

## IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

# Mexican Immigrants and Mexican American Political Assimilation

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**T**here are many political dimensions of Mexican immigration and Mexican American life in the U.S. Political life in the U.S., as elsewhere, includes the realms of routine electoral politics where candidates seek votes, symbolic politics where images of immigrants may be put to a variety of uses, legislative politics where rights and privileges of different groups may be gained or lost, and so on. The political relationship between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans (a term which I will use in this paper to refer to U.S. born persons of Mexican descent) is a multidimensional one that has evolved over time as the Mexican American community has evolved politically, and as U.S. immigration law has changed.

While at first it may seem that immigrants have little direct effect on routine electoral politics in the U.S., because they cannot vote, there are in fact a number of links between immigrants and electoral politics. Immigrants effect electoral politics directly through census enumerations and decennial redistricting. U.S. congressional districts, and all state legislative districts are apportioned on the basis of *persons*, rather than on the basis of citizens or adult citizens because of the wording of article 1, section 2 of the U.S. constitution (the U.S. is quite unusual in

this regard). In the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and subsequent court interpretations (see Guinier, 1991), some legislative districts have been designed to be minority dominated, in order to insure greater minority representation in the various legislative bodies. Because these districts are designed to contain a certain number of people, rather than a certain number of adult citizens, Mexican immigrants contribute to the electoral power of Mexican Americans by the weight of their sheer numbers. Because of the presence of so many Mexican immigrants, Mexican American districts have many fewer potential (and actual) voters than other districts. Table 1 shows that in the 1992 U.S. elections, people of Mexican descent (Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans) cast only about 16 votes per hundred persons, while non-Hispanic Whites cast about 50 votes per hundred persons. The low number votes by persons of Mexican origin (Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans) is due to a number of factors: younger population, lower citizenship rates, along with relatively low registration and voting rates, but the most important is the low adult citizenship rate of 54% as compared with 95% for non-Hispanic Whites and 92% for non-Hispanic blacks.

Mexican immigrants also may represent a cost to Mexican Americans if the presence of immigrants induces an anti-immigrant backlash in the non-Hispanic native population. Political organizations that serve the Mexican American community fought against IRCA in 1986 because they feared that a policy of employer sanctions that was intended to deter the employment of illegal Mexican immigrants might lead to wholesale discrimination against Mexican Americans and other Hispanic groups as well. IRCA also included an amnesty provision for long term undocumented residents, a provision which allowed more than 1.5 million Mexican immigrants to legalize their residence in the U.S., so the opposition of the Hispanic political organizations to IRCA ought to be viewed as evidence that immigrants are not the primary constituents of these U.S. based Hispanic organizations. Generally, if the anti-immigrant backlash takes on racial, ethnic, or discriminatory overtones, then such a backlash will necessarily make life more difficult for the non-immigrant coethnics (in this case Mexican Americans). Weintraub (1996) and Espenshade and Belanger (1996) take up such issues as California's Proposition 187, and other well known uses or abuses of the image of immigrants in U.S. popular politics.

Mexican immigrants are incorporated into life in the U.S. through communities or barrios that are already densely settled by Mexican Americans and other Mexican immigrants. In these barrios the Mexican American political organizations, civic organizations and elected officials constitute the local elites. As the Mexican American community has evolved politically over the last 30 years, and in particular as the Mexican Americans have become assimilated into routine electoral politics in the U.S., the nature of the barrios has changed. As the nature of the

**Table 1**  
**Demography of Political Participation, 1992**

	Mexican Americans	Non-Hisp Blacks	Non-Hisp Whites	Other Non-Hisp	Cubans	Puerto Ricans	Other Hispanics
Persons	15,267,776	32,077,899	192,958,425	8,780,088	1,122,381	2,640,295	4,715,788
(A) Adults/ persons	60%	65%	75%	71%	75%	55%	67%
(B) Adult Citizenship Rate	54%	92%	95%	58%	55%	93%	43%
(C) Registration rate (for adult citizens)	61%	71%	78%	62%	78%	61%	69%
(D) Voting rate (for those registered)	80%	84%	90%	87%	90%	79%	87%
Voters/100 persons (A*B*C*D)	15.76	35.27	49.94	22.28	28.96	24.34	17.34

Source: Case weighted data from the 1992 Current Population Survey, November Voting Supplement

barrios has changed, the political dynamics between the Mexican immigrants and the Mexican Americans has necessarily changed. In this paper I examine the trajectory of Mexican American politics, especially the growth of electoralism, and discuss how these changes may have effected the political dynamics between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.

