

DRAFT—DO NOT CITE WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHORS—DRAFT

LATINAS IN LATINO POLITICS

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Our discussion of Latinas in Latino politics classifies the literature into two major analytical categories. The first category identifies largely *descriptive differences* between Latino men and Latinas.¹ The differences focus on the traditional dimensions of political analysis including public opinion, political participation with special emphasis on organizational leadership, and electoral representation. The second category we term *prescriptive possibilities*. This literature focuses on Latina feminist writings and emerging models of Latina legislative leadership. Unlike the first category noted above, these literatures explicitly develop understandings of the transformative, i.e., institution changing, potential of new ways of conceptualizing the interests of Latino communities and developing strategies of policy advocacy built on the interest intersectionality of Latinas in the American polity. It is this later category that we find the most intellectually rich and most likely to affect the future practice(s) of Latino politics, and especially the role of Latinas in that Latino politics.

DESCRIPTIVE DIFFERENCES

Public Opinion. The earliest study to note gender differences in public opinion was conducted by Brischetto and de la Garza (1983). They found that Mexican origin women were more favorably predisposed to the Democratic Party than were Mexican origin men. Mexican origin men were more predisposed to the Republican Party. This study was based upon respondents from selected cities. Similarly, based on a survey in one California Congressional district taken in the 1980s, Cain and Kiewiet (1985) found that Latinas were more likely to self-identify as Democrats than Latino men, but were not any less likely to identify with the Republican Party. Welch and Sigelman (1992) were the first to explicitly examine gender differences between Latinas and Latino men with national data. They found that there was a small difference in political ideology, modest difference in party identification, and most difference in presidential vote choice. Based on presidential election exit poll survey data in the 1980s, Latinas tended to identify as slightly more liberal, significantly less likely to identify with the Republican Party, and slightly more likely to vote for Democratic presidential candidates. Their data were aggregated

¹ We follow the tradition established by Hardy-Fanta (1993) is using the terms “Latino men” to refer to Latino males and “Latinas” to refer to Latina females. “Latino politics” refers to all politics related to both genders.

to the national level and the authors were, therefore, not able to examine possible differences by region or by national origin group.

Several studies find no gendered differences in attitudes toward immigration (Wrinkle 1991; Binder, Polinard, and Wrinkle 1997; Hood Morris, and Shirkey 1997). Using 1996 exit-poll data, however, Hardy-Fanta reports that Latinas favor decreasing immigration more than do Latino men (Hardy-Fanta 2000).

The most thorough analysis of gender differences in public opinion is provided by Montoya (1996). Using the 1989 Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) she found that some differences existed between Latino men and Latinas, but there were some variations by national origin group and the differences were not always in the same direction as predicted by studies of the gender gap among whites. Controlling for age, income, nativity, and “born-again” experience she found that Mexican origin men supported higher spending on defense than Mexican origin women. Gender differences were not statistically significant for Puerto Ricans or Cubans. In the area of spending on social welfare programs she found statistically significant differences by gender across the three national origin groups examined. Finally, Montoya found that the most consistent gender differences in public opinion were in the area of “women’s roles” (Montoya 1996: 261-262).² She states, “Latinas [across all national origin groups] are more likely than Latinos to favor modern or very modern roles for women” although the differences are not dramatic (270).

Political Participation. Few studies have specifically examined gendered differences in the political participation of Latinas and Latino men. One consistent finding is that there are no major differences in either propensity to turnout or in presidential preferences (MacManus, Bullock, and Grothe 1986; Lien 1994, 1998; Montoya 1997). However, the predictors of turnout do seem to have some gender-based variation. Latina heads of households are less likely to turnout than are males (Uhlaner,

² Modern roles were based on responses to questions regarding whether women should sacrifice their careers to help their husbands by taking care of household chores and children, whether women in public office were more capable than men in public office during times of crisis, and whether women will be better off if they stay home and raise families (See Montoya 1996: 262).

Cain, and Kiewiet 1989). Montoya (1997) found that the most consistent predictors of Latina turnout were related to organizational participation including church attendance and school involvement.

Similarly, most survey-based studies have found little difference between Latinas and Latino men regarding rates of non-electoral participation.³ No major differences in likelihood to make a financial contribution to or volunteer in a campaign, attend a rally, contact elected officials, or work to solve a community-related issue have been found (Montoya 1997; 2000). However, Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia (2000) report that predictors of likelihood to participate in such activities do seem to display patterns of “gendered affluence,” i.e., Latinas who are more wealthy, report civic skills, and participate in groups generally do seem to participate more in non-electoral activities. No consistent predictors of the participation of Latino men in such activities have been found (Montoya 2000).

