



Latino Voices

Mexican, Puerto Rican,
& Cuban Perspectives
on American Politics

Rodolfo O. de la Garza

Louis DeSipio

F. Chris Garcia

John Garcia

Angelo Falcon

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*To William A. Diaz
Friend and Colleague*

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The Latino National Political Survey

Pundits and politicians have in recent decades become increasingly concerned about the nation's "Spanish-origin" populations. Among the questions they ask are How much do Latinos¹ support fundamental American values? How willing are they to learn English? Are Hispanics liberal or conservative, Republicans or Democrats? Is it better or more accurate to refer to them as Hispanics or as Latinos?

The need to answer questions such as these gave rise to the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS). Future volumes will thoroughly analyze its results. In this volume, our objective is much more modest: to provide basic information about the political values, attitudes and behaviors of the Mexican-, Puerto Rican-, and Cuban-origin populations in the United States.

There are several reasons why politicians, the press, and the American public are now interested in Hispanic populations. One is demographic. From 1970 to 1980, Hispanics went from 9.1 to 14.6 million, an increase of 60 percent. By 1990, they increased by another 47 percent, to 21.4 million. A second is that this growth has been accompanied by geographic dispersion and changes in the national origins of the group. Historically, the great majority of this population was of Mexican origin and concentrated in the Southwest, including California. Today, this population is visible in virtually every major city in the country and includes large concentrations of Cubans and Puerto Ricans as well as identifiable clusters of groups from the Caribbean (Haitians and Dominicans), from Central America (Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans), and growing concentrations of Latin American nationalities.

A third factor is increased political clout. For several reasons, including mushrooming activism and the expanded protections of the Voting Rights Act, the number of "Spanish-origin" representatives has increased rapidly. In Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, New York, and Texas, this expansion outpaced population growth between 1973 and 1990 (Pachon and DeSipio 1992). This growth rate reflects both recent

dramatic gains and the historical exclusion of this population from elective office.

The nation's knowledge about this group has lagged behind its interest in it, and this knowledge gap has become fertile ground for claims and counterclaims about Hispanics—who they are and what their presence portends for the nation. Non-Latinos rooted in or nurtured by historically grounded anti-Hispanic biases expressed alarm. Their fears, fueled by unsubstantiated claims, contributed to creating the climate that produced the Official English movement and the anti-Hispanic dimensions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (de la Garza and Trujillo 1991; de la Garza 1992). Although neither of these focuses exclusively on Latinos, there is no question that both target Hispanics.

Indicative of that national mood is a 1990 national poll that found that, compared to Jews, blacks, Asians, and southern whites, Americans perceive Latinos as second only to blacks in terms of being lazy rather than hard-working and as living off welfare rather than being self-supporting (Smith 1990). The survey also reports that Hispanics are seen as the nation's least-patriotic group. Nationally influential individuals such as Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY), former governor Richard Lamm (D-CO), and Michael Teitelbaum of the Arthur P. Sloan Foundation share this latter concern and have gone so far as to suggest that Latinos threaten the physical and political integrity of the nation (Fuchs 1990: 255-256).

Unlike Anglos, Latinos reacted positively to demographic increases, and many made equally unsubstantiated claims about how this growth would affect the nation. Perhaps the most vivid illustration of hopeful and exaggerated projections was that the 1980s would be the "Decade of the Hispanic." The assertion was that with increased numbers, Latino political clout would influence the outcome of the presidential election of 1980; when that did not materialize, they made a stronger claim for the 1984 election, and then the 1988 election (de la Garza and DeSipio 1992). Similarly, they predicted that their new political clout would make itself felt in legislation emanating from Congress and statehouses across the nation. Without doubt, Latino influence did increase in these legislatures; equally true is that this influence did not approximate what had been predicted.

Similar unsubstantiated claims were made regarding other aspects of Hispanic life. Market analysts proclaimed the existence of a distinct "Hispanic market" unified by language and other cultural styles (Caplan 1987). More significantly, leaders in the commercial world and in politics spoke and acted as if the Spanish-origin populations constituted a community, that is, a relatively homogeneous population with a common culture and shared political and economic interests. Whether this group

was identified as Hispanics or Latinos was less significant than the assertion that a coherent group existed and must be recognized.

