WEDGES AND QUAKES:  
NEW LANDSCAPES FOR LATINO POLITICS  
IN CALIFORNIA  

DISSERTATION  

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By  
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ABSTRACT

Despite now being the largest minority in the U.S., the politics of Latinos remains an understudied and misunderstood phenomenon. While this dearth of knowledge can partially be attributed to neglect, when political scientists have taken an interest, they have too often relied upon ordinary circumstances and traditional thinking to classify the political identity and behavior of Latinos. When these conventional frames have fallen short, Latinos have been either cast-off as a defective version of the dominant typological exemplars, or worse, deemed as apolitical. To correct these deficiencies of scholarship, this study uses the wedge initiatives in California (Proposition 187; 209 and 227) to measure the political response of Latinos to a series of controversial political events in order to test the validity of traditional political identity frames in a contextual and contentious environment. In addition, the operating thesis of this work advances the notion of cultural citizenship as a viable and superior alternative to traditional group identity models and as a concept that successfully incorporates the unique experience of Latinos into its framework.
Dedicated to the women in my life:

my wife, mother and sister
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In the last decade, California has been hit by a series of earthquakes that have rocked the state and revamped its fault lines. In this case, I am not referring to geo-physical quakes, but rather, tremors of a political nature. The first quake was a product of the Rodney King incident that went national in scope and tested the nation’s grit with respect to minority justice. In the aftermath of that controversial verdict, the ensuing images of urban rioting in Los Angeles gave the nation pause to reflect on just how poor the state of unity was in the world’s reigning democracy. In another era, one could have expected some ambitious social response to the bleak picture that emanated from Los Angeles that day, but instead, with the national mood and political climate greatly moderated since Johnson’s War on Poverty, the country quickly rebounded from the crisis and returned to the status quo. Nowhere was this more evident than in California itself, where on the heels of the riots, three socio-cultural initiatives (Proposition 187 [passed in 1994 and known as the “anti-immigrant” initiative]; Proposition 209 [passed in 1996, and known as the “equal opportunity” initiative]; and Proposition 227 [passed in 1998 and known as the “English for the Children” initiative]; see Appendix I, II and III for text) containing strong language and draconian measures were passed to achieve profound social reform. The provisions of these measures were so patently anti-minority and so ethnically and racially divisive, that they became popularly known as the “wedge initiatives.” These political epicenters and their aftershocks are the crux of this story and
they may hold important clues for unraveling some of the mystery surrounding Latino politics.

According to many political observers, the wedge initiatives (especially Proposition 187 which sought to cut-off social, health and educational services to immigrants) were the direct product of an escalating nativist sentiment that was driven by the growing presence of Latino immigrants in the nation’s most populous state. It has already been acknowledged and documented that Latinos are an emerging force in the United States and their growth continues unfettered. For example, Latinos in the U.S. are currently estimated to number over 38.3 million or approximately 13.5% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau), and they continue to enter the country at a rate of 350,000 per year (Torres and Katsiaficas, 1999; Valle and Torres, 2000). According to recent Census Bureau figures, the growth rate of Latinos has been so phenomenal that they have already supplanted African Americans as the nation’s largest minority. In longer-term projections, it is estimated that by the year 2050 Latinos will outnumber all other minority groups combined (Torres and Katsiaficas, 1999). The numbers in California are even more astounding. In the “Golden State”, Latinos already make-up over 30% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau), and according to estimates, a Latino majority may emerge by the year 2040 (Lowenthal and Burgess, 1993). “Latinos [also] accounted for nearly half of California’s population growth during the 1980s, both through continuing immigration and through high rates of fertility, [thus today] one Californian in five is of Mexican heritage, compared with fewer than one in ten in 1970” (ibid:vi). In Los Angeles, the nation’s second largest city, Latinos made-up 45 percent
of the population, while in L.A. County, one of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas, they constituted 44% of the inhabitants (cited in Valle and Torres, 2000).

These developments are dramatically and overtly changing the complexion of California, and as a consequence, a profound political transformation is also taking shape. According to Hero and Tolbert (1996), as California has continued to absorb large numbers of minorities, it has become a bastion of backlash politics that now resembles the bifurcated states of the Old South where V.O. Key (1949) performed his classic studies on racial politics. In his analysis of the Black Belt (counties in the Old South where Black populations ranged from 40% to 80%), Key found robust evidence that bifurcated environments have a tendency to produce a racially charged and a highly polarized style of politics. Although his work may appear outdated to some, it was underscored forty years later when Glaser (1994) revisited the south and found that areas where Black populations were higher invariably produced a greater propensity for group conflict, a more polarized electorate, and a stronger bent by Whites toward conservatism. In further support of these findings, national political surveys have time and again demonstrated a marked chasm between Whites and Blacks in political policy preferences, thereby, confirming that race counts in America (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Dawson, 1994). These studies and the growing Latino presence in California lend support to Hubey Blalock’s (1982) theoretical proposition that when minority groups gain substantial size, they may pose a threat to the dominant group and be treated with considerable hostility. In this environment, the prospects for smooth political transitions are lessened by racial and ethnic competition to acquire the greatest share of rewards and to dominate and control the most important resources or centers of power (ibid.). As
Latinos continue their prolific growth in California, they appear to be at the center of a controversial political vortex that is bringing these theories to life in dramatic fashion.

The fact that Latinos have now emerged into the political spotlight is a novelty in itself. For decades now, Latinos have been popularized as “the invisible minority” because they, and their countries of origin, have rarely held political center stage in the U.S. (the reasons for this will be addressed later). One excellent example of this oversight is Mexico and its people. Despite Mexico’s proximity and connection to the U.S., it has continually been eclipsed by America’s global standing and superpower status; consequently, it has not received the commensurate attention it deserves. However, as we enter the 21st century, the significance of this attachment is becoming increasingly apparent and the nexus of this activity appears to be in California.

Over the last two decades, despite the border dividing the two countries, there has been a quiet revolution occurring in California that, for a while, went unnoticed by much of the nation. These changes are so significant that it prompted scholars to produce a compendium of works called *The California-Mexico Connection* (1993) where, using multidisciplinary approaches, the implications of this phenomenon are analyzed. The findings suggest that California (especially the southern region) has been experiencing a fusion of capital, geography, resources and people of such astonishing levels, that it has virtually locked the area into a symbiotic relationship. Economically, for example, trade between Mexico and the U.S. exceeded the 10 billion dollar mark a decade ago, and Mexico ranked as California’s second largest foreign market after Japan (ibid.). By 1999, due, in part, to NAFTA’s passage and a tightening economic relationship, exports to Mexico reached nearly 15 billion dollars thus, today making it California’s largest
foreign market (NCGTAD, 1999). Industrially, *maquiladoras* (manufacturing assembly sites mostly started by U.S. capital) dot the northern Mexico border producing a plethora of manufactured goods such as television sets that will be sold back to U.S. consumers, thereby, bolstering the bilateral trade and transnational markets that bind the two nations. Additionally, “it is estimated [that of the] 3 billion dollars remitted to Mexico in foreign investment, $2 billion of that may come directly from Mexicans in California alone” (Lowenthall and Burgess, 1993:vii). The border between the two nations has literally blurred and the region is becoming such a blending of language, culture, and capital, that Clark Reynolds, a Stanford economist, was compelled to deem Southern California a “silent integration” (cited ibid.).

Because capital is fluid and easily transcends borders, under normal circumstances few people would consider the U.S.-Mexico mergers any different from bilateral investments with other countries. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Mexican situation is extraordinary in that the bond includes an immigration flow that is supported and perpetuated by historical factors, contiguous geography, and polarized economies. The physical intertwining of the two nations gives the Mexican-U.S. relationship a very visible and conspicuous component not found in other alliances and it is encroaching on American culture in a very palpable way. For example, some parts of Los Angeles now have such a Latino look and feel to them that it is reminiscent of border towns like Tijuana or Juarez and, in some cases, even resembles towns located deeper in the Mexican interior. Additionally, few U.S. citizens are aware that Los Angeles contains more inhabitants of Mexican origin within its city limits than any other Mexican city except for one—Mexico City, itself (which, by the way, holds one quarter
of Mexico’s total population). In fact, the immigrant population in Los Angeles has swelled to such heights that its percentage of foreign-born inhabitants actually exceeds the rates of turn-of-the-century New York at the peak of European immigration (Scott, 1996). As an outgrowth of these factors, Los Angeles is the only major city in the U.S. sustaining a thriving garment district (Bonacich, 1999) and other low-wage industries that, in other cities, have already gone offshore. Furthermore, L.A. is so heavily staffed in low-wage service sectors, that it is moving against the national trend of declining unionism and becoming a thriving locale for organized labor (Valle and Torres, 2000). The totality of this transformation in Southern California prompted David Rieff (1991) to designate Los Angeles “the capital of the third-world.”

From an economic standpoint alone, the numbers suggest that the U.S. and Mexico are entwined in a bilateral enterprise that is not only of immense proportions, but also mutually beneficial. Generally speaking, with investments and trade of this magnitude one would anticipate a positive response to the continued cultivation and preservation of this union; and indeed, there are many investors, leaders and legislators in California that would be quite content to see this relationship nurtured and fostered to its full potential. However, despite the huge economic incentives to support this alliance, there are occasions in politics when visceral passions can overtake the monetary and material considerations that accompany the pursuit of self-interest (Miller and Stokes, 1963). It appears that California has now reached this threshold and it has placed Latinos in the state’s political crosshairs.

Sometime in the early 1990s, the discourse on Latinos took a definitive shift that has altered their standing and reputation in the nation’s consciousness. Whereas, in the
past, portrayals of Latinos were cast in the softer overtones of a “rising minority” or a “sleeping giant”, sharper characterizations such as “interlopers, aliens, foreigners and parasites” soon replaced them (Santa Ana, 2002). As so often happens during difficult times, when nativist sentiments flare, immigrants and “foreigners” can easily become the target of their resentment and angst, thus attenuating the latter’s social and civil status. Sometimes these resentments, via symbolic and political mechanisms, can escalate and coalesce into organized social movements that appeal and maneuver for state intervention. When these occasions arise in a democracy, the course of action is to either pressure legislators and officials into compliance, or for mass publics to take matters into their own hands by becoming citizen legislators. The former involves constituencies leveraging their voting power in representative elections and the latter relies on taking the issues to the masses on the open ballot. As more and more states adopt provisions for direct democracy, the use of initiatives and referenda are increasingly an option.

In California, it appears that the wedge initiatives may signify a shift in political direction and priorities via Whites’ increasing concern about unfettered immigration and a Latino invasion. In fact, trends show that Americans have consistently been less welcoming to immigrants than official policy and favor more restrictions on border immigration (Cornelius, 1982; Simon, 1985), but this has had little impact in spurring government to pass legislation or enact policy reforms. It is believed that this mass frustration with legislators has led voters in California to seek relief by employing ballot initiatives to address target issues and to achieve their political goals. Statistics show that in the last few decades California ranks first among all states in terms of the number of initiatives appearing on state ballots (Allswang, 2000). Additionally, there is a growing
trend toward using these initiatives to promulgate socio-cultural reforms and, as more of them are authored, they are increasingly finding a support base across states that have provisioned for their use. Indeed, in California support for Proposition 187 was so broad that it easily qualified for the ballot in 1994 and passed by a considerable margin statewide in the same year. In two succeeding elections, the passage of two other anti-minority initiatives (Proposition 209 [anti-affirmative action] and Proposition 227 [anti-bilingual education]) emphatically demonstrated that this political trend was not going to recede. This prolific use of direct democracy is, in a sense, an unprecedented maneuver to control immigration levels and contain minority rights, but from a Latino perspective, the political message is consistent with the anti-Mexican activity that has characterized the Southwest throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

In spite of their long and storied history in the Southwest, the rooted Mexican society did not fare well after the American conquest. In both historical and contemporary terms, the region has never been a place where the Mexican has achieved acceptance and this fact has not been lost on either Chicanos (native-born) or Mexicanos (the foreign-born and immigrants). While the region readily adopted, glorified and enshrined the cultural heritage of Spaniards (especially when its mythology proved to serve commercial purposes), Mexicans were seen as the profane form of this legacy and Americans made every effort to avert contact with them (McWilliams, 1948). At the time of the conquest, there was no shortage of American elites who were willing to step-up and deprecate Mexicans on purely racial terms. For example, the Illinois State Register, in expressing post-war concern about assimilating peoples of mixed race stated that Mexicans “were but little removed above the Negro” (cited in Gutierrez, 1995:16).
As well, John C. Calhoun, a senator from South Carolina argued against their incorporation because they represented a motley amalgamation of “impure races, not [even] as good as the Cherokees or Choctaws” (cited in Horsman, 1981:241). Indeed, after the war, there appeared to be more misgivings and debate about how to absorb the newly acquired Mexican population than excitement about how to exploit and develop the annexed lands (Gutierrez, 1995). The fact that the Mexican’s initial experience in the U.S. was conceived in a racial context has been a stain that has never quite been Whitewashed from the Southwestern experience, and it has been a thread that can be traced throughout the region’s history (these episodes will be addressed later).

Today, the wedge initiatives in California represent a contemporary bookend to the Mexicans’ initial confrontation with racism in the 19th century and it evidences just how jagged and awkward their path toward assimilation has been. These recent events not only contradict assimilationist scholars, but also give much credence to those who have argued that Chicanos are a poor example of the “immigrant paradigm” (assimilation based upon the experience of White European peoples) (Blauner, 1969; Barrera 1979; Garcia and de la Garza, 1977) at work. A cursory review of the early days of the American conquest in the Southwest reveals that Chicanos rapidly lost their land, political power, and, consequently, their economic base, thus they were left with little but their culture and identity. Subsequently, as they were relegated to the lowest socio-economic tier, they became, especially in the Depression years, the victims of unfair labor competition and of repatriations back to Mexico. For those who remained, daily life left much to be desired. Chicanos were continually debilitated by both *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination that manifested in the form of segregated public facilities and
schools, an exclusionary labor system, and unequal and unjust treatment in the nation’s courts. The totality of these experiences that stretch from the Mexican-American War to the wedge initiatives have weighed heavily on the Latino community and they have been instrumental in establishing a tradition of politics based on suspicion and recrimination. Because of the scope and consistency of these experiences, the Chicano community has, in sporadic instances, challenged the American political system as an oppressed and marginalized minority group, thereby, seeking the protections that were attained by Blacks via the Civil Rights movement. Under the terms of Title VII, Latinos qualified as a “protected group” under the law’s provisions regarding employment and public facilities (Chavez, 1991) and, just as importantly, they obtained the protective coverage afforded by the Voting Rights Act of 1975 (de la Garza, 1996). To many, these developments have irrevocably placed Chicanos in a “special class” that delimits them a minority contender in the wider world of competitive politics. This minority designation, however, is only one tag, of many, that has been placed on this most enigmatic and unclassifiable of groups.

Those who have specialized in ethnic and political studies have not found it easy to reconcile the many ambiguous factors that seem to characterize the nature of the Chicano community. In fact, the dissonant elements of the larger Latino community in the U.S. have appeared so prominent that it may have erroneously led scholars to limit their investigations to the forces that divide and fragment the community rather than look for commonalities that bond. For example, much has been made about how Chicanos, as a result of competing for the same jobs in a labor market of depressed wages, are hostile and resentful toward Mexicanos (Mexican immigrants) for impeding their socio-
economic progress in the U.S. The studies that profess this theme have been effectual in constructing a conservative, immigrant image for Chicanos (Gutierrez, 1995). In fact, these studies are so persuasive that, historically, an entire era of Chicano politics has been referred to as “the politics of accommodation” (circa 1940-1960s) in reference to their attempt to adapt to American society (Barrera, 1985; Marquez, 1988). During this epoch, much of the analysis on Chicano politics concentrated on middle-class movements that sought to advance the socio-economic position of the Chicano at the expense of new immigrants. The emergence of organizations like LULAC and the American G.I. Forum were deemed the personification of a consciousness that sought acceptance by the American mainstream and a distancing from the tarnished image of “recent immigrants.” This theme is very prominent in the literature and it has been highly influential in portraying Mexican Americans as another immigration group seeking acceptance in the dominant society and moving toward successful assimilation. In this epoch, very little was written about the forces that transcended middle class boundaries or about other movements or organizations (like El Congreso Mexicano) that sought to unify all Spanish speaking peoples under one banner, irrespective of class or language.

In fact, despite scholarship’s strong emphasis on underscoring the “differences” between natives of Mexican descent and immigrants, there is evidence to suggest that many Mexican Americans, because of the animosity and rejection they have faced from Anglos, don’t distinguish greatly between themselves and recent Mexican immigrants. According to Gutierrez (1995:5), “noting that Americans seem to discriminate against Mexicans whether they are U.S. citizens or not, Mexican Americans oriented in this way can see little difference between their position in American society and that of more
recent immigrants.” By being lumped together as the objects of racism, Chicanos and Mexicanos see in each other a common ground and an opportunity to bond against a greater threat. There are many historical examples that support this scenario and they have promoted forms of political fusion between native and foreign-born elements of the Mexican community (I will address these in a subsequent chapter). This bonding, I would argue, has led to an underlying and sometimes dormant sense of ethnic consciousness that ebbs and flows according to situations, but it, nevertheless, persists. It is akin to the tolerance that African-Americans exhibit with respect to the nationalistic messages of Louis Farrakan and The Nation of Islam, despite the fact that most Blacks don’t support nationalistic politics wholeheartedly (Dawson, 1994). Perhaps for Blacks, after viewing their tenuous social and economic condition in America, these messages resonate in a way that keeps political options open when they need to be invoked. In the same manner, when Latino cultural boundaries are threatened, it may strike chords deep in the community’s recesses that spark a sense of group consciousness which, in turn, ignites forms of collective action and political response designed to limit damage and protect community integrity. In a deductive sense, the above ideas may sound like reasonable conceptions about a Latino perspective, but obviously, they must be operationalized into real and tangible variables before they can attain any significant meaning. The wedge initiatives, which I will address below and in later chapters, may be very helpful in that regard.

In another sense, however, Latino politics is different from Black politics and the direct comparisons that have been made may unfairly characterize Latino politics as docile and uninspired. While Black politics, which has been the “front lines” of
minority/race issues in America, has a history of reaching beyond internal boundaries to secure resources and marshal movements designed to bring down laws and practices (*de jure* discrimination) that have formally and systematically barred their participation, Latinos have all along been *de facto* victims of this same exclusionary system. In the post-civil rights era Blacks may have come to understand more tangibly what Latinos have already experienced: that racism and discrimination continues in subtle, veiled and institutional forms even under the formal protection of the written law. After all, following the Mexican-American War (under the terms of the *Guadalupe-Hidalgo* Treaty), Latinos inherited the formal protections of the U.S. Constitution in theory (Del Castillo, 1990; Gomez-Quinonez, 1994), but the deconstruction of the Southwest proved to be so rapid and shocking that the law was rendered useless, thus causing displaced Mexicans to gravitate to enclaves that afforded little more than the possibility of self-preservation. Thus, the Latino political ethos has not entirely been defined by the notion of relative deprivation and the overt goals of economic and material parity (in fact, many immigrants have been happy to receive higher wages in the U.S. than are available in their countries of origin), but it has assumed an internalized quality that resists the conciliation of its identity. According to Gutierrez (1995:37), “the success of Mexican Americans in maintaining a distinctive culture in the Southwest did not lie in the fact that they violently or even overtly resisted Anglo ‘Americans’ steady encroachments on their way of life. Rather, the ultimate political and social significance of the perpetuation of distinct Mexican American communities throughout the Southwest lay in the fact that Mexican Americans were able to survive and persist as an ethnically distinct people despite the change in political sovereignty over their homeland.”
The successful preservation of Mexican *pueblos* is, according to some scholars, a manifestation of “cultural citizenship”—a concept realized by the claiming of status and space that allows for a cultural and existential expression (Flores and Benmayor, 1997). Although it involves difference, it is not as if Latinos seek out such difference. Rather, the motivation is simply to create space where the people feel “safe” and “at home,” where they feel a sense of belonging and membership (ibid.). Cultural citizenship signifies a blending of worlds where Latinos engage in the formal requirements of North American society for survival (citizenship), but where they retain and embrace their own cultural heritage naturally and informally. Thus, by preserving their cultural practices in a foreign environment, they, in a sense, assert a political boundary around their most precious resource— their distinct identity. Although the addition of cultural citizenship adds some promising leads towards uncovering a Latino political identity, a way is needed to operationalize its manifestations against the backdrop of a tangible situation in order to validate its utility. However, because culture and its associated elements have been unwieldy and abstract concepts in political science research, this may pose a great challenge.

In order to make sense out of any social or political experience, it is useful to employ a model that can organize the prevailing ideas that apply while, at the same time, still encapsulating the essence of the experience. This has been a difficult proposition when applied to Latinos. The known complexities that exist in this community have discouraged and defied the use of such means to capture and portray their experience in the U.S.; instead, scholars have tended to emphasize the factors that instigate pluralities and internal dissention over the components that bond, or they have simply defaulted to
conventional models for explanations, even when they have proven to be grossly inadequate. Donald Horowitz (1985:70) sensed this plurality when he asserted, “the history of Mexicans in the United States has two sides”; the small but significant Mexican population that was encapsulated and treated as a conquered population; and the voluntary immigration that occurred as a result of instability in Mexico during the Revolution of 1910. Indeed, the contrast between Chicanos and Mexicanos can sometimes be so stark, that even the ordinary citizen can draw adept observations about them from the purely physical and sensory aspects of the social milieu. As ordinary Mexican Americans have often commented, “some of us have been here for 300 years and some of us for three days” (cited in Skerry, 1993). These observations well reflect the diversity of interests that comprise the Latino community and it is these complexities that have actually served to discourage increased scholarship on Latino politics.

On the other hand, when academia has taken an interest, they have too often been prone to superimpose Latinos against standard theories and models to explain their American experience, and when the incongruities start to mount, they are cast off as either anomalies, or because of their low profile, scuttled for richer areas of research. Ironically, the most striking feature about Latinos may be the enduring and recalcitrant nature of these complexities and how they have defied the linear assimilation track to which so many scholars have subscribed. Indeed, the complexities, ambiguities and uncertainties that encompass the Latino community have not faded and continue to be a factor in prescribing and delimiting a Latino political platform even today.

To make progress, some scholars have expanded the modeling matrix to at least include options. For example, Peter Skerry (1993), in his penetrating and comparative
work on Mexican-Americans, has laid out a useful, yet parsimonious model for assessing where the future of Mexican American politics might lead. This is not to say that the Latino community, by any stretch, can be considered either a political monolith (evidence shows Blacks as having much greater political unison) or an entity that conforms to reductionist tactics, but his model includes two important and traditional ideas that have helped define the experiences of distinct groups in the U.S.: group identity and assimilation. According to Skerry, the Mexican American community today is so diverse, unpredictable, and divergent in their political outlook, that he termed them the “ambivalent minority.” But despite the existence of these complex interests and sometimes bipolar characteristics, he argues that the Latino predicament boils down to a simple dichotomy with respect to forging their political future. According to his analysis, Latinos can either take on the identity of an “aspiring immigrant group” ready to assimilate under the traditional values of Americanism, or they can stake their claims under the “politics of confrontation” as an oppressed and marginalized minority group.

In his work, Skerry takes on this dichotomy and makes an honest effort to compare the distinct advantages and pitfalls of each, however, as we will see, these frames are not malleable enough to envelope the Latino experience, thus attenuating his findings. Additionally, by relying heavily on urban social structures to make his case (he compared the structural characteristics of the Chicano community is San Antonio, TX with Los Angeles, CA.), little room was left to integrate the dynamics of political context and climate into his study, thereby, Whitewashing these important factors from the equation. Because of this omission, his work may have limited facility in assessing political movements in strenuous conditions and circumstances such as appear to be
unfolding in California. A quick survey of political history (in Chapter Three) will demonstrate that exogenous factors have had an important impact on Latino politics and this, as a rule, should be addressed. But to further improve Skerry’s analysis, I propose the addition of a third prong that would include the aforementioned concept of cultural citizenship (Flores and Benmayor, 1997). As a frame, cultural citizenship incorporates the acculturative aspects of the immigrant group and the assertive qualities of a cultural minority, but rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive, it integrates them into a new political form that is drawn directly from the experience of Latinos. Thus, by producing a political identity that stems from the interaction of two opposites, cultural citizenship takes on more than the trappings of a hybrid, it stands alone as a distinct and dynamic category. As the third frame of our three-pronged model and with the help of an appropriate study, one can compare its currency against each of the other two frames and, as well, form an ordinal rank between the three (see Figure 1 for a comparison of the three). With this in mind, a way is needed to test their utility against the backdrop of a tangible political situation. In this regard, the wedge initiatives may be extremely helpful.
In assessing the wedge initiatives in California, most scholars have classified them as a direct and overt attack on minority rights, thus the controversy surrounding them has been placed in the context of ethnic and racial conflict. Since Whites still make-up about 75% of the voting majority in California (*National Review*, 16 June 1997) it follows that the initiatives have been cast as referendums on race relations and, more specifically, White attitudes about Latinos. Without question, there are clear ramifications on that level and they will be considered and pursued in this analysis. However, if one looks more closely at the content of these propositions and considers some of their symbolic components, then some interesting and nuanced possibilities begin to surface. For example, if we shed the race angle and invoke the Latino
perspective in its place, the prospects for a whole new analysis begin to present themselves. First, two of the three initiatives (187 and 227) attack cultural issues (acceptance and language) that resonate powerfully in Latino communities and this, in itself, gives them great significance as measures of cultural unity and attachment. In addition, however, across the three initiatives the issues nicely cut across subgroup interests to the point where they provide potent tests of native and immigrant reactions. Thus, by addressing those zones where subgroup interests either connect or clash, they form a barometer whereby traditional frames can be compared to cultural citizenship. A closer look at the content of the three individual propositions suggests that each one represents a core issue that strongly parallels one or more of the three political strategies Latinos can assume according to our previously referenced typological model, thus they can each serve as a tool for measuring the extent to which these traits manifest in Latino political behavior.

For example, if we take the content of Proposition 209, there is little question that it targets those groups who petition the state for fairness and equality from the periphery. Despite 209’s rhetoric of invoking a colorblind process and enacting an “equal opportunity” system in California, for minorities, it was perceived as a direct attack on important programmatic gains that had been acquired through the civil rights movement. The initiative’s specific intent to eradicate all forms of affirmative action in state hiring and recruiting posed not only a powerful challenge to the human, material, and economic advancements minorities had obtained in the post-civil rights era, it was also a way of marginalizing the virulent forms of discrimination these groups had collectively experienced over the course of their American experience. In a larger sense then, the
initiative reignited the political chasm that has always existed between majority and minority groups on social policy, and it became something of a tolerance quotient on the extent to which minority rights and preferential treatment will be allowed to prevail in the public arena. Taken solely from a minority standpoint, a strong reaction in opposing 209 would suggest a consciousness that sees differences between themselves and mainstream America, thus it would support the existence of a “minority” identity or some other form of social distancing (culture, perhaps). Conversely, a tepid response would reflect neither a cultural or political consciousness but rather the assimilation tendencies of the immigrant model. By and large then, employing data cuts by race and ethnicity on voting and political reaction to 209 would allow for some estimation of each group’s “minority” quotient.

Similarly, Proposition 227, the bilingual education initiative, was targeting what many scholars (sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists) use as a measure of group assimilation into a foreign society—language. In the multiplicity of elements that make-up distinctions between ethnic and racial communities, language stands out as one of the most overt and profound manifestations of culture. As a distinguishing feature, it is one of the most powerful components in terms of giving communities identity and form, and its meaning is so symbolic, that its significance extends well beyond the specific policy reform addressed in 227’s provisions. For nativists, language has connotations of patriotic symbolism and it is also a highly palpable way of gauging the rapidity with groups do or don’t adopt the values of the dominant society and assimilate into the mainstream. Thus, Proposition 227, otherwise known as “English for the Children,” was far from being only a reform that sought to do away with bilingual
education; it was actually perceived by many as a referendum on the retention of “American” ideals and the protection of core American values from foreign elements that might contaminate them. If we omit the nativist perspective from this scenario and again approach the issue squarely from the Latino viewpoint, an insight emerges as to how amenable Latinos are to compromising their customs and values in order to gain a better life in a new and foreign world. This is a classic dilemma for immigrants which, perhaps, became even more pointed for Latinos given the many cultural advantages they enjoy in the Southwest, thus it undoubtedly resonated as a critical exercise of their vote. In effect then, 227 was a referendum on the immigrant tendencies of Latinos when placed in the context of Skerry’s dichotomy and, therefore, took on much greater significance than its literal intent.

While the above propositions seem to fit Skerry’s dichotomy ideally, 187 appears to pose a conundrum for his model. For example, Proposition 187’s intent was to deny a wide slate of critical services to illegal immigrants as a way to contain the tide of border crossings, therefore, its principle target population does not fall under the “minority” rubric given that illegal immigrants, most of who have only been in this country for a short time, have no historical justification for exacting grievances on U.S. institutions. It is also not an immigrant issue in the context of assimilation, since the “immigrant” strategy assumes its subject ethnic group to not only be here legally, but also on a fast track of absorption. In fact, 187 isn’t even a Chicano or Mexican-American issue, since no members of these communities qualify as illegal immigrants. This leads one to ask: why did this issue create such controversy and outrage in the Latino community in Los Angeles and California? Given that so many sectors of the Latino community came out
against the proposition, one must conclude that larger issues were at stake that somehow transcended the traditional political boundaries of Mexican subgroupings in a very profound way. Indeed, the overt response to 187 was such a harmonious blending of diverse interests that the Latino community became greater than the sum of its parts. The external threat posed by 187’s provisions may have tapped the forces that underlie cultural citizenship in such a way as to promote a temporary political alliance between Chicanos and Mexicanos and, in the process, forged a stronger connection between the two.

Because the three wedge issues so nicely parallel the three-pronged model of political identities/strategies, it affords an opportunity to test the relative strength of each frame against a dynamic political situation in order to decipher how Latinos respond to specific issues and gain a overall impression of their political character and motives. Because the three-pronged model blends historically accepted concepts (the immigrant and minority identities) with a contemporary perspective (cultural citizenship), it can serve as a reasonable tool around which to organize political data that emanate from “Latino-critical” issues (e.g., the wedge initiatives). Furthermore, the model possesses enough span to form a general impression about political outcomes while being able to absorb and not wholly disregarding anomalies. In the end, the model serves as a necessary component for capturing the existent complexities of Latinos, but, by itself, it is not sufficient to complete the task. By applying the model in California where the right political and demographic forces have converged, the stage is set for an improved analysis of contemporary Latino political consciousness.
1.1 Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of this paper is an attempt to understand, to the extent possible, how the wedge initiatives in California can give us a reading on the core ideology and direction of Latino politics against the backdrop of Skerry’s dilemma (revised). While in Skerry’s work (1993), *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, a comparative approach was taken to ascertain the benefits and deficiencies of politicking as an “immigrant group” versus an “oppressed minority,” his work preceded and, therefore, contained nothing about the anti-immigrant and anti-Latino surge that propelled the “wedge” issues. Thus, while his work was logical in deducing which political strategies worked best in relation to each other, very little was mentioned about how the climate and conduct of politics would be impacted in a dynamic and adversarial environment (the Hegelian factor). This study will expand Skerry’s dichotomy by adding cultural citizenship as a new theoretical explanation, and through the use of the wedge initiatives, its relative utility will be tested. In California, it appears as if the necessary and sufficient conditions have converged to test his proposition against the backdrop of a hostile political environment and the fluctuating and dynamic realities of racial and ethnic conflict. As aforementioned, the concentration of Latinos in California is reaching such unprecedented levels that, based on numbers alone, they will harbor great political significance in the near future. If Latinos are, in fact, facing a pivotal point in terms of their political choices, then as they gain more political influence, their reactions to the developments in California may reveal important indicators as to where they will steer and how they will enact their politics. In consideration of how powerfully rooted the
Latino culture is in the Southwest and the powerful forces binding the California-Mexico connection, these processes and indicators should be understood.

A second objective of this study is to fill a void in political science research. Because this study is about Latinos specifically, it may serve a purpose beyond the core objective and be useful at other levels. For example, it is a well known fact that Latinos have been understudied politically relative to other groups, therefore, a project that places them squarely as the feature subject will, if nothing else, help alleviate a deficiency in this subfield. There are a number of reasons that contribute to this dearth of knowledge. First, there has never been a tidy way to research Latinos because they comprise such a diversity of sub-groups (e.g., Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, South and Central American, etc.) that it has been difficult to place them under one over-arching category. Their cultures, values, and countries of origin are so distinct that it has discouraged many scholars from pursuing the concealed and, perhaps, ambiguous forces that form them (and sometimes don’t) into a definable community. Traditionally, there has also been a propensity to overlook Latinos in favor of other groups (e.g., Blacks, Jews, Irish Americans) who have either been more visible and cohesive politically, more socially distanced from the mainstream, or perceived as more oppressed. In addition to the above, Latinos have never fit well into the Black and White paradigm that has dominated the study of minority politics in America; consequently, they have often been seen as falling outside the boundaries of conventional study and, therefore, shelved. In fact, for many, it is hard to determine whether Latinos should be looked at as an ethnic group or as a distinct race, thereby, complicating the prospects of an academic endeavor even further. Therefore, by filling an obscure zone on the political map, Latinos lay disregarded, often
misunderstood and, ultimately, unsung. At the most basic level then, it is my hope that this paper will illuminate one small aspect of the Latino experience and contribute in some modest way to an underdeveloped database.

The effects that spring forth from California’s political rumbles are important in that they are a continuation of the racial and ethnic strife that has plagued our nation throughout its history. Racial and ethnic conflict, forces that have surged and receded throughout American history, have produced a plethora of changes in our nation’s socio-political realm that could be considered “synthesized” in the Hegelian sense. For example, the Civil Rights movement was fomented in response to a century of systematic and formal repression against Blacks which caused such a build-up of social strain that it finally led to a civil implosion. The ensuing upheaval of the 1960’s recalibrated the nation’s consciousness with respect to human and minority rights while also creating the supporting mechanisms for its maintenance. The new platform of structural, legal and civil reforms constituted a Hegelian “synthesis” that realigned the country’s political center and its legacy still influences public policy to the present day. The Irish, too, when shunned by the original Anglo-Saxons in America, turned to machine politics and left a legacy which includes New York’s Tammany Hall, Chicago’s Daley machine (Levine, 1966; Erie, 1988), and a host of other political remnants across lesser known venues. Some argue that the Progressive movement, which profoundly changed the trajectory of politics in the U.S., was actually launched to specifically bring down the era of machine politics thus, demonstrating the “ripple effect” of ethnicity (Fiorina and Peterson, 2001). As we contemplate the powerful impact of race and ethnicity in the
American experience, we should not take lightly the potential for profound social change in the backlash climate that today characterizes California.

At another level, this study may prove to be an indictment of direct democracy and bring into question its unfettered use. Initiatives and referenda, by definition, are movements that seek to gain broad support among mass publics to exact policy reform in state governments. In many cases, however, the content of these legislative efforts are so narrow and obscure that their support base is often comprised of no more than a few specialized interest groups and, at best, a scattered following in the general public (Broder, 2000). Thus, for many arcane issues, it is often difficult to clearly identify either support and opposition camps by discernable attribution. In contrast, the socio-cultural initiatives have engendered large adversarial bases that are structured and identifiable along ethnic and racial lines, thereby, establishing clear divisional markers in the populace. When political winners and losers start to consistently fall into majorities and minorities based on race, it is usually a “red flag” that the spirit and principles of democracy are in danger of being compromised. This is hardly a novel notion given the fact that direct democracy has been suspect, especially in relation to minority rights, since the birth of this nation. James Madison (see Federalist #10), for example, argued eloquently that tyranny could emanate not only from rulers and monarchs, but also from the masses if the right mechanisms were in place (cited in Spitz, 1984). That is why he opted to support representative government in favor of direct democracy in order to escape the contagious passions that might arise from majoritarian rule (ibid.).

The interaction of direct democracy with minority interests may be a new threshold in redefining minority politics in the U.S. In the aftermath of the civil rights
movement, minority grievances, for the most part, have directed their angst at impersonal and corporate forms of discrimination that, at worst, were guilty of sustaining traditions that resist change, create bias, and exclude non-member groups. But now, with the advent of the wedge initiatives, it is as if the disdain and scorn toward minorities has become popularized and personalized, thus leaving a wake of resentment and mistrust between Anglos and minority groups. Now, instead of making progress, minorities find themselves slipping in the cauldrons of public opinion, fighting supra-institutional forms of racism, and engaging in militant style politics just to stay on par. In total, these developments are complicating their predicament, exacerbating their already frayed dispositions, and revising the calculus under which they operate. The way minorities view the shift from a depersonalized, institutional form of discrimination to being the objects of a popularized antipathy should not be underestimated, much less cast aside. The data in this study may give us a glimpse into that perception and how the outward environment has influenced it.

Another controversial aspect of the wedge initiatives is in how they have propelled Latinos to a new level of notoriety. The first initiative, Proposition 187, catapulted Latinos into California’s political crosshairs and produced such a resurgence of ill will that it is reminiscent of the Civil Rights era and the Moratorium protests of the 1970s in East Los Angeles. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Latinos in California may feel more socially distanced today than they ever have. The escalating political controversy in California may literally be redefining Latinos’ standing and rank in the American psyche. Wilbur Rich (1996) argues that minorities fall into social queues by virtue of their values thus, those seen as exemplifying behaviors closest to the
mainstream are more likely to gain institutional entrée. Rich’s observation, when quantified, has yielded a consistent pecking order with respect to where minority groups fall vis-a-vis Whites. For example, Link and Olendick (1996) using a social construct model that measured White attitudes toward minority groups via evaluative criteria and social distance, found that Asians were ranked closest to Whites (they are often called the “model minority”), Blacks fell furthest from the norm, and Latinos usually rated somewhere in the middle. While this ordinal pattern has generally been accepted in most thermometer-style studies on race, the developments in California may have knocked Latinos into the bottom tier and, thereby, displaced them from their traditional rank in the minority queue. If, indeed, this perception shift has the power to change the political strategies or consciousness of Latinos, then it should be recognized as an important political development and investigated further. If the possibility remains that minority politics is defined by the nation’s “worst case,” (as it has with Black politics) then Latinos’ reaction to their unenviable position as the foreigner may signify the genesis of a new platform that influences other minority groups. This emerging development in American politics should be respected and, more so, understood.

Another final objective of this study relates to the political participation of Latinos. There is ample empirical evidence to suggest that Latinos have not participated in most forms of politics to the degree that other groups have (Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; Arvizu and Garcia, 1996; Verba et al., 1995). This issue relates to the peripheral position of Latinos in American society and to a number of social, cultural and endemic factors unique to this community (Garcia, 1974, 1977, 1988; Santillan, 1988). A great deal of theoretical work has been done to explain the reasons behind these group
proclivities and scholars have speculated on a complex array of both exogenous and endogenous issues that relate to this condition (Hero, 1992; Garcia and Arce, 1988; MacManus and Cassel, 1988). While it is difficult to dispute the consistency of the empirical findings generally, there are numerous instances where Latinos have generated political action to combat oppression or reform policies that were perceived as detrimental to the community’s well-being. It is likely that many of these events have not been investigated with enough scrutiny and breadth to understand where and how they fit into the larger political picture. To date, there have been ample studies of Latino politics that fall in either the “deductive-theoretical” category or the “circumscribed-ideographic” account, but few studies have married these elements together to form an integrated work that supports, sustains and compliments itself. Because Latinos are now more visible, and arguably, at a new juncture (evolving more rapidly than ever before) in terms of salience, it may be time for general, deductive studies to merge with dynamic, contextual analyses that can provide a sharper focus on nuanced events. These contemporary episodes, if linked with historical constants and theory, could provide a deeper understanding of the Latino political perspectives and behavior. It is my hope that this study can dovetail the best of these two approaches into a thorough, comprehensive product and from this vantage point, reveal new and useful information.

1.2 Methods and Structure

The Latino experience in America is filled with such complexities and ambiguities that it has sometimes confounded past scholarly attempts and often resisted conforming to a singular perspective or a uniform methodology. That is what makes the study of Latino politics a simultaneously fascinating and frustrating endeavor. In order to
gather a reasonable impression of community dynamics and consciousness, it is imperative that the analysis be sensitive to a multiplicity of factors, and that, in the end, they be tied together as an integrated whole. This means that details should be considered in the context of the larger picture and vice-versa; that fluid and dynamic variables should be considered in relation to constants; and the contemporaneous should be superimposed against the past. By facilitating this blending of variables, data and events, I believe that a useful portrait will emerge of how Latinos see themselves in the context of the American experience and where that vision may be leading. These insights may prove to be valuable given the startling projections of Latino growth in the U.S. and their increased potential to influence the spheres of American culture and politics.

When faced with the challenge of selecting an appropriate methodology for this important analysis, I was pleasantly surprised at how simple the answer turned out to be. As I poured through the available literature on the wedge initiatives, there already existed a number of descriptive analyses that were based on anecdotal data, journalistic accounts, and other forms of ideographic chronology. These newsworthy efforts gave the story life and vividness, but alone they were open to critique and interpretation, thus attenuating their power to stand-alone. A second set of studies, however, gleaned from quantitative analyses of electoral data, were crucial toward validating the journalistic accounts and supplying additional firm conclusions about context and causality in their own right. What appeared to be missing as a research tool was a ground level view of the proceedings by individual persons who witnessed these events first-hand, and who were struck by them not only in a public sense, but also in a personal way. By employing the personal interview, I was able to not only fill a methodological void regarding the
initiatives and supplement the exemplary work that had already been done by others, but also peer into crevices that often get overlooked by accounts that hinge on spectacle and salience. Additionally by drawing from all of these different sources, I was able to maintain my commitment toward the comprehensive model that I believe is paramount to understanding the complexities involved in this analysis. In total, I utilized over twenty extensive interviews of people (totaling over 40 hours of tape) that included elected officials, academics, political activists and ordinary citizens. In all, the interview subjects included representatives from different sectors such as education, government, business, academia and politics in order to give the study as wide a range as possible. The selection of individual subjects was based upon one or more of the following factors: their reputation as having extensive knowledge of Latino politics in California; their extensive involvement in the state’s political process; their attachment to an institution or sector that was greatly impacted by one or more of the initiatives; or their serving, in one capacity or another, as a representative of the greater Latino community in Los Angeles.

In addition to these interviews, I performed a survey of newspaper and magazines to ferret out relevant articles that ledgered the many occurrences and events in this story into a manageable and organized timeline. Within these articles are contained a great many polls and surveys that were conducted in the relevant time periods and that were gathered with generally accepted statistical practices in journalistic and scholarly circles. Also, to enhance and qualify the contextual conclusions that spring from this analysis, I have relied heavily on the findings of other peers and scholars who had already launched large-scale, quantitative analyses in California and L.A. County that very deftly address the issue of race and ethnic conflict, a subject that is central to the thesis of this
document. In order to further augment their findings, I pulled data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the L.A. County Board of Elections to assess the impact of Latino populations at the city level on voting against the initiatives.

