Emerging U.S. Latino politics : the enfranchisement of Bethlehem's Latino community

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Emerging U.S. Latino Politics: The Enfranchisement of Bethlehem’s Latino Community

By

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Abstract

According to some estimates, in the early part of the new millennium Latinos will be the largest ethnic group in the United States. This will mean that Latinos will have a profound impact on the various segments of our nation’s social, economic and political life. Unfortunately, the plight of Latinos in the U.S. is one that is not associated with success. Latinos are underrepresented in many professional fields, are likely to perform below average in school, have lower incomes, and have a high percentage of juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse. As a newly emerging group, Latinos have the task of improving their societal circumstances for not only themselves but for the benefit of the entire citizenry.

This thesis focuses on the political mobilization of Latinos in the United States. Particularly examined is the political dynamic of Latinos in smaller cities outside traditional urban areas where many have historically migrated. In order to comprehend the impact that Latinos will have on the U.S., a general introduction is given as to who Latinos are, and in which parts of the country they have traditionally settled.

Upon establishing the differences between Latino groups, a more detailed analysis is given to the political mobilization efforts of Latinos in smaller cities. A case study on a small Pennsylvania city is conducted in order to evaluate the political dynamics of this emerging group. What is to be determined is whether or not political mobilization is sufficient to create a Latino political franchise, enabling Latinos to be elected into local governmental positions. This analysis is followed by legal and political suggestions that may expedite the political inclusion process for Latinos in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
The conclusion of this thesis finds that while political mobilization may stimulate attention by policy makers, it is not sufficient to politically empower Latinos.
Introduction

In the past thirty years, the Latino community in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has increased from 6.7% of the population in the 1970s to an estimated 20% in the 1990s and early 2000s. Despite this increase, Latinos have been unable to elect a non-Anglo candidate to city council or any other at-large elected position within Bethlehem city government. Many identify the at-large voting structure of the city as the greatest obstacle for Latino candidates in Bethlehem. In races where Latinos ran for city council or any other at-large elected position, voting data illustrates that Latino candidates won the city wards with the highest concentration of Latinos by an overwhelming majority. Yet others suggest that Latinos inability to win elections is not a result of the voting structure of the city but rather a failure by the Latino community to politically mobilize and turn out and vote in local elections. This thesis addresses the mobilization and empowerment efforts of Latinos in small town politics, using Bethlehem Pennsylvania as a case study. Moreover, it asks the question: Is mobilization sufficient to politically empower the Latino community in Bethlehem, or are institutional barriers such as the city’s at-large voting structure more of an obstacle to political enfranchisement?

Scholarly work on Latino politics has been focused primarily on major metropolitan areas such as New York City, Miami, San Antonio, Chicago, and Los Angeles. These studies indicate political mobilization efforts succeeded only after years of deliberate disenfranchisement. It was during the 1960 civil rights era that the political
infrastructure for Latinos and other similarly disenfranchised\textsuperscript{1} groups in larger urban areas was created. For newly formed Latino communities, the absence of this political development period is an extremely important factor in discerning reasons for this group's potential to become politically empowered.

Recently there has been an effort to document the history and analyze the political influence of Latinos in smaller to mid-sized cities. This is because in these areas, Latino populations have reached such a critical mass that they have become virtually impossible to ignore. Nevertheless, it must be noted that despite this growth of Latino populations and emerging scholarly attention to smaller U.S. cities, there continues to be a lack of social, economic, and political documentation of this group.

This thesis offers an analysis of the political mobilization efforts of Latinos in Bethlehem and facilitates understanding of the dynamics of Latino political mobilization in smaller cities throughout the country. This study will also shed light on the variety of national political models that may succeed within these regional Latino communities.

Divided into three parts, the first part elaborates on the terms Latino and Hispanic - the umbrella names given to a diverse group of people; it explains the three most prominent U.S. Latino/Hispanic political mobilization models: Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican; and describes the migration of Latinos into smaller to mid-sized cities throughout the U.S. and in particular the northeast.

\textsuperscript{1} Although politically the term "franchise" means the right to vote, I use the term "disenfranchise" to refer to not only not having the right to vote but also to biased voting techniques - such as the location of polling places and inadequate voting instructions - that have limited if not halted intentionally minority groups' ability to vote.
In part two, a case study of the political framework of Bethlehem’s Latino community will be presented. What is to be determined in part two is whether political mobilization of Bethlehem’s Latino community is sufficient to provide Latinos access to local government and politics. Furthermore, does Bethlehem’s Latino community have the ability to elect a Latino candidate given the at-large voting structure of the city? Part two begins with a historical overview of the Latino community in Bethlehem, followed by a detailed description of the current political status of Bethlehem’s Latinos. This will be done by examining the most politically influential Latino organizations and institutions within the city; the political role of Latino social and civic organizations and professional Latino organizations; the local influence of Latino political organizations, the number of Latinos in local government, agencies and departments; the media’s portrayal of Bethlehem’s Latino community; as well as the various 1990s city council elections in which a Latino ran for a city council seat². Part two concludes with identifying the specific political framework that exists for Bethlehem’s Latino community, with an estimate of the city’s Latino political strength.

Part three focuses on the options available to politically empower the Latino community in the City of Bethlehem. Given is an assessment of the political and legal means of including Latinos into city government. Politically, traditional methods of mobilization are elaborated on in order to comprehend strategies that work with the status quo. An overview of the legal procedure, to change a municipal government in

² When applicable I use interviews with Latino and non-Latino leaders and professionals as my primary source.
Pennsylvania, is presented. If local change is reluctant to occur, the 1965 Voting Rights Act is also included as a possible recourse for developing a new political structure in Bethlehem.

Studies of Latino political mobilization are limited, and where efforts are made to study it, lack of historical data make the task even harder. Despite the fact that Latinos have lived in Bethlehem since the Second World War, it was not until recently that the first book about the history of Bethlehem’s Latino community was written. Although Latinos in Bethlehem comprise 20% of the city’s population and 25% of its school district student population, little is known of their historical contributions to the city.

This study is thus part of a continuing effort to understand the dynamics of Latino politics primarily as they pertain to new and emerging Latino communities throughout the United States. Bethlehem Pennsylvania’s Latino community will serve as a case study for which future studies can build upon.
Part I.

The Myth Of The Monolithic Group: Latinos/Hispanics

Can one lump persons in a generic “Hispanic” category? Only by ignoring the diversity of the latina/o population. For example, federal forms usually provide the following options: black (not of hispanic origin); white (not of hispanic origin); hispanic. As the forms seek information in the conjunctive, implicitly recognizing that ethnic identity and racial identity are two separate, co-existing traits, it is particularly ironic that latina/os are deprived of the opportunity to identify as ethnic, i.e., latina/o, including subcategory identification such as Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, as well as to identify by race. As multiple-layered selves we are denied part of our personhood when we have to deny part of who we are. Our experience simply cannot be sanitized to fit a mold in the creation of which we were not considered.

Berta Esperanza Hernandez-Truyol in Building Bridges Latinas and Latinos at the Crossroads

Introduction

The terms Latino and Hispanic are frequently used to describe people of Spanish-speaking (and sometimes Portuguese speaking) countries. This, however, creates a general perception of homogeneity amongst a diverse group of people. The term “Hispanic” is used by the Census Bureau and most mainstream sources to describe people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and South American, or some other Spanish origin. Throughout this thesis when describing Latinos or Hispanics, the term Latino(s) will be used. Hispanic will be used only if it is the official name of an organization as in

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I use Latino to describe the people from Spanish speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Hispanic comprises those people from Latin America and Spain. Since this thesis specifically deals with Mexican, Cuban and particularly Puerto Rican immigrants, Latino is preferred over Hispanic.
the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute. More often, the particular Latino or Hispanic group’s name (Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban) will be used.

1. Latinos

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic write about the U.S. term Hispanic, “millions of people of a variety of national backgrounds are put into a single “ethnic” category, and no allowances are made for their varied racial, class, linguistic, and gender experiences (1998, pg. 3).” Although Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans have established roots in the U.S. it was not until the 1980’s that a greater number of Latin Americans from Central and South America began to journey northward to the United States. This influx of Latinos, as a result of the many civil wars throughout Central America during the 1970s and 1980s, created a migratory explosion into the U.S. Coupled with U.S. lenient immigration laws⁴, Latino numbers increased at an unprecedented rate.

Latin America includes many nationalities, races and particular historical backgrounds that provide for many apparent distinctions. Additionally diverse are the varied social, political and economic ideologies that exist. Despite these known facts, it is common by many to place all Latinos and Hispanics in the United States under one general umbrella⁵. Attempts to study Latino politics at national or local levels must include an understanding of the diversity of people that make up U.S. Latinos.

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⁴ The Simpson-Mazzoli Bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in 1984 called for the granting of amnesty to illegal aliens residing in the U.S. Some observers estimate that as many as 7.4 million uncounted Hispanic aliens became U.S. citizens as a result (Vigil, 1987, pg. 4).
⁵ Delgado and Stefanic elaborate extensively on this topic in their 1998 publication, The Latino/a Condition; they elaborate on the general usage by the U.S. government in categorizing Latinos as one homogenous group.
Similarly, Chris F. Garcia writes, that “very little of the data available for Latino or Hispanic groups is broken out by national origin; most of the data lumps together Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Central and South Americans and others (1997, pg. 9).”

Efforts by political analysts to develop a national political framework have been complicated by the diversity and varying needs within the Latino community. Some have suggested an ethnic approach to political empowerment, while maintaining various degrees of autonomy between the various subgroups. In his article, *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, Peter Skerry digs into some of the dilemmas and paradoxes facing Latinos in the United States and explores the political implications that arise from them. In his view, one of the primary dilemmas distinctive to Latinos is their diversity and their somewhat ambiguous status in a racially divided and racially conscious society. Skerry raises two questions, both of which have great importance for Latinos and for Latino politics. The first is the rise of the generic umbrella term “Hispanic” or “Latino”. Demographically, there is no doubt that people called Latinos or Hispanics are an extremely heterogeneous group with regards to national origin, experiences in their homelands and in the United States, and varying socioeconomic characteristics. Skerry elaborates further,

the term “Hispanic” or “Latino,” used as a pan-ethnic description can both be advantageous in implying strength and solidarity, as well as a liability in leading to a misunderstanding of the particular needs and strengths of this group (pg. 13)
For grassroots mobilization purposes the incorporation of Latino leaders to identify with one large national group is advantageous for creating feelings of worth and usefulness, something that is difficult when struggling to mobilize a small group in a larger city. But when these efforts are associated with national efforts by other Latino groups across the country, whether Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican, political empowerment goals seem more obtainable.

The second problem Skerry pointed out, is which of two contrasting political strategies Latinos should follow. Should Latinos follow the political route blazed by African Americans, that is, one pushed by a victimized racial minority with a history of severe racial discrimination and pursue power primarily as a relatively homogenous national racial minority? Or alternatively, are Latinos more like white ethnic Catholic immigrant groups such as the Italians, who through eventual incorporation into the core American culture, emphasizing educational and economic success, and focusing on community and local levels, eventually will take their place after a few generations alongside other European immigrants (Garcia 1997, pg. 13)?

The latter argument is expressed by non-Latino critics who feel that Latinos should endure the same struggles today that their parents or grandparents faced. This, as strong willed as it sounds, only creates problems for society at large. If assimilation efforts could be made more quickly and smoothly then perhaps many of the problems, such as language difficulties and school drop out rates, could be reduced, benefiting not only new immigrants but the established citizenry as well. This would mean
incorporating new immigrants into the political system at a faster rate, enabling them to articulate their interest more clearly in a new (and for many, hostile) environment.

Skerry's emphasis in understanding Latino particular needs and creating distinct categories rather than aggregating Latinos into one general category is more beneficial at the local than national level for stimulating political mobilization. An aggregate political mobilization model for Latinos would certainly provide a sense of national cohesion, in particular at the local level where mobilization efforts are just beginning.

In the following section I will discuss the various U.S. Latino political models, emphasizing that Latino political models should be analyzed outside the context of mainstream U.S. politics. This is due to the particular needs and mobilization strategies that pertain to Latino groups throughout the country.

2. Contending Latino Political Models: Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican

Understanding how politics are perceived and therefore operate within a culture is not possible if one is ignorant of the history, the condition of other coexisting political cultures, the prevailing mood within the political system, and other major contextual factors. Therefore, to understand Latino politics, one must have some familiarity with the specific historical political developments of the particular Latino group. In this case it will mean an examination of an aggregate system in which some commonalities can be found. To this extent, what many Latino politics scholars agree on is two major phases of Latino political development.
Villarreal and Hernandez describe the first phase as the “politics of protest era”. This period encompassed part of the civil rights era (1960s) and lasted into the mid-1970s. The second phase which began in the mid-1970s and which still continues today, has been characterized as the “politics of moderation, recognition and compromise.” It is these two phases that provide the framework for Latino political empowerment efforts as well as the building blocks for future Latino political endeavors in large urban areas⁶.

Writing about the first phase of U.S. Latino politics, Villarreal and Hernandez note that “the politics of protest era originated in a sea of political apathy and conformity among the Latino population, juxtaposed with the enormous obstacles and opposition generated by a dominant political system that was not responsive to the needs of many groups.” The politics of protest brought about a proliferation of ethnic organizations in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was during this period that Latinos in the U.S. and other disenfranchised minority groups began to transcend leaders that fought for greater social, economic and political equality. Villarreal and Hernandez elaborate further, “it was the politics of protest that created the infrastructure for the political operations to include a third party system; and it was the politics of protest that brought, for the first time, national attention to the plight of the Latino (Villarreal and Hernandez, 1991, Introduction)”

The birth of a third party system that Villarreal and Hernandez refer to is a result of ad hoc political groups (such as Latinos) mobilizing and penetrating the political

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⁶ It is important to note that these two phases pertain to larger urban areas. Newly emerging communities in smaller to mid-sized cities will have to adapt without this first phase of political development.
system as a distinct entity. For example in Texas during the late 1960s and early 1970s mobilization efforts by the poor were conducted through community-based organizations. Often referred to as the Alinsky style of community organizing, Texas exemplifies a unique phenomenon with its Mexican-Americans ability to politically mobilize and to thrust forward specific political agendas into mainstream politics.

Beginning in the late 1970s and extending through the 1980s a different type of political phenomenon in the Latino community began to occur. Having created the infrastructure for political mobilization, the children of the politics of protest era gained more access and influence in the political arena than their predecessors. Described generally as a politically moderate leadership, these new leaders used less provocative political measures than were used during the first phase. This group was relatively young, well-educated, politically articulate, and visible and accessible to the media. This new Latino leadership was also more coalitional, creating stronger political-relationships with those in power. New York’s Puerto Rican leadership displays such characteristics. New York Puerto Rican political leader Herman Badillo’s rise to political power was not a result of a militant attitude. Instead Badillo’s political success was a result of compromise and negotiation behind closed doors, gaining not only the respect of Puerto Ricans in the city, but also his Anglo counterparts.

During the politics of protest era, many groups articulated their interest through specific issues rather than through a general ideology. This phenomenon that occurred in this first era was not unique to Latinos but was true for many disenfranchised groups. The impetus for success in the second phase was not only a result of what was created
during the civil rights era, but also a result of diverse political leaders meeting differing Latino groups’ needs. Smaller cohesive networks formed as disenfranchised groups learned how to interact with the political system. Herman Badillo was just one of three types of leaders that emerged out of New York City’s Puerto Rican community. Although militant and machine boss leaders coexisted with the moderate leadership it was the combination of the three that provided the political mechanism to articulate the needs of the Puerto Rican community in New York City. Certainly in comparison to the first phase the second phase appears less politically provocative.

