

EXCERPTED FROM

**Latino Political Power**

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## Pathways to Incorporation

In 1963, an electoral nonviolent revolution took place in the south Texas town of Crystal City. While no shots were fired, the impact of what took place has reverberated for more than forty years. Fed up with the domination of an entrenched Anglo leadership that controlled the politics of the local schools, city council, and economic affairs of the town, an alliance formed between the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO) and the Teamsters Union to change local politics. Led by Juan Cornejo, a local leader of the cannery workers' division of Teamsters, a dedicated group of Mexican American political activists organized to topple the entrenched Anglo political leaders and replace them with five Mexican American city council members.<sup>1</sup> This bold action, long overdue in a town with a 75 percent Mexican population, launched the contemporary movement for political incorporation by Mexican Americans and other Latinos throughout the United States. This book introduces the reader to the efforts of countless numbers of Latinos who have sought to fully participate in the U.S. political system at its most basic level, as voters, political participants, candidates for office, and officeholders.

A largely untold story in American politics is the ascension of Latinos to elected office nationwide. In the early years of the twenty-first century there are Latino elected officials at the local, state, and federal level; many have achieved elected office fairly recently due to changing political structures, demographics, and Latinos' growing awareness of the importance of holding political power. Although there is uneven progress in the extent of office holding from state to state and community to community, Latinos have established considerable influence statewide in several key Electoral College states, including California, Florida, and Texas. Latinos are also the dominant influence in numerous large cities, such as Miami and San Antonio, and have growing influence in other cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Jose.

Yet Latinos in political office are not a new phenomenon in the United States. Spanish and Mexican settlers arrived in the late 1500s and established settlements and governed themselves in the northern New Mexico area beginning in the early 1600s under the sovereignty of Spain and Mexico.<sup>2</sup> After the United States annexed the northern half of Mexico in 1848, following the war between the United States and Mexico, the New Mexico region became a U.S. territory. The Hispano descendants continued to govern themselves until New Mexico became a state in 1912. Mexicans who remained in the Southwest region of the United States following the annexation of northern Mexico became U.S. citizens; over the next 100 years some of them were elected to political office, including city council and mayor, U.S. senator, U.S. House of Representatives member, and governor. Outside of New Mexico, however, only a handful of Latinos were elected to office; by and large Latinos remained marginalized in the U.S. electoral arena. This began to change in the 1960s.

This book is a comparative analysis of the diversity of Latino politics. It explores the political struggles of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Colombians, and other Latinos in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the United States to make a transition from marginalized descendants of the Spanish conquest and indigenous peoples, to immigrants and political refugees, and to officeholders and decision makers. While the media have begun to focus on the growing significance of the Latino vote for presidential elections, the development of Latino political efforts at the state and local levels has not received much coverage. The aim of this book is to explain one facet of a larger story of the Latino political experience—the efforts of Latinos to obtain political power, particularly at the local level, where the forces of opposition to their efforts at achieving political equality have been most virulent.

The purpose of this book is twofold: (1) to describe the transition of Latinos from disenfranchised outsiders to political leaders and policymakers at the local level and, increasingly, at the statewide level, and (2) to observe the relationships they hold with their ethnic communities as candidates and as elected officials. I examine to what degree Latino elected officials are sensitive to ethnic community concerns and whether they deliver policy benefits to their communities. This book highlights how Latinos have achieved political empowerment and how they have provided leadership in office. After obtaining elected office, not all Latinos act the same. Some are more responsive to ethnic community needs; others are more attentive to concerns of the larger communities they serve; still others straddle ethnic community needs and universal needs in their policymaking priorities. This chapter begins with a discussion of key terms used in the text, including the racialization process of Latinos; then the underrepresent-

tation of Latinos in politics is briefly reviewed. Next, an exploration of the growing impact Latinos are having on electoral power in the twenty-first century provides a look into contemporary Latino politics. This is followed by a discussion of the concepts explored in the text, including representation and political incorporation.

What is Latino politics? A discussion of the terms used in this text must by necessity begin with a definition of *politics*. Politics is the study of who gets what, when, and how. The *who* are the participants in politics, including voters, interest groups, political parties, and elected and appointed government officials. The *what* are the public policies produced by the political system in areas such as education, health care, and national defense. *When* and *how* refer to the dynamics of the political process, including campaigns for office and elections, implementation of legislation, and decisions made by the courts.<sup>3</sup>

In this book, the term *Latino* is used to refer to all individuals originally from Spanish-speaking regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. *Latino* does not refer to a specific race of people, rather it is inclusive of indigenous, white, black, Asian, and mixed-race people. As Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Mariela Paez note, “The Latino population is a highly heterogeneous population that defies easy generalizations.”<sup>4</sup> The term *Latino politics* will be used to refer 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.

