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Hispanics in a Multicultural Society: A New American Dilemma?

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As the twenty-first century dawns, and as the U.S. Bureau of the Census (USBC) prepares for another decennial snapshot of demographic change in American society, the population enumeration for the year 2000 is certain to reveal the continuation of dramatic shifts in U.S. ethnic and racial group makeup. The multiethnic and multiracial character of the nation is accelerating at a pace even more rapid than many demographers had projected. The most recent projections from USBC confirm the population increases of American minority groups, in particular that of Hispanics. Indeed, the term "minority," as a useful population classification, will become increasingly outmoded with each passing decade.

Much is being made of the projection that Hispanics will constitute the nation's largest minority population by 2050. High birth rates and continual immigration from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean are pushing Hispanics' numbers higher than those of Blacks'. But what will it mean for this highly diverse group to become the largest minority in the United States? In the early twenty-first century, will patterns of residential, occupational, educational, and other measures of mobility resemble those of the great waves of immigrants from Europe and their offspring in the early twentieth century? Or will large numbers of Hispanics, midway through the next century, be described as a "new American dilemma," members of the nation's largest ethnic group and economically isolated from mainstream American society? In 1944, in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944),

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Gunnar Myrdal identified a central tension. In this landmark study, he outlined the moral dilemma between the "American Creed . . . [a value system] . . . where the American thinks, talks, and acts under the influence of high national and Christian precepts"—and the discriminatory treatment of Blacks. Will a new American dilemma characterize growing sectors of the Hispanic and Black populations, cut off from economic opportunity and meaningful participation in the civic life of the nation in the twenty-first century (Bonilla, 1988)?

The status of Hispanics is a mixed bag, with signs of group progress matched by signs of decline and stagnation. Some Hispanics are achieving impressive upward socioeconomic gains, having successfully climbed the ladder of occupational and geographic mobility to better jobs and better homes in safer neighborhoods. Others languish in deepening chasms of poverty and despair, seemingly trapped in urban *barrios* increasingly isolated geographically from opportunities in the larger society. The changing dynamics of U.S. and global economies are altering labor markets in fundamental ways that will have important consequences for Hispanic workers. Will the legions of today's Hispanic youngsters be incorporated fully into the body politic and institutional life of the nation in the next century, or will too many of them remain outside a "gated" American community? Will fears about the "Balkanization" of American society and identity politics result in a "Quebec-type" situation for Hispanics?

HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND HISPANIC AMERICA

Any starting point for discussion of the contemporary status or future prospects of Hispanics must begin with consideration of critical historical legacies—developments of the past that continue to indelibly stamp the contemporary reality of Hispanic subgroups. Among the many benchmarks that have influenced the course of history for Hispanics in the United States, two stand out as being particularly important—the Mexican-American War in 1848 and the Spanish-American War in 1898. These events set the stage for the incorporation of Spanish-speaking peoples from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba into the United States, and, at the same time, established economic, political, and international diplomatic relations that later played a great role in the migration and immigration of millions of Spanish-surnamed people to the United States.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, between the United States and Mexico, resulted in the annexation of nearly half of Mexico's territory and the incorporation of a new regional minority—Mexican Americans of the Southwest (Camarillo, 1993; Griswold del Castillo, 1990). During the early twentieth century, growing instability in the Republic of Mexico, and a

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heavy-handed dictatorship, gave rise to the first modern revolution—a civil war that unleashed the first great wave of Mexican immigrants to venture north to the United States. Throughout the past 100 years, U.S. dependence on workers from south of U.S. borders, coupled with Mexico's economic instability and inability to absorb its expanding workforce, resulted in many millions of Mexican immigrants settling in the United States. With the exception of the Great Depression years, immigration from Mexico was continuous throughout the twentieth century, swelled the ranks of existing Mexican American communities, and spawned the development of newer communities in the Southwest and elsewhere (Gutierrez, 1995).

Although the manner of incorporation into the United States was different for both Puerto Ricans and Cubans, a war—the Spanish-American War—also set in motion forces that later propelled millions of people from those islands to U.S. shores. The United States acquired Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898 and established a colonial relationship with the island. Puerto Ricans were not accorded the status of U.S. citizenship, however, until 1917, just in time to make them eligible for military service in World War I. In 1947, Puerto Rico was accorded commonwealth status, a development that did not appreciably change the status of the island and its people as possessions of the United States. Numerous factors—interdependency, U.S. domination of the island's economy, unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunity, combined with cheap transportation costs to the United States—resulted in Puerto Ricans migrating to the U.S. mainland; and the movement gained momentum in the decades after World War II. Steady migration streams of Puerto Ricans arrived in mainland cities, especially New York City, where a highly segregated urban experience unfolded (Sánchez-Korrol, 1983).

The Cubans' experience was quite different. A few years after military occupation of the island in 1898, the United States turned over control to the Cubans. Though a small Cuban immigrant community had developed in Florida, especially in Miami, mass migration did not occur until after Castro's socialist revolution in 1959 (Portes and Bach, 1985). Successive migrations followed.

With the exception of the first wave of immigrants from Cuba, the historical legacies of the wars in 1848 and 1898—conquest, racial and class subordination, colonialism, and economic interdependency—created political, economic, and social patterns for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans that persisted into the late twentieth century. As racialized minorities in American society, most Hispanics share a dubious distinction with other U.S. citizens of color. Generalizations of this type, however, must be considered in light of significant differences between each Hispanic subgroup. Because of the enormous diversity within this broadly defined group, any

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demographic profile of Hispanics must consider the particulars of each nationality.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

Demographic Profile

The increasing national attention on, and concern about, Hispanics in U.S. society has been driven, in large part, by the spectacular growth of this population, especially since the 1960s. That Hispanics will soon become the nation's largest minority—a demographic shift frequently noted in the media, and one that causes consternation for many Americans—is testimony to the dramatic growth of this diverse group. The expansion of Hispanic America must be considered one of the fundamental demographic trends that is sure to continue in the future. Thus, when one considers projections for the future, the question of whether this group will constitute an essential component of a "new" American dilemma turns basically on the issue of numbers.

Though the specific numbers may be imprecise (because of such factors as census undercounting, different ways used by USBC to identify Hispanics over time, and undocumented immigration), the general patterns are clear. Between 1960 and 1996, the total population of Hispanics soared from about 6.9 million to more than 25.3 million (Table 4-1); and the Hispanic percentage of the total U.S. population more than doubled, increasing from less than 4 percent to 11 percent. There is no end in sight for this population growth. USBC projections estimate a total of 31.4 million Hispanics in 2000, increasing to 95.5 million by 2050. Nearly a quarter

TABLE 4-1 Hispanic Population in the United States 1960 to 1996 with Projections for 2000 to 2050 (millions)

	1960	1970	1980	1996	2000	2030	2050
Total Hispanic population	6.9	9.1	14.6	25.3	31.4	65.6	95.5
Hispanics as percent of total U.S. population	3.9	4.5	6.4	10.7	11.4	18.9	24.5

SOURCES: Adapted from Bean and Tienda (1987:59, Table 3.1); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996:12, Table 1); del Pinal and Singer (1997:6, Table 1).

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of the entire U.S. population in 2050 is projected to be of Hispanic origin. The driving force of this population expansion is the high fertility rate among Hispanic women (with the exception of Cuban women), but nearly as important is the constant stream of both documented and undocumented immigrants from Latin American nations (especially Mexico) and the ongoing circulation of Puerto Ricans from the island to the mainland (del Pinal and Singer, 1997; Torre, 1992).