As far as structure, the dissertation is organized in a logically sequential way so that the reader might understand Latino politics theoretically, historically, contextually, and prospectively. Chapter two lays out a theoretical portrait of Latino politics with an emphasis on their complexity and on how poorly conventional perspectives have captured or incorporated their experience. By acknowledging the diverse nature of Latinos and accounting for the occasions where events and circumstance don’t mesh with traditional theoretical constructs, one can begin to undertake their study with more of an open mind and, possibly, consider some unorthodox or alternative modes of explanation. The inconsistencies that emerge may illuminate how and why some myths and distortions may have arisen with respect to the Latino community and their political proclivities. The chapter will also include theories that parallel the three political identities that are often ascribed to Latinos and that form the components of my research model. By taking an accounting of Latino political theory and superimposing it upon the many unique and peculiar circumstances associated with Latinos, it may help us sort out reality from fable.

Chapter three will lay out a historical perspective on Chicano political evolution with an emphasis on how certain notions and paradigms that emerged from distinct eras and circumstances continue to dominate scholarly thinking to the present day. In particular, this chapter is crucial for understanding how historical factors and flawed methodologies have been integral to advancing the notion of divisiveness within the Chicano community as an unbending characteristic of its nature and for understanding
how this conclusion was erroneously adopted and advanced by academics. The chapter will focus greatly on organizations in Latino politics since they have been so influential in establishing an operative ideology for the Latino community-at-large and, as well, been focal points of disunity and discord in community politics. As a set-up to the chapter’s central theme, I will first take a stock, conventional look at Chicano community/political organizations, and in the process, establish the basis for an ensuing critique and deconstruction of these traditional views. The counter-analysis will be based on Gutierrez’ (1995) riveting work, *Walls and Mirrors*, a study that advances an alternative perspective to the accepted frameworks that dominate the Latino sub-field and that uses multi-dimensional examples to support its conclusions. In the final analysis, the intent of this chapter is to extend the parameters of Latino politics to the point where paradoxical and ambiguous factors, rather than eschewed, can be incorporated into the political analysis of current events such as the wedge initiatives.

Chapter four will serve a dual purpose. First, it will journal the story of the wedge initiatives in order to provide a setting and background for the critical events leading up to their advent. Secondly, it will serve partially as a data chapter in the qualitative area as a result of documenting the protest and upheaval directly caused by the initiatives. A highlight of this chapter will be Latino protest activities surrounding the onset of Proposition 187 that was, without question, the most controversial of the three wedge initiatives. Through a recap of these events, one can gather the scope and feel of the activity and sentiment that permeated the political scene in California and also attain a sense of how multiple interests within the Latino community responded. This chronology of events will provide the background needed to make sense of the more
pointed and objective measures that supplement the quantitative data and the overall storyline.

Chapter five will contain the quantitative core of the study and will measure concrete variables (voting turnout; survey responses; policy preferences; and partisanship) that are extracted mostly from electoral data, polls and surveys concerning the initiatives. In this study, I posit that the data will support the notion that Latinos, while under political siege from these initiatives, will demonstrate political behaviors that includes the assumption of all three identities in the political model, but they will do it selectively and in accordance with the nature of the issue. Because the three initiatives, at their core, are issues that correspond substantively to the political identities that make-up the three-pronged model, the way Latinos react to each will provide a refined and contextually rich insight to their perspective and tendencies. By using a three-dimensional model in this analysis, we can more clearly understand which issues run hot, cold, or mild in the Latino consciousness, and how they affect political behavior and activity. Furthermore, the comparison of the three issues will reveal the potency or weakness of each political strategy and identity and, from this, we might be able to extract a general impression about where the overall political road leads hence. In the end, I submit that cultural citizenship will emerge as having greater explanatory value for the overall response of Latinos across the three initiatives and that it will help assess the relative value of the other two frames.

Chapter six will contain a summary of the findings and reflections about what they might mean in the “bigger picture,” and it will also include a wider look into important and recent developments in Latino politics in California. In this chapter I will
attempt to integrate the pieces into a larger, integrated whole and from there make some informed prognostications and conclusions about the future may hold. In order to supplement the core study, it may be helpful to include some post-initiative events that have since transpired to help substantiate further the study’s results or help illuminate those instances that may appear at odds with its findings and conclusions.

To ensure clarity for the reader, there are certain qualifiers that should be addressed. First, while this study will reference Latinos at various points in the study, the emphasis of this work will be Mexicans and Mexican-Americans because of the geographic locale in which it occurs. It is important to note that the political circumstances of Latino subgroups in the U.S. are highly varied and don’t conform to one framework. For example, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Mexicans are geographically dispersed and their politics generally hinge on issues as varied as commonwealth independence, American foreign policy, and immigration, respectively. However, when in a particular geographic region (e.g., Cubans in Miami or Mexicans in Los Angeles), the circumstance and culture of one subgroup will normally dominate and incorporate other Latinos into its sphere (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb, 1984; de la Garza, 1996). Therefore, because the research will be focusing on California politics (with an emphasis on Los Angeles), coupled with the fact that two-thirds of all Latinos in the U.S. are Mexicans from the Southwest, the bulk of this work will be speaking to the theoretical frameworks that define the Chicano experience over others. Also, the terms Latino and Hispanic will be interchangeable, as will the terms Chicano and Mexican-American. Chicano delineates native-born Mexicans and Mexicanos will be used as a synonym for the foreign-born and immigrants.
CHAPTER 2
LATINOS AND POLITICAL THEORY

In the wake of communism’s collapse and the ensuing balkanization of Europe and the Soviet states, ethnicity has once again emerged as an important factor to consider in defining social and group relations; however, the dominant theories for explaining advanced democracies (pluralism and the power elite) have not always been forthright with this subject. Pluralism, one of the most dominant theories used to explain contemporary American politics, took hold after Robert Dahl’s (1961) legendary study of power in New Haven—Who Governs? While Dahl’s work was lauded for its insightful defense of American democratic principles at work, and for his assessment that power is widely disbursed among many actors, it is not without detractors and controversy. In fact, it spawned an antithetical perspective that originally resides in the school of “power elitists,” which sprang and propagated from the ideas of C. Wright Mills (1956) and others, who see democracy as merely a facade that cloaks an elitist structure of power, control, and privilege. Both theories, along with being broadly conceived and commanding, are hallmark perspectives that are clear and unabashed in their assertions and, at the same time, diametrically at odds. It is the clarity and utility of these theories that is so admirable given their ambitious attempts to unravel the forces that govern the entire American political system—no small task by any standard. In fact, these theories have wielded so much influence in the social sciences that they have, by extension,
incorporated many other sub-disciplines and specializations into their sphere—the politics of race and ethnicity among them.

Some problems, however, arise when applying broad theoretical constructs to the lives and experiences of distinct racial and ethnic groups and these should be addressed. First, due to the sheer scope of macro-theories, their tenets are pressured to incorporate a whole host of variables into their fold even if they cannot do so. Therefore, in order to remain parsimonious, these precepts cannot extend much beyond systemic concerns without becoming unwieldy and incoherent in the process. As a result, macro-theories can successfully lay out the external parameters that govern social and political systems but they cannot easily penetrate the diverse and varied experiences of different claimant groups, thereby, rendering endogenous variables as having no explanatory power. In the end, macro-theory is so skewed toward the exogenous explanations of social and political power, that it fails to consider the interactive fronts where group-specific issues intersect systemic and institutional forces.

Unfortunately, these limitations plague even the sharper and more nuanced theoretical strains that have spawned from macro-theory and they, too, fall short of the mark. For example, assimilation theory, which derives from pluralism, assumes an open and equal system that stimulates the engagement and participation of all groups depending on their willingness to do so. To reinforce their assertions, pluralists use European groups who have successfully assimilated in America (the immigrant paradigm) as the exemplar of this model and they project these principles onto all groups who reside within U.S. boundaries. Unfortunately, this approach does little to address the involuntary nature of the Black and Chicano experiences and it marginalizes the difficult
obstacles that would litter their path as a result. On the other hand, while power elitists acknowledge the social and political hurdles that plague minority groups, they also tend toward the systemic and institutional explanations to rationalize their conclusions, leaving issues like race, ethnicity and culture in the lurch. When they do assert a forceful example of their perspective, they usually default to Black politics as the exemplar of the “minority” identity and it becomes an operating standard against which all other groups are evaluated. When Latinos are seen as failing these paradigmatic frames, they are either ignored, classified as a diluted version of each, or simply cast-off as an anomalous case. In the end, the interests of true scholarship are not well served and, additionally, our understanding of Latinos, the nation’s largest minority group, is also not enhanced.

To ameliorate the above oversights, this chapter will invoke the concept of cultural citizenship as a viable theoretical explanation for Latino politics. This theory, rather than a boilerplate approach, starts with the experience of Latinos as its premise and, from there, looks for interactive variables that shape and influence their political ethos and choices. In this process, concepts like ambivalence and ambiguity are considered as more than divisive and offsetting forces, but rather, as coactive elements that can produce fruitful and purposive political action. Through understanding these interactions, cultural citizenship views Latinos as more than a conglomeration of separate and disparate parts and it brings focus to the common fronts along which Chicanos and immigrants converge, thereby, ascribing a solid foundation onto Latino politics and reshaping perceptions about its potential. Additionally, by considering how endogenous variables interact with exogenous forces that accompany socialization, cultural citizenship attains an added dimension of analysis that strengthens its case and sets it
apart from models built on conventional scaffolding. Thus, by raising Latino-specific
issues to the fore and injecting them into the analysis, it helps scholars avoid the awkward
process of evaluating them against pre-existing models that are not derived from their
experiences. Lastly, by not shying away from antagonistic issues, cultural citizenship
illuminates those cracks and crevices that, in the past, have represented the ambiguous
aspects of Latino politics.

Upon understanding how well cultural citizenship is tailored to the Latino
experience, groundwork is set for testing its utility in an appropriate political context. In
this regard, the wedge initiatives form an excellent test case. At the most basic level, the
initiatives, due to their adjudication at the ballot box, offer a broad measure of Latino
mass attitudes—the first step in understand a group’s collective consciousness. But just
as importantly, 187’s intent, by targeting the immigrants of an adjacent country,
invariably provokes those sentiments and attachments like culture and ethnicity that
cannot be stymied by physical borders. Therefore, by striking this common chord that
traverses both immigrant and Chicano communities, it forms a measure of their solidarity
and linkage with one another—both critical components of cultural citizenship. In
addition, due to a temporal flow that borders on the ideal, the initiatives offer further
insight to the Latino identity by allowing for a comparative analysis. First, by falling in
consecutive elections (1994, 1996 and 1998) and in the same location, the wedge
initiatives occur in such a short span of time that they repeatedly test the mettle of Latinos
as a political bloc. The clarity of this test is enhanced by how each initiative varies in
context and target, thereby, giving greater resolution to the overall study. As
aforementioned, because each initiative parallels one or more of the identity frames in the
three-pronged model, each event is a revealing window into group consciousness. Through this comparative process, clear theoretical winners and losers emerge that allows us to place an appropriate designation on their politics based on real and unencumbered data. In the end, this process insures that Latinos are measured against themselves rather than subjecting them to the criteria of frames wrought from the experiences of others, and it helps filter out the inappropriate designations that have hampered their study in the past. Ultimately, it is a first step toward challenging the validity of conventional thinking and, more importantly, for gaining a sharper image of Latino politics as a unique phenomenon.

2.1 Traditional Theory and Latinos

If one takes pluralism and accepts it as a valid explanation for American politics, one finds that it is well-endowed with profound assumptions. For example, “the pluralist model asserts that the policy-making process rests on a base of multiple centers of power, none of which is entirely sovereign. Power is widely dispersed both formally and informally and groups are assumed to be relatively equal in ability and influence in competing for available resources. Pluralism is also characterized by multiple access points where groups can exert influence and insure that no particular group can achieve disproportionate or cumulative power” (Garcia, 1977). Those who subscribe to the pluralist perspective imply that the political system is open to all groups who desire to participate; therefore, those who don’t are excluded by their own volition (Dahl, 1961). Thus, if one embraces pluralism’s tenets, then by extension it follows that peripheral or outlier groups will face some immediate levels of opportunity given that they are one of
many contenders in an arrangement where no supreme power exists. Under this guise, new or “outsider” groups would optimize their chances for success by adopting the identity and attributes of a classic immigrant group with all of its assimilative tendencies in order to achieve entrée and acceptance into the dominant culture.

In contrast, the elitist model is diametrically at odds with pluralism and provides a very different view of the distribution of power in America. In general, elitist theory proposes that power resides in the hands of a select few (usually top business and financial leaders) who basically control decisions and resources over the powerless masses (Mills, 1956). The basic assumption of “elitists” is that these few actors that hold power do so in an autonomous fashion relatively free from mass influence (Dye, 1997). In fact, not only are elite forces accused of setting agendas for mass publics, they are also implicated in stifling mass interests through nondecision-making (Barach and Baratz, 1962), and also suspect in even driving the very desires and wants of ordinary citizens (Lukes, 1974). Elite ranks are also characterized by a closed system and they are set apart by distinguishing social, cultural, economic, or ethnic characteristics (Garcia, 1977). In the final analysis, “elitist” scholars have concluded that American politics is exclusionary, systemic in nature, characterized by power relationships where all groups are not equally valued, and skewed with an upper-class bias (Schattschneider, 1960; Verba, et al., 1995; Stone, 1980 and 1989; Parenti, 1978; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). In this case, if one were to accept the “elitist” argument as valid and subscribe to its tenets then, by extension, peripheral groups would face political obstacles and structural barriers that would have to be overcome in order to achieve entry in American politics. In this scenario, groups would have few options but to adopt the attributes and strategies of an
“oppressed community” in order to “break-in” and contend for a share of the available power and resources. In the post-civil rights era we know this approach as “minority” politics.

As the above exemplifies, macro-political theories establish the parameters that govern the political system and, by extension, lay out the opportunities and limitations that exist within each configuration. Because the scope of these theories are vast, extensive, and highly generalizeable, many of the studies associated with them have been characterized by high-level, deductive approaches that start with elite entities and, from there, begin the unearthing process. This mode of analysis, by virtue of its initial emphasis on the structures and processes that form the social, political and economic epicenters of the American system, constitutes a top-down approach; therefore, by design, high-level entities are considered first and lower-level interests are considered secondarily or not at all. This methodology has obviously been applied with great success given that these two major theories have flourished from its application. However, they have also not escaped criticism for overlooking important details and protagonists that lie in the cracks and crevices of the social structure.

For example, when Dahl concluded in New Haven that no singular player or institution held cumulative power or dominated politics across domains, he was faulted for not casting his net wide enough with his high-end approach and, thereby, derided for missing the most marginalized sectors of the city. The study’s flaws were made apparent in a famous counter study by Michael Parenti (1970) (he studied a poor neighborhood in Newark) who using a bottom-up approach, started with the city’s most politically remote and disadvantaged sectors and, from there, discovered the political impotence and futility
that characterized the politics of the poor and unincorporated. His study exposed the importance of angle and perspective when engaging in theoretical propositions on a macro-scale.

Parenti’s concerns become even sharper when one attempts to incorporate and reconcile the experiences of racial minorities with the general tenets of political macro-theory. When one begins a political study with a minority premise, the flaws in conventional theory become accentuated and their application awkward. For example, among many minority scholars it is understood “that early theories on Latinos have, like Black politics, suffered from narrow perspectives and conventional bias in the social sciences” (Croucher, 1999:8). In the United States theories about ethnic and race relations have been based on a European paradigm and have focused primarily on assimilation, “or the adaptation of one group to the core culture and structure of another group” (ibid: 1999:8). The working premise in the immigrant paradigm suggests that as groups engage a new or foreign society, especially one based on the inclusive principles of classic liberalism, memories of their “old world” fade away and they quickly adapt and homogenize into the modes and dispositions of their new environment. “These assimilation works portray interaction between different ethnic and racial groups as a relatively peaceful process, a smooth progression through established and universal stages of adaptation to a core or common culture. This perspective, heavily laden with the assumptions of liberal pluralism, assumes that in the final stage of intergroup interaction social, cultural, economic, and political distinctions based on race or ethnic group identity will fade or “melt” away” (ibid.:8-9). The assimilation perspective is very much in harmony with the basic tenets of pluralism; therefore, scholars who subscribe to
it argue that all groups will eventually and inevitably be subject to a phased
transformation as depicted in the “melting pot” scheme.

For most assimilationist scholars, there is scant allowance for exceptions to their model, thus they believe that Mexican Americans should be considered an ethnic group in the manner of other European groups as described by the immigrant analogy (Skerry, 1993; Chavez, 1991). One objective argument used to justify this position is the fact that after the Mexican-American War in 1848, only about 60,000 to 80,000 Mexicans inhabited the Southwest and experienced annexation, therefore, very few Mexican-Americans today can trace their lineage back to the original conquered population (Bean and Tienda, 1987). The vast majority of Mexicans living in the Southwest today are descendants of immigrants that migrated into the U.S. in a series of waves that began around the previous turn of century. Therefore, rather than being a “conquered people” and involuntary inhabitants, the majority of Mexicans, like Europeans, were strangers in a strange land who came on their own volition and thus, faced similar conditions. Some qualitative interpretations of Southwestern history have also led scholars to adopt the immigrant argument as applicable to Mexicans. For example, historian David Montejano (1987) has argued that the availability of pliant immigrant labor in Texas for long and continuous periods essentially rendered labor controls to restrict mobility, such as vagrancy laws and pass systems, highly ineffective and superfluous. Thus, according to Skerry’s (1993) interpretation of this analysis, Mexicans were able to advance in ways that Blacks from the South could not, therefore, proving a fundamental difference in their condition and circumstance. In the end, Skerry concludes that immigration has been a driving and dominant force in shaping the Mexican experience in the Southwest (ibid.).
In addition to the above, other sociological factors have been used to ascribe the immigrant paradigm onto the experience of Mexicans. For example, data on intermarriage reveals that Mexican Americans marry outside their group at rates comparable to those documented for ethnic Europeans over the course of this century (Murguia, 1982). This, of course, has important implications with respect to the levels of dispersion and integration that occur across and between distinct populations. Along with this social means of penetration, some argue that the Latino population has also been less stymied by legal obstacles or by housing and residential covenants that have crimped Blacks from attaining greater levels of social, physical and geographic integration. The upshot of these trends is that Latinos, overall, have experienced a greater level of social integration than Blacks in American society, thereby diminishing their clout as an oppressed minority group when relatively compared to the objective conditions of the latter. Some scholars have gone so far as to compare the Latino immigrant experience with Italian immigrants because of their similar characteristics. For example, immigrants from both groups have tended to be uneducated and of rural class status, have strong kinship ties, be suspicious of outsiders, and have great respect for traditional values (Skerry, 1993).

In her controversial book, *Out of the Barrio*, Linda Chavez (1991) strongly asserts that Hispanics (her terminology), by virtue of objective data and characteristics, should be classified as an immigrant group like Europeans and that efforts to do otherwise are misleading and erroneous. She contends that sociological studies on Hispanics have consistently incorporated recent immigrant subjects into their statistical analyses, thereby depressing progress indicators in the areas of economics, education, poverty and
employment; thus, these flawed methods have left the impression that Hispanics are stunted, debilitated and the stark victims of discrimination. Perception has also contributed to this phenomenon. According to de la Garza (1996b), the continuing tides of Mexican immigrants have caused a commingling of intergenerational Mexican populations all over the United States, thereby also depressing the perception of Mexican acculturation and assimilation, and also diluting the possibilities of political incorporation. Because new immigrants are alienated and maintain large social distances from society, all Mexicans are viewed as being apathetic, disconnected and not interested in embracing the American core culture. Chavez contends that by isolating the data on native Hispanics, “real progress” can be measured through highly objective variables and that, in the final analysis, these figures undermine the notion that Hispanics qualify as a disadvantaged group or a protected class. As specific examples of her thesis, she offers the following data for native Hispanics: most Mexican-American adults have completed high school, being nearly as likely to do so as other Americans since 1965 (in Current Population Survey (CPS), cited in Chavez, 1991); the decline in poverty between 1970 and 1980 was significantly greater for Mexican Americans than it was for immigrants (Bean and Tienda, 1980); native-born earnings equate to 83% of non-Hispanic Whites, thus cutting in half the differential purported to exist for all Hispanics (in CPS, cited in Chavez, 1991); intermarriage statistics show that one-third of U.S. Hispanics are marrying non-Hispanics (Alba, 1988).

While the experience of several European groups (e.g., Italians, Jew, Germans, and Irish) who have left their homelands abroad do appear to align with the immigrant formula (although works like The Unmeltable Ethnic and Strangers in the Land, reveal
the grimmer side of this experience), this perspective, when applied to Latinos, appears insufficient. Gomez-Quinonez (1990), a Chicano scholar, argues that pluralist perspectives and U.S. history, in general, have tended to emphasize the socio-political structures and institutions that have been instrumental in bringing about form and order to a nation, and they have not sufficiently contemplated the impact and implications of conflictual politics. According to Croucher (1997:8), the assimilationist perspective “ignores the role of power, conflict, and inequality in the relations between ethnic and racial groups” and, consequently, has not accounted for the political impacts of such episodes. Latinos, in their mestizo (of mixed European and Amerindian stock) form, have been on this continent since the 15th century, and their assimilation trajectory in the U.S. has been erratic rather than linear. This is not unlike the early phases of rejection and staunch nativist resistance that other ethnics experienced as they attempted to blend into the American social fabric (see Higham, 1955; Novak, 1972). Latinos, however, while having already experienced a litany of these episodes throughout their history, continue to face political controversy and hostility in the present. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the last decade in California where Latinos, via the “wedge” initiatives, were facing a political backlash of such magnitude, that it clearly defied the expected assimilation trajectory so crucial to the “melting pot” notion. As a consequence, universal applicability of assimilationist theory may be placed into question.

Some might argue, as Chavez asserts, that cleaving off Chicano data from immigrants would yield a story that supports a smooth assimilation track; however, one cannot fully grasp the complexities of a group experience by means of a surgical analysis.
alone. Instead, to prevent bias, it requires an approach that considers a broad range of factors and subgroups that play into the process in order to understand the Latino experience in a wider context. While Chavez has uncovered some interesting data in objective social indicators to support one aspect of the Latino story, her reductionist approach (she relies almost exclusively on rational choice indicators) ignores the impact of culture, political consciousness, and other community dynamics that contribute to social and political outcomes that extend well beyond her limited database. Her narrow findings not only makes it difficult to extrapolate larger conclusions about the Latino experience in the U.S., they also call on other scholars to expand the parameters of Latino research so that a wider array of factors can be included to form broader and more comprehensive conclusions about a Latino “world view.”

Some scholars have suggested, for example, that “assimilationists” have woefully failed to include historical context as a factor in the political development of minorities and this has continued to be an egregious oversight in their works (Horowitz, 1985; Glazer, 1985; Pachon, 1985). The two cases that most defy the assimilationist perspective are Blacks and Chicanos. For example, neither group initially emigrated to the U.S. on a voluntary basis, but instead, were victims of the Atlantic slave trade and the Mexican-American War, respectively. With coercion and force serving as initial factors for the Black and Chicano experiences, it is not surprising that their political development was stunted at the outset and turned inward, away from the mainstream. A deeper look suggests even more distinctions between the experience of Chicanos and other groups. According to Gomez-Quinonez (1994), Chicanos were neither voluntary immigrants to this country like Italians, nor subjected to a forced migration like African-Americans.
The assimilation of Chicanos was more complex in that it required the deconstruction of an existing social and political order before the process of conformance to the structure and standards of the American polity was initiated (ibid.). Thus, Chicanos were not relocated but they were forcibly annexed by military conquest under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. This scenario, therefore, was not simply defined by a clash of two contrasting cultures, but instead, required an additional phase of dissolution in order to impose a new political order. Because of this, the original population of Mexicans in the Southwest was seen as more than a competitive group with “foreign” attributes; they were also seen as an enemy. This is why in the initial decades following the war, the Southwest experienced considerable upheaval and politics was played out through lawlessness, violence, and border skirmishes. Examples of this are the exploits of Tiburcio Vasquez in California and the Cortina Wars in Texas (a series of guerilla battles along the Texas-Mexico border to reclaim lost lands). These and similar incidents were commonplace from the treaty’s inception on up through the Civil War years (Cuellar, 1974), and they speak volumes about the initial reaction toward the American conquest. In Chicano historical and political circles, the era is known as the “politics of insurgency” (Circa 1845-1870).

Along with overlooking historical factors, “melting pot” theorists have also ignored the importance of contiguous geography in defining the Latino experience (e.g., the California-Mexico connection). Immigrant models have notoriously not considered the consequences of a common border with Mexico and the close proximity of other Hispanic nations that have bolstered cultural transmission and made it easier for Latinos to retain their traditional values and cultural distinctiveness (Falcon, 1988). While Blacks
in the U.S. have developed a distinctive heritage after 400 years in this country, Latinos come from a mix of culturally and politically diverse countries that makes their status in the U.S. more foreign and tenuous (ibid.). The polar economies of North America and Latin America combined with their geographic proximity, have also been important factors in fostering massive immigration waves northward, thereby inextricably intertwining the U.S. with many Hispanic nations. Glazer (1985) contends that the contemporary Mexican economic situation in relation to the United States is unique in that “no other highly developed country shares a long land frontier with a developing country,” thus creating a perpetual economic relationship. These factors have contributed greatly to the exploding Latino presence seen in places like Southern California.

These repercussions from the California-Mexico connection are becoming so overt and influential that it is hard to believe they have been disregarded by scholars who specialize in immigrant studies and ethnic relations. The implications that arise from these neglected factors are great and the complexities formidable. One such example is the diversity of sub-populations that have, at one time or another, made up the region’s inhabitants. The Southwestern has always been a region in flux, continually mixing populations of native Chicanos, recent Mexican immigrants, and the settled inhabitants who were foreign-born. It is estimated that between the Mexican revolution of 1910 and 1928, fully one-tenth of the Mexican population crossed north of the border and into the U.S. to escape the chaos and violence of their homeland (Corwin, 1973). If we account for the constancy of Latino immigration into the U.S. across several time periods, then a portrait emerges of “new” populations continually mixing with “established” communities over the course of the 20th century. The prospects of cultural cross-
fertilization in this scenario should be obvious even to the casual observer and suggest that seeing these conglomerations as leading only to a state of divisiveness and competition would be overly simplistic.

The Southwest, which was familiar in geography and customs to Mexican refugees, became a haven for them and their presence caused an inevitable commingling with the base population (Chicanos) that, in turn, led to the sustenance of a bicultural environment (de la Garza, 1996b; Gutierrez, 1995). Their attraction to each other was, in part, a cultural kinship and a mutual economic dependency brought about by their geographic limitations due to segregation and their relegation to the lowest social strata. Mario Barrera (1979) argues that one of the defining characteristics of the American Southwest was its colonial labor system that relegated Chicanos and Mexicanos to labor in ranching and agriculture, railroads, and mining. In a political sense, they were drawn together by the overt racist ideologies of White America, which held all peoples of mixed or full indigenous stock as incorrigible and inferior. In this respect, Mexicans experienced the racial disdain that has plagued the Black experience, and in the Southwest, Latinos settled in the lowest social strata with no other groups present to mediate their social distance—a fact often overlooked by race scholars. Responses to this form of persecution resulted in a number of political efforts (I will address these later in detail) crafted to form a united front against racial discrimination and other forms of ethnic ostracizing. They included the formation of mutual-aid societies (in the earlier part of the 20th century) to help Mexican refugees acculturate to their new surroundings, the formation of broadly-based political organizations open to all Spanish-speaking peoples; and the Chicano Power movement of the 1970s.
In total, the novelty of the Chicano experience demonstrates that American political and sociological theorists, by not including historical variables into their models, have painted an incomplete portrait of racial minorities in the U.S. As reflected above, the complexities driven by context and geography alone serve to muddle the picture greatly. But of equal importance, by skewing the analysis to suggest that assimilation is inevitable, as a notion it becomes an almost righteous standard of measure, thus those groups (like Latinos and Blacks) seen as social outliers are viewed as deficient in some way. This perspective on social analysis can lead scholars to explain away theoretical inconsistencies by ascribing certain faults and imperfections as inherent to minority groups. To counter these assertions, Latino scholars have contended vehemently that the conventional study of Latino politics in the U.S., and Mexican-American politics in particular, has been based largely on myths rather than historical facts (Tirado, 1970; Alvarez, 1971). For many years, prevailing political thought has ascribed to Latinos a number of endemic faults that have been used as tools to explain away their apparent lack of political engagement, participation and power. Some of these attributes include traditional culture; primary kinship systems; present-time orientations (Tirado 1970); a lack of political sophistication; an unwillingness to culturally assimilate (Santillan, 1988); apathy; [and fatalism (having a tendency to accept their situation)] (Garcia, 1988). According to Santillan (1988:99), “these outdated assumptions have often promoted the narrow view that Latinos themselves are primarily responsible for their own powerlessness,” and they have left a strong perception that internal factors are the “genuine article” for explaining Mexican-American invisibility in the political arena. Due the power of this operational premise, it is not surprising that few scholars have been
willing to launch penetrating analyses of Latinos that assess their endeavors, organizations, dispositions, and unique circumstances in order to better understand the overall context of their American experience.

As noted above, the pluralistic concept has proven to be inadequate for capturing the stumbling blocks that have littered the Latino path to assimilation, thus placing its utility as a universal explanation into question. In contrast, the “elitist” school of thought has, almost inherently, acknowledged that an array of structural, social, political and economic barriers would normally exist for poor and unincorporated groups, but many of these theories have not always been forthcoming with respect to racial and ethnic issues. That is why some social scientists, while fundamentally supportive of power elite views have, nevertheless, found them wanting on the issues of race. Among the political theories that were spawned by the elitist school of thought are coalition bias and internal colonialism.

Coalition bias, while not beginning with a racial premise, does place great emphasis on social stratification to explain how concentrated resources advantage the upper-class sector of American society and how this comes at the expense of lower-class groups (where the bulk of minorities lie) (Stone, 1986;1980). The wealthy, using their broad interests from corporate and private enterprises, establish “informal relationships” with public sector officials whereby, they gain access and privileges in civic affairs and governance (Stone, 1989). Through these informal links, institutional boundaries are transcended thereby, allowing extraneous interests to move and shape public decision-making (ibid.). As these tacit arrangements crystalize, representation takes on a select and narrow character thereby, placing narrow regime objectives above broad democratic
initiatives (ibid.). “The importance of coalitional bias for understanding minority politics is the theory’s attempt to link issues of class with those of racial-minority politics” (Hero, 1992:16). Minority status is equated with a lower social-class position, thus minorities, by default, are viewed as having less access, influence and visibility in mainstream politics, and as undesirable as a regime member or coalition partner (ibid.). As lower-class interests get systematically shut out of governmental processes, by default, minority groups are also seen as powerless, damaged, and marginalized in public affairs.

While elite theory, and particularly, coalitional bias have furthered the political debate by indirectly extending into the realm of race and ethnicity, it is deficient in considering issues shaped by history and context. For this reason, Chicano scholars, dissatisfied with the explanatory power of these two models, have advanced a third perspective—internal colonialism—as an explanation for groups involuntarily forced into American society (Almaguer 1987; Barrera 1979; Flores, 1989; Moore, 1970; Blauner 1969). Although this model is a modified version of classic colonialism, where one group of people dominate and exploit another, it is adapted to capture the unique experience of Chicanos in the United States (Garcia and de la Garza. 1977). In general terms the model is similar to elite theory, but it also includes four other major characteristics: forced entry; cultural genocide; external administration; and racism (ibid.). These elements attempt to account for the unique way in which Chicanos became part of the United States and try to establish an explanatory framework for what has happened hence. For example, many Chicanos in the Southwest did not become citizens by choice but rather were annexed through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo following the Mexican-American War. As aforementioned, Chicanos had a pre-existing
social, political and economic system that was disrupted by the imposition of American institutions and they were forced to succumb to an unfamiliar American polity (Gomez-Quinonez, 1994). Thus, colonization is thought to apply in that a deliberate attempt is made to suppress native values and orientations of the conquered group while, in parallel, subordinating and subjugating them as a result of their “differences.” Racism emerges in the populist domain when the subordinate group is seen as deficient, foreign and inferior, but even where individual racism might not manifest overtly, institutional racism would play a prominent role in establishing one group’s dominance over the other (Garcia and de la Garza, 1977). While internal colonialism served to broaden the debate and incorporate historical context, it has not been without controversy even among other Latino scholars. For example, some argue that the theory may have overstated its case by assuming the constancy of oppressive, colonial conditions in eras as distinct as the 19th and 20th centuries. Others argue that Mexicans were accorded certain rights in 19th century America that other groups like Blacks and Asians were not and, as a result, Latinos were historically advantaged in certain aspects of their absorption (in later chapters, I offer examples where this was not the case).

Despite these arguments, not all Chicano scholars have agreed with these criticisms (Acuna, 1981, Barrera, 1979), but it has led others to tweak the theory in order to improve its currency. The most recent academic version of this argument is that offered by Rodney Hero (1992) called “two-tiered pluralism.” According to Stone and Hothschild, “two-tiered pluralism describes a situation in which there is formal legal equality on the one hand, and simultaneously, actual practice that undercuts equality for most members of minority groups, even if some individuals register significant
achievements” (quote cited in Hero: 189-90). In other words, certain basic equalities and rights apply to all Americans, but because of the distinctive historical experiences and structural features of some groups, and because cultural or racial deficiencies are alleged to exist (Barrera 1979), equality is largely formal or procedural, not substantive (Hero, 1992). Thus, institutional racism continues to exist in spite of formal laws that promulgate the contrary, and only small percentages of individuals from “protected groups” break into the first-tier of governance where systemic power resides. In the final outcome, most minorities fall into lower categories or “tiers” in the political system where they function as clients and recipients of services as opposed to participating in development and agenda setting.

As aforementioned, the two polar macro-theories form the basis from which political groups in American society develop strategies that will optimize their chances as efficacious political players. Under the tenets of pluralism, ethnic groups are expected to adopt the characteristics of “classic immigrant” groups in their gradual, but deliberate march toward acceptance and assimilation. Under the elitist premise, political strategies, by necessity, are more confrontational and unpredictable so as to leave a sharper imprint on the reputations and identities of outlier groups. In the ethnic and racial context, political strategy can be so powerful that it becomes the defining characteristic of a group’s identity. For example, during the civil rights era Blacks established a distinct identity from their deliberate employment of political tactics that included mass protests, civil disobedience, boycotts and other forms of insurgency. This movement legitimized the political existence of “otherness” in American society and it profoundly impacted the formation of a Latino consciousness. By borrowing from Black political strategy and
taking an accounting of their own historical exclusion, Latinos adopted many of the
“minority” attributes of Blacks to stake their own claims for remedial action. Several
episodes of Chicano politics that challenged the status quo erupted during this tumultuous
era of politics. For example, in California, student walkouts by Chicano students
occurred to shed light on the failures of urban schools systems; in New Mexico, Reies
Tijerina challenged the courts to reclaim lost Chicano land; in Texas, Chicanos formed a
separate ethnic party, La Raza Unida, in an effort to control their own political and
economic destiny (Castro, 1974); and in Colorado, leader Corky Gonzalez popularized a
Chicano ideology of ethnic unity and pride (Vigil, 1999), “explicitly rejecting the myth of
Anglo superiority” (Hero, 1992:8).

The visibility of Latinos as civil rights contenders sustained a high enough profile
to ensure their minority status in the American consciousness. From these movements
also emerged activists and leaders that, despite moderating their political stances over
time, maintained an interest in political and policy concerns that was different and more
assertive than that of previous generations of Latinos (Munoz, 1989; Renteria, 1998).
Along with gaining the rights and privileges accorded to “protected class” groups such as
equal opportunity and affirmative action, and coverage under the Voting Rights Act,
today’s Latino leadership continues to espouse a “minority” strategy in their political
appeals and deployment. For example, Latino organizational leaders and some
Congressional representatives have been supporters of bilingual education in the public
schools (de la Garza, 1988a); have lobbied zealously against imposing employer
sanctions on immigrants (Montanejo, 1999); have successfully used the courts to
apportion Latino-majority districts and establish Latino eligibility and protection under
the Voting Rights Act (Santillan, 1988, de la Garza, 1996b); and have strongly supported affirmative action as a legal and social means to remedy past injustices. In addition, Latino leadership has been credited with utilizing internal, institutional power to quell English-only movements across many states in the nation where they are greatly outnumbered (Santoro, 1999). Thus, by virtue of taking on “Black” political attributes and strategies, and by being more visible in challenging elitist and majority interests, Latinos have forged a “minority group” standing in the larger sphere of competing groups (Rich, 1996) and in the process, have secured their standing as a protected class.

However, despite attaining recognition as a minority contender in politics, Latinos have not been regarded as the category’s stellar case, and in many respects have fallen by the wayside in political studies. When direct comparisons are made between Latinos and Blacks in political preferences, scholars find that the latter appear more uniform in their tastes and, overall, demonstrate higher levels of group-centricity—attributes that are prized in politics. For example, in survey data, Black policy preferences and party identification (Blacks are mostly align with the Democratic Party) appear very aligned and highly cohesive, often reaching near unanimity on important political indicators and policy questions (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Tate, 1994, Dawson, 1994); also, their leadership corp remains highly synchronized with the rank-and-file on most political issues, thus providing a clarity and linkage to their political platform that is next to none (Verba et al., 1995). Also, in specified studies of linked fate, Latinos have ranked lower than Blacks in terms seeing their world through a collective prism (Carpio, 2002). On the other hand, survey data on Latinos has shown some ideological and policy moderation, a lack of constraint on certain policy issues (de la Garza and Weaver, 1985; WCVI, 1988;
Dyer and Vedlitz, 1986), variations in ideology between subgroups (de la Garza, 1999), and significant gaps between the stances of leaders and activists with the constituency core (Verba et al., 1995). These findings suggest that Latinos, although ascribed with the “minority” identity, also retain a nebulous character that defies placement in an unequivocal political category. These incongruities perpetuate their reputation as a political enigma and, unfortunately, suppresses a greater interest in pursuing Latinos as a feature subject of political analysis. Therefore, in more than one sense of the word, they become an “invisible” minority.

The above suggests, once again, that normative political perspectives and predispositions have been dominant in defining where Latinos fit on the scale of political potency rather than allowing the Latino experience to define itself. Today, traditional political approaches have not relented in working the dichotomy that characterizes Latinos as either an aggrieved minority group that pressures the system for respite from aggravated conditions, or ascribes to them an immigrant persona that moves slowly but steadily along the assimilation track. When assessed against these standard models, Latinos tend to reflect unsharpened, unrefined, and underdeveloped attributes that dampen their political outlook and that derail further scholastic interest. For example, when Latinos are superimposed against the “immigrant” model for analysis, a myriad of aberrations (as cited above) crop up that simply don’t conform to the smooth assimilation track that defines the pluralist perspective. If this model’s facility was exemplary and appropriate, then why would the anti-Latino slant of the wedge initiatives arise with such fervor 150 years after Mexican socialization in this country began? The evidence of continued struggle in the Latino case is overwhelming and fails the litmus test for
pluralism and assimilation. Similarly, when Latinos are pitted against the “minority model,” they can’t escape comparison with the impervious and form-fitting politics exemplified by Blacks, thus they qualify only as a defective version of the exemplar and, consequently, remain an aberrant and understudied phenomenon. The upshot of not conforming to the dictates of dominant theory has engendered a perception that their political disposition is disjointed, irresolute, and feeble, thus unworthy of further analysis as a collective political entity. These descriptors have, unfortunately, caught on and even calcified into a kind of intractable paradigm. In the final analysis, by having been pitting against established, stalwart models, Latinos have been the victims of political science purists who have overlooked their endemic strengths and, in the process, prevented an appropriate cultural niche from surfacing.

However, for those willing to extend political parameters beyond the overt, objective participatory indicators that so often define the boundaries of what is political, there may be much more to uncover about Latinos than meets the eye. For example, at the outset, rather than putting the onus on Latinos to demonstrate a traditionally accepted form of political behavior, it might make more sense for researchers to flex and expand their research designs (even if it means including unorthodox activity or inter-disciplinary approaches) to capture the productive and dynamic aspects of Latino life before writing them off as uninteresting. This tack to contemporary political research is not new and, as aforementioned, has already emerged as an operational part of gender politics. As evidence mounts, for example, that women perceive and engage in politics in a manner quite different from men, the parameters and definitions of political action have expanded to include non-traditional forms of activity. Hardy-Fanta (1993), in her study of Boston,
found that women (Latino women in this case), rather than engaging in formal, hierarchical, and institutional forms of politics, instead applied a grassroots politics that relied on personal contacts, informal community networks, and other non-institutional forms of politicking. Her study, and others like it, have redefined the nature of gender politics, and as a consequence, legitimized its campaign to stretch and broaden the limits of what might be considered a politically viable act. This evolvement has escaped the field of minority politics, perhaps, because the dominance of Black politics has overshadowed the existence of other political modes. In the case of Latinos (and particularly Chicanos), there are so many factors that appear to support a cultural politics as opposed to a traditional political culture that it begs and warrants a more encompassing study that can merge unusual political forms into a credible analysis.

2.2 Cultural Citizenship

One concept that is showing great promise as an explanatory tool for Latino politics is cultural citizenship. Coined in recent years by anthropologist Renato Rosado, “[c]ultural citizenship names a range of social practices which, taken together, claim and establish a distinct social space for Latinos in this country” (Flores & Benmayor: 1). “[It] refers to the ways people organize their values, their beliefs about their rights, and their practices based on their sense of cultural belonging rather than on their formal status as citizens of a nation” (ibid.: 44). With culture as their operating core, excluded groups become citizens, enter the public sphere, claim their rights, and ultimately, change the society in which they function (ibid.). “A key element of cultural citizenship is the process of ‘affirmation,’ as the community itself defines its interests, binding solidarities,
its boundaries, its own space, and its membership (who is and who is not part of its ‘citizenry’)” (Inter-University Program, cited ibid.: 44). According to Gottdiener, “space involves more than a physical location or a piece of real estate, it represents rather a multiplicity of socio-material concerns that converge to create environments where people not only feel safe and ‘at home,’ but where they also have an existential and mental freedom of expression in their daily lives” (cited in Flores and Benmayor, 1997: 15). In places like Southern California, these claimed spaces and cultural centers now extend significantly beyond the traditional Mexican barrios like East L.A. and further than, for example, a “Little Italy” or a “Chinatown,” they are now extending to locales that only a few years ago were considered classic suburban communities. In my visit to America’s first mall in Lakewood, CA, this irony was not lost on me as I traversed the entire facility and hardly saw a White face in the crowd. One resident in Downey, a suburban community in L.A. Metro, expressed almost trepidation at the prospect of shopping in local malls due to the notable transition from English to Spanish in many of the area’s establishments (Hernandez interview). In this same sector of the city, while shopping at the local Wal-Mart, I was astonished to have never heard a word of English spoken by either staff or clientele, even after virtually circumventing the store’s interior.

