collective identity and closely collaborated with the labor movement and the new left movement that arose during this period. Collectively with other leftist forces, the Puerto Rican Movement represented an important alternative to mainstream politics during the 1960s.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The term *Boricua* is the original term for Puerto Ricans, derived from the Taino Indians' (native inhabitants of Puerto Rico) name for the island, *Borinquén*. It is often used by Puerto Ricans to emphasize pride in their heritage.

<sup>224</sup> Torres, 10.

<sup>225</sup> See: Geron, 5

### **8.3. Puerto Ricans Today**

Disintegration of the Puerto Rican Movement was followed by new strategies to give voice to Puerto Ricans in the political system. In 1977, the *National Puerto Rican Coalition (NPRC)* was founded due to acutely concerning economic circumstances most Puerto Ricans lived in. Widespread poverty among them even caused Jimmy Carter's administration to call for Puerto Rican activity within the U.S. political system. The *NPRC* started to systematically strengthen and improve the social, political, and foremost economic well being of Puerto Ricans throughout the United States. In the course of this "reawakening" of Puerto Rican politics several other civil rights and interest groups were formed, such as the *National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights*, a successor of the *Young Lords Party*. The most important civil rights advocacy group, however, remains to be *PRLDEF*, because it is actively engaged in the maintenance and improvement of voting rights and political education.

Political engagement has slowly started to grow, as numbers of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland increase. Florida, a crucial "swing-state" in the last several presidential elections, is home to a fast growing Puerto Rican population. They soon will challenge Cuban dominance of Latino politics there by virtue of their numbers. In consideration of this fact both major parties started to develop campaign strategies designed to mobilize Puerto Ricans. Traditional tendencies of mainland Puerto Ricans to vote Democratic are beginning to fade, since new arrivals are more tied to island party loyalties and to issues of Puerto Rico's political status than to specific U.S. matters. Therefore, they value both parties rather in consideration of their standpoint toward Puerto Rico than domestic topics.

The hybrid identity contributes to a split of the center of life what María E. Pérez y González calls a "dual home base". This phenomenon of a two-home life may be attributed to the circumstance of holding U.S. citizenship and comparable low socio-economic life standard on the mainland.

[I]t is [...] an 'internal response of the community to adverse conditions'. For example, when life in Puerto Rico becomes unmanageable due to lack of funds, the social service institutions in the States provide economic resources. Or when one's health in the States is deteriorating, the place to seek healthier surroundings is Puerto Rico. Because the economic structures set in place by the United States directly affect Puerto Rico, when there

seems to be an economic surge in the United States, Puerto Ricans tend to (im)migrate to the States, and when the economic situation in Puerto Rico appears to be improving, they tend to return.”<sup>226</sup>

Most likely, this way of life will continue until significant changes are made in the political status of Puerto Rico, such as the unrestricted independence. As long as common status will be retained, social and political conduct is improbable to change. Political consciousness and engagement may be altered when both major parties increase efforts to attract Puerto Rican voters, mediating the necessity of active participation. Along with these steps, the advancement of economic circumstances is imperative.

Despite the unique attribute of holding U.S. citizenship by birth Puerto Rican political engagement is comparably low, which is mainly because of two reasons. As mentioned before Puerto Ricans are torn between the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico. Back and forth travel is common and prevents the United States to become the life center for Puerto Ricans. Secondly, Puerto Ricans do not possess significant influence in specific states due to extensive dispersion throughout the country. Thus, unlike Cuban Americans in Florida, Puerto Ricans may not be the decisive factor in a swing state. Despite these reasons explanation for low Puerto Rican political engagement remains to be fragmentary. Neither of the aforementioned factors elucidate why Puerto Ricans are only limitedly proactive. Academic research in this field is almost not existent but is likely to change in the future with growing influence of the Latino population in general and its second-biggest national-origin group in particular.