Among the different Hispanic subgroups, Mexicans have always constituted the largest contingent. In 1970, the Mexican-origin population comprised about half of the Hispanic people enumerated in the census. The percentage increased to 64 percent by the mid-1990s. Puerto Ricans made up the second largest Hispanic subgroup, between 15 and 11 percent of the total Hispanic population between 1970 and 1996. Cubans have accounted for 4 percent to 6 percent of the Hispanic population since 1970, and Central and South Americans, and a category labeled by USBC as "Other Hispanic" (including immigrants from Spain and people of mixed Hispanic heritage from other countries), constitute sizable proportions of the total Hispanic population (Figure 4-1) (Bean and Tienda, 1987; del Pinal and Singer, 1997).

The historical legacy of regionally concentrated Hispanic subgroups is still plainly visible today (Table 4-2). Mexican-origin people continue to be overwhelmingly concentrated in the five states of the American Southwest, especially California and Texas, whereas most Puerto Ricans are located in New York and other Northeastern states, and Cubans are clustered primarily in Florida. Since the 1970s, Central and South American immigrants have gravitated to particular cities, especially port-of-entry cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami. Central Americans also form substantial communities in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans; and Spanish-speaking Caribbean people are concentrated in New York City and other Atlantic seaboard cities (Ueda, 1994). With few exceptions, all Hispanic subgroups are highly urbanized (more than 80 percent lived in cities in 1980), one of the defining demographic patterns of Hispanic America since before World War II (Bean and Tienda, 1987).

City life for Hispanics since the 1950s has gone hand in hand with residential segregation, both in long-established *barrios* and in newer urban localities. Only since 1960 have scholars attempted to assess the levels of residential isolation of various Hispanic subgroups from Whites, and the picture that has emerged fits somewhere between the extremely high levels of residential segregation experienced by Blacks and the patterns of neighborhood formation and dispersal experienced by many European groups.

The analysis of the spatial characteristics of Hispanics, conducted by

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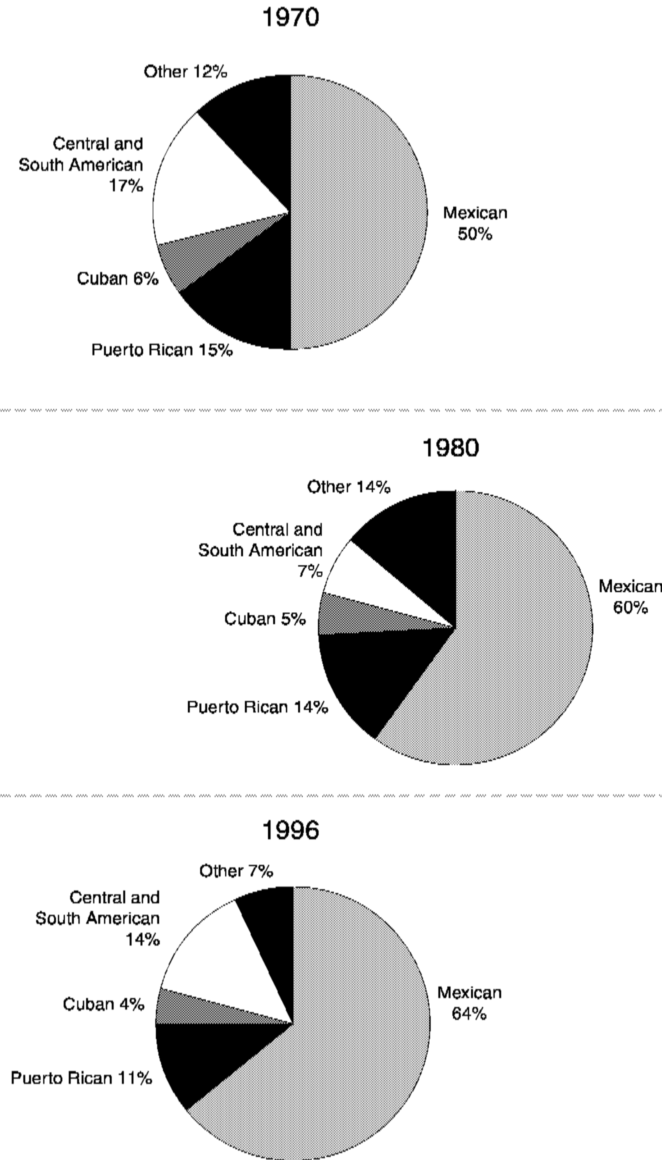

FIGURE 4-1 Hispanic population in the United States, by national origin, 1970 to 1996. The decrease in the number and percentage of people of Central and South American origin between 1970 and 1980 is likely due to changes in self-reporting for Mexicans made by the U.S. Bureau of the Census during the 1970s. SOURCE: Adapted from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1974: 2, 9:Tables 1-1 and 1-3); del Pinal and Singer (1997: 7:Figure 1); Bean and Tienda (1987: 60).

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TABLE 4-2 Hispanic Population in Selected States, 1970 to 1990 with Projections to 2020 (millions)

	1970		1980		1990		2020	
State	n	% of State Population	n	% of State Population	n	% of State Population	n	% of State Population
California	2.0	12	4.5	19	7.7	26	17.5	36.5
Texas	1.8	16	3.0	21	4.3	25	10.3	40.3
New York	1.2	7	1.7	9	2.2	12	3.0	15.9
Florida	0.4	6	0.6	6	1.6	12	4.2	21.5
Illinois	0.5	4	0.6	6	0.9	8	2.1	15.7
Arizona	0.3	15	0.4	16	0.7	18	1.8	31.7
New Jersey	0.3	5	0.5	7	0.7	10	1.5	17.0
New Mexico	0.3	30	0.5	37	0.6	38	1.3	55.4
Colorado	0.2	10	0.3	12	0.4	13	1.0	20.0

SOURCES: Adapted from Bean and Tienda (1987:77-81); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996); Horner (1997:12-15, 17-18).

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Frank Bean and Marta Tienda (1987), using 1980 Census data, also revealed that substantial variety exists among Hispanics regarding residential segregation. Hispanics concentrated in the largest metropolitan areas—i.e., Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago—had the highest levels of residential segregation from Whites, while only moderate levels of segregation characterized the smaller metropolitan areas in which Hispanics reside. Among the various Hispanic subgroups, Puerto Ricans had much higher levels of residential segregation from Whites—an historical pattern that continues to define the group's urban experiences—than both Mexicans and Cubans. Ongoing immigration has increased levels of residential isolation, especially for Mexicans in the largest metropolitan areas where they reside in great numbers. If this trend continues through the 21st century, we may see sprawling urban *barrios* that look increasingly like the inner-city ghettos inhabited by Blacks.

Economic, Occupational, and Educational Status

However one chooses to characterize the socioeconomic restructuring of the United States since the mid-1970s, the impact of these changes on Hispanics has been felt most directly through major labor-market shifts. These changes have contributed to increasing the segmentation of Hispanic workers at the lower end of the occupational ladder. General trends of growing inequality and absolute poverty have weighed heavily on substantial Hispanic working sectors, especially Hispanics born outside the United States. A large body of research now tracks the main forces, domestic and transnational, defining the magnitude, composition, and circuits of labor-force movement and the distinctive patterns shaping the incorporation of Hispanics in the regions and principal cities to which they have gravitated.

Because they are the largest and fastest growing sector of the Hispanic population, and because of their particular modes of entry and accommodation within the United States, both U.S.-born and foreign-born Mexicans dramatically illustrate some of the most fundamental changes taking place in the United States. In addition, their large numbers make possible a more refined analysis of the dynamics of these processes and their impacts on youth and women, and on particular occupations and sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, this summary account can only point to general characteristics of the present labor force and its ethnic and racial composition.

