

**Article: “Latino Politics in the United States”**  
**Author: Tony Affigne**  
**Issue: September 2000**  
**Journal: *PS: Political Science & Politics***

***This journal is published by the American Political Science Association. All rights reserved.***



---

APSA is posting this article for public view on its website. APSA journals are fully accessible to APSA members and institutional subscribers. To view the table of contents or abstracts from this or any of APSA's journals, please go to the website of our publisher Cambridge University Press (<http://journals.cambridge.org>).

This article may only be used for personal, non-commercial, or limited classroom use. For permissions for all other uses of this article should be directed to Cambridge University Press at [permissions@cup.org](mailto:permissions@cup.org).



## Latino Politics in the United States: An Introduction

Tony Affigne

*PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), 520-527.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1049-0965%28200009%2933%3A3%3C520%3ALPITUS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-2>

*PS: Political Science and Politics* is currently published by American Political Science Association.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/apsa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## Contributors to "Latino Politics in the United States"

**Tony Affigne**, associate professor of political science

and former director of black studies at Providence College, organized this symposium. He was founding co-chair of the APSA

Organized Section on Race, Ethnicity and Politics and the APSA Fund for Latino Scholarship. His research interests include comparative racial politics, political participation, Green Party politics, and labor politics. He is coauthor of *Race and Politics in the Americas* (New York University Press, forthcoming).



**Edwina Barvosa-Carter** is assistant professor of social and political theory in the department of Chicano studies at UC-Santa Barbara. She has published in *Contemporary Justice Review* (1999) and is currently revising her doctoral dissertation (Harvard, 1998) into a book titled *A Wealth of Selves: Multiple Identity and Democratic Citizenship*.



**Teresa Carrillo**, an associate professor of La Raza studies at San Francisco State University, teaches government and politics courses for the College of Ethnic Studies, and leads study tours to Mexico City. Her most recent publication, *Cross-Border Talk: Transnational Perspectives on Labor, Race and Sexuality* can be found in *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (MIT Press, 1999).



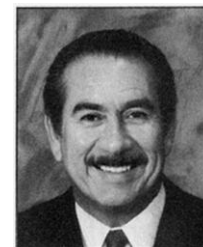
**Louis DeSipio** is associate professor of political science and interim director of the Latina/Latino Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is author of *Counting on the Latino Vote: Latinos as a New Electorate* (University Press of Virginia, 1996), and coauthor, with Rodolfo O. de la Garza, of *Making Americans/Remaking America: Immigration and Immigrant Policy* (Westview, 1998).



**Luis Ricardo Fraga** is associate professor of political science at Stanford University, with research and teaching interests in urban politics, racial and ethnic politics, voting rights, and educational policy. He is coauthor of "Theory, Reality, and Perpetual Potential: Latinos in the 1992 California Election," in *Ethnic Ironies: Latino Politics In The 1992 Elections* (Westview, 1996).



**F. Chris Garcia** is professor of political science and former provost at the University of New Mexico. He was a principal investigator for the Latino National Political Survey, and is the author, coauthor, or editor of numerous books and articles in the area of Latino politics, focusing on electoral behavior, political attitudes, and political socialization. He is editor of *Pursuing Power: Latinos and the Political System* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).



**John Garcia** is professor and former head of the department of political science at the University of Arizona. He was a principal investigator for the Latino National Political Survey, and has authored numerous books, chapters, and articles on Latino politics, including "The Chicano Movement: Its Legacy for Politics and Policy" in *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic and Political Change* (University of Arizona Press, 1996).



**Sonia Garcia** is assistant professor of political science at St. Mary's University (TX). She received her Ph.D. from University of California, Santa Barbara in 1997, her M.A. from the University of Arizona, and her B.A. from St. Mary's.



**Carol Hardy-Fanta** is research director at the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, and research affiliate at the Mauricio Gastón Institute, both at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She is author of *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston* (Temple University Press, 1993), and *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies and Prospects* (Garland, forthcoming).



**Rodney Hero** is professor of political science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. His research and teaching interests include U.S. democracy and governance, race and ethnicity, Latino politics, state and local politics and policy, and the intersection of these issues. He is author of *Faces of Inequality: Social Diversity in American Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1999).