In his work, *Hispanics In American Politics: The Search For Political Power*, Maurilio E. Vigil uses an eclectic approach combining many political models – democratic, elite and pluralistic democracy – along with various theoretical models – internal colonialism, assimilation, melting pot, and cultural pluralism - to explain the place of minorities in American politics. Using David Easton’s Political Systems Paradigm, Vigil crafts a political model for Latinos using factors essential for political empowerment. It is important to note that Vigil’s model is one that is exogenous to the political system and should be used as an explanatory model for entering mainstream politics. Vigil’s ethnic groups political system model can be schematized as follows:
(Figure 1.1)

ETHNIC GROUPS IN AMERICAN POLITICS: A PARADIGM

FACTORS THAT ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A PARTICULAR GROUP IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Factors Or Forces That Enhance Group Identification:

- Ethnic organization based on group identification and basic core values
- Articulation of group's goals by organizations
- Communication of common group problems by organizations
- Material and psychic rewards, recognition, patronage, mobility

Salience Of Individual Identification With The Particular Group (Which Depends Upon):

- Intensity of group consciousness
- Subjective Identification
- Closeness of individual to group
- Priority of one over another group membership

Resources | Skills | Power Position | Incentives
---|---|---|---
Cohesion | Knowledge | Access to decision makers | Primacy of group goals
Numbers | Strategy | Proximity to political affairs |
Organization | Wealth | |
Time | Allies | |

TOGETHER THESE FACTORS AND FORCES INFLUENCE THE NATURE OF GROUP INPUTS INTO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

ETHNIC GROUPS (LATINOS)

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

CONVERSION

NATIONAL

INPUTS

STATE

OUTPUTS

LOCAL

FEEDBACK

Vigil's political system model is useful in that it provides a national and local political framework in which to describe the flow of politics for Latinos. Although this
conception of the political system neglects political barriers that may exist, it illustrates a fundamental concept of how Latinos can become included into the political system. As it pertains to this thesis, Vigil's model is used as an aid to illustrate the movements of articulated needs to policy responses. Vigil's work provides a macro and micro political model which Latinos (as a whole or in subgroups: Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban) can use to gain political power.

Latino politics are as diverse as the people who comprise it. For this reason it is difficult to speak of one particular political model that can be used to articulate political needs for all Latinos. Since a successful national political mobilization effort has yet to occur for Latinos, discussion of contending Latino political models will be focused at the local level, categorizing the various types of political models that exist. To be examined in this section will be three distinct Latino political models from the three largest U.S. Latino groups: Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans. Each model contains unique qualities and historical makeup that have enhanced the speed and effectiveness of the groups integration into the American political system.

The Mexican Model: Texas

Mexican-Americans are distinct in many ways from other Latino groups. Their history dates back to the early 1800's when parts of the Southwest, which now belongs to the U.S., were then part of Mexico. This history and relationship that Mexicans have with the U.S. would leave one to question why Mexican-Americans have only recently emerged as a political presence.
The Mexican model can be viewed as being politically significant while at the same time being politically weak. In the former, this model provides a perfect case for pluralist or group theory advocates who suggest community based approaches to enfranchising rural and urban poor. In this first image the Mexican model displays a community with a growing political force and vast political potential. On the other hand, a contradictory image holds that the Mexican-Americans participate less in the political process than other groups in American society (Pachon, pg. 215). This is due to the constant dilution of the Mexican-American vote by non-citizens as well as illegal Mexican immigrants that hinder the strength of the Mexican-American political machine. Additionally, biased voting techniques (such as literacy test and poll taxes) have kept Mexican-Americans virtually out of state and national politics until the 1960s.

Even with the emergence of federal voting laws that prohibited biased voting techniques, analysts in the past have neglected Mexican-Americans because they did not influence the electorate as much as their ethnic counterparts. Latino political scholars have noted that Mexicans-Americans as well as other Latino groups show more political efficacy in their involvement with local social organizations than in the electorate because they are more familiar with the former than with the latter. Miguel Tirado notes in his work, "Mexican American Political Organization",

... that during the early part of this century [the twentieth-century] the Mexican American would establish undifferentiated multipurpose organizations which would not only serve his political needs but also his economic, social and cultural ones as well (1970, pg. 53).

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7 Harry Pachon notes that the large number of non-citizens is often overlooked in studies of Hispanic political participation. In his essay he elaborates on how demographic studies overestimate the electoral potential of Mexican-Americans by including non-citizens or permanent residents who cannot vote.
For this reason the Mexican-American model is best described as a social-political instrument that is separate from mainstream politics. Thus it is no surprise that the Mexican-American model in Texas is often associated with Saul Alinsky’s Theory of Community Organizing, which advocates a grass-roots and personal type of political mobilization. Through the efforts of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in the 1970s and 1980s the Alinsky style of mobilization was achieved by mobilizing Mexican-American community based groups throughout Texas and forming a formidable political presence.

According to Saul Alinsky:

A people’s organizing actually is built upon all of the diverse loyalties – to the church, to labor union, to the social groups, to the nationality groups, to the myriad other groups and institutions which compromise the constellation of the American way of life. These loyalties combine to effect an abiding faith in, and profound loyalty to, the democratic way of life (Alinsky, 1946, p 88).

Although Alinsky recognized the tendency for a political and economic elite to usurp power in U.S. communities, he believed it was within the power of grass-roots insurgency to counterbalance their structural advantages (Marquez, 1997,pg 131). The success of this approach is not only incorporated in its ability to influence public policy, but more in its ability to incorporate as many people as possible into its mobilizing effort. As noted by Alinsky it is not the intention to create a machine in which a few will lead, but an entity where many if not all people feel part of the organizational effort.

During the late 1950s and into the 1960s various Latino organizations began to emerge and address the social and political needs within the Mexican-American
community in the Southwest and in particular, Texas. Two important Mexican-American organizations were formed – the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the Southwest Voter Registration Project. These organizations engaged in voter registration, litigation to support voter registration, “get out the vote” activities, and legal advocacy on behalf of Mexican-Americans. These activities directly supported ethnic political mobilization and depended primarily in grass-roots mobilization (Pachon, pg 252).

Additionally it was the IAF that promoted the collaboration amongst social groups that benefited the politicization of the Mexican-American community in Texas. The IAF’s accomplishments are many. They include everything from being a recognizable political force, to more importantly an entity where policy makers ask IAF members which Mexican-American communities government money should be allocated to, in an effort to rebuild (or in some cases build) neighborhood infrastructure and local social programs. It has also been the IAF’s affiliate organizations that helped elect Mayor Henry Cisnero of San Antonio, the city’s first Hispanic mayor in over 150 years.

Cobb, Jennie Keith-Ross, and Marc Ross have developed a model through which one can understand the agenda-building process and through which the IAF’s political platform and record of achievements can be assessed. They argue that the IAF’s philosophy is one which accepts the challenge of moving their concerns through several developmental stages: initiation, specification, expansion, and entrance. Initiation is where grievances are articulated; specification is where grievances are translated into specific demands; expansion is where widespread support is rallied in order to attract
attention of decision makers; and finally, entrance is where there is movement to the formal agenda, where serious consideration of the issue takes place (García 1997, pg. 13).

The combination of these political initiatives is what many political analysts have attributed to beginning the political mobilization process for Mexican-Americans. The IAF as well as MALDEF and the Southwest Voter Registration Project induced a movement that brought attention to the political needs of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest.

**The Cuban Model: Miami**

Although Cubans are not as large as a group in the United States as their Mexican-American counterparts, they have been able to gain political power by means distinct from the Alinsky model. The demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions particular to the Cubans created unique opportunities not only for them but also for the majority of Latinos in Miami. Many analysts consider the economic enclave that the Cubans created after their mass migration in the 1950s and early 1960s as the primary reason for their success. In many respects this is true, however, it was their acceptance by the Republican Party that gave the Cubans an almost immediate advantage in local and state politics. This, coupled with their passion to fight Fidel Castro and their unique history, has contributed to their successful political mobilization efforts.

In contrast to the long history that Mexicans have in Texas, the growth of the Cuban community in Florida has been quite recent. Examining data on Latino migratory patterns, it can be observed that the city of Miami underwent the single most dramatic
ethnic transformation of any major American city in the 20th century. It is incredible to
consider that before the 1959 Cuban revolution the Latino community in Miami was
almost non-existent, and forty years later it is regarded by some as the “capital of Latin
America” (Levine 1985, pg. 211). The climatic point for Cuban migration occurred on
January 1, 1959, with Fidel Castro’s revolution. Most Cuban exiles settled in Miami after
first settling in the North. A large Cuban community of about 80,000 was established in
the area around Union City, New Jersey, while smaller communities exist in Chicago and
Los Angeles. Despite Cuban settlement in other parts of the country the majority
relocated to southern Florida. According to 1992 Census figures 56 percent of the 1.1
million Cubans in the United States lived in the greater Miami area (Dade County).
Miami now ranks third in the nation, behind only Los Angeles and New York, in the size
of its Latino population (Moreno, 1997, pg. 212).

Cuban immigration was further aided by favorable U.S. government policy,
which viewed Cuban refugees as U.S. allies in the cold war against Soviet-style
communism. Cubans, unlike other Latinos, did not suffer the historical discrimination
and oppression described in most of the literature on racial and language minorities.
Additionally, as political exiles, they entered the United States voluntarily and not in a
forced process as did African Americans and many other Latinos. This acceptance
perhaps created a favorable culture of political participation with which other Latinos
groups may have struggled to initially obtain.

Unlike the Mexicans, the Cuban success can also be attributed to middle class
Cubans who settled and started businesses in the Miami area, creating a thriving.
environment of small business throughout the city in the early 1960s and 1970s.

Journalist David Rieff captured the dynamic of Cuban exile economics when he wrote, "the first wave of immigrants (those who came to Miami after the first years of the revolution) founded businesses that employed the second wave (those who came to Miami between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies); in turn both groups employed the third wave" (Rieff 1987, pg. 46)." This large, prosperous business zone provided Miami’s Cubans with a potent small business incubator in which many analysts have termed the Cuban economic enclave. This enclave was further stimulated by the estimated $4 billion of aid that the U.S. government provided to Cuban exiles (Moreno, 1997, pg. 212). Sociologist Lisandro Perez points out that "the strong and diversified entrepreneurial activity is responsible for the enclave’s most important overall feature: institutional completeness (Perez 1992, pg. 90 - 91)."

The demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions described above created unique political opportunities for Latinos in Miami. Darion Moreno in his article, *The Cuban Model: Political Empowerment in Miami*, suggest the following five factors that contributed to the enfranchisement of the Cuban community: (1) Ethnic Mobilization; (2) Ideological Consistency; (3) Incorporation into the Republican Party; (4) The Cuban American Foundation; (5) The Media. These five factors coupled with the advantageous economic setting resulted in an ideal political landscape for Miami’s Cubans.

As Raymond Wolfinger posited, the strength of ethnic voting depends on both the intensity of the ethnic identification and the level of ethnic relevance in the election.
Similar to what other non-Latino immigrant groups endured, the Cubans in Miami created an ethnic voting bloc that challenged races through various elections. The cohesiveness and predictability of the Cuban vote made them an important voting bloc for contending candidates and parties alike.

The “Cuban Model” of ethnic mobilization is unique because of its ideological dimension. Although it is no longer the “singular” Cuban issue it once was, preoccupation with Latin America communism generally and Castro specifically still stands as a core political issue in the community.

Coinciding with political similarities and the weak nature of the Republican party in Southern Florida during the 1960s, the Cubans gained political empowerment in an ironic situation. The Cubans, as depicted by many sociologists, have not been too different from other past (European) immigrant groups. Moreno elaborates, “As with many of the immigrant groups that came to the U.S. in the late 1800’s, the party of opportunity frequently is the party which is the weakest in the region. Like the Irish in Boston who seized control of the Democratic Party’s local machinery in the face of ‘Yankee Republicanism,’ the Cubans have become dominant in Dade County’s Republican party, providing an ‘entrée’ for Cuban political activists and candidates (Moreno, 1997, pg. 219).” Cubans access to the political system was thus a result of the weak state of the Republican Party in the 1960s. In their own empowerment efforts the Republicans then welcomed the newly registered and increasing Cuban voter. The Cuban Republican combination made for dramatic changes in Dade County, that by 1994
nine of the thirteen state representatives and three of the six state senators were
Republicans, all of whom were Cuban Americans (Moreno, 1997, pg. 209).

Articulating the needs of the Cubans in Miami was also enhanced by the Cuban
American National Foundation (CANF). CANF, founded in 1981 by young affluent
Cubans, replaced the old style militant Cuban organizations as the principle Cuban
political organization in the U.S. They organized a U.S. style political action committee
(PAC) in Washington to articulate the principal objectives of the foundation – namely,
providing information on Cuba to Washington policy makers and providing information
to Cubans still living in Cuba (Fernandez, 1987, pg. 125). Additionally campaign
contributions to influential congressmen has made CANF a key player on Capitol Hill.
With its well-educated staff and plenty of dollars supporting them, policy makers in
Florida have given CANF much attention, developing policie that meets the goals of the
organization. CANF’s most important success to date was the passage in 1992 of the
Cuban Democracy Act. The Act, which tightened the U.S. economic embargo against
Cuba was passed over the objection of the State Department. CANF’s presence has
created a forceful PAC in not only the Florida legislature but in the U.S, where policy
makers consider and implement Cuban initiated programs.

The media’s influence and power is a common factor to political empowerment
with many groups. For the Cuban community in Florida, and in the U.S. as a whole, the
media is particularly potent in creating and dispensing a powerful image. Five radio and
two television stations in Miami have a clear ethnic agenda. They have been so effective
that when radio stations began a public boycott after a supermarket clerk was suspended
for speaking Spanish in front of customers (in the aftermath of the passage of proposition 11 the English only initiative), the store, within 48 hours of the incident, issued a public apology and transferred the offending manager out of Dade County (Moreno, 1997, pg. 224). Unlike other Latino groups, the Cubans control of prominent Latino media networks has given them a comparative advantage that makes them particularly powerful.

These five factors combined with the Cuban economic enclave in Miami, created not only an empowering political model, but also a distinct community from other U.S. Latinos.

The Puerto Rican Model: New York City

The Puerto Rican model in New York City is still in development. Although other Puerto Rican communities exist in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia, as well as in smaller cities throughout the east coast, its dynamics are best illustrated in New York City. Throughout the 1960s Puerto Rican politics were more notably referred to as sporadic and inconsistent. This, however, changed as new leaders replaced old ones, and as the new leaders addressed more precisely the needs of the community. The Puerto Rican model in New York City can be traced back to the mid-1970s. It was during this period that the first scholarly works emerged on Puerto Rican political mobilization efforts.

Given their U.S. citizenship status, Puerto Ricans unlike Mexicans and Cubans, were perhaps the most, politically prepared to assimilate in the U.S. Ironically, however, Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. colony actually impeded the political mobilization and assimilation process. Having the same rights as other U.S. citizens, the Puerto Ricans, as
their numbers grew substantially in New York City, only had to go to the office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in New York City to have their political needs addressed. When first established, it was understood that the office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico would represent the political needs of the Puerto Ricans. In an ironic turn of events, the Commonwealth Office actually impeded political mobilization. By expressing the concerns of the community to city officials, the office acted as the liaison to the community, making the need for community-based Puerto Rican leaders unnecessary. This might have worked out well if the Commonwealth Office incorporated members of the community actively as in the Alinsky model, however, the impetus to collaborate with top officials with minimal participation at the community level stopped political mobilization efforts.