Cultural citizenship goes beyond the traditional legal definitions of citizenship where rights, benefits, membership and responsibilities are accrued by birth or by decree of the state (Flores and Benmayor, 1997); it considers, as well, the way culture influences and shapes community identities into viable modes of existence, even if they are contrary to mainstream expectations. The factors that support a merging of culture and citizenship have always been present in the Southwest, but they have not been recognized
effectively, comprehensively, or even adequately. Populations of native Chicanos and immigrants have been commingling in this region throughout the 20th century, but most political scholars have seen them as separate groups divided by irreconcilable agendas and interests, thus prompting researchers to embrace conflict and division over all other possible scenarios (Gutierrez’ Wall and Mirrors is an important exception and will be addressed in the next chapter). Unfortunately, these biased studies have left the impression that the Chicano experience can be understood and catalogued by isolating and dissecting its separate parts, a notion that reduces and abridges a very complex set of circumstances and ignores their syncretic capacities. By treating Chicanos and Mexicanos as separate entities, no recognition was given as to how the citizen role of the Chicano interacted with the cultural role of the immigrant and vice versa. Also, because the border initially crossed Chicanos rather than the other way around, the original Mexican population could not be considered in the same class with the adventurous and undaunted immigrants who came from Europe and who were willing to risk everything to start a new life. Thus, Mexicans in the Southwest were predisposed to sustain and preserve their way of life as opposed to gravitating toward a rapid assimilation into a new and foreign culture. This fact, of course, worked to bolster cultural solidarity while, simultaneously, retarding all out assimilation. Additionally, because of the stark racism and segregation that ensued after the conquest, Chicanos and Mexicanos were relegated to the same social strata, thus they became economically, socially and politically symbiotic to where they meshed more as one entity, than not. And even after Mexican immigration started in earnest, the proximity of Mexico, the familiarity of the Southwest, and the fluidity of the border all contributed to discouraging a permanent rooting in the
U.S. These forces were shaping Chicano consciousness very early on and they have fortified Latino culture to the present day.

However, to function in daily life, Chicanos were eventually forced to adopt American values, causing them to apply and enact a range of behaviors according to the duality in which they lived. Over time, through treading this middle zone, Chicanos didn’t completely gravitate to one pole or the other, but instead, developed a hybrid identity tailored to their bicultural setting. This amorphous identity has strapped Chicanos by allowing them only partial membership in both cultures, but at the same time, liberates them to develop a new and unique identity based on the fusion of those same contrasting cultures (ibid.). In this case, fusion means the interplay, exchange and transmission of practices and mores among all three cultures (American, Chicano and Mexican), but with an emphasis on the middle part of the continuum (where Chicanos fall) where these forms condense and intensify. This process is bolstered by the interplay of variables as depicted in Figure 2, and it culminates in an interaction of culture and citizenship that produces not only social, cultural and political mergers, but at times, discord, as well. This is why border cultures contain unique blends of food, language, mores, and values that permeate not only social and economic boundaries, but cultural and political, as well. Chicanos are the living epitome of this confluence.

In general, scholars have done a good job of recognizing the social implications of cultural interplay, especially with respect to the variant traits exhibited by second generation Chicanos. For example, investigations of this cohort reveal that they are torn between the Mexican values they learn at home and the conflicting messages they receive in the public schools, thus they straddle a nebulous middle ground that lacks attachment
to a root. Some have speculated that their attempt to be Mexican and American at the same time has diluted their standing in both cultures, thereby, instigating in them a rebellious nature that rejects both. They too, experience rejection from the purer and undiluted endpoints of the cultural continuum. For example, from the Mexicano perspective, Chicanos are seen as adrift, having lost their homeland and their culture; conversely, from the American view, they are merely Mexicans, the same racial archetype that exists south of the border. Thus, in the former, Chicanos are denied their cultural inheritance and history, and in the latter, they are denied the full rights and privileges of the citizen. Therefore, in the end, through being defined and rejected by both cultures simultaneously, they are forced to develop strategies and self-defense mechanisms that promote their survival and preservation. One such strategy, for example, is the enactment of American culture in public life, and the assertion of Mexican culture in private. Thus, as the Figure 2 shows (below), social, spatial and economic distance pushes the Chicano to seek culture as a refuge and similarly, the Mexicano, whose distance is based on both cultural and legal factors, is pushed to seek citizenship. In this process, they borrow from the other what they don’t have, and in times of crisis, it can fuse their political interests.

In order to better understand how these survival strategies permeate the political domain, we must weight the relative power of exogenous factors to understand how they have influenced the evolvement of Chicano identity. For example, although the term “hybrid” is a catch phrase and a reasonably good descriptor of the Chicano make-up, it would be over simplistic to assume that on a continuum, this identity would necessarily fall midway between the two cultures. There are clear indications that certain forces
yielded more power than others in the Chicano experience and these issues must be addressed in order to break the inclination to cast them in the conventional terms of “minority” or “immigrant.” For example, the effects of racism have been underplayed in the Chicano experience, and its impact in forcing political alliances between subgroups, has not been properly developed. While historical evidence suggests that some conflict and competition existed among Chicanos and immigrants, especially in hard economic times, these issues have not been assessed in relation to their experience with Anglo racism. The historical socialization of Chicanos and Mexicanos in the U.S. is filled with evidence of deprivation, hostility and controversy that stemmed from racism, thus, in their march toward gaining citizenship, they were continually impeded by oppressive forces that curtailed their status as Americans. These obstacles took the form of repatriations, de facto segregation, political exclusion, and conflictual politics throughout the 20th century. These experiences, that truncated their citizenship status, kept Chicanos and Mexicanos relegated to the same social station, thereby, creating a common class that was further bolstered by cultural similarities. In addition to these structural limitations, the propensity of White Americans to lump all people of Mexican descent together into the category of non-White foreigners, only served to further fuel their attraction to one another. Even though the status of Chicanos in the U.S. was enhanced by a series of legal, legislative and executive decisions after the civil rights movement, a compulsory acceptance “on paper” does not equate to the membership wrought from a cultural bond. As a result, the existent differences between the two groups would likely have been mitigated and overshadowed by the greater menace of Anglo racism and, in addition, prompted them to further find refuge in their own culture. As Figure 2 shows, this
variable (racism) pushed both groups toward the middle and which creates the basis for a political intersection.
Figure 2 Cultural Citizenship Model
Although the notion of cultural citizenship has been used primarily to explain social and cultural transformations occurring throughout the world, as immigration continues at high levels in the U.S., it may have equal utility in the political arena. As immigrants settle in greater numbers within the spaces already occupied by Chicanos, their differences, when pitted against the backdrop of mainstream culture, start to fade away. As their interaction and dependence increases in these urban barrios, their social, political and economic perspectives start to broaden from the daily contact and the parallel experiences that grow from close quarters (segregation variable in chart). As the performative aspects of expressive culture grow, they create intersection points for the two groups that eventually crystallize into common political interests (ibid.). A political hedge begins to form in local and urban venues that induces social movements bound by culture, but enacted to protect the community’s material well-being. Eventually, the gap is bridged and the claims of recent immigrants and the undocumented “are given space by Latino social movements and by a counter-ideology that stresses unity between Latino citizens and the undocumented based on commonality rather than difference. These include space for the participation of the undocumented in unions, in parent struggles, and in community empowerment efforts and for a counter-discourse and counter-ideology to redefine so-called illegal immigrants as part of the Chicano-Mexicano community” (ibid:22). The social compression that stems from racism and segregation eventually produces a role interchange between Chicanos and Mexicanos that politicizes the immigrant to adopt the former’s political modes, while sensitizing the native to his mother culture and the latter’s plight (again, see figure 2). In effect, each subgroup is seeking to acquire what the other has in order to fill the cultural, spiritual and political voids that come from living in the
shadows of a dominant culture. According to Antonio Gonzalez, this interchange often happens quite starkly where the immigrant becomes more zealously “Chicano” than the native, and the native becomes an avid defender of the culture, something that immigrants take for granted (e.g., the Chicano/Aztlan movement) (Gonzalez and Regalado interview).

Perhaps the underlying cause of Latino invisibility in politics may not stem from their physical distance or their reticence to engage civic affairs, but rather, derives from the cultural barriers that appear deviant and foreign. Renato Rosaldo (1989), an anthropologist, interestingly observed that there was an inverse relationship between the concepts of full citizenship and cultural visibility. The more a people were incorporated into a national structure and exemplified the rights and privileges of full citizens, the more they appeared to lack culture. Conversely, the more culturally endowed a people appear to be, the more distanced they are from mainstream interests and all of the amenities that define the notion of full citizenship. Chicanos, while not being an extreme case of Rosado’s observation, to some degree reside in a cultural envelope that obscures them from the political limelight and that places them to the left of a “perfect hybrid” on a cultural continuum. While Chicanos have been assailed for lacking political potency and visibility, few have suggested that, in lieu, they garnered strength through a strong identity that derives from cultural security and “claimed spaces.” The cultural slant of Latinos has hindered their capital in attaining centrality in political science pursuits and, as well, the discipline hasn’t found effective ways to measure their cultural strengths in an economical way. Consequently, Latino spaces are viewed as distanced, dormant and inert, instead of places where syntheses and production are robust and vibrant. Through
these distorted views, Latinos, unfortunately, fulfill their ascribed status as the “invisible” minority. As evidenced by the text above, the cultural elements that influence the Latino condition are quite dynamic and complex, thus they defy reduction and standardization into parsimonious models. The frame that promotes a minority identity for Latinos seems reasonable enough to describe Chicano political activity, but it is only one narrow, specialized component of what constitutes Latino politics. On the other hand, ascribing an immigrant identity to Latinos not only overlooks the pre-existing society of the Southwest, it also ignores the fluidity and interactive power of culture as it extends and transforms social relationships. By fusing the best of these two frames together, cultural citizenship attains the necessary breadth to incorporate a wider scheme of possibilities and, therefore, is more amenable and adaptable to reaching new explanations while also absorbing anomalies (e.g., explaining discord when it occurs). But, in actuality, it is vastly superior to the other options by also accounting for the effect and implications of interactive variables that stem from culture, identity, class, and economies, which can form an unusual blending of political interests. Cultural citizenship, in consideration of unique circumstances, carves a more realistic space for Latinos from which studies can glean proactive and productive activity, rather than focus on their deficiencies as underscored by inflexible political models (e.g., immigrants and minorities). Also, through the theory’s emphasis on culture, it expands social perspectives beyond the limitations inherent in legal and civil rights, thereby, underscoring that pluralism, in effect, is deficient in dealing with difference and that at its core, it expects movement in the direction of adopting a set of uniform traits and attributes. Cultural citizenship speaks from the perspective of the peripheral and
marginalized in that it considers how culture may be a source of power that fills voids and vacuums that cannot be fulfilled by legal and economic means alone. It further considers realities in U.S.-Mexico relations that have led to conditions in the Southwest conducive to cultural syncretism and to the creation of hybrid communities, thus debunking notions that posit a path of universal assimilation. Lastly, cultural citizenship recognizes that the interaction of different forces that relate to culture, identity and social condition in a foreign environment and how these can socially construct a formative political bloc.

2.3 Measuring Culture Through Politics

The contributions of cultural citizenship go a long way toward recognizing some inherent differences in the Latino condition that have otherwise not been addressed by prevailing theories and models. Through its application, the possibilities for uncovering productive and robust forms of politicking are greatly enhanced; however, in another sense, the theory presents some difficulties. For example, through its emphasis on culture, which comprises a wide array of activities and behaviors, the theory poses great challenges in terms of finding variables and measurements that are reducible into parsimonious models. Culture tends to be more abstract and elusive than the standard political measurements that so often support the basis of traditional perspectives and it, therefore, challenges the process of methodological design. Thus, the researcher is left to construct a study that operationalizes culture in an economical way (something that would be quite difficult) or wait for some fortuitous circumstance that would allow for the relative power of culture to be isolated in a political context. In this author’s opinion,
the wedge initiatives constitute the latter and their advent in the nation’s most populous state provides the study with more relevance, scope, and validity.

The wedge initiatives in California, through the use of direct democracy, not only represent an interesting development in the evolution of racial and ethnic politics in the U.S., they also provide a specific view into the politics of Latinos in a way that allows for its testing at three different levels and on three distinct issues. Without even extracting a measure, these initiatives and their anti-Latino messages, underscore a backlash effect that invariably plagues bifurcated environments thus, Latinos, who preceded Anglo-Saxon settlements on this continent and already have over 150 years of socialization under American rule, continue to face rejection in this country despite their enduring contributions to this nation’s progress. Therefore, at the highest level and on the most generic terms, this scenario defies the expected blending and absorption predicted in the assimilation perspective, thereby, constituting a failure of its tenets in the most egregious way. If the assimilation model was at work, and it was a sound explanation for the incorporation of foreign groups, then the distinctions that are setting Latinos apart in California today should have disappeared long ago and faded into oblivion. Obviously, this is not the case and it raises serious questions about its utility. Nevertheless, despite this obvious discrepancy, the immigration frame should be tested against the other two frames to establish its relative applicability to Latino politics.

On a second level, the wedge initiatives and their populist attacks on Latinos, demonstrate the peripheral position of this community vis-a-vis mainstream society, thus giving credence to their “minority” status and rank and, in turn, some legitimacy to “elitist” notions of an inherently unequal power structure. At this more nuanced level of
analysis, it becomes clearer that some operative forces are housed within the text and intent of the wedge initiatives (e.g., racism, nativism, anti-minority populist politics) and that these visceral and pointed sentiments sustain a chasm that distances and marginalizes the Latino experience. Elitism and its associated “minority” frame appear to have some currency for explaining the debilitated Latino condition, but in the end, they cannot quite grasp the ethnic factor nor reconcile some of the differences that Latinos have with “Black” politics. Because of this, Latinos continue to occupy an obscure zone on the political map that perpetuates their enigmatic status and that diminishes their clout as a legitimate and unique political bloc. With Latinos now growing to unprecedented levels in the U.S. and poised to exert more political influence, scholarship is called to remedy these issues in an urgent and systematic fashion. The first step is to carefully scrutinize those political events like the wedge issues that have profound consequences for the Latino community around the country.

At the third and final level of this study, enough nuance emerges for the analysis and testing of cultural citizenship as a viable theoretical explanation for the Latino condition in the U.S. This new theory, by employing the novel aspects of the Latino experience, is more malleable as a construct and more attuned to exploring the products of interactive forces, thus it is a frame that extends beyond the boundaries of its limited predecessors. Thus, when anomalies crop-up, cultural citizenship can address these contradictions as part of its platform in ways that rigid, conventional frames cannot. Despite its apparent superiority to its sister frames, it must still hold up to scrutiny in a head-to-head comparison with dominant designations.
Now that the three competing frames have been laid out for discussion, it is time to examine them in political context to evaluate their currency. To test all three frames, I will initiate a multi-dimensional test pitting the explanatory power of each one against the Latino reaction (both electorally and non-electorally) across all three propositions. Ultimately, the propositions will form the independent variable for the analysis and the Latino response to them will constitute the dependent variable. In a cursory comparison, the conventional frames (minority and immigrant) appear to be modeled with less flexibility than cultural citizenship, therefore, initially one would think their relative strength tied to a particular proposition that reflects its bailiwick. For example, a strong response to 209 because of its programmatic slant would, in itself, suggest that Latinos retain the characteristics and attitudes of a “minority” group as defined by the typological model. However, this measure might be improved by the fact that Latino responses to the other two ballots can indirectly provide the minority frame with a measure of strength or weakness, as well. For instance, strong opposition to 187 would not support a “minority” identity given that it deals with policy for non-citizens, thus falling outside the boundaries of domestic policy, but a weak response would augment the thesis of a Chicano mentality that diverges from immigrant concerns. Conversely, for 227, a strong response would support the domestic policy concerns of the minority, but a low response would more closely reflect the immigrant frame.

In the case of the immigrant model, 227 most closely reflects its focus, therefore, a weak response to retaining bilingual education would dovetail nicely with the assimilative tendencies ascribed to this frame. In this same vein, low responses to 187 and 209 would suggest that Latinos don’t have a strong ethnic consciousness that sets
them apart, thereby, reflecting a trajectory of absorption that would be again be consistent with immigrant attributes. By invoking measures of both support and opposition to the initiatives, the explanatory power of each frame increases or diminishes depending on where the cuts occur and how strong they manifest.

In the last case, cultural citizenship which blends culture and transnational issues into a dynamic frame, nicely sets itself up to explain the contradictions that plague the 187 debate. Because culture transcends both legalities and borders, cultural citizenship is malleable enough to explain a strong reaction to 187 and, at the same time, is flexible enough to have relevance in the 209 and 227 controversies. For instance, with 187, a strong Latino response would violate the concept of subgroup fragmentation, therefore, it would have to address the involvement and engagement of both Chicanos and immigrants. In relation to traditional theory, only cultural citizenship is equipped to deal with this vexing issue. With respect to 209, its programmatic slant clearly rankles the citizenship component of cultural citizenship, but it also taps the cultural component the keeps Latinos distanced and feeling “different.” If Latinos didn’t distinguish themselves as unique, then they would not be concerned with a “special class” status or with programs that appeal to that category. With 227, which powerfully address native language, the policy concerns of citizens are inextricably paired with a cultural issue, thereby creating a profound political intersection that ideally reflects the conceptual premise of cultural citizenship. Therefore, a strong reaction of opposition would support its precepts while the opposite would empower the immigrant model. In the end, by testing the three-pronged model across the wedge initiatives, clear theoretical winners and losers emerge that bring help bring clarity to the nature of Latino politics.
To ensure that the test is comprehensive, I will address the voting patterns of all ethnic groups so that the relative position of Latinos can be placed in the proper perspective. Additionally, the activity surrounding the campaigns (Chapter Four) will be used as a qualitative measure of reaction to better put each individual initiative into context. If, in the course of their reaction, Latinos overcome poorly organized counter-campaigns on specific issues, it will serve to bolster the power of the applicable frame(s) on that initiative. Also, to further enhance the test, I will include not only employ state level data, but also urban data from L.A. County to account for the more exigent dynamics of the urban milieu. This helps to average out the potent and concentrated effects of urban politics with the more dispersed populations around the state. To conclude the study, I will evaluate the relative strength of each frame across the three initiatives and assess their utility as an explanation for these events in California.

For the purposes of this study, the wedge initiatives were fortuitous events that lent themselves to traditional political measures (e.g., protests, electoral data, polls) that support the prevailing perspectives of other theories; thus by using the standard and accepted practices that dominate political science today, an unorthodox view that enacts culture can be supported by the same means. In the end, it also helped the author eschew the difficulties of developing an organic set of measures and variables that effectively and parsimoniously operationalized culture—a task potentially too formidable to undertake. Although the wedge initiatives in California form the centerpiece of this study and, as well, the basis upon which cultural citizenship will be tested, it is important to recognize that the theory’s origins date back to events and circumstances that occurred in the early part of the last century and have continued since. While it is a fact that the theoretical
construction of this perspective is new and of recent vintage, the forces that brought Chicanos and Mexicanos together has been an on-going circumstance that has endured across all political epochs of the 20th century. Sadly, in cases past, scholarship was prone to favor the salient over the substantive; consequently, a narrow historiography inevitably led to theories that languished in the status quo. For example, much of the historical literature on Chicano politics that advanced the notions of division and fragmentation between native and immigrant groups was so dominant that it marginalized and obscured the advent of alternative thought. An excellent departure from this paradigm is David Gutierrez’ (1995) *Wall and Mirrors*, a work that undertakes the relationships of Mexican subgroups in all their complexity and, in the process, finds grounds to question the prevailing arguments of Mexican in-fighting. Not only does Gutierrez uncover new findings and expose past oversights, but he presents a historical precursor to the notion of cultural citizenship and, as a result, promotes its legitimacy through a time-tested legacy. Therefore, before launching into the research construct (the set-up is in Chapter Four and the results in Chapter Five), it is critical to understand how the arguments of fragmentation originated and how they have fared against the cultural bonds espoused by cultural citizenship. The next chapter will address these important issues by employing a Latino organizational history.
CHAPTER 3

THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONS ON LATINO POLITICS

For minorities, organizations often serve as compensatory vehicles for what they lack in mainstream circles, consequently, the ideologies that drive them can be quite pointed and definitive. Black politics is an excellent example of this phenomenon in that most of its enduring and influential organizations have retained an organic connection to the civil rights movement that either spawned them outright or gave them legitimacy in the wider political sphere. Today, organizations like the NAACP and the Rainbow/PUSH coalition not only serve as perpetual watchdogs on the civil rights front, they also engage in proactive efforts to steer legislation and sentiment toward the protection and expansion of minority rights. Their indomitable will and uniformity of purpose are a reflection of the great chasm that divided Black and White America only decades ago, and their presence and mission has served to sharpen the political cohesiveness of the wider Black community and vice-versa. Sometimes these organizations can become so prominent and influential, that they embody the traits of the larger community and actually become the vehicle by which the latter is defined. For Blacks, whose politics exhibit great cohesiveness and group-centric traits across all levels of the community, the organizational model has been an asset in constructing for them an identity as the quintessential “minority” group.
For Latinos, who have also experienced many of the same inequities as Blacks, organizations have also served to fill in the voids of their social and political experience. However, due to the incorporation of immigrants into their political calculus, they have not attained a collective uniformity in their ideology. Therefore, on the one hand, while one front of Latino politics battles relative deprivation that stems from racial and cultural discrimination for American citizens, the other arm must consider transnational issues for non-citizens whose own condition may be in relative improvement. These incongruent factors have led to the existence of a wider range of ideologies in Latino organizations even if they have not been overtly expressed by institutional mediums, and it has greatly thwarted a clear understanding of the Latino political ethos. These inherent complexities in Latino politics have not been well represented in organizational models despite the fact that, in the past, they have been used to extrapolate mass attitudes.

Today, even though the study of ethnic and race politics can boast a number of new methodologies that include elite studies, surveys, content analysis and experimental designs, Latinos can still lay claim to being understudied. As a result of this neglect, they remain victimized by theoretical retrofitting (evaluating Latinos against minority and immigrant models) due to the absence of a suitable political designation. In the end, not only have these past research strategies not enhanced our understanding of Latinos, they have also stunted its analysis by presuming the non-existence of a coherent political core—a grand indictment against any group. Unfortunately, this condition has led to a simplistic notion that they are a splintered people with limited capacity to effect political unions and, along with it, eliminated the idea of interactive subgroups serving as political catalysts. Even more surprising, much of this perception comes from the legacy of
narrow organizational studies that, despite their limitations, retain disproportionate utility in the present. And to further exacerbate the problem, these past studies overwhelmingly relied on a sliver of groups that strongly slanted toward patriotism and citizenship, thus skewing the findings toward conventional thought. As a result, they cannot be taken seriously as comprehensive explanations for Latino politics and, consequently, require further analysis.

One refreshing work that has redefined Latino politics is David Gutierrez’s (1995) *Walls and Mirrors*. In his gripping study on Latino political history, Gutierrez works outside of Skerry’s dichotomy and unearths the epicenters where the interests of Chicanos and immigrants converge. By looking across several historical epochs and assessing a wider sample of Latino organizations, the author finds that Chicanos and immigrants are inextricably tied politically and that this relationship endures across circumstances and time. Through his in-depth study, the unique political traits of Chicanos are overtly placed on the table for dissection, and what emerges is an identifiable political core that is signature Latino and unlike the politics of convention. Although, in his work, Gutierrez doesn’t dispute the existence of differences between Mexican subgroups (called “Walls” in his title), he finds that this idea has been grossly overplayed to where the image of Latinos as a loosely formed and fragmented group have been distorted. Instead, Gutierrez unearths historical examples where subgroups of Mexican heritage through culture, condition and circumstance, found purpose and commonality (called “Mirrors”)—a concept egregiously ignored by dominant perspectives. By injecting this new angle, Gutierrez helps us reshape our image of Latino politics from an inert and unclassifiable phenomenon to one with a distinctive and vibrant
character and, additionally, launches the process of examining Latinos in a new light. Although his work predated the advent of Flores and Benmayor’s (1997) Cultural Citizenship, his ideas have a striking resemblance to its precepts and may unwittingly serve as a means to validate its utility.

To further deconstruct the paradigm of division, this chapter will examine the roles and ideologies of Latino organizations in-depth, and use them to establish a basis for understanding Latino politics at the mass level. To the extent that organizations do represent the collective sentiments of a given ethnic community, to do them justice, they must be evaluated across a broad range of criteria and circumstances and probed deeply for ideological make-up. This would entail taking organizations at more than face value and placing them within the context of political trials, a strategy that often gets overlooked. This dynamic analysis should deliberately include episodes of crisis and controversy, for it is in these instances where core consciousness surfaces and the true nature of subjective perception emerge. Therefore, to shed light on these points, this chapter will look closely at organizations, but it will go beyond their official language and stated purposes and, instead, assess their reactions to dynamic and revealing predicaments. Central to this analysis will be the Gutierrez study and others that employ alternative methods to gather data, favor contextual studies over content analysis, and that look across a wider range of organizations than those relied on by traditionalists. In the end, not only do these studies help debunk the distortions we have come to accept about Latinos, they also point to the existence of contradictory forces in the community that are not necessarily offsetting and, in fact, surprisingly interactive. Through the use of political history, we begin to understand how Latinos are able to incorporate diverse
ideologies into their political organizations without totally self-destructing and, more importantly, gain a glimpse of the inner forces that drive their politics.

By acknowledging the existence of interactive ideologies in Latino organizations, the notion of an alternative explanation for Latino politics springs forth. Because “division” thesis derives from organizational studies and has been used to define mass Latino attitudes, new findings obtained from the same source (organizations) would seriously challenge its validity. Therefore, in an attempt to evaluate the accuracy of the two perspectives, this chapter will examine the arguments for each and set them up for a test at the mass level. In this regard, the wedge initiatives play a big role in that their scope ensures a broad reading of Latino politics, their content cuts across distinct policy domains, and their resolution is achieved in a controversial political climate. Additionally, because the initiatives occurred in consecutive elections, it permits the pursuit of a comparative test that, in turn, gives the findings greater lucidity. Should the Latino response to the initiatives (Chapter Five) reflect internal division and discord, this would generally support the conventional organizational models of Latino politics since they draw their purpose and mission from this pretext; however, a more cooperative scenario among subgroups might support the precepts of developing theories like cultural citizenship where subgroup dynamics foment political action. These findings would not only debunk past misconceptions, they could also establish a template for recalibrating how Latinos will be studied in the future.

3.1 Conventional Theory in Latino Political History

The studies of political history in the Southwest, whether deliberately or not, have often been in tandem with the conventional theoretical strains used in this analysis,
therefore, any studies that offer an alternative must account for these views. To
demonstrate how unusually Latinos have been treated by scholarship, it is necessary to
begin with the Mexican Revolution of 1910. In the decades following the revolution it is
estimated that one-tenth of Mexican population crossed over into the U.S. to escape the
anarchy and chaos that was gripping the Mexican nation. Because of these massive
immigrations waves into the U.S., many initial accounts of the Mexican experience were
either narrow in focus or virtually non-existent. For example, most Chicano accounts of
that era tended to focus on Mexicans as refugees or migrants, thus by being cloaked in
international politics, they were not treated as typical immigrants. As a result, a
perception arose that most of these Mexican émigrés were only of temporary status and
that upon attaining the restoration of order and stability in Mexico, they would return
promptly to their homeland. As a result of these special circumstances, Mexican
populations were not taken seriously as a permanent force in the U.S. thus, in political
studies, there was little effort to merge labor issues with citizenship rights. This fact
suggests that, from the outset, the Latino experience was not considered in an
“immigrant” light. However, as many Mexicans found the pay and opportunities in
America agreeable to their self-interests, many chose to stay and become citizens, thereby
commencing the process of acculturating to American values.

As more Mexican nationals became permanent residents and citizens in the U.S.,
they spawned a new generation of children that socialized exclusively on American soil.
The members of this generational cohort were cultural hybrids if ever such a category
existed. Their experience was defined by a duality where Mexican culture dominated the
home life while American values were inculcated in the schools (Gutierrez, 1995). In
retrospect, this cultural merger may represent the very foundation of Chicano consciousness in the U.S., but it may have been somewhat overplayed as a seminal turning point in their political and social identity due to the integrative effects of WWII. For Chicanos, as with many others, the war effort provided greater economic opportunities and allowed for greater levels of investment and engagement in mainstream society, thus their social and material status realized a noticeable improvement. As their acculturation process merged with the war’s social transformations, on the surface they appeared to be establishing a distinct niche that distinguished them greatly from recent immigrants.

In Mexican American political studies, the war years have been touted as an important crossroads in Latino political development and, as well, a crucial turning point in Chicano consciousness. Rather than remaining in the racial typecast of passive and disconnected people that Anglos had ascribed to Mexicans as a whole, Chicanos were realizing a new existential identity that was formed by the unique circumstance of having an American experience within the confines of a cultural homeland. As a small minority of Latinos began to enter the middle class, this identity was sharpened by expanded citizenship roles, increased political activity, and organized political development. These developments marked for Chicanos a definitive shift toward addressing policies and issues that directly impacted the domestic condition of their communities. A number of scholars have attempted to label this period in such a way as to capture a prevailing political motive. For example, Villareal (1988) summarized it as a period of accommodation and social change; Garcia and de la Garza (1977a) describe it as an era of adaptation and politicization; and Barrera (1985) speaks of it in terms of egalitarian
politics. In the end, each of these assessments was attempting to key in on the emerging Chicano consciousness as it worked to reconcile outward success in the U.S. with the larger interests of its disparate parts.

This assertion of a new “Americanized” identity has been used by both theoretical camps (pluralism and elitism) to support and validate the currency of their respective theories. For example, for the power theorists, the new identity and specific political agenda that Chicanos were now declaring was reflective of a new and unique political base that saw itself as distinct from mainstream America. Through ethnic-based labor movements (see Garcia, 1989, Kasiaficas and Torres, 1999), court battles to end segregation in Southwestern states (see Ramos, 1998, McWilliams 1948, Garcia, 1989), and the formation of Spanish-speaking organizations (see Gutierrez, 1995; Ramos, 1998;), Chicanos were early-on exhibiting the traits of a minority group that saw itself as excluded and marginalized from the core American society. Although the Mexican-American political movement of the WWII era didn’t attain the fervor or national prominence of Chicano Power, the cumulative effect of robust political activity at the regional and local levels, nevertheless, evidenced the existence of a vibrant and discernable political consciousness (See Garcia’s, Mexican Americans for numerous examples). As an increasing number of these events have been chronicled, many have concluded that this form of politicking actually represents a precursor to the Chicano movement that came decades later (Garcia, 1989; Kasiaficas and Torres, 1999). Thus, for power elitists, Mexican-Americans were already on a path that would lead them to assume the postures of “minority” and “protected class” in later decades.
For pluralists and assimilationists, these events were translated in a much different way. As Chicanos increasingly filled vacancies in the military and war industries, the first signs of a Latino middle class began to emerge as a distinct economic and political entity. As this identity sharpened, Chicanos sought full acceptance in American society and began their quest to achieve equal rights and equal protection under the law, a trajectory not exactly aligned with immigrant concerns. Thus, for pluralists, the evolving Chicano identity, rather than being tied to social distancing, was instead, a flowering of citizenship that could be directly tied to the forces of assimilation and adaptation. By taking this view, assimilationists, instead of focusing on the divide between Chicanos and mainstream America, instead accentuated the Chicanos’ Americanization and their imminent disconnect from the immigrant community. Ultimately implied in this scenario was that Chicano issues no longer intersected Mexicano concerns, therefore, their future would be staked on their ability to adapt and assimilate, even if it conflicted with immigrant interests.

This notion of divide between Chicanos and Mexicanos has crystallized into a powerful paradigm and it continues to influence the way we see Latinos. In fact, a number of political histories have promoted the idea that assimilation was the primary objective of Chicano politics and organizations instead of one option in an array of choices (Woods, 1940; Garcia, 1984; Barrera, 1985; Marquez, 1987, 1988, 1989). If one looks at the condition Chicanos were facing, on the surface, this idea appears to have merit. For example, one study in Texas concluded that “the wave of Mexican immigration coming [from Mexico] had led to a fear on the part of middle class and White collar Chicanos that they would be swamped by the new arrivals, and that their
own precarious status would be undermined if the dominant Anglo population failed to differentiate them from the working-class immigrants” (Woods, 1940:21). Thus, in order to shed this burden, many Chicanos turned to organizations such as LULAC and the GI Forum that espoused full assimilation to legitimize their status as citizens. This resident sentiment in the community is consistent with a belief that Anglos would not accept people who were strongly linked with the Mexican culture, therefore, it translated into a social and economic pressure to change and adapt identity in order to better fit into American life. The strategy of adopting assimilation politics seemed to be the path of least resistance and it also aligns with the rational choice models that form the mainstays of pluralist and assimilationist theory. In retrospect, the manner in which these pressures permeated Latino politics speaks volumes about how important culture and economics were to the Mexican experience in the U.S., and it exemplifies how even a democracy can wield tremendous pressures to conform.

As stated above, in an effort to capture the essence of this movement and the prevailing attitudes that drove it, earlier scholarship placed great emphasis on the organizational aspects of Chicano politics as an explanatory tool. It is likely that this methodology dominated due to the nascent state of behavioralism at the time and to the general scarcity of alternative studies in the same epoch. Thus, within this frame of analysis, organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the GI Forum, considered model representations of Mexican-American politics in its heyday, took a prominent position on the political mantle. These organizations represented much more than one aspect of Latino political development, they became emblematic of a middle-class movement that sought to assimilate Latino populations into
American culture as rapidly as possible. And despite the limited utility that an 
organizational study can bring to the measurement of mass attitudes, at that time, it 
represented the most salient manifestation of political consciousness that existed thus, as 
an ideology, it was accepted as broadly held by Chicanos throughout the Southwest 
(Gutierrez, 1995). Ultimately, this ingrained perspective on Latinos has obscured the 
other aspects of their political core that recognized difference and discrimination and it 
has often steered discourse and investigations away from issues like culture and social 
distance.

Given the historical slant presented above, it is not surprising that conventional 
perspectives dominated the analysis of Latino organizations and, by extension, defined 
their politics. One prominent political organization founded in the nascent stages of 
Latino politics and deemed as emblematic of its time is the League of United Latin
American Citizens (LULAC). By looking at LULAC through a traditionalist perspective, 
there is little doubt that its platform reflected the tenets of the classic immigrant model 
and, by extension, the pluralist view. According to Garza, Garcia and Sandoval, 
“LULAC’s politics was that of assimilation and accommodation, with the major goal to 
reform American society and fit in with the White majority” (cited in Marquez 1993:1). 
LULAC had no problem with people retaining a pride in their ethnic and cultural 
heritage, but they wanted it clearly understood that Mexican-American allegiance was to 
the U.S. and its institutions first (ibid.). More specifically, LULAC members advocated 
the acquisition of the English language, loyalty to the United States, and participation in 
American civic and social activities (ibid.). In addition, they were economically 
conservative, strongly espoused American ideals in their ideology, and they even adopted
a world view that individual initiative and achievement were central to the collective realization of the American dream (ibid.). These sentiments are consistent with the processes and perspectives advanced by assimilationist scholars where groups gradually lose their distinctiveness as they get absorbed by a dominant culture (Gordon, 1964). In effect then, LULAC was the embodiment of the assimilation model.

Similar to LULAC, organized Latino politics was also boosted by the entrance and involvement of a new political interest—Chicano veterans. As previously mentioned, the war effort served to invest and integrate many in the Chicano community into critical elements of American society. However, this honeymoon was short-lived, and as veterans returned from the war, they were disillusioned to find their people still denied a stake in American dream. “The standard interpretation is that Chicano veterans returned to society to find that the democratic ideals for which they had fought were not realized for their own people” (Cuellar, 1969:16). This feeling of inequality and relative deprivation stung Chicanos particularly harshly given that their military service as a people had been one of distinction and honor. In World War II, for example, they were awarded the most medals of valor per capita, suffered disproportionate losses in relation to their population, and were never charged with a desertion, cowardice, or treason (Camarillo, 1984). The uneven treatment of Chicanos in both the military and civilian sectors generated a common plight and purposive goals for all who had tasted the opportunities created by the war effort thus, the groundwork had been laid for organizational activism in the political arena. Out of this experience, arose a merger between veterans and political activists who now sought to retain the material gains Chicanos had achieved during the war and to, furthermore, attain an equal footing and
stake in American society. The organized representation of this union became known as the American G.I. Forum.

Despite the fact that the GI Forum initially organized around material benefits for veterans, it’s constitution was also assimilationist in nature in that it was patterned after other veteran groups that placed great emphasis on patriotism and vowed to “secure the blessings of American democracy” through strictly non-violent means” (Ramos, 1998:5). They further had three other stipulations in their aims and objectives that identified them with reform and not insurgency: “Preserve and advance the basic principles of democracy, the religious and political freedoms of the individual, and equal social and economic opportunities for all citizens”; “Uphold and maintain loyalty to the Constitutions and flag of the United States; and “Preserve and defend the United States of America from all enemies” (ibid.:6-7). While the GI Forum, because of its strong ties to veterans, was considered more as a special interest group with narrow policy objectives, its parallels to LULAC were undeniable and further bolstered the notion that Mexican-American politics and assimilation politics were one and the same.

3.2 Walls and Mirrors

While the above organizations have been held up as defining Latino politics in the Mexican-American era (refer to this above), not all scholars were convinced of its clean conclusions. One of those scholars is David Gutierrez. In his riveting work, *Walls and Mirrors* (1995), he takes the work of Chicano historians and meshes it with political science to produce an excellent alternative account of the Chicano political experience. In his study, Gutierrez does not dispute the divisive aspects of the Chicano and immigrant experience (what he calls “walls”) but, instead of dwelling on that theme exclusively, he
cultivates a new perspective of their relationship by seeking out and including the forces and variables that breed solidarity and fellowship (called “mirrors”). Through his approach, emerges a compelling account that not only explores the complexities and paradoxes of cultural encounters; it offers a new vision of Chicano politics that dovetails with the proactive elements of cultural citizenship. Gutierrez not only questions past methodologies, he offers evidence of subgroup unity and commonality from a variety of sources and, in doing so, upholds the concept of La Raza as a functional, corporeal entity that sometimes arises from forces as seemingly incompatible as culture and citizenship.

In his analysis, Gutierrez diverges from the themes of division (all based on organizations) and invokes a number of compelling push factors such as poverty, racism and segregation that brought Mexican subgroups together into a common condition and cause. Although these groups may have had conflict in competing for space and jobs in their neighborhoods and private lives, because they were relegated to the same industries and social station, at the point of contact with the Anglo world they often formed the same united front. Thus, while in their own segregated venues, nuanced differences between the subgroups where obvious and detectable, in their public roles where collective issues are brokered and negotiated, they were essentially one common body lobbying for the same rights and privileges. Given the segregation they experienced in their social, physical and labor environments, it is easy to see how their own internal discord would have trivialized into irrelevancy when faced with issues of survival. Although Gutierrez was obviously impressed with this idea, he stopped short of accepting it at face value and looked to other methodologies to reinforce his thesis.
In a departure from organizational case studies and to capture a sense of social attitudes from an earlier epoch (interwar period), Gutierrez first turned to the personal papers of early immigration scholars like Taylor, Bogardus, and Gamio to gather a sense of how immigrants and Mexican-Americans viewed their world in those trying times (Chapters two and three of *Walls and Mirrors*). Through extensive contact with both subgroups, these scholars consistently encountered ambivalent feelings from both populations that often bordered on resentment. A common complaint of immigrants was that Chicanos were trying too hard to act like Americans and they would ridicule them as people who had lost their country and culture. In the same breath, however, they would acknowledge their economic and social dependence on Chicanos and recognize their relative closeness to them both socially and culturally. Similarly, while Mexican-Americans blamed immigrants for labor competition and low wages, they were reluctant to ostracize them given the memory of their own difficult struggles at the bottom of the social strata. Despite their differences, there was an obvious cultural thread that tied them together and this bond was only made stronger by the racial rejection that ruled the day. For immigrants, attaining acceptance by Anglo-Americans seemed a universe away, so casting their lots with the Chicano was a resigned acknowledgement of reality in their new world. In the end, the immigrant displayed a pervasive acceptance that the Chicano was in the same social circumstance in which they found themselves and, in some ways, considered them worse off. For example, many immigrants resisted naturalization expressly because citizenship seemed to offer few to no advantages for the Chicano. Also, as immigrants, they could at least claim some modicum of protection from the Mexican Consulate when all else failed.
Despite the much-publicized antipathy Chicanos wreaked on immigrants for being their primary competitors in labor, in hard times, it was the Chicano who extended a helping hand to immigrants who literally had no recourse. The kinship between the groups was evidenced by extremely high intermarriage rates and by the reluctant admittance by immigrants that Chicanos were part of their larger family called la raza.

As Mexican sociologist Manuel Gamio (1971:130) observed:

Notwithstanding these differences in point of view between the Mexican immigrants and the Mexican-Americans—differences which in reality are of purely superficial formal nature—both groups consider themselves as together composing that body called by them “The Race”; both are called Mexicans by White Americans; they live together in the same districts; they belong to the same social stratum; they talk the same language; they wear the same clothes and possess the same needs and ideals; and most significant of all, they frequently intermarry.

In later studies, similar sentiments were expressed by Chicanos on the immigrant question. When de al Garza et al. (1988b) performed an attitude study on immigration policy, he found that Anglos relied on media and opinion leaders to formulate their position on the matter. In contrast, Chicanos formed their conclusions about immigration on personal contacts with the immigrants themselves, and cultural affinity was found to significantly impact their position on the issue. This suggests that the effects of direct contact should not be underestimated as they likely have by most conventional studies and, that in controversial settings, they should be given more weight.

In considering the above, it is clear that assimilationists not only ignored the contradictory and paradoxical complexities that can accompany cultural clashes, they also neglected factors that are antithetical to their conclusions. For example, despite the fact that there existed numerous forces with unifying capacities such as culture, racism, geography and language, these were still glossed over as unimportant in the overall political scheme. The fact that Chicano culture resides in an area that is contiguous with
its mother country is alone a compelling reason to question assimilationist arguments but, in addition, its continual replenishment and rejuvenation due to robust immigration only accentuates their error. And, add to these the qualitative issues of rejection and racism that dominated their socialization, and one can but scarcely conclude that culture and social condition must have made Chicanos and Mexicanos peers in a common struggle. Instead of pursuing these leads to their fruition, scholars latched on to the theme of division between Chicanos and Mexicanos despite evidence that it’s support came solely from narrow and biased organizational studies. The upshot of these academic choices led scholars to believe that, as a political entity, Latinos were adrift and formless, and that their agency had been stripped away. Because many of these notions hardened into truth, recent Latino scholarship has been consumed with deconstructing and rebuilding the story with fresh viewpoints. In considering the historical evidence presented above, it seems quite absurd that political analysis would have failed to incorporate these important experiences into their conclusions, and even more egregiously, allow a narrow methodology to dominate the thinking of Latino studies.