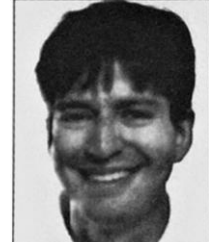
**James Jennings**

is professor of political science and senior fellow at the Trotter Institute, University of Massachusetts, Boston. He has published several books and articles focusing on black and Latino politics and urban affairs, including *The Politics of Black Empowerment* (Wayne State University Press, 1992) and *Understanding the Nature of Poverty in Urban America* (Praeger, 1996).



**Michael Jones-Correa**

is associate professor of government at Harvard University. His research interests include immigrant politics and interethnic relations in the United States. He is the author of *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City* (Cornell University Press, 1998).



**Linda Lopez** is an assistant professor and director of the legal studies program at Chapman University. She teaches courses in public law and is currently researching hate crime legislation and its impact on minority communities.



**Benjamin Marquez** is an associate professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His research interests include social movements, urban politics, and minority politics. He is the author of *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (University of Texas Press, 1993) and numerous articles on Mexican American politics. He is currently at work on a comparative study of identity formation in four Mexican American political networks.

**Valerie Martinez-Ebers**

is an associate professor of political science at Texas Christian University who specializes in policy analysis and program evaluation, especially the consequences of educational reforms for low-income, minority children. She is chair of the APSA Committee on the Status of Latinos y Latinas in the Profession.



**Lisa J. Montoya** is assistant professor of government at the University of Texas, Austin. Her research interests are Latino politics, political participation, and gender politics. She published "Latino Gender Differences in Public Opinion: Results from the Latino National Political Survey" in *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* (1996) and is currently writing a book on Latino gender politics.



**Harry Pachon** is president of The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, Kenan Professor of Political Studies at Pitzer College and Claremont Graduate University, and executive director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). He is coauthor of *New Americans by Choice: Political Perspectives of Latino Immigrants* (Westview, 1994).



**Ronald Schmidt Sr.**

is professor of political science at California State University, Long Beach. A member of the Latina/o Caucus in Political Science, he also serves on the APSA Committee on the Status of Latinos y Latinas in the Profession, and is a member of the executive committee of the Organized Section on Race, Ethnicity and Politics. His most recent publication is *Language Policy and Identity Politics in the United States* (Temple University Press, 2000).



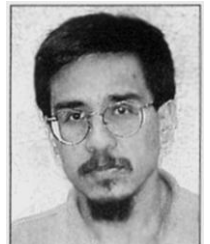
**Christine Marie Sierra** is associate professor of political science at the University of New Mexico, where she teaches and researches American racial and ethnic politics, Latina/o politics, and women in American politics. She has published research on Mexican American activism on immigration, and Latino politics in New Mexico.



**Rodolfo D. Torres** teaches urban political economy and social policy at the University of California, Irvine, where he is associate professor of education and a member of the Focused Research Program in Labor Studies. He is coauthor of *Latino Metropolis* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000).



**Arturo Vega** is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas, San Antonio. He is also the interim director of USTA's Metropolitan Research and Policy Institute. Vega teaches courses in U.S. Congress, ethnic and racial politics, research methods, and public policy.



American Political Science Association  
**MINORITY IDENTIFICATION PROJECT**

---

**THE CONCEPT**

The Minority Identification Project is a collaboration of undergraduate and graduate political science programs to attract talented minority undergraduate students to graduate study and, ultimately, to increase diversity in the political science profession.

Faculty in university and college undergraduate programs talk with minority students about professional careers in political science and send the names of promising minority candidates for graduate study to the APSA. Participating graduate institutions actively recruit students identified by the Project, and make special efforts to provide financial aid to those admitted to their programs.

---

**HOW TO PARTICIPATE**

The Minority Identification Project is open to all schools and students. If you are interested in any aspect of it, please contact:

Sue Davis at [sdavis@apsanet.org](mailto:sdavis@apsanet.org)  
Titilayo Ellis at [tellis@apsanet.org](mailto:tellis@apsanet.org)  
1527 New Hampshire Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
phone: 202/483-2512  
fax: 202/483-2657

**Here are some of the basic steps for participating:**

**Students:** If you would like more information about a career in political science and about the Minority Identification Project, contact your undergraduate advisor. Ask him/her to submit your name to APSA. You can also contact APSA directly.

