INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 9521310

The social construction of pan-Latino identity: Gender, class, and politics in Corona, Queens, New York City, 1986–1988

Ricourt, Milagros, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1995

Copyright ©1995 by Ricourt, Milagros. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PAN-LATINO IDENTITY: GENDER, CLASS, AND POLITICS IN CORONA, QUEENS, NYC, 1986-1988

By

Milagros Ricourt

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Philosophy, the City University of New York

1995

1995

MILAGROS RICOURT

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jan. 25, 1995 — Roslyn W. Bologh
Date — Chair of Examining Committee

Jan. 30, 1995 — Lindsey Churchill
Date — Executive Officer

Dr. Roger Sanjek
Dr. William Kornblum

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PAN-LATINO IDENTITY: GENDER, CLASS, AND POLITICS IN CORONA, QUEENS, NYC, 1986-1988

By

Milagros Ricourt

Adviser: Professor Roslyn Bologh

This dissertation studies the social construction of Latino ethnicity in the everyday activities and leadership roles of Latin American female immigrants in Corona, Queens, New York City. This dissertation studies the conditions that have enabled women of diverse nationalities to develop a collective sense of identity as "Latinas de Queens." The study is rooted in ethnographic fieldwork in Corona, a neighborhood of immigrants from every Latin American country, as well as from Asia, and of white and African Americans--probably the most ethnically diverse community in the United States.

The analysis of Latino ethnicity begins with the interaction process among working-class women of different Latin American nationalities in the Corona community that has led to the emergence of a common Latin American ethnic

identity. This study then move outward from Corona to examine the place of women in the organizational leadership that serves and articulates the needs of Queens' Latin American residents. The focus is on middle-class Latina immigrants in the institutional arenas of cultural and social service organizations, churches, and politics.

This study of Latin American female immigrants involves three intersecting elements: ethnicity, gender, and class. These three elements shape unique forms of leadership that simultaneously are also shaping the Latin American community of Queens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LISTS OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: FIELDWORK IN CORONA AND QUEENS

This study analyzes the social construction of Latino identity in the everyday activities and leadership roles of Latin American female immigrants in Corona, Queens, New York City.

It examines the conditions that have enabled women of diverse nationalities to develop a collective sense of identity as "Latinas de Queens." Although each term has varying connotations. "Hispano" or "Latino" in Spanish, and "Hispanic" and "Latin American" in English, all refer to the emergent ethnic consciousness this study concerns. The study is rooted in ethnographic fieldwork in Corona, a neighborhood of immigrants from every Latin American country, as well as from Asia, and of white and African Americans--probably the most ethnically diverse community in the United States. It might not be another community like this in the United States. After describing the Latin American population of Queens, my analysis of Latino ethnicity begins with the interaction process among working-class women of different Latin American nationalities in the Corona community that has led to the emergence of a common Latin American ethnic identity.

I then move outward from Corona to examine the place of women in the organizational leadership that serves and articulates the needs of Queens' Latin American residents.

Here I focus on middle-class Latina immigrants in the institutional arenas of cultural and social service organizations, churches, and politics.

In Corona informal informational networks developed by working-class women permeate the neighborhood and meet many practical needs. These networks develop in neighborhood, household, stores, streets, and workplace. Grassroots leadership, often provided by longer established women, links these informal networks to block associations, to carpools for transportation to work outside Corona, to churches, and to formal organizations.

Although not sufficient in number to meet their needs, a variety of advocacy, service, cultural, and religious institutions serving the Spanish-speaking community flourishes in Corona and other nearby Queens neighborhoods. Latin American women of South and Central America and of Caribbean origins are active as founders, leaders, and staff members in these institutions.

Latin American women also hold political appointments in the two community boards including Corona, and at higher levels. Of the three appointed officials on the Borough President's staff who are Spanish-speaking, all three are female.

This study of Latin American female immigrants involves three intersecting elements: ethnicity, gender and class.

These three elements shape unique forms of leadership that simultaneously are also shaping the Latin American community of Queens. This is evident in several ways. First, it is working-class Spanish-speaking immigrant **women** who are the major group uniting the diverse Latin American Queens community; their activism affects the entire Latin American population. They develop what I call a female ethnic consciousness. Second, the leadership of middle-class Latino women aims at the formation of a cohesive ethnic community that is integrated within the political bodies and sources of power of New York City. And third, the female leadership that emerges from an ethnically-diverse community tends to articulate a discourse that moves beyond not only any single national group, but also toward links with non-Latino neighborhood and Queens residents.

My research developed within a larger study directed by Professor Roger Sanjek, an anthropologist at Queens College. In September 1983 "The New Immigrants and Old Americans Project" began to study the impact of immigration in the multi-ethnic and multi-racial neighborhoods of Elmhurst and Corona in Queens, New York City. The goals of the project were to understand the social, cultural and political life of an American urban neighborhood that was experiencing the impact of substantial new immigration.

The project addressed these issues through intensive ethnographic fieldwork. In addition to participant observation, a project household interview form was developed to collect data on socio-demographic characteristics, migration and work histories, and community involvement.

Rather than studying each immigrant population on its own, however, the project involved concurrent and overlapping team fieldwork among several immigrant Asian and Latin American Populations (See Chen 1990, Danta 1989, Khandelwal 1990, Park 1990).