By providing simple reflections from ordinary immigrants and looking at the realities of their environment, Gutierrez has, with one stroke, challenged the paradigm of political bisection as too simplistic. By drawing out the mixed and ambivalent feelings as expressed by both groups, forces of attraction are indicated that transcend not only organizational boundaries, but national ones as well. But what makes his work even more compelling, is the fact that he challenges the paradigm of “division” on the same grounds on which it is based. By drawing on his own analysis of organizations, he debunks the thesis of division and replaces it with a broad model of political fluidity that
incorporates a wider range of ideological views. Furthermore, by injecting the notions of
duality and ambivalence onto the Latino consciousness, and by observing how they play
out in actual events, a politics of ebb and flow emerges that directly contradicts one of
rigidity and conflict. And interestingly, in these political shifts, there are numerous
instances when Chicanos and immigrants are brought together as an ethnic group with
common political interests.

One of the first sectors where this political affinity manifested occurred in labor.
As Mexicans became a stable part of the American labor force and joined institutions in
greater numbers, labor unions began to take up their cause. Because the labor structure in
the Southwest was cleaved into a pecking order based on race, it wasn’t that difficult for
unions to rally workers toward a cause and to form around the system’s natural dividing
lines. One of the seminal examples of organized Mexican labor occurred in November
1927 when a committee of mutual-aid, fraternal and beneficent societies called for the
formation of Mexican trade unions “to combat inferior wages and working conditions in
Southern California” (Gutierrez:103). “By 1928, two thousand Mexican and Mexican-
American immigrant workers had joined together to form the Confederacion de Uniones
Obreras Mexicanas (CUOM), which was modeled closely after Mexico’s largest labor
organization, the Confederacion Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM)” (Gutierrez:103).

Initially, CUOM bargained for the typical bread and butter issues found on most
union agendas, but the deplorable wages and working conditions that Mexicans were
facing tilted the organization toward an ethnic and class struggle (ibid.). In fact,
conditions were so poor for Mexicans that CUOM advocated, as LULAC had, that
immigration be stopped or curtailed until Mexican labor conditions reached par with
American labor. However, the most surprising aspect of CUOM was not their stance on immigration, but rather, their view on cultural issues. Instead of calling for rapid assimilation as espoused by other Mexican-American organizations, CUOM encouraged the maintenance of ethnic solidarity among Mexicans whether they were citizens or not. This doctrine, in a sense, implied that Mexicans would not be accepted as equals in American society thus, through self-segregation and cultural maintenance they could attain some sense of refuge in a hostile society.

In time, this political fusion coalesced into a working partnership and established the foundation for a more expansive labor ideology that placed greater emphasis on the rights of immigrants. The most important manifestation of this new political direction was the founding of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) in July 1937 (ibid.). UCAPAWA not only sought to include more Mexicans and women in the labor movement, they also set important precedents in addressing the Mexican immigrant question (Ruiz, 1987). For example, “in a sharp departure from virtually every previous major American labor union, UCAPAWA from its inception argued that resident immigrant workers had a right to work in the United States and to participate in the American labor movement “(Gutierrez, 1995:110). No other union had so boldly considered the notion of organizing undocumented and illegal immigrant workers on such a large scale. By recognizing the Mexican’s diminished status in the U.S. and by expanding membership to include all subgroups, the unions were creating a common political interest among all Mexicans, regardless of their formal status. As these unions engaged critical quality of life issues, it is easy to see how these endeavors would have superceded and even trivialized the extant differences between
Chicanos and Mexicanos thus, further blurring the lines between the two. And, it is also interesting to note that, despite the ideological differences between CUOM and UCAPAWA, neither could establish an effective political posture without incorporating the issues of culture and immigration into their agenda. Also, when tested against time, these critical concerns remain as integral to Latino politics today as they were then.

As the effects of WWII raised Latinos to new levels in American society, labor unions began to give way to more community and politically oriented groups that sought unification of all Spanish-speaking peoples. “Undoubtedly, the most important of these new organizations was El Congreso de Pueblos de Habla Española (the Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples). Organized in 1938 by a coalition of labor and local Mexican American and Mexican community activists, the congress represented one of the most dramatic examples of an expanding range of attitudes among ethnic Mexicans on the broad issue of immigration, civil and political rights, and the general status of the Mexican-descent minority of the United States” (Gutierrez, 1995: 110). Not only was El Congreso’s platform broad, but through union connections around the country their membership was widely disbursed, attracting nearly 1000 delegates to their First National Congress in Los Angeles in 1939 (ibid.). According to conference literature, the agenda placed great emphasis on the issues of education, housing and health, discrimination and segregation, and the complex issues involved in citizenship and naturalization (In Camarillo and La Opinion, cited in Gutierrez, 1995: 111-12). “The platform broke new ground in a number of areas, but the group’s most important contribution was its insistence that all Spanish-speaking people—citizens and aliens alike—work together to better their conditions as residents of the United States. Delegates at the convention
issued a resolution calling for a congressional investigation into the deplorable conditions facing the nation’s Spanish-speaking residents” (Gutierrez, 1995: 112).

In actuality, the basis for El Congreso’s existence and ideology was directly tied to racism, segregation and discrimination. The stratified nature of American society that kept the Mexican strapped in the working class in good times and made them the object of antipathy in bad, often served to fuse interests of native and immigrants into a common plight. El Congreso’s philosophy to unify the Spanish-speaking people was a legitimate political sentiment spawned by the obvious chasm between Anglos and Latinos in American society. While material issues such as “discrimination in employment, differentials in wage payments, discrimination in relief, lack of cultural opportunities, and the lack of civil and political rights” (from McWilliams papers, cited in Gutierrez, 1995:112) were included in El Congreso’s platform, in a larger sense they were more a representation of the contradictions that plagued the Spanish-speaking peoples in the U.S. Their charges of hypocrisy and neglect resonated more strongly because of the known contributions Latinos had made to war efforts against tyranny (both in the killing fields and in the agricultural fields), and because they amplified the failure of democracy at home. “Rather than arguing, as LULAC’s leaders did, that unrestricted Mexican immigration was primarily responsible for creating and perpetuating these conditions, congress leaders were straightforward, arguing that Americans themselves must accept responsibility for the ethnically bifurcated and increasingly polarized society that had evolved in the American Southwest. It is here that the congress parted ways most dramatically with the advocates of assimilation and Americanization” (Gutierrez: 112-13). “Instead of demanding that Mexicans prove their loyalty to American values, ideals
and institutions, congress members argued that Americans themselves should begin to live up to the high democratic standards and principles they claimed to venerate” (ibid.:113). Indeed, as they saw it, hard-working Mexican American and Mexican immigrant laborers had already earned the right to an equal place in American society: they insisted that it was “the American people, all of them [who] owe an enormous cultural and physical debt to the Spanish-speaking people” (quoted from Galarza papers in Gutierrez, 1995:112-13).

Again, this was another example of where Mexican subgroups, feeling exploited in a number of industry segments, joined together to establish a unified agenda rather than diverging into distinct identities. The fact that El Congreso emphasized language as a unifying factor for political ends, demonstrated that they were not concerned with the differentials in legal status, but rather, driven by a common cause that was bound by culture and their materially diminished state. While these Chicano activists were well attuned to the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the citizen and espoused an agenda of domestic betterment, they could not cleave off the immigrants who were in the same compartment and status as themselves. For Americans, tapping immigrant labor from loosely formed immigration policy was a win-win situation because it represented cheap labor in undesirable occupations; for immigrants, it represented a safety valve from the poverty in their homelands. From the Chicano standpoint, however, the mass use of labor merged immigrant interests with their own experience, thereby, entitling the latter to receive the full rights and privileges of American workers. From their diminished social and political station they could not divorce immigrant concerns from their own, so their platform had to reconcile this foreign presence with legal and domestic rights.
Looking across time, the immigrant factor, in one way or another, has been an integral part of Chicano (and Latino) politics and as the conflict extends to mass politics (i.e., the wedge initiatives), that connection is given reason to strengthen rather than decline.

In the examples above, Gutierrez has offered counter-ideologies drawn from alternative, yet significant, organizations of their times thus, he effectively challenges the traditionalists not only with expanded methods, but on their own terms. Through his extended analysis, questions arise that challenge the notion of a one-dimensional trajectory leading to division and, consequently, political fracture among Mexican subgroups. However, in addition to supplying alternate organizations to debunk the prevailing notions of community division, Gutierrez also re-examined the same middle-class organizations that had been responsible for its supposed utility to underscore his point. According to his findings, the salience of political organizations in this era was mistakenly perceived as a representative ideology for the entire Latino community when, in fact, it may have only held by a small percentage of the population. Perhaps the passivity, inactivity and absence of other sectors of the community were misread as a tacit acceptance of the assimilation philosophy. However, this notion fails to consider that alienation and withdrawal were very “real” responses to a the dominating environment of that era (Hero, 1992).

A second look at organizations like LULAC and the GI Forum reveals that the literature, at best, treated them inadequately and one-dimensionally. Despite the fact that both organizations have often been characterized, by some, as accommodationist institutions, only the more nuanced and penetrating studies have captured the internal ambivalence that resided among members and their families. As aforementioned,
although LULAC asserted their allegiance to, and framed their constitution around core American principles, they were quite forthright in condemning racism as the bane of democratic society and acknowledging its existence in America. LULAC formed when south Texas was being flooded by Mexican immigrants, and in a sense, they were trying to disassociate their own membership (middle-class Mexican Americans) from the discrimination, prejudice and racism that was being experienced by immigrants. But by reproaching racism, espousing the abolishment of illegal segregation, and recognizing that much of Mexican American poverty was due to discrimination, LULAC encompassed the struggle of all Latin people who were treated as unequals in the larger American society. “Trying to reconcile these values and goals with the realities of race relations at the time pulled the group in three different and often contradictory directions” (Marquez, 1993:21). In one sense they were an activist group seeking to end discrimination, in another sense they were an ethnic political booster, while in a third way, they sought to establish a conservative social lifestyle for their members (ibid.).

In the harsh racial environment of south Texas, however, Mexicans of all backgrounds were so distanced and segregated that it undermined LULAC’s efforts to sustain a homogenous membership based on class-distinction. Despite the fact that the Latino community was made-up of a complex array of interdependent interests that included natives, the foreign-born, permanent residents and illegals, little to no regard was given to them as influential forces in LULAC’s politics. The high intermarriage rates alone were creating extended families that ranged from the most assimilated groups to the most culturally isolated, thus diversifying the internal structure of the Latino community and, as well, variegating LULAC’s membership. Thus, with class and
cultural lines blurred, the thrust of LULAC was more a cacophony of competing interests than one unified voice. Within members’ own families there was plenty of discord and ambivalence with regard to the question of citizenship versus culture, and not all were convinced that sacrificing their heritage for acceptance and assimilation was a favorable strategy (Gutierrez, 1995). These mixed feelings even permeated LULAC’s leadership, and on a number of occasions, the costs and cultural trade-offs related to attaining integration were openly questioned by the organization’s national leadership (ibid.). These incongruent sentiments even manifested in the language of their formal documents, thus exposing an institutional vulnerability that could be politically damaging. For example, while their constitution espoused a strong loyalty and allegiance to the U.S., at the same time, their goals and objectives denounced the evils of discrimination thus, implying the existence of racism and inequality. In reviewing the above commentary, it is evident that many ambiguities accompanied Latino life and influenced their politics throughout their history in the U.S., but in the end, what is most astonishing is how few have attempted to incorporate these issues into their political analysis.

The inner-conflict created by immigration policy manifested actively in the conduct of Latino politics and it sometimes split organizations like LULAC into two opposing factions. For example, when Congress passed the Internal Security Act of 1950 and the McCarran-Walter Act in an attempt to secure U.S. borders, it’s passage was lauded by many Chicanos because of its stricter guidelines regarding entry into the U.S. To many in LULAC’s membership, uncontrolled immigration along the southern border was the main contributor to stunting the economic advancement of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest thus, any effort to tighten that process was initially received with great
enthusiasm. However, when the provisions of the act reached the implementation phase, they took the form of vigorous INS sweeps across the Southwest (called “Operation Wetback”) and resulted in the summary deportation of many immigrants, including those who had been here long-term. As it became evident that Mexican immigrants were taking a disproportionate hit in these raids and that families were being torn apart by the deportations, a chorus of resentment arose across all stratas of the Latino community, up to, and including its most conservative organizations. The ensuing outcry prompted LULAC to pass a resolution to condemn the McCarren Act at their annual convention in 1953 and to outright oppose it as “oppressive and unjust” at the next national convention (Gutierrez, 1995). Eventually, the internal opposition to the Security Act became so great that, in some quarters of the organization, a call was issued for the government to extend amnesty and legalization to immigrants rather than expulsing them to Mexico. This stance on immigration was unprecedented in the organization’s history and in diametric opposition to its original tenets.

These ambivalent sentiments also permeated the GI Forum and divided it in much the same way as LULAC. In the early 1950s, at the same time that LULAC was pushing for immigration control, the GI Forum launched their own campaign to stem border crossings by criticizing state and federal agencies for not enforcing immigration laws. However, when “Operation Wetback” went into effect full-force to deport Mexicans, instead of supporting it whole-heartedly, the organization found itself protesting and criticizing the heavy-handed tactics being used in the operation by Immigration Service police. This was an extension of a larger conundrum as expressed by Ramos in his integral study of the GI Forum:
balancing the competing interests of stricter immigration law enforcement with expanded rights for Mexicanos was a complex, sometimes painful undertaking for the GI Forum. But the organization’s own internal contradictions, as much as the complexities of government immigration policy, compelled it to try. Rank and file Forum members were highly patriotic and essentially conservative. They believed for the most part that U.S. jobs should be reserved for American citizens. Conversely, as Mexican Americans with strong familial, linguistic, and cultural ties to Mexico, Forumeers felt a special kinship to a responsibility for braceros and other Mexican workers in the United States. Inevitably, these sentiments were difficult to reconcile (Ramos, 1998:73).

Indeed, the ambiguities Latino organizations experienced in their struggle to improve the lot of their compatriots was simply incorporated as a way of life. Debates and disagreements abounded between Mexican Americans with respect to the “American” ideologies professed and advanced by LULAC and the GI Forum, and often these splits reflected dissention about how la raza (the race) should be viewed. For some, the Mexican people would always be defined as one group of a larger conglomeration bound by a common language, heritage and purpose (la raza); consequently, these advocates lobbied for the preservation of their cultural and historic past. For others, La Raza represented a group reaching new thresholds in existential identity and working to carve out space in a foreign environment, thus the future of Latinos was bound by political necessity and citizenship over all other forms of concordance. Within this ideological clash of citizenship and culture, the presence of immigrants neutralized the ability of Chicanos from establishing a purely domestic agenda and, therefore, maintaining a strict minority stance. On the other hand, their notoriety accentuated the racial and cultural markers that distinguished Mexicans from other Americans, thus preventing the assimilation process from full acceleration. As many political groups emerged to represent Chicano interests, they had to integrate these competing views into their agendas so that despite its ambivalent nature, it could endure over time. At the core
level, this interaction can and does ignite as evidenced by the powerful Latino reaction to the wedge initiatives in California. The reaction to Proposition 187 is an especially pointed example of this functional nucleus at work, but it also appeared in other historically distended issues that drew in the width and breadth of the Chicano community.

A more proactive example of this dual mindset and ideological merger was exemplified by the Community Service Organization (CSO), a political group founded in 1947 in Los Angeles. From the start, CSO’s mission concentrated on mobilizing those sectors and groups that were powerless or poorly represented in democratic politics, so they were willing to experiment with different strategies to accomplish their ends. For decades, the Mexican community in Los Angeles had been neglected and disorganized so the eastside barrio was a fitting place for CSO to launch their multi-faceted plan to politicize the area. Once initiated, “the CSO concentrated its efforts on nonpartisan voter registration and education drives, neighborhood improvement, legal advice, youth activities, health screening and referral, and legislative advocacy at the local and state levels” (cited in Gutierrez, 1995:169). Because its mission was so focused on the political, CSO’s message strongly advocated citizenship as a means to unify all Latinos who were living and working in the U.S., for without this prerequisite, there was no way to effectively engage American institutions or have a voice in governmental affairs (ibid.). However, because CSO had no citizenship requirements of its own and even actively encouraged non-citizens to join, it was better able to bridge the gap on issues that for so long had separated natives from immigrants (ibid.). This political fusion between the subgroups allowed CSO to be more facile and action-oriented when it came to
addressing the immigration question that was haunting LULAC and the GI Forum. For example, when the firestorm surrounding McCarren-Walter was in full swing, CSO, in lieu of rhetoric, initiated hundreds of classes across the region to help immigrants begin the process of naturalization. According to several sources, “within a year and a half of the program’s initiation the CSO had ‘graduated’ more than 5,000 new American citizens [and over a five year period] to have assisted over 40,000 Mexican nationals in obtaining American citizenship” (cited ibid.:170).

Because CSO was structured in the image of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), an Alinsky-style community organization connected to labor, it did not shy away from immigrant issues. In fact, many of the CSO’s founding members were CIO-affiliated trade unionists who had “fought for the right of resident aliens to work in defense industries during the war” (ibid.,170). By walking this middle ground, the organization was able to extol the virtues and privileges of full citizenship, while at the same time lending assistance to non-citizen residents regardless of their legal status (ibid.). By establishing a sincere and proactive agenda on behalf of immigrants in California, CSO helped develop a broader sense of community solidarity between Chicanos and Mexicanos, and it brought an increasing awareness of the racist dimensions of American immigration policy (ibid.). Eventually, from these efforts, other organizations like the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born (LACPFB) began to openly take up the cause of immigrants and this tradition has continued in Los Angeles to the present (more on this in Chapter Six) and includes CHIRLA, an organization which operates immigrant day worker centers all over Southern California (Anorve interview).
Although American officials would not openly admit it, even U.S. policy can be indicted for creating a political interest out of Chicanos and Mexicanos. In the annals of American immigration history, never has policy with respect to a particular ethnic group been so ambivalent and ill defined so as to render clear objectives untenable. For example, there is evidence that in early farm worker strikes in L.A. County (circa 1933) American officials tacitly allowed the intervention of the Mexican consulate to negotiate on behalf of Mexican nationals in order to preempt the infiltration of subversive forces in the labor unions (Gonzalez, 1999). Thus, by working through official Mexican channels, the U.S. government appeared to be fully complicit in aiding and perpetuating the acquisition of cheap labor from their southern neighbor (ibid.). Additionally, American policy was continually at odds between securing the southern border to prevent illegal immigration versus allowing the entrance of an adequate labor pool to meet the demand-pull interests of agribusiness. This duplicitous approach to the Mexicano presence created for them an intermediate status that fell somewhere between the fully vested citizen and the forsaken illegal thus, condemning them to a nebulous state where rights and recognition were absent. For many activists working on their behalf, these special circumstances made Mexicanos indistinguishable from other American workers, so they sought to steer federal policy toward conferring on them the full rights and privileges of a citizen laborer. The situation was so ambiguous and ill defined that Mexican officials quietly referred to the region as *Mexico de afuera* (the external Mexico) (ibid.). For Americans, these discrepant policies underscored their advantaged position with respect to drawing labor from Mexico, but for Latinos, it amplified their second-class status as a
racial and ethnic group thus, transforming their cultural and economic attachment into a political cause.

As labor issues gave way to more intensified political movements in the 1960s, cultural factors began to play a more overt role in Latino politics. In the aftermath of civil rights, not all minority factions were satisfied with the deals that had been brokered on their behalf, consequently, many turned to nationalistic ideologies to reject co-optation and preserve cultural integrity and racial solidarity. For Latinos in the Southwest, this nationalistic philosophy was called Chicanismo and the effort to implement it was called Chicano power. The movement’s principal ideologue was named Corky Gonzalez, a Denver activist who for years had lobbied on behalf of Chicanos for improved social and public services and greater political awareness (Vigil, 1999; Castro, 1974). As a philosophy, Chicanismo made extensive use of Mexican cultural symbols to advance its message and it transformed the word “Chicano” from a pejorative descriptor of the Mexican lower class into a slogan of political unity and cultural pride. Also, to give the movement a greater sense of mission, the term Aztlán was ascribed onto the Southwestern U.S. to describe a mythic homeland from where the Aztecs had migrated into the Valley of Mexico (Castro, 1974). Thus, because the region was viewed as the fatherland of a great civilization to where the descendants (Chicanos) had returned, it became the symbolic homeland that Chicanos were to reclaim by historic right and by any means necessary. This focus on land and heritage gave the movement its nationalistic edge.

Ultimately, by utilizing this cultural strategy to advance a political agenda they were not only rejecting the premise of assimilation, they were also opening the door to establishing greater solidarity with their immigrant counterparts. Within this context,
“the immigrant issue assumed much more complex dimensions and importance in Chicano political discourse” (Gutierrez, 1995:190), and it blurred the lines as to the boundaries of membership in the Chicano community. Despite nationalism’s appeal to bringing racial or ethnic groups together as one entity, however, many mainstream interests considered the notion of separate autonomy as unrealistic, thus these platforms were thought to be pure abstractions that could never be realized in an advanced and pluralistic democracy. Lost in this analysis, however, was the electoral potential of minority concentrations in local and regional venues that, if mobilized, could change the face and direction of governance in a myriad of locales. As it turns out, these conditions soon materialized in south Texas, and the resultant outcomes became a revealing portrait of the Chicano cultural consciousness and of American retaliation.

In 1970, after decades of experiencing harsh physical and economic segregation, a Chicano nationalist group and political party called La Raza Unida (LRUP) peacefully took over the reins of city government in a south Texas town called Crystal City. After their assumption of power, it quickly became apparent that LRUP’s objectives were to impose a new cultural order based on Mexican nationalism and to transform the town’s institutions into the supporting pillars of their philosophy. Immediately, the fledging party replaced members of the old regime with their own people, installed a more communal approach to city economics, passed new laws to limit police actions, and transformed curriculums in the schools to include Chicano and Mexican history, bilingualism, and a host of other non-traditional pursuits (Navarro, 1998). According to LRUP’s leader, Jose Angel Gutierrez, it was time for Chicanos and Mexicanos to get out from under the oppressive weight that Anglos had imposed on them in rural Texas and to
begin the process of establishing self-determination (ibid.) During LRUP’s tenure, the municipality became so autonomous and independent that it established a dialogue with foreign countries such as Cuba and Mexico and also worked to contain excessive patrolling of Chicano neighborhoods by Texas State Troopers (ibid.). However, despite LRUP’s earnest efforts to keep their revolution afloat, they met great resistance from powerful Anglo interests and other political opponents until their effectiveness was greatly damaged and ultimately undermined. As corporate, legal, and economic sanctions were imposed on LRUP’s membership, the party was not able to settle in firmly to pursue and implement their radical agenda; eventually, the weight of these external pressures created fissures within the group to where it accelerated their disunity and ultimately their demise.

Although in the larger picture of American politics LRUP became merely a footnote denoting another nationalist movement from the era of social change, from a Latino politics standpoint, the outcomes of this political experiment were more lasting and profound. First, despite the fact that Crystal City was a short-lived experience in a circumscribed area it, nevertheless, represents one of the few examples where a nationalist movement was won peacefully via electoral means and openly supported by a majority of the local citizens. Although LRUP had been clear and forthright in advancing a radical platform of cultural and institutional reform, the local citizens of Mexican descent openly embraced the party’s philosophy and even actively engaged in its political defense. This suggests that LRUP’s movement was more than a few extremists intent on overthrowing the status quo, but rather, indicative of mass desire to merge and incorporate cultural issues directly into the political framework. Second, because LRUP
transitioned from rhetoric to governance, as a case study, Crystal City became invaluable for viewing the enactment of an alternative ideology through the institutional arms of government. With their control of city and county institutions, LRUP was able to convert the community’s latent sentiments into programmatic and policy realities and to prove, contrary to liberal democratic assertions, that power, position, and ownership are crucial to determining a community’s nature and character. Ultimately, by using culture as a dominant political tool, their reforms appeared to be a counterattack against all of the cumulative events, experiences, and policies that had disparaged and diminished the Mexican’s standing in American society, and it also reflected their desire to retain an ethnic distinction on their own terms. The swift and brutal response by Anglo interests to this cultural rebellion was a striking example of how narrow the boundaries of tolerance can be in America’s so-called liberal democracy.

Over the long run, the Chicano Power movement’s greatest impact may have come in the form of influencing Mexican-American thought with respect to immigration. By placing such a premium on the importance of Mexican culture, history, and language, the movement had established a separate identity for Chicanos thus, implied was a rejection of the assimilation model. This movement had enough social impact to create new organizations around this ideology. One example was a California group called the Center for Autonomous Social Action (CASA), which openly espoused and integrated the interests of immigrants into their mission. After more than four decades of labor union organizing in Mexican communities across the Southwest, CASA was pushing for Mexican workers to acquire equal status with Americans due to the many exploitations they had suffered in the past. In addition to fervently advocating labor-rights for the
immigrants, the group also provided them a number of direct services that included immigration counseling, and assistance with notary and legal concerns (Gutierrez, 1995). In effect, CASA’s ideology professed that the plight of immigrant workers did not constitute and separate or special case, but rather, should be based on the same rights as other workers in the U.S. In the end, CASA was a sharp departure from the more salient assimilation groups and they continued to maintain that, “by virtue of their sacrifices and contributions to American society, immigrants had the right to live and work in the U.S. without harassment from the government” (ibid.:191).

In considering the many facets of the Chicano experience across the Southwest, it appears that the one common thread, whether analyzing a nationalist party or a conservative political organization, is the issues of immigration and its impact on Latino politics. Although prevailing macro-theories have not ignored immigration, by treating it as a transitional variable rather than perpetual, they have failed to capture its relevance to the Chicano experience in the U.S. By doing so, conventional thinking overlooks an important duality that weighs the Latino consciousness and it, therefore, occludes the cultural ligature that forms its political core. The forces of immigration, in fact, are so powerful in the Southwest that it has been very difficult to promote an exclusive political agenda that doesn’t in some way eventually involve immigrants. Even in government institutions, Latino leaders are constantly steering legislation in the direction of inclusion and openness toward immigrants rather than the opposite. By segregating the experience of Latinos into subgroups, the interaction of psychological, cultural, and political variables get overlooked at the point of contact. The flourishing of these interactions has been demonstrated effectively by Gutierrez’ excellent analysis, but it has not been
well incorporated into political models that reflect Skerry’s two-dimensional structure. This incongruency, therefore, pushes one to support a more accommodating theoretical frame as offered by the notion of cultural citizenship.

In reviewing the historical record, how does one explain Chicano leadership taking up the cause of Mexican immigrants (a sliver of these examples include labor issues; fighting Operation Wetback; El Congreso; LRUP; Proposition 187; immigration legislation, English-only, etc.) when these people are not even citizens, and conversely, immigrants taking up the historical grievances of Chicanos when they have no “rational” or historical justification for doing so? The interaction of these two groups may actually comprise the essence of Latino politics, but traditionalists, rather than finding ways to accommodate it, are instead waiting on Latinos to adjust to the paradigms. In the end, this is not likely to happen, for these people are not really foreigners, they belong to a sister culture that has successfully blended the indigenous aspects of the New World into its fabric, and they have extended their influence across borders by having had an open invitation, as needed, in and out of America’s domain. Mexican culture in the U.S. is like a tree branch still connected to the trunk, where the immigrants serve as nutrients that replenish and revitalize it, so expectations that they will assimilate unilaterally in the image of European immigrants is erroneous and unrealistic. In fact, these New World elements of Latino culture are so entrenched in the people that they supercede the cultural and political contradictions of living in the U.S. That is why these recent trends in mass rejection are likely to drive a wedge between Latinos and others rather than fracture their own internal components. They have already proven a historical resiliency to that effect, and in locations like California, where Latino numbers and adversity are rising
simultaneously, the interactive forces that ignite their political core will likely surface in more overt and pronounced ways. The Latino response to Proposition 187 and the other wedge initiatives may be a striking example of this phenomenon at work and should be examined closely in light of Latino growth across the nation.
4.1 Proposition 187: The “Anti-Immigrant” Initiative

If Latino politics is to be understood, then one must place it in a context that pricks at its heart and soul and that evokes a measurable response. In California, between the years 1994 and 1998, this very scenario appeared to take place in the form of the wedge initiatives. For the most part, in the decades since the tumultuous era of civil rights, minority groups had been out of the limelight as far as engaging in social confrontations and civil strife, and instead, had been concentrating on ways to penetrate the borders of those locales in which power resides. This new political strategy was not only evident by the social quietude, but it was also reflected in the prevailing slant and the dominant themes of general academic literature. For example, in the post-revolutionary era, chants and slogans of “Black and Chicano Power” and “women’s rights” gave way to studies on institutional representation, electoral mobilization, deracialization, and the more subtle aspects of racism. It appeared that Black and Latino fortunes now rested solely in the electoral arena and, more precisely, in the urban milieu where their communities were concentrated enough to engineer their own campaigns and elect their “own” ethnic/racial candidates. For a time, minorities were consumed with this huge challenge and learning by leaps and bounds how difficult it is to sustain a dedicated agenda for race and ethnic issues. Nevertheless, the process of political education and experience appeared to be taking hold to where minority candidates, caucuses, and leaders were learning how to operate in the larger political framework. This process was shaken up in California by
the explosive reaction to the first Rodney King verdict, and it was further agitated by the ensuing anti-minority ballots that would soon after unfold. With the arrival of Proposition 187, all of the old resentments, wounds, and indignations that had frayed minority groups in the past were stirred-up once again and strewn onto the battlefields of California’s electoral system, its institutions, and because of direct democracy, across all of its local communities.

In order to gather a perspective on the sentiments that inspired the genesis of Proposition 187, the following excerpt may be helpful. “In 1992 during a routine visit to an Orange County social service center, Barbara Coe became frightened by the changes immigration had brought to California. Stated Coe, ‘I walked into this monstrous room full of people, babies and little children all over the place, and I realized nobody was speaking English’” (Suro, 1998:107). Coe, who was there to help an elderly friend obtain social service benefits, was initially aggravated by the milling crowd at the center, but that soon turned to frustration when she couldn’t find a window with an English speaker, and finally to outrage when she was told the bulk of the crowd was made up of illegal aliens (ibid.). Perceiving that these aliens were receiving benefits at the expense of her friend and other Americans, Coe was determined to do something about it (ibid.). Looking for a way to get substantive results, she formed a citizen’s group around the issue and collectively they advanced the idea of using a ballot initiative to combat illegal immigration.

After launching a petition drive in suburban Los Angeles to put 187 on the ballot, the anti-immigrant campaign was given the code name “Save Our State (SOS),” a slogan that embodied the urgency with which the “immigrant problem” was perceived. The
main thrust of Proposition 187 was to deny health, educational, welfare, and social services to illegal immigrants residing in California (see appendix A for text). The SOS logic was unabashedly clear: withhold critical human services to those of illegal status in California and see an immediate reduction in the state’s alien population; also, many figured this policy course would send a message of discouragement to prospective immigrants with their sights set on California as a future haven. Additional provisions in the initiative brazenly mandated that state employees, teachers, social workers and health care aids report or “turn-in” suspected illegals to law enforcement authorities or face the legal consequences.

The brashness of SOS appeared to be a reflection of the growing national concern about “illegal aliens” and the security of US borders as evidenced by strong public support for tougher immigration reforms. As aforementioned, studies have shown that average Americans have grave concerns about unfettered immigration and they are in favor of much tighter controls than those currently offered by official immigration policy (Cornelius, 1982; Simon, 1985). Studies also show that majorities in most states support tougher immigration laws, but in those without provisions for direct democracy, few actions have been taken to push social reform.

Due to the fact that California is today the most prolific user of direct democracy (Allswang, 2000) and also the number one destination of Latino immigrants who enter the U.S., the state has been transformed into a venue ripe for a controversial political and legal clash on this issue. This was evidenced by how quickly the SOS movement garnered grass-roots support for their petition drive in the Los Angeles suburbs; once commenced, the campaign was able to attract former immigration chiefs as technical
advisors and it also received substantial funding by the Republican party (Los Angeles Times, 15 November 1997). The vehement opposition to immigration across the country seemed to catch fire in Los Angeles, especially regarding immigrants from Mexico and Central America, who have been drastically altering the region’s demographic makeup. For some time now, Californians had been experiencing a latent anxiety about the growing immigrant presence in the southern part of the state. According to the 1990 census, the foreign-born made up 33 percent of the population in Los Angeles County, and within a few years it was getting close to the 40 percent mark reached by New York in 1910 at the peak of the European migration (ibid.). “The change was not limited to the central city. In 1960, Hispanics made up one-tenth of the population in the five-county L.A. region, but by 1990 they represented one-third” (Suro, 1998:109).

The transformation was as much visual as it was statistical. For some years immigrants had become a common sight to Angelenos at day worker centers that dotted street corners and empty lots in cities all over the region. For those looking to vent their angst at the presence of foreigners, ubiquitous day workers made an obvious and easy target. Across the nation, the number of these sites where workers congregate and employers go to pick them up have increased dramatically and, for the most part, they are made-up of illegal immigrants from Mexico and other Latino American countries (U.S. News and World Report, 3 September 2001). In L.A. County alone it is estimated that there are approximately 150 such sites (ibid.). Since the early 1990’s officials in greater Los Angeles had been under growing pressure to contain the escalation of these sites or to abolish them altogether. In fact, the clamor about them became so great that many metropolitan cities began to pass ordinances designed to prohibit the informal
congregations of immigrant work groups. For example, in 1994 when Ladera Heights residents complained about unruly day laborers, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors was prompted to pass an ordinance that would punish and fine anyone engaging in curbside job-seeking (Los Angeles Times, 7 September 1996). Other communities around southern California followed suit and now have similar ordinances (ibid.). In retrospect, these initial changes in the local landscape became the seeds of what would wax into an all out backlash against illegal immigrants in the form of Proposition 187.

The “immigrant problem,” while being played out contentiously in the local arena, also became salient in statewide political races. In his bid for governor, incumbent Pete Wilson found his campaign in trouble due to the poor marks his administration had received on handling the California economy. L.A. Times polls showed that there was an overwhelming belief among the electorate that Governor Wilson’s leadership had placed the state on the wrong track, thus placing his reelection bid in great jeopardy (Los Angeles Times, 9 November 1994). In fact, among voters in the election, his approval ratings were barely around the 50% mark with two-thirds (63%) believing that the state had gone astray under his tenure (ibid.). However, as the controversy on 187 escalated, Wilson adeptly undertook it as a centerpiece of his campaign and was able to turn around his momentum by successfully appealing to White voters who formed a strong majority in the electorate (Wall Street Journal 28 August 2000; ibid.) Despite his poor performance evaluations as the incumbent, a substantial percentage of voters supported Wilson’s return to the governor’s chair as a direct result of his anti-immigrant position on 187 (Los Angeles Times 9 November 1994). Thus, in spite of initially facing many political obstacles to regain the governorship, Wilson's campaign team succeeded in
making the race a contest about illegal immigration, crime and taxes, all of which,
directly or indirectly, linked-up with the proposition (ibid.). These three issues ranked
highest among voters' concerns as they went to the polls and the voters, by a large
margin, trusted Wilson to tackle these issues over Kathleen Brown, his principal
opponent (ibid.). In the end, Wilson’s 187 strategy helped his cause in the short-term;
however, his harsh platform and hardball approach was equated with racism and branded
with the term “Wilsonian politics.” The label stuck, and worse, was associated closely
with Republican party ideology thus, minorities abandoned the party in droves, setting its
diversification efforts in the state back decades.

As the intent of 187 became more widely known, it quickly developed into an
issue of controversy and placed a menacing and undesirable slant on the immigrant
identity. Though the term “illegal aliens” is not directed at any one nationality, its
contextual use in the Southwest refers to Mexicans and appears to bolster the stereotype
that Mexicans and criminals are synonymous (Delgado and Stefancic, 1992). The
terminology, although seemingly more subtle, only replaces the term “wetbacks,” (Park,
1970) which is clearly aimed at Mexican immigrants (Neuman, 1995). As van Dijk
(1995:148) recently noted, "being an 'illegal' immigrant in itself is already seen as a
crime, an opinion that seamlessly fits in the widespread system of racist prejudices that
associate Black and Latino minorities with problems and crime in the first place.” The
more intensive studies of anti-immigrant language by linguists like Otto Santa Anna
(2002) exposed terminology that went even beyond the boundaries of reason. For
example, in his thorough survey of L.A. Times articles related to the wedge initiatives,
Santa Anna found that references to immigrants included the abundant use of metaphors
like “quarry”, “flocking” and “prey,” that blatantly dehumanized their status. The use of such offensive language against a specific and identifiable population—Latino immigrants—soon sparked political reactions based on race and culture, thus setting up clear and contentious dividing lines in the campaign. The rhetoric surrounding 187 was so callous and demeaning that even if Latinos had wanted to avoid the adversity, they scarcely could have eschewed the swirling political vortex caused by its mean-spiritedness. The intense emotions and scathing language surrounding the campaigns left little doubt among many sectors of the Latino community that they were the targets of an all-out political assault.

The political controversy associated with 187 and the manner of campaign strategies employed, were highly indicative that race had overrun the rational arguments and taken a central role in influencing voters. For example, the strategy employed by the Taxpayers United Against Proposition 187, a coalition of statewide organizations and the major campaign against the initiative, revealed much about the White sentiment in California. To begin with, the campaign conceded that immigration was perceived as a serious problem by the voting electorate; therefore, the Federal Government was introduced as a target and blamed for inadequate policing of the border (National Review, 16 June 1997). There was little the anti-187 coalition could do to suppress the perception in LA Metro that an immigrant invasion was indeed taking place. In a now notorious commercial in support of Pete Wilson’s re-election and Proposition 187, the ominous introduction to these ubiquitous television spots read: "Every day they keep coming" (Barreto and Woods, 2001). This message, in combination with the grainy footage of Mexicans running across the border, projected an image of crime, chaos and
confusion along a porous border to the south (ibid.). The denigrating tone of these political messages was offensive to many Latinos, including many who weren’t immigrants, and many who considered themselves conservative (Regalado interview). A second set of messages played on voters’ fears: chaos and civil unrest from truancy; health risks and the spread of disease from untreated “illegals,” and the traditional arguments of bureaucratic hassles and prohibitive costs (National Review, 16 June 1997). These arguments were considered so denigrating and offensive by Latinos that many abandoned the counter-campaign (No on 187) to salvage a sense of dignity despite few other options to defeat the measure (ibid.).

Not surprisingly, the disparaging language and negative innuendos resulted in a rise in racial tension that was not limited to the electoral system, but extended into civil life, as well. For example, a poll conducted by the Spanish-language newspaper, La Opinion, and KVEA-TV of documented and undocumented immigrants revealed that high percentages were concerned with the growing anti-immigrant sentiment in Los Angeles creating a negative psychological effect in the local community (Acuna, 1998). This sensation was more than a sixth sense as records showed that a rise in hate crimes since 1991 had been shadowing the anti-immigration rhetoric. According to the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, in 1994, alone, hate crimes against Latinos had risen by 23.5%, and after the passage of 187, the Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights (CHIRLA) reported an additional 229 cases that involved discrimination, civil rights violations, hate speech and denial of services (The Progressive, September 1996). Mobilization by anti-immigration and racist groups was also on the upsurge in California and other western states (ibid.). Along the border many
of these well-organized groups were sponsoring and engaging in high-profile rallies that made use of swastikas and Confederate flags, and they engaged Mexican migrant workers and counter-demonstrators in belligerent and sometimes violent clashes (ibid.). For many, these fervent reactions to the 187 campaign left little doubt that the anti-immigration movement was founded in racial overtones, and that these sentiments were now manifesting through both institutional and non-institutional modes. The emotion surrounding the initiative brought together many interests that would not normally be in political alliance and these strange bedfellows fueled accusations and probably worked to the detriment of all parties involved.

Latino students, who perceived themselves as the target of this initiative, took to the streets in protest and levied charges of racism at the sponsors and supporters of the bill. Although there were scattered student protests throughout the state, LA Metro experienced the largest and most animated crowds. In the weeks leading up to the state elections, student walkouts and demonstrations by opponents of 187 were so large that they were reminiscent of the Vietnam era anti-war rallies. Despite efforts by principals and officials to keep the students in school, it is estimated that more than 10,000 teenagers from approximately 30 different schools walked off middle and high school campuses around Los Angeles in a prodigious showing of student opposition to Proposition 187 (Los Angeles Times, 3 November 1994). In many venues across LA Metro, students marched and remained mostly peaceful while police, who were on tactical alert, kept a watchful eye (ibid.). The fact that the marches occurred in edge cities that spanned from Orange County to the San Fernando Valley suggests that this
was a widespread movement that had impacted teenagers of all social and economic stripes.

At L.A.’s city hall, a large student rally attracted speakers and participation from a variety of political groups that included the Peace and Freedom Party, the Communist Youth Brigade, local worker’s unions and even members of the L.A. City Council (*Los Angeles Times*, 3 November 1994). Throughout the day, speeches in opposition to 187 were heard and many took aim at the California governor for supporting it (ibid.). In places like Santa Clarita and Orange County, where students came in direct contact with the public, they boldly displayed the Mexican insignia on banners and flags as passing motorists derided their audacity and lack of patriotism (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 1994). For many who witnessed the demonstrations and were already leaning in support of the initiative, these confrontations only strengthened their resolve to get it passed (*Los Angeles Times*, 3 November 1994). From the student perspective, 187 was nothing more than a racist effort to oust Mexicans from California by attacking the Achilles heel of immigrants: the needs of their children (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 1994). In rallies as far away as Chicago, IL, Hispanic leaders expressed concerns about the xenophobic wave sweeping the country and how this had led nativists to blame immigrants for every problem the country is facing (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 7 November 1994).

In addition to the student marches, 187 provoked one of the largest mass protests in the city's history when an estimated 70,000 demonstrators (march organizers claimed 100,000) marched from the Eastside to Downtown on Sunday, October 16, in boisterous condemnation of the initiative and its best-known advocate, Governor Pete
Wilson (*Los Angeles Times*, 17 October 1994). By all accounts, the march was larger than the 1970 Chicano Moratorium in Lincoln Park where demonstrators clashed with police resulting in numerous arrests and the deaths of three individuals (ibid.). According to participants and the press, the crowd stretched over a mile long and was replete with banners, flags and placards as it made its way down Cesar E. Chavez Avenue toward L.A.’s city hall (ibid.). Hundreds of volunteers were required to help guide the large crowd in an orderly fashion and, along the sidewalks, vendors set up shop and sold a plethora of products that vilified Pete Wilson and decried 187’s intent (ibid.). At the rally across from city hall, both speakers and individual participants expressed their anger and dismay at the draconian measures proposed by the 187 initiative and pledged their unity and commitment to defeat it (ibid.). For many, the proposition was not only seen as an expression of hate, bigotry and scapegoating, it was also perceived as an attack on the rights and needs of children; society’s most vulnerable segment (ibid.).