Unemployment rates in 1996 for Hispanics, put at 10 percent for both men and women, hovered at double the rates for Whites. Rates for Hispanics had been between those for Whites and Blacks for decades; but the gap between Hispanics and Blacks seemed to be closing, with "Other

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Hispanics" apparently adding to the ranks of Hispanic unemployed and pushing the joblessness rates closer to those for Black males. Puerto Ricans and most other Hispanics, except Cubans (whose unemployment rates tended to be closer to those for Whites than for other Hispanics), were all clustered around the 10 percent rate, though other analyses suggest that patterns of labor-market participation and exclusion for the larger subgroups vary considerably. Mexicans generally remain longer in low-wage jobs; Puerto Ricans are more likely to step out of, or lose connection to, low-end job markets; and Cubans, constituting a special case, are moving, in the present generation, toward patterns long shared by other disadvantaged groups.

Occupational patterns from 1996 Census data point to the sustained segmentation of job-market access, with White males about evenly divided between professional, administrative, and sales positions, as opposed to jobs in the service, skilled, and unskilled labor market (Table 4-3). By contrast, two-thirds of Blacks were in service and low-skilled jobs, and almost three-fourths of all Hispanic males held these types of jobs. Slightly more than one-half of Cuban males were also employed in these job categories. Fully four-fifths of Hispanics born outside the United States remain at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. It is interesting to note, however, that Hispanic women manifest a markedly superior capacity to break through into the professional and managerial sectors, especially the U.S.-born.

Poverty rates and family incomes closely match labor-force participation and placement (Table 4-4). About 25 percent of Black and Hispanic families are estimated to be living below poverty levels, whereas only 6 percent of White families are in that income group. Among Hispanics, 36 percent of Puerto Rican families and 30 percent of those born outside the United States stand out as the most deprived; the rate of poverty for Cubans (16 percent) is closest to the figure for all American families. Cubans and U.S.-born Hispanics, as a group, stand out among Hispanic families with annual incomes of $25,000 or more, an indication of the modest inroads that some have made into the ranks of middle- and higher income classes. Median family income by race and ethnicity since the 1970s reveals that great disparities still characterize annual income levels between Whites and Asians at the higher end and Blacks and Hispanics at the lower end (Figure 4-2). Hispanic and Black family income, relative to that of White families, has decreased since the mid-1970s. Hispanic median family income has actually dropped substantially, in fact; but much of this decrease is attributed to large-scale immigration of people who are relatively unskilled and who do not possess much formal education. In a report prepared by the Council of Economic Advisers (1998a), which President Clinton transmitted to Congress in February 1998, important

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TABLE 4-3 Percentages of Unemployed and Employed Persons (16 years and older) and Employment Categories by Race and Ethnicity, 1996

			Employed Workers			
			Men		Women	
	% Unemployed[a]					
Race/Ethnic Group	Men	Women	Professional, Administrative, Sales	Service, Skilled/ Unskilled Labor	Professional, Administrative, Sales	Service, Skilled/ Unskilled Labor
Total	7	5	48	52	72	28
Non-Hispanic	6	5	50	50	74	26
White	5	4	51	49	76	24
Black	14	9	34	66	61	39
Other Non-Hispanic[b]	7	5	58	42	67	33
Hispanic	10	10	27	73	56	44
Mexican	10	10	23	77	55	45
Puerto Rican	10	11	37	63	64	36
Cuban	6	6	44	56	72	28
Central/South American	8	10	29	71	48	52
Other Hispanic	16	7	45	55	60	40
Born in U.S.	10	9	41	59	72	28
Born outside United States[c]	9	11	18	82	40	60

[a]Persons age 16 or older in the labor force.
[b]Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and other non-Hispanics.
[c]Includes Puerto Ricans born outside the contiguous states.

SOURCE: del Pinal and Singer (1997:38, Table 8). Reprinted with permission from the Popualation Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C.

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TABLE 4-4 Family Income and Poverty Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, 1995

		Family Income (%)			Percent Below Poverty		
Race/Ethnic Group	Number of Families (1000s)	Under $10,000	$10,000-24,999	$25,000 or more	All Families	Female-headed	Elderly[a]
Total	69,597	7	21	72	11	32	6
Non-Hispanic	63,311	7	20	74	9	30	5
White	52,861	5	18	77	6	22	4
Black	7,871	19	29	51	26	45	17
Other Non-Hispanic[b]	2,579	10	20	70	15	33	10
Hispanic	6,287	16	35	49	27	49	18
Mexican	3,815	15	37	47	28	50	18
Puerto Rican	742	26	29	45	36	64	19
Cuban	312	10	28	62	16	29	12
Central/South American	929	11	35	54	22	35	19
Other Hispanic	489	20	26	54	25	50	20
Born in U.S.	2,466	15	29	56	22	47	16
Born outside United States[c]	3,821	17	38	45	30	51	20

[a]Householders age 65 or older.
[b]Non-Hispanic American Indian, Eskimo, Aleuts, Asian, and Pacific Islander.
[c]Includes Puerto Rican householders born outside the 50 contiguous states.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

SOURCE: del Pinal and Singer (1997:40, Table 9). Reprinted with permission from the Popualation Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C.

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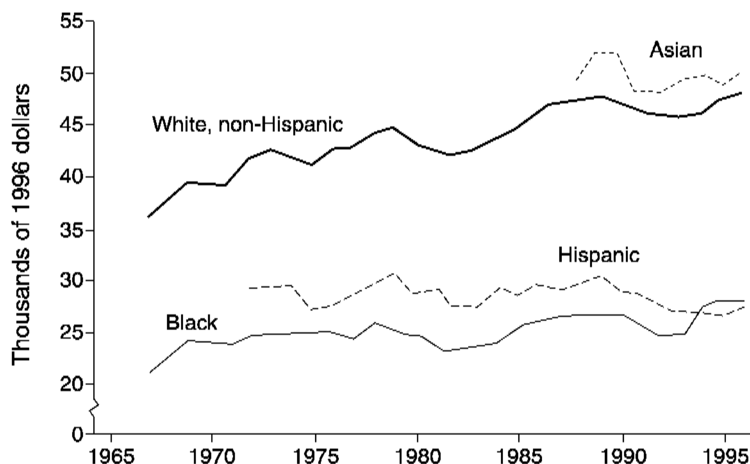

FIGURE 4-2 Median family income by race. Prior to 1972, data for Whites include Hispanic Whites. SOURCE: Council of Economic Advisers (1998b).

explanations were offered regarding the growth of income inequality among ethnic and racial minorities.

> Thirty-four years ago the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set the Nation on a course toward racial equality. As the economy surged, income differences narrowed for a full decade. The sharp recessions of the mid-1970s and early 1980s hit Black and Hispanic Americans particularly hard, however. And in the expansion of the 1980s, economic growth was accompanied by sharp increases in overall income inequality. As a result, despite the economic growth of this period, income differences between Black and Hispanic families on the one hand, and non-Hispanic White families on the other, did not diminish. The recession of the early 1990s brought further economic hardship, as the poverty rate climbed to a new 30-year high (p. 119).