Electoral Representation. Five studies report findings regarding Latinas in elective office. Pachón and DeSipio (1992) found that Latinas comprised 30.1% of all Latina/o elected officials in 1992 when women as a whole were only 17.2% of all elected officials in the country (as reported in Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia 2000: 558). Takash’s study was specific to Latina elected officials in California (1993). Her survey of 50.6% of the 150 existing Chicana/Latina elected officials in the early 1990s revealed that “proportionally, more Latinas serve as elected officials than women in general” (341), and that 64% had never experienced prior elective or appointive office although “68% participated in campaign work, 61% claimed community activism...and 70% served as board members of local organizations” (344). She also found that 67% won in at-large elections for local office, 68.2% were the first Latinas to serve in their positions (344), and that while over 80% of Latina officials supported feminist goals, just over 50% actually labeled themselves as feminists. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, she found that these officials seemed more concerned with issues affecting Latinos generally than those that might be considered women-specific (353).

³ Below we will discuss a number of case study findings indicating a long tradition of women in leadership roles in community-based organizations.

Sierra and Sosa-Riddell (1994) report that in 1987 there were a total of 592 Chicana/Latina elected officials and in 1989 there were 744. They also note that Latinas were recently elected to important positions at national, state and local levels (1994: 309-311). Hardy-Fanta found that “[b]etween 1968 and 1994, Latinas [in Massachusetts] won 56% of their election campaigns while Latino men won only 15%” (as reported in Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia 2000: 559).

Table 1 presents the patterns of representation for all Latino and Latina elected officials for the period 1990-2002. These data demonstrate that there has been a 90% increase in representation in the U.S. Congress, 55% increase at the state level, 26% at the county level, 17% in municipal office and only 1% at the school board level.⁴ Table 2 presents these data for Latinas. Latinas had 27.4% of all elected positions held by Latinas and Latinos. Latinas had the highest representation within the Latino ethnic delegation in state senates at 40% of all Latina/o elected officials, followed by 33% in county offices, 32% in Congress and 32% in school boards, 26% in state lower houses, 24% at the municipal level, 23% in judicial/law enforcement, and 17% in special districts. What is most interesting, however, is the magnitude of the increase in Latina representation over the course of the 1990s. There was a 500% increase in the number of Latina members of Congress (1 to 6) and a 280% increase in state offices (16 to 61). Although more modest, Latina increases of 37% also occurred at the county level, 55% at the municipal level, and 41% in school boards. At each level of government, Latina increases far outpaced increases in Latina/o ethnic representation overall.

Fraga, Martinez-Ebers, Ramírez, and Lopez (2001) provide the first and still only state-specific analysis of gendered patterns of Latina/o representation in state legislatures. The states they examined were Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Their study makes two important findings. One, patterns of both gender and ethnic representation vary considerably by state (Fraga et al. 2001: 5-7). Not only is there variation in the overall magnitude of both gender and ethnic representation, there is also considerable variation in the gendered representation within the Latina/o delegation given overall patterns

⁴ These data are taken from annual NALEO reports. The figures were calculated simply by comparing 1990 data to that reported for 2002.

of gendered representation in state legislatures. An exclusive focus on national trends can mask considerable state specific differences. Two, “[trends] in Latina state legislative representation may be more tied to increasing gender representation than to increasing ethnic representation. Latina representation increases even when Latino representation remains constant” (Fraga et al. 2001: 7). This study suggests that state specific traditions and institutional design may greatly affect current patterns and future trends in the electoral success of Latinas and Latino men.

Political Mobilization and Community Organizing. The role of Latinas in mobilization and community organizing is one area where research has presented consistent findings. Latinas have always been involved in this type of political activity, have very often had significant leadership roles, and have also made explicit linkages between the workplace and formal arenas of politics. This literature does not explicitly compare Latinas to Latino men. Reported findings, however, demonstrate that it is one area where Latinas have had clear and consistent success. We subdivide our discussion of the role of Latinas in political mobilization and community organizing into three distinct components: historical presence, consistent leadership, work and political connectedness, and participation in explicitly political organizations.

Historical Presence. Latino communities have always had strong women leaders. One of the first national labor figures of Mexican extraction was Lucy Eldine Gonzales from Johnson County, Texas. Most historians list her as Mexican-Indian. In the 1870s she was a charter member of the Chicago Working Women’s Union, and in 1905 she was a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) (Asbaugh 1976: 267-268; Boyer and Morais 1974).

