

HISPANIC COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

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- THE CUBAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: CULTURE, IMAGES, AND PERSPECTIVES.* By THOMAS D. BOSWELL and JAMES R. CURTIS. (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984. Pp. 200. \$36.50.)
- THE CUBAN POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES: THE RESULTS OF THE 1980 U.S. CENSUS OF POPULATION.* By LISANDRO PEREZ. Occasional Papers Series. (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, 1984. Pp. 22.)
- CUBANS IN THE UNITED STATES: A BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES, 1960-1983.* Compiled by LYN MACCORKLE. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984. Pp. 227. \$35.00.)
- HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES.* By JOAN MOORE and HARRY PACHON. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985. Pp. 213. \$16.95.)
- LATIN JOURNEY: CUBAN AND MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES.* By ALEJANDRO PORTES and ROBERT L. BACH. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. Pp. 387. \$45.00 cloth, \$11.95 paper.)
- LATINO ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS: THE CASE OF MEXICAN AMERICANS AND PUERTO RICANS IN CHICAGO.* By FELIX M. PADILLA. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. Pp. 187. \$20.95.)
- PUERTO RICAN POLITICS IN URBAN AMERICA.* Edited by JAMES JENNINGS and MONTE RIVERA. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984. Pp. 166. \$27.95.)

Today there are almost twenty million people of Hispanic heritage in the United States. According to one widely used estimate, they will number nearly twenty-five million by 1990, and if present trends continue, by the year 2000 Hispanics will be "the largest ethnic minority in the country."¹ But do Hispanics (a controversial ethnic label in itself) comprise a single ethnic group at all, these immigrants who come from a score of countries with highly varied skills, skin colors, and customs? Are the things that Hispanics have in common as important as the things that divide them?

Several recent books can help explain these issues of unity and diversity and the consequent potential of "Hispanics" for significant impact on U.S. politics and social life. The works under review here focus on Cuban-Americans and Puerto Ricans, two of the largest groups, as well as on broader issues concerning the behavior and social identity of Americans of Latin American origin. Recent publications on the far larger Chicano or Mexican American population will be discussed in another review.

In several conspicuous ways, the Cubans are the most different from other Hispanic groups in the United States. Lisandro Pérez has analyzed data from the 1980 U.S. Census of Population showing that Cubans are significantly older, more urban, more educated, and more likely to be divorced than Americans of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or other Hispanic origin (these data do not include the more than one hundred and twenty thousand entrants from the Cuban port of Mariel, who began arriving shortly after the census was taken in April 1980). Numerous surveys, including the research by Alejandro Portes and Robert Bach to be discussed below, have confirmed the fairly obvious fact that when compared to Hispanics of other nationalities, Cubans are also much more "conservative"—that is to say, interventionist—in their views on U.S. foreign policy and much more likely to favor candidates of the Republican party. This brief description, however, does not begin to suggest the fierceness of class and other tensions existing within the U.S. Cuban population.

Thomas Boswell's and James Curtis's *The Cuban-American Experience: Culture, Images, and Perspectives* provides more details on this group but is very general and excessively polite, suggesting greater harmony than actually exists. The authors, both geographers at the University of Miami, portray a community diverse in talents but uniformly dedicated to political conservatism and private enterprise, with no significant divisions or problems. Theirs is a partial vision at best.

Some readers may be startled by Boswell and Curtis's assertion that the "failure of the invasion" of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) in 1961 "damaged the image of the United States government, but not necessarily that of Cuban-Americans. . . ." This statement seems to imply that a successful invasion would not have damaged the government's image. Clearly, the quality of the image depends on who is doing the observing.

Drug trafficking is not even mentioned in their description of Cuban Miami, although a study of Cuban-American drug use is cited in their chapter notes. Alpha 66 and Omega 7 are described blandly as "secretive militant organizations . . . which occasionally promote acts of violence as a means of trying to suppress an increasingly more liberal

view of Cuban politics." Boswell and Curtis neither discuss the content of that "increasingly more liberal view" nor explain how it came about, despite bomb attacks and murders by the right-wing Cuban organizations.