The term *Hispanic* is used by the U.S. government, and some who self-identify themselves, to include anyone from a Spanish-speaking region, including Spain. This term will be used sparingly, except where it refers to a governmental designation or in those instances where this is the chosen self-designation. While *Hispanic* is controversial in some quarters, in a recent survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, it was preferred over other such terms.<sup>5</sup>

*Mexican American* and *Chicano* are used to refer to people of Mexican descent raised in the United States. The term *Chicano* became popular among Mexican American political activists in the late 1960s as a means of political self-definition, and it retains popularity today. Others from a Spanish-origin population apply terms such as *Hispano*, *Spanish American*, and *Latin* to their heritage. *Tejanos* and *Californios* are used to refer to Mexicans who lived in what is now the U.S. Southwest before its annexation in 1848. Where possible, the word or term used in previous research or in a group or person’s self-identification is used. *White* and *Anglo* are used to refer to non-Latino Caucasians, and *black* and *African American* are used to refer to residents of the United States with an African heritage. People from the Caribbean islands are referred to by their country of origin; simi-

larly, persons from Central and South America are referred to by their country of origin.

In spite of the diversity among Latinos, a common political legacy has been formed by their collective experiences and identity. This is not to say each distinct national-origin group does not have unique political as well as other characteristics, but the dominant U.S. political system has racialized Spanish-speaking peoples from throughout the hemisphere into a broad category known by labels such as *Latino*, *Hispanic*, and *Hispanic American*. In other circumstances, multiple national-origin groups of Latinos are racially lumped into one predominant group such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban by those outside the Latino community, such as government agencies, the English-speaking media, and the public. In both instances, this has the effect of diluting national distinctions, and many Latinos find such dilution problematic.

Racialization is “the construction of racially unequal social hierarchies characterized by dominant and subordinate social relations between groups.”<sup>6</sup> One form racialization takes is the U.S. government’s use of racial and ethnic categories for census enumeration and apportionment for political representation. After each ten-year census, federal, state, and local governments redivide political boundaries based in part on broad racial and group categories, including Hispanic. This process groups together all persons with Spanish-speaking origins and countries. The lumping of peoples from throughout the Americas into one category masks important political and social differences among Latinos, such as the influence of homeland politics, national-origin distinctions, party affiliation, citizenship status, and ideological beliefs. On the positive side, the commonality of a panethnic designation has brought Latinos together to work for shared political goals including civil rights, redistricting of electoral boundaries, support for bilingual education, and equal opportunity.

Still, despite efforts at cooperation among Latino ethnic groups and the growth of panethnic organizations, in the present period there is no political agenda adhered to by all Latinos. The heterogeneity of political views among the major ethnic groups, the lack of an identifiable national leader (or leaders) who could unite all Latinos around a common program, and a high percentage of new immigrants in the Latino community with strong ties to their country of origin make political unity difficult in the short run. While Latinos tend to agree on some social issues such as support for bilingual education, they are not united in their views on other issues, such as immigration—particularly undocumented immigrants. In 2004, 60 percent of registered Latinos believed undocumented immigrants help the economy, while more than 30 percent said these immigrants hurt the economy by driving down wages.<sup>7</sup> This disharmony does not permit the development of a political agenda that would unite Latinos nationally. Instead, the presence

of Democrat and Republican Latinos in Congress and in several state legislatures reflects political and more fundamental ideological differences and has resulted in distinct Latino caucuses based on party affiliation at the state and federal levels.

Nevertheless, as racial minorities in the United States, the majority of Latinos find themselves in barrios with poor educational institutions, where crime and drugs are prevalent, and where politically they have been disenfranchised until very recently. This book makes the case that the Latino community in the twenty-first century has developed common political experiences, whether they live in Lawrence, Massachusetts; Orlando, Florida; Brownsville, Texas; Cicero, Illinois; Pueblo, Colorado; or Oakland, California, and these similar experiences cross state lines and regional particularities. Today, a typical group experience of Latinos, whether they are American born or immigrant, involves participating in efforts to achieve political incorporation at the local level and beyond. In some instances, Latinos join together as Latinos, not simply as an alliance of national-origin Latinos. Other times there is a go-it-alone attitude, with an emphasis on national-origin compatriots. This is both a unique and not so unique experience: like African Americans and other racial minorities, Latinos have learned they need to join together to increase their opportunities for advancement, yet at times there is only limited cooperation among Latino national-origin groups. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that a distinct brand of politics known as Latino politics has emerged in the United States. Time will tell whether it becomes established as a distinctive form of politics or becomes more similar to the political activities of other groups.