Educational attainment is, of course, an essential key to job access and improved incomes. Among the many factors that promote success, adequate schooling remains a serious obstacle to Hispanic progress. Hispanics' educational attainment rates are significantly lower than those for both Whites and Blacks, although, again, U.S.-born Hispanics of every national origin have made some gains in the number of years of high school education completed. For example, the median number of years of schooling attained by native born Mexicans (age 25 and over) went from a low of 6.4 years in 1960 to 9.1 years in 1980. For other Hispanic groups, between 1960 and 1980, the median number of school years increased

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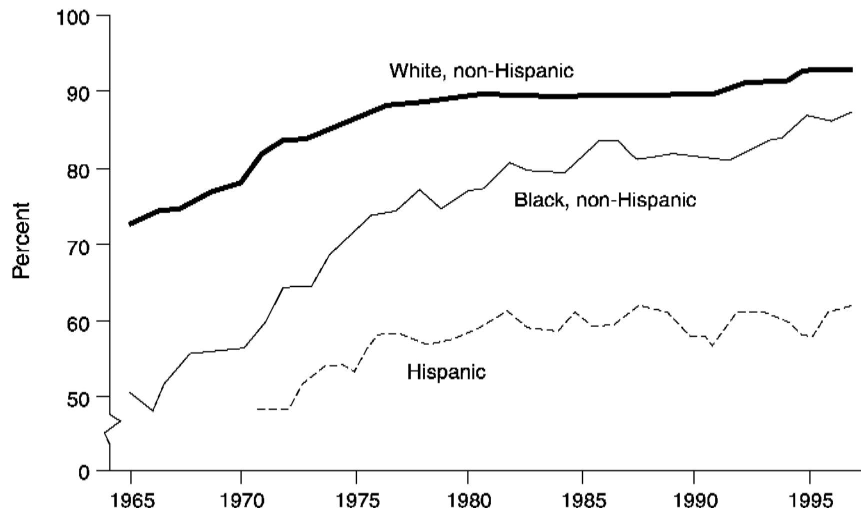

FIGURE 4-3 Persons aged 25 to 29 with a high school degree or equivalent. SOURCE: Council of Economic Advisers (1998b).

from 7.5 to 10.0 years for Puerto Ricans and from 8.0 to 11.7 years for Cuban-Americans. By contrast, the median school years attained by Blacks during these years increased markedly from 8.0 in 1960 to 12.0 years in 1980 (Bean and Tienda, 1987), a figure that matched those of non-Hispanic Whites (11.0 years attained in 1960 and 12.0 years in 1980). Comparing high school completion rates also reveals a similar pattern of educational disadvantage among Hispanics. Figure 4-3 illustrates how the gap between Hispanics, Whites, and Blacks, with regard to high school completion (and equivalency), has actually increased since the 1980s; only about 60 percent of Hispanics completed four years of high school in 1997.

The relatively low rates of high school completion for Hispanics is, to a substantial degree, attributable to the large percentage of immigrants who generally have lower levels of educational attainment. Indeed, the rather dismal educational profile of Hispanics brightens when one compares the rates between U.S. born and foreign born. Figure 4-4 compares the educational attainment rates among the various Hispanic groups by nativity. In 1996, about 70 percent of all U.S.-born Hispanics had completed high school or some higher education level; Cubans and Central and South Americans achieved the highest levels of educational attainment (86 percent and 84 percent, respectively); Mexican-Americans had the lowest rate (67 percent). Across the board, foreign-born Hispanics

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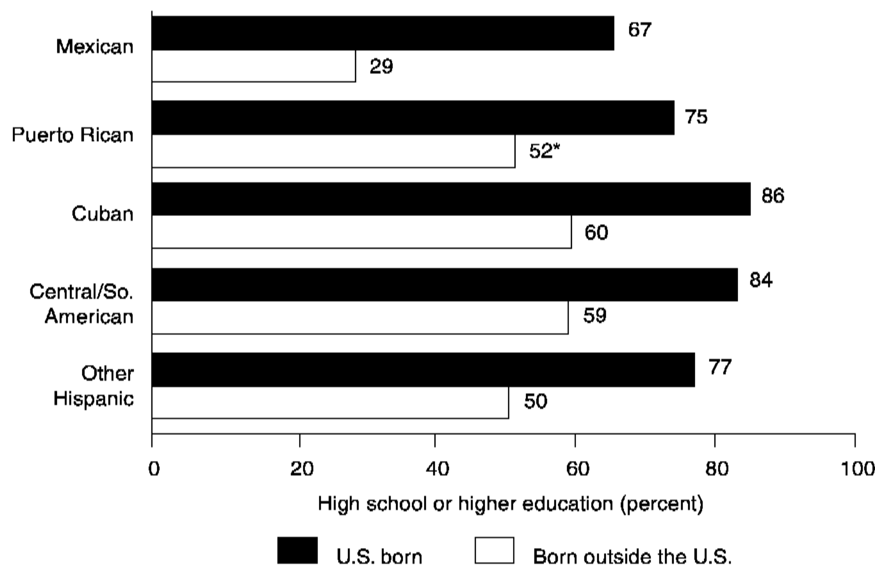

FIGURE 4-4 Educational attainment of Hispanics by national origin and by nativity, 1996. Sample includes persons ages 25 or older. Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico or outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia. SOURCE: del Pinal and Singer (1997:p.33, Figure 11). Reprinted with permission from the Population Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C.

were less educated, especially immigrants from Mexico. Although second-generation Hispanics have narrowed the educational gap, compared with Whites and Blacks, large numbers of them are still disadvantaged educationally—a fact that continues to have great influence on individual and group socioeconomic status.

A pattern of under-education for Hispanics is also illustrated when one considers institutions of higher learning. Since the 1960s, the percentage of Americans aged 25 to 29 who completed a four-year college education has steadily increased. The percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic Blacks who completed four years of higher education also increased, but at a disproportionately lower rate than that for non-Hispanic Whites. In 1997, about 33 percent of Whites had completed college, compared with about 11 percent for Hispanics and 14 percent for Blacks. As is indicated in Figure 4-5, Hispanics and Blacks continue to fall significantly behind Whites in attaining four or more years of college (Council of Economic Advisors, 1998b), and this higher-education gap actually widened rather than narrowed in the 1990s.

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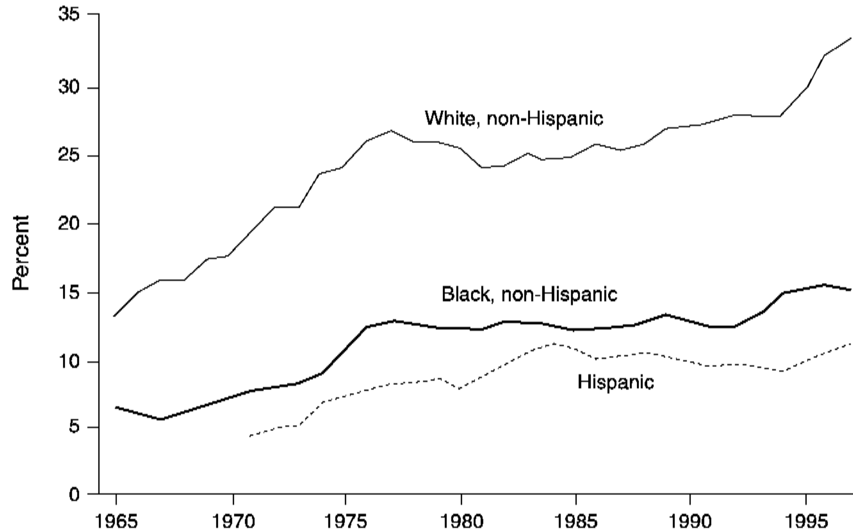

FIGURE 4-5 Persons aged 25 to 29 with a four-year college degree or higher. SOURCE: Council of Economic Advisers (1998b:22).