James Jennings and Monte Rivera write,

The office of the Commonwealth has hindered the development of patron-client relationships in the Puerto Rican community that were characteristic of white ethnic groups. Political leaders, patrons, were unnecessary so long as Puerto Ricans were represented by the Commonwealth Office. Puerto Ricans viewed the Commonwealth Office as an extension of the government of Puerto Rico; this emphasized the notion that the Puerto Rican presence in New York City was temporary. The Commonwealth office psychologically reminded Puerto Ricans that they were residents and citizens of Puerto Rico and that their stay in New York City was only temporary (1984, pg. 84).

Puerto Rican political activist William Rodriguez, who was director of the Williamsburg Community Corporation in 1974, stated in response to a question concerning the role of the Commonwealth office for the community:

I very much resented the role of the Commonwealth Office because it played a role of becoming the paternalistic leader of the community. Monserrate (director of the Commonwealth Office) and his brand of people, in effect, created a condition where indigenous leadership failed to evolve because the Office and its
leadership played the Big Daddy role for the community: that I think reduced the level of natural development and evolution of Puerto Rican leadership . . . Now, I don't think that any government office should play the role of institutional leader for the community—I'm opposed to that (Jennings and Rivera, 1984, pg. 85).

The Office of the Commonwealth was just one factor that impeded political inclusion. Before WWII the primary focus of the Puerto Rican community was the unresolved status and colonization of the Puerto Rican society. Additionally, the constant movement of Puerto Ricans from New York City and back to the island created an unstable voting constituency. Scholarly descriptions of the political transformation of the Puerto Rican community in New York City distinguished three historical phases.

The first phase of Puerto Rican politics was heavily influenced by various socio-historical factors; this has often been called a period of Puerto Rican relative nonparticipation in the American electoral processes. This phase is quite different from the first stage of most European immigrant politics, where nonparticipation was not a matter of choice; for the most part, these immigrants wanted to be citizens and make new homes in America. Although Puerto Ricans came to the United States for economic reasons as well, the similarities with their European counterparts ended there. In the early part of the 20th century, C.W. Mills wrote in his book, The Puerto Rican Journey, that “Puerto Ricans were similar to the European immigrants who settled in Urban America in that they all came primarily for economic opportunities (Mills, 1957, pg. 50).” Jennings and Rivera also elaborate:

Whereas political motivations were important in explaining the immigration of earlier groups, Puerto Ricans did not have strong political reasons for leaving Puerto Rico. The mass migration from Puerto Rico was induced by the U.S. in order to provide cheap labor for industries in New York City during periods of
waning European immigration. In a sense, the lives of Puerto Ricans were economically manipulated to "force" them to come to New York City... The political organizations found in the European immigrant communities have been absent from the Puerto Rican communities because the Puerto Rican, for a long time, felt that one day he would be returning to Puerto Rico (1984, pg. 4).

The second phase of Puerto Rican political mobilization coincides with what was described earlier as the politics of protest era. This phase marked more an era of single issues than a particular theme. In this stage there was a growth of Puerto Rican radicalism directed at the concerns of Puerto Ricans in urban America rather than the island orientation. Particular emphasis can be placed on radical leaders within the community. Although institutional factors influenced the development of Puerto Rican politics in the first phase, it is in the second phase where the effects become most clear.

Phase three has been unfolding since the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is in this stage where new political relationships have been developing between African Americans and Puerto Ricans. This phase marks the move of Puerto Rican politics from a concern for accessibility, or influence, to a thrust for power. The rise of less militant leaders to more coalitional and politically savvy leaders also has developed in this stage. Particularly important is the emergence of leaders for various segments within the Puerto Rican community. The New York City community can be characterized by three sectors: a highly mobile segment that continues to commute between the U.S. and Puerto Rico (this segment has been labeled the in-transit population); Puerto Ricans who have arrived from Puerto Rico and have remained in the city for five years or more but are still oriented toward Puerto Rico; and the stable population, residents who may still feel a
closeness to Puerto Rico and make periodic visits but are more comfortable living and working in New York City then in Puerto Rico (Jennings and Rivera, 1984, pg. 78).

Lastly the efforts made by the Democratic Party to politically mobilize the Puerto Ricans in this early stage were non-existent. Psychopolitcally, Lipset calls this phenomenon, the “Quandom complex”. He uses this term to explain the reaction of American nativists to immigrants from Southern Europe in the 1850s. “Many American nativist organizations saw the new immigrant as a dangerous challenge to their power and status and concluded that the newcomers should be kept out of the U.S. and out of American Organization (Lipset and Raab, 1970)”. Additionally the Democrats excluded the Puerto Ricans for economic reasons. Jennings notes that the Democrats at the time had a weak economic and social structure and had little to offer to the newcomers.

However as time passed and new moderate leaders came onto the scene this Quandom complex faded. With the aid of not only moderate leaders but machine bosses (leaders who could generate votes, forming a formidable voting bloc) the Democrats became less reluctant to leave the Puerto Ricans as an untapped voting resource.

Today, New York City Puerto Rican politics is unfolding into a more coalitional entity with other Latino and ethnic minority groups. Despite the emergence of Puerto Ricans as a visible political force within New York City, Dominicans, another emerging Latino group, will soon be the largest Latino group in New York City creating a new
Latino political dynamic. And as a result Puerto Ricans may have to be more coalitional in order to maintain or increase political power.

3. Summary and Lessons

The literature review presented describes Latino political mobilization efforts primarily in large urban areas and holds lessons for future attempts to mobilize Latino communities. Villareal and Hernandez's two phases for Latino political development, characterized as the politics of protest era (1960s) in the first and in the second that of moderation, recognition and compromise (from the mid-1970s to the present) depicts mobilization efforts for Latinos in larger cities. Skerry's two possibilities for continued Latino political mobilization efforts, that of a national homogenous group, or a political strategy that is either similar to Villareal and Hernandez's first phase or one that emulates white ethnic immigrant Catholic groups, is applicable not only in larger cities but also in non-traditional areas to which Latinos have just recently been migrating.

Skerry's suggestions can be applied to smaller cities throughout the U.S, where the first phase of Latino urban political development is non-existent. Finally, it is the Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican models that provide further insight to contemporary mobilization efforts, displaying the most current approaches by Latinos to political enfranchisement.

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8 The Dominican presence is relatively new. They are not mention because it is uncertain as to what role they will have with the Puerto Rican community.
Newly emerging Latino communities (in the post-civil rights era) will have to unite through commonalties, language, social-economic status, and ethnicity in order to identify with each other at a national level. In this manner Latinos will be able to ascertain an identifiable image; this will enable smaller emerging Latino communities an incentive to mobilize into mainstream politics. It is Skerry who posits a more conflictual approach, thrusting Latinos into mainstream politics by way of protest – as well as by way of emulating the political plight of African Americans. Other analyst suggests differing alternatives for Latinos to become politically assimilated. Alternative views acknowledge differences between various Latino groups while emphasizing the importance of unity within U.S. borders and working within the U.S. political system.

Although commonalties exist between various Latino subgroups, differences, such as those between Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans deter rather than unite national efforts to politically mobilize. Maurilio E. Vigil’s model provides a specific framework for a national political model that possibly could be applicable across all Latino groups. His model is particularly useful for developing political efforts in small cities where new Latino communities are just emerging. Although Vigil does not stipulate the need of a protest era, as described by Villareal and Hernandez, and suggested by Skerry, it must not necessarily be ruled out.

The Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican models described previously illustrate different approaches used by each group to obtain political mobility. Additionally they depict the strength and relative effectiveness of each model to enfranchise its citizenry.
Despite having resided in the U.S. longer than any other Latino sub-group, Mexican-Americans are not necessarily the most influential in creating a political franchise. Their political strategy relies on few financial resources and concentrates its efforts on the human component of grass-roots politics. Described as the Alinsky style of community organizing, Mexican Americans have developed a political model that exemplifies pluralism at its best. Their success, however, is limited due to their seemingly issue oriented political campaign. Cobb, Jennie Keith-Ross, and Marc Ross note four developmental stages in which the IAF’s transcends its political agenda building process into: initiation, specification, expansion, entrance. This process works on single issue-oriented campaigns for short-term goals. This model unfortunately neglects to include a more diverse political campaign that may include more long-term goals for a community to develop. It is in this aspect that the Mexican model falls short of creating a franchise that can be sustained over a long period of time.

The Cuban model is perhaps the most successful in its ability to articulate the needs of Latinos in the Miami area. Although Cubans have lived in the U.S. the shortest amount of time, they have been able to elect officials of their choice consistently over the last forty years. They have also been able to create an influential presence not only in the state of Florida but in Washington where they consistently lobby legislators successfully for specific pro-Cuban American legislation. The Cuban’s political success can be traced back to when middle class Cuban exiles moved to Miami after Fidel Castro’s revolution. Forming a thriving economic enclave of Cuban owned businesses, Cubans began to support their own candidates (as well as the Republican party) to help create a formidable
anti-Castro presence. Darion Moreno has identified five additional factors which have contributed to the enfranchisement of the Cuban-American population in Miami: (1) Ethnic mobilization; (2) Ideological consistency; (3) Incorporation into the Republican party; (4) The Cuban American Foundation; (5) The Cuban owned media. These factors have been identified as part of the political framework that have contributed to a successful political franchise for Miami's Cuban community. In comparison to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans the Cubans not only have more economic strength, they are relatively smaller in total size, enabling them to mobilize, and stay mobilized, with greater consistency.

The Puerto Rican model in many aspects is just beginning to emerge. New York City provides an example of the development of domestic Puerto Rican politics. Despite having citizenship status since the early part of the twentieth-century, a seemingly strong comparative advantage over their Mexican and Cuban American counterparts, Puerto Ricans have been reluctant to create a formidable political force. As noted, the feasibility to travel back and forth to the island of Puerto Rico has worked against Puerto Rican mobilization efforts. What has emerged are various types of leaders (militant, machine-boss, and moderate) that have been able to contain two types of groups within the Puerto Rican community, those that choose to make the U.S. their new home, and those that continue to migrate back to the island (having little interest of politically assimilating). Recently, however, the Puerto Rican community has benefited in their mobilization efforts by national interest groups, such as the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, that have not only fought for civil rights violations but have also sought to
politically educate and mobilize the Puerto Rican community. As the need to travel back to the island decreases, a more potent political presence can be assumed to occur for the Puerto Rican community in New York City and throughout the U.S.

The literature review and the political models described here pertain to major urban areas. Before the 1990s documentation of Latino politics included little attention to emerging communities throughout the U.S. Political literature pertaining to Latinos was primarily focused on Mexicans in the West, Cubans in the South, and Puerto Ricans in the Northeast. Although demographically Latinos are now located in every state in the union, there continues to be a lack of literature and empirical political analyses concerning this group. As Latinos increase in total size, pundits, political analyst, and scholars will need to emphasize attention to not only the social impact but the political impact Latinos will have on U.S. politics.


Over the last three decades, the growth of the Latino population residing in the United States has been extraordinary. In 1970, U.S. Latinos numbered about 9 million or 4% of the total population. According to the 1990 Census, the growth of the Hispanic population increased by approximately 53% or from about 14 million to at least 22 million from 1980 to 1990. According to 1994 Census Data figures, 26 million Latinos resided in the United States. This accounted for approximately 10% of the U.S. population. Additionally, while the non-Latino population grew 9% from 1990-1996, Latinos grew by 27%, greater than any other ethnic minority group in the U.S.
The U.S. Latino population has been growing so fast that census numbers reported in 1990 have already become outdated. According to some estimates the Latino population as of 1997-1998 has reached an all time high of 29 million or 11% of the total U.S. population. The estimated national breakdowns are the following: Mexican Americans 14.5 million, Puerto Rican 2.7 million, Cuban Americans 1.2 million, Central and South Americans 4 million, and categorized as other is estimated at 5 million.

Traditionally U.S. Latinos have migrated to specific parts of the country. However, this has changed throughout the past two decades. The long term concentration of Latinos in the Southwest, the Midwest, and a few urban centers in the Northeast and Florida changed rapidly as the Latinos population dispersed throughout the country. The 1990 census indicated Latinos living in every state of the Union, even in such areas as the Deep South and the Plains states (Garcia, 1997, pg. 2).

The City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania is such an example. The population of Bethlehem has also seen an increase since the early 1960s and 1970s when New York Puerto Ricans migrated to Bethlehem to work for Bethlehem Steel. Throughout the 1990s this increase was more pronounced as indicated not only by census data, but also by the Bethlehem Area School District's records, which indicate a Hispanic student enrollment of over 25% (1998). According to the latest census figures the Hispanic population in Bethlehem has increased by more than one hundred percent. This can be attributed to Bethlehem’s two major neighboring cities, Philadelphia and New York City. These two cities have traditionally been the cities of choice for many new Latinos.
However, with growing Latino populations outside of these cities more Latinos are choosing smaller, and relatively cleaner and safer communities in which to relocate.

The Latino population increase in Bethlehem is not unique among smaller cities in the Northeast. In fact Bethlehem’s neighboring city, Allentown, saw its Latino population increase 126 percent in the 1980’s. Lawrence, Massachusetts, located just outside of Boston, saw its Puerto Rican population increase by 156 percent between 1980 and 1990. Lancaster, Pennsylvania’s population was 18.6 percent Latino in 1990, an increase of 72.7 percent over the decade. In Hartford, Connecticut, the Latino population jumped 27.3 percent to 55.1 percent of the population (Adams, 2000, Introduction).

These increases suggest a new migratory pattern for Latinos. As the Latino population increases outside of traditional urban areas, greater attention will have to be given by those who wish to mobilize this group. Part two examines the impact of a growing Latino community on a small Pennsylvania city. Particularly examined will be the component parts of the political framework that exists for the Latino community in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
Part II.

Puerto Rican Politics Outside Traditional Urban Areas

The literature on Puerto Rican politics in the United States can be characterized briefly as having developed slowly and unevenly over the last fifty years or so, with New York City as its focus. There are very few scholarly studies of this community’s politics, but it has been treated, albeit as a secondary subject, in most of what is largely a sociological literature on the Puerto Rican experience in the United States.

Angelo Falcon in *Puerto Rican Politics In Urban America*

**Introduction**

This thesis is the first attempt to understand Latino political mobilization efforts in the city of Bethlehem. Although Latinos have lived in the city of Bethlehem since the early 1900s, it is only recently that extensive efforts have been made to understand them. It is acknowledged by city officials that city government does not resemble the diversity of its population (Interview, Cunningham, 2000). Frequently Latinos themselves are blamed for failing to produce qualified personnel for city positions. They are also criticized for being politically apathetic and not caring about their community. These criticisms display the ignorance that is prominent within the city of Bethlehem in regards to its Latino community. Despite being underrepresented in city government, Latinos have displayed efficacy in their community - establishing businesses, churches, and civic and social organizations that often carry the political load of the Latino community. Seldom mentioned are the many attempts that Latino candidates have made to run for an elective position city wide; Latino candidates for city council who tend to win majority
Latino wards but lose elections within the at-large voting system. Part II examines more closely the political efforts of Latinos from the mid-1980s to the present. The criticisms posed above will be elaborated on by examining the various facets that contribute to the political dynamic of Bethlehem’s Latinos.