Within the Cuban-American community, a small but extremely active and articulate minority have been challenging the dominant conservatism and promoting a dialogue between "the Cuban community abroad" and the government and people of Cuba. Their organizations and their publications (including the political-cultural journal *Areíto*,² which recently suspended operations after more than ten years of publication) are ignored in *The Cuban-American Experience*, as are the conversations between several prominent Cuban-Americans and Cuban government officials, including Fidel Castro. Prior to these conversations, Cuba had followed a harsh policy toward the exiles, making it virtually impossible for them to return to visit their relatives. These conversations, called "el diálogo," led to highly emotional family visits by Cuban-Americans, which in turn accelerated further changes in both Cuba and the overseas community. Contacts with the Cuban-Americans and the merchandise that most of them brought on these visits almost certainly stimulated a desire to emigrate in many Cubans and thus contributed to the great 1980 exodus from Mariel. For these reasons, Boswell and Curtis's lack of interest in the dissidents among the Cuban-Americans and the effects of their actions weakens the work's overall analysis considerably.

Not surprisingly, the view of "the community abroad" differs substantially in Cuba. In this regard, the Cuban non-exile sociologist Juan Valdés Paz writes, "Emigration to the United States, besides being induced as an open counterrevolutionary policy, functioned objectively as a crossing to the enemy camp, as an alignment against the homeland, as a subversion against the decision of the immense majority of the Cuban people. . . . The real Cuba was denied in favor of an ideal Cuba which had never existed, and which now is identified with the [Cuban] community in exile. Affirming the [exile] community against the real Cuba, this was the new meaning of the shattered nationality."³

Readers curious about how social scientists in Cuba view the "Cuban community abroad" might want to look at several informative articles in *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*.⁴ Raúl García Buchaca, Lourdes Cervantes, and Rafael Hernández have coauthored a "research note" that is really a brief exposé on the Fundación Nacional Cubano-Americana and the anti-Cuban connection in the United States. Redi Gomis's essay reviews and summarizes the skimpy literature on the experience of the Mariel boat-lift refugees, consisting mostly of articles by Robert Bach, Max Azicri, Gabriel Haslip Viera, Juan Clark, Karen Kerpen, and

Silvia Unzueta. This essay is a useful starting point for research on the *marielitos*. It also points out the poor reception they received, in contrast with earlier Cuban émigrés.

Lyn MacCorkle's *Cubans in the United States: A Bibliography for Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1960–1983* is an essential research tool despite some defects. It lists some fourteen hundred English-language sources on Cubans in the United States, including articles from academic journals and popular periodicals (but not newspapers), books, theses, unpublished papers, and government documents completed since 1959. Entries are organized under seven topical headings: bibliography; economics, business, and labor; education and language; public administration and public policy; psychology, social psychology, and health; politics; and sociology, anthropology, and demographics. Within these sections, items are listed by date of publication and then alphabetically by author. The volume includes an author index but neither subject index nor any commentary on the works, making it difficult to find material on a particular topic or identify it as important once it is found.

Portes and Bach's *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* is the theoretically most ambitious of the books reviewed here. The authors are concerned with three theoretical issues: first, whether migrations can best be explained by a two-systems model of a sending and a receiving society or by a single world-system model; second, whether "labor replacement" or a dual market (or "split labor market") model better explains contemporary immigration; and third, a comparison of the "enclave" hypothesis with a model of step-by-step (or generation-by-generation) assimilation. Portes and Bach present important comparative data on Mexican and Cuban immigrants. They argue in passing (and persuasively, in my view) the fatuousness of labeling one migration stream as "economic" and the other as "political." It is clear that material motivations were as important to the Cubans as to the Mexicans and that political decisions had affected economic conditions as decisively in Mexico as in Cuba.

In this connection, Boswell and Curtis also noted that between 1959 and 1980, Puerto Rico and Cuba "experienced a comparable outpouring" of emigrants. This parallel suggests the possibility (which Boswell and Curtis do not entertain) that similar forces were inducing emigration from two Caribbean islands with radically different political regimes. It also suggests that the interpretation of Cuban emigration as a politically motivated escape from communism, in contrast to an economically motivated emigration from Puerto Rico, may be greatly exaggerated.

Portes and Bach argue that migration today is better understood as a dynamic within a single complex global system, where events in

any part affect those in others, rather than as movement from one discrete system (a “sending” country) to another (the “receiving” country). The world-system approach is fundamentally a cybernetic model in which motion in any part affects the rate and direction of forces in every other part, which in turn act on the element that started moving in the first place. Such an approach is congenial to both the technologically and the dialectically literate. It is appropriate in this context, Portes and Bach argue, because migrants do not sever their connections to their homelands and because in the modern economy, events in the two countries can never be independent of one another.

If Portes and Bach had wanted to provide a clear illustration of the model at work, they might have pointed to a sequence discussed above: tensions in the Cuban-American population lead to one segment of that population opening a dialogue with Cuba, which leads to family visits, which (along with other forces) provoke a new emigration wave, which alters the composition of the Cuban-American population, and so on.