In addition to social protest activity, personal reflections about the political implications of 187 on Latino politics were also quite pointed and rang consistently across respondents from a variety of sectors. Dr. Regalado, a march participant and community activist, exclaimed that this was much more than an immigrant march; the participants included members of every major Chicano organization in existence, most of which were not in the habit of employing protest as a means to their ends (Regalado interview). According to Dr. Santa Anna, “it was the best and most organized mobilization, and the most powerful coalitional movement that I have ever seen; much bigger, better and stronger than anything that transpired in the 1970’s” (Santa Anna interview). This included but was not limited to LULAC, the Mexican-American Legal
Defense Fund (MALDEF), the American G.I. Forum, the National Council de la Raza, members of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), and other longstanding organizations and institutions (Regalado interview). In Regalado’s own words, this was an issue that was so crosscutting, it fomented a united front among every faction conceivable within the Latino community at-large. Participation was so variegated and vast that the march took more the character of a social movement than a singular protest to a policy objective (ibid.).

It would be over simplistic, however, to say that among Latinos there was no support for 187 and that the subgroup chasm acknowledged by cultural citizenship was not felt. In talking with Victor Narro, Workers Rights Project Director for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), many third, fourth and fifth generations Chicanos were concerned that immigrants were receiving special treatment regarding citizenship and this offended many who had painstakingly become citizens the legal way (Narro interview). Additionally, Chicanos were concerned that unfettered immigration might also result in lower wages and lost jobs. In contrast, Newton (1998), who utilized the Field Polls to extract survey responses from Latinos, ethnic identity was more significant than either economic self-interest or discrimination concerns as an explanation for Latino support of 187. She concluded that the more assimilated tended to favor 187 while the Spanish-speakers skewed in opposition, thus prompting her to conclude that Latinos are not a monolith.

According to Narro, CHIRLA’s educational campaign that focused on civil liberties and on the studies of immigrant contributions to the economy, greatly allayed the fears of many who had initially supported 187. By giving examples of how poorly even
legal residents had been treated in previous immigration campaigns, the cutting effects of 187 became more apparent, thereby, improving the prospects for oppositional support (Narro interview). Also, despite the split Newman found in Latinos by level of assimilation, her analysis failed to consider that the bulk of votes cast on this ballot would have more likely come from those Latinos who were already well-adjusted toward citizenship or, if one prefers, assimilated, thus suggesting the cross-cutting effects of 187’s provisions. Similarly, if one were to invoke her argument of language as having a divisive impact, then the geographic and cultural advantages apparent in the Southwest might at some point expand the ethnic factor rather than contract it.

The nature of 187 was quite stark and it evoked strong emotions across a wide range of affiliations. The sentiment was so strong, it easily pierced partisan lines. For example, in one notable case, an intergenerational Latino family, who were known as staunch Republicans and had built a career legacy in law enforcement and business, was so outraged by the tone of 187 that they were compelled to switch parties as a direct result of the immigrant controversy (Regalado interview). Also, according to Ruben Guadegui, an entrepreneur who networks extensively among Chicanos in the private sector, most of his colleagues were offended by 187 and many perceived the proposition as a response to the Latinization of southern California. He added that, for years, the growing Latino population had been a prominent topic in the print media and rarely a week went by that an article on Latinos did not appear in local and state newspapers (Guadegui interview). 187 simply became the fuel by which many of these entrepreneurs became activated politically and it changed the face of politics across Southern California.
Some of the political transformations evoked by Proposition 187 went beyond the emotional and manifested in utilitarian ways. For example, one local Latino councilman from a city in LA Metro suggested that the Latino community had taken a quantum leap in response to the initiative by establishing networks and resources that simply didn’t exist before its effects became widespread. Suddenly people of different sectors were talking to each other to pool resources and integrate politically in an unprecedented fashion. In fact, he credits the financial and political support of a Latino network for the success of his own campaign and, in the process, was able to out raise his opponents by a margin of three dollars to one (councilman interview). Despite the fact that he had never previously held political office, he unseated a sitting incumbent handily and joined another Latino on his local council. This scenario was replicated throughout venues in L.A. County, where between 1994 and 1998, significant increases in Latino elected officials occurred in Congressional districts, state districts, and a plethora of county and municipal level posts (NALEO Annual Reports, various years).

In further interviews with local political players, it became apparent that Latino politics had made not only numerical gains, but was also altered qualitatively. One local lawyer and political organizer commented that the nature of campaigning was being transformed in many of LA Metro’s inner cities and districts (Navarro interview). For example, in areas that were populated heavily by Latinos, candidates were revising and tailoring their agendas to unabashedly fit the needs of immigrants after their door-to-door campaigns revealed a constituency ready to be tapped (ibid.). Not only were immigrants and the foreign-born motivated by the stinging nature of 187, they were filing in droves into one-stop shops that promoted citizenship, residency, and voter registration. Jake
Alarid, a tax specialist and former national commander for the GI Forum, stated that many Chicano businesses and offices offered their facilities to stage and coordinate immigrants to better funnel this explosion of activity. In his office alone, he estimates that at least 1000 people were processed for various forms of citizenship and electoral status. The spillover in political participation was so great that Latino organizations were working with African-Americans to activate political networks through the churches (Alarid interview). As has happened with political crises in the past, many immigrants end up socializing politically through the use of Chicano resources, knowledge and venues, thus creating opportunities for cultural and political cross-fertilization.

As a result of this new and motivated political base, a new breed of elected official, like Gil Sedillo and Mario Firebaugh, have emerged who enthusiastically craft and support legislation to expand immigrant rights in the U.S. and who are not afraid to author controversial legislation on behalf of this same constituency. For example, Firebaugh was the author of H.R. 260, a controversial bill to allow illegal immigrants to gain driver’s licenses, and the debate on it has been so partisan that it has abated little to this day (Arroyo interview). According to Richard Santillan, the recriminatory environment has stimulated developments that have changed the general tone and nature of politics in California to where the Ivy League personas such as a Henry Cisneros, who were up and coming in the 1980s (the “decade of the Hispanic”), are no longer appropriate or even facile for representing Latino interests; instead, candidates grounded in labor and working class origins are becoming the norm in what has become a spiteful and vengeful political climate (Santillan interview). Today, the clout of union leaders like Maria Elena Durazo has become so powerful, that virtually no mega-project is
planned or initiated without strong consideration of union interests (Valle and Torres, 2000). Of the many state senators like Hilda Solis, Xavier Becerra, and the Sanchez sisters who were politically weaned in this pro-union environment, many have gone on to win Congressional seats and are today enacting a Latino working-class agenda through their party backing and through the Congressional Hispanic Causus.

Organizationally, the Latino response to the initiatives was also characterized by a political fusion that strongly defies the portrait of Latinos as being little more than a loose smattering of fractured interests. The tone and breadth of 187 was so broad and mean-spirited that Latinos across a plethora of social stratas and cultural affiliations were offended and outraged. Ironically, two of the institutions where their cultural and citizenship tendencies interacted proactively were the very organizations that were implicated as dividing them: LULAC and the GI Forum. According to Jake Alarid, because 187 was targeting people who were already living and working in the country, the GI Forum largely viewed the issue as a civil rights concern; therefore, by handling it as such, it broke down the barriers between Chicanos and immigrants (Alarid interview). The cause overrode community differences in this case and prompted the Forum to expand their membership criteria to include non-veterans and permanent residents (ibid.). Similarly, LULAC got involved in registration drives to defeat the 187 campaign and, according to Larry Luera, there was a great deal of cooperation between the Mexican and Central American communities in Southern California on this particular effort. Prior to the eruption of 187, Luera noted that LULAC, over time, had been quietly and successfully tapping mainstream interests and resources to advance the Latino cause across the nation, but this backlash campaign created a very deep rift with those allies and
it profoundly changed the posture of the organization. As a result, LULAC changed its constitution to include non-citizens, and today, remains very active in abbreviating the process that brings amnesty and citizenship to those who have earned it. Mr. Luera added that much more of the organization’s time is taken up with immigrant issues than in the past and they are working closely with state officials on ways to humanize and improve the detainment and deportation centers run by the state (Luera interview).

Despite the spirited response to the initiative and the changes that it generated across all levels of Latino politics, the legal aspects of the initiatives still loomed as a major threat to Latino interests. The day after 187 passed in November, 1994, MALDEF and other civil rights organizations launched a battle to have the proposition rescinded on constitutional grounds. In 1998, following a four-year court battle, Mariana R. Pfaelzer, a federal judge in Los Angeles, struck down the initiative by ruling that it violates not only the Constitution, but a welfare law called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (National Review, 16 June 1997). In the Judge’s view, Proposition 187 was attempting to regulate immigration, an exclusively federal domain, outside of federal law, thus on its face, it was unconstitutional (ibid.). So it followed that if California is powerless to enact its own legislative scheme to regulate immigration, it is also powerless to enact its own legislative scheme to regulate alien access to public benefits (ibid.).

In the aftermath of the court battle, it is very possible that the principal story, the one with enduring consequences, was lost. The embittered supporters of the immigrant initiative, upon realizing that all legal recourse had been exhausted, focused their angst on the federal government for asserting its jurisdiction over immigration without
producing the necessary resources to alleviate California’s disproportionate immigration load. The case was decided on the classic constitutional issue of state’s rights versus federal power and, therefore, presented a damaging blow to any future attempts to bring immigration under states’ jurisdiction. In July, 1999, the civil rights organizations reached a settlement with Governor Gray Davis after four months of closed-door negotiations monitored by federal court authorities (*Los Angeles Times*, 12 September 1999). In effect, 187 was dead. The day after the settlement, MALDEF held a victorious news conference to thank all politicians and legal organizations that had helped their efforts to kill 187 (ibid.). When it was time for MALDEF’s president Antonia Hernandez to speak, she issued a “special thanks” in Spanish to Governor “Pedro” Wilson and remarked, “Because of Wilson, California’s Latino community rallied and is stronger than ever” (ibid.).

4.2 Proposition 209: “The Equal Opportunity Initiative”
Following the acrimony and controversy stirred up by Proposition 187, conservative forces steadfastly continued their assault on minority rights by authoring and supporting Proposition 209 (also known as the California Civil Rights Initiative [CCRI]), an initiative that again contained provisions with significant implications for protected groups and people of color. The fundamental purpose of 209 was to ban equal opportunity programs designed to remedy race and gender discrimination in public employment, education and contracting within the state of California (Campaign, 1996). In substance, 209 eliminated any and all forms of preferential treatment in state institutions designed to boost the participation of minorities and women such as affirmative action, outreach, recruitment, mentoring and tutoring programs (ibid.). This
The work on 209 had actually begun back in 1992-93 when Dr. Glynn Custred, an anthropology professor at UC Hayward, and Dr. Thomas Wood, the Executive Director of the California Association of Scholars, teamed up to co-author what was then known as the California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI) (Glynn, 1996). The intent of CCRI (and Proposition 209, as it later became known) was to amend the California constitution to prohibit racial and gender discrimination and preferences by government agencies in public contracting, employment and university admissions (The Seattle Times, 1 October 1996). Their work began to get national press attention in late 1993-94; by early 1995 it was a highly celebrated cause. Polls showed right away that the language of the initiative was popular (Arnn, 1997). This was no surprise, as race and gender preferences have never been liked by many ordinary, non-minority citizens. Frustrated in their initial attempts to place CCRI on the ballot through the legislature, and continually thwarted by
the political muscle of then Speaker of the House, Willie Brown, the authors decided to go public with the issue and, by petition, qualify it for the open ballot (Glynn, 1996).

Already armed with a message that seemed to resonate across the electorate, the next step was to recruit a credible leader and spokesperson that could embody and sell the campaign’s principles. After several exhortations, they got their man: his name was Ward Connerly. Not only was Connerly a successful Sacramento businessman and a sitting member of the Board of Regents for the University of California, he was also a long time Wilson confidant and not unfamiliar with politics (The Seattle Times, 1 October, 1996). He was a perfect choice to chair the CCRI campaign statewide. To begin with, Connerly was very outspoken, having long opposed the idea of “set-asides” and other race and gender-based programs to remedy social ills; instead, he felt it was time for minorities and women to quit dwelling on past injustices and to begin concentrating on the plethora of opportunities that awaited them as citizens of the U.S. (ibid.). If his prestige, determination, and ideology weren’t already enough to make him the ideal campaign chair, the fact that Connerly was Black and had himself been the victim of southern racism in his youth, was the crowning attribute (ibid.). By being of African-American stock, Connerly, in a big way, served to legitimize the 209 movement among average voters in the populace. With his leadership, CCRI was able to obtain over 1,000,000 signatures to place it on the state ballot (Ward Connerly Biography, 1996).

Initially the originators of CCRI were hoping to advance the initiative on principle rather than partisan grounds, so they sought to place it first upon the March 1996 primary ballot, which would give maximum possibility for bi-partisan support (Arnn, 1997).
However, the fissures between the parties quickly developed as Democratic opposition grew from their deep investment in the preferences and quotas that 209 was targeting for elimination (ibid.). With the bi-partisan option blown, this opened the door for Republicans to seize the moment by embracing and funding 209, and incorporating its language into their platform. To give the pro-209 campaign every possible advantage, the Republican Party raised $3 million, more than three times what the opposition was able to muster (San Francisco Chronicle, 26 October 1996). The California Republican party, alone, accounted for a total of almost $1 million to support the cause that included an extra $121,000 to fund a media blitz in the last two weeks of the campaign (ibid.).

With respect to making 209 a platform centerpiece, the Republicans, perhaps still reeling from the abrasive minority backlash that occurred in the wake of 187, equivocated. In national elections, it was clearly considered a flashpoint, but Republicans were reluctant to bring it to the fore. Despite Governor Wilson’s full support for the measure, Senator Bob Dole (then running for President), while proclaiming his support sporadically, was more cautious and avoided direct attachment to the controversial proposition (Arnn, 1997). Although, at one point, candidate Dole wrote an article in support of the measure (in the Los Angeles Times, March, 1996), his failure to follow-up let it fade into oblivion (ibid.). Later, at a press conference, Dole’s California strategist, Ken Kachigian, stated that 209 would not be integral to Dole’s campaign (ibid.) This distancing was further reinforced by the quietude surrounding the issue and by the fact that Connerly was not allowed to speak at the Republican convention in San Diego (ibid.). Although the addition of Kemp to the ticket brought his initial endorsement [of 209], thereafter, they were, at best, equivocal and, at worst, silent
(ibid). In contrast, President Clinton took a compromise position on the issue with his famous byline: “mend it, don’t end it” (ibid.). For Democrats, it appears that the greatest risk of supporting affirmative action lay in losing the White votes of middle America while, conversely, for Republicans, supporting it was sure to alienate the surging minority populations in California and further damage their already tarnished reputation in the wake of 187.

When Proposition 209 was put to a statewide vote in the Presidential election of 1996, it received strong support by ordinary Californians despite the efforts of a large coalition of minority and peripheral groups to defeat it. While minority groups didn’t take 209 lying down, there was a notable absence of mobilization in relation to the 187 campaign. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the anti-209 campaign was not in the amount of protest it generated, but rather, in how it brought so many diverse organizations together under one umbrella to fight the measure. In formal statements that denounced the measure there were literally listed dozens of organizations that represented women, Blacks, Asians, Latinos, Jews, liberal Whites and, as well, many alternative parties that rarely get recognized by the general American polity (Organizations, 1996). Among Latino groups in the fray, probably MALDEF was the most prominent organization working to form coalitions with other affected communities in hopes that these partnerships would build the needed momentum to defeat the campaign. MALDEF’s involvement was important not only because of their storied courtroom history in redistricting battles, but also because of their constitutional challenges to other propositions that have limited the rights of Latinos. MALDEF, for example, spearheaded
the legal battle in the aftermath of Proposition 187 and was successful in their bid to have it declared unconstitutional by the federal courts.

Despite the many organizations that signed up against 209, the overall campaign strategy seems somewhat one-dimensional. For example, some activist groups like “By Any Means Necessary” (BAMN) were working to stir up interest on college campuses throughout California, but these efforts didn’t seem to reach far beyond those specialized boundaries. They were successful in sponsoring student protests and building occupations at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, and these efforts were accompanied by significant student marches in San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles (Inmotion Magazine, 1996). However, much of the clamor was directed at the UC Regents in hopes that they would either rescind their support for 209 in order to preserve diversity on college campuses, or at least explain their positions formally in light of the profound ramifications the initiative might have.

With respect to the public schools, anti-209 forces may have been looking for Latinos students to lead much of the protest activity given the ferocity of their reaction to 187 which had occurred only two years earlier. Instead, however, the protests seemed toned down, more generic in nature, and involving students from many different backgrounds. While there was a notable public protest against 209 on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles (USA Today, 24 October 1996; Los Angeles Times 24 October 1996), the largest public rally in the state occurred in San Francisco, where thousands gathered with Jesse Jackson and Willie Brown to cross the Golden Gate Bridge in a spirited protest against the measure (Croft, 1997).
Despite the coalitional efforts to defeat 209, it was passed by a 54% to 46% margin statewide, winning in mostly rural areas and losing in urban areas like San Francisco and Los Angeles (California Secretary of State, 1996). Following its passage, the ACLU filed a suit against its implementation but the California Supreme Court vindicated the proposition in November of 2000 by ruling that state and local governments cannot give women and minority-owned firms preferential treatment on public work contracts (Adversity, 2000). In later appeals, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case and let the lower decision stand (ibid; Erler, 2000). The victory and affirmation was a blow to the anti-209 minority coalition and they have caused an aftermath of political battles that have not ceased to this day. Since 209 was connected to very visible and tangible benefits for minorities, its passage has produced a backwash of negative outcomes for minority interests and it has kept advocacy groups crusading for policy reform. For example, immediately following 209’s passage, a rapid decline in minority college enrollments was evident (especially in the UC system) and directly tied to the new admissions process. The implications from these developments were considered so profound that it prompted California’s Lt. Governor, Cruz Bustamante, to call for alternative programs and policies to help rectify this dwindling pool of applicants (San Francisco Chronicle, 9 March 2001). Bustamante’s efforts to contain the damage wrought by 209 and the other wedge initiatives (ibid.) often put him at odds with Gov. Grey Davis, especially when it pertained to the preservation of minority rights (San Francisco Chronicle, 29 April 1999). The fact that these fractures have extended all the way from the electorate to the very halls of California’s executive branch is testimony to the divisive power embedded in these socio-cultural reforms.
Now that the initiative has become law, California and the invested parties (both pro and con) have been left to sort out the larger issues and implications of its passage. Surprisingly, despite 209’s popular language and support base nationwide, there has not been a rush to push similar initiatives in states that possess the referenda capability. Regarding this particular issue, it is likely that the bifurcated condition in California is the leading edge that prompted the initiative’s genesis and, perhaps, its intent was to stem the growing influence and power that minorities are inheriting and wielding in the state. If this is, in fact, the case, then California may have lurched forward well beyond the political evolvement of other states and, as minorities cross new boundaries and settle in new regions, there will likely be a reoccurrence of the same circumstances and scenarios that enveloped 209.

With respect to the larger implications concerning Latinos, the events surrounding 209 sent mixed signals. Because of Latinos’ numerical superiority in California, and because they had just shouldered the brazen attack of 187, there were probably expectations that they would sustain their political momentum and be front and center in the 209 debate. While Latinos were certainly active participants as members of a wider coalition to defeat 209 and preserve minority gains, they were not the visible, dominant force that had taken on the anti-immigrant fervor that was gripping California. In fact, in some ways, the affirmative action battle reverted back to the old Civil Rights formula by calling on national Black leaders like Jesse Jackson to lead the charge, with Latinos, Asians, and women playing important, but supporting roles. These developments are curious given that Latinos had just finished a successful stint in the political front lines that should have bolstered their political efficacy, engagement and momentum. Across
the board, in discussing 209 with my interviewees, there was a conspicuous inability to pinpoint the factors that led to a decline in political activity, especially, given the fact that it had come on the heels of a very controversial campaign. Respondents seemed tentative in their efforts to explain the measured response to 209 and, in many cases resorted to clichés such as: “the energy simply wasn’t there”; “we weren’t as well organized”; “we were misled about its intent”; “we didn’t see it coming” (Anorve interview; Navarro interview, Serrano interview).

For activists with a front-line view, some bright spots emerged from the learning curve on 187 in the form of more Latino sponsors and benefactors to fund the counter-campaign on 209. With more revenues to support their cause, activists were able to recruit dignitaries such a Colin Powell and others to extol the virtues of affirmative action; however, the campaign remained grounded in conventional terms and did not attain the sparked reaction of 187 (Narro interview). In the 209 scenario, Latinos, without question, assumed their political “minority” posture to fend off this overt attack on their civil rights, however, they also appeared to revert back to their support role as secondary players in a wider coalition. Normally this would not be an unusual occurrence, however, with the lingering sting of 187, one would have anticipated a more prominent role. Somehow, 209 failed to breach the tolerance threshold of Latinos in the manner of 187, thus creating some variability in their response to similar, but independent political events. Taken alone then, 209, rather than illuminating the Latino political identity, might instead serve to underscore their popular status as an unpredictable political enigma. However, as we will see, by looking for more nuances across the three initiatives, a clearer portrait of Latinos can and does emerge.
4.3 Proposition 227: “English for the Children”

In 1998, Proposition 227 (otherwise known as the “English for the Children” initiative) appeared on the ballot as the third piece of the “wedge trilogy.”

This proposition, in addition to its importance as an educational issue, contained controversial provisions (see Appendix C) to abolish bilingual education in California for over 1.4 million students and, if instituted, would allow for no more than one year of intensive immersion in English before they were moved to regular classes (Zapata, 1998). According to many observers, 227 was an extension of the symbolic politics used by “English-only” forces to play on the xenophobic fears of the American populace in order to gain an advantage in promoting immigration restrictionism. During historical periods of peak immigration, nativists have used language politics to express their desire to preserve core American values while remaining free of foreign contamination and influences (Higham, 1955). According to Fishman (cited in Crawford, 1997), “‘English-only’ is a classic case of status anxieties expressed through the politics of language. Enthusiasm for the cause waxes and wanes depending on social, political, and economic trends far removed from language itself” (ibid.: 10). Indeed, according to survey findings back in 1986, most Californians supported Proposition 63 (the “English-only” proposition passed in 1986) because they perceived it as a codeword for nationalism (Citrin et al., 1990). Because of California’s success in passing the measure, other states with large Spanish-speaking populations (Arizona, Colorado, and Florida) initiated efforts to codify English, and in the process, perpetuated an anti-Latino sentiment. For Latinos in California, who by 1998 had already been assaulted by two previous anti-
minority initiatives, the above descriptors seemed to be accurate portrayals of the social and political climate in their state.

The advent of Proposition 227 had an immediate and resounding impact in the political arena. Speaking on behalf of the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), spokesperson, Jaime Zapata (Zapata, 1998), was quoted as saying, “Like Proposition 187 against immigrants and Prop. 209 against women and minorities, Proposition 227 is yet another cynical political move to divide Californians.” As expected, Whites supported the measure emphatically while opposition came strongly from Asians and Latinos due to the profound impact it would have on their children’s educational experience. There was no denying that the measure would produce deep political dividing lines and have important ramifications in ethnic relations. Additionally, with California still reeling from the rise of anti-immigrant fervor in the 1990s, English-only was destined to create a partisan divide. “House Republicans, who came to power on the same day that Californians adopted Proposition 187, sought to exploit the public mood. They portrayed ‘bilingualism’ as a menace to national unity, arguing that English needed ‘legal protection’ to preserve Americans' most important ‘common bond.’ Additionally, by marrying ‘free-market’ ideologies with the English-only movement, conservatives insisted that banning bilingual services would ‘empower’ immigrants by motivating them to learn English, the ‘language of opportunity’” (Crawford, 1997:11). Debate and comments in the Congressional Record suggested that Democrats found these arguments for English-only divisive, mean-spirited, and overly restrictionist (cited ibid.), so they hunkered down to oppose language politics in hopes of preserving the extended civil rights platform of the 1960s.
The crusade to pass 227 was led by Ron Unz, a Republican candidate for Governor in 1994 and a multimillionaire software developer who was prepared to dig deep in his own pockets to fund the campaign (Issues, 1998). Unz claimed that Proposition 227 was inspired by a 1996 protest by Latino families against bilingual education at the Ninth Street Elementary School in downtown Los Angeles after the school administration refused to allow their children to be taught in English (Crawford, 1997). While some accepted this story at face value, those in the know were aware that an Episcopalian priest and left social activist, Alice Callagan, had played an instrumental role in bringing about the protest. Callagan, who runs an inner-city community center known as Las Familias del Pueblo, held some very strong views about the failures of bilingualism and about how it was inhibiting the advancement of Latino children in this country (Ottawa Citizen, 24 May 1998). Even though there was a great amount of dispute about who orchestrated the boycott (according to Crawford, Callagan was leading the charge) and how many Latino parents actually participated freely, the controversy fed anti-bilingual sentiments by portraying bilingual education as failing its most critical target—Latinos. By depicting this incident as a boycott by Latino parents, the controversy reached a furor that produced sensational headlines in local newspapers that, in turn, sharpened the political confrontation that was about to ensue (Crawford, 1997). As the Unz and Callahan version of the Ninth Street story was adopted as truth, the incident became a rallying point for the anti-bilingual campaign and it signaled the collaboration of many groups and interests coming together to dismantle the policy of foreign language instruction. Initially, the story seemed to resonate when the first Los Angeles Times poll (1997) reported that four out of five Californians were in strong
support of Unz’s measure (cited ibid.). However, even though these initial numbers seemed promising, it is likely that many Californians with no direct knowledge of bilingual education reasoned, "If the parents of children in these programs don't support them, why should I?" (Crawford, 1997:4).

Throwing his cash and political know-how behind the movement, Mr. Unz's team worded Proposition 227 to junk the bilingual education system, while allowing waivers to individual parents who approved it. Bolstered by the promising statewide polls, the campaign gathered a burst of momentum when an early poll in October 1997 revealed that support among Latinos, the target group of bilingual education, was riding at about 84 per cent (Ottawa Citizen, 24 May 1998). However, those initial numbers were short-lived. In February, 1998 a new poll showed that the overall “Yes” vote had dropped to 66 percent and that Latinos were now split down the middle on the controversial issue (ibid.) The perception shift was attributed to the work of Latino community leaders and Democrats, and to impassioned teachers who felt that 227 was nothing more than a racist expression by “Anglo” Republicans. It was clear that the pundits had recognized the underlying message of 227 as being connected with the larger anti-immigrant mood that was gripping California, so for many ordinary citizens, the issue became more visceral than programmatic. The stinging nature and the racist overtones projected by 227 concerned Republicans so much that Dan Lungren, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, elected not to back the proposition (ibid.). Some speculated that his motives were driven by the party’s miscalculation on the two previous initiatives and the disastrous exodus of Latinos that ensued (ibid.). Up until 1990, the Republicans had
remained competitive in competing for Latino membership; however, following the
debacle of 187, their support dropped precipitously (ibid.).

While 227 was stirring populist sentiment, the “No on 227” campaign and the
defense of bilingual education was left to be worked out by policy wonks, bureaucrats,
experts and narrow interests. The bilingual issue had been brewing for decades in
California, in one form or another, so the proponents of bilingual education were
experienced and skilled at defending their craft in the legislature (ibid.). For example,
“the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) often used its clout with
Latino lawmakers to resist perennial calls for bilingual education ‘reform.’ On several
occasions, the state senate voted to give districts greater discretion in educating English
learners by relaxing a state mandate for native-language instruction, but each time these
bipartisan bills met a roadblock in the Assembly” (ibid.: 5). A prescriptive law in the
1970s (The Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act) had almost forced
California school districts to implement bilingual education, but once adopted, it had
become a standing part of the curriculum in most locales (ibid.). “Now that many—if not
all—districts had become supporters of the program, it was uncertain how strongly lifting
the mandate would disrupt school operations and how significant would be the
pedagogical impacts. Despite these concerns, a bipartisan bill proposing a “middle-
ground” on the issue was forwarded, but CABE continued to hold out for stronger
accountability provisions in the bill—requiring schools to document student progress in
non-bilingual programs—which the sponsors were unwilling to accept” (ibid: 5).
CABE’s concerns led to the proposal’s demise in the Assembly Education Committee in
September, 1997 and it remained dormant until a compromise bill was passed.
However, by the time it reached Governor Wilson’s desk, the pro-227 surge had already insured that he would not sign it (ibid.). Had the bill initially passed, it’s compromise provisions might have assuaged the fears of protagonists on both sides of the argument enough to entirely avert the extreme reforms proposed by 227 (ibid.). Additionally, it might have also helped ordinary Californians understand the serious challenges this proposition posed to the districts’ local control of decision-making and curriculums (ibid.).

In the end, educators' failure to defend the merits of bilingual programs directly, “combined with their backroom deal making in Sacramento, contributed to an image of bureaucratic arrogance and intransigence—an easy target for Ron Unz” (ibid.:5). “He modeled his campaign along the populist lines typical of most ballot initiatives: mad-as-hell voters versus a system ‘completely gridlocked’ by special interests” (cited Ibid.: 5). In particular, Unz, in the Los Angeles Times, demonized bilingual educators as "profiteers" who were "financially rewarded for not teaching English" with "as much as $1 billion" in annual subsidies (cited in Crawford, 1997:5). Though the 25-year-old legislation technically expired 11 years ago, the teaching establishment and ethnic politicians were accused of relishing in the pork barrel of grant aid that it spawned (Ottawa Citizen, 24 May 1998). For example, some teachers were receiving up to $5,000 in bonuses a year for participating in the program, while schools were given incentives to keep schoolchildren in the scheme as long as possible to maximize their state aids (ibid.).

“By the time the initiative's opponents got organized in November 1997, they were trailing by more than 4 to 1 among registered voters (Los Angeles Times Poll, cited
Ron Unz had been circulating ballot petitions for more than four months, receiving extensive media coverage and encountering no organized response from the advocates of bilingual education” (Crawford, 1997:14). Due to the poor public image of bilingual education, muted responses to attacks were not uncommon and had plagued the program in other states, as well (ibid.). “Years of inattention to the program's public image had left numerous misconceptions unchallenged” (ibid.:14). According to McQuillan & Tse (cited, ibid.), despite many illustrious academic defenders and abundant studies showing positive results, journalists echoed the conventional wisdom and remained skeptical of research findings favorable to bilingual pedagogies. And to make Unz’s case even stronger, opinion surveys usually found that the idea of intensive English instruction was popular in many immigrant communities (ibid.). Indeed, Latino politicians, traditionally bilingual education’s strongest advocates, were hardly unified on this issue. While some did speak out, others remained muted in the face of early polls showing strong populist support for 227 (ibid.). According to Gloria Lopez, an elementary school principal, not only was the silence surprising, it was also shocking how many Latino politicians actually supported the measure for political expediency (Lopez interview). Meanwhile, other Democrats expressed impatience with the CABE for opposing compromise legislation; they, too, remained largely silent about the initiative (Crawford, 1997).

“Isolated and misunderstood, bilingual educators reached out to allies in California's education, civil rights, and immigrant advocacy communities, who recognized the extreme nature of Unz's proposal. These forces came together to form Citizens for an Educated America, the official No on 227 organization” (ibid: 14). With
initial funding from the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) and the California Teachers Association (CTA), they conducted polls and focus groups while seeking professional advice from political and media consultants (ibid.). In effect the “No on 227” coalition was facing a monumental political challenge to overcome the visceral support for 227 and their most pressing concern was to develop a palatable, if not persuasive, strategy for the underdog campaign. After a thorough assessment of the electorate, consultants recommended that the “no” campaign eschew any direct defense of bilingual education and instead concentrate on critiquing the extreme provisions found in Unz’s proposal (in Citizens for an Educated America, cited ibid.). Opinion research had already shown that it was too late to change voters’ minds about the merits of bilingual education, but an effective message to discredit Unz’s solution might still resonate (ibid.). In addition, the consultants recommended the heavy use of broadcast media given the short time frame of the campaign and the large electorate residing in California. Unfortunately, this recommendation would require massive fund-raising to support estimated expenditures of over one million dollars per week (ibid.). To get the most “bang for the buck,” consultants also recommended that swing voters be heavily targeted (this turned out to be female Republicans over 50), since bilingual education’s core supporters—minorities and liberal Whites—were unlikely to turn out in adequate numbers (ibid.).

Some of these recommendations came as a shock to many bilingual educators and researchers, especially the notion that hindered a spirited defense of their livelihoods (ibid.) They were unsure that they could stand by silently while ideologues maligned programs that they felt were helpful, and even essential, in helping Limited English
Proficiency (LEP) children to socialize into a foreign environment (ibid.). Many bilingual professionals felt that by refusing to challenge Unz’s charges, they would be seen having ambiguous feelings about the program’s merits and, as such, concede the validity of their profession and standing (ibid.). Now that 227 was out in the open, many educators supported a strategy of vigorous discourse so that the public could, once and for all, get educated on the substantive “pros and cons” of bilingual education.

“Ultimately, however, the leaders of Citizens and its organizational sponsors accepted the consultants' advice” (ibid:15). Perhaps their capitulation had less to do with not having a cogent argument and more to do with the nativist fervor that had been encountered in the two previous wedge initiatives; nevertheless, in the end, “they came to believe that not discussing bilingual education offered the best hope of saving it” (ibid.: 15). “The "Don't Defend" strategy was then sold to CABE members and to bilingual directors throughout the state, who were counseled not to respond to attacks on their programs. Activists, including those working in language-minority communities, were urged to highlight what was wrong with Proposition 227, not what was right with bilingual education” (ibid: 15). While many advocates fell in line with this campaign philosophy, others chose to work independently of Citizens (ibid.). According to Campbell, “grassroots efforts sprouted throughout the state, but they received limited support or coordination from the campaign apparatus, except for those involved in fundraising” (cited ibid:15).

“To represent its views, No on 227 hired spokespersons with no background in bilingual education” (Crawford, 1997:16). According to Citizens (cited ibid.), whenever the subject came up in public debates or media interviews, the discussion was redirected
away from the merits of bilingual education and toward the specific provisions of Unz’ proposal. In a debate with Crawford, Unz cited the "Don't Defend" strategy as evidence that bilingual education was indefensible and, ultimately, this attack strategy proved appealing to the news media, which gave massive coverage to Proposition 227 as compared with other ballot initiatives and primary races (cited ibid.). More than 600 newspaper articles (not to mention countless radio and television broadcasts) appeared on the anti-bilingual initiative in the six months before Election Day and most of them featured inflammatory charges by Ron Unz, rarely accompanied by effective counter-arguments (in one nation, cited ibid.). “This way of framing the issue—as a misleading either/or decision—clearly benefited the Yes on 227 campaign by distracting voters away from the technical/substantive issues and appealing to their basic instincts” (ibid.: 5). Moreover, it cast opponents as the stodgy defenders of the status quo, a role that was unfamiliar to them and one in which they were extremely uncomfortable. In this case, it was very hard to fault ordinary Californians for believing him, given that the opposition had failed to offer any credible counterarguments to Unz’s position.

While some continued to rationalize the proposition’s controversy as a product of policy and political strategy, others were convinced something more nefarious was underlying the campaign’s ill will. No on 227 began with the premise that voters' minds were closed to considering the merits of bilingual programs, so when their diversionary tactics did not work, bilingual advocates concluded that the electorate was so bigoted that their cause had been hopeless from the start (ibid.). According to Laurie Olsen, a leader of the No on 227 campaign, ethnic factors were key to the initiative's victory because, from the outset, opinion research revealed "a reservoir of anger, distrust, and even hate
focused on bilingual education, bilingual educators, and immigrants--particularly Spanish-speaking immigrants" (cited in Crawford, 1997:2). Proposition 227 successfully exploited "a set of fears and beliefs of a voting California [that was] unrepresentative of the state--Whiter, older, only 15% with children in public schools" (Olsen, cited ibid.: 2) and a majority of this electorate expressed that Spanish was ruining this country by posing a threat to our sense of nationalism. “The notion of upholding English as the symbol of national unity was seen as a stance to protect a way of life thus, this sentiment outweighed every argument that the No on 227 could wage” (ibid.: 2). In the end, Olsen concluded that voters opposed it not only because they didn’t understand it—they also didn’t like it. With such a staunch closure of minds, most bilingual advocates have concluded they will never be able to sell future policy proposals around programmatic or meritorious arguments. Although, Crawford, in his thorough analysis, believed that the “No on 227” was defeatist from the outset and failed to test the “bigot” hypothesis, he may have underestimated the correlative studies that showed a strong association between voter support across all three initiatives despite formidable counter-campaigns in the first two instances (Proposition 187 and 209 [see Allswang in next chapter]). Nevertheless, the manner in which the 227 campaign was conducted left many wondering whether Californians could have been convinced to support bilingual education, or at least consider reforming it in some substantive way in lieu of discarding it. Due to Unz’s effective and relentless campaign, perhaps that answer will never be known.

Whether bigotry or racism was the underlying sentiment that propelled 227 to victory or not, certainly Unz's short-term strategy also had a wide appeal among Californians (ibid.). “The initiative passed easily, despite a disproportionate turnout of
liberal and Democratic voters, who defeated other conservative ballot measures” (ibid.:13). Ethnic opposition was considerably weaker than it had been over Proposition 187 four years earlier: 37% of Latinos and 57% of Asians voted for the anti-bilingual initiative (Los Angeles Times - CNN Poll, 1998), versus 23% of Latinos and 47% of Asians for the anti-immigrant initiative (Los Angeles Times, 10 November 1994).

Relatively speaking, attacking bilingual education did not result in the level of polarization that many had expected or that had been experienced in the previous two initiatives. However, Unz’ assertion that his side had spent only $1.2 million from start to finish, a paltry sum by the standards of other voter initiatives in the state, and much less than the $3.2 million his opponents say they spent (New York Times, 4 June 1998), left many wondering whether the bigot factor had indeed been a driving force in propelling 227 to victory.

With respect to the implications for Latinos, it appears that 227 did not trigger the contentious and overt responses that they demonstrated in fending off 187, however, it did evoke strong electoral opposition at the urban level. Perhaps because the campaign debates were cast largely around personalities and ulterior motives, it was not educational for ordinary voters and it left them to their own devices to unravel the issues surrounding bilingual education. When the arguments did sway in the direction of programmatic concerns, many ordinary citizens were left to follow the lead of educators and program experts in terms of deciding which way to vote. As a result of the sheepish and one-dimensional approach employed by the opponents of 227, there was little in the way of substantive arguments that Latinos could support and embrace. With so little to go on, Latinos were left to appealing to their own conscience regarding which way to vote;
therefore, if a cultural factor was present, it would have to be sifted out of the electoral data. The reserved way in which the “No” campaign was conducted perhaps depressed a community outcry in the manner of 187, but it set-up 227 to have greater significance in the event of strong Latino opposition given the way culture and policy were blended into the initiative’s fabric. In the end, the Unz attacks on bilingual education still failed to convince a majority of Latinos that the program should be scrapped thus, suggesting that although they may have had mixed feelings about the program’s merits, they were reluctant to employ Unz’ knee-jerk reaction as a solution. Their resiliency against this onslaught was significant in that it demonstrated both cultural and political resiliency.

For those Latinos who worked in education and better understood the programmatic merits, they were shocked at how precipitously the program was discredited and how rapidly even some Latino leaders joined the Unz bandwagon. According to Gloria Lopez, principal at North Ranchito elementary school, some local Latino leaders not only supported the “Yes” campaign and lent their names to its efforts, but many, including radio personalities in Spanish broadcasting, openly decried the evils of bilingual programs (Lopez interview). According to one local teacher, the battle to defeat 227 appeared so fruitless that, well before the election, teachers were already holding meetings about how to deactivate it (Munoz interview). Despite these odds and a poorly orchestrated counter-campaign, Latinos were impervious to these programmatic attacks and held resilient in opposing the measure at significant levels, especially in the urban milieu (see next chapter). Because 227 meshed a specific policy objective (discontinuing bilingual education) with a cultural factor (language), the triggers associated with cultural citizenship were enacted in a profound way. According to
Lopez, who attended various forums on 227, initially, Latinos were hardly unified in opposing the initiative and efforts by her and others to educate people on the program’s technical merits, were not very well received (Lopez interview); nevertheless, upon reflection, Latinos were unwilling to abandon a program that centers on cultural traits, even if in the eyes of others, it carries a stigma.

Even though 227 did have the makings of a “wedge” issue in terms of race and ethnicity, it lacked the comprehensive approach and integrated coordination that was witnessed in the 187 campaign. Politically speaking, the mixed response of Latinos to 227 was very perplexing and not seemingly in line with what had previously transpired. For example, in my discussions with community activists Raul Anove and Victor Narro, both cited that a substantial learning curve had taken place during the first two wedge campaigns with respect to grassroots organizing, media blitzes, and the acquisition of prominent endorsements to support their causes. In light of all of these experiences, one would have expected a more widespread and finely tuned response to the attacks on bilingual education and to have seen a greater community outcry toward addressing 227 as another example of cultural and ethnic rejection across the state. Despite relentless exhortations on my part, the respondents across the board could not really pinpoint why 227 failed to push Latinos onto the street in fervent and animated protest. Perhaps its programmatic focus assuaged its impact as a brazen and absolute rejection of Latinos in California; nevertheless, it left an unresolved angle to the analysis which supports the Latino enigma.

In fact, at the state level, some analysts were surprised at how many Latinos actually voted for 227 because it defied their reputation as a foreign and recalcitrant
community, but considering the one-sided campaign and the low use of bilingual ed. in rural districts, it is to some degree understandable. This seeming anomaly, however, was itself mitigated by the strong reaction of Latinos in opposing 227 at the election booth (see next chapter). In L.A. County, for example, Latinos en mass (see Barreto and Woods, next chapter) continued to express a growing cynicism to these repeated attacks on their cultural differences and minority rights, and unlike the diminishing protest activity, oppositional voting increased in momentum with each “wedge” event. By 1998, Latinos in L.A. County were fending off these attacks at the ballot box in a most forceful and deliberate way, thereby, surprising those scholars and pundits who had anticipated a much more muted response. Somehow, the fervent arguments decrying the defects of bilingual education were not enough to shake loose the cultural and linguistic bonds enjoyed by Latinos. In this case, although the protest threshold was not attained, a cooperative and unambiguous consciousness was detectable in their overall response at the urban ballot box. This coalescence appears to be consistent with the unifying elements of cultural citizenship that give coherence and form to political causes. For Latinos, who are continuously assailed as fragmented, it defied conventional wisdom in a significant way.