Politically, the group came to be recognized. By 1984, the potential of the Latino vote was such that both parties claimed to have won the support of the Latino community. Democrats pointed to the historical support they had received from Mexican Americans and to the continued support they received in the barrios of the Southwest to document that they continued to win the great majority of Latino votes. Republicans emphasized that they had made major inroads into the Hispanic community because Republicans appealed to traditional Hispanic values such as religion, the family, and the work ethic. Scholars and columnists who analyzed the results of the 1984 campaign concluded, however, that neither assertion could be believed because neither was supported by reliable data (de la Garza 1987).

The principal reason for questioning these and other claims regarding Latinos is that neither in 1984 nor since have independent national surveys and public opinion polls systematically included Latinos as a separate population whose social and political attitudes and behaviors could be analyzed. Moreover, when Latinos are included, the several subgroups are not identified separately so as to know whether the views presented are those of Mexican-, Puerto Rican-, or Cuban-origin respondents. As is shown throughout this volume, on many important issues there are key differences among these groups, and therefore it is necessary to identify whose views are being cited.

Thus, until now, there have been no reliable national data indicating whether Latinos support "traditional" values, as Republicans claim. Moreover, Republicans claim generalized Hispanic support when what they have received is overwhelming support from Cubans in Florida. At the state and local levels within Florida, furthermore, Cuban Republicanism is somewhat tenuous (Grenier 1991). Also, there are reasons to suspect that Republican polls describing Latino support oversample the small number of affluent Latinos who live in mixed or majority Anglo neighborhoods, that is, those who are most likely to vote Republican. In short, Republican claims about Latino support are not believable.

Democratic claims are also suspect. Their reports seem to ignore the decline in Democratic affiliation and voting among younger voters and among the better-educated and more affluent (F. C. Garcia 1987). Also, many of the data on Mexican Americans have been produced from surveys that oversample low-income areas in Southern California and South Texas, that is, barrios that are the core of traditional Democratic partisanship in two major states. To the extent that Democrats rely on such data for generalizing about Latinos, they overstate Mexican American (and Puerto Rican) support for their party.

These partisan exaggerations reflect a fundamental problem for Hispanics. The nation's politics continues to be conducted without the systematic inclusion of Latino voices. This is because national public opinion polls, including those supported by public funds such as the National Election Study, have not made the same effort to include Latinos that they have made to include African Americans. Consequently, it is impossible to document Latino concerns in the same way that the concerns of other Americans, including African Americans, are documented. To the extent that the results of such surveys play a role in determining candidates and influencing policy, this means that Latinos are effectively denied the opportunity to influence these processes.

Furthermore, because we do not know what Latinos themselves think, others, including well-intentioned Latino leaders and anti-Hispanic Anglos, are free to claim that they represent Latinos or accurately describe Latino views. This gives rise to debates about what the "people" really think and who speaks for them. For example, Linda Chavez, to whom television news programs often turn when they want the Hispanic perspective, indicts Latino leaders for inaccurately representing Hispanic views of bilingual education and the extent to which Hispanics speak English and support learning English (Chavez 1991). Somewhat to our surprise, our findings completely contradict her arguments (see Tables 7.19 - 7.21).

A. Design and Implementation of the Latino National Political Survey

It was to provide reliable information regarding such fundamental issues that the LNPS was designed and implemented. Thus, the first objective of the LNPS was to collect basic data describing Latino political values, attitudes, and behavior. This includes information on (1) support for core American values, including several types of ideological indicators; (2) attitudes toward other groups, including Hispanics and Anglos, that are relevant to coalition building; (3) attitudes toward major social issues such as abortion, affirmative action, and women's rights that address long-standing assumptions about Latino cultures; (4) foreign policy perspectives that are relevant to questions about patriotism and irredentism; (5) partisanship and voting practices that respond to competing claims; and (6) political behaviors such as organizational memberships, problem-solving strategies, participation in ethnically related activities, and involvement with schools that will indicate how and to what extent Latinos engage the polity in efforts to improve their lives.