## **9. Final Remark**

*Latino politics* is a complex term intended to stand for an exceedingly heterogeneous part of the U.S. population and its participation in the political system. Inherently, the concept of politics is multi-faceted and subject of far-reaching academic research. Combination of both, *Latino* and *politics* comprise

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<sup>226</sup> Pérez y González, 37.

diverse actions and actors making a broad generalization factual impossible. Yet, the term *Latino politics* is used in academic literature as well as by the media and political actors to indicate forms of participation in the U.S. political system by a language-defined minority.

In analyzing the three largest national-origin groups with their specific histories and political actions the aim was to provide a more tangible picture of Latinos. This complex and fast-growing minority has been subject of comprehensive academic research for around twenty years and is sure to increase in the future due to its size and growing influence. Latinos do not only grow in size, but in diversity as well, given rising numbers of immigrants from the Dominican Republic and El Salvador as well as other countries – most notably from Central America. Even though the growth of Latinos will expand their influence on politics in the United States, at the same time their heterogeneity causes further differences among them.

The multiplicity of political experiences among the three presented national-origin groups makes wide generalizations difficult. Rapid advancement of influence on U.S. foreign policy by Cuban Americans in Florida is a rather singular pattern among Latino political efforts. Specific circumstances in international relations accounted for this extensive impact and helped Cubans to overcome discriminatory obstacles. Thus, the case of Cuban Americans in Florida is not comparable to the Mexican American and Puerto Rican experience both suffering much longer “of entrenched structural discrimination and social ostracism.”<sup>227</sup> Aside from experiences by national-origin groups who look back on a long history in the United States, recent immigrants from Central and South America stand at the beginning of finding their place in U.S. society.

As Latinos do not share an identical political experience in this country examination of the three largest national-origin groups aimed to identify these varying experiences that have contributed to their histories before and after coming to the United States. Nevertheless, there are commonalities, especially in their colonial histories and reasons for immigrating to the United States. Mutual experiences proceeded within the United States, facing racism and obstruction in gaining elected offices. In terms of social and political conditions, status of almost all Latino immigrants (with the exception of most Cuban Immigrants coming to

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<sup>227</sup> Geron, 212.

the U.S. between 1959 and 1964) was rather low. Economic aspects mainly drove immigration and are still the most important factors. However, as soon as starting their new lives in the wealthier north, paths lead to different directions.

Many Latinos are prosperous, socially integrated and politically vocal. They hold prestigious occupations, such as lawyer, doctor or teacher and are U.S. citizens. Especially second and third generation Latinos are mostly English dominant, hold U.S. citizenship and are as “American” as every Anglo. They do not identify more with Spanish-speaking Latinos than they do with their African American or Anglo neighbors and instead of using such labels regard themselves as “Americans”. Such factors account for the circumstance that Latinos do not compose a homogenous voting block. Although Latinos were viewed to overwhelmingly vote democratic, in the 2004 presidential election the Republican Party was able to increase its share of Latino votes for the third time in a row, causing the Democrats to rethink their strategy of attracting Latinos.

Yet, in all their diversity, Latinos underwent a broad transformation in the United States during the last decades. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Latinos in the United States comprised of Mexicans in the south and Puerto Ricans in the northeast. “[T]hrough intermarriage, through shared knowledge of one another’s music, food, and traditions, through common language, through a common experience of combating anti-Hispanic prejudice and being shunted into the same de facto segregated neighborhoods”<sup>228</sup>, Latinos converged culturally as well as politically.

A bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2005 that would increase security at the border while making it a felony for an illegal immigrant to be in the country or to aid one caused large demonstrations. Beginning in April 2006, protests reached a climax on May 1<sup>st</sup> when several million immigrants marched against the bill throughout the country. Under the banner “Day without an Immigrant” they intended to show America’s need for low skilled manpower. “While the boycott, an idea born several months ago among a small group of grassroots immigration advocates [...], may not have shut down the country, it was strongly felt in a variety of places, particularly those with large Latino populations.”<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Gonzalez, 187.