**Undergraduate Faculty:** Please meet with your minority students as soon as possible in the academic year, and send APSA the names of those a) who would be promising graduate students, b) with whom you have met and discussed professional careers in political science, and c) who have expressed an interest in being included in this program. Send the name, current and permanent address, phone number, E-mail address, race/ethnicity, GPA, graduation year, and a brief comment (optional) that would offer insight into the student's academic and personal strengths to a graduate school recruiter. Please submit names of seniors and second semester Juniors by mid-April for the Spring Round and by mid-October for the Fall Round of the Minority ID Project.

**Graduate Schools:** Core graduate schools receive names of students and mailing labels by the end of April and October and may begin contacting students immediately. Other graduate schools interested in receiving the names of students identified in this program should contact Sue Davis or Titilayo Ellis at APSA.

---

**GRADUATE SCHOOL  
CORE PARTICIPANTS**

University of California at Berkeley  
University of California at Los Angeles  
University of California at San Diego  
University of California at Santa Barbara  
University of Chicago  
University of Colorado at Boulder  
Columbia University  
Cornell University  
Duke University  
Emory University  
Harvard University  
Howard University  
University of Illinois  
Indiana University  
University of Iowa  
Johns Hopkins University  
University of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Miami University  
University of Michigan  
University of Minnesota  
University of Missouri  
University of New Mexico  
University of New Orleans  
University of North Carolina  
Ohio State University  
University of Pennsylvania  
Princeton University  
University of Rochester  
Rutgers University  
University of Southern California  
Syracuse University  
University of Texas at Austin  
University of Virginia  
University of Washington  
Washington University  
Washington State University  
University of Wisconsin  
Yale University

# Latino Politics in the United States: An Introduction

At some unknown moment within the next seven years, the Latino population in the United States will surpass 40 million, and the nation will cross a profound political threshold. Across that transformation lies a national polity where, for the first time, Latinos will be the largest “minority” population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998). This shift occurs early in the post-Cold War period, in one of the world’s most important democratic arenas—national politics in the United States. Moreover, Latino politics are becoming more important just as the nation’s other communities of color also emerge politically.

Scholars of black politics rightly argue that black political empowerment has not to date resulted in social and economic equality, but the political enfranchisement of black Americans since the 1960s has nonetheless altered U.S. politics

beyond recognition (Barker, Jones and Tate 1999; Walton 1994).

Across the U.S., as in the rest of the Americas, local, state, and federal agencies face renewed assertions of sovereignty and land

rights by Native American nations (Alfred 1995; Deloria and Lytle [1984] 1998). And for three or more generations, U.S. communities of Asian and Pacific Islanders, including refugees from the 1965-73 U.S. war in Southeast Asia, have pursued their own political development, building Asian ethnic and panethnic organizations, electing increased numbers of Asian-descent public officials, and raising Asian participation levels (Espiritu 1992; Lien forthcoming; Takaki 1998). Latino emergence in the U.S. is thus part of a broader transition toward greater democratization and effective suffrage for ever-larger “non-white” (i.e., not of European descent) populations.

In the international context, Latino emergence takes place as economic integration, primarily through U.S.-sponsored structural adjustment in Latin America and the North American Free

Trade Agreement, reconstructs international relations in the American hemisphere. Against this backdrop of national and international political change, the central question of Latino politics is evident: How will continued growth of the Latino population, and Latino communities’ emergence to national political significance, affect U.S. politics, in the 2000 elections and into the future?<sup>1</sup>

To help readers understand coming changes, 21 leading scholars have collaborated to produce this special *PS* symposium on Latino politics. In six subject areas—electoral politics, social movements, immigration, gender, public policy, and identity—teams of authors explain central themes, summarize key findings, and suggest future directions for scholarship. Our goal is to help our political science colleagues, in their roles as teachers, researchers, writers, and citizens as this transformational period in political history unfolds.

