

MEXICAN MIGRANTS AND THEIR RELATION TO US LATINO CIVIL SOCIETY

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In 2000, there were more than 19.8 million persons of Mexican origin residing in the United States, out of something over 35 million Latinos.¹ These numbers have been increasing rapidly over the last thirty years, largely due to migration. Much of the growth in the Latino population over the last thirty years has come about as the result of immigration from Latin America. First generation Latin American immigrants make up 41 percent of the total Latino population, and slightly more than 60 percent of all adults. First and second-generation immigrant Latinos—immigrants and their children-- make up more than two thirds of all Latinos.² This foreign-born Latino population is growing by almost 5 percent each year.

The foreign-born population from Mexico alone increased from .8 million in 1970, to 2.2 million in 1980, to 4.3 million in 1990, and to 7 million in 1997. Immigrants from Mexico accounted for 28 percent of the total foreign-born population; their numbers are about 6 times as large as the next largest immigrant population. First generation Mexican migrants make up about 38 percent of those of Mexican-origin in the U.S. and together with Mexican-Americans born in the US of Mexican-born parents, make up 68.4 percent of the Mexican-origin population in the U.S.³ On the other hand, about 80 percent of Mexican-Americans 18 and younger are born in the US, and a third of Mexican-origin adults belong to third generation or beyond—that is, both they and their parents were born in the United States.

On the one hand, then, much of the Mexican-origin population in the United States is relatively recent—many of them are first and second generation immigrants. On the

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Hispanic Population in the United States: Population Characteristics*, Current Population Reports P20-527, February 2000

² About half of all foreign-born Latinos in 1990 arrived since 1980. The median length of residence for foreign-born Latinos in the U.S. in 1998 was 12 years. See Census, “We the American People: Hispanics in the United States”. p. 6.

³ Data from the combined 1996/2000 Current Population Surveys. Note that 9.5 percent of the Mexican-origin population in the US has one foreign-born and one native-born Mexican-origin parent.

other hand, these migrants enter a context in which a substantial number of Mexican-American families have spent at least two generations in the United States, and where, particularly in the southwestern states of the US, the Mexican-American presence has left its imprint on ethnic organization, identity, history and politics. This paper explores the implications of these differences in immigration experiences for the organization of civil society among the Mexican origin population in the United States. First and, to a much lesser extent, second generation Mexican migrants engage primarily in *transnational* forms of organization, while much of the second generation and beyond engage primarily in *ethnic* forms of organization. These two modes of organization exist in largely discrete universes—they rarely overlap. They do imperfectly overlap around one set of issues, around immigrants’ rights. But even here, even while they address similar concerns, these issues are addressed in quite different ways and means. In short, differences in immigration experiences lead to differences in forms of organization, differences that are not easily bridged.

Transnational Organization

About 60 percent of all Mexican-origin adults in the US are first-generation migrants—residing in the US, but born in Mexico. A majority of these migrants are engaged in some form of participation in transnational networks—social connections that span borders, enabling individuals to sustain multiple social memberships, identities and loyalties. For instance, in one survey of first-generation immigrants, 77 percent of Spanish-speaking immigrants called family and friends in Latin America at least weekly.⁴ Immigrants remit money, travel, maintain their interest in sending country affairs, keep up with media from their country of origin, and may take part in organizational life, politics and social events linking the sending country with expatriates in the receiving country.

⁴ *Ibid.*

A significant number of immigrants remit a portion of their income, in some cases a substantial portion, back to their home country.⁵ Because of the increasing numbers of migrants now residing in the United States, remittances today are about eighteen times what they were in 1980. Flows just to Central America and Mexico increased from nearly \$1 billion dollars in 1980, to \$3.7 billion in 1990, to \$11 billion in 1999, to over \$14.2 billion in 2003 and estimates of \$18 billion in 2005.⁶ Just over half this amount goes to Mexico alone.⁷

Given the size of the flows, remittances might be expected to have a significant impact on sending countries' economic development. This explains why sending country governments are increasingly involved in actively maintaining ties to their expatriate communities. Several Latin American governments, for example, have established programs to organize their immigrant communities in the United States. The most fully developed are those of the Mexican government, which are designed to encourage Mexican immigrants to form associations, and to prompt the membership of these organizations to remit funds and invest in their local communities of origin.

The Paisano program⁸ and the Program for Mexican Communities Living Abroad (PCMLA) are two examples of these Mexican programs. The Paisano program seeks to improve the treatment that the returning migrants receive at the hands of Mexican

⁵ In 1989, for example, Colombian immigrants in the United States were remitting an astonishing 17% of their incomes back to Colombia. Recent figures for other Latin American immigrant groups are equally impressive: Dominicans remitted 11%, Salvadorans 10%, Mexicans 8% and Guatemalans 6% of their annual incomes (see de la Garza et al. 1997. "Binational Impact of Latino Remittances," Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Brief, March:4 Table 4).