<sup>229</sup> Archibold, Randall C.: *Immigrants take to U.S. Streets in show of strength*, New York Times, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006.

The protesters were mainly Latino, coming from all national-origin groups residing in the U.S. The issue of immigration and its consequences is of central concern to Latinos regardless of origin, showing signs of convergence despite numerous differences. In this context the concept of pan-ethnicity<sup>230</sup> receives increasing importance in consideration of unified acts to counter anti-immigration legislature. On the grounds of common experiences as immigrants and a Spanish-speaking minority, Latinos need to act cohesively to enhance their impact on U.S. politics. As recent demonstrations have shown, the maximum number of protesters is decisive in order to attract public awareness.

However, it is necessary to outline the multi-ethnic character of the protest, where African and Asian Americans accompanied Latinos, albeit in far smaller numbers. Immigration is not an explicit Latino issue, yet, it may serve as a trigger for further corporate steps. Despite all differences, Latino politicians, entrepreneurs, and professionals have a marked interest in an unified Latino population. Politicians may hope for a broader base to receive their votes from. Benefits for entrepreneurs and professionals would be a bigger market to distribute products, which would add new jobs to the Latino community.<sup>231</sup>

Acting as a unified entity would definitely offer new opportunities to Latinos, not only politically. Being larger than all but the eleven richest countries in the world, the Latino market in the United States indicates potential for economic influence, which inevitably may have an impact on U.S. politics towards its biggest minority.<sup>232</sup> Already now, two TV stations, produced in the United States but broadcasting exclusively in Spanish, and several dozen Spanish newspapers are serving the Latino market. The Latin Grammy Awards are held annually, paying tribute to the fast growing Spanish-language music market in the United States.

Despite critics of comprehensive and fast immigration to the United States, Latinos do not aspire to build a parallel society. Comparable to German, Irish, and Italian immigrants arriving in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Latinos seek to preserve parts of their traditions and culture in their new environment. Their unique feature is that immigrants from over twenty countries share one single

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<sup>230</sup> See: page 6.

<sup>231</sup> See: Portes, Alejandro: *The New Latin Nation: Immigration and the Hispanic Population of the United States*, Center for Migration and Development, Working Paper 04/02, Princeton University, Princeton, 2004; 19.

<sup>232</sup> See: Geron, 207.

language. But as surveys show, second and third generation Latinos are predominantly English speaking. They hope to climb the social ladder in order to improve life circumstances of themselves and their families in their home countries. To do so a political voice is essential.

The cases of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have shown that it is a long struggle for equal opportunities and political influence and that possibilities as well as measures may differ. Among Latinos, the Cuban experience is rather unique attributed to international circumstances. In consideration of histories, legal opportunities, and actions the Latino population in the United States is a heterogeneous part of society subsumed under one label. Regarding the future, however, it seems of fundamental necessity to act in a more or less unified way. Due to their growing numbers, Latinos will enlarge their impact on U.S. politics both on national as well as on international issues.

Internationally, Latinos are predominantly concerned with correlations between the United States and Latin America. In the past, they already actively or passively influenced several events. The Elián González affair was accompanied by heavy political lobbying of Cuban Americans in Florida, forcing the U.S. government to act. Ongoing immigration from Mexico to the United States and lobbying by Latino interest groups forced George W. Bush and the Mexican President Vicente Fox to push for legislation in order to regularize this stream.

Nationally, topics such as immigration, social security, and education were named top priorities by Latinos and will be influenced by them in the future.<sup>233</sup> In view of the aging of Anglos and the relative youthfulness of Latinos social security programs will increasingly depend on the latter. Due to ascending numbers of Latinos, who become naturalized, issues of their concern will be promoted politically. The ethnic and socioeconomic diversity may be disadvantageous but is unlikely to prevent them to play an even stronger role in influencing electoral outcomes as they already do. When managing to act cohesively, despite all differences, Latino influence on United States politics will increase making the country's largest minority an even stronger political and societal entity.