## The Roots of the Latino Experience

Most people known in the United States today as “Hispanic”<sup>2</sup> or “Latino” are immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, from the former American colonies of the Spanish Empire, especially Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba (see Table 2). A small but significant number of Mexican Americans trace their U.S. residency to the mid-nineteenth century, when California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado, were seized by the U.S. from Mexico (Acuña 2000). These *hispanos*, the oldest of U.S. Latino communities, find themselves within the nation’s borders only because Mexico lost a war, and its northern territories, to the United States in 1848. Other Mexicans have migrated northward in years since. In Mexico, a turbulent social revolution in 1910 was followed by decades of economic and political crisis. Since then, drawn by strong, cyclical demand for low-wage labor, millions of Mexican workers and their families have

by  
**Tony Affigne,**  
Providence College  
*Symposium Organizer*

migrated to—and sometimes been expelled from—the United States (Griswold del Castillo and De León 1996; McWilliams [1948] 1990). From 1986 to 1996, nearly three million new Mexican immigrants were legally admitted to the U.S. (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1999). Mexican Americans now number more than 20 million, making theirs the largest of the Latino national-origin communities (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

Puerto Ricans also became subjects and then citizens of the United States by force, first when the Spanish Empire lost a war (and its colonies of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines) to the U.S. in 1898, and again in 1917, when Congress and President Wilson, ignoring overwhelming opposition on the island itself, assigned U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans (Fernandez 1992). By the 1920s, the ebb and flow of Puerto Rican migration to the industrial Northeast had begun; airfare from San Juan to New York fell as low as \$35 in the late 1940s (Mills, Senior, and Goldsen [1950] 1967). Operation Bootstrap in the 1950s made easy Puerto Rican labor migration official state policy, on the island and in Washington (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños 1979; Dietz 1986). About 4 million Puerto Ricans now live on the island, and more than 3 million others live on the mainland, all of whom are U.S. citizens at birth.

The Cuban American population of nearly 1.4 million is comprised largely of political and economic refugees (and their descendants) who emigrated to the United States following the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

Since the mid-1980s, these three oldest and largest Latino communities have seen their own populations swell with recent arrivals, and have been joined by new migrants from the Spanish Caribbean, Central America, and South America (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

## Latino Emergence

In May 1999, *U.S. News and World Report* breathlessly announced that “Suddenly, Latino Culture is Everywhere.” Television specials and feature articles in newspapers across the country are further testament to Latino emergence into U.S. national culture and political discourse. The cultural emergence reflects widespread changes in the U.S. ethnic demographic. Between 1990 and 1997, the Latino population, on the strength of increased child-rearing among Latino families and ongoing immigration, grew four times faster than the overall U.S. population.

By 2050, as the nation’s “minority” groups together become its majority population, Latinos will be the largest of them all, comprising more than one-fourth of the U.S. total, a share already surpassed in New Mexico, California, and Texas (see DeSipio 1998; Garcia 1997). Population growth has brought a more prominent economic role for Latino workers, consumers, and businesses, and widespread public exposure to the vibrant Latino aesthetic in food, art, music, and literature. Despite persistent negative stereotypes of Latinos, U.S. popular culture is being transformed by styles born in the Latino experience (Olivarez 1998).

Recent years have also seen the election of many Latino public officials. With large population shares in many of the nation’s most populous states—including nearly a third of all Californians, more than a fourth of Texans, one in five Arizonans, and about one-tenth of the people in Florida, Colorado, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois—Latino communities have become crucial variables in the calculation of electoral mathematics (de la Garza and DeSipio 1999; Pachon 1998).

At the same time, however, electoral participation rates among Latinos have been declining steadily, and are now at their lowest point since the mid-1970s, when national census data on Latino voting was first collected. By 1996, barely one-third (36%) of adult Latinos were registered to vote, and just over one-quarter (27%) actually cast ballots for president, a figure well below comparable rates for blacks and non-Latino whites (Affigne, Avalos, and Jackson 1999; Affigne and Lien 1998). Forty percent of Latino adults

**TABLE 1**  
**Overview of U.S. Latino<sup>a</sup> Population, 1999**

Latino Population <sup>b</sup>		31.7 million
Percent of Total U.S. Population		11.7
Noncitizens as Percentage of Latino Adults (18+)		39.2
Latinos as Percentage of Population (Projected)	2010	13.8
	2030	18.9
	2050	24.5

### *Latino Population Percentage in Selected States, 1997*

New Mexico	40.0%
California	30.8
Texas	29.4
Arizona	21.9
Florida	14.4
Colorado	14.3
New York	14.2
New Jersey	11.9
Illinois	9.9

Sources: Affigne, Avalos, and Jackson (1999); U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000).

<sup>a</sup>“Latino,” measured as the Census Bureau’s “Hispanic” category, includes some whites and blacks, but not Asians or Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Aleuts, or Eskimos.