Working closely with Ruby Danta, who focused on Latin American immigrants in several Protestant churches, I took responsibility for research on women in Corona and in political activities of the wider Latin American population in Queens.

The project also encompassed field research among white and black American residents of Elmhurst and Corona (See Gregory 1991, Sanjek 1990, 1991, 1992).

I joined the New Immigrants and Old Americans Project in the summer of 1986. My first objective was to gather an overview of women in the Corona neighborhood through participant observation in churches, volunteer work in an advocacy organization and interviews for the project's survey of local businesses. Each task impressed upon me the leadership role of women in Corona.

My visits to the Spanish-speaking First United Methodist church of Corona gave me the opportunity to meet the pastor, a Puerto Rican women. In addition, most of the lay leaders were females, as was the majority of the church's members, many of them residents of Corona. Informal conversations with the church members helped me to get acquainted with the neighborhood and to establish my first contact persons for interviews and further introductions.

I also did volunteer work at Concerned Citizens of Queens (Cuidadanos Conscientes de Queens--CCQ) which is an advocacy organization for Latino Queens residents, begun by a Puerto Rican woman. CCQ's staff was also mainly female. During my time at CCQ I became acquainted with still other of Corona's political and community leaders, who also happened to be mostly female. I also got a sense of the community political structure.

The project business survey involved short interviews with all local business in Corona and Elmhurst. Ten staff members of different nationalities, and speaking Spanish, Korean, Cantonese, Taiwanese, Mandarin, and English, collected information on 1350 businesses in the two neighborhoods. Two sheets were distributed to all the merchants. One explained the survey and its sponsorship by the Elmhurst Economic Development Corporation and the Corona Community Development Corporation; the other was the survey form. The staff then

conducted door-to-door interviews with the local businessmen and businesswomen.

This work permitted me to get to know Corona geographically, and to became familiar with immigrant entrepreneurs and their costumers. During the survey I also learned that a significant number of Latin American businesses were operated by women. These women became my next source of contact persons in Corona.

This first summer of fieldwork in 1986 challenged me. As a woman and as a feminist I was excited by meeting so many Latin American women leaders and entrepreneurs. Was this a common pattern in Spanish-speaking new immigrant communities, or was I in the middle of discovering a new pattern? The literature on Latin American immigrants most often portrayed women as passive; much of it focused on exploited garment workers (Gonzalez 1974; Pessar 1987a, 1987b). In still other studies, Spanish-speaking immigrant women were merely figures in dry demographic patterns (Gurak 1979). Other studies portray the lives of third world
immigrant women as the result of global economic changes (Sassen-Koob 1981; Sassen 1992). Few studies attempt to understand the specificity of women in both the migratory and settlement processes. Castro (1982) examines Colombian women's experiences starting with the assumption that it must be realized that migrants are "social beings with flesh,

minds, cultures, and not just passive actors" as is suggested by the partial analysis using macro categories of class, capital, and the international division of labor. In Corona, women were clearly organizing, leading, and creating a new Latin American community before my eyes.

A challenge to me was present in Corona. Spanish-speaking immigrant women were more than only garment workers or statistical figures, and there was an urgent need to document more fully these women's lives.

Fortunately, funding was available for me to continue working with the New Immigrants and Old Americans project, and in January 1987 I joined Roger Sanjek, Steven Gregory, Kyeyoung Park, Hsiang-shui Chen and Ruby Danta on a full-time basis.

My initial research questions were short, focused on specific content, and highlighted only part of the reality I would encounter in the lives of Corona's Latin American women. I was intrigued with how ethnicity, class, and gender influenced leadership in the Queens community. Despite diversity among Spanish-speaking nationality groups, could politics and female leadership be a homogenizing element among them? Were middle and working class women exerting their own brand of leadership? Why was it women more than men who seemed to be developing pan-Latino leadership in Queens? How exactly did women make their contribution to the process of

Latino ethnic identity, and the formation of a Latin American political community?

These questions sharpened as the process of my acceptance among Corona residents began. The immediacy of economic issues and of social ties through women struck me the day I began to look for an apartment in the neighborhood. The difficulties of moving into the community (described in Chapter IV) made me aware of how acute was the housing situation in the neighborhood. It also offered me a chance to meet ordinary Corona residents and to start learning from them more about the neighborhood where I was to conduct fieldwork.

Living in Corona did not turn me into an ordinary resident. People understood my purposes, and approached me as a researcher. In spite of sharing with most of them their language, and common cultural and ethnic background, I was not seen as a normal housewife while going to the Laundromat, the supermarket, or other local stores. Many of my initial informants were not open immediately to sharing with me their migration, work, family, and everyday life experiences.

The process of acceptance was long, but revealing. The view of me as the intruder who asked uncomfortable questions finally disappeared after I became pregnant. At that time I had finished almost all my household interviews with Corona working class women. Yet I was reluctant to process that information because I wanted to add more depth to the

household interviews I had already conducted.

My pregnancy gave me that opportunity. Women in the Laundromat now approached me to tell me that I was going to have a boy because of the shape of my belly. Next-door neighbors and women from the Methodist church prescribed remedies for my morning sickness. Invitations followed to visit their homes so they could share with me their first experience with having a baby. Due to complications during my pregnancy I had several crises that ended in hospitalization. During my admissions to Elmhurst Hospital I met other pregnant women who lived in Corona, and several became friends and later informants.