### ■ The Underrepresentation of Latinos

Historically, the domination of politics and economics by Anglos was almost universal in the United States. There were virtually no nonwhite elected officials until the 1950s, except in New Mexico and a few local areas. The emergence of the modern Latino civil rights and nationalist movements in the 1960s and 1970s forced open the political process to an ethnic group previously disenfranchised.<sup>8</sup> Latinos used a variety of methods to gain entrance to institutions that had previously excluded them, “but underrepresentation remained the rule.”<sup>9</sup> Inequalities in employment, unequal access to education, limited opportunities for social advancement, and a cultural bias that privileged the language, customs, and values of whites were difficult to overcome. According to pluralist theory, an important theory in the study of U.S. politics, power is dispersed in society somewhat equally among various groups and institutions; thus no one group

dominates the full policy agenda in American politics. However, the experiences of racial minorities, including Latinos, reveal continuing major disparities between whites and nonwhites in the political sphere and other aspects of society. Conventional pluralism is unable to explain why racial minorities have little power in our society despite the growth of interest groups focused on equality. The theory of two-tiered pluralism more accurately describes the system's formal political inclusion of minorities with whites while minorities remain marginalized with few avenues for full participation and equality.<sup>10</sup>

The political legacy of discrimination and marginalization of minority groups is manifested in underrepresentation in elected offices. According to one author, "When marginalized groups are chronically underrepresented in legislative bodies, citizens who are members of those groups are not fairly represented."<sup>11</sup> The extent of electoral empowerment of racial minorities can be viewed as a measure of whether the U.S. political system can be categorized as just: "Equal access to decision making is therefore defined as an equal opportunity to influence the policy-making process. Such a situation has two elements: a realistic opportunity to participate on the basis of self-defined interests and a continuous opportunity to hold representatives accountable to community-based interests."<sup>12</sup>

To gain access to the electoral process, Latinos have used grassroots activism, legal challenges, and group protest.<sup>13</sup> The passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the extension of voting rights legislation to language minorities in 1975, the elimination of structural barriers to participation, and the creation of single-member districts eliminated many formal barriers to inclusion.

These legal and structural changes, combined with group mobilization efforts, have enabled Latinos to hold elected office in locations, and in numbers, not previously possible. In 1973, a few years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, there were only 1,280 Spanish-surnamed officials in the six largest Latino-population states.<sup>14</sup> The growth of Latino political efforts in the post-civil rights era of the 1980s and 1990s is evident in the numbers of Latinos who hold elective office at all levels of government. In 2004, there were 4,853 Latino elected officials, 29 percent of them Latinas (see Table 1.1).

Yet the total number of Latino elected officials (LEOs) is still woefully discrepant with Latinos' percentage of population. The 4,853 LEOs listed in Table 1.1 represented less than 1 percent of the nation's 513,200 elected officials,<sup>15</sup> while the Latino population had risen from 9 to 12.5 percent between 1990 and 2000.<sup>16</sup> By comparison, there were 9,101 African Americans in office in 2001,<sup>17</sup> and African Americans were also 12.5 percent of the total population in 2000. Thus the number of African American elected officials is nearly double the number of LEOs for a comparable

**Table 1.1 Total Latino Elected Officials, 2004**

Level of Office	Number of Males	Number (and Percentage) of Latinas	Total
U.S. representative	15	7 (47)	22
State officials	7	3 (43)	10
State senators	41	20 (49)	61
State representatives	119	41 (34)	160
County officials	307	167 (54)	474
Municipal officials	1,188	397 (33)	1,585
Judicial/law enforcement	488	150 (31)	638
Education/school boards <sup>a</sup>	1,118	605 (54)	1,723
Special districts	143	37 (26)	180
Total	3,426	1,427 (29)	4,853

Source: National Directory of Latino Elected Officials (2004).

Note: a. Does not include Chicago local school council members.

minority population. While the number of African American elected officials still falls far short of their percentage of the population, their larger number relative to LEOs reflects several factors, including the long struggle to obtain the right to vote in the South and a high rate of U.S. citizenship, which has enabled more African Americans to participate in the voting process and vote for an African American candidate.<sup>18</sup>

The imbalance in the number of LEOs relative to the Latino percentage of the population reflects a combination of factors, including the legacy of exclusion and structural barriers faced by Latino candidates for office, low participation rates in politics among Latino groups, and a high percentage of immigrants who are not yet engaged in politics. Latino elected officials are concentrated in nine states, including three of the four largest states in the country (see Table 1.2). These nine states represented 82 percent of the

**Table 1.2 LEOs in Selected States, 2003**

State	Total
Arizona	363
California	987
Florida	91
Colorado	149
New York	89
Texas	1,967
New Mexico	634
Illinois <sup>a</sup>	78
New Jersey	76
Total	4,434

Source: NALEO Education Fund (2003).