It is crucial to keep Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans separate empirically and analytically, especially when studying political issues. Mexican immigrants have long been known to have the lowest levels of naturalization, and the most tenacious maintenance of their native language among all major immigrant groups in the U.S. The attachment of Mexican immigrants to American politics is, therefore relatively low. Surveys of political opinion have revealed that Mexican Americans have a surprisingly low level of political solidarity for immigration issues (see De la Garza et al, 1992). One cannot assume, therefore, that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans share a common political perspective, although some processes such as naturalization have undergone tremendous changes since 1994 such that the future political statuses of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans are hardly certain (see concluding sections).

Most studies that deal with the political assimilation of Mexican Americans, such as J. García (1987), are methodologically individualistic, that is they address the assimilation of individual persons. In this paper, political assimilation is used the way it is used by Dahl (1961) to mean the political assimilation of minority groups, rather than the assimilation of individuals. The relevant part of Dahl's famous study of New Haven is the section that details the political incorporation of Irish immigrants in the 19th century. Dahl argues that ethnic identity politics and nationalistic politics are a transitional phase for minority groups; in the case of the Irish in New Haven these former immigrants and working class citizens came to hold a share of mainstream political power in the course of three or four generations.

Alvarez (1973) proposed, and M. T. García (1989) explored in greater depth a generational interpretation of recent Mexican American history that has proved to be quite influential. García refers to 1930-1950 generation as the Mexican American generation, and the 1960s as the Chicano generation. The Mexican American generation was typified mainly by assimilationist, legalistic organizations like LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), founded in 1929, which held its meetings in English and excluded Mexican nationals from membership. The Mexican American generation was succeeded by the radical Chicano generation of the 1960s.

M. T. García's analysis does not go past the Chicano generation. I. M. García (1996) attempts to fill the void in M. T. García's analysis by suggesting that the recent, post 1975 generation of Mexican Americans is the 'Hispanic generation.' Acuña (1988) refers to the current period as the 'age of the brokers,' by which he

means that since the mid 1970s Mexican American politics have been dominated by elites (businessmen, politicians, bankers) who mediate between the wider American power structure and the Mexican American community. One of the salient changes in Mexican American politics since the Chicano generation has been the growth of Mexican American electoral participation, especially the new presence of Mexican Americans at many levels of elected office. Using data on Hispanic surnamed officials in state legislatures, state executive offices, and the U.S. Congress, I show how Mexican Americans have undergone a quantum leap in electoral politics since 1970.

The emergence of Hispanics as an electoral force has been treated for the case of California (Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1984; Guerra 1989; Guerra 1991). I extend the analysis to include the rest of the Southwestern U.S., and also offer some new ideas about how electoral representation ought to be measured. De la Garza et al (1982) notes that prior to 1965, there were hardly any Mexican American elected officials in all of the southwestern U.S., and further notes that at the time of publication Mexican Americans were still greatly underrepresented. This paper takes a somewhat different approach, by focusing on a transition from electoral insignificance to electoral significance. For the Mexican Americans in the southwestern U.S., this transition takes place in the 1970s (except in New Mexico, where it took place much earlier). The transition from electoral insignificance to electoral significance has important implications for how immigrant minority groups are assimilated into U.S. culture.