In addition to gathering this baseline political information, the LNPS also collected demographic information on the respondents (see chapters

2 and 3). Those familiar with survey research will note that these demographics are extraordinarily detailed regarding ethnic indicators. This is to help us measure as precisely as possible the characteristics that distinguish Hispanics. For example, commercial and political surveys seldom indicate if respondents are native- or foreign-born, and they usually ignore language capabilities. The LNPS traces familial histories for three generations and measures language competence subjectively and objectively. Also, virtually all surveys equate national origin with ethnic identity; that is, they assume Latinos of varying national origins identify as Latinos, rather than with their national origin. The LNPS separates national origin from ethnicity. It determines an individual's national heritage, and with a series of questions it then determines the extent to which that person identifies ethnically. LNPS respondents of Mexican origin, for example, may identify as Mexicanos, Hispanos, Americans, or with some combination of these or other identities. Similarly, surveys that include Hispanics, blacks, and whites often report differences between blacks and whites and note that "Hispanics may be of any racial group." The LNPS asks its respondents how they identify racially and includes that response as a separate ethnic indicator.

The LNPS, thus, was designed to combine detailed demographic data with extensive attitudinal and behavioral data to answer the following key questions:

1. What are the fundamental political values of Latinos in the United States?
2. What principal factors have influenced these values?
3. How stable are these values across age cohorts, national-origin groups, and regions?
4. What patterns characterize Hispanic political attitudes and behavior?
5. How stable are these attitudes and behaviors across age cohorts, national-origin groups, and regions?
6. How are political values related to the political attitudes and behavior of Latinos?
7. What effect do gender, immigration history, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, and community characteristics have on Hispanic political values, attitudes, and behaviors?
8. Is there a distinct Latino, as opposed to Mexican American, Puerto Rican, or Cuban, political community in the United States? If not, is there a basis from which such a political community may emerge?
9. What are the significant differences and similarities regarding political values, attitudes, and behaviors among Hispanic sub-groups and between Latinos and non-Latinos?

Our efforts to analyze the data and answer these questions are ongoing. As of June 1992, eight papers have been presented at academic conferences. These have focused on self-labeling (J. Garcia et al. 1991), ideology (F. C. Garcia et al. 1991), support for core American values (de la Garza et al. forthcoming; de la Garza et al. 1992a; de la Garza et al. 1992b), partisanship (F. C. Garcia et al. 1992), political participation (Falcon et al. 1991) and foreign policy perspectives (de la Garza et al. 1992c). We expect to combine that work into two comprehensive volumes. At that time, we plan to make the survey results available as a public-use file.

B. Speaking for Themselves

In this volume, we present data in the format most often used by public officials and the press; that is, we describe the extent to which U.S. citizens of Hispanic origins hold particular views and participate in specific activities. Additionally, because noncitizens constitute 37.7 percent of the Latino adult population, compared to 3.1 percent of non-Hispanics, we also present selected data on noncitizens (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports 1991a: Table One [hereafter Census]).

We think it is important to keep the attitudes and behaviors of citizens and noncitizens separate. Failure to do so distorts any description of the relationship Latinos have to the polity. For example, more than half of all Hispanics who did not vote in 1990 were ineligible to vote because they were not U.S. citizens (NALEO 1991: vi). Thus, calculating voter participation without distinguishing citizens from noncitizens seriously understates Latino voting. For example, in the 1988 presidential election, 28.8 percent of all Latino adults voted. Among Latino U.S. citizen adults, fully 45.9 percent voted (NALEO 1992: 6). Additionally, noncitizen views are seldom heard. Since this is a population that may soon join the polity, it is in the interests of Latinos and the nation to be informed about its views (NALEO 1989).

We think that presenting our data in this format will maximize their relevance to contemporary political debates. They illustrate the views of different groups and indicate the issues on which the groups differ as well as those on which there is agreement. For example, given the acrimonious debate over bilingual education, it is important to know that over 80 percent of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban U.S. citizens support bilingual education. Latinos, in other words, are essentially of one voice on this issue. Furthermore, even greater percentages of each group indicate that the objectives of bilingual education are to have students learn English exclusively or to have them learn English and Spanish.