The first section will provide the framework for understanding the current plight of Puerto Ricans in Bethlehem politics. Little data is available on the history of the Latino community in Bethlehem. Only recently (1996) was the first book published on the history of the Latino community. Written as a history dissertation, *A History of the Puerto Rican Community In Bethlehem, PA 1944-1993*, Lehigh University graduate, Peter J. Antonsen documents the historical formation of Bethlehem’s Puerto Rican population. Antonsen focuses on the Puerto Rican enclave because, since the Second World War, Puerto Ricans have outnumbered other Latinos within the city. Generally, when the Latino community in Bethlehem is mentioned, it is often associated with the Puerto Rican community. Recently, however, there has been an increasing number of Central and South Americans moving into Bethlehem. Nevertheless, this analysis of Latino politics in Bethlehem will focus predominantly on Puerto Ricans through which Peter Antonsen’s work provides an important component.

The second section will discuss many non-Latinos’ perceptions of why the Puerto Rican community is politically apathetic. Particularly to be discussed is the perception

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9 The emergence of Latino politics has historically been through civic and social organizations. The political activity before the mid-1970s and early 1980s was minimal due to the relatively small Latino population in Bethlehem.
that Puerto Ricans (and other Latinos) are not a cohesive group and as a result participate minimally in the electorate.

In the third section I will analyze the most politically influential Latino organizations and institutions in the city: social and civic organizations, Hispanic political groups, the media, the church and city government. This case study will allow an evaluation of whether Bethlehem’s Latino community is winning or losing its political empowerment efforts.

The last section will discuss the specific political framework that exists for Bethlehem’s Puerto Rican community. Emphasis will be on the political resources that Latinos in Bethlehem posses and prose how those resources can be used to create a political franchise.

1. **Bethlehem: A Historical Perspective**

Bethlehem is a small city of approximately 71,000 residents. According to the latest census figures, 18 percent (12,000) of Bethlehem’s residents are of Hispanic origin. Of this number 80 percent (9,600) are of Puerto Rican dissent. The population of the Hispanic community in the City of Bethlehem, PA has increased at an unprecedented rate in the last thirty years. However, this influx of new Latino residents to the City of Bethlehem is not a new phenomenon. In fact Latinos have been migrating to Bethlehem since the 1920s. Bethlehem’s development into a commercial center offers insight as to why Latinos and European immigrants chose to settle in this small Pennsylvania community.
Because Bethlehem is often associated with the Moravians, one might think that the City of Bethlehem is a homogenous Pennsylvania town. Its history, however, indicates the opposite. When the Moravian’s planted the first tree and started the settlement that was christened “Bethlehem” on Christmas eve in 1741, many non-Moravians helped make up the city population. This was especially true for the Southside which became a mecca of industry when the area was opened up to immigration; after 1845, a mix of nationalities, languages and religions gave the city character and color unique to its surrounding communities (The Morning Call, 8/25/00).

Bethlehem’s location made it accessible to merchants and traders who needed a rest stop between Philadelphia and New York City. As a result of this activity and coupled with a welcoming attitude toward migrants, Bethlehem began to evolve into a vibrant town. Bethlehem’s natural resources attracted many entrepreneurs searching for economic opportunities. It was the old Sauconia Iron Company (predecessor of Bethlehem Steel Corporation) in particular, that attracted the latter group into the Southside of Bethlehem (Lehigh Litho, Inc., 1976, pg. 115).

The need for labor on the Southside reached a climax when the iron company expanded in the 1890s. It was in the countries of Eastern Europe that recruiters were able to find the cheap labor they wanted. As the steel grew in the early 1900’s new efforts were made to find cheap labor. It was during this period that the first Latinos came to Bethlehem. As early as 1923, Bethlehem Steel Corporation recruited Mexicans to work in the Coke Works (the most dangerous and the most labor intensive area of the plant). In that year, 912 men, 29 women and seven children were brought to Bethlehem by train.
Some left after a short time but others stayed. By the 1930s a community of about 400 Mexicans established itself. As the 20th century progressed a new immigrant group from the island of Puerto Rico began to migrate to the U.S. in search of work (Antonsen, 1996).

By the mid 20th century Bethlehem resembled a blue-collar town, with many of its residents working for the steel mill and the newly emerging textile industry in the surrounding areas (Antonsen, 1996).

**Bethlehem's Puerto Rican Community**

The history of the Puerto Rican community in Bethlehem encompasses two distinct periods. The first mass migration was after World War II in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The second wave migrated to Bethlehem throughout the 1970s – 1980s. In his work of Bethlehem's Puerto Rican community, Peter Antonsen notes that the first wave of Puerto Ricans to Bethlehem parallels the period in which many Puerto Ricans migrated to New York City.

This migration was further punctuated by the rapid deterioration of the Puerto Rican economy after WWII. Antonsen explains, “The decline of agricultural and industrial employment in the years of 1940 to 1974 led to the current growth of poverty on the island and spurred migration.” Commenting on the similarities between Puerto Ricans and earlier European immigrants who settled in urban America, James Jennings and Monte Rivera explain that Puerto Ricans came only for economic opportunities and to live in the U.S. temporarily,
The Irish, the Jews, and the Italians came not only for economic opportunities supposedly offered by the New World but also in many cases in search of a new home. The Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, did not come seeking a new home but came only looking for a job. The attitude of a large number of Italian immigrants on arriving to New York City was that this city would be their hometown, a new community that they would have to become accustomed to psychologically, socially, and politically (1984, pg. 5).

This phenomenon can also be observed in Bethlehem. The European immigrants who came to Bethlehem, came with the notion of not only gaining economic opportunities, but with the desire to start a new life and assimilate socially and politically (Lehigh Litho, Inc., 1975, pg 126). On the other hand, many Puerto Ricans during the early 1950s and 1960s frequently traveled back to the island to reunite with their families, keeping strong ties with the island. However, as a Puerto Rican community evolved in the 1970s and 1980s more Puerto Ricans became accustomed to their community in Bethlehem creating less of a need to travel back to the island. It was during this period that two distinct clusters, within walking distance of each other, formed in Bethlehem. The largest portion of the Puerto Rican community (about 2/3 of the whole Puerto Rican population) was located in south Bethlehem and followed alongside the steel plant for most of its length until it ended at the rail yards, Bethlehem Steel Corporation easternmost point. The remainder of the Puerto Rican community resided in an extensive sprawl of public housing projects (Pembroke-Marvin) in the northeast corner of the city (Antonsen, 1996, pg 23).

The Puerto Ricans, who migrated to Bethlehem during the 1970s and 1980s, came at a time when the local economy was entering a recession and losing many businesses to other parts of the country and the world. The recession, however, did not stop the new
waves of Puerto Ricans to the city. Nor did it prevent the tensions within the community between Anglos who saw the influx of new Puerto Rican migrants as a threat to the status quo and more specifically their jobs.

In general the Puerto Rican migration to the United States was two-fold. The first (post WWII) dealt with employment opportunities and economic upward mobility. The second (from 1970s to the early 1990s) dealt with the desire for family members and friends to reunite with loved ones who were able to establish themselves economically in the States. The latter, perhaps, is more indicative of the reasons that many Puerto Ricans migrated to the States during the second period.

During the first wave in the 1940s-1950s the City of Bethlehem provided manufacturing, textile, and steel jobs that required little technical experience and little (if any) knowledge of the English language. In fact, all that was required was a strong back and a willingness to work long hours. In the period after WWII hundreds of Puerto Ricans worked for Bethlehem Steel, mostly in the Coke Works. By 1960 the Bethlehem industrial sector’s textile and metal industries produced 56.1% of all the area’s jobs (Antonsen, 1996, pg. 23).

The increase in population brought not only labor for local businesses, but also created an impetus for entrepreneurialism. Subsequently, various Latino community organizations and small businesses began to sprout up throughout Bethlehem’s more densely populated Puerto Rican neighborhoods. By the 1970s, Puerto Rican grocery stores, the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society, the Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations, several Protestant Churches, and the Catholic Holy Infancy Church all
were born from this new wave of immigrants (Antonsen, 1996, pg. 23). The latter
groups, the church, various social and civic organizations, provided much support in the
community not only for their intended purposes but as well as for political purposes.
These institutions would be the backbone of the Puerto Rican community and serve as the
political network in which future needs would be addressed.

As these new migrants moved to Bethlehem they continued to concentrate
themselves in the Southside of Bethlehem, and certain sections of the Eastside. The
public housing sectors in the Pembroke-Marvin neighborhood saw a dramatic increase in
the numbers of Hispanic tenants. The housing projects, in the past, were used
temporarily to help newcomers settle into the city. For many Puerto Ricans this
neighborhood offered short-term housing until it was more economically feasible to
relocate to the Southside. Unfortunately, for many of these new tenants, their stay was
prolonged by the downturn in the local economy during the 1970s. With globalization,
many large businesses, in particular textile and manufacturing businesses, relocated to
other parts of the world in search for cheaper labor and a chance to improve the bottom
line. As a result blue-collar jobs that once were easily obtained and jobs that brought a
decent earning potential, were becoming scarce.

Unlike the first wave of immigrants, the second wave (1970s to the early-1990s)
found decreasing employment opportunities as soon as they reached Bethlehem.
Furthermore their welcome into the Lehigh Valley was short-lived, as their numbers
increased and jobs decreased. Antonsen writes,
An increasing percent of this second wave arrived via the Spanish-speaking ghettos of New York City; they continued arriving in even greater numbers through the 1980s and into the 1990s. They were seeking, in addition to jobs, a better quality of life than was available in the barrios* and slums of New York City. The new Puerto Rican migrants came less as two-parent families. A greater percent of them were younger and even less skilled than the prior wave, and they came at an unfortunate time when industry in Bethlehem and throughout the Lehigh Valley was in decline. The reception accorded the Puerto Rican migrants also changed over the years. At first, in an area of generally available employment in the industries of the area, the local Bethlehem community welcomed the new and energetic workers. The welcome eroded slowly as their numbers rose and the next migrants were seen increasingly as competitors for the jobs and social service's of the area (1996, pg. 26).

Although there was a decline in the well-paying low-skilled jobs that Bethlehem and its surrounding area had to offer, the absence of severe crime, drugs, and poverty that plagued larger cities appealed to many new Latinos. These newcomers, the children of the first migrants, however, were not as fortunate as their parents in finding well-paying jobs. Combined with a lack of education and few alternatives in life, they found themselves marginalized to certain sections of the city and increasingly dependent on government housing and assistance. The lack of employment coupled with a dependence on government assistance created what many sociologists term a culture of poverty. By the late 1980s and into the early 1990s Bethlehem’s Latino population was the poorest group economically in the city. The percentage of Puerto Ricans who relied on public assistance rose drastically from the 1960s to the 1990s. The percentage rose from 13.8 in 1969, to 33.6 in 1979. In 1991, 39.9 percent of the Latinos in Bethlehem received public housing assistance, compared to 26.8 of African Americans, and 4.52 percent of the other residents (Antonsen, 1996, pg. 87).
The city’s inability to adapt to its changing population resulted in many deficiencies, which further propelled this downtrodden spiral. Bethlehem Area School Districts (BASD) lack of bilingual teachers, moreover Latino teachers has caused education disparities in which Bethlehem Latinos have been the most adversely effected. Table 2.1 illustrates the problems created when a school district is unable to adapt to its changing population:

| Table 2.1 |
| High School Graduates: Bethlehem 1990 |
| (Persons 25 years and over) |
| White | Total | Completed | Percentage Completed |
| 40,164 | 29,600 | 73.7 |
| Hispanic | 4,120 | 1,809 | 43.9 |
| Pembroke-Marvin (Hispanic Residents) | 918 | 326 | 35.5 |


The author of a recent article in the Bethlehem edition of the Morning Call (9/00), noted that “despite the below average performance of Latinos in BASD, Latino grade point averages increased from 1.72 to 1.93.” Although the grade point average of Latinos have risen these numbers still indicate a less than average performance for Latino students as compared to the entire student body. Additionally these numbers suggest that despite the increase in attention (or rather the Latino student body) Latinos continue to perform below average. Similar disparities can be found throughout the city in various parts of government, social, and political life.
Not only were the two waves of Puerto Rican migration distinct from each other, but so too were the attitudes of the residents at large towards them. During the first wave Puerto Rican migration was welcomed because Puerto Ricans were perceived to be of little threat to the status quo. Jobs were plentiful, and Puerto Ricans (at the time) were barely visible in the community. However, as the local economy hit a recession, public perception changed to resentment. Viewed as a threat to the status quo, Puerto Ricans were (inadvertently?) isolated economically, socially and politically by their Bethlehem neighbors.

During the 1970s and 1980s various Latino organizations were created to meet the social and political needs of the growing Puerto Rican community. Electorally, however, Puerto Rican’s frequent migration to and from the island of Puerto Rico, caused an unstable voting constituency that perhaps was the cause for the lack of attention given to Latinos as a whole up until the early 1990s by local officials and state legislators. Despite this constant movement, Latino organizations were able to influence various officials on the lack of representation for the Puerto Rican community, affecting local policy to hire and recruit Latinos for more positions, in the school district, and in the various government agencies throughout the city.

However, these efforts by various Latino organizations and Latino leaders have resulted in minimal public policy responses. Current data from the City of Bethlehem indicates racial and ethnic disparities within city government. Excluding the public school system the City of Bethlehem employees 31 Latinos out of 920 full time and part time employees; approximately 3 percent of local government. A low number when
considering that Latinos comprise more than 18 percent of the total population and 25 percent of the school district. The breakdown is as follows: 164 full time employees for the Police Department of which 3 are Latinos; 113 full time employees for the Fire Department of which 4 are Latinos; 333 full time employees for the City of Bethlehem of which 15 are Latinos; and 310 part time employees for the City of Bethlehem of which 7 are Latinos (Bureau of Personnel 1999).

Although efforts have been made to integrate Latinos into mainstream politics in Bethlehem by the Democratic and Republican parties, little has been achieved. The social tensions noted by Antonsen that were prompted by the second wave of immigrants have hindered Puerto Rican political mobilization efforts. Voting data (to be examined later) illustrates that the Puerto Rican vote is in constant dilution. The at-large system limits minority group representation within the city. In 1994 there was an attempt by state representative T.J. Rooney to change the voting structure of the city from an at-large to a district structure. Representatives Rooney's proposal was turned down by City Council noting that, "such a system would divide the city into various factions, creating a system in which council members would address only their districts rather than the entire city (Interview, Donchez 2000)."
2. Political Apathy Versus Political Efficacy

Some argue that the Puerto Rican community in Bethlehem is apathetic. They cite statistics showing an economically, socially and politically downtrodden people. Additionally they elaborate on the internal conflicts within the Latino community, and point to the lack of support the community gives to its Latino candidates. However, what is never mentioned are the many Latinos social and civic organizations that facilitate the political articulation process for the community. Similarly neglected is the fact that the Latino vote has helped empower various Democratic leaders, locally, and at the state and federal level.

Before proceeding to detail the various civic and social organizations that make the fabric of Latino politics in Bethlehem, a discussion of some of the general misperceptions noted above is needed. Particularly to be addressed will be the perception that the Latino community lacks unity and that the Latino community deserves little attention from legislators because as one state legislator put it, “they do not come out to vote, so why spend our resources trying to convince them to do so… (Interview, Snyder 1999)”

Internal Turmoil

The recent population growth within the Bethlehem Latino community coupled with a lack of representation of Latinos in city government and elected positions, has prompted an effort by Latino leaders to coordinate politically, beginning an effort to mobilize the Latino community. However internal disagreements between Latino leaders
on how to mobilize punctuated with a lack of political experience has created a situation that is less than ideal for political mobilization. Additionally Allentown’s Latino organizations have contributed to this tension by being extremely parochial and often times recruiting Bethlehem leaders to their own city.