⁶ Manuel Orozco. 2000. "Remittances and Markets: New Players and Practices" Inter-American Dialogue and the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, May; Manuel Orozco, 2000. "From Family Ties to Transnational Linkages: The Impact of Family Remittances to Latin America" in *Pensamiento Propio* July-December, p.66; and Deborah Waller Meyers. 1998. "Migrant Remittances to Latin America: Reviewing the Literature," Working Paper, Inter-American Dialogue and Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. The Mexican state of Zacatecas, which has more than a third of its population abroad, receives more money in remittances than it does from the federal government of Mexico. Chris Kraul, "Tapping Generosity of Emigrants" *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 2000.

⁷ Because these estimates are based on the World Bank's figures collected from central bank data they almost certainly underestimate the total amount of remittances to these countries.

⁸ See the Paisano program webpage at: <http://www.paisano.gob.mx/> (October 28, 2005). See also: Patrick McDonnell, "Mexico Vows to Curb Abuses Against Returning Citizens," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1995, p. B3.

officials by reducing corruption and abuse.⁹ The PCMLA, established in 1990, provides a wide range of services to Mexican immigrants in the United States through the Mexican consular network and first-generation immigrant organizations sponsored by the consulates, as well as channeling remittances toward local development projects.¹⁰ Hometown associations have served as platforms for matching fund schemes that pool remittance monies with government funds and expertise, and occasionally with private sector contributions, for locally focused economic development projects.¹¹

Hometown Associations (HTAs)--social clubs and community organizations formed around common ties to hometowns, states or regions—are the primary organizational form for migrant transnationalism. While many migrants engage in transnational practices directly with family and kin in Mexico, HTAs are the collective expression of the desire to maintain ties with sending locales in Mexico. One way these ties have been expressed is that HTAs have been involved in raising money among migrants in the U.S. for development projects in their hometowns. These are often either basic infrastructure and communication (roads, potable water, electrification and telephones); public service infrastructure and capitalization, or projects that bolster education health and social security (schools, computers, clinics, old-age homes); recreation and status related (sports fields, rodeo rings); or any other area of community or urbanization (plazas, public benches, historic preservation).¹²

⁹ Manuel Orozco, “Remittances and Markets: New Players and Practices,” working paper, Inter-American Dialogue and Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, Washington, DC. 2000; p.12.

¹⁰ Carlos González and Maria Esther Schumacher, “La Cooperación Internacional de México con los Mexicano-Americanos en los Estados Unidos: El Caso de PCME” in Olga Pellicaer and Rafael Fernández de Castro eds. *México y Estados Unidos: Las rutas de la cooperación* (México D.F.: Instituto Matias Romero 1998).

¹¹ Orozco, “Remittances,” *op cit.* p. 15. Interestingly, many outreach programs in Mexico are being conducted by various states rather than federal, governments. The governments of Zacatecas, Jalisco and Oaxaca have all established matching programs for remittances originating from Zacatecan clubs in the United States. See R. Marquez “Seminario Sobre Migración Internacional y desarrollo en Norte y Centro América” Programa Dos Por Uno, Gobierno de Zacatecas, Mexico, May 1998; cited in Orozco, “Remittances” *op cit.* p. 18. Indeed, federal programs were implemented partly to re-establish central control over autonomous state level initiatives, like the Program for Zacateños Abroad.

¹² Luin Goldring, “Re-Thinking Remittances: Social and Political Dimensions of Individual and Collective Remittances.” Toronto: Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, February, 2003. p. 11

HTAs and their investment projects have been fostered by the Mexican federal and state governments. The Mexican government's Program for Mexican Communities Living Abroad (PMCLA), for example, encourages Mexican clubs and hometown organizations to raise funds on behalf of their hometown. The state government of Zacatecas in Mexico began a two-to-one matching program for investment funds collected through HTAs, and the Mexican government adopted and extended this program with a three-to-one match beginning in 1993. From 1993 to 2001 235 Mexican HTAs had participated in the program (out of the 500 or more in the United States), raising \$5 million (\$1.8 million from the HTAs themselves).¹³

Despite the success of the Mexican matching programs for HTA investment, and the funds they have leveraged, these are really infinitesimal compared with the much larger stream of direct individual-to-individual remittances.¹⁴ The purpose of these programs is more broadly symbolic, and thus political—to demonstrate the government's commitment to Mexican migrants abroad, and simultaneously, to back migrants' claims to continued membership in the sending communities. In addition, the HTAs, or their leadership, have found these donations give them leverage with both national and state governments in Mexico.