If one takes 227 as a defining event, it might perpetuate the existing perceptions about the amorphous nature of Latinos (unfortunately, this has too often been the case in the past), however, when put in a larger context, it might actually serve to clarify their status. Despite the fact that the overt responses of 187 were missing, a nuanced analysis reveals that in conventional political activity, opposition to 227 was just as pronounced if not higher than the levels witnessed in 187. By 1998, Democrats were registering new
Latino voters in L.A. County at a 10 to 1 ratio over the Republicans and this deliberate movement against the initiative was replicated by the Latino urban vote (Barreto and Woods). In head-to-head comparisons of the Latino vote in L.A. County, 227 demonstrated a sharper connection between opposition voting and Latino populations than did the other two initiatives (see Table 7, Chapter Five). This is significant in several ways. First, this oppositional consciousness was attaining greater levels of uniformity as each new wedge initiative appeared over time, thus demonstrating that Latinos were experiencing an ethnic factor. Secondly, attaining these numbers in the face of a paltry counter-campaign on 227 only makes their uniformity that much more astonishing. Given the campaign obstacles, the previous initiatives, and the way bilingual education had been maligned, the strong Latino opposition was not reflective of an ambivalent state that many ascribe as endemic to this community. Rather, it supports a consciousness that subjectively sees a difference between themselves and mainstream interests, and it, as well, objectively underscored their outsider status when compared to other ethnic groups. While a “minority” stance is partially reflected in Latinos’ response, the cultural nature of the policy is not well reconciled in this model given that Chicano interests should not mesh that well with those of recent immigrants. With respect to the immigrant analogy, the model fails miserably. In the next chapter these distinctions will be pursued further through the use of quantitative data.
CHAPTER 5

ELECTORAL RESPONSE TO THE INITIATIVES

With the fall of the communist bloc, and the ensuing balkanization of Europe, ethnicity has reemerged as a credible explanation for political structure and dynamics. Despite this resounding comeback, explanations for advanced democracies like the U.S. are still dominated by two cornerstone theories: pluralism and the power elite. However, as we have seen, with respect to incorporating the problems related to race and ethnicity, these two perspectives have demonstrated glaring weaknesses. For example, by embracing only structural and systemic arguments to make their respective cases, and by continually intellectualizing their rationales, these two theoretical strains have ignored the power that visceral and emotive forces can have in driving political agendas. Additionally, the arguments pursue such lofty and esoteric explanations that they simply fail to account for outcomes that stem directly from cultural, tribal and racial attachments and other basic forms of collective consciousness. In the end, by averting these topics, studies in political science can become a sterile exercise of axioms, patterns, and logic that ostensibly work to dissect and unravel the sources of social ills in the public arena, but in reality, only skirt the edge of possible culprits. Therefore, at times, in a given analysis, it is simply necessary to raise racial and ethnic issues to primacy in order to better understand the nature of impulsive forces and how they impact politics (Tolbert and Hero, 1998). In this chapter, given the multicultural and bifurcated environments
that characterize the state of California, politics and race will be merged by placing emphasis on group behaviors and outcomes in the electoral arena. At the center of this analysis will, of course, be Latinos and the wedge initiatives.

For those scholars who wish to pursue race and ethnicity as their chosen discipline, there is no better social laboratory than the state of California. Whether it freely elected to do so or not, California (in particular its urban centers) has become a “world community” of ethnic and cultural diversity of such magnitude, that few places in the world could lay claim to be its equal. Because of its unusually nice climate and topography, California has been a magnet for large migrations from other regions and nations, blending them together in large concentrations such as LA Metro. For example, in the early 20th century, large numbers of Blacks and Whites from the southern and Midwestern regions of the U.S. settled in Southern California to escape poverty and to participate in the area’s economic boom thus, in one sense, a blending of regional cultures was already underway. Additionally, from its Pacific Rim location, it drew many ethnics from Asia to support the mining and railroad industries of the 19th century, thereby igniting an Asian influx that has continued to the present day. And because of its Southwestern roots, California has been an attractive, prosperous, and accessible location not only for many immigrants from neighboring Mexico, but from many other Latin American nations located well beyond the confines of this continent. For many, the success of California in amalgamating these varied groupings comes not from an inherently progressive outlook, but rather, from a contagious optimism that often characterizes transplant populations seeking adventure, prosperity and a new start.
Within this pool of diversity, Latinos form an interesting case apart from the general populace. For one, Latino culture preceded the contemporary habitation patterns of California, thus giving the area a westernized cultural identity before it became part of the U.S. In addition, this cultural core was fed and nourished by its nearby mother country which, for better or worse, has never dissipated. Due to a vast and contiguous geographic connection, Mexican culture, today, is not only discernable and operational in California, it is thriving and persisting in a way European subcultures never did. In fact, throughout this century, Mexico has not been an idle neighbor, but rather, served as a funnel whereby millions of immigrants have made their way into this country, with most of them settling in California, itself. Thus today, as Latino growth continues unabated, California has shifted from its adaptive flexibility in the social arena to a contentious posture in the political. This neo-conservative response, according to Hero and Tolbert (1998), equates California with the racial and political hostilities that characterized much of the Old South earlier in the 20th century.

5.1 Ethnic Conflict

As mentioned at the outset of this study, as Latinos continue to grow prolifically in California, they are rapidly changing the racial and ethnic balance of the state and, in the process, developing a growing political advantage. This growth is so phenomenal, that even without an assessment of the qualitative aspects of political robustness, the potential for increased political power is present. Additionally, when ethnic groups experience their growth in concentrated, urban settings, then the possibilities for attaining some level of political control and for advancing ethnic-specific agendas exponentiates.
For Latinos, the growth is so immense across the state that they appear to be experiencing a continuous upward trend in terms of overall voting percentages cast in major elections. Table 1 summarizes the growth in voter registrations and the percentage of Latino votes cast for the state of California in the major elections since 1988.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Latino Votes Cast in California</th>
<th>*Voter Registrations (in 000’s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Electoral Growth Statistics for Latinos In California by Election Year

Source: Exit polls conducted in California by Voter News Services, its Predecessor Voter Research and Surveys, or exit polls sponsored by CBS, NBC, ABC or the Field Institute in each election cycle.

The above table seems to have two interesting dimensions. First, by pairing up the numbers in any two consecutive elections, the electoral growth for Latinos appears to be modest, showing only one to three point increments along the way. However, while these numbers may appear less than dazzling, Antonio Gonzalez, Director of the William C. Velasquez Voter Institute (WCVI), states that a one point increase in California can easily represent hundreds of thousands of votes, so it is highly significant (Gonzalez interview). In fact, although it went unnoticed by the mainstream media, by 1992 Latinos
had cast over 1,000,000 votes in California, the first time any state had ever surpassed that threshold. The table, however, if taken as a whole, shows a doubling of the Latino vote within a decade, an astonishing development given the size of California’s population. In the table, it is also notable that between 1992 and 1996, which includes both the period preceding and following Proposition 187’s appearance (1994), the percentage of Latino votes cast starts to take a continuous upswing. Without the aid of an in-depth investigation, these electoral trends may appear to be nothing more than a reflection of general Latino population growth, and for many, that explanation has sufficed. Below, however, these patterns will be described in more depth, and some of the findings may be surprising.

According to Gonzalez, if you look back at the political history of California in terms of Latino electoral participation, up to 1976 it essentially remains flat. Because of the salience of the anti-immigrant hysteria of the last decade, many people were under the impression that Latino political engagement did not begin until the 1990s. However, Hernandez explains that the following pattern has been observed by WCVI: from 1976-1984 a previous flatline gave way to modest growth; from 1984 to 1994 one continues to see steady growth occurring; and from 1994-2000 the curve begins to accelerate. Despite perceptions to the contrary, 1984 was a seminal point for Latino electoral participation in California. In that year, Latino registration and voting rates took off due to a combination of three factors: 1.) more Latinos were entering important political races across the state; 2.) community leadership emerged that placed great emphasis on mobilizing Latinos politically; 3.) and successful redistricting efforts served to empower Latinos (Gonzalez interview). Following this pivotal year, Latino political fortunes were
further enhanced by the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, whereby thousands of immigrants who met certain conditions were able to obtain citizenship status and, consequently, qualify as voters. The effect of IRCA was accentuated in California because fully 43 percent of the 1.25 million immigrants regularized under its provisions were residing in that state (Gonzalez interview). While these events explain the electoral growth of the late 1980s, Gonzalez, without hesitation, attributed the accelerated participation of the following decade squarely on the wedge initiatives.

In the 1990s, the wedge initiatives not only took center stage as California’s most controversial ballot propositions, they were also implicated with creating division and fragmentation among California’s ethnics. Within this swirling controversy, Latinos emerged as the most salient group and as the initiatives’ principal target. The effect of Proposition 187, in particular, cannot be underestimated. The spread of ethnic and racial resentments in a populist platform placed Latinos in a singular political battle that deprived them of the luxury to consider the wider slate of political issues on the table. Proposition 187 created such a firestorm that polls and surveys across the state showed Latino opposition running at about the 80% mark. This level of political alignment is not only unusual for Latinos, but it also defies their reputation as being relatively moderate and disbursed in their policy preferences (WCVI, 1988; de la Garza and Weaver, 1985). Suddenly, with clear majorities, Latinos were contesting the political will and desires of the citizenry in the country’s most populous state, and they were taking to the streets to accentuate their point. Without question, this was either a turning point in Latino politics, or it was the manifestation of a latent undercurrent that had always existed. To
unearth the reasons for this strong political reaction, an analysis of ethnic and racial factors is essential.

In order to establish a pretext for the forthcoming arguments of ethnic fragmentation, John Allswang’s (2000) study of referenda in California fits the bill. In a thorough analysis that traverses an entire century of populist legislation, Allswang sought to make connections between individual initiatives by grouping like ones together in order to better understand the nature, ideology and profile of supporters and opponents. Concerning the sociocultural initiatives that are relevant to this study (he also looked at Proposition 63, English-Only, passed in 1986), the author performed correlations of voting in two different configurations: one that compared the three relevant initiatives (187, 209, and 227) and another that connected Proposition 63 with 187. In the course of his analysis, he discovered that a “yes” vote for one initiative was strongly correlated to voting the same way for the other two (see Table 2 [below] for results). Additionally, the author also found a strong correlation between voting for Proposition 63 in the 1980s and Proposition 187 in the 1990s. In Allswang’s own words: “there was a striking positive relationship in voting for Propositions 187, 209 and 227; between voting to end affirmative action and voting to end bilingual education, the correlation was .940, about as close to a perfect relationship as one will ever see in the real world” (ibid:229). Without question, the three initiatives touched the same nerve of certain voters in the California electorate and were so tightly bound politically, that they could have easily been collapsed into an ideological index. On the other side of this ideological chasm were Latinos, who, according to measures of individual data, diametrically opposed the implementation of all policy reforms.
Table 2: Correlations of Voting on Sociocultural and Ideological Propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prop. 187</th>
<th>Prop. 209</th>
<th>Prop. 227</th>
<th>Prop. 63 (English Only)</th>
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<td>.915</td>
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<td>Prop. 227</td>
<td>.915</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</table>


While ethnic conflict, in and of itself, is not the central theme of this analysis, it plays potently in the setting and needs to be incorporated as an influential factor in defining both California’s political environment and the direction of Latino politics. Allswang’s study, by connecting the slate of socio-cultural policies and reforms through the voting process, helped us to understand that there was a strong ideological component uniting those who voted for the initiatives and supported their enactment. This was an important contribution about individual attitudes, but it stopped short of teasing out how group and collective preferences may have played out in the process. If we could take Allswang’s findings and control for groupings, it would reveal the nature and profile of people who support or oppose the policy reforms advanced by the wedge initiatives and Official English at the mass level and what variables were at play in driving the vote. While Allswang stopped short of doing this, other scholars pursued this line of investigation and found interesting results. Below lies a discussion of these efforts.

In order to understand how race and ethnicity have surged as factors affecting the political climate of California, a statewide analysis by Hero and Tolbert (1998) is crucial.
toward that end. As aforementioned, race and ethnicity have often not surfaced as primary factors in defining political theory and, as a consequence, have not been systematically incorporated into the research (ibid.). When they have been included, they have habitually been cast in Black and White terms to where it has precluded a signature context for lesser known minorities like Latinos and Asians. Thus, in political terms, very little is known about these latter groups and, and from the research angle, they suffer from a marginal identity. As a result, Hero and Tolbert’s study is important on two counts: it specifically seeks out a racial/ethnic context in California’s political environment and the study targets events that profoundly impact Latino interests.

As an initial premise for their study, Hero and Tolbert were looking to affirm V.O. Key’s proposition (1949) that public policies and attitudes can be shaped by the racial composition of an ecology. To accomplish this task, they looked at the voting patterns of two socio-cultural initiatives—Proposition 63 (Official English) and Proposition 187 (Save our State)—in 58 different counties whose populations varied considerably in their ethnic/racial composition. In examining Proposition 63, the authors applied a series of OLS equations to estimate the impact of racial/ethnic context and within each model used racial/ethnic populations as the independent variables and the county-level votes for Official English as the dependent variable. Ultimately, the authors concluded that there was an inverse relationship between larger Black, Asian and Latino populations and support for Official English; thus, where the environment became more heterogeneous via increased minority presence, support for the initiative dropped. Conversely, the size of the White population was positively correlated with support for the initiative, therefore, translating into higher percentages of “yes” votes in White
dominant areas. This latter trend was not surprising, given that it followed the patterns of other states who had also voted for their own versions of Official English (Citrin et al., 1990).

When they turned their attention to 187, the results were strikingly similar. In counties with a heterogeneous population where Blacks, Asians and Latinos were found in significant numbers, support for the initiative was low. However, in the bifurcated (where Latino populations were high) and homogenous counties (where Whites were numerically dominant), support for 187 was generally well above the statewide mean of 64% (Hero and Tolbert, 1998). In other words, the strong support of 187 by Whites was not only driven by a strong and immediate Latino presence (bifurcation) as Key would argue, it manifested even in the abstract, for rural Whites (ibid.). In dissecting this more complex pattern of support, Hero and Tolbert surmised that illegal immigration had been perceived as such a broad problem that it took on statewide implications and, therefore, affected even the most remote and rural counties profoundly (ibid.). Indeed, the operating slogan for 187 was “Save Our State,” suggesting that Whites did not need the immediate presence of Latinos in their environments to be concerned with growing minority populations (ibid.). To further bolster their results, the authors controlled for partisanship and unemployment across counties in an effort to attenuate the racial/ethnic effect, but in the final analysis, it remained potent and significant. In total, not only does this study appear to parallel V.O. Key’s findings in the Old South, it also goes against the grain of progressive or moralistic political culture that Elazar (1966; 1984) and others have ascribed onto California.
To underscore the findings of Hero and Tolbert from another source, Table 3 shows voter support for the three socio-cultural initiatives as cut by racial/ethnic groups. In looking at the numbers below, they generally depict significant differences between ethnic/racial groupings as would be expected along many fronts of policy preferences. However, a closer look reveals something simultaneously interesting and unusual. In looking across all three initiatives, large chasms in support and opposition occur between Latinos and Whites, thus defying the typical patterns one is accustomed to seeing between these two groups. Already, these numbers go against the ordinal patterns of social distancing that have typically characterized minority groups vis-a-vis Whites, and they also defy the dominant Black and White archetype that has dominated minority politics in the U.S. On balance, the entire chart illustrates that Latinos and Whites were the groups furthest apart in their voting positions and it appears to suggest that something stronger was motivating them on these issues than was the case for Blacks and Asians. The cleavages, especially those regarding support for, or opposition to, 187 were remarkably evident along ethnic lines, and the skew of those numbers suggest that Whites were steadfast in their support for the initiative. In contrast, Latinos appeared to be sensing themselves its primary target. These patterns were consistently found by many polls and studies that have closely investigated the “wedge” trilogy (ANSAP Polls; Field Polls; L.A. Times Polls, various years).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Proposition 187</th>
<th>Proposition 209</th>
<th>Proposition 227</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>63</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Voter Support for Wedge Initiatives by Race/Ethnicity in %


If there was any question whether these initiatives were actually creating a “wedge” between groups, the above data is hard to refute. The objective data surrounding these issues suggest that Whites and Latinos clearly had an inverse opinion about whether these policies should be enacted and they suggest that Latinos have veered furthest away from what some would call “mainstream” opinion. The political chasm between the two groups, especially given the policy moderation Latinos have shown in the past, suggests that something more than intricate policy preferences were at work. Because the preferences were concentrated within groups and not more randomly distributed suggest that the sentiments arose from emotive origins such as threat, resentment and disdain, rather than from deliberate policy calculus. Both sides, it appears, were fearing what the other represented. For Whites, perhaps the growing Latino presence spells more competition for space and political power in the state, thereby inducing these kinds of campaigns to contain it. The reaction of Latinos, on the
other hand, may have been seen as an offensive and mean-spirited rejection of their presence and, more importantly, one of their most cherished possessions—their culture.

If, in fact, Latinos are cultural citizens and weaving a functional status in the U.S. that doesn’t compromise identity, then attacking and rejecting them as a group, by extension, denigrates their culture and dilutes their standing as citizens. The feelings then, aroused by this scenario, leave little room for reconciliation and, much less, scant allowance for a rational and judicious discourse about solutions. Although some tried to inject economic arguments as driving support for the initiative, these rationalizations failed to take hold, leaving the protagonists trading charges of racism and unpatriotic behavior. Across all respondents, Latinos seemed to take this action as an affront to their dignity and as a form of diminishing their contributions to American society. This effect was all the more hurtful given the fact that Latinos constitute the majority of stoop labor and domestics around the country, a status few Americans would desire. In effect, the initial jolt of 187 sent Latinos looking for cover in community, labor and political institutions to such a degree, that it changed the face of politics in the state for years to come (more on this below).

Taken as a whole, the trends suggest that Latinos, within the context of a controversial political climate, were greatly motivated and compelled to take a strong political stand in order to protect their interests and standing in California. Distinct from other events, where Latinos functioned in the “muddled middle,” they were clearly rankled by 187 and it prompted them to marshal a formidable opposition to this populist movement. The political indicators, as stated above, were so uniformly tilted, that for the duration of the controversy, they were the most salient “minority” group. This majority-
minority theme was, without question, a key issue in driving the Latino response, but it did not completely overshadow issues related to inter-minority relations. Along with the large divide between Latinos and Whites, the reticence of Blacks and Asians on 227 and 209, respectively, was also significant and full of implications. Their moderate views contrasted with Latinos significantly on some of the issues, thereby, leaving Latinos in political isolation in the same way Blacks have often been on the civil rights front. In fact, minority voting on the wedge initiatives, in some ways, spells a potentially new dynamic for California politics in that Latinos may now constitute the most outlier group of those delineated as protected classes. Additionally, they are testimony to the changing equation that now shapes intra-minority relations in the state.

In looking again at the findings of various studies and at Table 3, there is little question that Latino and White opinions accelerated away from each other on some key socio-cultural issues. The divisions were proven out in the voting and partisan splits and they were punctuated by the political melee that resulted from the advent of 187. The basic quality of life issues embedded within the wedge initiatives elevated their significance beyond policy rationalizations. They rather, symbolized a form of rejection that was emotive, cutting and deep, thus placing Latinos on the defensive and, more importantly, on the social and political fringes. The Asian community by being split and indecisive across the three issues, served to exemplify the isolated posture of Latinos, however, because Latinos generally don’t compete with Asians head-to-head for space, employment and public resources, the implications were likely minimal. If anything, Asians parallel Latinos to some degree about issues related to language and culture, but generally have not been as assertive or visible in the political mix. With respect to
Blacks, however, who do function in a common strata with Latinos across a number of strategic and economic locales, the stakes are higher thus, making the variations in initiative support of profound importance to future political endeavors.

Initially, one might surmise that the divided support within the Asian and Black communities on 187 and 227 was driven from their own experiences of rejection in American society, thus vicariously evoking a sensitivity to their own tentative status. For example, California has not been kind to Asians and this hostility extends all the way back the Chinese Exclusion Act of the 19th century and to the Internment Camps for Japanese citizens during WWII. Perhaps upon contemplation, an understanding emerged among Asians that the tide of nativism could turn in any direction, thus essentially preventing them from supporting measures like 187 wholeheartedly. In the Black case, the continuing struggle for Civil Rights has become so morally internalized, that they can scarcely fail to identify with other groups who face rejection, controversy and discrimination, even if the group is perceived as a competitor. However, ultimately, Blacks backed 187 and 227 enough to affect the political calculus of the state and it resulted in profound implications for political events that followed in Los Angeles.

By adopting solely the majority-minority theme to explain the nature and cause of the wedge initiatives, the true significance of the wedge story is subject to unfair diminishment. Because Blacks and Latinos are generally perceived as residing in the same social strata, they are often seen as allies and not as direct competitors on the political front. While their relationship has ebbed and flowed across different issues, in places like South Central Los Angeles, new developments are stirring due to the growing Latino encroachment on Black space. In fact, the Latino presence has become such an
issue, that Blacks are leaving the south-central area in significant numbers thus, diminishing their political clout and putting the district’s posture in a disadvantaged state. Tied to these developments are Black concerns that they will lose political leverage and resources in city politics and, as well, experience a backslide in public sector employment. These concerns may be legitimate given the nature of recent proposals and initiatives beginning to emanate from Latino interests. According to Nilca Serrano, interest was recently rising among local Latino leaders to shift a lucrative segment of downtown from the Southside Black district to the Eastside Latino district in an effort to balance out revenues across the city. In some of these city sectors, parking revenues alone can total in the tens of millions, so it is quite understandable that the competing interests would see it as a zero-sum game. Although an awkward attempt to initiate this process failed, it nevertheless, exemplifies the high stakes involved in political transitions, and how quickly the new equation can produce a new potential for intra-minority conflict (Serrano interview).

Some of these feelings of suspicion and mistrust have already arisen in recent political events. When Antonio Villaraigosa decided to run for mayor of Los Angeles, he was applauded by many supporters who felt it was time for this Spanish-origin city to have a mayor of Mexican descent. Not only did Villaraigosa apparently have the support of the vast majority of Latinos in Los Angeles, but he also obtained the backing of many important Westside interests who were willing to liberally fund his campaign effort. However, despite all of these seeming advantages that buttress success in the electoral arena, Latino turnout in the local election was less that it had been for presidential and gubernatorial races, thus letting an opportunity to gain local representation slip away
(Chicago Sun-Times, Oct. 28, 2001). Villaraigosa, who lost by only 40,000 votes, was only able to garner 30% of the White vote and 20% of the Black vote, thus demonstrating that the coalitional efforts of his campaign were not strong enough to attain a vision that transcended ethnic and racial lines (ibid.). Also, he may have underestimated the ethnic factor that was driving Latino politics in the post-wedge initiative phase and it may have cost him his margin of victory. According to Luis Arroyo, had Villaraigosa not wrapped himself so tightly in the flag by promoting such a broad-based platform, he might have garnered more political support from the pro-Latino forces (Arroyo interview). An alternative strategy would have been to capitalize on the ecological advantages posed by the Latino community by launching intensive mobilization efforts in the traditional ethnic enclaves. Had an additional one-third of the 150,000 Latino registered voters who stayed home turned out, they could have easily put him over the top in this most important mayoral race (ibid.).

It is curious that the Latino momentum from the wedge issues did not carry over into Villaraigosa’s campaign, but on the other hand, it is a telltale sign of the great challenges Latinos are facing politically. The mayoral campaign in Los Angeles, which was far different from the reactive and emotive sentiments that drove the wedge issues, represents a conventional and institutional political process that requires great resources and deft organizational skills, two important characteristics that have not exactly been a Latino trademark. The systematic exercise of conventional politics requires experience, education, and perseverance; thus, it can sharply contrast with the quixotic and romantic elements that sometimes drive unconventional political forms. While Latinos are certainly making strides in all of these areas, they have been on the margins for so long
that it is unrealistic to think they can overnight transform themselves into an institutional political machine. Furthermore, these broad political campaigns, in addition to requiring all of the above, also necessitate the creation and cultivation of political coalitions and partnerships that may have never existed prior, thus dramatically elevating the need for a clear vision and strategic sophistication. In the end, even the most engaged and prolific groups are challenged to attain these attributes and to successfully orchestrate them into an integrated whole; therefore, it follows that this process would be especially difficult for groups that have traditionally functioned at the margins. And, of course, Latinos’ ability to leverage and negotiate politically is further impaired by their newly weakened position as the most prominent outlier.

5.2 Latino Reaction to the Initiatives

According to Gonzalez, strong opposition to these initiatives was the primary factor in driving a more engaged Latino electorate in the 1990s (Gonzalez interview). His views were supported by various polls and surveys that found a harsh Latino reaction to Proposition 187. For example, Latino voters in a Los Angeles poll responded that Proposition 187 was the most important item on their political agenda and was the one issue that induced them to vote in the 1994 election (Gonzalez interview). Additionally, in 1996, a statewide poll revealed that Proposition 209, the initiative to abolish affirmative action in state-run institutions, was the issue that mattered most to California Latinos in deciding who to vote for in the Presidential election (WCVI, 1997). At one point, surveyed Latino voters in California rejected Proposition 209 by more than eight in ten (80.3%), thus nearly equaling their disdain for 187 (ibid.). By comparison, those “hot button” issues prominent in the national debate like abortion, character and ethics
and the federal deficit, ranked at extremely low levels in the Latino consciousness (ibid.). Clearly, the nature of these initiatives was striking a negative chord with Latinos and priming them for an intense reaction.

One aspect of this reaction includes political mobilization, a dimension that may hold very important clues regarding the nature of Latino politics. According to a 1999 WCVI report, since 1988, Latino voter registration in California had grown by 53% or 704,308 new Latino registered voters (WCVI, 1999). 43% of the Latino voter registration growth within those ten years occurred between 1994 and 1998 and was bolstered by the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), an increasing body of new naturalized Latino citizens (ibid.), and a controversial political climate. Following the 187 debacle in 1994, Latino turnout in 1996’s presidential election broke all previous records (ibid.). According to WCVI’s turnout analysis, 1,351,142 Latinos turned out to vote in California in 1996, representing 66.2% of eligible California Latinos voters (WCVI, 1997). In total, Latinos comprised 13.2 % of the state’s voting electorate in 1996, up from 9.2% in 1992 (ibid.). This represented an increase of 22.2% in terms of total votes cast in the previous presidential election while, in parallel, the participation of all California voters decreased by 7.2% in the same time period (ibid.). To bolster their aggregate growth, the turnout rates for Latinos in this period also increased by a whopping 37.5 % (ibid.). This statewide growth was consistent with the data obtained at the local level when the controversy over 187 was in full bloom. In some locations, Latino registrations surged from 20 to 30 percent of eligible voters overnight in an effort to defeat 187 (National Catholic Reporter, 9 December 1994). Some cities with heavy
Latino populations, like South Gate and Boyle Heights, reported a doubling of voters over the 1992 presidential election (ibid.).

In a further analysis on turnout, WCVI concluded that by 1998, an estimated 1.162 million Latinos had cast votes in the 1998 Gubernatorial election (WCVI, 1999). This figure represents an 18.6% increase from the 1994 election, again evidencing a discernable shift toward increased political participation (ibid.). In both the 1996 and 1998 polls, Latinos ranked affirmative action and bilingual education, respectively, as their issues of greatest concern in those elections, thereby, demonstrating that the wedge initiatives were central motivators regarding their political engagement (ibid.). This increased Latino voting occurred despite a turnout decline of 3.2% among all voters thus, incrementally tilting the political balance a few more notches in their favor. In addition, Latinos experienced gains in voter registration, growing by 21.6% since 1994 for a net increase of 374,184 (ibid.). About half of those who registered since 1994 were foreign-born citizens, and in a 1998 poll taken by WCVI, most exclaimed their distaste for the slate of anti-immigrant legislation that was prevalent in California politics. By the appearance of the third wedge initiative, Proposition 227, the Latino share of total votes cast in California increased to a record high 13.5% (ibid.).

The state data acquired by WCVI was consistent with the findings of increased political participation by Barreto and Woods (2001) at the county level. In an effort to better understand how the initiatives impacted Latino politics in an urban setting, Barreto and Woods (2001) initiated a two-phased study in L.A. County that first sought to understand the initiatives’ implications on political participation (in this case, voter registration and turnout). By drawing on the total population of registered voters in L.A.
County for the General Elections of 1994 and 1998, their study was not as vulnerable to the confidence estimates that limit surveys and polls (ibid.). Also, in order to distinguish Latino voters from others, they used the United States Census Bureau Spanish Surname database (ibid.). In their aggregate analysis, they used data cut by the 25 assembly districts that fall within the borders of L.A. County (n=25) (ibid.).

The data indicate that, with regard to raw numbers, the number of Latinos who voted in 1998 was far larger than the number who voted in 1994. In a four-year period, the Latino vote in L.A. County increased by 117,462 votes, an increase of 48.7% (ibid.). This figure is striking in and of itself, but is all the more significant relative to rates of turnout among non-Latinos. For example, while the Latino vote increased at a nearly 49% rate, turnout of non-Latinos increased at a rate of just over 10%, thereby demonstrating that Latino voter turnout was outpacing the non-Latino vote by almost 5 to 1 between 1994 and 1998 (ibid.). Even after accounting for the larger base that came from newly registered Latino voters, Barreto and Woods found that the turnout rate as a percentage (40.2% vs. 42.6%) had increased along with the raw numbers. Although the difference appears to be only a modest number (2.4%), one must remember that we are talking about a community that, in the past, has attained political fame by virtue of their non-participatory tendencies.

In addition to measuring indicators on raw participation, one must also consider the qualitative implications that emerge from these contentious scenarios. Because the politics of majority-minority relations often play out in partisan terms, another way to measure the “wedge” impact on Latino politics is to look at affiliations drawn from partisan voting and party ID and, from there, sort out the associated cleavages. In this
case, partisanship measures apply, given the common knowledge that minorities tend to gravitate toward the Democratic Party while the Republican Party has greater success in attracting White voters and members. Therefore, by looking at these variables and cutting the data by race and ethnicity, the issues of commonality or divisiveness can be identified, filtered, and assessed through the relevant period in which the wedge initiatives occurred. Since party ID is a formidable political variable that has been thought, by some scholars, to be a stable driver of political preferences (see Niemi and Weisberg, 1993, *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, pp. 272-276) and represents a deeper and more permanent affiliation with parties and ideologies, it also warrants a closer look. Also, for Latinos, party ID has been a consistent barometer of their politics, given that they typically register as Democrats at about the 70th percentile, one of the more tilted indicators in their profile. In the case of the wedge initiatives, the data from a number of scholars shows that the Latino response was not only significant numerically, it was also patterned in a clear and definitive direction, a quality that many academics and politicos have sought from Latinos but have, in the past, often not found.

Because the three wedge initiatives were intended to reform statewide policies, it is very difficult to divorce the initiatives politically from a state-level context thus, it becomes a good place to start the investigation. In “pre-wedge” elections, Republicans in California had made great strides in attracting large numbers of Asians and Latinos to their party, at one point, carrying nearly half of each community. In 1990, for example, moderate Pete Wilson won the governor’s race with 47% of the Latino vote through a pro-immigrant and pro-Latino platform and, in addition, did better among Asians than Whites (*The Wall Street Journal*, 28 August 2000). Bruce Herschensohn, a very
conservative Republican, did almost as well in his unsuccessful race for the U.S. Senate in 1992 (ibid.). However, as aforementioned, Governor Wilson found himself in a tight race thus, even though he initially found the provisions of 187 extremist, he suddenly reversed course to support it (ibid.). Most suspect that after observing 187’s enormous popularity, he ultimately chose to use it as a centerpiece of his gubernatorial campaign. Upon assuming this strategy, Wilson spent millions on the now famous television spots that showed Mexicans dashing across the border, thus fueling fears of a Latino invasion and provocating concerns about welfare and crime. Despite a state economy mired in recession, Wilson won a landslide victory by appealing to the numerically dominant White electorate (ibid.).

Because Wilson’s strategy was so closely tied to the Republican Party, the initiatives caused quite a backlash in the Presidential race, as well. Coming only two years after the 187 debacle, an overwhelming majority of California Latino voters selected Bill Clinton for President on election day, 1996: the president captured 85.4% of the Latino vote according to survey participants (WCVI, 1997), numbers ordinarily only attained by Black urban constituencies who face a plethora of social and economic ills. Within the foreign-born Latino segment, Clinton captured an astounding 90.5% of the vote (ibid.). Congressional Democrat candidates fared equally as well as Clinton, capturing 85.4% of the California Latino vote, compared to 10.1% for Republican candidates and 4.5% for “Other.” (ibid.). The president’s share of the California Latino vote rose 14% from the 71% he gathered in 1992’s election (ibid.) Republican candidate Robert Dole’s 7% share of Latino votes was half of George Bush’s 14% in 1992, all likely due to the Latino backlash against the Republican party (ibid.) Independent Ross
Perot’s 1992 result of 15% of California Latino votes also decreased by more than half in November of 1996 (ibid.). In total, the above results show a distinct pattern of Latinos moving toward the Democratic candidates in a big way, and all of it occurring suspiciously on the heels of the tumultuous battle over Proposition 187. In the context of “Wilsonian politics,” Republicans, after endorsing and advancing the anti-immigrant message, were seen as espousing a platform that was antithetical to minority interests.

The full effects of the wedge initiatives are seen in the 1998 election where turnout swelled and partisanship became sharply pointed. According to an exit poll done by WCVI, in the gubernatorial race, 83.7% of the Latino vote went to the Democratic candidate, Gray Davis (WCVI, 1999). This figure is compared to 14.4% of the vote received by the Republican candidate, Dan Lungren (ibid.) Similarly, in three other key races in California, the Democratic candidate received at least 79.8% of the Latino vote (ibid.). In the race for Lieutenant Governor, Cruz Bustamante (D), a Latino, received 87.1% of the Latino vote compared to 11.7% for Time Leslie (R)(ibid.). In the Senatorial race, Barbara Boxer (D) received 79.8% of the Latino vote compared to 18% for Matt Fong (R)(ibid.). In the Congressional District races, Latinos in California reported voting for the Democratic candidate 83.8% of the time compared to 13.8% for the Republican candidate (ibid.). See Table 4 for a summary of top-of-the-ticket voting and other important trends across the last two decades.
Election | Latino Votes | Dem Plurality Among Latinos | Net Edge Latinos gave Dems. In overall vote |
<table>
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<tr>
<td>1998 (Gov.)</td>
<td>78% For Dems. 17% For Rep.</td>
<td>+61</td>
<td>+8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 (Pres.)</td>
<td>70% 21%</td>
<td>+49</td>
<td>+5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 (Gov.)</td>
<td>71% 25%</td>
<td>+46</td>
<td>+4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 (Pres.)</td>
<td>65% 35*</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td>+2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 (Gov.)</td>
<td>53% 47%</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 (Pres.)</td>
<td>65% 34%</td>
<td>+31</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 (Gov.)</td>
<td>52% 46%</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984 (Pres.)</td>
<td>55% 44%</td>
<td>+11</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: Data gathered from California Opinion Index [online]. Exit polls conducted in California by Voter News Service, its predecessor Voter Research and Surveys, or exit polls sponsored by CBS, NBC, ABC or the Field Institute in each election cycle. Includes votes cast for Ross Perot.

As indicated by the table above, the partisanship of Latinos, over time, starts to take a distinctly patterned move with respect to voting for Democrats in top-of-the-ticket offices. Although in some of the early years indicated, the support for Democratic candidates had somewhat of an ebb and flow, as the 1990’s are ushered in, the movement favors the Democrats more consistently and systematically and it realizes an accelerated rise in the years between 1994 and 1998, the heyday of the wedge initiatives. According to a Democratic Party operative, Latinos were openly and unabashedly levying charges of racism against Pete Wilson and the Republican Party, and this message was being advanced to mobilize Latinos in a counterattack to 187 and the associated wedge issues. While the initial reaction to 187 was boisterous and fraught with personal attacks on Wilson’s credibility, in the subsequent elections that included 209 and 227, the party, with the blessing and support of the state Latino Caucus, initiated grassroots efforts to articulate the party’s outrage and to mobilize more Latino voters. According one party
operative, many foreign nationals and newly naturalized citizens were turning out for the organized neighborhood meetings, and these included many foreign-born individuals with educational degrees and occupational certifications (private source). The effort provided more than an emotional boost against the initiatives, it included a detailed workbook for participants on how to cascade the mobilization effort in the event they would face a similar onslaught as 187, and for many immigrant newcomers, it was their first foray into American politics (ibid.). Apparently some of these efforts took hold in that many Republican candidates for local, state and federal offices who happened to be Latino failed to make inroads in that community. According to Ed Perez, a Republican candidate for Congressman in 1996 and 1998 in the 34th district, despite running a campaign that was deliberately sensitive to labor and working-class issues, Latinos in middle-class cities like Santa Fe Springs could not be persuaded to support his version of the Republican agenda (Perez interview).

In order to validate that the wedge initiatives were, in fact, strong contributors to the Latino partisan tilt, a more nuanced analysis of the initiatives within the proper timeframe would be required. Fortunately, the second phase of the Barreto and Woods study (2001) of L.A. County addresses this very issue. After determining that Latino political participation increased significantly during this period (as discussed above), the authors were looking to make a connection that would somehow implicate the wedge initiatives as driving the increases they were witnessing. In order to accomplish this link, they would have to tally-up the opposition levels in each assembly district in L.A. County and then compare these with the change in turnout from the 1994 election to the one in 1998 (note: these were both mid-term elections). After using a number of other variables
as controls such as age, gender, income, etc., in order to eliminate them as possible causes, they hypothesized that they would find a significant and positive effect in turnout when using “opposition to the propositions” as the independent variable. As indicated in their first model, after controlling for a number of potentially important indicators influencing the change in the Latino vote, they found that an Assembly District's opposition to the three divisive propositions is significant, and positive, as expected. For a unit change in the percentage of Opposition to Propositions, they found a positive 1.061 unit increase in the Change in Latino Turnout (ibid.). This indicates a slightly better than 1:1 ratio between the two measures, which underscores their expectation that it was opposition to these initiatives which fueled the change (ibid.). The model as a whole is significant with an adjusted $R^2$ of .777 – a fairly good estimate, particularly given their limited degrees of freedom (ibid.). Overall, their study concluded that the wedge initiatives were the most significant factors in driving Latinos to the polls between 1994 and 1998 (ibid.).

In an additional step to their study, the authors sought to measure the level of GOP detachment in the Latino electorate as a product of their opposition to the wedge initiatives. They measured GOP detachment by looking at the numbers and percentages of “since 1994” registrants to determine if Latinos, smarting from the anti-minority tide, might be moving away from the Republican party in greater rates. In terms of total registration base, the advantage for Democrats is apparent throughout the period under study. In 1994 Democratic registrants among Latinos stood at 68% relative to 20% for the GOP, and by 1998 the corresponding figures were 66% and 17% respectively (Barreto and Woods, 2001). This is of numerical significance for both parties and
important due to the many ways Party ID has been purported to affect voter’s decisions, ideologies, and social affiliations while not itself subject to exogenous forces.

Again, in total, the numbers may not look astounding at first glance, however, a closer examination yields more interesting results. By looking specifically at the “since 1994” registrants, the authors calculated a 48.2% drop in GOP base registration, and by 1998 concluded that, over a four year period, the GOP was attracting Latinos at only half the rate they were realizing in 1994 (ibid.). If the increase in turnout is tied together with partisanship, the results are striking. After isolating the voting records of those who registered between 1994 and 1998 (117,462 new Latino voters), 88,000 were registered Democratic, 8,221 were registered Republican, and 21,241 were registered as Independents or with another Third Party (ibid.). This amounts to 75% of new registrants who voted aligning with the Democratic Party, while 18% of new registrants were with Third Parties or Independent thus, leaving just 7% of the new registrants voting Republican (ibid.). By 1998, among Latino voters that registered between 1994 and 1998, the Democratic party held more than a 10 to 1 advantage over Republicans (ibid.). This is significant given the amorphous ideology Latinos are thought to hold.

My own study of L.A. County yielded results highly similar to the Barreto and Woods analysis. Using data acquired at the L.A. County Board of Elections, I averaged the 1990 and 2000 census data for Latino populations in each city in L.A. County (because initiatives occurred in mid-census cycle) and compared them to the percentages of “No” votes on each of the three propositions. Using a simple regression analysis (OLS), I found that as the propositions progressed temporally, the opposition to them correlated more closely with Latino populations across the entire slate of cities. Across
all three initiatives there was a strong linear association between the two variables (% opposed versus % of Latino populations) and across all three, the relationship was highly significant ($p < .001$). With the initial jolt of Proposition 187, an $R$ of .69 was obtained which would be considered significant by most any standards, but as each of the next two referenda were introduced the association only became stronger, reaching $R$’s at or above .80. This demonstrated that, even at the initial stages, the Latino community was not divided and, as time passed, their unity grew stronger. The strengthening effect over time and its uniform direction suggests a rapid and systematic move toward opposing these initiatives and it counters arguments that Latinos are a divided and fragmented community. In a comparative sense, the urban opposition to 187 scored the lowest numbers, but they, in themselves, still support a significant level of “ethnic effect,” especially when compared in relation to other ethnic and racial groups (see Table 4). Additionally, these lower urban numbers on 187 are mitigated by the strong individual opposition measured for Latinos at the state level, and the organized protest levels that accompanied its advent. Additionally, when considering that the contextual rationales for subgroup cooperation are virtually non-existent on 187, the pronounced oppositional tilt of the Latino community becomes even more punctuated, explained almost half of the opposition votes rendered by Latinos in L.A. County. While this may not appear highly significant at first glance, it was the initial point at which organized Latino politics had to grapple with an escalating climate of negativity that was to persist for the next four years. As the controversy continued, Latino opposition became more closely tied to the Latino populations of each city, thereby, suggesting Latinos across a wide array of geographic and economic zones were staunchly opposed to these policies and, as they escalated,
opposition grew. This systematic growth in opposition is consistent with the thesis and data put forth by Barreto and Woods and it, furthermore, defies the notion of political fragmentation amongst Latinos.

Furthermore, when one marries these trends with the increasing participation and the uniform partisan tilt of Latinos, one feels pressured to consider what factors or elements were responsible for binding Latinos into a wave of opposition. Because the data between ethnic groups was so scattered on these propositions, the class arguments hold very little legitimacy as a causal factor thus, leaving culture as the intuitive default for explaining the skewed and significant political tilt of Latinos. Although the $R^2$ for 187 was relatively low when compared with the other two propositions, the $R^2$ of .69 on 209 and .75 on 227 demonstrate how quickly opposition to these policies developed in a uniform direction. Although a strong response would have normally been expected on 209 due to its civil rights bent, the stronger response to 227 on a cultural issue appears out of the ordinary in the context of traditional identity profiles. Below, these measures will be discussed further and placed in the context of both emerging and conventional theories and their associated identity frames.
Table 5: Bivariate Regression on % of “No” votes for Wedge Initiatives according to Latino city Populations located in L.A. County.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000 census and L.A. County Board of Elections Voting Archives.

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<(.001)$ (two-tailed).