## **Methodology**

The standard measure of electoral representation is the parity score (Robinson and Dye, 1978; Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1984), which goes by a variety of different names in the literature, but consists simply of this: specific group percentage of total elected officials divided by the same specific group's percentage of total population. A group that makes up 12% of a state's population, but only 6% of that state's elected officials would have a parity score of 0.5.

$$1.a \text{ Parity Score} = \frac{(\# \text{ of Hispanic elected officials} / \text{Total \# of elected officials})}{(\# \text{ of Hispanic persons} / \text{Total \# of persons})}$$

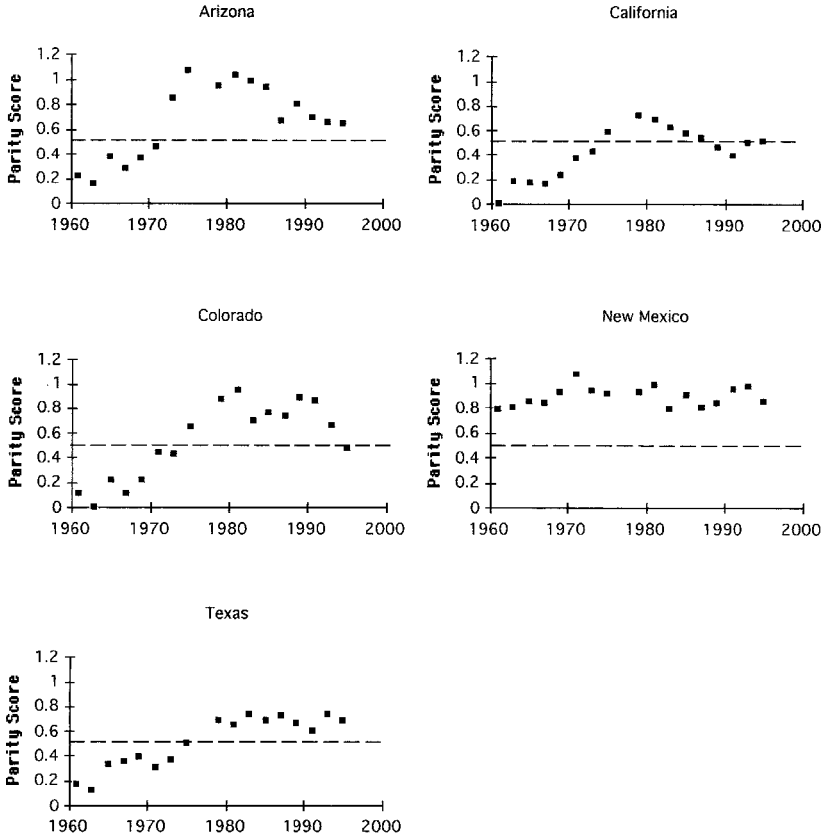
Or

$$1.b \text{ Parity Score} = \frac{(\# \text{ of Hispanic elected officials} / \text{Total \# of elected officials})}{(\# \text{ of Hispanic adult citizens} / \text{Total \# of adult citizens})}$$

Because of the winner take all election format in the U.S., and because of the established preference of majority white voters for majority white candidates (Guinier, 1991), minority groups are almost always underrepresented (i.e., have parity scores of less than 1). Some authors, most notably Guinier (1991) have questioned the significance of increased numbers of minority elected officials, on the grounds that electoral representation does not guarantee real political gains for the minority group. Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (1984) have made the argument that minority groups may only enjoy the fruits of increased political power if their representatives are part of a governing coalition; clearly electoral representation is a necessary, but not by itself a sufficient condition for minority political empowerment.