The identification of groups by race and ethnicity reported here with respect to jobs, incomes, and formal schooling, though drawn from "official" sources, provides only a broad overview of a volatile and complex process that can elude observation or obscure the actual dynamics shaping outcomes (del Pinal and Singer, 1997). Unemployment rates, for example, generally reported in recent years as close to a "full-employment" standard, omit millions of part-time workers who would like full-time jobs, and millions of additional "discouraged workers" who need jobs but no longer actively pursue opportunities. School drop-out rates similarly reflect a multifaceted dynamic of school readiness among pupils, family conditions, and institutional readiness, especially in public schools confronted with unprecedented levels of ethnic and racial diversity.

Political Participation and Group Identity

Looking back to the 1950s, at the participation of Hispanics in American political institutions at the local, state, or national levels, one cannot help but be impressed by gains that have occurred. Fifty years ago, with the exception of New Mexico, the number of Hispanic elected officials at the state or federal level could be counted on one hand. Though Hispanics were able to help elect a few of their own kind to local public offices, for the most part discriminatory practices such as poll taxes, gerrymander-

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ing, and English language-literacy provisions excluded Hispanics from the political process. These historical legacies, when combined with high poverty and low naturalization rates, effectively disenfranchised huge numbers of Hispanics.

By the 1970s and 1980s, however, more and more political commentators and prospective candidates—including those attached to the national political parties—began to take notice of the growing Hispanic influence. Significantly, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, intended to help unlock the ballot box for Blacks, also helped to make the political process more open to Hispanics (Moore and Pachon, 1985). Characterizations of a "sleeping brown giant" beginning to show political awakening in the late 1960s and 1970s were reinforced by signs that, indeed, Hispanics were emerging as a political force to be reckoned with in the 1980s, the so-called "Decade of the Hispanic."

Clearly, Hispanics have come a long way in the past generation with regard to flexing their growing political muscle. Hispanic elected officials at all levels now number more than 5,000; and there are hundreds of Spanish-surnamed persons who have been elected to state and federal positions. But although these gains are impressive, Hispanics are still grossly underrepresented, based on their percentage of the U.S. population (DeSipio, 1996). Greater political participation of Hispanics in electoral politics may take a long time, and may be difficult to achieve. One must raise the question of whether Hispanics will follow the political paths of other ethnic and racial minorities—Eastern and Southern European immigrants and their children in the earlier decades of the twentieth century and Blacks since the Civil Rights era—toward ever-increasing inclusion in the American political system.

Some political pundits and politicians point to the low voter registration and voting rates of Hispanics as indications of less interest in things political. In the 1992 and 1994 elections, Hispanic voter turnout ranged between 20 percent and 28 percent of registered voters, whereas the rate for Whites hovered around 64 to 65 percent, and that for Blacks ranged from 37 to 54 percent (DeSipio, 1996; del Pinal and Singer, 1997). In rebuttal, Hispanic advocacy organizations and ethnic political leaders argue that ongoing voter registration and education drives will result in more and more Hispanics who will exercise the franchise, ensuring greater and greater Hispanic political influence at all levels of government, especially at the local levels where they are currently more concentrated (Hero, 1992).

Several factors will help determine the eventual outcome of Hispanics as a powerful political force in the United States. First, it is commonly understood that low socioeconomic and educational status have a huge bearing on political participation rates; on this count, Hispanics have a

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long way to go. This factor is particularly important for the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican populations, which are disproportionately represented among the ranks of the poorer working classes and who continue to have lower rates of higher education attainment. Second, the Hispanic population is one of the youngest in the nation; one-third of all Hispanics are younger than 18 years old, and more than one-fifth of all Hispanics of voting age are between the ages of 18 and 24. It is a fact that younger voters simply do not participate as actively in the political process as older voters. Third, immigrants and their children comprise about two-thirds of all Hispanics; and naturalization rates among them, especially among Mexican immigrants, is one of the lowest of any group in U.S. history. In 1996, for example, more than 40 percent of Hispanics older than age 18 were not naturalized citizens of the United States and, therefore, were ineligible to register to vote (del Pinal and Singer, 1997; Young, 1991). Finally, Hispanics do not constitute an ethnic voting bloc; they are composed of diverse constituencies with different political attitudes and are unlikely to combine their political power in the near future.

Scholars who analyzed data from the Latino National Political Survey of 1990 concluded that the various Hispanic subgroups do not view themselves in common. There are, however, issues of importance—such as increased government action to support education, especially bilingual education, to fight crime, and to provide child care services—that cut across national-origin group interests. It would, nevertheless, be misleading to describe an "Hispanic partisanship," because the political differences between Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are too great to lend themselves to a vision of a united Hispanic electorate (de la Garza et al., 1992). In some specific locales, however, historical circumstances have converged, bringing together different Hispanic subgroups for concerted political action. Chicago is a case in point (Padilla, 1985).

To no one's surprise, the Latino National Political Survey also revealed that Hispanics overwhelmingly prefer to use national-origin terms as primary ethnic identifiers—i.e., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.—although U.S.-born Hispanics use these terms less than the foreign born, as one would expect (de la Garza et al., 1992). The pan-ethnic labels, Hispanic or Latino, are used as secondary terms of identification; and here, again, the U.S. born are more likely to use the pan-ethnic terms than the foreign born. Among those who use the pan-ethnic labels, a 1996 USBC survey found, a majority—58 percent—use the term Hispanic rather than Latino, the term used by only 12 percent (Pinal and Singer, 1997).

Ethnic or national-origin identity for Hispanics raises some interesting questions about race and ethnicity in America, not only about how the different subgroups view themselves, but also how the larger society views Hispanics. The U.S. government classifies Hispanics as an ethnic

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group; yet, Hispanics can be of any race (most classify as White, a minority as Black, and a growing percentage as "Other"). In the minds of the majority population, and in the minds of many Hispanics, there is ambiguity about racial or ethnic categories—an ambiguity that has indeed characterized Americans' preoccupation with skin color, national origin, and other sociocultural/religious differences that have separated Americans from other Americans for hundreds of years. This ambiguity is aptly reflected in the many confusing ways USBC has categorized Hispanics over the past century. For example, with the exception of the 1930 Census, when Mexicans were classified as a separate "race," Hispanics have been identified by foreign parentage, birthplace, "Spanish mother tongue," "Spanish surname," "Spanish origin," and, beginning in 1980, Spanish/Hispanic origin (Bean and Tienda, 1987). Given the diverse makeup of the nation's Hispanic populations—in terms of immigrant cohorts, national origins, cultural roots, distinct local and regional concentrations, and socioeconomic status—it is clear that any attempt to categorize them as a distinct, homogeneous group is counterproductive. Consequently, the catch-all term "Hispanic," as the preferred label of the federal government, includes the foreign born with the native born of many generations in the United States, political refugees, undocumented and legal immigrants, and people from many national origins. Yes, they derive from common Spanish-language origins and Roman Catholic religious traditions, and can trace their heritage to Spain's colonial legacies in the New World, but Hispanics in the United States at the dawn of the twenty-first century defy generalizations as a single group. The diversity that distinguishes Hispanics will surely continue to be one of the main characteristics of the group, a diversity that exists not only across but within each national-origin group.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

It may seem ironic to many that one of the thorniest intellectual and social-policy challenges presented by the surging number of Hispanics on the U.S. mainland today is identifying and counting them. The problem is far from new but is now at the center of heated controversy with respect to the 2000 Census and the related prescriptions for federal data-keeping mandated by the Office of Management and Budget (1997). There has been a growing furor about where and how the color line will be drawn in the twenty-first century, which has clearly displaced the complacency on this issue reflected in a 1983 report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. That report (Davis et al., 1983) stated:

> Prior to the 1970 census, the concept of Hispanics as a group barely existed. Information on some components of the population, such as

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> Mexicans, could be obtained from the usual census questions on a person's country of birth or that of parents, use of a language other than English at home, and ancestry. . . . But none of the identifiers used prior to 1970 could satisfy the need for a definition which could be applied nationwide and with reasonable consistency over time (p. 5).