5.3 Discussion
In digesting the data presented above, there is no question that the wedge initiatives mobilized Latinos politically and crowded them into camps divided by cultural and ethnic markers. Also, a closer look reveals a scenario that falls outside the established norms in political science. For example, in even a cursory review, the Latino response to the wedge initiatives (this includes the qualitative data presented in Chapter Four) was so engaged and compelling that it challenges the conventional wisdom that Latinos, as a rule, participate less than other groups (such studies include Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). First, these socio-cultural initiatives ignited both institutional and non-institutional forms of political mobilization that went beyond what we have been taught to expect. The Barreto and Woods study (2001) showed definitive proof that Latino participation levels were not
only exceeding their own base growth, but that they were turning out in greater rates than
other groups who have enjoyed a reputation as being more politically astute. The fact
that these sharp and/or measurable reactions came from a community that has at times
been pegged as uninspired, amorphous, and politically docile, gives one cause to rethink
reality. Pundits and scholars, who have classified Latinos as a strictly “low-participation”
group, must have been taken aback and, at the very least, forced to consider the
variability of Latino politics according to issue, location and context. The results were so
contrary to convention that it opens the door to challenge other traditional notions that
may be inappropriate or blatantly wrong.

In addition to the surge in participation, Latinos also exhibited some qualitative
political shifts that were purposive and systematic in fending off these populist attacks.
The Barreto and Woods study demonstrates that there was strong opposition across the
three initiatives and that, in the urban setting, this grew to a crescendo by the appearance
of 227 in 1998. This suggests that Latinos were not only politically inspired, but that the
heightened activity took on cohesive and group-centric characteristics. While some
scholars have been seeking these traits from Latinos in the past given the dominance of
Black political models, they have not always found them abundantly or explicitly. In
fact, these traits go against the thesis of some who have deemed the politics of Latinos as
loosely formed and unaligned (Verba et al., 1995), thus causing one to question the
contextual basis of these notions. Also, despite the “division” thesis, the raw data
suggests that under duress, Latino subgroupings can find common political ground. In
total, these discrepancies make one wonder how well Latino studies has actually evolved
with respect to increasingly salient events, and how well traditional theory can claim to
represent the plight and condition of Latinos. It presages the scholar to keep an open-

mind when engaging the intricacies of this sub-discipline.

While the above numbers served to demonstrate, in total, the increased and more

focused participation of Latinos surrounding the wedge initiatives, they don’t distinguish

their response according to theoretical frames. In order to assess the applicability of each

identity frame within the context of each initiative, the three-pronged model will be tested

both qualitatively and quantitatively in each scenario. The tables below summarize

Latino activity (both institutional and non-institutional) according to each individual

initiative to establish a comparative yardstick between the three and to isolate their

relative importance in the eyes of Latinos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Polls (%)</th>
<th>Registrations increase</th>
<th>Voter Inc.</th>
<th>Plurality from previous in-kind election</th>
<th>Δ for Dems.</th>
<th>Non-Institutional Profile*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prop. 187</td>
<td>Y 23</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop. 209</td>
<td>Y 30</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop. 227</td>
<td>Y 37</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Summary of Latino Political Activity by Initiative (Statewide)

Sources: L.A. Times Polls, WCVI archive data (wcvi.org), and Exit polls conducted in California by
Voter News Service, it predecessor Voter Research and Surveys, or exit polls sponsored by CBS, NBC,
ABC or the Field Institute in each election cycle. *Based on the level of visibility and protest demonstrated
by Latinos to ward off passage of each proposition.
In looking across the three initiatives broadly, it is possible to engage in some
generic conclusions about the immigrant frame. For example, it is striking that none of
the data even remotely supports the notion of an immigrant identity for Latinos given
their strong opposition to the three initiatives. Across the board, their reaction does not
support the theoretical strains that would see Latinos as fulfilling the assimilative and
integrative qualities of the immigrant and the associated dilution of identity that would
accompany that scenario. Were this the case, little outrage would have ensued over 187
given its emphasis on illegal immigrants and little concern would have been exhibited
about social programs such as affirmative action and bilingual education given their
attachment to a “special-class” status. In fact, overall, the effect is emphatically contrary
to such a designation. If Latinos were to have had an immigrant mindset, their track of
successful integration into American society would have precluded their concerns over
rejection, racism and special programs designed to achieve fairness and equity. To
support the immigrant frame, one would have expected Latinos to either support the three
initiatives wholeheartedly, or at least demonstrate some level of serious division on one

Table 7: Urban Latino Response (L.A. County)

*Data acquired from Barreto and Woods analysis of L.A. County
or more of the issues. The data gathered at the state level and in L.A. County does not support this conclusion across the slate of issues, thus placing the immigrant frame and associated theories into disrepute.

On the other hand, while the “minority” designation fares a bit better as an explanation of the Latino response to the domestic policy issues contained in 209 and 227, in a more nuanced analysis, it too falls short of the mark. Because 209 directly attacked the concept of affirmative action, it is clear that, with respect to Latinos, its target was Chicanos. If we look at the policy content of 209 (anti-affirmative action), there is no doubt that this initiative is attacking the legacy of Civil Rights and, more specifically, the programmatic gains made by minority groups in the course of their social and political accession. This is resoundingly a political issue that symbolizes the essence of politics in the post-civil rights era where peripheral groups based on designations such as race, ethnicity, creed and gender, are synonymous with “minority” identities. Without question, the relevant communities in this political assault were all the groups, who by virtue of their history and contributions in the U.S., were able to advance grievances that included discrimination, inequality, relative deprivation, and a host of other infamous concerns; furthermore, these groups successfully staked claims for redress in all of these categories and, ultimately, achieved success in some of these petitions.

Within the Latino community, which is comprised of a diverse set of generational subgroupings, the only truly legitimate claimants to the civil rights legacy in America are those Chicanos whose families and ancestors have contributed to building this nation, but have not received the commensurate rewards for their service. De la Garza (1996b) uses the passage of the 1975 Voting Rights Act as a line of demarcation to denote Latino
generations that can or can’t lay claim to the programmatic remedies that came about through the civil rights movement. Thus, in terms of pure policy, 209’s scope was not an issue pertinent to recent immigrants or even the foreign-born, but it was a Chicano issue due to the latter’s legitimacy via their U.S. nativity, history, and citizenship. It was, in effect, a “minority” issue, but one that should apply only to a specific sub-population of Latinos whose long-term presence and contributions validates their crusade to petition the government. However, because democracy allows for all groupings to express their political views as long as they are citizens, the verdict rendered by Latinos was an amalgamation of variegated subgroup interests. Thus, in a sense, the response to 209 was not strictly a referendum on minority programmatic policy, it was also measure of political cross-fertilization between Latino subgroups that, more specifically, gauged how strongly the non-native Latino elements played into adopting that role. The strong and tilted response against 209 suggests that Latinos of recent tenure were assuming Chicano political traits in their attempt to protect the legal and constitutional gains attained well before their arrival. The strong reaction to the wedge initiatives by late registrants and the foreign-born as measured in WCVI’s exit polls validates their “Chicano-like” position. Therefore, while 209’s substance adheres nicely to the “minority” frame, the electoral response, due to open participation, better represents the effects of interactive forces between subgroups, a cornerstone of cultural citizenship.

According to tables 6 and 7, the overall response to 209, suggests that Latino opposition to it was very strong in both the urban and state milieus. Although it may have not been a defining campaign for Latino “minority” leadership, electorally the response was strong enough to support the existence of an active “minority
consciousness” in the Latino community. Although 209 didn’t quite match the synchronicity exhibited against 187 in that the protest activity surrounding it seemed to emanate from only specialized sectors of the community (students and academicians for the most part), it still demonstrates that the legacy of civil rights is deeply ingrained in the Latino consciousness. In fact, so ingrained that the protests against 209 reverted to the old civil rights formula where Blacks led the charge and Latinos and other groups played supporting roles. This outcome was exemplified by a huge protest on the Golden Gate Bridge led by Jesse Jackson and Willie Brown, and demonstrated for all intents and purposes that this theater of operations was, and continues to be, a Black bailiwick.

In assessing the protest activity surrounding 209, it is difficult to conclude that this issue had really shaken the Latino political core. Because the boisterous response to 187 had preceded proposition 209 by only two years, it is actually surprising that Latino visibility and leadership was not higher than what was witnessed or measured. To fend off 209, Latinos joined Blacks, their natural allies in Civil Rights, in opposing the initiative at high levels, however, this coalition diminished their visibility and isolation as the most distanced outlier group. Thus, by reverting to national Black leadership to orchestrate opposition and to escalate this important issue beyond the borders of California, Latinos, even under fire from 187, did not consummate their leadership role as the reigning civil rights “minority” in California. In the end, this suggests that even in the most pressing and ideal situations, Latinos do not fulfill the role of “minority” exemplar, thus diminishing its clout as a fitting and perpetual identity frame for Latinos. This fact begs for some level of explanation given that the social condition of Latinos closely reflects that of Blacks.
When pitting the “minority” frame against Proposition 227, it appears to partially fit the bill but, at the same time, raises some awkward incompatibilities. In the sense that 227 addresses a domestic policy issue (language) that affects a “distinct” group in America, it appears, on balance, to be a “minority” concern. However, if as “minorities,” Chicanos have purportedly diverged from immigrant interests (as the division thesis would submit), then concerns about preserving native language is not entirely compatible with that political profile. In addition, given 227’s focus on a cultural issue (language) tied to a foreign homeland, then the connection to a minority concern becomes even dimmer. While the “minority” profile is exemplified in Latinos’ opposition to 227 (especially at the urban level) on the grounds of resisting a policy that might affect the quality and efficiency of their socialization, the thesis of Chicano and immigrant division would envisage some level of insularity to such a blatant cultural issue on the part of Chicanos and, again, the data does not support this outcome. Had this been the case, more division between Latino subgroups would have been detected on Proposition 227 than what actually occurred. The powerful rejection of 227 in L.A. County and the tilt in opposition at the state level are made even more significant in that they came about despite a paltry campaign to defeat the measure, thus suggesting that, even in the face of technical arguments and well-funded campaigns, Latinos were resistant to cultural change. This cultural resiliency would be consistent with the precepts of cultural citizenship.

The reader may at this point be intrigued as to why I have made no mention of Proposition 187 thus far, and chosen to address the impact of the wedge initiatives out of sequential order. There is actually a very good reason for doing this. So far, we have
reviewed the information and data that parallel a Latino political identity based on Skerry’s dichotomous model of minority or immigrant group in the form of Propositions 209 and 227, respectively. These propositions were so tailored to these traditional political models/identities that very little cogitation on our part was required to make them fit. Clearly, affirmative action constituted a political issue that impacted the minority element within the Latino community, and assuming that Latino subgroups interact and interchange with one another, then the strength of their “minority” identity was expressed in their electoral and militant reaction. Similarly, bilingual education was an issue that was directly pertinent to the foreign elements of the Latino population, thus again, assuming that subgroups have the opportunity to blend and mix, and also, knowing that many voters were not immigrants, it becomes a barometer about Latinos’ overall feelings on culture and assimilation. The attached issues in these two cases greatly parallel the strategies proposed by Skerry’s original dichotomy. As an overall expression of voting, however, due to the participation of various subgroups, they better satisfy the interactive elements proposed in cultural citizenship.

On the other hand, Proposition 187 presents a premise of greater complexity than its initiative counterparts, satisfying neither category of Skerry’s dichotomy. In reality, the issue addressed by 187 is so ambiguous and problematic that it requires a more expansive and imaginative solution to put it in perspective. If we take the core intent of 187, it represents a policy statement that sought to delegitimize the informal status of illegal immigrants residing in California by withholding services critical to their physical, social and economic sustenance. Without a doubt, it was a bold, brash and heavy-handed maneuver to achieve socio-cultural reform in an unprecedented fashion. One’s initial
impulse is to deduce that Latinos, who in California, find themselves in the social, economic and political spotlight as antagonists, would be quite angry and offended by this unsympathetic approach to solving social problems. However, unless we acknowledge the primordial bonds that tie people together in a profound way, this anticipated gut reaction does not fit the profile of a fragmented and divided Latino community that scholarship has popularized.

If we take a deeper look at 187’s provisions, there appears to be no logical, policy-oriented grounds upon which Latinos should have reacted with such ferocity and outrage as rational choice arguments would lead us to believe. First, and foremost, 187 doesn’t qualify as a “minority” issue in the legal sense because it was directed at illegal immigrants, thus Chicanos who are native to this country are, or should be, unaffected by the intent and objective of this initiative. Their citizenship status exempts them completely from the provisions that 187 was seeking to implement. Secondly, illegal immigrants, the target population of the initiative, and who also have no legal status in this country, have no legal basis or historical legacy upon which to stake claims in the U.S. thus it is curious that they would have a defiant political consciousness considering their precarious status and relatively short tenure in the U.S. In fact, if you pare the Latino community down into the distinct subgroups and components that comprise it, their reaction to the proposition makes very little sense because it simply doesn’t apply when imposed against the operating parts. Traditional designations have been responsible for compartmentalizing Latinos into separate parts and their lack of integrative capacity insufficiently addresses 187’s crosscutting implications.
Thus, we are left with this question: How does one explain the explosive and sustained political reaction of Latinos to Proposition 187? By looking at the data, information and angles presented in this study, one thing is evidently clear—Latinos were outraged by the content of 187 and they were equally infuriated by the attempt to pass it via a state ballot. Along many indicators in Table 6 and 7, the oppositional response to 187 was not only strong, in certain areas it appears to have breached the Latino political core. The effects of 187 provoked such resentment among Latinos that, in this instance, it rendered conventional political theory and thought erroneous and questionable. Not only did their political participation and engagement significantly go up, it brought many sectors of the Latino community together in one common objective. Jake Alarid, past National president of the American G.I. Forum, exclaimed how his tax offices in Bellflower were used as a staging area for dispensing information on 187 and for initiating naturalization and registration procedures for Latino community members (Alarid interview). He stated that these types of community and neighborhood efforts were common across locales throughout L.A. County, and that the activity was vigorous and purposeful. The Barreto and Woods study (2001) illuminated the way in which 187 was a political flashpoint in terms of engendering electoral political impetus. If we factor in a short lag period to absorb the political fallout from 187, we see that record-breaking turnout occurred among Latinos in the 1996 Presidential election and that these figures were accompanied by unprecedented support for the Democratic ticket. Literally, the Republican party, which had concentrated its support on passage of the initiative, was left in shambles in the wake of its defeat in the courts. Latinos from all walks of life and from cross-border backgrounds were all brought together to march and protest in the
open, and one couldn’t but sense that this popular legislative effort had offended their
dignity in the most profound way. Polls and electoral data presented above demonstrate
that the after-effects of 187 continued to influence the political intensity and preferences
of Latinos well into the next two elections.

Furthermore, the protest levels that accompanied the anti-187 campaign were so
potent and widespread that one cannot advance the analysis without deeply
contemplating their causality. As witnessed by first-hand participants, the 187 march was
the largest protest initiated by Latinos in the history of California and it included so many
elements of both Chicano and immigrant communities that it leaves little room for
isolating singular components of the community. The march had such a profound impact
across L.A. County, that for a moment, Latinos of all backgrounds and stripes were one
political bloc moving in one uniform direction. The meshing of interests across Latino
subgroups does not conform well to the perceptions that have dominated scholarship, and
it creates a host of questions regarding the factors that produced it. Against the backdrop
of 187, the immigrant frame cannot be considered as the operating mindset that would
provoke this type of reaction. And as for the “minority” frame, it struggles to explain
Latino convergence over fracture, especially given the illegal status of the proposition’s
target.

Across the three initiatives, cultural citizenship holds up well as a plausible
explanation for the Latino reactions to these controversial events. For example, the
strong opposition to 209, while validating the presence of a “minority” current among
Latinos, also reinforces the notion of culture and citizenship interacting to form of a
political bloc. The culture of the immigrant gives impetus to the distinct Latino identity
that is incorporated into a functional political platform that seeks equity and rights based upon that same identity distinction. Thus, 209, while a domestic policy concern of Chicanos, cannot divorce itself entirely from immigrants given that their influence has, in part, formed the very Chicano identity that seeks redress. Thus, as Chicanos fight for their social and civil rights today, the cultural and social links between subgroups will transpose these battles onto immigrants as they socialize (according to cultural citizenship model) in the U.S., thus making cultural citizenship directly applicable in the civil rights domain. As referenced by my respondents, politics gives impetus to Chicano-immigrant relations and the contentious variety hastens that process. Clearly, the wedge issues touched a nerve that precipitated a vibrant and purposeful bond in Latinos at the mass level.

On 227, even less rationalization is required to connect political activity with culture. In this case, by blending a social policy (the dissolution of bilingual education) with a cultural element (language), 227 ignited the two major components of culture and citizenship into a political reaction that, especially at the urban level, sought to defeat the eradication of bilingual education. Although individual data at the state level was not as pronounced, Latinos still opposed it strongly enough to suggest the existence of a cultural bond, thus, not greatly attenuating cultural citizenship’s relevance in this scenario. Perhaps because rural districts use bilingual education less, this could account for some of the relatively lower oppositional numbers. Nevertheless, with the overall data still skewing significantly toward opposition, the immigrant frame can be eliminated entirely while the “minority” frame is hard-pressed to incorporate the cultural factor. In the final analysis, cultural citizenship retains a relative edge over the frames that constitute
Skerry’s dichotomy and it may also suggest that Latinos are undergoing a socially constructed identity.

On Proposition 187, the rigidity of his dichotomy becomes even more apparent and it loses even more stock as an explanation for what transpired. For example, within Skerry’s designations, Latino identity would be tied to a specific social or political trajectory that includes some concrete objectives and a relatively fixed direction. Thus, in the case of immigrants, their identity would be the product of successful social, political and economic advancement and their platforms would reflect this success. In the case of minorities, their identity would be linked to the social and political barriers that have impeded their incorporation into American mainstream society, thus their battle would be focused domestically. Neither of these frames should be concerned with the plight of illegal immigrants and much less, would they expend great amounts of energy and resources to defend their “rights.” Yet, this is what transpired in Los Angeles and across California. Without defaulting to the cultural bonds that tie Latinos together, none of these scenarios make sense. Cultural citizenship suggests that the components of Latino society (the subgroups) are not mutually exclusive but, in fact, highly interactive entities that engage themselves daily. These relations are dependent, ambiguous, ambivalent and even antagonistic (in a relative sense), but they are linked in a way that creates social and political distance from the mainstream and identity shifts in relation to each other. As indicated by table 6, the response against 187 suggests that the Latino political core was breached and that it exploded into non-conventional political activity. At the state-level, the oppositional numbers were so great that it suggests some level of cooperation between native Latinos and immigrants. Also, the overall response to 187
suggests that the breadth of Latino politics extends beyond domestic issues or even legal residents, it also incorporates the politics of Mexican nationals and Central Americans (*La Raza*), thus further burdening the integrative capacities of their social and political endeavors. Thus, the reproach Latinos get for low participation may, in fact, be less innate and more linked to the exogenous factors that work to stratify the Southwest. However, in contentious cases, participation for Latinos has shown it can increase.

In the absence of a good explanation from either Skerry’s original model or from political science convention, few alternatives are left but to borrow from scholars who suggest that identities can be socially constructed. By their response to 187, Chicanos proved that they could bring together disparate parts into an organized political union in order to ward off legislation that was detrimental to their interests, thus some form of community ligature and bonding must be acknowledged. Even the antagonism between Chicanos and immigrants was reflected by the relatively low $R^2$ on 187 in the urban model, but since this is acknowledged by Gutierrez’ historical thesis (e.g., his “walls”), it does not discredit cultural citizenship as an operating frame. In day-to-day dealings, Chicanos feel the pressure of “foreignness” that immigrants bring, but when “push came to shove,” they did not turn their backs on these newcomers. Latino behavior during this contentious period not only defies the hardened views of intra-group dissention and fragmentation that we have come to accept as a Latino reality, it suggests that extraneous forces can empathy and cooperation. Somewhere within this community exist dynamics and forces that somehow bind people together and give them a sense of solidarity, otherwise this sequence of events could never have occurred. Perhaps studies crafted from periods of quietude cannot capture the subjective realities or latent undercurrents
that lie in a group’s political core, and if that is, indeed, the case, then the research methods must be revised and expanded.

At this point, it is only clear that Latinos tend to coalesce internally in the face of adversity and threats and that these political bonds can shape identity and consciousness. It appears that that the citizenship rights of Chicanos and the cultural potency of immigrants successfully transposed across intra-group boundaries to forge a political front that, despite the disadvantages of distance and difference, sustained. Overall, the response to the initiatives seem to deviate enough from Skerry’s traditional models to place their utility into question as an explanation for Latino politics. These models, traditionally favored by political science, don’t appear to have the reach and breadth to capture the inherent dynamics and activity that reside in the community. Rather, it appears that a model of broader parameters is needed to chisel through the cracks and crevices of Latino studies that have been ignored, overlooked, and worse, used to exclude them from the pantheon of political contenders.

Cultural citizenship appears to be a multi-dimensional construct with enough facets to reconcile the Chicano perspective with immigrant interests, and it acknowledges that Latinos can derive fluidity from their cultural and linguistic advantages. In the case of the wedge issues, the traditional political models appear wanting, thus calling for approaches that extend beyond the limited and inadequate frameworks that exist today. The mounting incongruities that emerge from Latino political studies suggest that we know little about our nation’s largest minority and, this alone should be a “red flag” for scholars and academics that Latinos deserve more analysis than they have been given.
By also acknowledging that they populate virtually every nation in this hemisphere below our southern border and every state in the union, the need to learn more is magnified.
Beneath the surface, California is a dynamic cauldron of geophysical forces that constantly work to reshape the state’s terrain and topography. The friction and pressure brought about by the collision of immense continental plates are continually fashioning new fissures and fault lines that send geologists scurrying to revise the calculus of impending disaster. Interestingly, as California absorbs and adjusts to new social and demographic developments, this geological metaphor could not be more fitting as a descriptor of the state’s current political condition. As California adapts to increases in population and to a rapidly changing environment, there are potent and dynamic forces working to transform the nature and trajectory of its political culture. These political quakes and their aftershocks are creating new breaks in ethnic relations and they may be a prelude to the end of the political structure that for so long dominated the South. In the final analysis, the wedge initiatives and their fallout may surface as a set of pivotal events that not only prescribe a direction for Latino politics, but that also set the tone for the general conduct of politics in the state.

Without even considering the logic, intricacies and trade-offs associated with policy development, the content of the wedge initiatives was so brazen and controversial that they were bound to provoke a potent and stinging reaction. The fact that they were driven by the mass process of direct democracy only compounded the issues and
escalated the involvement of ordinary citizens and political players across the state. Additionally, they extended so forthright a challenge to Latinos that they acted as a lever to unhinge them from political obscurity straight into the political spotlight. For scholars waiting to understand the political behavior of Latinos in a controversial environment, the initiatives were a bonanza of information about their perspective and consciousness. Additionally, the initiatives’ variegated content and temporal continuity combined to produce a plethora of political data in a condensed and relevant timeframe, thus forming an almost natural research construct that required little manipulation on the part of interested scholars. In the final analysis, it was a fortuitous confluence of events that produced great dividends for both Latino studies and political science.

In reviewing the impact of the wedge initiatives and their aftermath, it appears that their influence was important and significant across several political dimensions. At the highest level, the initiatives served as an intersection point for an interesting interdisciplinary merger—ethnic studies and political science—in part, due to a perception that Latinos were their principal target. However, these types of partnerships are not always a good fit due to their inherently different approaches. For example, ethnic studies, which explores many facets of the ethnic experience and generally strives to capture a wide swath of it, tends to evolve expansively. Because of this, the premises are more malleable, interactive and broader to where epistemological boundaries can sometimes experience rapid change. Additionally, in ethnic studies, differences are celebrated, constituting a source of intrigue that drives the desire to uncover more. In fact, this is so much the case, that ethnographers must be careful that the novel won’t mesmerize them into trivializing the substantive or ascribing importance to the banal.
On the other hand, political science is more restrictive. It represents motion, movement and change within the confines of well-defined systems (i.e., autocracy, democracy, communism, socialism, etc.), thus its analysis occurs within parameters established by the rules, processes, and institutions that comprise and define the particular system in question. As a result, it tends toward generalizing variegated and diverse experiences into a preconceived set of models in order to construct a framework from which to draw conclusions. Thus, in contrast to ethnology, political science, due to its more rigid structure, may be hindered from extending and capturing what is potentially crucial. In order to reconcile these interdisciplinary contrasts, a powerful vehicle that contains components of both must be employed. In this author’s opinion, the wedge initiatives fulfill that role.

The wedge initiatives, although in one sense representing a harbinger of the difficulties Latinos will face in bifurcated environments, has also helped them break out of what has been a contradictory and nebulous state. For example, while in ethnic studies Latinos are considered a dynamic conglomeration of vibrant and impassioned cultures, as a political entity, they have been considered dormant and irresolute. This has posed a problem for classification and typology in political science, and it has further complicated endeavors to launch interdisciplinary mergers. However, the totality of the data surrounding the wedge issues suggests that Latinos experienced a political surge in this four year period and their behavior, without question, defied the norms held by conventional wisdom. Not only did Latinos take to the streets to rebuke the tenets of 187, within the relevant time period (1994-1998), they also experienced greater turnout in electoral terms than the rest of the population. This surge in political activity was not
isolated to any one political component but, rather, an integrated process that, at the
front-end, included efforts to organize awareness, protest and naturalizations and, at the
back end, promoted registrations and turnout. The synchronicity of their reaction
supports a rising Latino consciousness that cannot be explained as solely an anomalous
case. Instead, the results call for broader investigations of their experience that include,
but should not be limited to, culture, history, geography and sociology. In effect, the
unusual response provoked by the initiatives provided grounds for injecting broader
concepts to explain the discrepancies with conventional wisdom and they impelled the
process to procure an explanation of more enduring quality. Within this intersection of
circumstances and disciplines, the notion of cultural citizenship seems to make the most
sense.

In the past, ignoring Latinos as a political group was justified on the basis of their
relative quiescence, unpredictability and intragroup diversity. Although these arguments
have been one-sided, one can understand that political analysis would be attracted to
those epicenters where political activity is most vigorous, cohesive and robust. This
lethargic approach to Latinos may have continued indefinitely if they had not recently
become the nation’s largest minority and, in the process, also become controversial.
These new flashpoints have now shifted attention in their direction and created great
political interest, but they have failed to tie in the cultural and historical factors that
impact these important developments. As we begin to contemplate the current state of
Latino politics and the issues driving it into the limelight, historical/political works like
Gutierrez’ begin to take on an increasingly important role. For example, in his study,
_Walls and Mirrors_, Gutierrez was seeking to uncover the psyche and consciousness of
Mexicans in the Southwest by exploring a diverse set of variables that included their experience, organizations, leaders, and mass attitudes. In the process, he discovered that beneath the political surface resided a consciousness of duality and ambivalence that blended roles, identities and cultures into a complex prism of perception. Not only was a dichotomy of Mexican and American culture/identity at work, but within the Latino community, there also existed an effect wrought from the interaction of Chicanos and immigrants. Despite the many assertions that Chicanos and *Mexicanos* were hopelessly divided by conditions that equated to zero sum, in reality the cultural/racial affinity was never really breached absolutely. Instead, in its totality, their American experience, while beset by divisive forces like economic competition, was also balanced by factors that are fashioned by culture such as tradition, practice and custom—issues so basic to individual and collective perception that they can scarcely be ignored. Additionally, these commonalities were reinforced by Latinos’ experience with racism, stratification and segregation, thus widening the chasm with Anglo-America and establishing a basic sense of solidarity. Ultimately, these forces not only caused an attraction that bridged social distances, they also became the means to creating a political identity that could transcend intragroup differences.

When Flores et al. advanced the idea of cultural citizenship at a national academic conference, he and his colleagues were asserting that it was time to view Latinos as a separate and stand-alone entity that present their own unique category in the pantheon of American politics. At the very least, the participants were acknowledging the complexities that plague the interaction of culture and politics in the Latino condition and they appeared intent on bringing these issues to light. On the other hand, when they were
discussing the spaces and occasions where Chicanos and immigrants had come together politically, they were reinforcing (although, possibly unwittingly) the “mirrors” encountered in Gutierrez’ study and validating the presence of a fundamental bond that, in this case, represents La Raza. These historical links, without question, gave the current examples of Latino political cooperation cited by Flores and others, a validity that went beyond sheer strategic calculus; in turn, these occasions of unified politics underscored and validated the enduring cultural attraction to which Gutierrez’ so prolifically referred in his study. Ultimately, despite the formidable adaptations required to fully undertake American citizenship, these scholars were asserting that, for Latinos, culture cannot be omitted from the formula. Perhaps the ambivalence measured in earlier epochs were the cultural seeds that have now seen full expression through a post-civil rights apparatus.

In Latino Cultural Citizenship and many other works, there are prolific examples where Latinos came together to fend off external threats via engagement in community politics. However, few of these examples were as cutting and widespread as the wedge initiatives in California. If the relative quiescence of Latinos had created the impression that they were smoothly and happily assimilating into American society, the advent of backlash politics in the nation’s largest state has proved this wrong. Since the 1960s, minority politics in the U.S. has largely been identified with Blacks and the civil rights movement. Within this frame, Latinos and immigration politics played, at best, only a secondary role. These circumstances may be suggestive of a number of things. First, it could indicate that Latinos are not as politically organized and engaged as Blacks and, in the final analysis, this could be a plausible explanation. However, it could also be true
that groups have political niches, and when their issues wax greatly, they are forced to respond in an unprecedented fashion. As the data shows in this analysis, Latinos experienced a political surge during the period that the wedge initiatives were in question, thus they suddenly and precipitously behaved out of character and, in the process, challenged a number of political norms. First, they skillfully used the media to organize the largest protest ever to take place in Los Angeles; secondly, they turned out to vote at greater rates that the rest of California’s population; third, they voted in a patterned and cohesive way across partisan lines, thus demonstrating a noticeable group-centricity; and fourth, they moved out of the muddled middle and onto the political centerstage. Upon reflection, the engagement and participation of Latinos in the “wedge” controversy was a story in itself and, for many, an unexpected turn of events. For political scientists, who monitor such activity, the “wedge” outcomes were, to say the least, surprisingly outside the norms of convention.

Of even further consequence, was what the initiatives told us about Latinos. For example, by bundling the initiatives together, the data shows that Latinos reacted in a very organized and cohesive way. As previously stated, the response to 187 was so powerful and prominent, that it shook the very foundations of state and regional politics in a way that changed perceptions about immigrant issues and associated legislation. After taking to the streets to defend immigrant rights, one is struck by the fact that mass Latino opinion in California moved steadily and uniformly into defensive positions on the two succeeding issues. These responses were strong enough to suggest that Latinos not only possess an interactive capacity that transcends subgroups, it may actually be the “stuff” of which their political core is made. In retrospect, it seems that once the policy
issues in 209 and 227 transitioned from cultural and racial rejection to programmatic concerns, Latinos, while electorally rejecting these attacks, were more subdued in their reactions. This suggests that as issues become more modular and programmatic, the spark that ignites and integrates the various components of Latino politics is less likely to take hold. For Latinos, due to the foreignness that immigration creates, the politics of acceptance dominates and often trumps the issues related to their objective well-being. This is not to say that the “minority” frame in no way applies, but simply to acknowledge it’s “less than ideal” fit.

If we shift to the historical aspects of the Latino story, the segregation and mutual-aid form of politics that dominated turn-of-the-century America, were indicative that Mexican culture was so embedded in the Southwest that many Mexicans were content to culturally insulate themselves. However, despite this cultural reflex, eventually the demands of citizenship begin to impinge upon the lifestyles of the culturally different thus, forcing people into the processes of acculturation and assimilation. Unfortunately, because of the academic penchant to apply the immigrant paradigm to Latinos, they have appeared as a deficient form of the European formula and, therefore, relegated to the backwaters of research. In fact, Latinos have a story of their own, and until recently, few people have made the effort to tell it.

As more scholars are entering the field, it is becoming apparent that important aspects of the Latino experience have either been ignored or completely taken for granted. For example, Latinos, while having roots in old world European culture, are actually a blend of many new world cultures that have matured right alongside the American experience at every historical stage. Because of this fact, Latino culture is so
intricately tied and rooted to this hemisphere that, rather than being a foreign presence in
the U.S., it is more like a resilient sister culture. Granted, the two worlds are very
different and distinct, but their continuous interaction in terms of labor, politics,
economics and geography, have created a relationship and policies that are distinctly
different from agreements with European countries. Latinos have inhabited this land
under every conceivable status that exists, and it ranges from native/indigenous citizens
to the illegally transient and every category in between. Latinos have been here as guest
workers to augment labor needs, and despite equivocal U.S. policy, they continue to
predominantly staff the hardest and lowest-paying jobs in the present. The relationship
has been so powerful and perpetual that many Latinos see the U.S. as a second home that
affords immediate opportunities to alleviate poverty and economic hardship. This is why
Mexicans in America form an ex-patriot grouping known as Mexico de afuera (the
external Mexico).

These important factors have affected Latino politics and make it inherently
different from other political forms that dominate the political radar. For example,
comparing Latinos to the European paradigm is inappropriate because, in the case of the
latter, distance, time and policy have essentially cut off their cultural lifelines. For
Latinos, this has not been the case. They continue to exert their cultural membership
while functioning as citizens, thereby, creating a cultural resiliency and presence that is
capturing the attention of scholars across many disciplines (see Lowenthall and Burgess
1993; Trueba 1999, Flores and Benmayor, 1997). In addition, Latinos, although a
protected class, should neither be compared to Blacks. While the African-American
experience was cultivated internally and tied to institutional oppression, their political

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essence was pointedly and understandably aimed at human and civil rights (see African-American response to 209 in table 3). For Latinos, the bulk of their battles have been waged on the immigration front, and their internal politics have been burdened greatly from the continuous influx of foreign populations. Thus, despite pressing social and material needs, Latinos have often had to favor the politics of entrance, acceptance and integration, over the loftier goals that emanate from programmatic politics and quality of life issues. Because 187 was a clear and basic rejection of the Latino presence, it produced a furor that went well beyond the activity associated with 209 and 227, initiatives more pointed toward the rights and privileges of the permanent.

Although in this study, much of my analysis was geared toward establishing a functional rubric for Latino politics, there are other areas where the initiatives may have a more lasting and profound impact. For example, within the context of ethnic conflict, the totality of the data seems to support and reinforce many of the observations made by important theorists such as Hubert Blalock (1982), V.O. Key (1949) and David Sears (1979). Though we like to think of our democratic system as being pluralistic and not sharply stratified, bifurcated regions like California seem to engender conditions that divide ethnic groups, produce strife between them, and ultimately, create contestations of power in the political arena. By using ethnic conflict theory as an instrument to explain California, it certainly appears to hold much currency in terms of outlining the conditions that support its assumptions and declarations. For example, as the Latino population has grown to the point of posing a threat to the mainstream, so has the level of conflict grown around Latinos. In the face of Proposition 187, Latinos staged the largest protest ever organized in the city of Los Angeles, thus validating their sense of desperation in fending
off this overt political attack. Suddenly, as immigrants were brazenly targeted in the mass arena, Latinos assumed the fervor that, for Blacks, had fueled the civil rights movement. The electoral data, cut by race and ethnicity, showed that Latinos in both pre-election and exit polls, were the most distanced from Whites in their position, with Blacks and Asians holding more moderate positions. Thus, Latinos, according to social distancing, found themselves in the lowest tier of the social structure where, as Blacks have come to understand, there are few allies to be found and tapped. This social reordering has challenged Latinos in California to grow and prosper in a controversial climate and against vast opposition, but at the same time, it has forced them to engage the political arena more openly and forcefully. Ultimately, these new circumstances may be a double-edged sword for Latinos where, on the one hand, they are pushed to new levels of political participation, while on the other, forced to face the challenges of greater rejection and isolation. Also, the shifts in policy preferences and allegiances will surely change the political calculus in the state thus, dissolving old and traditional coalitions while, simultaneously, creating new ones. Overall, this new scenario poses an interesting crossroads in the development of not only Latino politics, but of state and minority politics, as well.

Although a study like this one can shed light on the most salient political flashpoints and measure its immediate impacts, much of the substantive political change will occur in the protracted grind of electoral and legislative processes. The wedge initiatives have awakened majorities, minorities, leaders, and special interests to the new realities that have overtaken California, and each of these sectors will have to respond to these developments in ways that optimize their control and interests. If one is a believer
in the pluralistic concept of power, then each sector will proceed with all due haste to place their agenda on the table. For those tending toward the elitist camp, these same platforms will be advanced, but they will either be tinged and embedded with proposals and strategies to retain existing power or, for those groups still skirting incorporation, to reduce social and political barriers. For Latinos, continuing studies of their political behavior still reveal an unpredictable approach to conventional politics (Michelson, 2001), but the initiatives’ after-effects and their growing political base will position them for success as never before and bring increasing opportunities to enact their culture. Some of these successes are already obvious in conventional politics. The question is: what environmental factors will influence that enactment?

Over the last decade, Latinos in California have experienced tremendous growth in electoral representation at all levels of government. Although this growth started back in the 1980s, in actuality, the first event that signaled a new political era for California was Loretta Sanchez’ victory in 1996 over Congressman Bob Dornan in Orange County (Brackman and Erie, 1993). Although Dornan’s area had been considered a safe district for conservatives, Latinos, in an inspired turnout of voters from Santa Ana, were able to put Sanchez, a Democrat, over the top in a hotly contested campaign. Her victory was a harbinger for what awaited the political scene in California, and despite the growing Latino presence in the area, it caught many people by surprise. As further proof that this was not simply an anomaly, since her initial victory, she has become a mainstay for the district by winning every election since; and now, in an interesting twist of fate, her sister Linda has joined her in Congress, serving as a Freshman representative for California’s 39th district. Sanchez’ victory in Orange County was not only a remarkable feat in and
of itself, but in a relative sense, it painted a very rosy picture for Latino politics in neighboring L.A. County where, for years, deliberate strategies in political mobilization, leadership, and redistricting had been in-work to marshal the growing political potential of the Latino community.

Although Latino representation at the national level has been increasing steadily since the 1980s, many of these victories only came as a result of vigilant redistricting battles, and laborious and painstaking efforts to naturalize immigrants and register voters. No doubt, many of these endeavors were helped and sustained by the anti-Latino climate that gripped California for much of the last decade, but in the end, this confluence of events has paid big political dividends for Latinos. For example, LA Metro now boasts the most Latino and Latina Congressional representatives in the nation, by far outweighing any other locale in the U.S. In 1994, California had four districts represented by a Latino or Latina, but by 1998, that number had grown to six (NALEO annual reports, 1994;1998). Today, seven districts in California now have a Latino/a in Congress and every one of them is located in the vicinity of greater Los Angeles; the area is, without question, the most prolific and concentrated region in the nation for substantive Latino representation. Such a conglomeration of Latino districts is unprecedented in U.S. history and it will surely make southern California a prime venue for understanding how Latinos will develop their newly found political leverage.

At the state level, Latino electoral victories are even more impressive than in national politics. In 1994, the entire state had a total of twelve districts with either a Latino representative or state Senator serving in office, but by 1998, that number had grown to 18 districts (ibid.). The growth in the Los Angeles area was even more
phenomenal. There, the number of Latino districts doubled in the span of four years, rising from seven to fourteen, and again, forming a powerful Latino bloc in Los Angeles. Even in the post-initiative phases of political activity, Latino registration rates and turnout continued to be robust, thereby, boosting additional electoral victories across the state (ibid.). By 2001, the state of California contained 27 total Latino districts, with 18 of those located in the LA Metro area, both numbers more than doubling the original base numbers of 1994 (Congressional Hispanic Caucus, 2003).

These growth trends are not only numerically impressive, they also include qualitative aspects that make them even more meaningful. First, most of the candidates who rode the confluence of demographic and political forces into the California State Legislature can be classified as pro-labor progressive Democrats thus, signifying that they will be strongly reflective of Los Angeles’ burgeoning labor environment and heavy Latino membership for years to come (Valle and Torres, 2000). In the process, Antonio Villaraigosa, a protégé of Willie Brown and an assemblyman from the 45th district, was appointed as Assembly Speaker, a very powerful post in terms of forwarding, prioritizing and funneling important legislation. If these developments alone weren’t enough to convince people of a meteoric Latino rise, in 1998, Cruz Bustamante was elected Lt. Gov. of the state, the first time that a Latino has held that office in over 100 years, and the first time a Latino had held any statewide office in California in the 20th century (Latino Legislative Caucus, 2003). These state-level posts have been a launching pad for many Latino legislators who have chosen to ascend the political ladder, thus, parlaying their power across political jurisdictions. Examples in this regard are Gloria Molina, who went on to become an L.A. County Supervisor for the first district, one of the most
powerful posts in southern California; Antonio Villaraigosa, who in a losing effort, ran for the mayoral post in Los Angeles but in the process established a national reputation; and Grace Napolitano, Xavier Becerra and Joe Baca, who left the state legislature to become U.S. Congressional representatives and are now standing members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (Congressional Hispanic Caucus, 2003).

While, overall, the numerical growth in representation is impressive, there is little doubt that political circumstances and environment had a hand in carrying some of these leaders to victory. The negative political climate in California contained a Hegelian dialectic that swung like a double-edged sword, smacking of racism and xenophobia on the one hand, while at the same time, breathing life into lethargic and even dormant political elements. Some members of the Latino national leadership, like the Hon. Grace Napolitano, the Hon. Xavier Becerra, and the Hon. Hilda Solis, were socialized as state legislators in the anti-immigrant climate that now grips California. Thus they carry an acute sensitivity toward issues and policies that specifically affect Latinos in all walks of life. Now in their national roles, they, like Latino leaders have in eras past, find themselves working on issues that impact not only Latino citizens in the U.S., but also those who have left their homelands to claim a stake in this country. In the tradition of past Latino leaders who fought against the injustices of the *Bracero* Program and the brutality of Operation Wetback, and who also lobbied for fair Amnesty laws, members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) continue the battle on issues that affect transnational populations. For example, CHC has led the fight to defend the enforcement of Executive Order 13166 that improves access to services for persons of limited English proficiency, and they have also stood up against an amendment (to the Bipartisan
Campaign Reform Act, H.R. 2356) that would have repealed the rights of legal permanent residents to make campaign contributions (ibid.). The nature of these issues is highly indicative of how national borders are inadequate as a jurisdiction for containing the scope and impact of issues that are pertinent to Latinos. These broad issues, that are both historical and contemporary, demonstrate that Latinos are fused and bonded by something greater than their American experience, something, as Andersen would say, imagined and cultural.