At home, women from church, women I met in the hospital, and neighbors all visited me frequently. Some of them accompanied me to doctor appointments, and even to buy the baby clothing I would need. By the end of 1987 I was not merely a researcher anymore. Neither did I feel I was an intruder. I had melted into the everyday lives of women who, at different levels in the community, were building the foundations of better lives for themselves, their children, and neighbors. When I decided to return home for a short visit to the Dominican Republic, women from the neighborhood helped me look for boxes, pack, and babysat for my infant son. One of them volunteered to take care of my plants while I was away.

When I moved back to Corona in 1988 (my son remained in the Dominican Republic with my parents) I shared an apartment with two Dominican women not far from the apartment I occupied during 1987. My new landlady, also Dominican, was a leader in our block association. That summer we often sat out on the sidewalk and talked about the changes in the neighborhood since the time she had arrived. In less than fifteen years, my landlady had seen her block gather people from all over the world.

My two Dominican apartment-mates soon introduced me directly into the world of sweatshops and garment workers' social lives and networks. I learned how Dominican owners run their factories in ways different from Chinese and Korean owners (See Chapter 5). On pinics with them in Linden and Flushing Meadow-Corona parks and on strolls in the neighborhood, I discovered the garment workers' networks which are permeated by subtle social reciprocities. My visits to the shop where one of my apartment-mates worked were so frequent that many women mistook me for a garment worker.

Now, even though people still knew I was gathering information for my dissertation, they no longer treated me as a researcher. It seemed they saw me first as the woman who shared the apartment with the two garment workers. I was seen as a friend, and sometimes even as a source of information in the midst of informal chatting. I lived with the two women

for nine months during 1988 but the relationship we established has lasted longer. During my later trips to the Dominican Republic I carried mail and money from them to their relatives.

My ties at the First United Methodist Church of Corona and at other civic and advocacy organizations also strengthened over time. Volunteer work in two of the church's programs and at Concerned Citizens of Queens not only facilitated deeper research, but it converted mere study into two-way exchange. My work as a volunteer involved participation as often as observation. Particularly at the Methodist Church I achieved a lasting relationship. Here I met a woman pastor who understood the constraints and conflicts a researcher among her own people might face. Without reservation she opened the church's door to me and introduced me to every single member. More than valued informants (which they certainly were), the pastor, and many members of the congregation became friends ready to assist me under any circumstance. To them I owe many wonderful moments, and a good part of the outcome of my study.

Overall my fieldwork included contact with all the civic, cultural, advocacy, political, and religious institutions and organizations formed or led by Spanish-speaking persons and serving Corona and bordering neighborhoods. Other civic and advocacy organizations as well as individual leaders were

contacted during both 1987 and 1988. Some of these organizations were not located in Corona, but served its residents along with other Latin Americans in Queens. Several of the women leaders operated at levels that also extended beyond Corona -- in community boards, the northern Queens Latin American community, and at Borough Hall, the seat of Queens county government. My fieldwork also explored metropolitan area-wide forms of cultural participation among Spanish-speaking groups, namely the annual Queens Festival and the Colombian Independence Day Festival, both held in Flushing Meadows-Corona park, just next to the neighborhood I studied.

During my 1987-88 research I conducted 50 intensive interviews, a purposive sample of 33 working-class women with whom I focused on grass-roots perspectives and informal networks, and 17 middle-class women who held positions in community boards, advocacy and civic associations, churches, and formal political bodies. All of these interviews began with the New Immigrants and Old Americans Project's household interview form, and then expanded into particular topics with different informants. Most of these women were visited twice or more often for interviews. Participant observation in their households and workplace, on the streets and in stores supplement hundreds of pages of fieldnotes. With other project team members, I developed and implemented a volunteer program at Concerned Citizens of Queens to help register

immigrants applying for amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. During the summer of 1986, I volunteered at the First United Methodist Church's summer school for children aged 5 to 12.

Churches were another site for participant observation and interviews. I attended five Spanish services at Bethany Lutheran Church in Elmhurst (See Sanjek 1988, and Danta 1988), and interviewed the Spanish-speaking minister and principal lay leader, both women. I attended five services at Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church in Corona. At the First United Methodist Church of Corona I attended 52 services and interviewed the pastor and several lay leaders, most of whom are females. I also did participant observation at the Methodist church's senior citizen center and daycare center.

As I traced Latin American female leadership upwards from the streets of Corona, fieldwork reached the doors of Queens Borough President Claire Shulman, and the office of New York State Governor Mario Cuomo. In both places I met women holding important positions. They included three Latin American women at Borough Hall who were also active in other community organizations serving Corona residents and other Queens Latin Americans. At Governor Cuomo's Office, I met two women who reside in Queens and were active in community activities not **only** at the borough but also at the city-wide

level. Many of these women were identified through the process of participant observation within the organizations I studied.

The fifty women I interviewed, with one exception, were all immigrants (or Puerto Rican-born migrants). They included 15 from the Dominican Republic, 11 from Colombia, seven from Puerto Rico, six from Ecuador, three from Honduras, and one each from Guatemala, El Salvador, Uruguay, Cuba, Argentina, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Peru, and one Dominican born in the United States. Most of them arrived in New York as adults, the earliest arriving in the 1950s, and more in the 1960s, in the 1970s, and the 1980s.

The data gathered in my fieldwork will be used to support the following key conclusions about ethnicity, gender and class as major elements defining the emergent Latin American leadership in the Corona community and in Queens.