Note: a. The number of officials from Illinois does not include local school site councils.



Latino population and accounted for more than 96 percent of Latino elected officials in 2003. In California, New Mexico, and Texas, LEOs represented 75 percent of all Latinos elected in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

### ■ The Impact of Latinos in Recent Electoral Campaigns

While historically Latinos have enjoyed very limited electoral success, this is beginning to change. The growth and presence of Latinos in electoral politics is evident in recent high-profile electoral campaigns in the Southwest and other areas in the United States. In 2001, in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston—three of the four largest U.S. cities—Latino politicians mounted well-funded, credible challenges for the office of mayor. In 2002, Latino candidates in Texas and New Mexico sought the governorship and ran highly competitive campaigns. The unsuccessful campaign of Tony Sanchez in Texas and the successful campaign of Bill Richardson in New Mexico (both were Democrats) illustrate the difficulties and the opportunities for Latinos to achieve statewide elected office. In November 2004, two Latino candidates, Mel Martinez from Florida and Ken Salazar from Colorado, made political history by becoming the first Latinos elected to serve in the U.S. Senate in nearly thirty years. Also, “John Salazar, the brother of U.S. Senator elect Ken Salazar, became the first Latino elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from the State of Colorado, bringing the total number of Latinos in Congress to 27.”<sup>20</sup>

Tony Sanchez’s race took place within a highly racialized atmosphere in Texas. Sanchez was attempting to defeat incumbent Rick Perry, who had been elected after George W. Bush was elected president. Sanchez, a wealthy south Texas oilman, spent millions of his own money in the attempt to win elected office. He had never held elected office previously and ran against an established politician. Sanchez did very well in heavily Mexican districts and did poorly among white voters. According to an exit poll, 85 percent of Latino voters voted for him.<sup>21</sup> Bill Richardson, meanwhile, was successful in New Mexico, where Latinos make up more than 40 percent of the population. Richardson had name recognition and had been previously elected to a high-level office. His opponent was also Mexican American, so racial dynamics were less apparent in the outcome of this race.

In the 2001 mayoral races, racial dynamics and locations of certain contests in the Northeast, South, and Southwest illustrate the growing strength of, and problems confronting, Latino politics nationally. Latino politicians ran historic campaigns for mayor and nearly won their elections in three of America’s largest cities and were successful in numerous other cities. New York City uses a partisan election format: candidates compete

in party primaries first and then compete with the opposing party candidates in the general election. If no candidate in the primary election receives 50 percent of the vote, then a runoff election is held between the two top vote getters. Fernando Ferrer, a seasoned Puerto Rican political veteran, was the leading vote getter in the Democratic Party primary but was defeated in a tight runoff by Mark Green, a liberal white candidate. Ferrer's defeat came despite his having built a coalition of African Americans and Latinos. While Latinos and blacks together make up 51.5 percent of New York City's population, they make up a much smaller percentage of the voters. While Ferrer won 70 percent of African American votes, he only gained 20 percent of white votes, and he failed to mobilize enough Latino voters to the polls. In the primary runoff, white ethnic voters, whose votes were originally divided between three white candidates, voted en masse for Green. In the runoff, Latinos and African Americans were angry that Green had wooed white voters with racial code words in his final campaign ads, implying that Ferrer could not be trusted and criticizing his connection to Al Sharpton, a well-known African American community activist (and presidential candidate in 2004).

After the Green victory, his campaign was unable to smooth over the problems with Ferrer and Sharpton. Many Latino and black voters responded by either switching allegiances or sitting out the general election. In the general election, Republican candidate Michael Bloomberg defeated Mark Green. In a city with a 4:1 Democratic Party registered-voter lead over Republican voters, the impact of race was undeniable in the final vote outcome.

Los Angeles uses a nonpartisan election format for mayor, and the first candidate to receive 50 percent of the vote wins. If no candidate gains 50 percent of the vote, a runoff election is held between the top two candidates. Antonio Villaraigosa, a popular Mexican American former State Assembly member who rose quickly to become the speaker of the California State Assembly, built a broad coalition of Latinos, labor, and liberals to become the top vote getter in the general election. He was defeated in the runoff, however, to James Hahn, a white liberal who had served as the Los Angeles City attorney for twenty years.