As time has passed, however, these transnational organizations have become increasingly involved in immigrant issues as they play out in the US context, from day labor to relations with police to broader issues of immigration amnesties and access to public college education for the children of undocumented migrants. Transnationalism for these organizations has meant in a sense having to pay increasing attention to the context of the receiving country as well as to that of their sending communities. As hometown associations have formed umbrella groups or confederations, like the Council of

¹³ Most HTAs are simply undercapitalized; on average they raise less than \$20,000 a year in charitable contributions.

¹⁴ The size of Hispanic intervention in Latin America should also be kept in perspective; Latinos in the U.S. may disproportionately invest and maintain ties to Latin America, but their primary commitments will always be in the United States itself. Keep in mind, for instance, that total remittances to Latin America make up less than 5 percent of the estimated buying power of Latinos in the U.S.

Presidents of Mexican Federations of Los Angeles, or the umbrella organization of *asociaciones de Zacatecas* in Chicago to increase their leverage *vis a vis* actors in Mexico, these new organizational structures have also brought them to the attention of political actors in the United States, who increasingly recognize home town associations' mobilizational potential—not just in the Mexican context, but in the United States as well.

Ethnic Organizations

If the framework for transnational organization revolves around Mexican migrants as retaining ties to their country of origin, ethnic organizations focus on US residents of Mexican origin as citizens or potential citizens. The 'ethnic' narrative is one of gradual incorporation into US society, albeit by also retaining some characteristics and attachments that mark Mexicans as 'hyphenated' Americans.

The ethnic narrative has been facilitated by the increasing openness of the political system to Mexican-American electoral mobilization, and the representation of Mexican-Americans in the formal processes of political representation. The growing numbers of Latinos in the U.S. have led, thanks to the 1965 Voting Rights Act, in a dramatic increase in the numbers of Latino elected officials, appointees and civil service employees at all levels of government in the U.S. In 2005 there are 2 Latino Senators (one Mexican-American), 27 Latinos elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (21 of them of Mexican origin), 27 states have Latinos holding statewide office, and there are more than 6,000 Hispanics elected to office at the local level. Together with the staff of non-profit advocacy groups like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC),¹⁵ the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO),¹⁶ the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF),¹⁷ the National Council of La Raza (NCLR)¹⁸ and the Southwest Voter Registration Project (SWVREP),¹⁹ these officials and

¹⁵ <http://www.lulac.org/>

¹⁶ <http://www.naleo.org/>

¹⁷ <http://www.maldef.org/>

¹⁸ <http://www.nclr.org/>

civil service employees form the backbone of Mexican-American ethnic organization, a group of individuals who can mobilize and lobby effectively within the American political system.

The potential muscle behind this mobilization and lobbying comes from the votes of Latino US citizens. Latino ethnic organizations have argued that the numbers of Latinos in the US will lead inexorably to increasing numbers of voters, and hence to more clout in the US electoral process. It doesn't hurt that Latinos are concentrated in California, Texas, New York and Florida, the states with the largest populations and hence the largest blocks of Electoral College votes. The top ten states where Latinos reside in the US together have 214 Electoral College votes: 80 percent of the total needed to win the presidency.

Latino Vote Turnout, Presidential Year Elections

1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
2,453,000	3,092,000	3,710,000	4,238,000	4,928,000	5,934,000

Source: US Census Current November Population Reports, 1980-2000

In 1996 Latinos were still only 5 percent of the national electorate, but only four years later, in the 2000 elections, they accounted for more than 7 percent of the electorate, a 40 percent increase. In California, the state with the largest number of electoral votes, 16 percent of registered voters—about 2.35 million people—were Latinos in 2000, compared with only 10 percent in 1990.

These increases are largely attributable to the naturalization of Latino immigrants, the registration of new citizens and the mobilization of the previously registered. From 1991 to 2000, 5.6 million immigrants naturalized. Between 1994 and 1996 naturalization rates increased three-fold across all immigrant groups in the United States, to 1.05 million.²⁰

¹⁹ <http://www.svrep.org/>

²⁰ For a further discussion of the impact of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act on the naturalization and voting rates of immigrants in the United States see Michael Jones-Correa, "Seeking Shelter: Immigrants and the Divergence of Social Rights and Citizenship in the U.S." in Randall Hansen and Patrick Weil eds.