In Puerto Rico one of the most extraordinary women labor leaders of the first decade of the twentieth century was Luisa Capetillo (1880-1922), a socialist labor organizer and a writer who argued on behalf of equal rights for women and tried to raise the consciousness of workers (Acosta-Belen 1986). Other women leaders in the Puerto Rican labor movement included Concepcion Torres, who, in 1902, became the first woman to give a speech at a public rally; Juan Colon (1875-1971), known as the “Joan of Arc of Comerio,” a leader and an active organizer of the tobacco strippers; Genara Pagan and Emilia

Hernandez, who presided over the Women's Organizing Committee of the FLT; and Franca de Armino, who led the Popular Feminist Association, founded in 1920 (Azize 1987).

Maria Hernandez of Lytle, Texas, had been active in organizational efforts since 1924. Like most women activists of her generation, she participated in middle-class groups, and took the lead in pushing the movement to take on a more militant tone. In the 1930s she organized against segregation schools. Throughout the 1960s, she spoke at rallies, identifying with youth. In the 1970s, she helped form *La Raza Unida* party (*Jose Angel Gutierrez Papers* 1959-1990).

By the 1930s, in the canneries, garment factories, and pecan-shelling industry, Latinas were in the vanguard of the rank and file. The Formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) gave Latinas alternatives; Latina leaders emerged within the ranks of UCAPAWA and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). In 1933 the ILGWU began to recruit heavily among these Mexican women, they had everything to lose. Rosa Pesotta, an organizer for the ILGWU worked to organize the women. The reality of mass repatriations of the times intimidated the women; if they persisted in protesting, the immigration authorities and local police were alerted (Gamio 1971: 249-251). From 1933 to 1937, ILGWU and Pesotta organized two union strikes on behalf of Mexican American women. During the 1930s, Latinas struck more often than males against low wages and poor working conditions (Blackwelder 1984).

The ILGWU also organized in other Texas cities with limited success. In 1931, the pecan industry used agribusiness employment practices. The pecan industry of San Antonio employed between 5,000 and 12,000 Mexicans (Walker 1965a). Conditions forced workers to organize and strike. Immediately, Emma Tenayucca, in her early twenties, supported the strike. Tenayucca, popular among the workers, served as an organizer for the Workers Alliance. She dedicated herself to building the Workers Alliance, organizing the unemployed. Tenayucca led demonstrations attracting 10,000 participants (Walker 1965b: 30-41). After 1939, Emma Tenayucca dropped out of political work. The reasons can

only be speculated: nervous exhaustion, the contradictions within the party, the chauvinism of many of its white members, and, to a degree, her removal as head of the pecan shellers' struggle. The participation of Latinas as leaders prior to the 1960s was more common in more militant and/or local organizations.

Consistent Leadership. In California, Dolores Huerta became vice president of the UFW, while East Los Angeles Latina activists like Julia Luna Mount and her sister Celia Luna de Rodrigues, active since the 1930s, continued working for social change in the 1960s. Luna de Rodriguez, a key organizer in the Barrio Defense Committee, spoke out against police abuse. Luna Mount unsuccessfully ran for the Los Angeles School Board in 1967, and was one of the leading voices against the Vietnam War and a founding member of the Peace and Freedom party (Garcia 1997).

Virginia Musquiz, involved in the 1963 Crystal City takeover, ran unsuccessfully the following year for state representative. A year afterward, she campaigned for the Crystal City Council. In 1969, Musquiz helped organize the Crystal City walkouts and the eventual takeover of city government (Navarro 1998).

In the mid-1960s Linda Benitez became a member of the executive board of the Los Angeles Central Committee of the Democratic Party. In that same period, Geraldine Ledesma, chaired the Mexican American Ad Hoc Education Committee a forum in which Latinos throughout Los Angeles County discussed Mexican American education issues. Irene Tovar was a leading force and later president of the Latin American Civic Association in the San Fernando Valley in California. Cecilia Suarez assisted in the founding of the Association of Mexican American Educators in 1965 (Chavez 1997).

Also in Los Angeles, Francisca Flores, a veteran activist, along with Ramona Morin, of the women's auxiliary of the Forum, co-founded the California League of Mexican American Women. Flores published and edited *La Carta Editorial*, which reported on political activism. In the later 1960s, Flores published *Regeneracion*, an activist magazine, focusing on women's issues. Flores founded the Chicana Service Action Center and played a leading role in the establishment of the *Comision Femenil*. She was the intellectual leader of many of the first Latina conferences (Martin 1991).

In 1967, Vicky Castro, East Los Angeles student, was president of the Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA), the precursor of the Brown Berets; Castro a leader in the 1968 school walkouts later became a teacher and president of AMEA. Foremost among the activists was Alicia Escalante, who in 1967 founded the East Los Angeles Welfare Rights Organization, which later became the Chicano National Welfare Rights Organization. Escalante, a leader in militant activities during this decade, in 1969 participated in *Católicos por la Raza* and served four months in jail for her part in the demonstrations (Acuña 1984:145).