While Villaraigosa was successful in establishing a broad left-liberal coalition, Hahn won by carrying mainstream and conservative white voters from the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles and a decisive 80 percent of the black vote. Two very important, perhaps decisive, factors were Hahn's extensive family ties to the black community (his father was a long-time county supervisor and had mentored many African Americans who rose to become senior leaders in the area) and some questionable ads that marred the campaign. Latino leaders charged that Hahn trafficked in racial stereotypes with a last-minute campaign ad that criticized Villaraigosa for

supporting amnesty for a drug dealer and linked his image to the use of crack cocaine and drug dealing. In a city with a Latino population of 48 percent, Villaraigosa lost 54–46 percent in the runoff election.

In Houston, the mayor's election is a two-stage process. The general election involves multiple candidates, as there are no party primaries. Candidates are not formally labeled by party affiliation. If no one candidate obtains a majority of the votes, a runoff between the two highest voter getters is held. In 2001, Orlando Sanchez, a Cuban American Republican at-large member of the city council, was one of two top vote getters in the general election. In the runoff, Sanchez put together a campaign that combined a heavy focus on Latinos and white conservative voters. He stressed cultural and linguistic pride and fiscal conservatism. Well-known African American incumbent mayor Lee Brown narrowly defeated him.<sup>22</sup>

These big-city mayoral campaigns, along with the Southwest governor's races, the U.S. senatorial campaigns, and the growing number and influence of Latino voters, signal the arrival of Latino politics on the national scene. The Villaraigosa campaign took place in the city with the largest number of Latinos, primarily of Mexican descent, in the country. Latinos make up nearly the majority of the population of Los Angeles and are on the cusp of leading a dramatic transition to a new Los Angeles in the twenty-first century, where Latinos will numerically dominate but have yet to achieve political leadership. In New York City, the 2001 mayoral campaign was overshadowed by the terrorist attack on September 11. Nevertheless, the Ferrer campaign also broke new ground in big-city politics, particularly in the Northeast, home to large numbers of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other new immigrant Latino voters. With 27 percent of the New York City population, the Latino community has a significant number of voters. The Sanchez campaign for governor of Texas was significant because it demonstrated the ability of a wealthy individual of Mexican descent to fund a major campaign for office in the second-largest state in the country. The Richardson electoral victory in New Mexico reestablished the importance of Latinos in a state that contains the highest percentage of Latino voters in the country. The Martinez and Salazar campaigns for U.S. Senate broke new ground in demonstrating the statewide appeal of credible, well-funded Latino candidates from both political parties.

With much less national publicity, Latinos were successful in retaining or winning the office of mayor in Albuquerque, Austin, El Paso, Miami, and San Antonio in 2001. San Antonio is America's ninth largest city, and of the ten largest cities, it is the only one with a majority Latino population. San Antonio is also a historic center of Mexican American politics. Ed Garza's campaign enabled a Mexican American to win the mayor's office, which had not been held by a Mexican American since Henry Cisneros's terms (1981–1989).

Meanwhile, in hundreds of cities, counties, school districts, and state capitols around the country, Latinos continued their steady march toward political empowerment as they won election to office or were returned as incumbents. In Connecticut in 2001, Eddie Perez became the first Puerto Rican elected mayor of Hartford, the state capital, after fashioning a multi-ethnic coalition. Perez, a community activist, won election in a city with a 40 percent Latino population and signaled the growing influence of Latinos in the Northeast region.<sup>23</sup>

Latinos in the United States are still searching for means to increase their political clout. While they recently became the nation's largest minority group, they are not a homogenous political voting block; this diversity represents a challenge for both major parties. In addition to their voting behavior, the attainment of political power by Latinos is tied to a number of factors including their economic resources, demographics in electoral districts, and influence in political parties. There are also issues of social class and racial identity, the role of grassroots organizing, and the use of various electoral strategies to achieve power. All of these need to be considered to determine their usefulness as explanatory factors in a study of Latinos politics and political representation.

### ■ Latinos and Representation in Government

Political representation has been the focus of the struggle for political equality by people of color, women, and others historically disadvantaged. *Political representation* refers to a prescribed relationship between elected officials and constituents. There are different dimensions of representation: formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive.<sup>24</sup> Descriptive representation for people of color matches the race, ethnicity, or national origin of the representative and his or her constituents.<sup>25</sup> As one author states, "Voters want to see someone who looks like them in office. Black voters tend to support black candidates and Hispanic voters tend to support Hispanic candidates."<sup>26</sup> The highest form of representation is substantive representation, where a representative acts in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them.<sup>27</sup> The main component of substantive representation is policy responsiveness: "there should be meaningful connection between the representative and the represented."<sup>28</sup>

Descriptive representation, in which the representative reflects the social composition of the people he or she represents, is still an important goal to achieve in many Latino communities. Once elected, Latino office-holders need to bring both symbolic and material benefits to the Latino community.<sup>29</sup> Symbolic representation is important because Latino elected officials become role models to a community that has had few visible polit-

ical leaders. Yet symbolism is not enough; the majority of Latinos remain impoverished, with many social problems that need to be addressed.