Portes and Bach next argue that contemporary immigrants to the United States are entering a “split labor market,” where they are not competing for the same jobs as native-born U.S. citizens. Thus overall unemployment rates have little effect on immigration rates. This situation did not obtain in the period between 1890 and 1914, when immigration would decline significantly following a year of high unemployment and would rise again when more job opportunities developed. In those years, according to Portes and Bach, immigrant workers were “replacing” native U.S. citizens who had gone West or left the unskilled and semiskilled labor force for other reasons.

The authors may be right, but the data they use on both unemployment and immigration are too unreliable to lend much confidence to their finding, and in any case, other explanations are possible. First, when thinking again in terms of a world system, it is probable that the interdependence of national economies is more developed and direct than it was seventy years ago and that a year of high unemployment in the United States is more likely to be a year of astronomically higher unemployment in poorer countries that sell goods to the United States. Thus in such years, no matter how bad things are in the United States, they look good to Latin Americans, Asians, and Africans, who may not be concerned about whether the labor market is split or unified. Second, it is not clear that the split labor market—in which particular jobs and industries were reserved for Jews, Italians, Irish, Hungarians, and other ethnic minorities—was less a fact of life in the period from 1890 to 1914.

For this study, 822 Mexicans and 590 Cubans were interviewed in 1973 as they entered the United States, the Mexicans in El Paso or La-

redo, Texas, and the Cubans in Miami, Florida. Subsequently, those who could be found were reinterviewed in 1976 and again in 1979, wherever they happened to be. The Cubans were notably more successful than the Mexicans as entrepreneurs, a finding that the authors attribute to the existence of an "enclave" in Miami, a factor absent from the towns where the Mexicans settled. Oddly enough, the authors do not get around to defining their key term *enclave* until more than halfway through the study. They define it as a "distinctive economic formation, characterized by the spatial concentration of immigrants who organize a variety of enterprises to serve their own ethnic market and the general population" (p. 203). In an enclave, the immigrants have access to capital and "an extensive division of labor."

Other immigrant groups mentioned as examples of enclave organization are the Eastern European Jews concentrated in New York and the Japanese on the West Coast. These minority members may indeed have exploited one another, but they also provided one another with the resources necessary to establish enterprises that could then reach a wider market, as the Cubans have done.

No one will doubt that such an "economic formation" exists among Cubans in Miami, but demonstrating the lack of such a formation in El Paso, Laredo, or the many other Mexican-American towns of southern Texas would be difficult. For that matter, the so-called Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago (the second most popular destination of Mexican immigrants after the Southwest) seems to have all the requisites of an enclave. Portes and Bach may be on to something, but they need to think through their enclave concept a little further. Then, if they can demonstrate that Mexican-Americans have not created an enclave, the question becomes "Why not?"

The authors also make much of what they consider the surprising (or as they call it, "counterintuitive") finding that the immigrants who have been in the United States for the longest time are those most likely to believe themselves the victims of ethnic prejudice from the "Anglo" majority. The explanation is simple: the immigrants are wising up.

James Jennings's and Monte Rivera's coedited *Puerto Rican Politics in Urban America* is mostly about New York and mostly favorable to former U.S. Congressman and Bronx borough president Herman Badillo, who gave it his blessing in a two-paragraph introduction. The book also includes a comparison of Puerto Rican leadership styles in New York and Boston by Jennings (which treats Boston too cursorily) and a longer discussion of Chicago's complicated ethnic politics by Isidro Lucas. Unfortunately, the latter article appears to have been written before Harold Washington was elected as mayor, an outcome that resulted in several new Puerto Rican and other Hispanic political appointments.

Regarding New York, the news is that Puerto Rican “machine” politics, based on a local boss’s control of antipoverty resources, has survived in both East Harlem and the south Bronx (not much is said about Brooklyn), despite the emergence of such antimachine politicians as Badillo and former city councilman Gilberto Gerena Valentín. Sherrie Baver provides a detailed and colorful account of these intracommunal struggles, particularly those involving the much-investigated Ramón Vélez, director of numerous Bronx organizations. Monte Rivera presents a case study of the creation of a similar machine in East Harlem, although he is curiously reluctant to name names (*El Diario/La Prensa* and the *Village Voice* have been less reticent in their exposés of the dealings of the del Toro brothers, State Assemblyman Angelo del Toro and community agency czar William del Toro). Rivera does have a nice way with phrases, however, as is demonstrated in his description of antipoverty programs as “patronage troughs for political opportunists.”