Beyond the problem of accuracy in population counts, until recently seen as safely anchored in mutually exclusive racial categories and thorough enumeration, lies a dawning awareness of the multiracial character of Hispanic peoples and the potential significance of the growing pace of interethnic and interracial marriages, which adds yet more ambiguity to existing racial classifications. In fact the catalytic power of Hispanics in stimulating racial mixing in the rigidly divided United States of the 1940s was noted at the time by Myrdal (1944) in his study of more than 400 industrial plants. He noted:

> The most frequently encountered policy was one based on the belief that 'Negro and White workers will not mix.' They did "mix", however, in over 50 of the plants studied. In certain plants where Mexicans were regarded as White, Negroes were not allowed to "mix" with them; where Mexicans were classed as colored, Negroes not only worked with them but were given positions over them. In certain plants Mexicans and Whites worked together; in some others White workers accepted Mexicans and objected to Japanese. Mexicans and Negroes worked under a White foreman; Italians and Mexicans under a Negro foreman (p. 393).

It is worth noting that at about that same time, Puerto Ricans in New York were configured together with Blacks in the first "minority/majority" senatorial district for the state legislature in what are today parts of Harlem and "el barrio." A 1935 pamphlet (The Tragedy of the Puerto Ricans and Colored Americans) delineated the obstacles in that setting to effective transracial/ethnic coalition-building in terms that have considerable resonance today (Martinez, 1935). Clearly, efforts to link the resources and capabilities of Hispanics with other marginalized communities to contest subordination are hardly new; there is, however, much to be done to pin down key elements of the present conjuncture in this regard as well as to critically revisit key historical experiences.

As discussed regarding Hispanics' demographic profile, despite the acknowledged constraints on the range and precision of public data gathering on Hispanics since the 1960s, a fairly consensual depiction of the dramatic shifts in the size, composition, location, and basic conditions of that population has been assembled by both official bodies and independent scholars, much of it by Hispanics themselves. On this front, public discourse on these questions has been decisively transformed. Still, in recent years, USBC's insistence on the qualifying proviso in every tabulation that "Hispanics may be of any race" has hammered home the idea of

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Hispanic communities as multiracial social formations, without seriously addressing the challenges and enigmas for research methods.

Present quandaries, and the need for pertinent inquiry, thus cluster on both of these fronts. The decision to combine data on ethnicity with race, and perhaps to allow more than one self-designation in both categories, generates complexities in the collection and manipulation of these identifiers as well as their linkages to other variables. The alternatives in data collection now under discussion all confront difficulties, especially when coupled with the added dimension of adjustments being considered to remedy a troubling growth in census undercounts that disproportionately affect minorities. Expert opinions range from those who consider any such assignations unnecessary, and, perhaps, absurd and wasteful, to others bent on fully charting the rich mosaic of U.S. society, even if it means radically enlarging the number of racial categories and allowing multiple options per respondent. Some of the latter voices are, of course, psychometricians and geneticists determined to track "race" links to "capacities" and behaviors, though the task of unraveling these from developmental and environmental conditions, and deciding which genes are at work in any instance, may be effectively moot in present circumstances. At least one member of the citizens' board advising USBC insisted that with 95 percent of Americans still checking only one race, the essential racial order remains firmly in place and all the brouhaha is pointless (Holmes, 1998).

Significant population growth is sure to increase the role of Hispanics in the American political system; and more-or-less "official" readings of the most recent data confirm protracted demographic growth, continued diversification, and potential assimilation (notably via intermarriage with non-Hispanic Whites). Recent economic slippage for most Hispanics and barriers to increased political participation likely reflect the limiting constraints of newness to the society, noncitizenship, language barriers, education lags, and class factors, rather than racial discrimination. Hispanic newcomers are said to bring positive work, gender, family, and community values (social capital) into the troubled milieus to which they gravitate. Thus, whatever the evolving dynamics in the immediate future, Hispanics are expected to play an important role in transforming the United States. Ensuring their well-being is manifestly in the national interest (Davis et al., 1983).

But the emergence of Hispanics as strategic actors in major processes of social change within the United States has even more far-reaching implications. In the context of expanding transnational interdependence and international migration, Hispanic communities in the United States are integral to the economic and political restructurings that are redefining identities, citizenship, democracy, and human rights. As millions of

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individuals are obliged to maintain viable lives simultaneously in more than one society, and as formal legal structures to accommodate these realities—e.g., dual citizenship—begin to be brought into place, every arena of policy formulation and implementation is impacted. It is into this essentially uncharted terrain that Hispanics are now called on to play an important role (Bonilla et al., 1998).

CONTEMPORARY POLICIES, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES

The Problem of Inequality and Exclusion

Since the 1960s, a number of key public policies have helped to open doors of opportunity for Hispanics and other minorities who were historically cut off from avenues of educational, occupational, and political mobility. Affirmative action-oriented admissions policies and new financial-aid opportunities facilitated access to institutions of higher learning that had been out of reach of the great majority of Hispanics. In addition, employment policies that provided protections against discriminatory practices in the workplace (e.g., those overseen by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) and policies that promoted the growth of minority-owned businesses (e.g., those overseen by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs) helped to establish a beachhead for economic progress in Hispanic communities.

Similarly, fair-housing statutes, voting-rights laws, and bilingual-education programs were efforts orchestrated by the federal government to combat discrimination as well as attempts to create new paths for individual and group advancement. These laws and policies, and others, were important for three principal reasons. (1) They acknowledged the contemporary effects of historical discrimination that were embedded in the institutions of society. (2) They represented proactive federal-government intervention and allocation of resources required to turn American society in a direction where all citizens of the nation—regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, age, or disabilities—could have a fair chance to pursue opportunities as far as their individual capabilities would permit. (3) These policies contributed to the burgeoning Hispanic middle class and served as proof that new policies made a difference in the life chances of hundreds of thousands of Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Hispanic Americans.

Just as important, many of the policies of the past generation were evidence that the American "creed of opportunity"—sewn into the fabric of democratic society and culture—though narrowly conceived originally, could expand and change over time. During the course of U.S. history, citizens have sacrificed and struggled to reconceive this creed so that

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women, racial and ethnic minorities, disabled people, the poor, and others historically outside the gates of opportunity could enter. For those Americans who, over many generations, were denied opportunity, the legacies of exclusion and inequality are still painfully visible at the dawn of the twenty-first century. For many Hispanics and other minorities, history weighs heavily on their contemporary reality. To be sure, socioeconomic and educational group progress was achieved in the last quarter of the 1900s, in ways unimaginable to previous generations of Hispanics; but the modest gains made must be sustained and accelerated if members of the nation's soon-to-be largest ethnic group have a chance to become full shareholders in American society.

The current public-policy discourse and acerbic debates about programs such as affirmative action in employment and education (admission to colleges and universities), bilingualism and educational reform (English-only state laws, bilingual education curricula, and voucher programs), immigration (services to documented and undocumented immigrants), and welfare reform (consequences for the poor as a result of the welfare reform policies of 1996) tend to exacerbate the racial and ethnic divides in society. A more productive policy discourse about these and other existing policies—most of which were developed by lawmakers to promote opportunity—should center on a fundamental question critical to the well-being of all Americans: As U.S. and global economies move toward ever-increasing interdependence, and as the nature of the American economic system shifts in the postindustrial era, which existing policies should be amended and which new policies should be envisioned that will sustain and improve opportunities for all Americans?