In California a record 879,000 immigrant adults were naturalized from 1994 to 1997, and another 623,000 had applications pending at the end of 1997. In 1997 the number of new citizens dropped off to 598,225 and to 463,060 in 1998. But in 1999 the number again nearly doubled, to 872,427. By the fiscal year ending in September 2000, the number had risen even further, to 898,315.²¹ Almost half of these new citizens were born in Latin America. Forty-five percent of likely Latino voters in the 2000 election were foreign-born, compared with 20 percent in 1990.²²

However, there are clear limitations to this ethnic electoral mobilization strategy, chief among these the large numbers of Latino non-citizens. The combined 1996 and 2000 November Current Population Surveys indicate that 76 percent all first-generation Mexican migrants eighteen and older are not U.S. citizens. This reflects, in part, the recency of the migrant streams: 67 percent of all first generation Mexican migrants arrived during the 1980s and after—within the last twenty years—and 15 percent within the 1990s (not long enough at the time of these surveys to have qualified for citizenship).²³ It's also not entirely clear how many of these arrived legally, so as to even be eligible for citizenship, but if we accept the Urban Institute's reasonable estimates of 10.3 million undocumented migrants in the US, with 5.9 million of these being of Mexican origin, then about *half* of all first-generation Mexican-origin adults are undocumented aliens in the US.

In sum, even as the absolute numbers of Latinos turning out to vote have increased, Latino registration and turnout as a percentage of the Latino voting aged population has held steady or actually declined. In other words, increases in registration and turnout

Reinventing Citizenship: Dual Citizenship, Social Rights and Federal Citizenship in Europe and the United States (New York: Berghan Press, 2001) *forthcoming*).

²¹ Walter Robinson, "Immigrant Voter Surge Seen Aiding Gore," *Boston Globe*, November 4, 2000. One should keep in mind that even though more immigrants were voting, while the voter turnout rate among citizens in the population as a whole is about 60 percent, only 45.4 percent of naturalized citizens of Mexican origin indicated they voted in that November's U.S. presidential elections. These naturalized Mexican citizens vote at lower rates than second-generation Mexican-Americans: 48.5 percent of natural-born citizens voted in the 1996 and 2000 elections, versus the 45.4 percent of the naturalized.

²² Sergio Bustos, "Poll Finds a Shifting Hispanic Electorate" *USA Today*, June 30, 2000.

²³ Census Current Population Survey November 1996 and 2000. The sample size for Mexican first and second-generation migrants across the two CPS surveys is 6639 individuals.

have simply not kept up with the increasing numbers of non-citizens. Furthermore, ethnic mobilization in the context of the US electoral system has focused on broad issues like access to education, employment, affordable housing and the like, and has tended to skirt issues of direct concern to those, like many Mexican migrants, who are at the margins of formal politics in the US, such as issues of immigration reform, regularization of legal status, and the like.

Areas of Collaboration

Latino ethnic organizations have tended to focus on the mobilization of migrants as citizens and as voters, and to pay less attention to those Mexican and other Latino migrants who were not citizens or had no hope of becoming citizens. Of the national organizations mentioned above—NCLR, LULAC, NALEO, MALDEF, SWVREP—all follow the ethnic strategy. NALEO began paying attention to Latino immigrants in the 1980s, but it did so by fostering naturalization programs focused on legal residents (it claims to have guided 90,000 immigrants through the naturalization process); likewise the SWVREP limits its mission to US citizens, as it conducts regular registration drives of unregistered Latinos.

This said, over time each of these organizations has become more active in the areas of immigration and immigrant policy. Employer sanctions to punish employers of illegal immigrants were first introduced into the House Judiciary committee in 1972. From 1977 to 1986 the major Mexican-American civil rights organizations, together with elected officials and activists, were able to join in opposing attempts to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill. They played a significant role in shaping the debate, blocking more restrictionist reforms, in particular employer sanctions making it illegal to hire undocumented workers, which they felt would have a detrimental effect on Hispanic employment opportunities as a whole. In short, in the 1984 battle over immigration, Latino congressional representatives were widely perceived as being

instrumental in blocking the Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Reform Act in the U.S. House of Representatives.²⁴

This victory, however, was short-lived. In 1986, when the next immigration bill came to a vote, the Latino coalition was split. They had gained some significant concessions: employer sanctions stayed in the bill, but were tempered by two controversial legalization programs. The first applied to illegal residents who had been in the U.S. since January 1, 1982, and the second was a special program for agricultural workers. In addition there were new and expanded safeguards designed to prevent employment discrimination on the basis of citizenship status.²⁵ The vote in the House of Representatives for the Simpson-Rondino bill was 230-166. Members of the Hispanic Caucus were divided in their votes: in the final vote for the bill, five Latino members voted in favor, six against. The bill was signed into law by President Reagan as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.²⁶

Eight years later, in 1994, Latino policy elites were galvanized by the passage of Proposition 187 in California, which proposed barring undocumented aliens from receiving any kind of state benefits, including education and health services. Latino elites interpreted the Proposition as a direct attack on all Latinos, whether citizens or non-citizens, leading to an unprecedented electoral mobilization, with the numbers of Latinos (many of them of Mexican-origin) naturalizing as US citizens, registering to vote and voting increasing dramatically in California. Three events in 1996 cemented Latino elite opinion on immigration. The first was a run for the presidency by then-Governor Wilson of California, who based his campaign largely on an anti-immigration platform, and by conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan, who echoed these restrictionist themes. The second was Congress's passage of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which sought to

²⁴David Ayón and Ricardo Anzaldúa Montoya. 1988. "Latinos and U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Latin America" in Abraham Lowenthal ed. *Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record* v.5 1985-1986. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers:130.