Figure 1 shows the parity scores for Hispanic surnamed elected officials for the 5 states with the largest percentage of Mexican Americans (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas) from 1960 to 1995. The 1960 starting point is far enough back to capture the entire trajectory of Hispanic electoralism in every state except New Mexico. The universe of elected officials in each state is the following: state wide elected offices (governor, comptroller, lieutenant governor, etc.), state legislature (house and senate), U.S. congress and U.S. senate. Hispanic ethnicity of elected officials is determined by surname. Using surname to determine ethnicity is less efficient than individual self identification, but the U.S. census did not fully rely on self identification for Hispanic ethnicity until 1980 (Bean and Tienda, 1987), and national lists of Hispanic elected officials are only available after 1984 (NALEO, 1994 and Brimhall-Vargas, NALEO educational fund, personal communication). Surname identification is therefore the only consistent way to address Hispanic political representation over time, as pre 1984 studies have done (see Lemus, 1974). For the sake of consistency, the official U.S. census lists of Spanish surnames (U.S. Census 1960, U.S. Census 1970, see also Bean and Tienda 1987) were used to determine the Hispanic ethnicity of elected officials, so that whatever biases are built into the list of surnames essentially vanishes as a result of being in both the numerator and the denominator of the parity score<sup>1</sup>. The random error aspect of using Hispanic surname as a marker for Hispanic ethnicity is somewhat controlled by the use of large sample sizes in the political universe—the states average more than 15 Hispanic surnamed officials each by 1995, so the random misidentification of one or two officials does not alter the long term trends. Since the long term trends are precisely what are of interest here, the use of larger political universes<sup>2</sup> (larger, for instance, than Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1984) serves to minimize the influence of the stochastic nature of individual election results.

The second element in the parity scores is the population denominator. In this case I take a different approach from the previous studies by using only adult



Sources: See Text

**Figure 1. Hispanic Surnamed Elected Officials in the Southwestern U.S., 1960–1995**

citizen population instead of total population. Only adult (over 18 years of age) citizens have the right to vote in the U.S. In a representative democracy, those who do not have the right to vote are not, strictly speaking, represented. Pachon (1991) describes the lack of rights that non-citizens face, and the problem that non-citizenship presents for Hispanic (especially Mexican American) political empowerment. Because the Mexican origin population includes so many immigrant non citizens (although this seems to be changing—see below), previous studies of political representation have overstated the under representation of Mexican Americans by including non-citizens among the minority population. In the studies of Black political representation (like Robinson and Dye, 1978),

very little bias is introduced by using total population instead of adult citizen population because whites and blacks have citizenship rates and age profiles that are very similar (see Table 1). The studies that have measured Hispanic political participation (Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1984; Guerra 1989; Guerra 1991) have adopted this same strategy of using total population figures, without taking into account the large problem of non-citizenship, and the smaller problem of an Hispanic population that is younger, and therefore has more non voters than the wider society. The data for adult citizen populations comes from the Public Use Micro Samples of the 1960 and 1970 census, and the November Current Population Surveys of 1978-1992.<sup>3</sup>

## Findings

California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado form the dominantly Mexican Southwest<sup>4</sup>. Among these five states, all but New Mexico show a pattern of electoral emergence in the early to mid 1970s<sup>5</sup>. The timing of the emergence of Mexican American electoralism is consistent with de la Garza et al. (1982), as well as with the authors who have reported findings only on California (Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1984; Guerra 1991). Crucial here is the identification of a general Mexican American entrance into electoral politics, what I will call the Mexican American electoral generation, starting in the early 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

What I endeavor to measure, in Figure 1, is the emergence of Hispanic electoralism, and more specifically Mexican American electoralism in the 5 Southwestern states. This emergence is judged by achievement of a steady level of electoral representation of at least 0.5 on the parity scale. This level corresponds roughly to Robinson and Dye's (1978) findings for the equilibrium level achieved by blacks in city politics in the U.S. Prior to 1970 there were a trickle of Hispanic elected officials. Early pioneers include Raymond Tellez, mayor of El Paso (elected in 1957—see M. Garcia 1989); Henry Gonzalez, congressman from Texas (elected 1960); Edward Roybal, congressman from California (elected 1962), and 'Los Cinco' who were elected to power in Crystal City, Texas in 1963 (see Shockley, 1974). The early pioneers are important historically, but what is more important sociologically is the achievement by a minority group of a steady and significant level of representation throughout the political system. This steady and significant level of electoral representation is both a marker of, and an engine for future political assimilation by the minority group.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note from the parity scores of Arizona, California, Texas, and Colorado that the gains in Mexican American elected representation that occurred during the 1970s reached a new stable level by 1980. The idea of a new threshold is important: the parity levels (roughly 0.5 to 0.8) reached in Arizona, Colorado,

California and Texas by the end of the 1970s have declined somewhat since 1980 but remained greater than 0.5 for 15 years, and this is what justifies the identification of a distinct phase of Mexican American electoralism.