The collection also includes an essay by Eddie González and Lois Gray on Puerto Rican trade union activism, but it is hardly more than a sketch. Luis Fuentes’s contribution criticizes one union, New York City’s United Federation of Teachers, for sabotaging attempts by Puerto Ricans to get representation on local school boards. Angelo Falcón has contributed a brief but valuable history of New York Puerto Rican politics from the 1860s to 1945 and a discussion of the literature on Puerto Rican politics in U.S. cities. Both pieces are clear and concise. The bibliographic essay will be especially useful to those beginning research in the field.

In general, the essays in *Puerto Rican Politics* are stronger on description than on interpretation. They fail to answer many of the questions they raise, such as why Boston’s Puerto Ricans are not as active as those studied by Lloyd Rogler in New Haven.⁵ Nevertheless, the collection offers an introduction to its subject that should prove useful to journalists, researchers, and perhaps even politicians.

Hispanics in the United States, by Joan Moore and Harry Pachon, is a comprehensive one-volume overview of the Hispanic populations of the United States that is presented intelligently. One of its important contributions is clarifying (although without resolving) the debate over whether these diverse peoples are fusing into a single national minority, and if so, what that minority might be like. Each of the main chapters compares data on Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans (the three largest national groups) with occasional references to the smaller and less-documented nationalities. Major themes used in organizing the data include demography, economic conditions, community institutions, culture and language, and politics. The last topic includes the politics within the several Hispanic communities as well as their relations to larger, outside political institutions.

Those of Mexican origin get the most space, appropriately, because they are not only the most numerous (nearly 60 percent of the 14.6 million Hispanics reported in the 1980 census) but have the longest and most complex history in the United States. The divergent histories of recent immigrants from Mexico, descendants of earlier immigrants, and descendants of early Hispanic settlers whose lands were conquered by the United States in the mid-nineteenth century have led to sharp differences in attitudes and ways of life. These differences are further compounded by regional and social class divisions.

As to the Puerto Ricans (15 percent of the Hispanic total), the contentious question of whether their U.S.-bred children are also Puerto Ricans or are something else (such as "Nuyoricans") is raised but not resolved. Moore and Pachon seem to suggest that, contrary to the experience of other immigrants, cultural differences between the two groups may diminish as mainland culture further penetrates the island and as the island becomes better known to its overseas progeny.

Moore and Pachon follow logic and convention by dividing the Cuban immigrants since 1959 into three waves: immigrants between 1959 and 1965 are characterized as rich, white, and counterrevolutionary; those immigrating between 1966 and 1980 as having greater variety of class origins but generally skilled, including a few dark-skinned Cubans; and the 1980 Mariel exodus as having many more blacks and unskilled workers. Little research exists on this last group, whose low status and aberrant behavior have embarrassed many Cubans, but the existing data are mentioned. According to the authors, although Cubans comprise only 5 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population, they enjoy disproportionately great influence because of their cohesiveness and high concentration in Miami (where they can vote and purchase as blocs) and because of the wealth and skills within the community. This finding of Moore and Pachon resembles Portes and Bach's enclave argument.

By juxtaposing data on all three groups in their topical chapters, Moore and Pachon are able to make broader comparative observations on such sensitive issues as the sense of community and machismo. They offer insightful observations about language use, language change, and the often exaggerated reactions of "Anglos" to use of the Spanish language. They also discuss the contribution of new immigrants to cultural maintenance in the *barrios* and the mistaken impression that barrio-dwellers never learn English.

As Moore and Pachon observe, "Very few Hispanics would choose a collective term of self-designation (either 'Hispanic' or 'Latino') even though this may be the term by which the rest of the nation generally knows them. . . . Furthermore, many Hispanics are somewhat suspicious of the word 'Hispanic,' believing that such bu-

reaucratic labels were often used as a mask for political manipulation." For example, "Anglos" (English-speaking whites) may designate upper-status Latin Americans (frequently Cubans) "to supervise low-status Hispanic laborers" or to be their spokespersons. The cultural and class gulfs between these "representatives" and the groups they are supposed to represent may be great, but such gulfs are ignored when all are considered to be part of the same broad ethnic group of "Hispanics."

"On the other hand," Moore and Pachon point out, "small and outnumbered components of the total Hispanic population often see their collective designation as a way of establishing their commonality with Hispanics who have more clout." Some of the labelees vigorously promote the term "Latino" instead of "Hispanic," although how this designation will protect them from manipulation is not clear. To some ears, "Hispanic" and "Latino" connote different socioeconomic statuses, "Latinos" being the ordinary, middle, or lower-status folk. As one Puerto Rican activist likes to say, "A 'Hispanic' is like a Latino yuppie."⁶

Yet for all their diversity and the quarrels over terminology, Americans stamped by the old Spanish Empire do have much in common and can be expected to continue to form coalitions in order to confront their shared problems and achieve power. The question is, under what conditions will they coalesce?