Work and Political “Connectedness.” In the 1980s, many Latinas conceptualized that their oppression was triple, comprised of class, race, and gender. Latinas state that theoretically these issues cannot be confronted separately but must be considered as a unit and that they are of equal importance (Segura 1986). In *Women’s Work and Chicano Families*, Patricia Zavella provided the first extensive critical examination of power dynamics (that included the intersection of race, class and gender) by Latinas on the factory floor and in their living rooms. She revealed the intricate negotiations of family, networks, and decisions made by Mexican cannery workers in the Santa Clara Valley (Zavella 1987).

More recent research has found that the dialectic of structural barriers and collective action resonates in Mary Pardo’s “Mothers of East Los Angeles.” Pardo (1990: 1-7) examines the ways women have taken power into their hands at the neighborhood level. Mobilizing for lights and recreational leaders at local parks, for example, may seem like a small victory, but such action reflects the community consciousness and organizing abilities of Mexican women. While not considered “work” within a traditional definition, women’s grassroots groups provide valuable civic labor. Challenging persistent stereotypes of docility and apathy, Pardo underscores Mexicana leadership, both manifested and latent, in community groups.

La Mujer Obrera, a grassroots Latina woman’s organization, located along the U.S.-Mexico border has gained attention because of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Navarro analyzes how this organization’s geographic location along the U.S.-Mexico border affects the structure and content of their sociopolitical identities (Navarro 2002). Navarro’s case study illustrates the ways in

which gender, class, race, language, and geographic location intersect to form individual and collective sociopolitical identities and how these constructions of identity shape political grassroots organizing and the potential for forging cross-border coalitions. Navarro's work highlights the diverse ways feminists are conceptualizing transnational feminist organizing and globalization.

Carol Hardy-Fanta (1993) found that the differences between Latina women and Latino men confirms the importance to women of the interpersonal process of politics, the emphasis on connectedness, and the importance of grassroots, personal politics—a politics tied to individual, family friendship networks, and community relationships. What makes Hardy-Fanta's study significant lies not only in the differences between how politics is conceived and the importance of personal relations in community organizing, but the fact that she examines gender differences in other smaller Latino groups: Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Central and South Americans. Prior to her study, three groups dominated Latino/a studies: Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. Now, scholars are writing about women's political activism in other smaller Latino/a groups like Guatemalans, Colombian, Dominican, Peruvian, Uruguayan and other Central and South American countries.

For example, Gabriele Kohpahl's (1998) *Voices of Guatemalan Women in Los Angeles* focuses on a range of conditions that perpetuate Guatemalan women's immigration to the United States such as their personal, marital and familial relationships; gender-role constraints; the socioeconomic and political situations in Guatemala. Kohpahl studied two organizations consisting of non-Mayan refugee women and the other Mayan refugee women. One organization gave small business loans to low-income women, and the other was a job cooperative. Many members had experiences in their home countries with organizing themselves, for example, as active union members. During their weekly membership meeting, jobs for the coming week were distributed.

Nora Hamilton and Norma Chinchilla (2001) share their twenty-year study of the Salvadorans and Guatemalans Latina's experience in Los Angeles. Apart from their individual efforts, many women immigrant workers, in collaboration have worked collectively to improve their situation. Unions such as the ILGW (now UNITE) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) reversed their longstanding

practice of ignoring immigrants and have hired Mexican, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran immigrants as organizers. Hamilton and Chinchilla examine the sophisticated set of strategies combining research on companies; legal action; the involvement of religious groups, community organizations, consumers, and others; and direct action tactics familiar to many of the immigrants themselves. The authors examine the role of women in Justice for Janitors campaign, Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), and LISTO.

Milagros Ricourt and Ruby Danta 's (2003) conducted an ethnographic study of Latino/a panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood. They examined two New York City neighborhoods--Queens and Corona—in which Latina women of diverse nationalities—Colombian, Cuban, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Puerto Rican, Uruguayan, and others creating, organizing, and leading a pan-Latin American communities. These women realize that there is strength in numbers and have mobilized a pan-Latin American organization to demand that their issues and concerns be addressed by elected officials.