## Discussion

Where are the historical antecedents and causes of the electoral generation? The 1975 extension of special protection under the Voting Rights Act to Hispanics (especially Mexican Americans in Texas—see Thernstrom, 1987) did not have important effects until the next period of decennial legislative redistricting, after 1980. Since Figure 1 shows that the crucial transition in Mexican American electoralism occurred before 1980, the transition cannot be due to the direct effects of the Voting Rights Act. In fact, both Thernstrom (1987) and Skerry (1993) point to the already developed state of Mexican electoralism in 1975 as evidence for their argument that Mexican Americans did not need the Voting Rights Act's substantial special protections. The comparison between the relatively developed state of Mexican American electoralism in 1975, and the abject exclusion of blacks from the electoral process in the American South in 1965 (the specific situation whose amelioration was the original goal of the Voting Rights Act in 1965) is instructive in this regard.

In order to address the origins of the electoral generation (and, by extension, its implications) I turn now to a more historical treatment of Mexican American politics. The starting point for this analysis is the generational view of Mexican American history introduced by Alvarez (1973), explored by García (1989), and implied by Acuña (1988), in which a Mexican American generation dominated by assimilationist organizations (like LULAC) in the 1950s is succeeded by a radical generation in the 1960s, and early 1970s which is in turn succeeded by a more assimilated, moderate period I call the electoral generation.

In its heyday (1968-1974) the Raza Unida Party (RUP) produced a stream of dedicated political cadres who helped to extend the reach of Mexican Americans into the electoral system in the U.S. These early forays into electoral politics included local elections in Crystal City, Texas and three races for governor of Texas. The first Mexican American political candidates in Illinois were both Chicano activists: John Chico in 1969 (see Acuña, 1988) and Rudy Lozano, a leader in the radical Chicano nationalist group CASA<sup>8</sup> (Centro de Acción Social Autónomo—see Taller de Estudios Comunitarios, n.d.) who was narrowly defeated in the Democratic primary for alderman in Chicago's 22nd ward in 1983. Other authors, including Guinier (1991) and Browning, Marshall and Tabb (1984) have noted that many of the first minority politicians have come from activist backgrounds.

Although the radicals played a crucial role in breaching electoral barriers, ironically the new electoral political strength proved to be a counter balance to the influence of the radicals, and groups like the RUP receded from prominence in the 1970s<sup>9</sup>. Ramsey Muñiz, the RUP candidate for governor of Texas got about 200,000 votes in 1972 and again in 1974. In 1978, with the RUP in disarray, their Texas gubernatorial candidate Mario Campean got only 15,000 votes (I. M. García, 1989). As the RUP lost influence, more moderate and mainstream political organizations, like Mexican American Democrats (MAD) stepped in to take their place.

In a classic account, Dahl (1961: 34) describes the emergence in 19th century New Haven of an ethnically based (mostly Irish) immigrant politics that challenged the patrician status quo in that city: “The very success of politicians who use the ethnic approach leads to the obsolescence of their strategy. As assimilation progresses, new unities and cleavages supersede the old...” Portes and Stepick (1993: 215) cite Dahl, and have made the same point with regards to Cuban politics in Miami: “... ethnic politics provides an effective vehicle for convergence because the achievement of political power socializes immigrants into the functioning of mainstream institutions and gives them the necessary ‘voice’ to feel that they are part of those institutions.” Politically assimilationist organizations such as NALEO (National Association of Latino Elected and appointed Officials) and SWVRP (South West Voter Registration Project) were founded in the 1970s, around the time when Mexican American electoralism became entrenched, to register Mexican American citizens, and to promote the idea of civic and electoral participation to Mexican Americans. SWVRP was founded by Willie Velasquez, a former RUP activist (I. M. García, 1989).