ETHNICITY. There is not a firm collective self-identity among the diverse Spanish-speaking population, which is officially labeled "Hispanic." This is due to its diversity of national origins, migratory experiences, settlement patterns, and occupational characteristics, despite the apparent "commonness of language and culture" (Portes and Truelove, 1986).

I will be concerned with the way in which women identify themselves. "Hispanic" is a label imposed upon immigrants by

American society: it is an official term that defines a minority or racial status separating "Hispanics" from other official categories: White, Black, Asian. People in Queens attach cultural meanings and values to their own national identities. In the United States these national identities can be interpreted as "ethnicity," much as European national identities are the basis of ethnic groups in the U.S. But unlike European or Asian groups, the Latin American of diverse national identities all share one language--Spanish. Spanish also has a cultural meaning and value to these immigrants, and provides a basis of communication and potential organization across ethnic lines.

It is in politics, however, that diverse Spanish-speaking groups of different national identities begin to find unity along new ethnic lines, whatever label acquires local or regional significance. Spanish-speaking persons occupy the lower rungs of America society, and suffer job discrimination (Reimers 1985). Here common needs arise. It is in dealing with the state in social programs, welfare, criminal justice, schools, and the electoral system that Spanish-speaking groups become united as they address their needs.

Through my fieldwork I learned that Corona women's motivation to become involved in both informal networks and community affairs relate most directly to their politically imposed and politically generated ethnicity. Working-class

women pursue these activities as part of their struggle for survival as "Hispanic" or Spanish-speaking immigrants in the host society. Middle-class women in the Queens community described their concern over the conditions facing the Spanish-speaking population as the major factor pushing them into activism. Thus ethnicity--"Latino Americano," "Hispano", or their English equivalents--is a channel to political activity and leadership.

GENDER. Latin American men are also involved in politics, but these politics tend to be related to their countries of origin. There is a vast arena of nationality-based Latin American associations that this study only touches upon, but which deserves study in its own right. I will refer to some of these activities in passing, but few of the women leaders I studied are active in these organizations, although they are quite familiar with them.

Few Latin American immigrant men are activists in the Queens local politics that seeks to represent Latinos as an ethnic category. It is women who form the majority of founders and leaders of such pan-Latino organizations. There are several reasons for the outstanding position of women in these activities.

1. Women develop a "female consciousness" which emerges from the gendered division of labor that assigns women the responsibility of preserving life. As Kaplan states, "women

with female consciousness demand the rights that their obligations entail. The collective drive to secure those rights that result from the division of labor sometimes has revolutionary consequences insofar as it politicizes the networks of everyday life" (Kaplan 1982:282). As we shall see, many of the grass-roots organizations developed by working-class women in Queens are related to issues of the distribution of resources in the community, block clean-up campaigns, school board elections, and preserving their neighborhood from drugs. A number of the organizations and institutions developed by middle-class women are also related to this female consciousness. Many of my informants told me that one of their reasons to get involved in community activities and politics was their commitment to build a better society for their children.

2. Both working-class and middle-class women have specific opportunities that men do not have to develop their community activities. In working-class households, while men are primarily limited to the male solidarity of the work arena, women spend more time interacting within their residential community. Working-class women, in addition to paid jobs, fulfill their duties as wives and mother. They go shopping; they do laundry; they pay utility bills. Their activities give them a measure of "freedom" from the household's walls and their husband's sight which allows them

to create their own informational networks.

3. My fieldwork has revealed that many of the Latin American middle-class women leaders are divorced, and head their own households. Their personal lives and their political activities are not unconnected. Their situation requires that they work, yet it also give them a measure of freedom and independence, allowing evening or weekend meetings. Significantly, these women do not have to play the role of female support to male household heads that married working-class women do.

4. Education is also a very important asset for women as protagonists in the community's political life. Participant observation, interviews, and statistical sources all confirm that both working-class and middle-class Latin American women have achieved higher levels of education than men.

SOCIAL CLASS. Social class is clearly very important in defining the arenas and goals of these Latin American women's struggles. Working-class women use arenas such as household, neighborhood sites (Laundromat, supermarkets, parks), and workplace to pursue their struggles. Middle-class women create and develop their own organizations. They are also more involved in the formal political system. In this regard, it is also worth noting that many of the middle-class women hold United States citizenship while a considerable number of the working-class women are permanent residents or

hold illegal status. The goals also vary by class. Working-class women pursue immediate, practical results in everyday concerns over housing, jobs, and child care. Middle-class women address the state-related domains of public resources and power.

The presentation of this study will be organized as follows:

1. An analysis of the literature about ethnic identity, Latin American immigrants' settlement patterns, and female leadership. This analysis will constitute the theoretical foundation of my dissertation.

2. An analysis of the population changes occurring in the neighborhood of Corona from 1960 to 1990, taking into account both census data, newspaper clippings, and the 1986 business survey of Elmhurst and Corona, as well as the testimonies gathered during my fieldwork of how the informants have witnessed the growth and changes of their community. This analysis will be essential to understand the ecological configuration of the neighborhood during the last three decades. The concentration of the Latin American population in the neighborhood of Corona and in specific workplace is essential to understand how pan-Latino identity is created.

3. An analysis of the grass-roots women's lives stressing the interactions of daily life using fieldnotes related to: finding housing, childcare, schools, and informal economic

activities. The analysis of these fieldnotes will enable me to answer questions such as how do solutions to everyday problems move beyond kinship to community contacts? Do daily life experiences of Latin American men in Corona also bring them together across nationality lines? And how are these activities important in building a pan-Latino identity?