Explicitly “Political.” The political fervor of the 1960s was not specific to Chicanas. The first people to leave Cuba were those most radically affected by the Cuban revolution. The organizing efforts of Cuban American women reflect a tradition of explicit “political” organizations. Historically, Estrade (1987) found that most Cubans perceived themselves as temporary exiles and planned to return to their homeland. Women, for the most part, were excluded from political organizations, since such activity was considered a male domain. As such, women established their own organizations to assist the independence movement, among them *Hijas del Pueblo* in New Orleans and the *Junta Patriótica de Dama de Nueva York* (176). Estrade goes on to document the role women played in the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC), which had the sole purpose of assisting the liberation of Cuba. Of the 200 *clubes femeninos* that constituted part of the PRC, 25 percent were women's clubs. (178-79). Moreover, the *clubes femeninos* did nothing more than organized dances, picnics, raffles, actions, banquets, rallies, and parades, through which they promoted the idea of independence. Once the Treaty of Paris was signed, most PRC clubs dissolved.

As each year decreased their chances of returning to Cuba, women began to work toward improving the quality of their lives in the United States. A handful of political organizations emerged that were exclusively for women, among them the *Union de Mujeres*, the *Curzada Femenina Cubana*, the *Movimiento Femenino Anticomunista de Cuba*, and the *Organization de Damas Anticomunistas Cubanas* (Perez 1986: 126-37). These organizations, however, offered no real political alternatives.

PRESCRIPTIVE POSSIBILITIES

In this section we characterize the literature on Latinas in Latino politics that has a clear prescriptive component. This literature goes beyond simply noting differences between Latinas and Latino men or the cataloguing of the roles that Latinas have had in a variety of political arenas. It is prescriptive in that it builds frameworks of analysis from which normative goals and strategies of influence, with a special emphasis on coalition-building, can be derived. The primary source of this analysis comes from a richer interpretation of the unique position, at the intersection of feminism, ethnicity, and class that Latinas occupy in the American polity.

Latina Feminism and Authentic Voice. Latina writings are writings of resistance, reaffirmation, and self-representation—a break from the cycle of perpetrator/victims. The articulation of the Latina reality through her own voice is immediately, by its very nature, a voice of resistance and the foundation for oppositional consciousness. The publication of Latina feminist newspapers, newsletters, and pamphlets in the 1960s provided a basis for the development of a feminist communication network for Latinas. As in other feminist movements, activity within the Latina community was facilitated by the rise of a feminist press. In the first issue of the Latina newspaper, published in 1971, *Hijas de Cuauhtemoc* (*Daughters of Cuauhtemoc*), called for the elimination of sexism in every aspect of the Latinas life. Similarly, *Regeneración* called for the end of the subservient status for Latinas. *El Grito* called on Latinas to challenge sexism, discrimination and developed survival strategies. Other publications that raised consciousness among Latinas included *Encuentro Femenil*, *La Comadre*, and *Hembra*.

Latina feminists have also organized numerous regional and national conferences to address their concerns. These meetings were designed to draw attention to the most pressing needs of Latinas. One of

these organizations was *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* (MALCS) founded in 1983 by women in higher education at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1988, Pesquera and Segura administered a questionnaire to women on the mailing list of MALCS. They sent the questionnaire to 178 women on the MALCS mailing list; 101 were completed and returned for a response rate of 57 percent. From the responses, Pesquera and Segura developed a Latina feminist typology: Latina cultural nationalist, Latina liberal feminist, and Latina insurgent feminist. According to Pesquera and Segura, Latina cultural nationalists write as a result of increased political awareness with a commitment to the cultural ideals of the Latino movement. For these feminists, their vision is anchored in the ideology of *la familia*. Latina liberal feminism focuses on the desire to improve the well being of the Latino community, with a specific emphasis on improving the status of women. Latina insurgent feminists call for a radical restructuring of society (1993: 95-116).

Similarly, Quiñonez (2002) suggests that there are two waves of Latina feminism. The “first wave” feminists incorporate issues of race, class, and gender by addressing the experiences of poor and working-class Mexican and Mexican American women (129-151). It was a bold move for Latinas to reject the role restriction placed upon them and even stronger step to suggest that the “triple oppression” (Hancock 1971: 168) of Latinas should be an issue within the movement. Most of the writing during late 1960s and early 1970s were replete with responses to Latinos and “loyalists” Latinas who claimed that the feminists were being divisive to the movement and products of “Anglo bourgeois feminism” (Nieto-Gomez 1973; 1974: 34). Latina feminists articulated a support for political unity (Vidal 1971: 31-32). This unity, *feministas* argued, called for a fuller participation of Latinos. Latina feminists understood that one of their first needs as activists was to become an integral part of the movement as leaders, primarily as conference speakers (Nieto 1974: 41). Quiñonez’s “second wave” writers (after the period of the Chicano movement) are said to possess other motives for writing that are not central to idea of the Chicana/o movement. There is no close connection to the Chicano movement.