Economic resources are needed to provide affordable housing, expand youth services, improve the quality of education, and build recreational facilities. The structural inequalities in America severely limit what politicians can do to erase fundamental problems of inequality and poverty. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances some Latino officials have taken action to direct resources to address longstanding problems in the Latino community. Such actions need to be analyzed. Of course, Latino politicians do not exist in a vacuum; LEOs have also prioritized universal issues such as economic development, fiscal accountability, crime reduction, environmental cleanup, and traffic congestion reduction. While these types of issues are concerns within Latino communities, the benefits of new policies are not specifically directed at the elected official's own community.

In a democracy there are limits to what an individual representative can accomplish for his or her constituents, since competing interests and priorities vie for the attention of lawmakers in all levels of government. Particularly for minority legislators, ascending to elected office has not always substantively benefited the constituents who helped put them into office.<sup>30</sup> Some argue that minority legislators and executives have only begun to achieve political power after many years of exclusion; they are still a minority of the elected officials at the federal level and in state capitols and have limited resources at the local level to solve basic inequalities.<sup>31</sup>

### ■ Latinos and Political Incorporation Theory

To move from disenfranchisement to political power, Latinos have used a variety of methods. To explain the process of achieving and retaining political power, I use political incorporation theory. The theory of political incorporation is a central idea in the study of politics; when a group is politically incorporated, it has opportunities to influence public policy.<sup>32</sup> According to Rufus Browning, Dale Marshall, and David Tabb, political incorporation explains local "movements demanding the power of political equality and their ability to achieve it."<sup>33</sup> *Political incorporation* is a widely used term to measure the extent to which group interests are effectively represented in policymaking in government.<sup>34</sup> At the lowest level, a group is not represented at all: there are no elected officials from the group, and the group does not participate in the governing coalition that controls political decision making through its use of resources. At the next level, racial minorities have formal representation in a governing body, but the government body is dominated by a coalition resistant to minority group interests.

The highest form of incorporation is when racial minorities have an equal or a leading role in a dominant coalition that is strongly committed to minority group interests.

For Latinos, the achievement of political incorporation has been uneven; there is wide divergence in the levels of incorporation at the local, state, and national levels. Because the history of political movements of Latinos to achieve incorporation has unfolded differently in state and local contexts, patterns of mobilization have also evolved differently. In some situations, Latinos were until recently completely excluded from access to government. In other situations, they were partially included in a governing coalition as junior partners in political party or business-centered slates. Under certain circumstances, they achieved an equal or dominant role without the use of a biracial coalition; an example is the achievement of Cubans in Miami.<sup>35</sup>

Groups seek to obtain political objectives in several ways. Groups can petition or pressure government from the outside (the interest group strategy) or they may seek to achieve representation and a position of power or authority by electing members of the group to office (the electoral strategy). Each of these approaches is pursued depending on the circumstances that exist. The protest strategy is usually employed when a group has been excluded and seeks to use group pressure to win appointments to positions, program funds, and increased hiring of members of the group. The electoral strategy is used when a group is sufficiently large to win office by itself or with allies in a coalition.<sup>36</sup>

### ■ Pathways to Political Incorporation

I have modified these two forms of mobilization to include other pathways to incorporation. There are at least four distinct pathways to political incorporation: (1) demand/protest, (2) nonconfrontational political evolution, (3) legal challenges to structural barriers, and (4) coalition politics.

The first pathway, demand/protest, includes violent and nonviolent protests (sit-ins, demonstrations, boycotts) and also includes more traditional tactics such as mass mobilization at city meetings and exchanges with city officials.<sup>37</sup> A second pathway is a more gradual political evolution without demand and protest; instead, individuals in the Latino community are cultivated by political elites to run for office, usually as probusiness candidates and as alternatives to more grassroots candidates. A third pathway is the use of legal challenges, usually voting-rights lawsuits that challenge redistricting and reapportionment plans and that lead to restructuring the electoral system. Latinos have used the legal approach nationally in many communities to overturn discriminatory political structures and create single-member districts.

The fourth pathway is the use of coalition politics. Browning, Marshall, and Tabb discuss the critical importance of biracial coalitions of minorities and liberal whites to achieve political incorporation for minorities where the minority group is not a majority of the local population. I view the coalition pathway as including other possibilities depending on the situation, such as African American and Latino coalition efforts in cities like Pomona, California, in 1987 and New York City in 2001. It can also include Latino-labor alliances, such as in the 2001 mayor's race in Los Angeles.

These pathways are not mutually exclusive; each may include aspects of other pathways to achieve political incorporation. Latino political incorporation efforts have historically used all of them in small towns, medium-sized cities, major urban centers, and state houses of government.