Any consideration of future public policies that does not take into account the human and economic costs of large sectors of society who are undereducated, underemployed, impoverished, and in ill health will surely undermine the foundations of American civilization. If the demographic projections are correct, and if the disturbing trends that characterize so many Hispanics today continue into the mid-twenty-first century, when Hispanics will constitute a quarter of the entire population, it may well be impossible to change the course of history for such a huge sector of the citizenry. For the well-being of American society in general, improving the life chances and opportunities for disadvantaged Hispanics and other poor Americans may indeed be one of the challenges that will determine the course of American democracy in the present century.

Hispanics in the Postindustrial Order

The Hispanic condition, as we look ahead, reflects, in stark ways, an overarching contraposition of social promise and denial in the contempo-

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rary relations of nation-state and market, both within the most advanced postindustrial U.S. setting and in the countries of origin of Hispanic peoples. As a major living link in the playing out of economic restructuring in the hemisphere, Hispanics confront massive shortfalls in the capacity of market and state to provide employment at a living wage or adequate social infrastructures for all. As the global rush to embrace free markets surges ahead, along with the ascendancy of the need to privilege capital and its freedom of movement, two key questions emerge: (1) When and how will some new forms of state control or legal norms be brought into place in response to the deepening social crises generated by the untrammeled movement of transnational capital? (2) What voice can workers, themselves trying to balance attachments to multiple national and cultural identities, have in shaping whatever social pact will undergird the emergent transnational global order, and protect their rights to work and decent living standards (Morales and Bonilla, 1993)?

Having become an overwhelmingly urban population, Hispanics now also stand at the epicenter of social transformations that dramatize the social pathologies of big-city decline. For these communities, the bad news continues. Inner-city Hispanics are now reported to be the most discriminated-against group in housing markets across the country. Their neighborhoods are awash with environmental perils, just as their workplaces are exposed to the severest job hazards (Yinger, 1995; Goldman, 1991). Yet, we begin to hear, as well, that newness to the society and social isolation may temporarily shield some Hispanics, especially those freshly arrived, from the perverse effects of urban poverty. For example, despite more modest human-capital endowments, Mexican immigrants are perceived by some employers as more willing and disciplined low-wage workers than Blacks. New immigrants have been hailed not only for their willingness to fill the demand for low-wage service workers, but also for their entrepreneurial energies in the informal economy and small enterprise. Thus, recent immigrants, in contrast to long-time resident Blacks and Puerto Ricans, are now credited with producing for New York City a "low cost equivalent of gentrification" (Sassen, 1991).

Cultural Citizenship

Historically, both indigenous groups and immigrant populations, including Hispanics, were expected to shed their cultural and ethnic baggage and conform to Anglo-Saxon norms as a condition for inclusion into mainstream American society. A host of social, institutional, political, and cultural forces together weighed heavily on efforts by groups to maintain some semblance of their ethnic or cultural identity. Indeed, society's expectation for assimilation was pervasive for any group identified as cul-

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turally or ethnically different. For many groups, this expectation was internalized, thus hastening the processes of assimilation and acculturation. But despite the so-called "Anglo conformity" or "one-way" model of group assimilation, certain racial and immigrant minorities remained outside the gates of the American community. This has been the experience for large numbers of Hispanics.

In the second half of the twentieth century, recognition that many groups had maintained distinctive elements of their ethnic and cultural heritage, and others had insisted on preserving the integrity of their social and cultural differences, gave rise to ideas about the United States as an ethnically diverse democracy that did not have to force assimilation on all its citizens. These ideas are best reflected in the pluralism and multiculturalism models of group relations in a diverse society. In contrast to the dominant paradigm of assimilation, these two approaches help explain how different groups are able to maintain their cultural distinctiveness and how society benefits from an understanding and appreciation of the many cultures that constitute the larger society. Though pluralistic and multicultural models promote cultural democracy in the United States and encourage celebration of contributions to society from many different groups, neither explains satisfactorily how groups can change society—its social, cultural, and political norms.

The idea of "cultural citizenship" has been developed by a team of Hispanic scholars (Flores and Benmayor, 1997) exploring ways to understand how Hispanics and other groups not only make cultural contributions to a plural society, but also alter society. By the sheer size of the Hispanic population and the myriad ways they are influencing society, this idea of cultural citizenship provides some valuable insights into how Hispanics, now and in the future, are bound up in dynamic interaction in American society, a dialectical process in which both the group and the society at large are constantly changing one another. "In our opinion," the authors state, "what makes cultural citizenship so exciting is that it offers us an alternative perspective to better comprehend cultural processes that result in community building and in political claims raised by marginalized groups in the broader society" (Flores and Benmayor, 1997:15). Using the idea of citizenship as a concept that extends universal rights to members of a society, cultural citizenship broadens the concept to include groups historically positioned, in the legal sense, as "second class" or "noncitizens." This concept helps account for how these and other groups build communities and develop identities, how they lay claim to cultural "spaces," and how they claim rights in society. These spaces and claims have the potential not only to reform society—e.g., the Civil Rights era reforms and reaffirmation of Black identity—but also to elevate various subcultures to a level where no one culture dominates. Thus, the idea of

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cultural citizenship, by logical extension, may form the basis on which Americans see themselves not in contentious ways, but as cultural citizens of a nation with connected and interdependent cultural communities that constitute the whole.

As the Hispanic population continues to grow, and thus leaves American society with no "majority" population, the idea of cultural citizenship in a heterogeneous society may serve as a useful way to envision society and cultural change as a key component of American democracy in the twenty-first century.

Country of Origin Linkages

To complicate matters, the growing importance given to Hispanics in the United States by governments in their countries of origin has not escaped worried observers. In 1987, for example, the Mexican government established an outreach program for its citizens, and their offspring, in the United States. Components of this program proliferated and took on new dimensions as the North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Mexico, and Canada took shape. Components now include several newspapers geared to community interests; sponsorship of cultural and sports events and organizations; academic exchanges; networking among labor, feminist, environmental, and religious entities; and so on. In 1997, the Mexican legislature, with unanimous support from all major parties, legalized dual citizenship, permitting immigrants who chose to become naturalized U.S. citizens to also retain their full rights as Mexican citizens. Parallel developments, especially with respect to absentee voting in presidential elections, are being pursued by numerous other countries—e.g., Peru, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and some Central American nations. In every instance, a major consideration stimulating this outreach to the millions in the diaspora is, of course, the millions in dollars and other remittances channeled homeward by immigrant communities.

In the late 1980s, Puerto Rico's Commonwealth government similarly moved to establish a cabinet-level Department of Community Affairs for Puerto Ricans in the United States. This agency soon mounted major voter mobilization campaigns in several states, thus raising major questions about "cross-state" political interference—i.e., using public monies from one state for political action in another. The repeated calls for binding referendums on the island's political status also highlight concerns about the rights of Puerto Rican mainland dwellers to a formal voice in such crucial matters. The intensifying debate about the island's status brings sharply into focus the fluidity and paradoxes of the waning powers of

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nation-states, of whatever order, to sustain the economic and social rights of their citizens within the emergent hemispheric and global context.

An official "dialogue" between the Cuban government and its nationals in exile in the United States was also mounted in 1987, and consultations involving the United States and other governments and international bodies along with Cuban-American organizations continue apace. Even the Spanish government has forthrightly declared its interest in U.S. "Hispanics" as a function of their "increasing political, social, and economic weight" (Cortina and Moncada, 1988). In brief, new kinds of transnational political relations are being pieced together, strengthened by the historic, existential ties of family, locality, culture, and other networks that have maintained immigrants' connections to their countries of origin over generations. Parallel efforts by federal agencies to engage Hispanic interests and political energies in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives further enhance the opportunities for Hispanic communities to assert independent perspectives in this terrain, rather than passively bowing to home-country or U.S. objectives.