²⁵Frank Bean, George Vernez, and Charles Keely. 1989. *Opening and Closing the Doors: Evaluating Immigration Reform and Control* (Lanham, Maryland: The Rand Corporation and the Urban Institute: 25-27.

²⁶Christine Marie Sierra. 1987. "Latinos and the New Immigration": Responses From the Mexican American Community" in Ignacio M. Garcia ed. *Renato Rosaldo Lecture Series Monograph* v. 3 1985-1986. Tucson: Mexican American Studies and Research Center, University of Arizona: 53.

keep undocumented immigrants from accessing federal public benefit programs. More drastically, it also barred permanent legal residents from participating in Social Security and food stamp programs, and banned all new resident non-citizens from federal means-tested programs like AFDC (Aid for Dependent Children).²⁷ The third was the passage that same year of a new Immigration Act by the Republican-controlled Congress that heightened the penalties for illegal stay in the United States, and increased the provisions under which permanent residents as well as undocumented aliens could be deported. By the late 1990s Latino policy elites had become active and regular participants in the ongoing immigration debates in Congress.

The 1990s were a key period for immigrant groups as well. Anti-immigrant initiatives spurred the formation of immigrant umbrella groups and alliances. However, these were not formed with the national Latino advocacy groups, but rather with labor unions and the Catholic Church, to make a joint case for reduced immigration restrictions. Central American immigrants, for instance, with the backing of the Catholic Church, U.S. Latino organizations, and sending-country governments began lobbying for the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Central Americans who had been residing in the U.S. since the 1980s. The prospect of California's Proposition 187, together with Propositions 209 (scrapping state Affirmative Action programs in California) and 227 (ending the state's bilingual education programs in public schools) stimulated new coalitions across ethnic and racial lines, but again, largely within the labor movement, particularly working with the Service Employees International Union and the newly merged UNITE HERE (representing the hotel, restaurant, and garment industries) in Los Angeles.

National advocacy groups supported, and continue to support comprehensive immigration reform, and here they are largely on the same page as local immigrant advocacy groups and hometown associations agitating for immigrant issues. In 2000, for

²⁷ Although there were numerous exceptions including emergency Medicaid, disaster relief, child nutrition, and some training and education, the legislation also allowed states to deny state and local benefits to some categories of immigrants if they so wished (Peter Schuck, "The Re-Evaluation of American Citizenship" *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal* v. 12 n. 1 1997, p. 27).

instance, a coalition was formed joining immigrant organizations and Latino advocacy groups, together with unions, churches and other civil rights advocates. This coalition supported an immigrant amnesty proposal introduced by Latino representatives in Congress known as the “Latino Immigration Fairness Act” (S.2912). The Act would have allowed tens of thousands of refugees who had escaped from political unrest in El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras to apply for permanent residence under a process now open to Nicaraguans and Cubans. It also proposed that illegal immigrants who had lived in the United States prior to 1986 be given the chance to apply for permanent residence (the current cutoff date is 1972) and that certain undocumented aliens be allowed stay in the U.S. with their families while applying for permanent residence.²⁸ In November of 2000, immigrant groups in New York, Houston, Los Angeles, Dallas, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, Washington D.C. and other cities with large Latino immigrant populations held rallies in favor of the measure.²⁹ However, the proposal was largely rejected by the 106th Congress, which passed a much reduced immigration reform package, in particular setting aside any question of amnesty.

The amnesty issue took a different twist in President Bush’s proposal in January 2004 to create a temporary worker visa program to resolve the legal status of undocumented workers. Under pressure from the right wing of his party, the president vowed that his proposal was not for an amnesty, but rather for a tightly regulated work program that would ensure that migrants returned, after a period of three to six years, back to Mexico. Critics of his proposal, including most of the national Latino advocacy groups as well as many immigrant rights groups, have pressed for some consideration of an ‘earned citizenship’ pathway for migrants who have resided for some time already in the United States.³⁰ These issues are as yet unresolved, though President Bush has indicated that immigration reform will move to the top of his legislative agenda in late 2005 or early 2006.

²⁸ Larry Lipman, “Striking Partisan Note, Democrats Push Immigration Bill,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 27, 2000; Nick Anderson, “Immigration Issues Top Agenda as Term Wanes,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2000.