What can reasonably be expected in a democratic society as a result of the incorporation of previously disenfranchised groups? One school of thought holds that there are limits to what local officials can accomplish, given the fiscal limitations of local government in this era of global capital mobility and decreased federal and state assistance.<sup>38</sup> Others argue that while there are indeed limits to what public bodies can accomplish in an era of globalization and fiscal conservatism, this does not mean that local government has no ability to redirect resources.<sup>39</sup> The general fund portion of any budget can be directed to address problems including inequalities; however, the level of resources will depend on the structural limitations of available funds. Furthermore, city leaders do not simply respond to a cost-benefit analysis of the prospect of economic advancement and political empowerment of racial groups. Poor and working-class people sometimes exercise power when they mobilize in mass defiance, breaking the rules that have restricted their participation in the institutions of a densely interdependent society.<sup>40</sup> At times resources are redirected to confront systemic problems. Many of the antipoverty programs of the 1960s arose in response to the riots in urban communities by racial minorities.

In addition to the structural arguments about achieving political power, there is the historical argument that the deeply embedded character of race relations and the history of racial antagonisms on an individual and institutional level have limited full participation by people of color in the economic, political, and cultural arenas of our society. The weight of this economic, political, and cultural domination has forced Latinos to try to overcome the legacy of exclusion, or condescension by Anglo politicians. The various outcomes of those efforts are important to document and compare.

As historical barriers to political inclusion have come down, Latino electoral efforts have blossomed; however, not enough is known about the consequences of these changes. Obviously, not all electoral efforts begin in

the same way or seek to achieve the same objectives or accomplish the same goals. These distinctions in the empowerment of Latinos reflect basic differences in political conditions and the individual philosophies of candidates regarding the role of government. Both internal dynamics within ethnic communities and forces external to the Latino community influence its political development.

In short, this book examines Latina and Latino efforts to overcome discriminatory barriers, seek political office, and establish policy priorities once in elected office. It explores how LEOs address the challenges of limited resources and conflicting interests that confront all elected officials, while maintaining ties to the Latino community. In particular, this text explores the role of Latinas, immigrants, and ethnic-specific and panethnic Latino politics.

### ■ Research and Data Sources

The research for this book is based on primary and secondary sources. Archival research, survey data, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic methods were used to gather materials. In 1997–98, I conducted forty semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of community leaders and activists in Watsonville and Salinas, California, and observed firsthand how Latino politics operated in these two communities. I lived and worked there and took part in local politics as a participant observer, gaining insights from the politicians, government officials, and business and community activists. Subsequently, I have continued to study these two cities and observe the unfolding of Latino power.

A mail survey was completed by a random sample of 112 Latino elected officials in 2000–2001. I also conducted forty-four in-person interviews with Latino elected officials during the summer and fall of 2001 in several major sites of Latino political activities in eight states, to observe the dynamics of contemporary Latino politics in local communities; I also conducted archival research in public libraries, universities, and local governments in those areas.<sup>41</sup> I also spoke with scholars and activists in many of the cities to draw on their insights about how Latino politics operates in different contexts. Subsequently, I have continued to interview elected officials and study more recent political developments in several cities and counties.

I have also attended a variety of national conferences and meetings of organizations involved with Latino politics, including the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials and the Southwest Voter Registration Fund (SWREF). A detailed review of articles, books, dissertations, and studies about Latino politics was completed as part of



this research. This combination of research methodologies and sources has produced a study that combines the practical experiences of electoral politics with analytical observations about Latino politics.

### ■ Organization of the Book

This is an introductory text about Latinos in American politics. Its purpose is to provide an overview of historical and current efforts by Latinos to achieve political power. While there are many books written on the Latino experience, and several have been written on Latino politics, this book discusses in detail the strategies and methods Latinos have used to achieve political power. Furthermore, it tracks what happened once Latinos achieved political incorporation in various political contexts. The electoral arena is not the only, nor even the main, vehicle that Latinos have used to achieve equal treatment under the law, end discrimination in schools, housing, and jobs, oppose racist stereotyping, and create positive images of themselves. Nevertheless, a study of the broad range of efforts by Latinos to influence and participate in the electoral system provides a means to explore the progress made to achieve representation.

We are now ready to explore the history and development of Latino politics and its contemporary features. The book is divided into two sections. The first section (Chapters 2–5) examines the history of efforts to achieve political power by Latinos. The second section (Chapters 6–8) analyzes political incorporation efforts and explores the views of Latino elected officials.

Chapter 2 details the history of Latino politics in this country from the 1800s to the 1940s. It chronicles the turmoil of the U.S. annexation of the Southwest and the subsequent political activities of Mexican Americans, as well as those of Puerto Ricans in New York.