4. A description of Corona religious life focusing on my most important research site: The First United Methodist Church of Corona. For this I will use fieldnotes related to church organization, members' social and informal gathering, and the organization and development of the church's senior citizen center and datura center. I will also use interviews conducted with several church leaders and members. The analysis of those fieldnotes and interviews will allow me to answer questions such as how does the church formally and informally use religious services, social celebrations, and language in order to reaffirm their Latin American immigrant member's own culture? How does the church through its social programs--senior citizen center, datura center, and free clothing and food distribution activities--reach and integrate a diverse community? And how do the pastor's sermons and the activities of its members give evidence to an awareness of the common situation of Spanish-speaking people in an ethnically

diverse society?

5. An analysis of the role of women, in Latin American cultural activities based on fieldnotes and interviews. Cultural organizations first flourished in the neighborhood during the 1970s. Each of the key organizations--such as Ollantay Center for the Arts and the Father Billini Association--have been important in creating a pan-Latino identity among the neighborhood residents and also in influencing formal political bodies. I will answer the following questions: how do these organizations help to perpetuate immigrants' cultural values and at the same time also operate within the power structure of the host society? How have these organizations developed a successful pan-Latin American discourse?

6. An analysis of the Latin American organizations that provide social services to the community, using data gathered at Concerned Citizens of Queens, United Hispanos of Woodside, and during school board elections. In this analysis I will answer such questions as how do these organizations relate to the grass-root activities and the cultural organizations also existing in the community? How did the task of providing services enhance the vision of a pan-Latin american identity?

7. An analysis of Latin American politics in Queens, and the role of women and men. I use newspaper clippings, census

data, fieldnotes, and interviews regarding organizations and individuals such as the United Latin Americans of Queens, Latin Americans holding key positions at Queens Borough Hall, on Community Board 4, and on school boards, and in the 1991 City Council redistricting process. This analysis will examine three issues. First, how does Latin American political organization relate to grass-root activities as well as to cultural and social service organizations? How does the political discourse of the individuals involved in such organizations related to the concept of pan-Latin American identity? How has the wider community responded or been involved in these political activities?

PART I

CHAPTER 2

LATIN AMERICAN MIGRATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF PAN-LATIN AMERICAN IDENTITY

Introduction.

Much recent academic work has focused on how to conceptualize ethnicity in the case of the United States Spanish-speaking population (Bean and Tienda 1985; Maldonado 1991; Murgia 1991; Shorris 1992; Padilla 1985 and 1987; Portes and Truelove 1987; Totti 1987; Valle 1991). This problem of Latin American ethnicity has been approached from different perspectives, yet all begin with the acknowledgement of certain key complexities. First is the great socioeconomic, racial, and immigration-status diversity of the Latino population. There are professionals and entrepreneurs, as well as farm laborers and unskilled factory workers. There are people of white, black, indian, and mixed ancestry. There are illegal residents, permanent residents, and U.S. citizens.

Second is the presence of groups of different national origins, each containing the contours of diversity just mentioned. Spanish-speaking immigrants originate from the nations of Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and also from Spain. Each of the national groups

the U.S. society.

Third is the dynamic nature of the group settlement patterns. The Spanish-speaking population involves many points of continuing entry into the cities and regions of the U. S., and secondary movements within cities, to suburbs, and to centers of economic expansion. Further, this population continues to expand in relation to events in the home countries.

These complexities produce many axes of both differences and similarities among the various groups. But beyond these differences and complexities there are countervailing forces that contribute to the social construction of a common Latin American ethnicity. The first is the residential concentration of the various national Spanish-speaking groups in the urban areas (Chaney and Sutton 1987; Massey 1981). This factor, and the particular mix and proportion of nationalities, is important to the formation of ethnic group solidarity in that it sets a stage for common interests and lifestyles, everyday contacts, and friendship ties.

Second is the Spanish language. Sharing the same language produces a strong sense of connectedness and identity difficult to create among groups of different languages.

Third is occupational concentration. Market structures which push Latin American immigrants into the same work spaces create a source of integration among the various Spanish-

speaking national groups.

And fourth is politics. Spanish-speaking groups occupy the lower rungs of American society, suffer job discrimination, and health and schooling disadvantages. Dealing with these problems is a further factor influencing how Spanish-speaking groups become united.

Part one contains four chapters. Chapter 2 is framed by a general analytical description of the causes and reasons of migration. It will also look at the history of migration of the various Latin American ethnic groups, namely Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Colombians. This analytical description allows this study to proceed from a theoretical and historical perspective on Latin American and Caribbean migration to the United States.

Chapter 3 discusses the problem of Latin American ethnic identity from various perspectives. It reviews classical and more recent theoretical approaches to ethnicity as a basis for discussion of the emergence of Latin American ethnic identity. Next, I will look at assessments of Latino cooperation in particular cities, stressing the importance of political action.

Chapter 4 turns to the situation in New York City and examines how new immigration waves from Latin American have affected residential and occupational concentration. It describes the settlement conditions of the various Latin

American groups in New York City and particularly in northern Queens, the site of my research. Here I address how the particular local setting is important to understand ethnic and political organization.