A common misperception by non-Latinos is that various Latino groups are in constant conflict with each other. Tensions did arise within the Latino community itself when the Hispanic Political Caucus in Allentown published a position paper (1991) differentiating between Puerto Ricans and other Latin Americans. The Puerto Rican migrants, the report noted, were generally rural and unskilled with a background of poverty, federal welfare programs and low educational levels. Latin Americans, according to the paper, were more urban, skilled, had higher educational levels and were unaccustomed to governmental social welfare programs. Puerto Rican leaders took great exception to those broad stereotypes (Adams, 2000, pg.42). Particularly offended were Puerto Rican leaders in Bethlehem, who perceived this to be another attempt to discredit Puerto Ricans publicly. These tensions, however, have been enhanced by the media and local non-Latino leaders who have “pointed fingers” at Latinos for not being a cohesive group. The reality is that although there are differences between Latinos, seldom do cultural difference’s cause major problems within Bethlehem’s Latino community.

Latino leaders such as Sis-Obed Torres Cordero, Director of the Spanish Council, Delia Diaz, Lehigh Valley and Monroe County’s Latino Affairs coordinator to Senator Mellow, Iris Cintron, Bethlehem Area School District Minority Affairs Coordinator of State and Federal Projects, Jose Rosado, Vice Principle of Broughal Middle School are
constantly in dialogue with city officials and in agreement about the many issues that affect Latinos in Bethlehem. Although there may be differences of opinion between policy agendas, Latino leaders do not exhibit any other irregularities in disagreements that the empowering majority may display.

Political mobilization of Bethlehem’s Latino community is in its infancy. The rapid emergence of a Latino community has brought many social problems and internal disagreements between Latino leaders regarding the means of politically mobilizing the community. Some suggest a more conventional approach (causing little disturbance to the status quo) while others would rather protest and pursue less traditional and more provocative measures. Locally leaders, like Sis-Obed Torres Cordero, prefer the more traditional method – that of negotiation and compromise and one that can be viewed as non-threatening to the current establishment. Others, like Delia Diaz, are looking for a more pronounced and provocative way to gain political power.

In an interview with Delia Diaz, she noted that in addition to the differing approaches to political empowerment, Latinos have been hindered politically by the lack of experienced Latino management personal to run political campaigns. She identifies this last problem as one of the greatest internal obstacles facing Latino empowerment in Bethlehem. Jose Rosado’s campaign for city council is one such example. In Rosado’s unsuccessful 1994 attempt, his campaign manager quit a few days prior to the primary elections (1994). When asked why, Rosado replied, “that it was a personal issue and not a business one ...”.

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Another internal problem that is more geographic than political is the proximity of Bethlehem's neighboring city, Allentown, which has its own Latino organizations. Latin Alliance, a civic organization that facilitates discussion on various issues within the Latino community, is an Allentown-based organization that theoretically serves the entire Lehigh Valley (Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton). However, its location in downtown Allentown has unintentionally excluded the rest of the Latino community. Although changing the location of the organization to a more central spot in the Lehigh Valley has recently been discussed, no action has been taken. Additionally key Bethlehem Leaders such as Guillermo Lopez, Community Organizer for the Alliance for Building Communities, and Jacqueline Torres of the Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem, are recruited to Latin Alliance draining Bethlehem of its needed Latino leadership.

The greatest deterrence to Latino unification, however, is not Latinos but the political system. This is perhaps the cause of many disagreements within the community. It is the at-large system that has these leaders in disagreement as to how to obtain more influence and access in local government.

For Bethlehem there has been a common misperception that Latinos are not a cohesive group because of cultural differences between Puerto Ricans and other Latinos. Although there are some disagreements about types of foods and music to play at festivals they are minimal and often times exacerbated by those who do not understand the Latino culture. Latinos are divided because the current political system frustrates them, leaving them with little political efficacy, and as a consequence, apathetic towards
the government. And even though there appears to be much apathy, Latinos do display (albeit sporadically) promising signs that they do care about their community. When the right opportunity arises political efficacy can be observed in the electorate. This has been the case when a Latino runs for office, or when a non-Latino candidate addresses Latino needs in Latino neighborhoods and social organizations.

**Elections: Voter Turnout**

Voter apathy is currently prevalent in the United States as a whole. This can be best illustrated by the 1996 presidential election, where the lowest voter turnout was recorded in American history. Voter apathy in the Latino Community is not as pronounced as one might be led to believe. Although voter data is unavailable by ethnicity, examining various wards within a particular city, or legislative districts in a state, often times gives an accurate depiction of how many Latinos come out to vote. Stereotypical comments on voting, as to why people vote, spans the spectrum from education, wealth, status, and language (Pantoja and Woods 1999). It is often noted that Latinos do not vote because they do not understand the language as well as their Anglo counterparts, or because, in the case of Bethlehem, a majority of Latinos are not homeowners. Even more debasing is the perception that Latinos do not vote because they are lazy.

The contrary is actually more indicative of Latino trends. As noted by the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute’s Publication, *The Almanac of Latino Politics 2000*, in presidential elections “... over a 20 year period, from 1976 to 1996, Latinos increased
their registration by 164% compared to 31% for the nation and increased their votes cast
by 135% compared to 21% for the rest of the country (2000, pg.3).” Similarly, “from
1974 to 1994, Latinos increased their vote in non-presidential national elections by 152%
and increased their proportion of the national total vote from 2% in 1974 to 4% in 1994
(pg. 3).”

In Bethlehem similar patterns can be observed. Although the Latino community
is often stigmatized as being politically apathetic, voter data indicates the opposite.
Although it is true that Latinos do not come out to vote in large(r) numbers in every
election year; evidence suggests that when a Latino candidate puts his or her name on the
ballot, city wards with the highest concentration of Latino residents turn out to support a
Latino candidate.

In 1989 Juan Cruz, then director of the Spanish Council on the Southside, entered
the Democratic primary in an effort to win the party nomination for a city council seat.
Although he was unsuccessful in his quest, Cruz mobilized the Puerto Rican community
by running an active campaign. He received 2376 votes, most of them from the
Southside.

In 1993 Jose Rosado, then serving as a peer counselor for Liberty High School in
Bethlehem ran for a City Council position. His campaign conducted weekly press
conferences to articulate his political platform. In an interview, Jose Rosado, currently
the vice principal of Broughal Middle School in the South Side of Bethlehem, noted at
the reply to the question, were you satisfied with the support from the Latino community?
“I was in no way disappointed with the Latino community.” He further commented,
“When there is a Latino candidate on the ballot, Latinos show their support at the polls.” Indeed the numbers indicate that Rosado won all the heavily populated Latino wards in the city. What was evident was that in non-majority Latino Wards Rosado did not win a single majority vote. In fact he went on further to explain that he received little financial support (except for the occasional “pat on the back” support) from the rest of the community. Rosado noted various other potential Anglo candidates who wanted him to endorse their names in the Latino neighborhoods by placing their names on his campaign literature. When asked if the same could be offered in return, Jose was told, “The rest of the city was still not ready to have a Latino in office.”

In 1994 Nancy Matos ran for District Justice in the Southside of Bethlehem. Not surprisingly, she was elected for a six-year term and consequently the first Latina to be elected as a District Justice in Pennsylvania. Her district comprises a heavily populated Latino area, in which, according to 1990 census data, 28% of the population is of Hispanic origin. In 1996 Guillermo Lopez attempted to run for a state house position. Challenging State Representative T.J. Rooney for the 133 District seat, Lopez set himself to win the Latino vote, which had supported the incumbent in past elections. Like his predecessors Lopez was unsuccessful, however, his effort demonstrated the growing interest of Latinos to participate in the political process.

Locally, non-Latino legislators have noted the importance and the contributions Latinos have made electorally to win several key races. Former U.S. Congressman Paul McHale would have lost in 1992 without the Latino vote. Ex-Congressman McHale notes, “The Latino community played an integral role in helping me beat Don Ritter.”
He further comments, “our attempt to harness the Latino vote was the first to my memory to explore the untapped voting resource of the Latino community ... a significant number of Latinos voted in 1992; somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 Latinos turned out to vote (Interview, McHale, 2000).”

At the national level in 1992, and more apparent in 1996, the Clinton Gore presidential campaign extensively sought Latino voters. Unlike the 1996 effort the 1992 Latino outreach effort was more superficial. The 1992 effort sought the Latino vote in a seemingly “last minute” campaign. In 1996, however, the effort was more organized and sought (albeit for a short time before the election) to mobilize registered and non-registered voters. And although Clinton could have won without the Latino vote, Latinos expanded his margin of victory, indicating to legislators the importance of the Latino vote for future elections (De la Garza and DeSipio, 1999, pg. 12).

It has been the developments of the 2000 presidential elections that has had both parties seeking the Latino vote more extensively than in the past. Although Republicans have generally ignored Latinos and Democrats typically seek the Latino vote in the weeks prior to a major election, recent developments indicate a more pronounced effort to obtain this vote. The importance of the Latino vote in Pennsylvania and around the country has had both parties recognizing the importance of the Latino vote locally and nationally.

In Bethlehem, both parties allocated attention to obtaining the Latino vote. It has been the Democrats more than the Republicans that have sought extensively the Latino vote for presidential candidate Al Gore as well as for the various state and federal
congressional seats. Beginning six months prior to the election the Democrats expanded traditional Latino outreach campaigns to include Latinos who have not participated in the electoral process. This effort by the Democrats is testimony to the importance of the Latino vote and in their confidence that Latinos can display political efficacy when given specific political attention.

3. Case Study: Latinos In Bethlehem Politics

Throughout the country Latinos are emerging as the fastest growing ethnic group. In Pennsylvania, smaller cities such as Allentown, Lancaster, York, Reading and Bethlehem are increasing their Latino populations faster than any other ethnic group in the State. Although Philadelphia has traditionally contained the largest number of Latinos (approximately 1/3 of Pennsylvania’s population) census data indicates that a greater amount of Latinos live in smaller cities than in Philadelphia. An important distinction between these new communities and that of Philadelphia is that the Philadelphia Latino community has had greater time to develop politically. Additionally, the presence of a large African American community has allowed Latinos to form coalitions with other minority groups thus expediting political empowerment efforts in Philadelphia.

On the other hand the emergence of Latino politics in the city of Bethlehem and in other Pennsylvania cities is only a recent phenomenon. This is partly due to the sudden increase in the Latino population, as well as an awareness by community leaders
and activists to become politically attuned. These communities will have to endure struggles unique from their Philadelphia counterparts. In particular they will not have the benefit of forming coalitions with existing minority groups, as Latinos and African Americans did in Philadelphia. Additionally they will be challenged in communities that have little history with immigrants other than those from Europe.

**Latino Social and Civic Organizations**

Nationally, Latino social and civic organizations have been the backbone for articulating the political needs of the Latino community. This phenomenon can also be observed at the local level, where newly emerging Latino communities, such as in Bethlehem, turn to local civic and social organizations to provide the political channels between local government and the Latino community. Maurilio Vigil notes,

> Hispanic organizations have been the vanguard of the Hispanic struggle for social, political and economic opportunity in the United States. They have been active in every environment – social, legal political, religious, business and professional – and every level of government in addressing the problems and concerns of Hispanics (1987, pg. 111)

For the Puerto Rican community in Bethlehem, local civic and social organizations and recently, national Latino organizations are helping construct the foundation for the political empowerment of this community. Organizations such as the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society, the Council of Spanish Speaking Persons, Hogar Crea, and Holy Infancy Church have historically provided much (if not all) of the political load for the Puerto Rican community. In the early 1990s, the Bethlehem Hispanic Political Caucus emerged to help integrate these organizations into one consolidated voice. Recently, the
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute, based in Chicago, contacted local leaders to further stimulate political mobilization and unification efforts by Latino leaders.

This process is occurring amidst the unprecedented growth of the Latino community in Bethlehem as well as the increasing resentment by non-Latinos. Although Latino voter turnout can be characterized as inconsistent and sporadic, an examination of Latino organizations indicates the contrary. Latino social and civic organizations, have indeed been stable and able to provide for the community, with a consistent leadership which few non-Latinos have taken notice.

*Puerto Rican Beneficial Society*

The Puerto Rican Beneficial Society (PRBS) was founded in the early 1950s. The PRBS is one of the oldest civic institutions serving the Latino community in Bethlehem. Past directors and members were also part of the steel workers union, where their presence was always seen as a coalitional organization strengthening the PRBS.

The PRBS is fully financed by private donations. Because of this the PRBS seldom invites elected officials to speak at PRBS events. This is partly due to “pride,” as one past director commented. PRBS members feel that elected officials should seek them out and not the reversal.

Traditionally PRBS directors have been politically out-spoken. Although they have historically been closely associated with the steel union, they have never turned down a Republican candidate who wish to speak at any of their functions. Currently, Carmelo La Torres is the presiding director. Torres has been characterized as loosely
involved politically. Some members in the community have viewed this as inappropriate of a PRBS director, who they feel should direct considerable political influence with Latinos and within the community at large.

_Council of Spanish Speaking Persons Organizations_

The Council of Spanish Speaking Persons (CSSO) was founded in 1968 as a social organization “committed to the community.” Its stated purpose was “to identify, represent and respond to the needs, interests and concerns of the Latino community.” The major programs offered by the CSSO are Drop-Out prevention Counseling, a Youth Arts Program, Latino Aids Outreach, *Proyecto Claridad*, employment counseling, Women’s Infants and Children’s (WIC) programs and a senior citizen activity program.

The Spanish Council is an integral part of the community. Not only is it a safety net for many of the community’s economically disadvantaged, but also a channel through which political needs can be addressed. The last two directors, Juan Cruz Jr. (whose term ended in 1992) and Sis-Obed Torres Corderro (the current director) have not only managed the business of the council but they have also served as political figures within the community.

In 1989, Juan Cruz ran unsuccessfully for city council. His entrance into the local political process was a sign of the maturation of Bethlehem’s Puerto Rican community as symbolized by the coming of age of its second generation. Cordero exemplifies a new Latino leadership. This new leadership is creating bridges between the established leadership of the city and the newly emerging Latino community.
More politically apparent is the organization’s involvement in hosting candidates night and town hall meetings. Both events give local political candidates the opportunity to address the Latino community more directly. Since the mid-1990s, extensive voter registration drives and get-out-the-vote campaigns have been conducted by the Council as an effort to promote political awareness as well as to create a formidable Latino force in the electorate.

_Hogar Crea_

Hogar Crea was founded in Puerto Rico in 1968 as a private nonprofit, social, civic, and educational organization. To deal with the high percentage of illegal drug users in the Puerto Rican community on the island and in the United States, Puerto Rican leaders as well as non-Latino leaders, organized and created a drug treatment center that would rehabilitate drug addicts with the intention of integrating them back into society as drug free members. On March 29, 1980 the first Hogar Crea in the United States was established in Bethlehem.

The formation of the Hogar Crea in Bethlehem comprised a response to the psychological as well as the physical needs of Latino addicts. In that same year, in an interview in Bethlehem, Dr. Efren Ramirez explained that the principle cause of the high rate of drug addiction among Puerto Rican youngsters was the cultural shock of rural migrants of Spanish culture adapting to urban North American culture.

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10 A Puerto Rican psychiatrist Dr. Efren Ramirez was influential in the organization of numerous Hogar Creas in Puerto Rico and in the expansion of the drug treatment facilities in the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and the United States.
Certainly, the formation of the Hogar Crea in Bethlehem must be seen as a turning point for Latino’s in Bethlehem. Even though poverty, crime, and drug abuse plagued the Latino community, Latinos, for the first time, were able to create an organization that specifically addressed these problems. Furthermore the fact that it was located in Bethlehem is a testament to the influence and organizational ability of the local Latino community.