Felix Padilla examines this question in *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. He introduces the category of "situational ethnic identity" as a way of describing the rational, pragmatic processes that are part of self-labeling. Essentially, the concept implies that individuals may shift their claims to ethnic membership as the practical advantages and disadvantages of each claim change, which may be quickly and often in a complex urban environment.

In Padilla's case studies of two Mexican–Puerto Rican coalitions in Chicago in the 1970s, the Spanish Coalition for Jobs and the Latino Institute, persons who normally thought of themselves as Mexicans or Puerto Ricans began to describe themselves by the more comprehensive labels of "Spanish" or "Latino" for the purpose of specific objectives vis-à-vis the dominant economic and political institutions. Although they presumably reverted to their former ethnic identities when they went back to their neighborhoods, they had learned to switch from one to the other according to the situation.

"Identity," however, may be too strong a term for the kind of self-labeling that Padilla describes. In the first place, the more situational a label is, the less ethnic it is. That is to say, the label becomes less charged by the kind of effable and ineffable cultural memories

evoked, for example, by Richard Rodriguez in his meditation on this subject, *Hunger of Memory*.⁷ Until and unless individuals have a memory of common struggle, identity based on a situational coalition will be fleeting.

Situational identity is a weak predictor of behavior, for obvious reasons. In pure form, such an identity can be taken on or cast off as conditions warrant, without altering the individual's basic self-perception. Thus one useful application of Padilla's concept may be to make readers skeptical about "Latino" or "Hispanic" solidarity because the chances are that such rhetoric represents no more than a "situational" or opportunistic "identity."

But there is another important implication to be drawn from Padilla's research and from the "situational identities" of trade unionists, politicians, and others: a situational identity may be internalized by habit. Individuals tend to see themselves as they would have others see them, so as it becomes important for more persons to present themselves more often as "Hispanics" or "Latinos," they may become Hispanics or Latinos in their own eyes. It is still possible that for the "Latino" coalitions in Chicago, the common memory of the Spanish language (and for some, its daily use) as well as the new political opportunities opened up by Mayor Washington's administration may give some substance to the broader identity.⁸

Does this process of pan-Hispanicization blur important distinctions among the several national groups? Undoubtedly it does, and we will always need historians, social scientists, poets, and novelists to keep rediscovering, or reinventing, the particular histories of ethnic groups. But the wider identity also gives organizations a crack at greater power and offers Hispanic businesses or mass communications media a chance at a wider market or audience. For these reasons, and because of frequent intergroup contacts and intermarriage among Hispanics, the tendency to assert a more inclusive and therefore vaguer identity of Spanish origin is probably irreversible. The process is encouraged by corporations interested in a homogeneous national market, by the U.S. Census Bureau looking for simple categories, by politicians trying to cobble together a constituency, but also by community groups needing coalitions and individuals who want to be part of something larger than, say, the Colombian community of Queens. The creation of a pan-Hispanic identity is thus not entirely unlike the processes, partly coercive and partly voluntary, that forged the Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other nationalities in the first place.

NOTES

1. *The Hispanic Almanac* (New York: Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1984), 22.
2. Since this review was written, *Areíto* has reappeared in Miami.
3. Juan Valdés Paz, "La integración de la comunidad cubana en los Estados Unidos: el proceso de aculturación," paper presented at the second Seminario sobre Minorías en los Estados Unidos, held in Havana, 1–4 Dec. 1984, 33–34.
4. *Cuadernos de Nuestro América* 1, no. 1 (Jan.–July 1984), published in Havana. See Raúl García Buchaca, Lourdes Cervantes, and Rafael Hernández, "La Fundación Nacional Cubano-Americana y la conexión anticubana en los Estados Unidos," 147–73; and Redi Gomis, "La inmigración cubana de 1980 en los Estados Unidos: revisión crítica de una bibliografía norteamericana sobre el Mariel," 228–48.
5. See Lloyd Rogler, "The Changing Role of a Political Boss in a Puerto Rican Migrant Community," *American Sociological Review* 39 (Feb. 1974), cited by Jennings.
6. Angelo Falcón, personal communication.
7. See Richard Rodríguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (Boston: D. R. Godine, 1982).
8. This statement was written before Washington's sudden death. At this writing, it is not possible to determine whether the increased opportunities for Hispanics in Washington's administration will continue under his successor.