Coalition Building

The record of misfires, divisive contention, and deliberate interventions by established power wielders to disrupt coalitions of Hispanics, especially with Blacks, goes back a long way. Mainstream apprehensions in this connection have peaked recently as part of the broad backlash against "big" government and social spending. Lance Liebman, a Harvard law professor, put the matter as succinctly and coldly as anyone in the early 1980s (Liebman, 1982):

> . . . we should hope for a Supreme Court wise enough and ingenious enough to uphold legislative decisions that assist Blacks but refuse to uphold, because the justifications are weaker and the costs to the social fabric so great, extensions of those arrangements to other groups (p. 173).

"Other groups" here means, of course, chiefly Hispanics and especially new arrivals among them, whatever their immigrant status. As a matter of fact, despite these intimations of hardening resistance to any moves to unify racial and ethnic interests, the 1990s opened on a very positive note in this connection with a major conference at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs (University of Texas at Austin), bringing together notables from local communities and from outside the communities—politicians, academics, policy analysts, and community organizers. Present at the forum, launched by the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR) and the Joint Center for Policy Studies, were

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such figures as David Dinkins, Barbara Jordan, Henry Cisneros, Nicholas Katzenbach, and Robert Reischauer. A landmark volume, *Hispanics and Blacks in the Cities: Policies for the 1990s* (Romo, 1990) provided a solid grounding for continued initiatives that are stretching into the present.

Taking stock of progress during the 1990s, there was the positioning of a critical mass of information, organizational capacity, and leadership resources backing minority coalitions that nevertheless confront serious reversals, determined opposition, shallow supports, and systemic challenges (Betancurt and Gills, 2000). For example, what early in the 1990s appeared as major electoral breakthroughs for Blacks and Hispanics in major cities—New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco—soon gave way to conservative counterattacks and a crumbling disarray under the pressures of deepening inequality and poverty, budget deficits, and waning federal social infrastructure supports. Locally, there was contention at municipal and state levels over minimal resources. Competition for jobs, especially in the public sector, also surfaced as a divisive issue. Growing political apathy and withdrawal from partisan and electoral activity have also put a chill on efforts to mobilize coalitions within and across ethnic and racial lines. Still, newly articulated visions of comprehensive social development, with enhanced democratic participation and recognition of the social value of diversity, continue to propel scattered initiatives and "model" programs around the country (Hartman, 1997; Pacific Coast Council on International Policy, 1998). Many of these must manage to overcome entrenched obstacles to effective action—individualism, elitism, and the challenges to giving a genuine voice in decisions to marginalized participants. An encouraging development is the increasing recognition and practical implementation of transnational perspectives and organizational strategies in many of these undertakings (Brecher and Castello, 1994).

Responses to Public-Policy Initiatives

Shared empowerment pursued through coalition-building may remain elusive. Nevertheless, a critical advantage is gained through intensified communication and collaboration across groups, however limited. The amplification of horizons and synergizing impact of the give and take about policy perspectives on common issues enhances and strengthens communication and mutual empowerment. In this connection, IUPLR, mentioned earlier, has been a driving force among Hispanic academics and has fostered collaboration for scholarly research, policy formulation, and community mobilization around matters crucial to all disadvantaged Hispanics and the nation at large. The more pertinent point is the virtual explosion of parallel endeavors validating and implementing, in new ven-

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ues, IUPLR's approach to overcoming the barriers between the academic world, public-policy arenas, and communities in need. Numerous such entities come to mind; one in particular, the National Jobs for All Coalition (NJFAC), can serve as exemplar here.

NJFAC, in operation since the mid-1990s, joined forces with an IUPLR working group on "Hispanics in a Changing U.S. Economy" to create a model advocacy forum in New York City to prepare a diverse group of Hispanic and other agencies to have a voice in municipal and state policies bearing on jobs and welfare rights. The nature of their contribution is well conveyed in their statement of task (Hernandez and Torres-Saillant, 1998):

> We will develop and disseminate economic and political analyses in formats appropriate for reaching the target audiences. These include new issues of our "Uncommon Sense" publications, written by experts on specific dimensions of the employment-unemployment area. The coalition has published more than 20 in this series; they are used by a wide range of organizations. The Coalition will also develop materials suitable for dissemination on the web, and in the form of video cassettes appropriate to school, university, and general audiences. We will expand our speakers' bureau for talks and appearances in universities and schools, on public forums, radio and television interviews and commentary, community and religious groups and other appropriate occasions (pp. 20-21).

NJFAC has a score of distinguished individuals on its executive committee and nearly 80 specialists, advocates, and important organizations on its national advisory board. Thus, as Hispanics move into the policy arena, they will have opportunities to draw on exceptional resources in bringing informed and responsible perspectives into this discourse. Parallel groups exist or are being formed to address many other issue areas—immigration, language, education, health, environmental conditions, youth, the roles and needs of women, community revitalization, and so on. The full inclusion of well-articulated minority perspectives and voices continues to be an aspiration rather than an accomplished fact; but the stage is set for a transformation of the coordination of research, explorations of policy alternatives, and community-driven political initiatives in which Hispanics may make creative contributions.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, Hispanics at the beginning of the twenty-first century stand at a crossroads in American society. On one level of analysis—especially if one examines the growing ranks of the emergent middle class—Hispanic families seem to be doing just fine. They have, in ever-

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increasing numbers, accessed opportunities in education and employment and have carved out a niche of American prosperity for themselves and their children. They tend to live in integrated neighborhoods and appear in so many ways to have achieved the "American dream," if one measures that aspiration by a standard of material possessions and economic stability. To the casual observer, tens of thousands of second- and third-generation Mexican Americans (predominantly a people with immigrant roots in the twentieth century) as well as Puerto Ricans and Cubans (who have lived on the mainland for dozens of years) seem to be following a stair-step rise in status, as each successive wave of migrants and immigrants settles in the United States.

If one looks deeper and more critically, however, at the diverse Hispanic population, there is cause for real concern—in some cases, cause for alarm. Below the thin ranks of the Hispanic middle class lies a much larger group. They are not thriving. They are increasingly falling into the new categories of the "working poor" or, worse, are seemingly trapped as a class of severely impoverished people living in urban *barrios*. They are the Hispanic underclass. Given the current size of the Hispanic population, the great diversity that characterizes the group, and the sustained projected growth, Hispanics themselves and the society and its institutions must search for explanations for why some are faring well and others are faring so poorly. It is this latter group of Hispanics, particularly the great numbers of young people, who stand at a crossroads in American society. If the path can lead to educational achievement that ends with good jobs that pay a decent wage and provide hope, Hispanics in the twenty-first century will be productive citizens who will contribute in significant ways to society. But if these disturbing trends persist or increase, the potential for a "new" American dilemma seems frighteningly real.

The challenge is for Hispanics to muster a unified response, drawing on all their resources and capabilities, and become an integral part of the movement to uncover the complex forces intensifying inequality, poverty, political passivity, exploitation, and social isolation, not only within their own ranks but in the United States as a whole. This means reaching out and grasping every opportunity to share in the scholarly debate, policy assessment, and organized movement to restore priority to human rights objectives, despite the limitations under which all such initiatives now operate. These limitations, and their accompanying enigmas, have thrown disciplines, institutions, and even social philosophy into disarray. We must remember that the societal transformations affecting the dynamics of race, ethnicity, class, and gender demand patience and commitment and unconditional resistance to any tendencies toward withdrawal or self-isolation.

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