In actuality, it is quite remarkable to find a Latino mentality working at the federal level, given that as one ascends the political scale, issues tend to get broadened to where discrete interests, like ethnicity, fade into more generic concerns. However, at the state level, the political battles in California have retained a more strident tone and unabashed character, and continue to be played out in the fractures of race and ethnicity. In Sacramento, the Latino Legislative Caucus, bolstered by rapid growth and increasing power, boldly and openly assert their aim to fight the anti-immigrant and anti-minority tide that is prevalent in California. It appears that their electoral success, coupled with the stinging aftermath left by the wedge initiatives, has vaulted them into a “front line” role in terms of issues like racism, affirmative action, civil rights and education. In a recent example of this role, the Latino Caucus was the most vocal entity in calling for a reprimand of Ward Connerly when, in a televised interview, made statements that exonerated Senator Trent Lott from remarks perceived by many as racist (Ferrier, 2003). In this case, they authored a letter to the UC Regents that deemed him ill suited to perform his duties and called for a reprisal for his insensitive remarks (ibid.). In a show of unison, the document was signed by every member of the Latino Caucus (ibid.). This
action, in decades past, would have more likely come from the Black community with other groups in support roles, but the fact that it didn’t, signifies how political roles have been shifting in the wake of the three controversial propositions.

It may well indicate that the state’s racial balance has been altered, thus causing Latinos to carry the torch increasingly on issues that affect all minorities. Individual caucus members, like Senator Gil Sedillo, have also introduced legislation that overtly and directly protects the rights of immigrants to gain access to vital services. For example, in Senate Bill 60 (SB60), Sedillo introduced legislation to repeal a Department of Motor Vehicle requirement to verify citizenship or legal residency of applicants for driver’s licenses and ID cards (Latino Legislative Caucus, 2003). Policies like these, that support a specialized Latino agenda demonstrate how strongly ethnic platforms still resonate in the state, and how in the wake of the wedge initiatives, it is still an environment in transition. In fact, the fissures are so deep that they have even fractured the executive corp of the state. For example, it had almost become commonplace to see Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante and Gov. Grey Davis publicly at odds over legislation that has Latino and minority implications. Instead of playing the role of bureaucratic overseer or rubber stamp executive, Bustamante has instead been an active crusader for minority rights, an opponent of anti-immigrant initiatives, and has been working diligently to battle the declining minority enrollments in state universities caused by the implementation of 209 (San Francisco Chronicle, 9 March 2001).

In reviewing the political priorities that face today’s Latino political leadership, they seem reflective of past issues that affected both Chicano and immigrant populations in the Southwest. Garcia’s work (1989), Mexican-Americans, chronicles how many
individuals, in a time that was overtly hostile to minority and racial challenges, still crusaded for the fair and equitable treatment of Hispanic peoples across many different regions and sectors of our nation. Although, many of these initial efforts were localized events (e.g., such as organizing a local union protest or a citrus strike), they sometimes, and almost inadvertently, enveloped the immigrant in the same cause due to his and her similar social station. Today, these same movements persist, but due to the expanded consciousness that minority leaders gained in the 1960s, they now deliberately take-up the cause of many populations that are outside the bounds of citizenship status (i.e., African-American efforts on behalf of Haitians; Chicanos on behalf of Central Americans). Cesar Chavez, for example, didn’t worry about the official or legal status of the farm laborer; he simply fought for their right to be treated as dignified human beings, and asked that they be compensated equitably. This type of leadership mentality was borne in the Civil Rights movement, and the way it has permeated the thinking of Latinos who socialized in this era, has been a primary topic of interest for some Latino scholars (Munoz, 1989; Renteria, 1998). Renteria, in an extensive series of interviews discussed how many Latinos, despite their success in the professional and entrepreneurial ranks, still remain grounded in the movement’s vision and ideals. This contemporary form of consciousness carries an acute awareness of the transitory forces and dynamics that are perpetually in play and this, inevitably, leads to an understanding of the fragility of one’s standing. But perhaps just as importantly, it allows a corp of leaders to emerge that can empathize with the plight of others, especially when these contemporary circumstances reflect the same issues and dilemmas that they themselves faced in the past.
Some of this awareness was evident in my discussions with a number of successful Latinos who had attained leadership status not only in civic affairs, but also in their capacities in the private and public sectors. One particular individual, a local city councilman in one of Los Angeles’ municipalities, who was motivated to enter politics in the fallout phase of the wedge initiatives, commented on how Latino business leaders had been energized by the anti-Latino sentiment in California. He mentioned how activists and businesspersons had in the past operated in cells that never really connected or intersected when it came to the bigger picture. Proposition 187, however, seemed to affect Latinos cross-sectionally and he credits this negative political environment with causing a diversity of sectors in the community to begin seeking each other out. The upshot of this movement created a new network of business leaders with a political frame of mind who, only ten years earlier, had not existed, and it also rallied Latino entrepreneurs to consolidate their money and resources into supporting local Latino candidates. In a tangible example of this phenomenon, the subject councilman related how his inaugural bid for office largely succeeded and benefited from the direct support of local Latino businesses (private source interview). This occurrence is more meaningful when one considers that California leads the nation in Latino-owned businesses, and that Los Angeles leads the state in this same category, having in the last few years experienced a three to one ratio in the growth of Latino businesses as compared to population increases (Valle and Torres, 2000).

In addition to the above, longstanding activists in Chicano causes also witnessed an evolution in Chicano and Latino organizations that are departures from the formal practices and narrower boundaries that defined their purpose and existence. For example,
Larry Luera, an executive with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), recounted how Proposition 187 posed a challenge to the organization in terms of forming coalitions and working in broad cooperative efforts on the immigrant issues. Even more pointedly, in light of the number of immigrants being affected by the “wedge” policies, it caused LULAC to rethink its membership requirements and ultimately change its constitution to include those who had not yet attained formal citizenship (Luera interview). These internal initiatives were meant to project a spirit of inclusiveness and they were also correlative with the expanded immigrant platform that LULAC was adopting in the wake of 187. Similarly, Jake Alarid, former National Commander of the American G.I. Forum, mentioned how the Forum had recently revised their constitution to include permanent residents and even non-veterans, given that many veterans and active duty personnel have not yet attained full citizenship (Alarid interview). These internal, constitutional adaptations, especially within organizations that have national memberships and that have been traditionally committed to citizen-oriented causes, marks a seminal turning point in organized Latino politics.

In a tangible example of this shifting platform, Mr. Luera and Mr. Alarid both went on to recount how much more of their organizational activities, as opposed to ten years ago, are now taken up by issues that directly, or indirectly, relate to immigrants. For the G.I. Forum, their activity has centered on learning from African-Americans how to utilize the church as a focal point of political activism and organization. Despite the spikes that have been witnessed in response to the initiatives, there is much more potential in Latino communities still waiting to be tapped and much more work to complete in terms of political education and mobilization. LULAC too, has been active
in overseeing government programs that have been specifically designed to address issues pertinent to the immigrant community in California. For example, Mr. Luera mentioned how the state had requested their involvement and participation at a detention center for illegal immigrants designed to provide incarceration, staging, and training for those being sent back to their homelands (Luera interview). This center was an example and manifestation of how diligent Latino lobbying had been working to humanize the process and treatment of illegals whose only crime had been to seek work in the U.S.

In the commentary above, I have proposed the idea that a rising Latino consciousness may be forming in response to controversies engendered by citizen-sponsored legislation. With that said, the inspired Latino battle against 187, or their reaction to the other two issues, still doesn’t substantiate that they are a monolithic political entity, but it did demonstrate that there was an underlying connection within the group that could supercede the customary political differences that would characterize the day-to-day conduct of politics. With some of these things now said, it is time to move on to issues that, undoubtedly, will form in the eyes of detractors who will be privy to this work. In the conduct of this analysis, I have not lost sight of the fact that great emphasis was placed on the action and response of Latinos to a set of circumscribed events thus it can be argued that the wedge initiatives reflect episodes that will not generalize well in the day-to-day grind of political give and take. Despite having uncovered some extant capabilities in the Latino community that have gone unrecognized and that give an improved measure of their political tendencies, it is also important to consider some of the political realities and divisions that exist in Latino politics during the periods of abeyance and normalcy.
6.1 Local and Prospective Politics

In the day-to-day mix of politics, there have been a number of Latino factions vying for power in the Los Angeles area that represent quite a contrast in their political and philosophical platforms. The first politician to attain continuous success in Los Angeles was Congressman Ed Roybal, who entered Congress after becoming the first Latino to ever serve on the L.A. City Council (Brackman and Erie, 1993). Following his retirement, two Congressmen, Martinez and Torres, who also became quite popular, took over the reins of Latino leadership and representation (ibid.). These gentlemen continued the pioneering efforts of Congressman Roybal who led the Latino community through lean political times and who worked to establish many organic, grass-roots efforts to address eastside concerns. Today, Lucille Roybal-Allard, the congressman’s daughter, is working to continue his legacy by serving as congresswoman for essentially the same community her father represented (ibid.). As Latino political opportunities grew, new actors and alternative platforms began to surface to challenge the eastside’s status quo. For example, at the state level there emerged new political players like Councilman Richard Alatorre, State Senator Art Torres, and Assemblyman Richard Polanco, who through their connections with Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, were able to run sophisticated and well-orchestrated campaigns (ibid.). Because of their formidable political savvy and insider status, and their support of growth strategies for the Eastside, they became known as the “PRI Machine” (ibid.). Indeed, their support of the East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU), one of the largest Latino owned business in the nation, has often put them at odds with community nationalists and with grass-roots politicians like Gloria Molina (ibid.). Despite these advantages for the “PRI Machine”,
Molina, through here grass-roots campaigns, still found success in separate runs for the assembly (1982) and for the L.A. City Council (1987) (ibid.). Molina has gone on to gain a seat on the L.A. County Board of Supervisors, who control budgets and resources so vast, that they are considered one of the most powerful governmental bodies in all of LA Metro (ibid.).

Aside from the power struggles at the top level, more actors and interests have entered the fray to create even more variability in the Latino political realm. Much of this activity has originated at the organic level where groups and communities are working hard to take charge of their own neighborhoods and destinies. For example, following a model called COPS in San Antonio, the United Neighborhoods Organization (UNO) has organized around church parishes to gather community input and work political agendas that reflect local needs and preferences. In addition, there are anti-growth factions like the Mothers of East Los Angeles. (MOELA) that seek to retain neighborhood integrity by opposing large and intrusive development projects, and the record shows they have realized some success with this platform (Valle and Torres, 2000; Pulido, 1996) For example, MOELA was successful in scuttling plans to run a gas pipeline through East Los Angeles, and they, as well, prevented the construction of a new state prison and a trash incinerator at other eastside sites (Pulido, 1996). In order to have a coherent Latino agenda on a on-going basis, many of these polar interests will have to find ways to set aside their differences and cooperate or compromise on major endeavors that bring implications for the entire community. Aside from these divergent interests, as Los Angeles becomes more and more an, immigrant, proletarian environment, new Latino leaders are emerging that are a direct product of labor and working-class origins,
thus placing them in between the growth and anti-growth concerns. Examples in this vein are Maria Elena Durazo’s local AFL-CIO office and their spin-off, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), who have negotiated important labor contracts throughout the Los Angeles area, including the massive Staples Center in downtown (Valle and Torres, 2000). These pro-labor leaders will be diligent in ensuring that all future growth strategies and large-scale development projects in cities like Los Angeles will include a distribution of benefits that include labor, trade, and working class interests. As Latinos continue growing, and as their interests continue to diverge, they will be challenged to achieve cooperation at a level that places, at times, the public interest over their specific, factional concerns.

All of the above suggests that Latinos, although bounded by culture and slowly working a niche in American politics, still have many challenges ahead of them in the setting of conventional politics. As the 1960s ended, and as the core Civil Rights movement abated, the challenge to American mainstream interests became fractured and fractionalized to the point where the movement lost its effectiveness and even popularity. Minorities discovered that elite forces were resilient, well invested, and had the resources to quell insurgency directly, or through subtler methods that included tokenism and cooptation (Pivan and Cloward, 1977). In the wake of one of America’s most strident and compelling social movements, the system quickly reverted to “normal operations,” thus, restoring and imposing the laws of convention and institutional politics on all future political contenders. In spite of the promising developments in California for Latino political power, they face a daunting scenario in the wake of fighting populist politics. As Blacks have discovered in other parts of the country, it takes great deft, skill and
education to function in the milieu of electoral politics, and minorities, in general, have not been privy to well-funded educational campaigns. Some recent political events are testimony to an underdeveloped political condition in the Latino community, and to how unpredictable and duplicitous the political game can be.

The Latino population growth and presence in California, however, is so compelling and powerful, that it is a fair proposition to begin speculating on how Latinos will make use of their rising political capital. In Sheila Croucher’s (1997) riveting work, *Imagining Miami*, she made a metaphoric observation that captured an important cultural condition for Mexicans in Los Angeles. In comparing the qualitative differences as to how Latino culture is disseminating and unfolding across the broad, urban landscape, she observed that Los Angeles is characterized by a peripheral enactment of Latino culture where patrons go to restaurants, hotels and other service industries and they hear and see the manifestations of Spanish culture all around them, but only as an adornment, where it is of little or no formal consequence to mainstream lives. On the other hand, in Miami, these service institutions exist, as well, but there the patrons and clientele all interact within the bounds of Hispanic culture and language. This distinction in urban cultures is indicative of how fine, indeed, is that line that separates the public and private spheres and how palpable are the effects of a transcendent culture. Given the cultural view on Los Angeles, “few Latino scholars have studied politics as an area for cultural representation because, until relatively recently, it was assumed that, as a politically marginalized group, Latinos enacted their cultural lives in private, or at least in their neighborhoods” (Valle and Torres: 168). Today, in the transformed state of California, one can begin to imagine the options, choices and alternatives that await the Latino
community as they transition from cultural and political minority to cultural and political majority.

In order to capture the possibilities that exist in this scenario, one has to address a multiplicity of factors that likely cannot be captured by one discipline alone. In a cultural and racial sense, Latinos have already bridged many of the issues that plague race relations in the U.S. through their already inherent racial mixture they call *mestizaje*. Within this broad racial realm exist people of European stock, indigenous Americans, Blacks, and interracial combinations of all of the above. With common roots in the Spanish Empire, the hegemonic force that ties all of these varied groups together, this amalgamation of culturally and racially diverse entities would seem to lay hope for a new era of neutrality in, at least, overcoming the prejudices that arise from the overt, phenotypic differences. If Latinos can maintain a perspective of *mestizaje* in the conduct of their public lives, then there may be hope that racial and ethnic barriers can diminish (Valle and Torres, 2000).

However, the caveats immediately crop up as one shifts into the next disciplinary domain. In politics, the forces that divide, ebb and flow situationally, and sometimes those divisions are directly proportional to the political stakes. Political science is not wanting for theories and models that explain the causes and conditions that lead to ethnic conflict, and it is abundant with studies that feature divisions and differences in world perspectives, policy preferences, objective sociological realities, and subjective condition. Latinos carry the power and advantage of *mestizaje*, but can they enact such a bold political platform when they have not had the luxury or experience of leading in the public domain? Some scholars, like Valle and Torres (2000), believe that the post-
Fordist effects in Los Angeles, where large immigrant communities of varied ethnic backgrounds have been greatly alienated from the newly-formed technocrats of the information age, will be a powerful force in politics when they realize the commonality of their class position. Others, like Laura Pulido (1996), found that grass-roots interests across ethnic and racial lines have shown limited capability and cooperation, sometimes even in the face of physical and environmental challenges of great concern. If even these immediate threats to the health and welfare of working-class communities can’t ignite a unified political front to ward off external interests and community invasions, what does that say about the state of race relations in our cities?

Without question, the political future of Latinos in California will be laden with a multitude of obstacles and barriers that will come in both populist and institutional forms, but at the same time it will be characterized by the delicate balances that inevitably pervade politics. Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (1984) in their analysis of ten California cities, discovered that minority incorporation (in this case, they emphasized Blacks) in urban areas was possible, but only through the skillful formation of coalitions that included liberal Whites and other significant minority groups as support players. In Los Angeles, where the Latino nexus is located, there are prior examples of where biracial partnerships, to some degree, did play a role in changing the city’s political core. For example, these types of coalitions were operational in the Bradley era in Los Angeles when Blacks, White liberal reformers, and Jews came together to ride the Yorty regime out of office (Sonenshein, 1993). Ironically, one of the triggers that augmented this unprecedented coalition was 1964’s Proposition 14, an initiative that intended to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act, which prevented racial discrimination in the sale of
homes (ibid.). In the face of this insidious proposition, the fault lines in Los Angeles were defined by Black outrage to these overt manifestations of racism, and Whites’ reaction to it. The growing Latino population found itself in the ambivalent middle of this political war, and they dropped to secondary importance in relation to the position of White, liberal reformers. This scenario is an excellent example of how common class origins don’t always converge in the political equation, and how cultural differences can override political or class commonalities. As mentioned previously, Villaraigosa, in 2000, lost over 70% of the Black vote to Kenneth Hahn (California Journal 1 May 2001), who may have been the beneficiary of the Black vote via his father’s civil rights legacy, but in reality, this may be only one part of the explanation. Ironically, because of similar class condition, Blacks and Latinos have been fighting what many perceive as a zero-sum game in resources, territory, and opportunities as Latino growth rapidly impinges on the Black foundation in Los Angeles. This scenario is especially pointed in the south-central district, a traditional Black enclave that Latinos are rapidly inhabiting, and where no one seems willing to discuss the ensuing political implications.

As the above scenarios demonstrate, when moving across eras in political history, some social forces (like racism, for example) remain unwavering and constant, while other factors (e.g., the actors, the methods, the ideologies, the strategies) shift and transform according to demographic and ecological changes. In this case, the pessimist could say that despite all of the efforts, movements and endeavors that have been marshaled to fight the ill-effects of racism, as we enter the 21st century, it is a force that persists and endures. Potential optimism comes from those things that do change, but
whether these changes will, in fact, unfold, develop, and produce the desired results is yet to be seen.

There are some hopeful signs. In the 20th century, American minority politics has been defined by its most pressing and compelling case—the Black movement. Thus, American race relations in the post-civil rights era have played out in the shadow of a powder keg. Some events, like the Rodney King verdict, have skirted a new social explosion, and others, like the O.J. Simpson trial, have shown that a racial polarity in world-views still exists in America, especially with respect to social justice. Our new social mores have incorporated civil behavior and courteous respect toward the other, but true integration seems to elude us. As Latinos settle in as America’s largest minority, and as they increasingly become the focal point of minority relations in this country, there is a chance that a new criteria and frame will define intergroup relations. This middle ground, or betweenness that Latinos have filled, might be a way to draw both ends of the racial spectrum toward the middle and it might have enough ligature to hold the middle in place. If the consciousness of mestizaje can become an accepted norm in the urban milieu (there is evidence that integrated communities in Los Angeles are already there), then it has potential to spread beyond the borders of trend-setting locales like California. This kind of social and racial evolution can and does happen over time (there is evidence that multiracial communities in Los Angeles are integrating), but before one is tempted to board the utopian train, one must acknowledge that the political aspect of life will always be tinged with self-serving motives. Here, the prospect and vision of a unified movement working in the public interest is more fragile and uncertain.
In the assumption of their new role as America’s largest minority, there exist a number of scenarios that could ensue in the domain of minority politics but, at this point, one can only speculate on what they might be. If Rich’s (1996) political typologies and theory of social distancing hold any weight, then it might be possible that the traditional Black and White paradigm that has defined minority politics, might be reframed by the increasing distance that divides Latinos from Whites due to emerging conditions in California. If Latinos become the most socially distanced group as a result of their foreign culture, then they may find themselves isolated and with fewer options to form political partnerships and, therefore, have fewer essential resources at their disposal; this unfamiliar lower rank might require them to enact a political platform that reflects their own discrete interests, which will undoubtedly include thorny immigration issues and cultural concerns. If this happens, then the prevailing minority agenda in U.S. politics may be altered to accentuate cultural citizenship rights over civil rights. This doesn’t mean that objective social condition will no longer matter, but it may increase the significance of true cultural acceptance and respect beyond the hollow rhetoric that defines today’s acknowledgement of diversity and multiculturalism.

According to some scholars, there is already a Hispanic nation in existence (Fox, 1996) in the U.S. and it is vibrant despite the diminished social and economic status of most Latinos. Coming here from nations all over the Western Hemisphere, Latinos are bonded by culture, language, religion, class, race, media and social station. Many of these factors have been mentioned in the foregoing, and they have played into the socialization of American Latinos across many historical epochs. These forces seem to hold together well enough to suggest that Latinos can, and do, form a greater whole than
the sum of its parts, and manifestations of a Latino consciousness are more conspicuous than ever. Today, the Latino community is served by a large slate of television and radio networks whose coverage extends across the entire Hispanic world and into 90% of Latino households in the U.S. (ibid.), providing news with in-depth perspectives not only on individual Latin American countries, but on Hispanics in America. Often, the Spanish media presents alternatives to the pro-American themes so often pitched by the American mainstream media (ibid.). They are the only minority group in the U.S. who is privy to such an extensive blanket of media coverage in their own language. In fact, one almost gets the impression that the Spanish networks perceive Latinos in North America as a nation unto itself, given the amount of coverage and analysis they give to U.S. policy that either directly impact Latinos or that would be of some relevance to them. Perhaps these options stymie Latino crusades for equitable representation in the arts (they started a boycott of ABC for not having enough Latino actors) given that they can find refuge in the ubiquitous presence of their own celebrities and stars that permeate the Spanish airwaves. This cultural fallback is an important aspect of the Latino experience and it should not be categorized as mutually exclusive from politics. As time goes on, it is becoming apparent that Latinos are tied strongly to a cultural core, and when they function in politics, that tether appears to stay intact.

These cultural trends are sharpened and amplified in Southwestern corridors like California and they test the tolerance of Americans. Despite the growing salience of immigration as a critical issue in recent years, immigration from Mexico is not a contemporary phenomenon and extends back to the late nineteenth century (Maciel, 1986). Over the course of the twentieth century, this process has produced one of the
largest population movements in history, involving an estimated 20 percent of Mexico’s total population (Gonzalez, 1974). The push and pull factors that attract workers from Mexico to the U.S. so continuously has virtually created an institutionalized labor force in industries such as agriculture, construction, and textiles, and this appears to be expanding into the service sector (Cornelius, 1989). In fact, some districts are so strongly tied to labor and immigrants, that candidates can openly advance an immigrant platform and win resoundingly (as was the case with Gil Sedillo’s election to the California assembly) (interview with Pete Navarro). “Although a pronounced anti-immigrant xenophobic ambience currently exists in the United States and much of the political discourse is directed at curtailing immigration significantly, the reality of the trends and actual needs of the U.S. economy indicate that Mexican immigration to the United States will not cease altogether,” (Maciel, 1998:4) and in fact, may actually increase over time. In response to this reality, the agricultural interests in the Southwest have already successfully lobbied the Agricultural Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives for exemptions on restrictive immigration measures, dismissing altogether the pervasive political rhetoric and anti-immigrant policies (ibid.). So it appears that the ambivalent policies of the U.S. concerning Mexican immigration will continue to defy populist sentiments and allow immigrants to transpose their culture across borders. Thus, the immigrant will continue to be instrumental in the preservation of their culture, values, traditions and language (especially in Chicano communities) (Aguirre, 1984), thereby, creating a growing conundrum for future generations in America between labor needs and cultural pluralism.
Overall, the indicators suggest that policy regarding immigration and cultural issues can have vigorous effects on the politics of Latinos, but in a similar sense, Latinos are having an effect on American politics. For example, throughout the three wedge issues the partisan impact on Latinos was so skewed toward the left and so supportive of the plight of immigrants and cultural preservation that the major parties have been reluctant to enunciate definitive positions on immigration and associated issues. The parties’ quiescence on border control in the face of strong anti-immigrant sentiment and the increasing threat of terrorism, emphatically demonstrate their hypersensitivity to these Latino issues. As the size and influence of Latino communities grow alongside the populist anti-immigrant fervor, the parties will continue to be squeezed on both ends of the political spectrum with no end in sight.

While it may be premature to suggest that Latinos are experiencing the binding forces of linked fate that have been ascribed to Blacks, the overall solidarity displayed in response to the wedge issues suggests that the prerequisites to this condition may have been met. According to most studies, Latinos have demonstrated more than a formative group consciousness regarding policies that affect their objective social condition, but their unity appears to have sharpened from threatening policies crafted outside their community boundaries. These threats could be the trigger that link individual perceptions to the fate of the group, thereby, resulting in a politics that more strongly affirms the ethnic factor. Given this evolving process, Latinos could potentially become as distinct politically as they are socially and culturally, thus leading to a more defensive and protective platform. According to Dr. Arroyo, evidence of an emerging group consciousness may have already occurred in the Villaraigosa mayoral campaign when
Latinos were largely unimpressed with his broad and centrist platform. Had he reached out to Latinos more forcefully and directly, many pundits and analysts believed he could have attained the winning margin in the Latino community alone.

The wedge initiatives appear to have engendered a counter-backlash to anti-Latino politics and have now given Latinos new leverage to promote policies such as drivers’ licenses for immigrants that under normal circumstances would be considered absurd, and under present conditions of heightened security, dangerous. So pronounced were the political outcomes in the 1990s that Latino legislators and executive officers have been both vocal and visible in denouncing the effects of anti-minority policies and in creating patchwork legislation to limit their impact. The reticence of both presidential candidates in 2004 to articulate a coherent and forceful immigration policy was thought to be driven largely by a strategy to avoid offending conservative and moderate Latinos. Although it would be more significant for Latinos to attain an influence in direct policy formulation, it is not insignificant that they are now influencing policy agendas. For both parties, the wedge issues evidence how singular, but profound socio-cultural reforms could trump broadly held concerns and shift the direction of partisan identification radically. For Latinos, these outcomes appear to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand their preferences can be a disincentive that deters aggressive social policy, but on the other, they become more distanced and isolated both culturally and politically. How these two competing forces balance out will profoundly impact the trajectory and form that Latino politics will take in California.

In the final analysis, it appears that Latino cultural retention and resilience are supported by both historical forces and contemporary developments thus, suggesting the
presence of a stout, internal community framework, especially in times of crisis.

However, this is only one part of the story to be told. As with so many other objects in existence, the Latino scenario in California seems to contain within it a Hegelian dialectic in that it is highly susceptible to external forces. As Hegel proposed, no object is self-contained and, in actuality, exists at the expense of forces antithetical to its survival. Latino politics could unfold and develop in such a way as to fill the gaps and crevices that have fractured ethnic and racial interests, but it will do so only if allowed to flourish in an environment that celebrates diversity and even mixture. If, however, the negative climate that produced the wedge initiatives persists, then the clash of these forces (Hegel’s thesis and antithesis) will likely produce a backlash effect that will radicalize Latino politics and drive it towards a narrow and insular political agenda (the synthesis).

In this regard, we don’t have to speculate vacuously. It appears that the Latino reaction to Proposition 187 was proof that some level of cultural integrity existed and under heavy and sustained assault, it held quite firmly. Latino politics will, no doubt, continue to address the traditional concerns that define their American experience such as education, discrimination, poverty, and civil rights, but as they grow in population and gain more political power, this new-found political leverage will likely be sensitive to and, to some degree, driven by external forces. In the final analysis, American society will have to decide whether it is going to receive Latinos with a spirit of acceptance, or whether they are going to invoke a climate of rejection, as has been the case in California. Unfortunately, the availability and accessibility of direct democracy devices makes it all too easy to enact the latter, so in the interest of political forecasting, scholars should keep
a close eye on the developments in California and a vigilant watch on direct democracy states where Latino populations are on a steep incline.
APPENDIX A

Proposition 187: Text of Proposed Law

1994 - California

This initiative measure is submitted to the people in accordance with the provisions of Article II, Section 8 of the Constitution.

This initiative measure adds sections to various codes; therefore, new provisions proposed to be added are printed in {+ italic type +} to indicate that they are new.

PROPOSED LAW

SECTION 1. Findings and Declaration.

The People of California find and declare as follows:

That they have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens in this state.

That they have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state.

That they have a right to the protection of their government from any person or persons entering this country unlawfully.

Therefore, the People of California declare their intention to provide for cooperation between their agencies of state and local government with the federal government, and to establish a system of required notification by and between such agencies to prevent illegal aliens in the United States from receiving benefits or public services in the State of California.


Section 113 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

{+ 113. Any person who manufactures, distributes or sells false documents to conceal the true citizenship or resident alien status of another person is guilty of a felony, and shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for five years or by a fine of seventy-five thousand dollars ($75,000). +}
SECTION 3. Use of False Citizenship or Resident Alien Documents: Crime and Punishment.

Section 114 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

{+ 114. Any person who uses false documents to conceal his or her true citizenship or resident alien status is guilty of a felony, and shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for five years or by a fine of twenty-five thousand dollars ($25,000). +}

SECTION 4. Law Enforcement Cooperation with INS.

Section 834b is added to the Penal Code, to read:

{+ 834b. (a) Every law enforcement agency in California shall fully cooperate with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding any person who is arrested if he or she is suspected of being present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws. +}

{+ (b) With respect to any such person who is arrested, and suspected of being present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws, every law enforcement agency shall do the following: +}

{+ (1) Attempt to verify the legal status of such person as a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident, an alien lawfully admitted for a temporary period of time or as an alien who is present in the United States in violation of immigration laws. The verification process may include, but shall not be limited to, questioning the person regarding his or her date and place of birth, and entry into the United States, and demanding documentation to indicate his or her legal status. +}

{+ (2) Notify the person of his or her apparent status as an alien who is present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws and inform him or her that, apart from any criminal justice proceedings, he or she must either obtain legal status or leave the United States. +}

{+ (3) Notify the Attorney General of California and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service of the apparent illegal status and provide any additional information that may be requested by any other public entity. +}

{+ (c) Any legislative, administrative, or other action by a city, county, or other legally authorized local governmental entity with jurisdictional boundaries, or by a law enforcement agency, to prevent or limit the cooperation required by subdivision (a) is expressly prohibited. +}

SECTION 5. Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Public Social Services.

Section 10001.5 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:
(a) In order to carry out the intention of the People of California that only citizens of the United States and aliens lawfully admitted to the United States may receive the benefits of public social services and to ensure that all persons employed in the providing of those services shall diligently protect public funds from misuse, the provisions of this section are adopted. 

(b) A person shall not receive any public social services to which he or she may be otherwise entitled until the legal status of that person has been verified as one of the following: 

1. A citizen of the United States.
2. An alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident.
3. An alien lawfully admitted for a temporary period of time.

(c) If any public entity in this state to whom a person has applied for public social services determines or reasonably suspects, based upon the information provided to it, that the person is an alien in the United States in violation of federal law, the following procedures shall be followed by the public entity: 

1. The entity shall not provide the person with benefits or services.
2. The entity shall, in writing, notify the person of his or her apparent illegal immigration status, and that the person must either obtain legal status or leave the United States.
3. The entity shall also notify the State Director of Social Services, the Attorney General of California, and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service of the apparent illegal status, and shall provide any additional information that may be requested by any other public entity.


Chapter 1.3 (commencing with Section 130) is added to Part 1 of Division 1 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

Chapter 1.3. Publicly-Funded Health Care Services

(a) In order to carry out the intention of the People of California that, excepting emergency medical care as required by federal law, only citizens of the United States and aliens lawfully admitted to the United States may receive the benefits of publicly-funded health care, and to ensure that all persons employed in the providing of those services shall diligently protect public funds from misuse, the provisions of this section are adopted.

(b) A person shall not receive any health care services from a publicly-funded health care facility, to which he or she is otherwise entitled until the legal status of that person has been verified as one of the following:
(1) A citizen of the United States. 
(2) An alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident. 
(3) An alien lawfully admitted for a temporary period of time. 

(c) If any publicly-funded health care facility in this state from whom a person seeks health care services, other than emergency medical care as required by federal law, determines or reasonably suspects, based upon the information provided to it, that the person is an alien in the United States in violation of federal law, the following procedures shall be followed by the facility: 

(1) The facility shall not provide the person with services. 
(2) The facility shall, in writing, notify the person of his or her apparent illegal immigration status, and that the person must either obtain legal status or leave the United States. 
(3) The facility shall also notify the State Director of Health Services, the Attorney General of California, and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service of the apparent illegal status, and shall provide any additional information that may be requested by any other public entity. 

(d) For purposes of this section "publicly-funded health care facility" shall be defined as specified in Sections 1200 and 1250 of this code as of January 1, 1993.


Section 48215 is added to the Education Code, to read:

(48215) (a) No public elementary or secondary school shall admit, or permit the attendance of, any child who is not a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident, or a person who is otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States. 

(b) Commencing January 1, 1995, each school district shall verify the legal status of each child enrolling in the school district for the first time in order to ensure the enrollment or attendance only of citizens, aliens lawfully admitted as permanent residents, or persons who are otherwise authorized to be present in the United States. 

(c) By January 1, 1996, each school district shall have verified the legal status of each child already enrolled and in attendance in the school district in order to ensure the enrollment or attendance only of citizens, aliens lawfully admitted as permanent residents, or persons who are otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States.
By January 1, 1996, each school district shall also have verified the legal status of each parent or guardian of each child referred to in subdivisions (b) and (c), to determine whether such parent or guardian is one of the following:

1. A citizen of the United States.
2. An alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident.
3. An alien admitted lawfully for a temporary period of time.

Each school district shall provide information to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Attorney General of California, and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding any enrollee or pupil, or parent or guardian, attending a public elementary or secondary school in the school district determined or reasonably suspected to be in violation of federal immigration laws within forty-five days after becoming aware of an apparent violation. The notice shall also be provided to the parent or legal guardian of the enrollee or pupil, and shall state that an existing pupil may not continue to attend the school after ninety calendar days from the date of the notice, unless legal status is established.

For each child who cannot establish legal status in the United States, each school district shall continue to provide education for a period of ninety days from the date of the notice. Such ninety-day period shall be utilized to accomplish an orderly transition to a school in the child's country of origin. Each school district shall fully cooperate in this transition effort to ensure that the educational needs of the child are best served for that period of time.

SECTION 8. Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Public Postsecondary Educational Institutions.

Section 66010.8 is added to the Education Code, to read:

(a) No public institution of postsecondary education shall admit, enroll, or permit the attendance of any person who is not a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident in the United States, or a person who is otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States.

(b) Commencing with the first term or semester that begins after January 1, 1995, and at the commencement of each term or semester thereafter, each public postsecondary educational institution shall verify the status of each person enrolled or in attendance at that institution in order to ensure the enrollment or attendance only of United States citizens, aliens lawfully admitted as permanent residents in the United States, and persons who are otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States.
{+ (c) No later than 45 days after the admissions officer of a public postsecondary educational institution becomes aware of the application, enrollment, or attendance of a person determined to be, or who is under reasonable suspicion of being, in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws, that officer shall provide that information to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Attorney General of California, and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. The information shall also be provided to the applicant, enrollee, or person admitted. +}

SECTION 9. Attorney General Cooperation with the INS.

Section 53069.65 is added to the Government Code, to read:

{+ 53069.65. Whenever the state or a city, or a county, or any other legally authorized local governmental entity with jurisdictional boundaries reports the presence of a person who is suspected of being present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws to the Attorney General of California, that report shall be transmitted to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. The Attorney General shall be responsible for maintaining on-going and accurate records of such reports, and shall provide any additional information that may be requested by any other government entity. +}

SECTION 10. Amendment and Severability.

The statutory provisions contained in this measure may not be amended by the Legislature except to further its purposes by statute passed in each house by roll call vote entered in the journal, two-thirds of the membership concurring, or by a statute that becomes effective only when approved by the voters.

In the event that any portion of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect any other provision or application of the act, which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to that end the provisions of this act are severable.
APPENDIX B

Proposition 209: Text of the Proposed Law

This initiative measure is submitted to the people in accordance with the provisions of Article II, Section 8 of the Constitution. This initiative measure expressly amends the Constitution by adding a section thereto; therefore, new provisions proposed to be added are printed in italic type to indicate that they are new.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE I

Section 31 is added to Article I of the California Constitution as follows:

SEC. 31. (a) The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.

(b) This section shall apply only to action taken after the section's effective date.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as prohibiting bona fide qualifications based on sex which are reasonably necessary to the normal operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as invalidating any court order or consent decree which is in force as of the effective date of this section.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as prohibiting action which must be taken to establish or maintain eligibility for any federal program, where ineligibility would result in a loss of federal funds to the state.

(f) For the purposes of this section, "state" shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the state itself, any city, county, city and county, public university system, including the University of California, community college district, school district, special district, or any other political subdivision or governmental instrumentality of or within the state.

(g) The remedies available for violations of this section shall be the same, regardless of the injured party's race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin, as are otherwise available for violations of then-existing California antidiscrimination law.

(h) This section shall be self-executing. If any part or parts of this section are found to be in
conflict with federal law or the United States Constitution, the section shall be implemented to the maximum extent that federal law and the United States Constitution permit. Any provision held invalid shall be severable from the remaining portions of this section.
APPENDIX C

Proposition 227: Text of the Proposed Law

This initiative measure is submitted to the people in accordance with the provisions of Article II, Section 8 of the Constitution.

This initiative measure adds sections to the Education Code; therefore, new provisions proposed to be added are printed in italic type to indicate that they are new.

PROPOSED LAW

SECTION 1. Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 300) is added to Part 1 of the Education Code, to read:

Chapter 3. English Language Education for Immigrant Children

Article 1. Findings and Declarations

300. The People of California find and declare as follows:

(a) Whereas, The English language is the national public language of the United States of America and of the State of California, is spoken by the vast majority of California residents, and is also the leading world language for science, technology, and international business, thereby being the language of economic opportunity; and

(b) Whereas, Immigrant parents are eager to have their children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement; and

(c) Whereas, The government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of California's children, regardless of their ethnicity or national origins, with the skills necessary to become productive members of our society, and of these skills, literacy in the English language is among the most important; and

(d) Whereas, The public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out rates and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children; and
(e) Whereas, Young immigrant children can easily acquire full fluency in a new language, such as English, if they are heavily exposed to that language in the classroom at an early age.

(f) Therefore, It is resolved that: all children in California public schools shall be taught English as rapidly and effectively as possible.

Article 2. English Language Education

305. Subject to the exceptions provided in Article 3 (commencing with Section 310), all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English. In particular, this shall require that all children be placed in English language classrooms. Children who are English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year. Local schools shall be permitted to place in the same classroom English learners of different ages but whose degree of English proficiency is similar. Local schools shall be encouraged to mix together in the same classroom English learners from different native-language groups but with the same degree of English fluency. Once English learners have acquired a good working knowledge of English, they shall be transferred to English language mainstream classrooms. As much as possible, current supplemental funding for English learners shall be maintained, subject to possible modification under Article 8 (commencing with Section 335) below.

306. The definitions of the terms used in this article and in Article 3 (commencing with Section 310) are as follows:

(a) "English learner" means a child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English, also known as a Limited English Proficiency or LEP child.

(b) "English language classroom" means a classroom in which the language of instruction used by the teaching personnel is overwhelmingly the English language, and in which such teaching personnel possess a good knowledge of the English language.

(c) "English language mainstream classroom" means a classroom in which the pupils either are native English language speakers or already have acquired reasonable fluency in English.

(d) "Sheltered English immersion" or "structured English immersion" means an English language acquisition process for young children in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with the curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language.
(e) "Bilingual education/native language instruction" means a language acquisition process for pupils in which much or all instruction, textbooks, and teaching materials are in the child's native language.

Article 3. Parental Exceptions

310. The requirements of Section 305 may be waived with the prior written informed consent, to be provided annually, of the child's parents or legal guardian under the circumstances specified below and in Section 311. Such informed consent shall require that said parents or legal guardian personally visit the school to apply for the waiver and that they there be provided a full description of the educational materials to be used in the different educational program choices and all the educational opportunities available to the child. Under such parental waiver conditions, children may be transferred to classes where they are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques or other generally recognized educational methodologies permitted by law. Individual schools in which 20 pupils or more of a given grade level receive a waiver shall be required to offer such a class; otherwise, they must allow the pupils to transfer to a public school in which such a class is offered.

311. The circumstances in which a parental exception waiver may be granted under Section 310 are as follows:

(a) Children who already know English: the child already possesses good English language skills, as measured by standardized tests of English vocabulary comprehension, reading, and writing, in which the child scores at or above the state average for his or her grade level or at or above the 5th grade average, whichever is lower; or

(b) Older children: the child is age 10 years or older, and it is the informed belief of the school principal and educational staff that an alternate course of educational study would be better suited to the child's rapid acquisition of basic English language skills; or

(c) Children with special needs: the child already has been placed for a period of not less than thirty days during that school year in an English language classroom and it is subsequently the informed belief of the school principal and educational staff that the child has such special physical, emotional, psychological, or educational needs that an alternate course of educational study would be better suited to the child's overall educational development. A written description of these special needs must be provided and any such decision is to be made subject to the examination and approval of the local school superintendent, under guidelines established by and subject to the review of the local Board of Education and ultimately the State Board of Education. The existence of such special needs shall not compel issuance of a waiver, and the parents shall be fully informed of their right to refuse to agree to a waiver.

Article 4. Community-Based English Tutoring
315. In furtherance of its constitutional and legal requirement to offer special language assistance to children coming from backgrounds of limited English proficiency, the state shall encourage family members and others to provide personal English language tutoring to such children, and support these efforts by raising the general level of English language knowledge in the community. Commencing with the fiscal year in which this initiative is enacted and for each of the nine fiscal years following thereafter, a sum of fifty million dollars ($50,000,000) per year is hereby appropriated from the General Fund for the purpose of providing additional funding for free or subsidized programs of adult English language instruction to parents or other members of the community who pledge to provide personal English language tutoring to California school children with limited English proficiency.

316. Programs funded pursuant to this section shall be provided through schools or community organizations. Funding for these programs shall be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and shall be disbursed at the discretion of the local school boards, under reasonable guidelines established by, and subject to the review of, the State Board of Education.

Article 5. Legal Standing and Parental Enforcement

320. As detailed in Article 2 (commencing with Section 305) and Article 3 (commencing with Section 310), all California school children have the right to be provided with an English language public education. If a California school child has been denied the option of an English language instructional curriculum in public school, the child's parent or legal guardian shall have legal standing to sue for enforcement of the provisions of this statute, and if successful shall be awarded normal and customary attorney's fees and actual damages, but not punitive or consequential damages. Any school board member or other elected official or public school teacher or administrator who willfully and repeatedly refuses to implement the terms of this statute by providing such an English language educational option at an available public school to a California school child may be held personally liable for fees and actual damages by the child's parents or legal guardian.

Article 6. Severability

325. If any part or parts of this statute are found to be in conflict with federal law or the United States or the California State Constitution, the statute shall be implemented to the maximum extent that federal law, and the United States and the California State Constitution permit. Any provision held invalid shall be severed from the remaining portions of this statute.

Article 7. Operative Date

330. This initiative shall become operative for all school terms which begin more than sixty days following the date on which it becomes effective.
Article 8. Amendment

335. The provisions of this act may be amended by a statute that becomes effective upon approval by the electorate or by a statute to further the act’s purpose passed by a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

Article 9. Interpretation

340. Under circumstances in which portions of this statute are subject to conflicting interpretations,

Section 300 shall be assumed to contain the governing intent of the statute
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