Chapter 3 examines the modern era of Latino politics, from the 1950s to the 1970s, when Latinos went from being outsiders to, for the first time, holding office in significant numbers.

Chapter 4 explores the mainstreaming of Latino politics. It continues the political history of Latinos between 1994 and 2001, giving attention to the emergence of new political voices.

Chapter 5 provides a national overview of the demographics and political behavior of Latinos. The chapter also includes an analysis of Latino elected officials at the congressional, state, and local levels and offers a critical look at the interrelationship between Latino candidate types and demographically distinct electoral districts. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the current state of Latino politics and the challenges facing Latino politicians as they extend their influence.

Chapter 6 uses case studies to explore political incorporation strategies and effectiveness of Latinos in the cities of Miami, San Antonio, and Los Angeles.

Chapter 7 highlights the efforts of Chicanos to win and hold office and build an effective local governing coalition in the medium-sized city of Salinas, California.

Chapter 8 examines the views and policy behavior of Latino state and local elected officials nationally and how they perceive their policy priorities.

Chapter 9 summarizes contemporary Latino politics. It draws conclusions from the case studies of Latino political incorporation efforts and looks ahead to future avenues of research.

This book will not explain all facets of Latino politics. A study of Latino grassroots efforts to influence the political process by opposing anti-immigrant laws, fighting discrimination in communities and workplaces, and obtaining quality health care and education lies beyond the scope of this book. These struggles, many of them at the local level, produce the seeds of change that create community leaders. Some of these activists run for office, oftentimes successfully, other times not. *Latino Political Power* seeks to explain the history of political activism that has led to electoral empowerment efforts by Latinos. It is my intent to add to the understanding of Latino politics as part of the broader political process unfolding in the twenty-first century.

## ■ Notes

1. J. S. Shockley (1974); A. Navarro (1998).
2. In 1680, a mass revolt by the Pueblo Indians forced the Spanish settlers to flee; it took more than a decade for Spain to reestablish its colonial outposts. See M. G. Gonzales (1999).
3. T. R. Dye (2001), p. 1.
4. M. Suárez-Orozco and M. Pérez (2002).
5. Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation (2002b).
6. M. Marrable (2004).
7. Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation (2004).
8. J. Jennings and M. Rivera (1984); L. Estrada et al. (1988); A. Torres and J. E. Velasquez (1998); C. Munoz (1989).
9. J. Gomez Quiñones (1990).
10. R. Hero (1992).
11. M. S. Williams (1998), p. 3.
12. L. Guinier (1995), p. 24.
13. J. Jennings and M. Rivera (1984); J. Regalado and G. Martinez (1991); A. Navarro (2000).
14. F. Lemus (1973).
15. U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992).

16. U.S. Bureau of the Census (2001b).
17. D. Bositis (2003).
18. The situation is changing as the African Diaspora draws immigrants to the United States; African and Caribbean immigrants of African descent cannot vote until they become U.S. citizens. See D. Fears (2002).
19. National Association of Latino Elected Officials (2003).
20. National Association of Latino Elected Officials (2004).
21. William C. Velásquez Institute (2002).
22. In 2003 Sanchez ran again for mayor of Houston and again was defeated in the runoff, this time by Bill White, an Anglo Democrat. Sanchez received the majority of conservative votes and won a plurality of Latino votes but trailed White among moderate and liberal voters, particularly African Americans, who voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic candidate.
23. E. M. Weiss (2001).
24. H. Pitkin (1967), pp. 11–12.
25. C. Swain (1993), p. 5.
26. C. Menifield (2001b).
27. H. Pitkin (1967), p. 209.
28. K. J. Whitby (1997), p. 7.
29. K. Geron (1998).
30. A. Reed (1995); R. Smith (1990b); J. Regalado (1998).
31. F. Matos Rodríguez (2003); R. Browning, D. Marshall, and D. Tabb (2003), pp. 377–78.
32. A. Stinchcombe (1987).
33. R. Browning, D. Marshall, and D. Tabb (1994).
34. R. Browning, D. Marshall, and D. Tabb (1997), p. 9.
35. D. Moreno (1996).
36. R. Browning, D. Marshall, and D. Tabb (1997), p. 10.
37. R. Browning, D. Marshall, and D. Tabb (1984), p. 78.
38. P. Peterson (1981).
39. S. S. Fainstein et al. (1983); C. Stone and H. Saunders (1987); C. Stone (1989).
40. F. P. Piven and R. A. Cloward (1977).
41. Information on the mail survey is provided in Chapter 8. A list of all interviews conducted can be found in the reference section at the end of the book.