The new Mexican American electoral elite face a number of structural barriers in their quest to further integrate their constituents into routine American electoral politics. One barrier is, of course, the continuing stream of new Mexican immigrants. As I noted earlier, Mexican American legislative districts have many fewer potential and actual voters than other districts. The presence of so many electorally non viable adults tends to dilute the community’s interest in electoral politics, and limits the strength of the bond between the elected officials and their constituents. This situation, referred to by Skerry (1993: 249) somewhat hyperbolically as the problem of ‘rotten boroughs’ may increase Mexican Americans’ cynicism about electoral politics, but I think it would be hard to demonstrate that Mexican American politicians are any more out of touch with their constituents than other politicians. A second argument that has sometimes been proposed is that Mexican Americans are passive and cynical about electoral politics because of lessons learned from decades of experience with bureaucratic authoritarianism in Mexico. There are, however, millions of immigrants in the U.S. from countries considerably less democratic than Mexico, so this argument may be less than convincing.

The transition to the electoral generation has produced gains, but it has also left gaps in the political avenues open to Mexican Americans. The radical Chicano organizations were much more inclusive of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, in their rhetoric and in their political organizing than is the current spectrum of electorally oriented Mexican American civic organizations. The transition to electoral politics has meant a change from politics based on ethnicity to politics based on U.S. citizenship. The absence of an effective, powerful Chicano nationalist organization (an absence which is a direct legacy of the electoral generation's success) has left the Mexican American community with weakened defenses against attacks, such as California's Proposition 187 which explicitly targeted undocumented Mexican immigrants and also raised the level of xenophobia high enough to represent a threat to Mexican Americans in California.

The enormous flow of immigrants from Mexico represents political benefits as well as costs to the Mexican American community. Since the immigrants of today are often the parents of the Mexican Americans of tomorrow, the current wave of immigration will be the driving force behind a dramatic expansion of the Mexican American electoral base early in the next century. This electoral expansion may have important consequences in the electoral balance of power between whites, blacks and other ethnic groups. Skerry (1993) argues that while Mexican American political organizations tend to identify themselves with a coalition of minority interests, Mexican Americans themselves are deeply ambivalent about their minority status. While Mexican American politicians in the U.S. congress tend to find much common ground with black congressional leaders (both groups are predominantly Democratic, mostly urban, and largely progressive on fiscal issues), on the local level such black-Mexican coalitions have proven much harder to create or sustain. It is by no means certain, therefore, that the explosive growth of the Mexican American population will lead to political empowerment of other minority groups, such as blacks.

In presidential politics, the concentration of Mexican Americans in three important states (California, Texas, and Illinois) could potentially give Mexican American voters an important amount of leverage, but this leverage would depend on the state in question being very closely contested, and on Mexican American voters turning out at a high rate and voting as a block. While Mexican American voters have generally favored Democratic candidates over Republican in presidential elections in proportions almost high enough to qualify as 'block voting,' the low turnout of Mexican Americans, and the lower fund raising potential of the Mexican American community compared to other groups means that national candidates are likely to continue (at least in the short term) to view the Mexican American electorate as a marginal, rather than a central player. DeSipio and Rocha (1992) argued that Dukakis' successful courting of Mexican American

voters and organizations during the 1988 Democratic primaries was a key ingredient in his successful run for the nomination, especially in the Southwest. They also note, however, that once the primaries were over Latino political interests were quickly marginalized.