Politically, Hogar Crea has been involved minimally. This is because Hogar Crea’s main responsibility lies in rehabilitation. They do, however, register voters and occasionally welcome legislators and other elected officials. Since they are primarily funded by private contributions they seldom pursue elected officials. The community supports Hogar Crea, and when there is a need, Hogar Crea supports Latino political candidates.

Hogar Crea’s existence is evidence of Latino’s concerns for the Latino community. However, the need for this institution exposes the social problems that have plagued the Latino community in the past thirty years.

*Holy Infancy Church*

Since the 1970s Holy Infancy Church, located on the Southside of Bethlehem, has served as the largest Catholic Church attended by Latinos in the city. Past priests such as Father John Grabish, have been seen many times at Latino community events. In 1983,

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11 I include Catholicism over other religions because they traditionally have been the preferred religion for most Latinos in Bethlehem. Pentecostals are growing in number, and should perhaps be used in future studies.
the American Council of Bishops issued a Pastoral Letter entitled, "The Hispanic Presence: Hope and Compromise." The letter recognized the presence of a large and growing Latino minority community in the United States and the necessity of the church closely relating to them and helping with their political and economic problems (Antonsen, 1996, pg. 125).

In Bethlehem, Father Grabish was instrumental in establishing Bethlehem's Hispanic Political Caucus. Additionally, the church has sponsored voter registration drives in order to register Latinos and empower the community. The Catholic Church has been viewed as a strong network for Latinos, socially and politically. Although the church has this network amongst Latinos, its political role has been (and continues to be) non-partisan.

**Political Organizations**

Latino political organizations are relatively new in Bethlehem. Three types of political organizations will be examined. The first is restricted within city limits, as in Bethlehem's Hispanic Political Caucus. The second type encompasses a broader area and addresses Latinos in various cities, as in Latinos for a New Lehigh Valley. The third type is national, as in the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute.

**Bethlehem's Hispanic Political Caucus**

The Hispanic Political Caucus in Bethlehem is currently inactive. Founded in the 1980s, Bethlehem's Hispanic Political Caucus served as a support organization for Latino political candidates. Throughout the 1980's the Caucus was involved in supporting
various unsuccessful political campaigns. Due to a lack of interest, by its members in the early 1990s, the organization went dormant.

There has recently been talk with various Latino leaders about reactivating the Caucus. This talk is a result of the penetration of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute into Bethlehem. However, as of yet little action has been taken to expedite this process.

*Latinos For A New Lehigh Valley (Political Action Group)*

Formed in 1993 in Allentown in order to support the emergence of new Latino political candidates, Latinos For a New Lehigh Valley served an important role for Latino political candidates throughout the Lehigh Valley. Its location, however, in Allentown, has inadvertently de-emphasized Bethlehem and Easton’s Latino candidates for city elected positions.

Ed Degrace, a Portuguese American, was the president and founder of this organization, which supported Latino political candidates in Allentown. Latinos for a New Lehigh Valley is no longer functioning. According to community activists a lack of organization and vision by its founder lead to its demise.

*Latin Alliance (Lehigh Valley)*

Latin Alliance was formed on November 12, 1994, as a result of a failed Latino Commission that was started by then Mayor of Allentown Joseph Dadonna (The Morning Call 11/12/94). Having a growing Latino population in Allentown, a study was
conducted by the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs (GACLA) in order to grasp the situation of the Latino community\textsuperscript{12}. From the recommendation of the Governor’s Commission and with the support of Mayor Joe Dodona, a Latino board (of 15 professional Allentown Latinos) was organized to report to the mayor on behalf of the Latino Community. Nevertheless, the Mayor’s Advisory Council was short-lived. By the time they had elected a president (Jose Lopez, then a Cuban professor of Spanish at Muhlenberg College) and appointed various committees, a new mayor, William Heydt, had been elected. Heydt, who had promised in his campaign to abolish the council, thought better of that once in office, but the members found him unsympathetic and uncooperative. They began to resign one by one until they disbanded completely in 1994. The former members of the council founded the Alianza Latina/Latin Alliance that same year (Adams, 2000, pg. 61). Julio Gruidy became the first president of the Latin Alliance group.

Politically Latin Alliance serves the community by advising public policy makers of the issues that mostly affect the Latino community. Since Latin Alliance is a non-partisan, non-profit organization they subsequently do not endorse any political candidate or party. They do however, conduct voter registration drives, voter education seminars, and get-out-the-vote campaigns.

\textsuperscript{12} The Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs came to Allentown for two days in 1992 to conduct public hearings on the status of the Latino community. They heard testimony from forty community leaders on housing, health, government, police, the legal system, the media, education and areas.
The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute

On a national level Latino political organizations are restructuring their political strategies to incorporate newly emerging Latino communities. The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) is such an organization. After years of concentrating in the Philadelphia, New Jersey, Delaware (tri-state) area, USHLI headed by a new Northeast Coordinator (in Philadelphia) is making an enormous effort to mobilize smaller Pennsylvania cities that have experienced substantial population growths in their Latino communities. USHLI is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization that was established in the early 1980s in Chicago to promote the empowerment of Latinos and other ethnic and similarly disenfranchised groups by maximizing civic awareness through participation in the electoral process (USHLI, 2000). USHLI has traditionally focused on specific issues and agendas to create the empowerment process: strong voter registration, voter education, get-out-the vote campaigns, redistricting, naturalization outreach and referral, and research advocacy activities.

In April of 1999 USHLI teamed up with local Latino political leaders in Bethlehem in an effort to enfranchise the Latino community. Incorporating the Leadership Development Program, created by USHLI, Bethlehem leaders began a process that would be the genesis of mobilizing the Latino vote and electing public officials and placing others in local governmental positions citywide.

The Leadership Development Program, which was conducted at the CSSO in the winter months of 2000, ran successfully as planned. The efforts by those who attended and by USHLI created the catalyst for beginning the reactivation process for Bethlehem's
Hispanic Political Caucus. USHLI’s presence not only legitimizes political efforts by Bethlehem’s Latinos by providing a nationally recognized Latino interest group, but also brings in needed resources in the forms of real dollars and education that helps train Latinos on how to run and raise money for political campaigns as well as educating others on how to conduct grass roots work.

_City Council_

City Council is the legislative branch of city government. Council has the ability to advance legislation on its own and influence the areas to which city money will be allocated. Bethlehem City Council is comprised of seven members - all elected at-large - who oversee the legislative duties of the city.

To win a city council seat a candidate must win a majority of the vote. In Bethlehem, votes are tallied by wards. Bethlehem is comprised of 17 wards, 4 of which are located in Lehigh County (10-13), while the rest are in Northampton County. The predominantly Latino dominated wards are 4, 15, 15/3, 16, and 17 in Northampton.

In the last ten years City Council has been virtually dominated by the Democratic Party. Never has a Latino (or Puerto Rican) served as a council member, despite various efforts by Latinos to run for office. This latter point has sparked tensions between Latinos and city leaders. Latino leaders suggest that the current at-large system constitutes an institutional bias, hindering potential Latino candidates to run for City Council. Others argue that Latinos simply do not vote and political apathy rather than institutional biases are the true barriers that Latinos must overcome to become politically empowered.
Criticisms directed at Latino apathy seldom discuss the success Latino candidates have in winning predominantly dominated Latino wards. For city council this has certainly been the case. Of the 17 wards, Latino candidates display strength in particular Latino dominated wards. The following is a list of the Latino candidates who have run for City Council, and lost, but won wards that comprise a high concentration of Latinos.

**Juan Cruz 1989**

Juan Cruz, who in 1989 served as the director of the Spanish Council in Bethlehem, marked the first of many attempts by a Latino to run for a City Council position. Cruz’s position as Director of the Spanish Council gave him the status and legitimacy in the community to run for a city council seat. Data from 1989 clearly indicates that Cruz won wards 5, 15, 15/3, 16, and 17 (all Latino dominated wards). In fact voting data from 1989 illustrates that ward 4 was also won by Cruz, and wards 1, 2, were only lost by a small margin. Cruz’s defeat in the Democratic primary illustrates that the Latino community does indeed support Latino candidates in the electorate. By winning the wards with a high concentration of Latinos, Cruz set a precedent in which future Latino candidates would follow.

**Jose Rosado 1994**

Learning from the past, Jose Rosado took his campaign effort and established a platform in which few could argue was not organized. In 1994, Jose Rosado was working as a Student Counselor for the Bethlehem Area School District (BASD). Employed by BASD, Rosado saw first hand the inequality within the school district
between Latinos and non-Latinos. Rosado interpreted part of the problem for the Latino community as being related to a lack of political power. He believed that he could make a difference by being on city council and advocating for legislation that would help the Latino community. In 1994, Jose Rosado decided to run for city council. Like his predecessor, Rosado won the wards that had a high concentration of Latinos. Rosado was able to win wards 5, 15/2, 15/3, 16 and 17. Rosado was also successful in wards 3, in which he tied, and in wards 1/North and South, and in 2, in which like, Juan Cruz, he lost by a small margin. However, because the at-large system tallies the entire votes instead of wards won, Rosado lost in the primaries. Interestingly, when examining the voter data, Rosado was not the only surname on the ballot that was of Hispanic origin. In that year Michael J. Garcia also ran unsuccessfully for a city council position (Garcia did not win a single Ward in the 1994 primary). According to Rosado, Michael "Mike" Garcia was chosen by the Democratic Party to further dilute the Latino (his) vote. Rosado has suggested that Garcia's name persuaded some Latinos and non-Latinos to vote for and give their vote to Garcia, because they "liked the sound of his name." When further examining voter data from the 1994 city council election, it can be observed that the removal of Garcia's name could have significantly altered the outcome of the election for Rosado. Although Rosado, like Cruz lost in the Democratic primary, he was able to win the wards in which had a high concentration of Latinos.
Unlike his predecessors, Sam Claudio did not run on the Democratic ticket for city council. Being in a predominantly Democratic dominated area, he was in an extreme disadvantage in his campaign effort. Nevertheless, in 1999 Claudio decided to give the Republican party an opportunity to support a Latino. Of the six candidates, three were Republicans and three were Democrats. Although Claudio lost in the General election (there was no Republican primary) out of the Republican candidates, he was able to win a majority of the votes. Out of the three Republicans, Claudio won wards, 1/North, 1/South, 2 through 7, 14/1, 14/5, 14/7, 15/1, 15/3, 16 and 17. He was competitive in wards 16 and 17 with his Democratic counterparts, but nevertheless lost. Despite receiving support from the Latino community, his Republican platform hindered his ability to win over Latino voters.

1998 City Council controversy

In 1998, City Council had the opportunity to appoint a new member. Twelve individuals came forward for the position. Two out of the twelve were Latino. Both where bilingual and educators in the Bethlehem Area School District. Jose Rosado had run unsuccessfully before in 1993. Sandra Figueroa was the principle of Dunegan elementary school in the Southside of Bethlehem. Both Latino individuals were respected by Latinos and by the community at large. The other candidates were newcomers and never ran for a city elected position. Considering the many social-economical problems of the Puerto Rican community as well the lack of Latino city
officials in local government, this would have been the perfect opportunity to appoint a Latino to help ease tensions within the city. Despite support from the Democratic Party, neither Latino was chosen. Interviews with various Democratic leaders suggest hidden racial biases (Interview, Jack Burke 2000).

The Media

For Latinos the media serves as the greatest resource for transmitting ideas and expressions about who they are, as well as their political and societal needs. Unfortunately for Latinos in Bethlehem the media has not always been sensitive to the needs of the Latino community nor have the media been attuned to the specific political needs articulated by Latino leaders. There are two forms of media that affect the Latino community, the first is the non-Latino media – which according to some Latino leaders has been the cause of much resentment against Latinos; second is the Latino media itself. Each is distinct and serves a crucial role within the community, articulating messages that either help the plight of Latinos or create tensions within the community as a whole.

The Latino media in Bethlehem is relatively new. Although there is no specific Bethlehem Latino based media, there exist Latino media in Allentown that serves the entire Lehigh Valley. Unlike the political organizations noted earlier, the location of the media in this case does not hinder the amount of coverage that is allocated towards the various Latino communities throughout the Lehigh Valley.

Currently the main local Latino newspaper for Latino’s in the Lehigh Valley is a bi-monthly insert in the Morning Call Newspaper entitled, El Torrero. According to its
editor Ricardo Monterro, El Torrero has a total circulation of about 10,000 readers throughout the Lehigh Valley. His paper addresses many particular Latino social, civic and political events that occur throughout the area. Politically, El Torrero has informed its readers of the importance of voting as well as the importance of being civilly involved in order to better the community. El Torrero, which began publication in 1997, has emerged as an important informational resource for the Latino community. Although it is published only in Spanish, it serves as a model for which future entrepreneurs can follow.

David Vaida, a host of the radio show “Commentario Al Dia” (“Current Commentary”) has gained considerable favor amongst Latinos throughout the area. His talk show, which airs Sunday mornings on WMUH 91.7 FM in Allentown, addresses a plethora of Latino and non-Latino related issues. Politically he has invited a variety of guest from all ends of the political spectrum to discuss and learn about issues that affect the Latino community. Vaida’s radio show was instrumental (as was El Torrero) in motivating and informing Latinos (particularly first time voters) to vote on Election Day. His radio show which has only been on air a couple of years has proven to be successful in transmitting local and national news in Spanish to a relatively new audience.

In 1995 there was an attempt in Bethlehem to establish a local Spanish newspaper entitled “La Plena del Pueblo”. Sis-Obed Torres Cordero, who now serves as the director of the Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations on the Southside of Bethlehem, created what he hoped would be a scholarly source of news that would portray the Latino community more accurately than what was being written in the local newspapers. Torres, a lawyer by education, created a newspaper that for some was perhaps too scholarly.
Within three years the paper closed. His efforts, however, mark the progressive steps that have been taken by Latinos to improve the Latino community.

The greatest obstacle for Latinos is not the Latino based media but the non-Latino media. Amidst the growing pressure of the community, *The Morning Call* has recently increased its sensitivity and awareness towards the Latino community. Although *The Morning Call* is now more culturally sensitive towards the Latino community, there still exists misperceptions and misunderstandings about Latinos with not only journalists but with the community as a whole.

Analysis of newspaper articles (before 1998) by the Morning Call’s on line archives resource tool gives insight into the many articles that have been written about Latinos in either a positive or negative aspect. Coincidentally it is the Morning Call that headlines the stories, “Man Robbed by Hispanic …”. This portrayal of the Latino community as villains has many Anglo citizens outraged with the influx of new Latinos to the area, especially at a time when downtown Allentown and Bethlehem’s Southside need much repair and economic revitalization. The increase in the Latino population, many of who have little formal education, and who also dwell in public housing, has many non-Latinos feeling a sense of resentment towards this emerging group.

4. *Bethlehem Latino Politics*

Hispanics organizations, as mentioned, have been the backbone for political mobilization efforts in Bethlehem. Contrary to popular belief, political efficacy exists within the Latino community. In Part I, it was noted that when analyzing Latino politics
it must be outside traditional U.S. politics. This is because Latinos have their own distinct culture of participation that is not easily observed. Latinos, nationally and locally have preferred articulating their political and social needs through civic and social organizations such as those examined above.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the political structure of Latinos in Bethlehem.