Contrary to the claims of supporters of the Official English movement, Latinos see bilingual education as a way to learn English and they strongly support access to this opportunity.

This volume, then, presents information that should inform our discussion about Latino politics. It tells us how Hispanics view and act on the political world; it does not tell us why they think as they do, nor does it suggest how to change their views and behaviors. Those are questions that our research will address in the future.

C. Methodology

The Hispanics included in this study are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans eighteen years of age or older. There are several reasons for this. First is that we share the view that recognizes the several Latino national-origin populations as distinctive (Bean and Tienda 1987: 2) and consider it culturally demeaning and conceptually indefensible to aggregate a priori all these groups under a single label such as Hispanic or Latino. Thus, we could not survey "Hispanics" without targeting specific populations. Given the nation's large number of distinct Latino national-origin groups, however, it would have been technically and financially impossible to survey representative samples of each. Therefore, the LNPS included Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans because they are the largest and politically the most significant Latino national-origin groups. As of March 1990, the Census Bureau estimated that Mexicans constituted approximately 64 percent of all Hispanics, while Puerto Ricans and Cubans were 11 and 5 percent, respectively (Census 1991b). Together, they account for almost 80 percent of the nation's Hispanics and an even greater proportion of the nation's Latino U.S. citizens.

In total, the LNPS includes 1,546 Mexicans, 589 Puerto Ricans, and 682 Cubans. For our purposes, a respondent was defined as a member of one of these groups if he or she, one parent, or two grandparents were solely of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban ancestry. Those members of these groups not represented in the survey are those living in states whose combined Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban populations are less than 5 percent Latino and those living in communities within selected states that have a combined total of less than 3 percent Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban residents. The survey was conducted in 40 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (see Table 1.1). The sample is representative of 91 percent of the Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban populations in the United States.

The survey also included 456 non-Hispanic whites (Anglos). The Anglo sample is representative of Anglos residing in the areas listed;

TABLE 1.1 Survey Sites for the Latino National Political Survey

Boston, MA	New York, NY	Nassau-Suffolk, NJ
Newark, NJ	Jersey City, NJ	Chicago, IL
Philadelphia, PA	Miami, FL	Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL
Houston, TX	San Antonio, TX	Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX
El Paso, TX	Lamb County, TX	Corpus Christi, TX
Albuquerque, NM	Phoenix, AZ	Denver-Boulder, CO
Riverside, CA	San Diego, CA	Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA
Fresno, CA	San Jose, CA	Hartford, CT
Austin, TX	Sacramento, CA	Kansas City, MO/KS
Bakersfield, CA	Las Vegas, NV	Portland-Vancouver, OR/WA
Anaheim-Santa Ana-	Gary-Hammond-	New Brunswick-Perth
Garden Grove, CA	East Chicago, IN	Amboy- Sayreville, NJ
Fort Lauderdale-	Paterson-Clinton	Brownsville-Harlingen-
Hollywood, FL	Passaic, NJ	San Benito, TX
Eddy County, NM	San Francisco-	McAllen-Edinberg-
Santa Cruz, CA	Oakland, CA	Mission, TX

however, since these sites were selected to represent Latinos rather than the nation, the Anglos included here are not necessarily representative of Anglos nationwide.

The survey began in August 1989 and ended in April 1990. Over 97 percent of the interviews were completed by February 1990. These were in-person interviews, and respondents had the choice of being interviewed in Spanish or English; 60 percent selected Spanish. Additional methodological information may be found in Appendix 2.

We made great efforts to ensure that the LNPS was well designed and implemented. With support from the Ford Foundation, a research team consisting of Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Angelo Falcon, F. Chris Garcia, and John A. Garcia began a feasibility study in 1987. The feasibility study completed, we received support from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and the Tinker Foundation to complete the LNPS. This included a major bibliographic project (F. C. Garcia et al. 1991) and extensive research into issues such as sample design, whether the survey should utilize in-person or telephone surveys, the significance of dialectical differences among Spanish speakers, and the extent to which the survey should focus on new issues or replicate prior research (F.C. Garcia et al. 1989).