More elaborate analyses and research and the emergence of poetry, fiction, and autobiographical testimony distinguish Latina writings in the second half of the 1970s. The starting point was the rejection

of traditional images and the debunking of social science myths about the Latina. The result was the redefinition of the Latina—by the Latina. Latina writers took on mainstream social science to dispel the belief that Latinas were inherently passive. In the mid-1970s, Maxine Baca Zinn wrote articles in which she stated that “the passive, submissive, Mexican woman is a creation of social scientists and journalists who have taken for granted the idea that women are dependent and unproductive creatures” (Baca Zinn 1975: 19). In her article “Latinas: Power and Control in the Domestic Sphere,” Baca Zinn reexamines Latinas within the family to show that “they have had great impact on Latino survival in an Anglo-dominated society” (19). It is the mother’s role within the family that helps preserve its stability and its source as a “refuge and protection from an oppressed society” (29).

In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) Anzaldua delineates the importance of spirituality as part of the mestiza consciousness. The manifestation of mestiza consciousness is a personal psychological process of rebirth. It is a consciousness, which transforms race and opposition into activism and agency. *Making Face/Making Soul: Haciendo Caras* (1990) also by Anzaldua is about understanding the complex and competing social, political and cultural forces that shape--sometimes quite brutally--the experiences of women of color in the U.S., and they are all about taking that understanding and mobilizing it toward creative and revisionary efforts for making social change.

The possibility of being active agents of change motivates Latina writers. As Gloria Anzaldua wrote in the foreword to the Second Edition of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women* (1984) “We are beginning to realize that we are not wholly at the mercy of circumstance, nor are our lives completely out of our hands” Anzaldua and Moraga see that Latinas are not alone, and thus she reaches out for the connections particularly with other women of color. The *Bridge Called My Back* represents an important coming out for lesbian women of color, an escape from the silence. Moreover, Anzaldua and Moraga explore how issues of race, gender, and community have changed over the past twenty years with the greater recognition of diversity and the multicultural nature of contemporary society. Many essays examine the increasing flexibility and permeability of racial, sexual, and gender

identities and its effect on feminism and the fight for social justice. Moraga and Anzaldua redefine queer, female, and Latino/a identities, and propose developing inclusionary movements for social justice.

Latina Intersectionality. Later other Latinas were more critical of the several simultaneous multiple spaces that their everyday multiple realities demanded. For Latinas the family was the initial focus of criticism. Latinas noted that household division of labor was unequal among both working class and professional household (Pesquera and Duran 1984) and that gender inequality in the household was connected to gender inequality in the work place (Zavella 1987). In her book on cannery workers in Santa Clara Valley, Zavella describes the patterns of occupational segregation of Mexicanas in seasonal cannery work, the formation of job-related networks, and their emergence from job segregation. She integrates the segregation in the workplace with a family ideology of inequality. Together, their experience in work and family reinforced the subordination of the Latina.

Segura has also studied participation of Latinas in the workplace and concluded that there is systematic concentration of Latinas in the “secondary labor market” and gender-specific jobs in the “primary labor market”(1988) Within job categories, Latina workers made less than their Latino male counterparts or white workers. The labor segmentation of Latinas creates a “triple oppression” that is reinforced by gender role socialization, racial discrimination by employers, the education process, and the institutional constraints of labor marketing structuring.

Another sociologist, Marta Lopez-Garza, examined Mexican and Central American women in Los Angeles and assessed the major variables affecting labor force participation. She has also initiated a study of the activities of Mexican and Central American women in Los Angeles’ informal sector. This is a continuation of work that she has done on reconceptualizing women’s economic activities through her work at the informal labor sector in Mexico (1986: 47-65).

In addition to work that assesses Latina labor force participation, Latina social scientists are studying the work experience of Mexicanas on the U.S.-Mexico border. Rosalia Solorzano Torres, for example, notes that most studies on the immigration experience leave out the experience of women and in fact make assumptions about the immigration experience that completely ignores their existence. In her

own study of “Female Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County,” she observes that nearly two-thirds of the women she studied worked in the maquila sector prior to their immigration to San Diego (1987). Vicki Ruiz (1987) writes in more detail about the Mexican domestic workers in El Paso. She concludes, “through frequently victimized, Mexicana domestics are not victims, but women who meet each day with integrity and endurance” (74).

Thus, not only is the Latina not just a “passive sufferer” or silent in her subordination, but she has been active in her resistance and survival. This is further highlighted in the second major writings of this period—that the Latina has a history rooted in struggle. The entire volume entitled *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present* (Mora and del Castillo 1980) was organized to document and appraise national oppression, class exploitation, and sexism. Mora and del Castillo portray Latinas as passive apathetic, yet this ignores their history as laborers and activists.