²⁹ “Rallies Aim to Spur Republican Support for Immigrant Bill,” *EFE*, October 24, 2000.

³⁰ As outlined in the McCain/Kennedy proposal for example.

National Latino advocacy groups continue to press forward on other immigration issues as well. NCLR, for example, continues to lobby Congress on a number of immigrant-related topics.³¹ NCLR opposed, for instance, the passage of the REAL ID Act, signed into law in May 2005. The act specified a set of federal requirements for all state-issued driver's licenses which will not only visually differentiate citizen, permanent resident, and temporary licenses, but will also likely have the effect of making it significantly more difficult for undocumented immigrants to get a license at all. NCLR backs the Dream Act legislation now before Congress, which proposes to address the plight of the more than 65,000 undocumented kids who graduate every year from high school. Brought to the US by their parents when very young, these kids have grown up in the US, attended US schools and are, for all intents and purposes, culturally American. Because of their education status, however, they are barred from receiving in-state tuition, federal grants and loans, many private scholarships and the ability to work legally to help pay for college. The Dream Act legislation would allow these undocumented residents to have access to state-subsidized tuition for public universities, and to readjust their legal status. Finally, the NCLR has opposed attempts to involve state and local police in the enforcement of federal immigration laws, in particular opposing the "Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act" (CLEAR Act), which was originally introduced to Congress in 2003 and reintroduced in 2005. In general, the act would give state and local police officers the authority to enforce all federal immigration laws; criminalize all immigration law violations; and place the names of any individuals believed to be in violation of immigration laws in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.

In each of these cases the NCLR has lobbied Congress in a manner that is clearly congruent with immigrant interests. However, these national Latino organizations see immigration primarily as a domestic issue, fitting in with their traditional emphasis on civil rights. Immigrant hometown associations, with their transnational orientation, find immigration issues an easier fit within a human rights framework that melds more easily with the rights emphasis of religious immigrant advocacy groups, human rights groups,

³¹ <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/1073/>

and labor organizers. In addition, these national organizations focus their efforts almost entirely on Congress, rather than working at the state or local level through direct advocacy. Thus even while both ‘ethnic’ and ‘transnational’ organizations focus on immigration policy as a central issue, and may share similar aims, they do so from different starting points, using different tactics. These differences have made cooperation between these national ‘ethnic’ organizations and ‘transnational’ immigrant groups the exception rather than the rule.

Immigrant Organizing in Virginia and Maryland Metropolitan Area

If there were an obvious place to expect cooperation between the more US-focused national ethnic organizations and more country of origin focused hometown associations and immigrant rights groups, this would be in the metropolitan Washington DC, which both ranks in the top ten immigrant receiving areas of the United States,³² and headquarters many of the national Latino advocacy organizations such as NALEO, NCLR, LULAC, etc. Instead the Washington DC metro area provides an illuminating example of the limitations of cooperation between the national ethnic organizations and more local immigrant-oriented organizations.

In Montgomery County, for example, has about a million residents, about a third of them racial or ethnic minorities, and about fifth of its residents being foreign-born. Casa de Maryland is the most active immigrant rights organizations in the county and the largest Latino community based organization in Maryland. Casa provides basic services including English classes, information concerning citizenship, health care, and job training, as well as mediation services between workers and employers. Casa now runs two day laborer sites for the county. Its legal program provides employment rights services through education and representation of day laborers, domestic workers, and other low-wage workers who have experienced non-payment of wages, unlawful wage

³² The Washington D.C. metro area is one of these thirty-five ‘melting pot’ metropolitan areas, and indeed, the 7th largest recipient of immigrants among metropolitan areas in the US—a fact that comes as a surprise even to many of those living there. In 2000, the Census counted 832,016 foreign born residents in the Washington DC area—about 17 percent of the area’s population.

deductions, health and safety violations, and discrimination. In addition, Casa de Maryland also lobbies the Maryland state legislature on immigrant-related legislation, such as state versions of the Dream Act, to allow young adults who entered the US as undocumented aliens when very young to have access to the state university system at in-state tuition rates, or opposing restrictions on drivers' licenses for undocumented migrants, arguing that restricting licenses will only mean more unlicensed and uninsured motorists will be driving on the road.