<sup>b</sup>March 1, 1999. Current Population Survey estimate.

**TABLE 2**  
**U.S. Latinos by National Origin, 1999**

National Origin	Percent of All Latinos in the United States
Mexican American	65.2
Puerto Rican	9.6
Cuban American	4.3
All Other Hispanic <sup>a</sup>	20.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000).

<sup>a</sup>“Other Hispanic” includes people from the Dominican Republic, South America, and Central America, as well as Census respondents who self-identify as “Spaniard,” “Spanish,” or “Spanish American.”

participation, Partisanship, and Office Holding,” Rodney Hero, F. Chris Garcia, John Garcia, and Harry Pachon ask the fundamental question in Latino political behavior: Will the growing population of Latino adults become a more politically oriented and active community, or not?

The answer will depend, in part, on future patterns of immigration, the single most important force shaping contemporary Latino politics. Ongoing in-migration has changed the character of Latino communities, making them more complex, dynamic, and difficult to organize (de la Garza and DeSipio 1998). Recently, new Latino immigrants have come in greatest numbers from Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru. They

**TABLE 3**  
**Voting in the 1996 Election, by Race and Latino Origin**

Voter Identity	Voting Rate	
	Adult Citizens	All Adults
White	61	60
Black	53	51
Indian	46	45
Asian	46	26
Hispanic <sup>a</sup>	44	27

Sources: Lien (forthcoming); U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000).

Note: Identity of voter is self-reported. All populations are of age 18 and over. Each racial category is exclusive of the others.

<sup>a</sup>Hispanic respondents may be of any race.

are not U.S. citizens, accounting for a portion of the difference in turnout, but the voting gap between Latinos and whites persists even when only adult citizens are counted. Voting by U.S.-citizen Latinos in 1996 stood at just 44%, compared to 61% for non-Latino whites (See Table 3). In this symposium’s opening essay, “Latino Partici-

ation, Partisanship, and Office Holding,” Rodney Hero, F. Chris Garcia, John Garcia, and Harry Pachon ask the fundamental question in Latino political behavior: Will the growing population of Latino adults become a more politically oriented and active community, or not? The answer will depend, in part, on future patterns of immigration, the single most important force shaping contemporary Latino politics. Ongoing in-migration has changed the character of Latino communities, making them more complex, dynamic, and difficult to organize (de la Garza and DeSipio 1998). Recently, new Latino immigrants have come in greatest numbers from Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru. They have arrived as refugees from civil war or economic collapse, as manual workers for the U.S. agricultural, service, and industrial economies, or as higher-skilled, internationally-mobile professionals (DeFreitas 1991). Appropriately, then, Christine Marie Sierra, Teresa Carrillo, Louis DeSipio, and Michael Jones-Correa, in



Many Latinos have served with distinction in the U.S. military. The author’s grandfather, Juan Ramon Affigne (1891-1985), was in the U.S. Army in World War 1. This photograph of *mi abuelo* was taken in Paris in 1919, after the war ended, on his way home to Puerto Rico (family photo). The Jones Act of 1917 imposed U.S. citizenship on all Puerto Ricans, as President Woodrow Wilson’s Caribbean policies prepared for war with Germany (Fernandez 1992).

“Latino Immigration and Citizenship,” ask how U.S. politics and policy have influenced Latino immigration and naturalization rates, how immigration has shaped politics within Latino communities, and how immigration from Latin America to the United States influences transnational relations, especially between the U.S. and Mexico.

Continuing immigration may have suppressed levels of formal electoral participation, but it has not prevented Latino communities from engaging in political action through other means. Via social movement organizations—including, for example, the *mutualistas* at the turn of the century, civil and land rights organizations, labor unions, student, environmental justice, and neighborhood groups, and, in one case, an ethnically-based political party (La Raza Unida)—Latinos have a long history of political action beyond the boundaries of formal politics. Benjamin Marquez and James Jennings, in “Representation by Other Means: Mexican American and Puerto Rican Social Movement Organizations,” examine the history of these *movimientos latinos*, as well as their role in contempo-

**TABLE 4**  
**Immigration from Spanish**  
**America<sup>a</sup> to the United**  
**States, 1986–96**

Country	Cumulative Immigration 1986–96 <sup>b</sup>
Mexico	2,969,595
Dominican Republic	405,239
El Salvador	319,369
Cuba	195,215
Colombia	154,523
Guatemala	138,245
Peru	109,299
Nicaragua	80,266
Ecuador	79,073
Honduras	75,133

Source: INS (1999a).