Finally I turn to the issue of the leadership role of Latin American immigrant women in the creation of Pan-Latino identity. Chapter 5 introduces theoretical viewpoints on female leadership to which I will return in the conclusion of the dissertation.

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

It has been stated that international labor migration has been an important component of major transformations of the social order, specifically in the development of the world capitalist system (Portes 1978; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Walton 1981; Sassen-Koob 1983). In the consolidation of the world economic system, for instance, international labor migration has emerged as the main channel of labor supply, eventhough other forms of migration, such as colonizing or refugees movements, have also been important (Portes and Walton 1981; Sassen-Koob 1983).

This section will focus on labor migration because this study is concerned with such migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Portes and Walton (1981) define labor migration as a process which encompasses particular sectors of a nation, occurring through inducement and spontaneous

decision and between units articulated into the same international system. However, there are different explanations of the origins and causes of these migrations.

The so-called "push-pull factor" theories interpret migration as the effect of multiple rational choices leading large numbers of women and men to areas where industrialization opens new occupational opportunities, more attractive wages, better working conditions, and other advantages (Marshall 1978). Different theoretical trends have developed within this broad perspective. Equilibrium theory, a variant of modernization theory, views migration as a way of restoring equilibrium between spatial units. Migration decreases the pressures of population in low growth areas and provides for the labor needs of growing regions, thus restoring balance between human and capital resources. Lerner (1965) states that the penetration of western values and forms of consumption in backward regions leads to the emergence of new aspirations among their most dynamic sectors. Mobilization for attainment of these goals takes place in the larger cities where advantages of modern life can be fulfilled.

The push-pull theories have been widely criticized. One of the main criticism is that this perspective does not explain why migration begins, increases, or diminishes at certain historical stages, nor does it account for the

direction of migration flows (Fernandez-Kelly 1983, Piore 1979). In addition, this perspective fails to take into account the structural determinants imposed on social classes by the accumulation of capital at the international scale (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Portes 1974). Portes and Bach (1985) state that the central difficulty with push-pull theory is that is does not take into account the changing historical context of migration. For this theory, migration occurs between two distinct, autonomous social units: that which expels labor and that which receives it. The possibility that such flows may actually be internal to a roader unified system to which both units belong is not contemplated (Portes and Bach 1985:6).

From a different perspective, so-called "dependentistas" also criticizes push-pull theories. They state that this flow of population and capital does not function to develop peripheral areas, but rather to deepen their underdevelopment. They argue that trade relation and the flow of capital investment from advanced to peripheral countries does not lead to eventual parity or equilibrium between then, but rather to the progressive subordination of the weaker regions. For the dependentistas", international labor migration reflects the struggle of impoverished populations in the subordinate countries to gain access to advanced industrial consumption (Santos 1980; Frank 1969). Portes and Walton (1981), however,

state that the "dependentistas" view shares with equilibrium theory the basic view of migration as a process occurring between two different spatially defined units. This polarity between places of origin and places of destination leads to a static conceptualization of concrete process of migration.

Still other theorists emphasize the gap in wage incentives between sending and receiving regions. The notion of unlimited supplies of labor, employed in the analysis of both internal and international migration, is based on the existence of a permanent large wage differential in favor of native workers in receiving areas. Portes and Bach (1985) call this position orthodox economic theory. They cite Piore (1979) who notes that the unlimited supply demonstrated by the ease with which new labor flows are initiated when older ones are cut off is attributed to the vast income advantages of advanced countries over all peripheral ones (Portes and Bach 1985:3). The orthodox economic perspective views immigrant labor as a supplement to a scarce domestic labor force. Immigrants are recruited to fill jobs in an expanding economy that has run out of hands in its own population. This explain the gravitation of immigrants toward the worst jobs as a natural consequence of an expanding economy. In this view, native workers move upward to better paid, more prestigious, or more autonomous positions. Immigrant workers are not qualitatively different from native workers except that they

are newer entrants in the labor force, and have less experience and less education. With time, immigrants can acquire the experience to move upward as well, thus leaving the bottom of the occupational structure open to new labor flows (Piore 1979).

Theories discussed so far have failed to explain migration movements universally, and this has led some scholars to propose alternative explanations. More recent writings offer a new perspective on labor migration. They explain that labor migration does not occur as an external process between two separate entities, Neither is it limited to the diffusion of new living standards and expectations. Labor migration occurs as part of the gradual articulation of an international economic system which has resulted in changing political-economic forces that underline these flows. The penetration of outlying regions by capitalism has produced imbalances in their internal social and economic structures. Though induced from outside, such imbalances become internal to the incorporated societies and lead in time to migratory pressures (Portes and Bach 1985:6-7).

To illustrate this new set of theories I will review two important discussions of labor migration. First, the Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos's *Labor Migration Under Capitalism* (1974), and second Sasses-Koob's *Labor Migration and the New International Division of Labor.* These writings

explain labor migration by taking specific migrant groups as the basis of their analysis. The Centro's study explains how capitalist penetration in Puerto Rico led to the formation of a relative population excess which was forced to migrate. Sassen's analysis is about the most recent migratory flows and how a changing capitalist structure of accumulation uses that labor.

CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS PUERTORRIQUENOS

Early studies of Puerto Rican emigration began with the supposition that Puerto Rico suffers from an endemic "overpopulation problem" which impels the constant geographic displacement its people. "Puerto Ricans emigrate because they are too many to be feasibly maintained in their own country. It is therefore necessary to reduce the population on the island to match the available resources. Thus, by virtue of individual rational and deliberate decisions, supported by public policy, a process is initiated that is beneficial to both the export and receiving countries, and of course to the emigrants population itself" (El Centro 1974:36).