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<sup>233</sup> See: Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation: *The 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation*, chart 7.

## 10. Zusammenfassung in Deutsch

Die Begriffe *Latino* und *Hispanic* dienen der Vereinheitlichung und Vereinfachung der numerisch größten Minorität in den USA. Aufgrund der Heterogenität dieser Bevölkerungsgruppe sind beide Begriffe unzureichend, werden jedoch sowohl in der Fachliteratur, als auch von offiziellen Stellen gebraucht. Beide Begriffe stehen für die aus über zwanzig Ländern Lateinamerikas stammende spanisch-sprechende Minderheit in den USA und werden in der vorliegenden Arbeit abwechselnd gebraucht.

These der Arbeit ist, dass man weder von den Latinos als einer homogenen Einheit, noch einer geeinten politischen Strategie dieser Gruppe sprechen kann. Da Latinos seit 2003 mit etwa 41.3 Millionen Menschen die größte Minderheit in den USA sind und ihre Zahl auch in Zukunft schnell wachsen wird, nimmt ihr Einfluss auf die Gesellschaft im Allgemeinen und die Politik im Besonderen zu. Spanischsprachige Fernsehkanäle und Radiostationen, sowie Zeitungen und Zeitschriften gehören längst zum Alltag der USA und stehen für eine wachsende „Hispanisierung“ des Landes.

Im ersten Teil der Arbeit wird ein Überblick gegeben, der die demographischen und wirtschaftlichen Besonderheiten der Latinos im Allgemeinen beleuchtet. Diese Bevölkerungsgruppe ist im Vergleich zu weißen Anglo Amerikanern durchschnittlich ärmer und verfügt über niedrigere Bildungsstandards. Dies wirkt sich auf die ausgeübten Berufe und somit auf das Einkommen aus. Latinos sind im Durchschnitt jünger als jede andere Bevölkerungsgruppe in den USA, was die zukünftige Zusammensetzung der amerikanischen Gesellschaft beeinflussen wird.

Die hohe Anzahl nicht eingebürgerter Latinos, die entweder illegal oder zeitlich befristet in den USA leben, beeinflussen ebenso die Teilnahme im politischen System, wie die vom Gesetzgeber vorgegebenen Beschränkungen. Da die Teilnahme an Wahlen die U.S.-amerikanische Staatsbürgerschaft voraussetzt, ist es im Falle der Latinos zweckdienlich auch andere Möglichkeiten politischer Aktivitäten zu erwähnen. In diesem Zusammenhang sind Bürgerrechts- und Interessengruppen von grundlegender Bedeutung, da sie für viele Latinos die erste Möglichkeit bieten sich politisch Gehör zu verschaffen. Zudem arbeiten diese



Gruppen intensiv im Bereich der politischen Aufklärung und Bildung, und helfen bei Einbürgerungsanträgen.

Durch die Vielzahl an Herkunftsländern und der damit einhergehenden Heterogenität der Latinos sind politische Absichten, sowie die Partizipation am politischen Prozess in den USA, jedoch äußerst unterschiedlich. Die drei größten Nationalitäten – Mexikaner, Kubaner, Puerto Ricaner – dienen hierbei als Beleg für diese These. Alle drei Gruppen werden vor dem Hintergrund ihrer spezifischen historischen Erfahrungen untersucht. Um politische Aktivitäten und Möglichkeiten der jeweiligen Nationalitäten zu verstehen, ist es fundamental, die historischen Beziehungen der jeweiligen Länder zu den USA zu beleuchten .