Note: These data report immigrants from other countries “admitted” to the United States, and do not show immigrants who *entered* the U.S. legally, but are awaiting final disposition. “Admission” is a legal definition, representing individuals whose applications for permanent legal residence have been finally approved. In mid-1999, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was processing more than 800,000 pending applications, about 93% of which were likely to be approved.

<sup>a</sup>Puerto Rican migrations to the mainland are legally equivalent to relocation among U.S. states, and are not reported. In addition to the 10 countries listed, other legal immigrants were admitted from Argentina, Panama, Venezuela, Chile, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

<sup>b</sup>Legal immigration only; estimates of undocumented immigration during the same period vary widely, are not reliable, and are not reported here.

health care, police, crime and justice, immigration, election rules, labor rights, and the balance of power between black and Latino, or Native American and Latino, communities. In “Latino Interests in Education, Health and Criminal Justice Policy,” Valerie Martinez-Ebers, Luis Fraga, Linda Lopez, and Arturo Vega explore how the assertion of Latino interests might reshape—indeed, is already reshaping—national social policies. They review Latino status in educational, health care, and criminal justice systems, and make policy recommendations for each area, reflecting the interests of Latinos and their communities.

rary Latino politics, focusing on the nation’s two largest Latino communities. Marquez and Jennings show that the roots of modern Mexican American and Puerto Rican politics can be found in those communities’ long histories of struggle for human and political rights.

The growing importance of Latino politics can also be seen in public policy conflicts. In areas of the United States where the Latino population has grown rapidly, sharp debate over social policy has been the result; high-profile referenda in California, widely understood by Latinos to be an attack on their livelihoods, family services, and educational and civil rights, are just the most visible examples. Across the country, Latino publics are involved in conflicts over education, language policy,

## Latina/o Political Studies: The Challenges of Culture and Complexity

While the U.S. is becoming more familiar with Latinos, many deeper features of Latino cultures, especially those arising from racial, economic, religious, and political diversity, are profoundly misunderstood by the broader Anglo dominated society. In earlier times, public awareness of Latino cultures and political interests was limited to the three areas of the country where Latinos were most numerous: the Southwest (Mexican Americans), the New York City area (Puerto Ricans), and South Florida (Cuban Americans). Now, however, steady in-migration from Latin America, and population shifts within the U.S., mean that wider regions of the country face the relatively new challenge of representing—or not—the political interests of Latinos.

Meeting the challenge is not simple, however, because there are many interests, and many subgroups, within Latino populations. In particular, national culture, gender, race, social class, citizenship status, ideology, and language mark cleavages among Latinos. Unfortunately, there is much we do not know about these groups because, for many questions, an absence of data makes it impossible to draw firm conclusions. The politics of gender in Latino communities is one area with wide gaps in political science knowledge. What is the nature of Latina participation in politics? How can we answer this question with so little evidence? Lisa Montoya, Carol Hardy-Fanta, and Sonia Garcia write in “Latina Politics: Gender, Participation and Leadership” that “until recently, most books on Latino politics had no articles on women’s participation and leadership.” Their essay draws on recent progress, reviewing what has been learned about Latina participation, gender, and political behavior, and about Latinas in both community politics and elite leadership.

Other aspects of the Latino experience also complicate Latino political studies. As one example, racial mixture (*mestizaje*), and the social norms of 500-year old, racially mixed and stratified cultures, very different from Jim Crow apartheid in the U.S., have been central features of Latin American societies (Sagrera 1998; Wade 1997). The Census Bureau is not exaggerating when it reminds users of official racial and ethnic data that “Hispanics [may be] of any race.” Yet “Hispanic” itself is not a “race,” although the tendency in U.S. political discourse, and in political science, has been to racialize all Latinos, ignoring the multiple diversities of Latino life and defining the group in strictly racial terms. In “Latina/o Identities: Social Diversity and U.S. Politics,” Ronald Schmidt Sr., Edwina Barvosa-Carter, and Rodolfo Torres look closely at the racialization of Latino identity. They argue against such monolithic social constructions, instead advocating contextual perspectives that reflect the complexity, and diverse identities, of the Latina/o experience. How, their essay challenges scholars to wonder, can models of political action represent Latino interests and behaviors when underlying theories ignore the lived experience of Latinas and Latinos?