The Centro rejected this Malthusian approach and countered it with a Marxist explanation. It asserted that demographic conditions, including "overpopulation", are at all times relative to the level of productive development of the society. Demographic facts are always politically situated, and can only be explained in relation to the prevailing

organization of social production (Centro 1974:35). In the operation of the capitalist mode of production there is a tendency to convert part of the working class into a surplus population. Population growth cannot be understood as an autonomous process occurring independently of the existing social organization of production.

Marxist interpretation of the capitalist system concludes that the capitalist mode of production tends not only to generate a relative population excess, but also to absorb it by means of successive transfers of workers from one branch of production to another, as well as by its own expansion (Centro 1974: 38).

This relative population excess is created by capitalism because of the dispossession of the majority of the population of the instruments and means of production, thus transforming it into a wage-labor force. But expropriation, and the demand for labor, are not matched by a capacity to absorb ever larger numbers of workers into the productive apparatus. This ends with the constant creation of population excess, or what Marx called the "industrial reserve army" (Centro 1974:40). In Puerto Rico, the Centro explains, the period from 1870 to 1898 constituted a transition toward the establishment of capitalist relations of production within agriculture. This was limited because the Spanish metropolis was unable to adjust the relations of production so as to enter fully into

the emergence of capitalism in Puerto Rico, and thus channeled Puerto Rico's external commerce to other expanding nations (Centro 1974:44).

Padilla (1987) also points to other causes limiting the development of agrarian capitalism in Puerto Rico. First, he notes that local sugar producers who controlled the means of production and ownership of the land lacked the economic power and solvency to finance large-scale projects that would lead to the transition. Second, the Spanish merchants who controlled the means of exchange in Puerto Rico tries to thwart the development of the capitalist mode of agricultural production since this tended in the long run to undermine their dominant role. This resulted in the "hacienda" system of family-operated plantation enterprise. In spite of these limitations or contradictions, the concentration of land and the introduction of machinery into sugar cultivation, along with a steady growth in population, generated diverse migratory moments, both internal and abroad.

The United States occupation in 1898 accelerated the ongoing transition and quickly consolidated the establishment of agrarian capitalism. During that period Puerto Rico was economically a mixture of mountain-slope subsistence farming, and a "hacienda" plantation agriculture, producing sugar, coffee, tobacco, with an almost non-existent domestic market. The population then was about one million, and 85 percent

lived in rural areas (Padilla 1987). As the Centro points out, United States imperialism in Puerto Rico took the forms of both direct colonial domination and imposition of foreign capital rule, and of economic penetration through American investment and an unequal trade agreement (Centro 1974: 50).

The plantation economy, along with its manufacturing complement (first tobacco processing and subsequently the needle trades) became a part of the international system at the service of the new metropolis. This second period, which lasted until 1940, saw the formation of growing relative overpopulation, and the generation of migratory currents, as well as a substantial internal redistribution of population. In that period major migration flow was very dispersed to Hawaii, Santo Domingo, and Central America, but after World War I it was directed to the U.S. core. At that time the U.S. recovered from the depression years and needed more workers.

The accumulation of relative overpopulation during these years was still cushioned by the persistence of precapitalist productive relations in some rural areas. But with the collapse of the plantation system and related manufacturing activities toward the end of the period, the accumulated human surplus began to constitute an acute social problem because no work was available for them (Centro 1974:47).

The early 1940 marked the beginning of industrialization. During that period the human mass that could not be absorbed

into the new scheme of production intensified its move to the United States. The period opened with a first phase of investment in light industry, and passed in the 1960s into a second phase in which finance capital with a much higher technology component became dominant. By the time of this second phase, the mobility of the Puerto Rican labor force had reached unprecedent proportions (Centro 1974: 59).

LABOR MIGRATION AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOR

Sassen-Koob (1983) offers a comparable analysis of labor migration during the 1970s and 1980s, the era of the new global economy. She studies the causes of more recent migration flows in a period of decline for the traditional manufacturing centers, and the emergence of a service economy in the core. The traditional manufacturing industries have been moving to Mexico, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia countries since 1960. These industries operate within what have been called free trade Zones.

Sassen-Koob states that in the 1960s two major migratory flows developed, indicative of a new pattern in the relationship between world accumulation and labor migration. These are internal migration to the industrial centers where free trade zones operate, and international migration directed largely to a few old centers of the world economy experiencing severe economic decline in traditional components of their economies: London and, more recently, New York City (Sassen-

Koob 1983: 175).

The new migrations to the core, Sassen-Koob points out, are both historically and analytically unusual as a pattern because they are directed to areas with pronounced job losses, especially in sectors likely to employ immigrants. Secondly, there is also capital emigration to those very areas exporting labor. She explains the flows as follows: first, the central factor in the decline of the traditional component is the shift in the location of rapid industrial growth from the old industrial center to peripheral areas: Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Mexico. Second, together with the transnationalization of capital generally, there is a pronounced expansion in the international demand for advanced specialized services. The production of these services is disproportionately concentrated in a few old centers at the core, such as London and New York City. The new migrations to the core are primarily associated with this recomposition rather than with the decline of traditional economic sectors, as is usually argued in the migration literature (Sassen-Koob 1983:176-177).