Die Mexikaner bilden mit etwa zwei Dritteln der gesamten Latino Bevölkerung die mit Abstand größte Ethnie innerhalb dieser Minorität. Mexiko Amerikaner können auf eine lange politische Tradition in den USA zurückblicken, die ihren Ursprung im Mexikanisch-Amerikanischen Krieg von 1846 hat. Seitdem waren Mexikaner vor allem in Basisorganisationen wie etwa Bürgerrechtsbewegungen und Gewerkschaften tätig. Nach Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges forderten Mexikaner zunehmend energisch ihre Bürgerrechte ein und gewannen auch durch ihre bloße Anzahl an Einfluss. Seit Mitte der 1980er Jahre besetzen sie zunehmend wichtige politische Ämter, etwa als Abgeordnete im Kongress.

Die Kubaner bilden mit etwas mehr als einer Million Menschen die drittgrößte Gruppe der Latinos. Sie immigrierten hauptsächlich nach der Machtergreifung Fidel Castros 1959 in die USA und leben fast ausschließlich in Florida. Da die meisten Kubaner aus politischen Motiven emigrierten, gilt ihr Hauptaugenmerk dem Sturz Castros. Durch ihre große Anzahl in Florida und sich überschneidender politischer Interessen mit einem Großteil der republikanischen Partei gelang es ihnen schnell, Einfluss auf die US-Außenpolitik zu nehmen. Mehr als jede andere Ethnie der Latinos verfügen Kubaner über beste Beziehungen in die höchsten politischen Kreise und nehmen in weitaus größerem Maße an Wahlen teil als andere Latinos.

Die dritte untersuchte Gruppe, die Puerto Ricaner, unterscheidet sich in einem wesentlichen Punkt von allen anderen Gruppen der Latinos: als einzige besitzen

sie von Geburt an die US-amerikanische Staatsbürgerschaft und verfügen somit über weitaus größere rechtliche und politische Möglichkeiten. Als Bewohner der Insel dürfen sie zwar nicht an den Präsidentschaftswahlen teilnehmen, sobald sie allerdings ihren Wohnsitz auf das Festland verlegen, sind sie rechtlich vollkommen gleichgestellt. Viele Puerto Ricaner nutzen diesen Vorteil, um flexibel zwischen Insel und Festland zu pendeln. Als „freier assoziierter Staat“ wird Puerto Rico offiziell geführt, von Kritikern als letzte Kolonie weltweit bezeichnet. Das politische Engagement der Puerto Ricaner ist stark von dieser Abhängigkeit geprägt. Zwar gibt es immer wieder Bestrebungen, die vollkommene Unabhängigkeit zu erlangen, doch sehen auch viele die Vorteile der US-amerikanischen Staatsbürgerschaft, die sie nicht aufgeben wollen.

Trotz dieser ausgeprägten Heterogenität unter den Latinos, birgt eine Vereinheitlichung, wie sie mit den Begriffen Latino und Hispanic gewollt ist, auch neue Möglichkeiten und Vorteile. Als numerisch starker, politischer Akteur können Latinos in Zukunft erheblichen Einfluss auf die Politik des Landes ausüben, vorausgesetzt sie finden einen gemeinsamen Nenner. Demographen gehen davon aus, dass im Jahre 2050 jeder zweite US-Bürger als Latino zu bezeichnen ist, weshalb die beiden großen Parteien vor einigen Jahren damit begannen, diese Bevölkerungsgruppe zu umwerben. Aller Diversität zum Trotz gehen einige politische Analysten, sowie Demoskopien, weiterhin von einem homogenen Akteur aus. Tatsächlich betrachten viele Latinos aller Ethnien Themen wie Immigration, Sozialversicherung, oder auch Bildung als wichtige Probleme, die es zu lösen gilt.

Sollten die Latinos in den USA, trotz ihrer Vielschichtigkeit, einheitliche Interessen definieren und diese gemeinsam verfolgen, wird die größte Minderheit zu einem noch wichtigeren politischen Akteur, der seinen Einfluss, sowohl auf nationale wie auch internationale Themen, geltend machen wird.

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Erklärung:

Hiermit erkläre ich, Kolja Müller, dass vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie die Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, durch Angabe der Quellen kenntlich gemacht wurden.

Kolja Müller