## The PS Symposium on Latino Politics

As readers will see, the articles in this symposium offer an introduction to key themes in Latino political studies. As broad and rich as they are, though, it is impossible to cover the entire field in just six articles.

### Notes

1. These articles were written between November 1999 and May 2000. Consequently, the authors have made no attempts to draw specific conclusions about Latinos' voting patterns or policy interests in this year's elections. They have tried, however, to provide contextual data and historical background to facilitate analysis and interpretation of Latino participation in the 2000 elections.

### References

- Acuña, Rodolfo. 2000. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. New York: Longman.
- Affigne, Tony, Manuel Avalos, and Njeri Jackson. 1999. "Latino Politics in the United States: Building a Race-Conscious, Gendered and Historical Analysis." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta.
- , and Pei-te Lien. 1998. "Race, Politics, and Asian Peoples of the Americas: Lessons and Theoretical Implications." Presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Los Angeles.
- Alfred, Taiaiake (Gerald). 1995. *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Barker, Lucius, Mack H. Jones, and Katherine Tate. 1999. *African Americans and the American Political System*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, History Task Force. 1979. *Labor Migration under Capitalism: The Puerto Rican Experience*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- DeFreitas, Gregory. 1991. *Inequality at Work: Hispanics in the U.S. Labor Force*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O., and Louis DeSipio. 1998. *Making Americans, Remaking America: Immigration and Immigrant Policy*. Boulder: Westview.
- , 1999. *Awash in the Mainstream: Latino Politics in the 1996 Election*. Boulder: Westview.
- Deloria, Vine, and Clifford M. Lytle. [1984] 1998. *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- DeSipio, Louis. 1998. *Counting on the Latino Vote: Latinos as a New Electorate*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Dietz, James L. 1986. *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Espiritu, Yen Le. 1992. *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Fernandez, Ronald. 1992. *The Disenchanted Island: Puerto Rico and the United States in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Praeger.
- Garcia, F. Chris, ed. 1997. *Pursuing Power: Latinos and the Political System*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Griswold del Castillo, Richard, and Arnoldo De León. 1996. *North to Aztlán: A History of Mexican Americans in the United States*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Lien, Pei-te. Forthcoming. *Remaking Asian America through Political Participation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- McWilliams, Carey. [1948] 1990. *North from Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Mills, C. Wright, Clarence Senior, and Rose Kohn Goldsen. [1950] 1967. *The Puerto Rican Journey: New York's Newest Migrants*. New York: Russell & Russell.
- Olivarez, Adriana. 1998. "Studying Representations of U.S. Latino Culture." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 22(4): 426-37.
- Pachon, Harry P. 1998. "Latino Politics in the Golden State: Ready for the 21st Century?" In *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California*, ed. Michael B. Preston, Bruce E. Cain, and Sandra Bass. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies Press.
- Sagrera, Martín. 1998. *Los Racismos en las Americas: Una Interpretación Histórica*. Madrid: IEPALA.
- "Suddenly, Latino Culture is Everywhere." 1999. *U.S. News and World Report*, May 24, 61.
- Takaki, Ronald. 1998. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Rev. ed. Boston: Little, Brown.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2000. "The Hispanic Population of the United States: Population Characteristics." *Current Population Reports*. P20-527. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.
- , Population Estimates Program. 1998. *Resident Population Estimates of the United States by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, April 1, 1990 to June 1, 1999*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.
- U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. 1999. *Legal Immigration, Fiscal Year 1998*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Wade, Peter. 1997. *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*. London: Pluto Press.
- Walton, Hanes Jr., ed. 1994. *Black Politics and Black Political Behavior: A Linkage Analysis*. New York: Praeger.

As for the inevitable omissions, the authors trust that increasing numbers of scholars will take up the challenge of studying Latino politics, and fully incorporating the Latino experience into their teaching and research. All of the symposium authors join me in offering these essays, as our contribution to encouraging further work in the field.

2. The government officially uses the term "Hispanic" to categorize and describe such individuals, and it and "Latino" are generally used interchangeably. For the sake of consistency, and to avoid confusion, the contributors to this symposium generally use "Latino" and its variants except when quoting from other sources.