A reoccurring theme in Latina writings relates to the ways in which Latinas have been active agents in either their work, home environment, or both. Pardo has studied women in East Los Angeles and writes about their activism at the grass-roots level (1990). In her study of “Mothers of East Los Angeles” (MELA), she describes how Mexican-American women transformed “‘traditional’ networks and resources of family and culture into political assets to defend to quality of urban life” (1990: 1). Pardo points out that the ways in which women of MELA have transformed their gender-related organizing experiences into political influences is similar to the activism of women in Latin American. Increasingly, conditions in Los Angeles resembled third world communities where inadequate housing, polluted and hazardous environments, low wages, the presence of unwanted institutions and development projects, and disappearing neighborhoods are eroding the quality of urban life. These conditions, points out Pardo, are setting the stage for new conflicts in which “quality of life issues” will be contested. Women such as the “Mothers of East Los Angeles” will be working at the grass-roots level to take on issues that have now moved to center stage in the midst of urban restructuring.

Latina Legislative Leadership. No study has systematically examined the representational consequences of the increasing presence of Latinas at all levels of government. This is unfortunate given

the very significant increases in Latina representation that have occurred over the last decade, as noted earlier.

One study presents an exploratory analysis of the differences in representational roles, styles, and strategies of advocacy between Latina and Latino state legislators. Fraga, Martinez-Ebers, Ramírez, and Lopez (2001) examined differences between Latina and Latino state legislators in the 2001 legislative sessions in California and Texas. They made five important findings:

- Both Latina and Latino representatives were well aware of the multiple constituencies that they simultaneously represent. In the case of Latina representatives it was their district constituency, women, and Latinos. Latino representatives saw themselves as simultaneously representing their district constituents and Latinos more broadly speaking.
- There were not systematic differences in the propensity of Latina and Latino representatives to serve on influential committees or to serve as chairs of committees.
- The way in which both Latina and Latino representatives advocated on behalf of Latino interests was tempered by the political context of the state. Although gender differences here were minimal, there were noticeable differences by state. California legislators tended to speak much more in terms of a California agenda to advocate on behalf of Latino interests. Texas representatives tended to work more with outside advocacy groups.
- Latina representatives in Texas seemed to identify more strongly with their interests as women than did their fellow female representatives in California.

The study did not examine differences in success at getting legislation enacted.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In their review of the state of research on Chicanas and Latinas in political science, Sierra and Riddell state that the “challenge [to political science] is to uncover the multidimensional nature of gender and ethnic politics through research that involves a wide array of theoretical and methodological

approaches” (1994: 311-312). We offer four general areas where we think it best for such future work to focus.

First, every effort must be made to expand the available data on Latinas in American politics. The last major social scientific survey of Latino public opinion occurred in 1989 with the LNPS. Since that time millions more Latinos have come to populate the U.S., their diversity in country of origin continues to grow, and the geographical dispersion of Latinos throughout all regions of the Southwest expands at rates inconceivable in 1989. The 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS) estimated that 38.8M Latinos live in the U.S. This is 16.4M more Latinos than lived in the U.S. in 1990. The 2002 CPS also found that although the largest subgroup of Latinos are still persons of Mexican origin at 66.9%, the second largest grouping is comprised of persons with origins in Central and South America at 14.3%. Puerto Ricans now comprise only 8.6% of the Latino population, and people of Cuban origin only 3.7%. Interestingly, those who describe themselves as “Other Hispanic” are a full 6.5% of Latinos; Black-Hispanics are estimated to comprise 2%. Additionally, the ten states with the highest percentage of Latino growth from 1990-2000 were: North Carolina (394%), Arkansas (337%), Georgia (300%), Tennessee (278%), Nevada (217%), South Carolina (211%), Alabama (208%), Kentucky (173%), Minnesota (166%), and Nebraska (155%). Our previous understandings of how gender provides a useful analytical lens through which to understand public opinion, political participation, and especially leadership must be updated to reflect the current reality that is Latina and Latino life in the U.S.

Second, consistent with Montoya (1986) we also think it very important that future research not only focus on identifying systematic differences between Latinas and Latino men; it is just as important to determine if the predictors of patterns of belief and behavior are consistent across these two groups. Lack of differences in voting rates or partisanship, for example, may mask different underlying structures of interest, experience, and socialization that may, for example, be key to developing gender-informed strategies to influence Latinas and Latino men to vote, run for office, engage in civic participation, or understand their interests within the current party system.