In each of the issues areas it covers, Casa de Maryland builds coalitions with other immigrant rights groups in the DC area, busing immigrants to committee hearings in Annapolis for instance, or organizing rallies. Casa has fairly robust ties with the transnational hometown associations in the DC area (many of these are Central American rather than Mexican, given the composition of the area's migrant population), but has little contact with the national organizations. Although the national organizations are headquartered nearby, they have tended to avoid direct involvement in immigrant mobilization or immigrant rights issues.³³

Organizational Layering

What these brief reviews of 'ethnic' and 'transnational' organizational efforts suggest is ethnic and transnational forms of organization might share issues in common, but on the whole their efforts don't really overlap. Instead they represent different *layers* of organizational effort. Ethnic organization focuses on participation in electoral politics and legislative policy or through the behavior and attitudes associated with this participation. Transnational organization is expressed through hometown associations, immigrant rights groups, and the parties and consulates of sending countries. The network of *ethnic* organization and politics hardly touches at all on the extensive networks of hometown and regional associations that exist in first generation communities; from the perspective of ethnic organizations these transnational

³³ Though NCLR has had staff working on the unionization of undocumented labor in the DC service sector, primarily janitorial staff.

associations are largely invisible or irrelevant. Likewise, for many immigrants engaged in migrant hometown associations, churches, social clubs, sports organizations and the like, the structures of American ethnic organization and politics are often simply to be avoided. One could imagine these organizational layers as alternate social universes.

So are these organizational approaches mutually exclusive? It might be that ethnic and transnational strategies are not necessarily distinct, and that there are multiple ways migrants and their advocates can combine these two strategies.³⁴ For instance, Kasinitz et al. find that the children of West Indian immigrants who are most engaged in regular transnational practices are also actively participating in New York City politics.³⁵ Rumbaut finds that home ownership, which in other contexts signals a commitment to settling permanently in the U.S. is also correlated, among second generation immigrants, with sending back remittances.³⁶ This complementarity works the other way too: the option of dual nationality facilitates acquisition of American citizenship, so that transnationalism in this case leads to political incorporation.³⁷ These examples, then, point to ethnic and transnational mobilization as complementary processes, each having their own social networks, so that participation in one facilitates participation in the other. Neither ethnic nor transnational networks contain every immigrant, but because most immigrants are linked to at least some of the individuals in each network, these social networks are able to reach almost the full extent of the migrant population. Most

³⁴ George Fouron and Nina Glick-Schiller. 2003. "The Generation of Identity: Redefining the Second Generation within a Transnational Social Field" in Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters ed. 2003. *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*. New York: Russell Sage. Nina Glick Schiller and Peggy Levitt. 2003. "Transnational Perspectives on Migration: Conceptualizing Simultaneity." Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University. Working Paper 03-09.

³⁵ Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf and Mary Waters. 2003. "Transnationalism and the Children of Immigrants in Contemporary New York in Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters eds. *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp. 96-122.

³⁶ Rumbaut, Ruben. 2003. "Severed or Sustained Attachments? Language, Identity and Imagined Communities in the Post-Immigrant Generation" in Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters eds. *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp. 43-95.

³⁷ Michael Jones-Correa. 2001. "Institutional and Contextual Factors in Immigrant Citizenship and Voting" *Citizenship Studies* 5:1 (February): 41- 56. Michael Jones-Correa. 2001. "Under Two Flags: Dual Nationality in Latin America and Its Consequences for Naturalization in the United States" *International Migration Review* 35:4 (winter): 997-1029.

migrants are thus at least potentially reachable through transnational organizations, even as they are also incorporated into ethnic organizational networks.

However, just as arguments for complementarity underplay the extent to which there are real disagreements and tensions among migrants, and even within migrant families, regarding both ethnic incorporation and transnationalism, just so arguments for organizational complementarity between these two approaches may downplay disjunctures as well. At the individual level, migrants disagree, among many other things, on how to raise a family, whether to learn English or retain their language of origin, whether or not to return, and where to focus their energies and commitments. Just as there are some immigrants who feel very strongly about being transnational there are some who want nothing to do with it. These divisions and disagreements can lead to participation in very different social networks, which not only may not overlap, but may actually be in competition with one another.³⁸ Thus, at the organizational level, ethnic and transnational mobilization may be going on simultaneously, but not necessarily complementarily. Nor it is the case that these networks are necessarily equally influential. The second generation, in particular, has ties to the broader receiving society through language, education, friendships, work, marriage and children that their parents may not have. If the children of migrants are more likely to be engaged in these ethnic networks than in transnational ones, and the processes of transnational and ethnic organization are competitive rather than complementary, then ethnic forms of organization will eventually drive transnational forms out.

Is the future of migrant organizations simply a matter of generational replacement? An assumption of much of the transnational literature on migrant organizations is that continual migration will replenish and refresh transnational organizations. Transnational organizations will always be needed to reflect the needs and interests of first-generation migrants. However, the continual flow of new migrants won't necessarily maintain

³⁸ 'Competition' here may be direct, driven by ideological or other disagreements, or simply be the result of competition over scarce resources, like time or money. Given the scarcity of resources, the second generation may only be able to commit to one network or the other, or may only be able to commit to them both unequally.

current transnational organizations, at least in the same form they exist today. The presence of a more established, rapidly assimilating second generation may well result in the more rapid incorporation of new migrants rather than resulting in the transnationalization of migrants and their descendants already in the United States.