Finally, the political status of Mexican immigrants both in the U.S. and back home in Mexico has undergone rapid changes in the 1990s with eventual outcomes that are far from certain. There is substantial evidence that the long-standing trend of low naturalization rates for Mexican immigrants is being reversed. Naturalization applications received by the INS had been steadily below 300,000 for many years but rose to more than 500,000 in fiscal year 1995, 1.3 million in fiscal year 1996, and are expected to be even higher in 1997 (Migration News, 4 /97). Three factors seem to be motivating this unprecedented increase. First, the Democratic party in the U.S. applied pressure to speed up the naturalization process prior to the elections of 1996, because immigrants (especially Hispanic immigrants) were viewed as potential supporters of the Democratic party. The deluge of naturalization applications, and the reported pressure by the Clinton administration on the INS to speed the process up led to some embarrassing errors, including the failure to properly screen some applicants for prior criminal records (Migration News, 4 /97). The second factor has been changes in Mexican law which allow Mexicans who naturalize as U.S. citizens to retain their Mexican citizenship (which includes the right to own certain kinds of land in Mexico), and the law will also allow Mexican citizens in the U.S. to vote in Mexican elections as early as the year 2,000 (Migration News, 6 /97). These changes in Mexican law have removed important barriers that previously kept many Mexican immigrants from naturalizing. The third set of factors include the 1996 welfare reform and the general political climate which has targeted immigrants (even legal immigrants) and limited the social services and benefits for which they are eligible. In an anti-immigrant political environment, U.S. citizenship carries more benefits. If the new trend toward naturalization continues, the political power of Mexican Americans will undoubtedly grow because the number of potential voters will grow, and Mexican Americans will move closer towards fulfillment of their potential in electoral politics.

## Notes

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1. Bean and Tienda (1987) discuss the fact that the official U.S. census list of Hispanic surnames changed from one census to the next, so that census counts of Hispanics are not strictly comparable.

2. By far the largest survey of Hispanic political representation is NALEO (1994), whose data includes officials down to the school board level, but their data only goes back to 1984 and is therefore of only limited use in studying the long term trends.

3. The Hispanic share of the adult citizen population is much more stable than the Hispanic share of total population, because the latter reflects highly variable and difficult to measure levels of legal and especially illegal immigration. The 1960 census did not ask about citizenship, so citizenship rates for 1960-1970 have been determined by linear extrapolation from the rest of the data set. Hispanic share of adult citizen population in 1993-1995 is set to be equal to the Hispanic adult citizen share in 1992.

4. Among the other in my sample that I do not present here, Illinois has the smallest Hispanic population (just over 4% of total adult citizens in 1992) of the states in our sample and does not cross the 0.5 parity level until 1993. New York, with its heavily Puerto Rican Hispanic population (Hispanics make up about 6.5% of the adult citizen population of New York in 1992), also does not cross the 0.5 parity level until 1993. Both New York and Illinois show signs of a breakthrough into significant electoral representation, but the signs are too recent to allow for any conclusions at this time. Florida, with its mainly Cuban Hispanic population crosses the 0.5 parity level in the late 1980s. There is enough of a pattern in the data to conclude that the Cuban American population, which is located mainly in Florida, has made a transition into the realm of electoral politics. Given this evidence, I can identify a Cuban American electoral generation, beginning in the early to mid 1980s.

5. New Mexican exceptionalism has frequently been commented upon in the literature (Sierra, 1992; Pachon 1991; Padilla and Ramirez, 1974). The New Mexican population consists of Hispanics of Mexican extraction and also of the descendants of the Spanish conquistadors, called *Hispanos* (see Bean and Tienda, 1987). The citizenship rate of the Spanish surnamed population of New Mexico has fluctuated between 85% and 95% between 1970 and 1992. By comparison, less than 50% of California's Hispanic population are citizens (based on the CPS figures for 1988-1992). Among the other states, only Colorado has citizenship rates equal to those of New Mexico, and these high citizenship rates are also partly due to a centuries old population of *Hispanos*.

6. Because the data in this study consist of elected officials, the contours of Figure 1 do not describe the years of grassroots political mobilization that may precede the eventual electoral breakthrough.

7. It is assumed that the first electoral gains are probably made at the level of school boards and local offices, which are not captured in this data set. The achievement of sizable elective representation in state legislatures, state executive positions, and the U.S. congress generally represents a subsequent threshold.

8. CASA competed with the RUP for influence in the 1970s, and absorbed some of the RUPs activists when the RUP faded from the scene in the late 1970s.

9. This is not to suggest, of course, that radicalism has disappeared from the Mexican American political spectrum. The tradition of radicalism is far too rich to have disappeared, but it has certainly ceded its central position to the assimilationism of electoral politics.

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