(Figure 2.2)

Latino Politics In Bethlehem Pennsylvania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>The Political System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Local)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Puerto Ricans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican Beneficial Society</td>
<td>Inputs/Conversion/Outputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council of Spanish speaking persons</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
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<td>Hogar Crea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Infancy Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>(National)</td>
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<td>United States Hispanic Leadership Institute</td>
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Local Leaders: Media

The schematic of the current Latino structure presented gives a general understanding of the most influential institutions that contribute to the input process as described by Vigil’s and Easton’s model in Part I of this thesis. However, unlike Vigil’s model there is no cohesion between these institutions. Missing from this framework is a distinct local political organization or network that can bridge these groups and unilaterally articulate the needs of the Latino community.

As examined, each institution above serves the Latino community in its own unique way. Although valuable, the natural fragmentation that occurs inadvertently hinders the political development of the Latino franchise. Recently, the United States
Hispanic Leadership Institute has helped bring together community leaders in an effort to politically mobilize the Latino community. Additionally, state-wide Hispanic groups, such as the Pennsylvania State Wide Latino Coalition (PSWLC) has also helped create bridges between Latino organizations, especially those social organizations that compete with each other for state and federal dollars.

This schematic thus presents the first attempt to outline the political framework for Latinos in Bethlehem. It is the transformation of this loose relationship into a cohesive entity that will provide the next obstacle for Latinos.

5. Summary and Lessons

For the Latino community in Bethlehem political articulation has traditionally been through social and civic organizations. The population increase in the Latino community in the 1970s spurred the creation of Latino organizations to meet the social and political needs that where developing within the community. As this population increased, more mainstream political efforts – running for elective positions and registering Latinos to vote – began to occur in order to create a franchise. However, because of a lack of experience and a political system that was not conducive to promoting the enfranchisement of smaller groups, Latinos continued to struggle and become politically empowered through traditional methods.

In the early to mid-1990s, non-Latino legislators began to take notice of the Latino community for their untapped voting resources. The recognition of a formidable Latino voting bloc created interest by non-Latino legislators to recruit Latino campaign
workers. In latter years these Latinos would be the focal point for beginning the process of building the franchise.

Unlike their New York City Latino neighbors, the Puerto Rican community in Bethlehem is relatively small and homogenous. Puerto Ricans are the most influential Latino sub-group in the city. Although per-capita income for close to fifty percent of Puerto Ricans is at or below the poverty line, there is evidence that Puerto Ricans are depending less on government assistance and moving economically upward. There are many new Latino owned businesses in the Southside of Bethlehem that are contributing to the development of Latino neighborhoods. Additionally, social networks between Latino organizations as well as local Latino based media locally are helping facilitate an ethnic enclave that is becoming increasingly active within the city.

Within the Latino community itself there are various leaders that are emerging and encouraging different segments of the population to become politically involved. There are those who are able to mobilize voters before and during elections days, and others who are influential with existing city leaders, persuading them to allocate resources to Latino organizations. The Puerto Rican community in Bethlehem, like its Mexican counterpart in Texas, is depending on grass-roots mobilization to further propel the franchise.

Today a loose network exists between Latino social and civic organizations as well as with Latino leaders within the community. Having already a political framework in place, it will be up to Latinos themselves to transcend this loose network to a politically empowered franchise.
Part III.

Latino Political Empowerment Strategies: Political and Legal

Lack of political power can be dangerous to a person's health. Political power can determine who lives or dies as well as a community's longevity. Political power determines who has priority to access health care, who has the best hospitals, and whose neighborhoods will be crime – and drug-free. If Hispanics do not participate in the political process, it can truly be a matter of life and death for the members of that community.

Raul Yzaguirre, Keys to Hispanic Empowerment

Introduction

Newly emerging Latino communities, will have to overcome many obstacles to become politically empowered. Latinos in these communities will have to choose strategies that either work with the current political system, politically mobilizing and following more traditional approaches towards mobilization, or methods that directly challenge the status quo.

Politically Latinos in Bethlehem and other communities alike will have to discern the best strategies to become politically empowered. In this section, I will examine those options available to Bethlehem’s Latino community. By taking the current Latino political framework, I will ascertain what political empowerment strategies can be used to strengthen and franchise this community.

If political mobilization seems to be unobtainable through traditional political efforts, then other methods to enfranchise this group will be given. Particularly examined will be legal remedies, such as the 1965 Voting Rights Act, with emphasis on subsequent
amendments that pertain to voter dilution. By understanding similar cases, it will then become clear what legal extremes are necessary for political empowerment.

1. **Political Remedies**

   There currently exists a loose network of social institutions that facilitates the political articulation process for the Latino community in Bethlehem. However, in order for a political franchise to emerge, three fundamental factors will need to be incorporated as strategies to empower this group. The first action to be taken is to mobilize the Latino vote and establish a consistent voting bloc. The mobilization of the Latino vote will be accomplished by establishing a more cohesive network between Latino, social, civic, and political organizations. In this manner not only will a voting bloc be created but also a formidable presence will be established by the unification of Latino leaders. This unification will affect public policy and push for the allocation of needed resources into Latino areas. This being said, the second factor must also include filling any void that exists within this network of Latino organizations. To this extent, this will mean reactivating the Hispanic Political Caucus, which has been dormant since the early 1990s. Lastly Latino leaders will have to find ways to influence the media in printing stories that depict Latinos more accurately. By achieving this end, Latino leaders will be able to reach a greater audience and perhaps change the general public perception that Latinos are a detriment to society to a more positive perception that includes a willingness to work together for a better community.

   Having the infrastructure in place to establish the franchise, the first objective for Latino leaders should be concentrated on creating an influential voting bloc. The
mobilization of the Latino vote in Bethlehem reached organized status in the early 1990s. As mentioned, this came about not through Latino efforts but through Anglo Democrats who saw the potential in the Latino vote. Since then, however, there has been an emergence of those Latino leaders who have consistently worked to register new Latino voters in an effort to build the franchise without being dependent on Non-Latino legislators. For Latinos in Bethlehem to obtain political power, they must continue to increase the number of Latinos who are registered as well as increase voter turnout and political participation in those wards that contain the greatest concentrations of Latinos. This being said, Latino leaders must exhibit caution in not creating a franchise in which only a few members of the community communicate the needs of the people. Internal networks of articulation from the various factions of the Latino community must be established to promote greater participation and to avoid inadvertently excluding others in the political process. The Texan model (discussed in Part I) provides an example for political mobilization and participation in which the importance of organization lies with grass-roots operation rather than elite control.

Rafael Collazo, The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute Northeast Field Coordinator, has commented on small city Latino political participation in Pennsylvania and in the Northeast that, “there is a tendency that the same Latino leaders perform all the political functions for the community… at every event, whether it be civic, social or political you see the same people (Interview 10/28/00).” The importance of creating a franchise with as many people as possible participating in the decision making process is vital for the success of the Latino community in Bethlehem. Bethlehem’s Latino
community, if not constructed correctly, has the potential to develop a leadership that can divide rather than unite the community. There are signs that Latino leaders are working together to further build the franchise. Nevertheless, there is still a need for more internal coalition building.

In the weeks leading up to the 2000 presidential elections, local Latino leaders in Bethlehem gathered together to discuss the various strategies to be used to have as many registered Latinos come out and vote (Morning Call Article 11/00). Understanding the importance of the Latino vote locally and nationally, Latino leaders discussed more than short-term goals for augmenting Latino voter turn-out. Discussed in these meetings were specific numbers needed at the polls in order to make an impact with Democratic and Republican leaders. This strategy was suggested not as a short-term opportunity but as a long-term move for future political endeavors within the Latino community. Frustrated with promises by the dominant party in local government, Latinos are learning to depend less on any particular party and more on themselves. The move to make a more concentrated effort to bring out the vote brought together Latino leaders who have not always been willing to work with each other.

The second strategy to politically mobilize the Latino community should result in the formation of a cohesive network of Latino social and civic organizations while also establishing a franchise that can work efficiently and effectively. By this, Latino leaders will be able to cut wasted time on communicating through middlemen that often facilitate the communication network. The coalition can be in the form of a committee, particularly a Latino political organization that can address the concerns of the
community. Since the 2000 presidential elections, community leaders have taken closer steps to reactivating Bethlehem’s Hispanic Political Caucus. The presence of national organizations such as USHLI and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LACLAA) has legitimized efforts to revitalize the Hispanic Political Caucus. Both national groups (LACLAA being a recent addition) have provided financial resources for educating Latinos on the importance of voting and becoming more politically involved, have paid for seminars on conducting political campaigns, and given scholarships that support Latino students.

There is no surprise that in order to obtain a franchise two fundamental factors must be obtained. The first is organization and the second is financial capital. For groups that lack economic affluence, as in the case of most Latino groups (Cuban Americans in Miami being an exception), the lack of financial capital causes impediments to the political mobilization process13. The emergence of national groups such as USHLI and LACLAA in smaller communities with few financial resources offsets some of the financial burden, enabling leaders to concentrate on organizing rather than using valuable time searching for financing. Bethlehem’s Latinos have been offered support by both national groups, as well as by some state Latino interest groups, to fund Bethlehem’s Hispanic Political Caucus.

13 The Cuban model for Bethlehem does not fit as well as the Texan/Mexican model described in Part I. Particularly because it was the Cuban economic enclave that propelled the political mobilization process in Miami during the 1960s and 1970s. The plight of Puerto Ricans in Bethlehem is different in many respects, here, however, the most obvious is economic. Where the Cubans poses the highest income of any Latino group the Puerto Ricans poses the lowest, nationally and locally.
Additionally, these interest groups have sponsored various get-out-the-vote and registration campaigns by paying local residents and educating them and providing them with additional resources to further the cause. These actions facilitate the strength of the internal network that is important for the maintenance of the franchise.

It is important to note that external coalition building with other minority groups has presented options for other disenfranchised groups. However, unlike in other cities throughout the United States where a large number of Latinos dwell with other minority groups such as African Americans and/or Asians (for example), Bethlehem’s Latino’s find themselves alone with no other large minority group with which to coalesce. Philadelphia’s Latino community’s political empowerment efforts were aided by the African American community in the 1960s and 1970s. Chicago and Los Angeles provide other examples where Latinos have built coalitions with other minority groups in order to become politically empowered. Bethlehem’s Latino community has the potential to become a formidable political force by itself without the assistance of an already established existing group.

Finally, the media for Latinos in Bethlehem should be a positive tool for influencing city officials on public policy decisions that will not only allocate city resources to Latino neighborhoods but also create a positive perception of Latinos throughout the city as a whole. Latinos should be specific with local non-Latino papers about the issues and realities concerning the Latino community. A greater public relations effort between coordinators of Latino events should be conducted with local media in an effort to foster a better relationship.
The combination of these factors is necessary but not sufficient for political empowerment. This is because numerically, Latinos do not possess a sufficient number of voters that can allow them to elect a (Latino) candidate of their choice. The political recommendations proposed here will enable Latinos in Bethlehem to gain more influence. However, for Latinos to gain real political power and access they will have to be involved in both politics and the decision making positions of the bureaucracy; it will be the former that will that will pave the way for the latter.

2. **Legal Remedies**

In order for Latinos in Bethlehem to gain political power, political mobilization strategies will have to be complemented by legal remedies that will help the empowerment process. The 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA), and particularly its subsequent amendments have helped Latino political empowerment efforts by erasing voting barriers. Throughout many cities where there are a large number of Latino residents, voting policies have changed to accommodate a more diverse population. Specifically, this has meant changing the location of polling places to accommodate emerging Latino neighborhoods and providing interpreters at polling places to further aid Spanish speaking residents who sometimes do not vote because they do not understand the voting terminology or process. One of the most effective political remedies offered by the VRA for Latinos and other similarly disenfranchised groups in local political systems has been the change of local voting structures from an at large to a district electorate. This processes, however, has been extremely difficult and at times controversial to change.
There is a plethora of literature that deals with voter dilution as a result of voting boundaries, particularly at-large elections for municipal government. The controversy results in the changing of the status quo to a more conflictual voting environment. Although there is a history throughout major cities in regards to the use of the VRA as a political remedy, for the most part Latinos in smaller cities throughout the country have yet to incorporate wide use of the VRA as a legal recourse to improving their political circumstances. Before examining the VRA, a brief description of state procedure for changing local government is needed. Understanding how local governments in Pennsylvania can change their voting structures will provide insight to the options available for Latinos at the state level.

State Procedure for Changing Local Government

Pennsylvania municipalities do have certain rights in initiating changes in local governmental structures. Home rule and optional charter rule gives local government the autonomy to make changes in local government. The basic concept of home rule is relatively simple:

"Home rule means the shifting of responsibility for local government from the State legislature to the local government ... a borough choosing home rule can tailor its governmental organization and powers to suit its special need. Commissions often liken a charter to a local constitution for the municipality. "It is a body of law, a framework within which the local council can adopt, adapt and administer legislation and regulations for the conduct of business and the maintenance of order and progress (Department of Community and Economic Development, 1999, pg. 1.)."

14 In the early 1990s there was a failed attempt by local Latino leaders and state legislators to change the voting structure of the City of Bethlehem. For this reason I elaborate more extensively on the federal law rather than the state because in the latter change has been reluctant to occur.
Home rule, however, does not set apart a local government from the rest of the state. It is subject to restrictions found in the United States and Pennsylvania constitutions and in state laws applicable to home rule municipalities.

For Pennsylvania the implementation of home rule has been a slow process generally lagging behind other states. Final adoption of Home Rule Law in 1972 came a century after Missouri became the first state to grant constitutional home rule in 1875.

In 1957 an Optional Third Class City Charter Law was created. This Law offered third class cities a selection of governmental forms provided in the law and granted a measure of home rule power. Between 1957 and 1972, seventeen cities adopted optional charters under the authority of this law. Thirteen still operate under their optional charters. In 1996 Allentown changed to home rule, while its neighboring city Bethlehem (which obtained its status in 1962) remained with the Optional Third Class City Charter.

Both home rule and charter rule give various degrees of autonomy to the city. In cases where city council can vote for or against an amendment - within their jurisdiction (as in local taxes) - home rule stipulates that an overwhelming majority vote by city council is needed. In this case if city council is comprised of seven members, five out of those seven members must be for the decision in order for it to pass. For charter rule only four members would be needed.

In the state of Pennsylvania only three charters guarantee minority party representation by limited voting. Lackawanna County continues the traditional limited voting system for county commissioners. Philadelphia provides for limited voting for its seven at-large council members, ensuring at least two minority members on council. The
Allegheny County Charter permits parties to nominate only one candidate for the two at-large council seats and limits voters to a single vote for the two positions (DCED, 1999, pg. 34).

Bethlehem’s status gives city council the power to vote for a change in the voting structure of the city. City council has the ability to place the authority in the hands of the people. In this case it would be in the form of a referendum during the course of a municipal election. In the early 1990s city council voted against a district representation.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act

The 1965 Voting Rights Act was established during the tenure of then president Lyndon B. Johnson. Although the 15th Amendment established universal suffrage for American citizens, African Americans and other minorities in the South (and sometimes elsewhere) were systematically excluded from participation in the democratic process. In the ninety-five years following the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment, state and local governments found a host of creative ways to exclude blacks and other minorities from the voting booths. The VRA changed this exclusion by preventing such tactics as literacy test, polling taxes, and hostile polling locations that intimidated minority groups from participating in elections.