We were greatly assisted in our deliberations by distinguished colleagues from across the country. Steve Heringa of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research advised us regarding sample

design issues. We invited the leading survey research centers in the nation to submit proposals for conducting the research, and he helped us evaluate these. After careful scrutiny, we selected Temple University's Institute for Survey Research to conduct the survey. Robert Santos, the sampling statistician for the 1979 National Chicano Survey, served as Temple's project director. After our survey was completed, the National Science Foundation evaluated the LNPS sample and approved it for incorporation into the ongoing Panel Study of Income Dynamics. We are therefore completely confident in the quality of the sample.

We emphasize this because many of the results that we have made public challenge what many of us have long assumed were unassailable truths. The first response of critics who would sustain those shibboleths has been to challenge the sample's representativeness. Rather than focus on the sample, therefore, we would encourage those who are discomfited by these results to focus on other dimensions of the study, including how to conceptualize and operationalize the questions that interest them. They might also find it useful to reexamine their assumptions, as we have begun to do.

The broad outline of what we hoped to accomplish included much more than we could realize. The LNPS National Advisory Board, consisting of Amado Padilla, Alejandro Portes, Steve Rosenstone, Carole Uhlaner, and Linda Williams, provided keen advice that helped us sharpen our focus. Carole Uhlaner was especially generous with her time and insights.

The items included in the questionnaire derive from several sources. To enable us to provide baseline data for Latinos regarding issues on which the attitudes of the general public are well documented, we took questions directly from established surveys, such as the National Election Study, the General Social Survey, the National Chicano Survey, and the Times Mirror Study of the American Electorate. We drew on our own work to create many new items, and we borrowed items directly from the work of Robert Bach, Bruce Cain, Harry Pachon, Amado Padilla, Alejandro Portes, Carole Uhlaner, and Sidney Verba. Having benefited from their advice and experiences, the decisions regarding the survey questions were made by Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Angelo Falcon, F. Chris Garcia, and John A. Garcia.

The feasibility study that preceded the LNPS also contributed to generating questions. The bibliographic research informed us about what areas were in greatest need of research. A series of focus group interviews that we conducted as part of the feasibility study helped us identify issues and create questions that otherwise might have been overlooked.

D. Reading the Tables

The chapters that follow share a common format. Each begins with a synopsis describing what we consider to be the most important findings of the series of related tables that are then presented. With each set of synopses, we provide a list of the survey questions used to produce that set of tables. The exact wording of each question is contained in Appendix 1.

The tables also follow a common format. All of them are based on weighted data (see Appendix 2). The first number in each column indicates how many of each national-origin group selected each of the possible responses to the question that was asked; the second figure indicates the percentage of that group that gave this answer. The sum at the bottom of each column indicates how many from each national-origin group answered the question. Thus, in Table 1.2, 586 Mexicans, or 38.3 percent of all Mexican respondents, strongly support bilingual education. A total of 1,529 respondents of Mexican origin responded to this question.

In some cases, we combine a series of interrelated questions into a single table and report the number of respondents who gave a particular response. For example, Table 8.11 indicates how many respondents reported that they had participated in each of the specified activities. In this type of table, we list the number of respondents who answered each

TABLE 1.2 Attitude Toward Bilingual Education, by National Origin

<i>Attitude Toward Bilingual Education</i>	<i>Mexican</i>	<i>Puerto Rican</i>	<i>Cuban</i>
Strongly support	586 38.3%	233 39.7%	256 38.0%
Support	711 46.5%	279 47.5%	356 52.8%
Uncertain	160 10.5%	42 7.2%	39 5.8%
Oppose	52 3.4%	23 3.9%	12 1.8%
Strongly oppose	20 1.3%	10 1.7%	11 1.6%
Total	1,529 100.0%	587 100.0%	674 100.0%

Note: Throughout the volume, percentages are rounded.