On arrival to a new setting first generation migrants set up social networks and organizations, many of which can be described as 'transnational.' But as this generation ages and the second generation comes into its own, a number of different scenarios may play out. In the first, the second generation may opt out of these transnational organizations and turn to ethnic forms of mobilization, leaving transnational organizations to be renewed by recent incoming migrants. In this case, there is the continuation of the bifurcated organizational universe described earlier, with ethnic and transnational organizations to operate in parallel universes. In the second scenario, first generation transnational organizations gradually re-orient themselves to ethnic concerns, a process hinted at today. This re-orientation would accelerate if the second generation were to stay involved in these organizations, gradually taking over their leadership. In this case, new migrants coming in would have two options: they could be covered under the organizational umbrella of the second generation or create their own organizations. Given the costs of setting up new organizational networks, and the benefits of membership in established networks, older migrant organizations are likely to be dominant. Future migrants would not be arriving to an organizational blank slate, but rather to a previously organized social space that will shape and channel their mobilization and incorporation. For examples of how this might play out we need only look at the situation in Miami after the influx of Cuban refugees-- Marielitos and balseros--in the 1980s and 90s, and at the arrival of Russian Jews to New York City during the same period. In both cases new immigrants were drawn into well-established ethnic communities that played a crucial role in their adaptation and incorporation into a US-oriented organizational framework. A third scenario is that the second generation will be drawn into first-generation organizations, but there are few signs of this occurring.

The assumption behind the replenishment of transnational organizations depends on the continued flow of migrants, but while likely, there is no guarantee this flow will continue. Continued transnational ties were less apparent among migrants in the previous immigration wave a century ago because of an emphasis on assimilation into American life and values, and because any incipient transnationalism was, in any case, curtailed by a number of factors: restrictions in immigration beginning in 1917, the Great Depression and then the Second World War. The current migration wave beginning in the 1960s has arrived to a very different context, when mobilization and display of ethnic and racial identities were already part of the accepted repertoire of American politics, thus accepting, or at least allowing for, transnational commitments. However, there is nothing to guarantee that this period of acceptance will continue; indeed, following the destruction of the World Trade Center in September of 2001, there have been indications that this acceptance has diminished, with a resurgence of an emphasis on ‘American’ identity, restricted movement across borders and calls for reduced immigration. As one portent, the rumblings from immigration restrictionists in Congress have become louder in recent months. How will these shifts in national contexts play out for Mexican-origin residents in the US?

Whether through the re-orienting of first-generation migrants, their capture by the second generation, or the curtailing of migrant flows via legislation or external events, hometown associations, often pointed to as the epitome of transnational political organization among Latin American immigrants living in the US could end up playing a broader role in ethnic, not just transnational, politics. Historically there has been little contact between the organizational layers of ethnic and transnational politics. But there is some sign that this may be changing, as umbrella groups of hometown associations seek to have greater contact and influence on Latino elected officials and issues in the US. Chicago area hometown associations are a good example of this process. For their part, elected officials seem increasingly eager to tap into the organizational membership and resources of hometown associations. Because of the relative absence of well-organized grassroots actors in Latino politics, it may be that ‘transnational’ hometown associations will end up

playing a critical role over the longer run in Latino ethnic politics. But this remains to be seen, and at the moment is still purely speculative.

The historical assumption has been that migrant transnational organization eventually, and inevitably, leads to ethnic organization. But this probably isn't true, at least in any simplistic way. Apart from the fact that facets of transnational and immigrant organization are likely to continue, it's far from clear that there is only a single kind of ethnic politics. It is also the case that there are probably alternative pathways of mobilization and participation. Among these are some that might lead Latinos to non-ethnic, non-Latino specific forms of mobilization. Labor union politics, or religious mobilization might be examples of these forms of organization (though arguably they might also be seen as examples of the different forms ethnic organization can take!)

Conclusions

Although there is sometimes agreement on the ends to be achieved, the organizational networks of Mexican migrants and Mexican-Americans remain largely separate, divided by generation of arrival, by forms of organization, and by their foci for mobilization. Mexican hometown associations in Los Angeles, for instance, rarely interact with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), which is based in Los Angeles, and the national Latino lobbying organizations based in DC rarely interact with the Latino migrants residing at their doorsteps in Washington and its surrounding suburbs. Bringing these different strata of Mexican civic organization together would require more than simply having interests or issues in common. Bridging the differences between ethnic and transnational organizational layers in the Mexican migrant community would require changes in the organizations themselves—perhaps resulting in a less legislatively focused efforts by national civic organizations for instance, and less attention to country of origin issues by the transnational organizations. Whether this is likely is still far from certain.