Third, the rich work on the role of Latinas in organizational activity must be continued. The insight that scholars who have an exclusive focus on traditional political activities such as voting, and office holding are likely to undervalue, if not miss entirely, the consistent presence that Latinas have played in much civic activity is still relevant. This research should, moreover, also focus on building into our understanding not just the types of civic activity in which Latinas have engaged, but also greater understanding of the policy impact these actions have had. Any assessment of policy impact must face challenges of measurement, especially selection of measurement criteria.

Finally, we think that the increased Latina success in attaining formal elective office must be linked explicitly with insights provided by writings and scholarship on Latina feminism. Research on gendered institutions finds that women face significant challenges in building on their increasing presence to attempt to transform institutions to become more able to respond to the legitimate interests of groups, such as women, who have been historically underrepresented (Acker 1990; Steinberg 1992; Kathlene 1994; Kenney 1996; Rosenthal 2000). However, research also finds that many women elected officials do tend to bring distinct interest perspectives and leadership styles to legislative arenas (Kathlene 1989; Acker 1992; Thomas 1994; Tamerius 1995; Sparks 1997; Rosenthal 2000; Carroll 2001; Walsh 2002; Jeydel and Taylor 2003). It may be the case that Latina intersectionality will force Latina legislators to face even greater barriers to their success within the masculinized and racialized institutions that all legislatures tend to be (Crenshaw 1989; 1997). Research suggests that this is the case for African American women legislators (Darling 1997; Barrett 2001; Smooth 2001; Hawkesworth 2003). However, might the intersectionality of Latina representatives provide them with a unique, and richer, set of strategic options to pursue the building of coalitions of interest, legislator support, and ultimately understanding that uses their multidimensionality (Segura 1986; Anzaldua 1987) to credibly advocate on behalf of multiplicity of interests simultaneously?

As women, Latina representatives may have a greater propensity to develop participatory, deliberative processes of consensus building (Acker 1992; Hardy-Fanta 1993), and be equally committed to introduce and support legislation that serves both women and Latinos generally, as Barrett (2001) has

found for African American women state legislators. If this is the case, are Latina legislators pursuing distinct coalition-building strategies that have greater likelihood of legislative enactment because they can, legitimately, solicit the simultaneous support, for example, of the Latino Caucus and the Women's Caucus? No doubt institutional characteristics like structure, partisanship, and legislative leadership will set parameters to any such strategic effort (Swers 2002; Hawkesworth 2003).⁵ Might not the unique intersectionality of Latina legislators position them as more ideal leaders of policy development and advocacy that serve the long-term interests of their multiple constituencies? If they are successful, the benefits could be substantial not just to the women and Latinos, but to our entire system of governance by enhancing what Mansbridge describes as the "social meaning of 'ability to rule' and...the attachment to the polity of the group" (1999: 628). Researchers should examine this prescriptive potential of Latina intersectionality with all the analytical resources available in the social sciences.

Without a doubt the study of Latino politics will be richer with a full focus on the role of Latinas within it. Latino politics has never operated with significant Latina participation and leadership. Recent scholarship suggests that this reality will become ever more evident given current trends in voting, civic participation, and especially office-holding.

⁵ For an excellent discussion of the prescriptive potential provided by a full understanding of Latina intersectionality see Hurtado 1996.

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TABLE 1. HISPANIC ELECTED OFFICIALS BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, 1990-2002

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
U.S. Representative	10	11	11	17	17		17	18	18	18	19	19	19
State	134	140	139	163	184		163	183	181	194	198	197	208
County	351	378	386	406	401		357	376	392	375	398	403	444
Municipal	1290	1314	1362	1474	1647		1295	1223	1351	1346	1464	1443	1516
Judicial/Law Enforcement	583	596	628	633	651		546	517	530	494	465	454	532
School Board	1458	1489	1554	1582	1578		1278	1251	1299	1289	1392	1412	1603
Special District	178	175	160	145	147		125	128	134	128	120	125	142
Total	4004	4103	4240	4420	4625		3781	3696	3905	3844	4056	4053	4464

Source: National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)

TABLE 2. FEMALE HISPANIC ELECTED OFFICIALS BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, 1990-2002

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
U.S. Representative	1	1	1	3	3		3	4	4	5	5	6	6
State	16	17	16	32	38		38	48	50	53	54	58	61
County	106	118	123	127	125		121	134	135	139	139	131	146
Municipal	223	256	277	319	371		277	267	304	312	344	335	361
Judicial/Law Enforcement	59	68	84	90	95		87	88	90	96	93	104	120
School Board	358	405	454	459	454		117	90	125	129	440	445	506
Special District	19	21	18	19	18		14	17	19	23	20	25	24
Total	792	886	973	1049	1104		657	648	727	757	1095	1204	1224

Source: National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)