One of the most significant corridors in which the VRA had become relevant was the area of reapportionment. Section 5 of the VRA required certain state and local governments “covered” by the Act obtain “preclearance” with the U.S. Department of Justice or the U.S. District Court of Columbia before any changes in voting standards,
practices, or procedure could be made. At first, the preclearance requirements were placed on only a few jurisdictions that had maintained literacy tests and other forms of blatant discrimination in voting qualifications. However, subsequent amendments in 1970, 1975, and 1982 broadened the reach and scope of the VRA, such that twenty-two states were now covered by the Section 5 preclearance requirements. This meant that such jurisdictions were required to preclear their reapportionment plans with the U.S. Department of Justice, placing an immediate check upon the ability of states to establish continued barriers to equality and voting rights. It also meant that any state or covered jurisdiction which failed to preclear its reapportionment plan or other electoral changes with the U.S. Department of Justice, or ignored the Department's objections to the plan, might immediately face a lawsuit in court. (PA 1991 Reapportionment Report, pg. 29).

Pennsylvania, because it lacked a history of overt discrimination in voting practices, was not included in the lineup of preclearance states. Nevertheless, Pennsylvania fell under the broader ambit of Section 2 of the Act, which “prohibited any state or political subdivision from imposing any voting qualification, standard or practice, or procedure that resulted in denial or abridgment of any United States citizen's right to vote on account of race, color, or status as a member of a minority group” (PA 1991 Reapportionment Report, pg. 30).

One of the most significant in a series of amendments to the VRA occurred in 1982, when Congress altered the VRA in response to the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in City of Mobile v. Bolden. In Bolden, the Court had diverged from a string of earlier cases and held that plaintiffs were required to prove an intent to discriminate to
establish a violation of the Fifteenth Amendment and to establish a vote dilution claim under the VRA. This “intent” test placed a heavy burden on plaintiffs, making it virtually impossible to prove a violation of the Act without proof of blatant discrimination by the state legislature. Congress disapproved of this stringent interpretation of the VRA and, in 1982, amended the Act to embody a more workable “results” test, which the Court had advanced in earlier cases (Fisher, 1999, pg. 1105-1186). The resulting language of the VRA, following the 1982 Amendments, provided the following:

(a) No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any state or political subdivision in a manner which results in a denial or abridgment of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color...

(b) A violation of subsection (a) of this section is established if, based on the totality of circumstances, it is shown that the political processes leading to nomination or election in the state or political subdivision are not equally open to participation by members of a class of citizens protected by subsection (a) of this section in that its members have less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice. The extent to which members of a protected class have been elected to office in the state or political subdivision is one circumstance which may be considered: Provided, that nothing in this section establishes a right to have members of a protected class elected in numbers equal to their proportion in the population (PA 1991 Reapportionment Report).

In this manner, the VRA as amended in 1982 provided a statutory cause of action for asserting that a voting standard, practice or procedure “resulted” in discrimination based upon race. The first major decision of the Supreme Court interpreting the 1982 amendments was with *Thornburgh v. Gingles*. 
The *Gingles* opinion established a fairly concrete test for determining whether a violation of the newly amended Act could be found. Under *Gingles*, a group of minority plaintiffs would be required to prove three elements to show that a plan impaired their opportunity to elect candidates of choice. The minority plaintiffs would be required to show that:

1. The minority group was sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority in a single member district.
2. The minority group was politically cohesive.
3. In the absence of special circumstances, "bloc voting" by the white majority usually defeated the minority's candidate of choice.

The *Gingles* Court further held that certain specific factors, derived from the Senate report relating to the 1982 Amendments, could be examined to determine if a Section 2 claim had been made out by minority plaintiffs. These factors included:

1. The history of voting related discrimination in the state or political subdivision;
2. The extent to which voting in the elections of the state or political subdivision is racially polarized
3. The extent to which the state or political subdivision has used voting practices or procedures that tend to enhance the opportunity for discrimination against the minority group, such as unusually large election districts, majority vote requirements, and prohibitions against bullet voting;
4. The exclusion of members of the minority group from candidate slating processes;
5. The extent to which minority group members bear the effects of past discrimination in area such as, education, employment, and health, effectively in the political process;
6. The use of overt or subtle racial appeals in political campaigns, and;
7. The extent to which members of the minority group have been elected to public office in the jurisdiction.
The Court noted that other factors might be relevant, but that the above were the most important because they directly mirrored the intent of Congress. Furthermore, the Court held that not all of these factors had to be proven in order to sustain a Section 2 claim; instead these factors were to be analyzed as part of a “totality of the circumstances” test to whether a violation had occurred (Thornburgh v. Gingles).

Political Equality: 1990 Legal Challenges By Bethlehem’s Latinos

Until the 1990s Bethlehem’s Latino community never fully challenged the at-large voting structure of the city. There is a history, however, of Latinos (as well as non-Latinos legislators) using the VRA as recourse to eliminate voting barriers. In the early 1990s Latino leaders challenged Northampton County’s Voter Registration Office for failing to provide adequate Spanish interpreters at polling places where a large number of Latinos vote. Later Democratic State Representative T.J Rooney and then Republican State Representative Joseph Uliana petitioned for a change in the local voting structure to a hybrid form of voting that contained both at-large and district seats for city council. These first few legal precedents, coupled with various unsuccessful attempts by Latinos running for public office positions, sparked much interest with Latino leaders to question the voting structure of the city and its viability as an equitable system for Latinos and other minorities in Bethlehem. Before proceeding to the present, these two particular cases noted above must be further discussed.
As the Latino community increased in the early 1990s, more attention was given to the political circumstances of Latinos in Bethlehem. In 1990, Uriel Trujillo\(^{15}\) of Bethlehem challenged Northampton County’s Voting policies by alleging that unfair and exclusionary tactics were implemented to deter Latinos from voting. Trujillo, who filed a letter of complaint to the U.S. Justice Department noted that the allegations of the proposed rights abuses ranged from a change in location of a voting place, with little prior notice to residents in the area (subsequently an area where a large number of Latinos live), to then excluding Latino interpreters from helping non-English speaking Latinos understand the dynamics within polling places (The Morning Call, 11/21/1990).

Trujillo argued that the election code allows people who have physical disabilities or problems with the English language to designate another registered voter to help them in the voting booth. He further argued that the exclusion of interpreters violated the federal Voting Rights Act. The incident ignited the attention of Latino leaders and advocates to question voting policies in Northampton County. After a representative from the Department of Justice came to Bethlehem, the matter was settled out of court. As a result of this incident, Northampton County became more responsive to the needs of the Latino community. Following the 1990 voting rights incident, an attempt was made by local state legislators to convert the prevailing political structure of an at-large electorate to a district elected system for city office positions (particularly city council). This issue would present the next political agenda for Latino leaders to endorse in the

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\(^{15}\) Uriel Trujillo received his law degree from the City University School of Law at Queens College. Following his graduation he moved back to Bethlehem where he became an advocate for the Latino community. This incident represents his first public legal advocacy for Bethlehem’s Latino community.
early part of the decade. In 1993, at the eve of a general municipal election, state Representative T.J. Rooney, D-133rd District, and then state Representative Joseph Uliana, R-135th District, proposed a plan that would allow voters to elect Bethlehem’s City Council members by districts rather than the at-large method in place.

The legislative move by both state representatives to endorse a change in Bethlehem’s political structure was an effort to create a more responsive City Council that would adhere to the specific needs of a uniquely geographic and ethnically diverse city. Geographically, Bethlehem can be divided into four distinct parts. Center City Bethlehem, or Historic Bethlehem, which has survived time and a changing city, generates attention locally for its shops, cafes, and old style architecture (where in other neighboring cities like Easton and Allentown, center cities have become dilapidated and gentrified). The Southside is perhaps the most distinct and bares the scars of the steel days with the erosion of Bethlehem Steel. A good majority of Bethlehem’s Latinos live in the southeast portions and immediately across the Lehigh River in the northeast portions of the city. Although South Bethlehem boasts the Steel Plant and Lehigh University, the condition of the southeast corner, with its pothole ridden streets and decaying buildings indicates a lack of affluence as well as a sign of neglect by city officials. The west side of Bethlehem is truly distinct locally and state wide in that portions of it reside within Lehigh County. The West Side’s proximity to Allentown often makes Bethlehem natives feel more comfortable with Allentown. Lastly, the North Side with its sprawling suburbs is perhaps the newest section of the city and contains a

16 Unique in Pennsylvania, Bethlehem is comprised of two separate counties, Lehigh and Northampton.
newly emerging Republican sector (an area that would benefit Republicans in a district electorate).

The unique makeup of the city prompted a debate about whether city council was inadvertently neglecting certain sections of the city by concentrating on the broader interest. This certainly was the case in 1993. Although Latino leaders argued this point in the past, it was not until said year, coupled with various unsuccessful political attempts by Latinos for elected positions that brought this issue to the attention of the city.

Received with a lukewarm response from candidates in the last days of a city wide race, then council member President James Delgrosso, a Democrat noted, “I am fearful that to divide the city into election districts will result in partisan bickering over gerrymandering and ultimately pit the various sections of the city against each other.” The seven-member Democrat council was very much against the idea, considering that this would mean losing a seat to a non-Democrat. State Representative T.J. Rooney commented that the unique makeup of the city neglected certain sections, particularly the South Side and the West Side which, as he said, “are being disenfranchised.” Then Mayor Ken Smith who backed the plan replied, “It works well because the various districts have their own representatives and the at-large representatives protect the broader interest...(The Morning Call,11/1/93).”

The plan, however, was not realized because according to state election procedure any attempt to change a local voting structure must be voted by the legislative branch of the city (in this case city council). Council voted against a change in the voting structure
of the city, noting that a change would create conflict and council members would then just serve their specific districts and not the well being of the city.

In 1994, Nancy Mato’s victory for District Magistrate eased tensions within the Latino community. The at-large and district voting structure issue would not surface again until after the 1998 city council controversy (noted earlier). It will not be until after the new census data figures that attempts to lobby for a change in the voting structure of the city will surface again.

A change in the voting structure from an at-large to a district (or even a hybrid form) electoral system has been denounced by current city officials, arguing that for a city the size of Bethlehem a district structure for municipal government (in this case city council and the school board) will divide council members to serve only the interest of various sections of the city and not the city as a whole. This statement which was made in the winter months of 2000 by current city council President Robert Donchez is almost identical to that made by city council President James Delgrasso in 1993 noted above. Although little has changed with this particular thought, positives changes to the city have been made in the North, West and Central portions. Regretfully it is the Southeast and a small section of the Northeast that continue to be neglected.

When the VRA was ratified the Act pertained primarily to those states in the South that had a blatant history of voting discrimination. In subsequent amendments it covered not only blatant but also subtle voting violations as in irregular voting boundaries and language barriers. It was not until the mid to late 1980s and into the early 1990s that voting dilution became an important issue. Pennsylvania, because it lacked a history of
racial discrimination, did not directly fall under the “preclearence” mandate noted within the VRA. However, since its inception, much has changed in Pennsylvania particularly in smaller communities such as Bethlehem. Additionally Pennsylvania is now a national leader with the amount of hate groups that reside within its boundaries. Pennsylvania has also experienced a dramatic increase in its Latino population in places where being foreign means the town next door. In the fall of 2000 Governor Tom Ridge acknowledged the growth of the Latino community in the state and declared the month of October Hispanic Heritage Month.

3. Summary and Lessons

As Bethlehem’s Latino population increases, it will become necessary for Latinos to be part of the decision making process within local government. In this manner Latinos will be able to receive the benefits that complement political participation. However, the ability of Bethlehem’s Latino community to become politically empowered will depend on an understanding of the dynamics of Bethlehem politics. To this extent, Latinos will have to create strategies that contain both political and legal remedies.

Politically, Bethlehem’s Latino community will need to mobilize using conventional strategies that work both within and outside of the political system. Extensive voter registration drives, get-out-the-vote campaigns, and support for Latino candidates and issues will have to be emphasized before and after election periods. Grass roots politics will play an important role in the mobilization of the Latino community. Culturally for Latinos, grass roots mobilization is more in tuned with the personal contact
and social ethos that is prevalent amongst the Latino culture. This method of mobilization can thus complement a political-culture that prefers to participate politically through social and civic organizations. However, the creation of an ethnic voting bloc will only enable Latinos to influence policy makers (and to what degree is not certain) and not necessarily elect a Latino candidate. A more empowering method will have to be in the form of changing the voting structure of the city to enable a large minority to elect officials of their choice.

The debate between leaving the status quo unchanged or altering it has those in power in conflict with those that are not. Interestingly it was the progressive reform movement in the early twentieth century that pushed for elections at-large to cure for the abuse of the nineteenth century ward system. The recent movement to return power to neighborhoods has been a force in the opposite direction.

Local legal challenges provide as many barriers as any other deterrent to political franchisement. In this case it is the legislative branch that openly admits to being against any kind of district representation for the city of Bethlehem. For this reason, Latinos must take the legal challenges to the federal level, where precedents have been established in the pursuit of equitable governmental systems.

Latinos in smaller cities throughout the country have the task of becoming politically empowered without a major national movement. For Latinos in larger urban areas this movement occurred during the 1960s civil rights era. It is to no surprise that in smaller cities, where Latinos reached a critical mass after this period, political mobilization has been slow to occur.
Conclusion

What Latinos in Bethlehem are trying to accomplish is to create a political franchise that will enable them to gain greater access and influence in determining public policy. Specifically this will mean having policy makers allocate city dollars to Latino neighborhoods, stimulating social and economic development in these seemingly depressed areas of the city. To this extent, political mobilization by itself will not fully permit Latinos to influence city officials to implement Latino influenced policy. In order for Latinos in Bethlehem to gain considerable access and influence in local government, Latinos themselves will have to be involved in the decision making process.

This thesis focused on the political mobilization process of Latinos in Bethlehem. What was addressed was whether political mobilization by itself is sufficient to correct the power imbalance between Latinos and the established leadership of the city. It has been suggested that political mobilization alone is not sufficient to create a political franchise where Latinos directly influence policy. In discussing the options available for Latinos in Bethlehem to obtain a franchise, two suggestions where given. Politically, Latinos will have to follow traditional methods of mobilization – voter registration drives, get out the vote campaigns and address political issues in Latino neighborhoods and organizations. The second strategy given involves the legal maneuver of changing an at-large to a district voting structure for city council.

Together these strategies can prove to be the catalyst to incorporating Latinos in the decision making process of city government. Certainly political representation, particularly on city council will give Latinos greater access to the decision making
process. However, without being involved in the bureaucracy Latinos will continue to be at a disadvantage when trying to understand complex public policy options. City Council and other elected positions will provide the stepping stone in which broader issues can be addressed. In conjunction with elected officials it will be the duty of Latinos to pursue bureaucratic positions to continue the progression of the Latino community in influencing policy agendas.

It is to no surprise that Latinos are the largest growing ethnic minority group in the city of Bethlehem. Many agree that in order to correct many of the social and economic problems in the city, with regards to Latinos, Latinos will have to partake a more active role within city government. Currently there is a lack of representation in not only elected offices but also in city government. As was noted earlier approximately 3 percent of the City of Bethlehem’s employees are Latino; and of this number half are full time. With regards to elected officials, there is not one Latino in office and only a hand full of employees working for non-Latino legislators. When considering that the current Latino population is 18 percent of the total population (not to mention the many that typically elude the census) and only 3 percent comprise the total Latino governmental work force, a large disparity can be observed.

Pennsylvania, like many other states across the United States, is experiencing a rapid change in the makeup of its citizenry. This change will affect the way local and state governments conduct state policy. At a more local level, small cities, as in the case of Bethlehem, will have to adapt to these new changes in order to insure its residents a secure living and future. Particularly this will mean employing bilingual staff for local
government, the school district, the police and fire departments and the various other facets of government in order to maintain an efficiently running bureaucracy that can provide a service for most, if not all, of its residents.
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