On the one hand, during the last two decades New York City has suffered important changes, ceding first place to a different set of activities centered around information processing and business transactions. In New York City, the emergence of a world service sector has followed (Tabb 1982;

Sassen-Koob 1983; Waldinger 1985). On the other hand, since 1970 New York City has experienced a considerable emigration of capital to both the sunbelt and Third World countries. New York manufacturing centers and employment patterns have been particularly affected by this capital emigration. Manufacturing employment in the city reached a peak of 1,073,000 workers in 1947, and had declined 12 percent by 1960. By 1970, a further 121,000 manufacturing jobs had been lost, and by 1977 another 287,000 (Tabb 1982:75). On the other hand, between 1977 and 1980, employment increased by 7.7 percent in finance, insurance, and real state, by 9.4 percent in communications and media, by 24.7 percent in business services, by 8.9 percent in educational services and research institutions, by 7.4 percent in entertainment, culture and tourism, and by 3.9 percent in social services (Sassen-Koob 1983: 193).

Sassen-Koob identifies how new immigrant labor is absorbed in this phase of manufacturing decline and service sector increase. First she argues that "new immigration provides cheap labor and therewith contributes to the survival of declining industries and of the backward sectors of capital generally." (Sassen-Koob 1983: 197).

She also incorporates in her analysis some of the views developed by dual labor market theorists. In their models the market is divided into primary and secondary sectors. The

need for a stable labor force applies only to certain types of jobs; where incentives to stability are not necessary, wages remain low, security of employment is not assured, and promotion prospects are few. These types of job form the secondary sector, and the "good jobs" constitute the primary sector (Doeringer and Piore 1971).

Radical theories moving beyond the dual labor market approach, however, stress that capitalists need to control the labor force, which with the development of factory production becomes more homogenous and more likely to unite against them. Job stratification allowed capitalists to divide and rule the labor force. Jobs were divided into grades, and within each grade promotion ladders were established. This stratification served to reduce the development of class consciousness in the labor force, and within each grade promotion ladders provide the incentives necessary to motivate workers (Gordon 1972: 77).

Sassen-Koob uses elements of both theories to explain why immigrants remain in low-paid and insecure jobs. In addition to these theories that Sassen-Koob develops, however, the highly dynamic, technologically-advanced sectors of the economy contain and increasingly generate low-wage, dead-end jobs, many of which are filled by immigrants (Sassen-Koob 1983:198-199).

LATIN AMERICAN MIGRATION

Major studies of migration from latin America and the Caribbean are generally oriented toward three national groups: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. Together persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origin constitute near 80 percent of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States. More recent immigrants from Caribbean countries and Central and South America, however, constitute a growing share of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States.

This section reviews the processes of migration of Dominicans and Colombians who are the more recent Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States, and are well represented in Corona, and Queens overall. First, however, a review of the literature on Puerto Ricans and Cubans is included because these groups are also very important in the ethnic composition of New York City population.

PUERTO RICAN

As we have noted above, significant migration from Puerto Rico started as a result of capitalist penetration in the island as well as capitalist development in the United States. It is estimated that from 1898 to 1944 around 90,000 persons migrated (Vasquez Calsada 1979:223). During that forty-five year period, the greatest movement occurred during the decade of the 1920s, when more than 40,000 Puerto Ricans migrated. The depression in the 1930s reduced this number considerably, and the current was reversed. Between 1930 and 1934 there was

a return migration of almost 10,000 people (Vasquez Calsada 1979).

After War World II more than 150,000 Puerto Ricans left the island during the 1940s and more than 400,000 left during the 1950s. According to census data, net migration during the 1960s was over 250,000 (Vasquez Calsada 1979:224)

Puerto Rican migration to the United States has also been productive for capitalist accumulation in the core. Rodriguez (1979:197) pointed out that the historical role of immigrants to the United States has been that of low-wage laborers whose exploitation has tended to increase the surplus value of capitalists while maintaining general wage levels in depressed conditions. She also says that the presence of Puerto Ricans kept the general wages in New York low during the 1950s and early 1960s. She points out that wages members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), a union with a high proportion of Puerto Ricans, actually fell within the period of peak Puerto Rican migration.

CUBANS

Cuban's experience is far different from that of Puerto Ricans. Bean and Tienda (1987:27) point out three factors that differentiate Cubans from other migrant groups. First, the early immigrants were primarily political rather than economic refugees. These early migrants were individuals from professional, urban, and more highly educated sectors.

Second, the 1950 U.S. census, enumerated 34,000 persons of Cuban origin. The Cuban presence increased during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s because of the exit of thousands seeking asylum from the Castro's regime. And third, the Cuban reception in this country was not the tacit acceptance by employers hungry for cheap labor, but rather a public welcome by the federal government eager to harbor those seeking refuge from a communist dictatorship (Bean and Tienda 1987:28-29).

By 1970 more than half million Cubans resided in the United States. Today Cubans constitute roughly 6 percent of all Spanish-speaking persons in the United States.

DOMINICANS

Capitalist penetration and political changes were essential to processes of migration from the Dominican Republic to Venezuela, Europe, other Caribbean Islands, and basically to the United States. Bray (1984) pointed to capitalist development and the creation of a capitalist state from Trujillo's regime (1930-1961) to Balaguer's twelve years (1966-1978) to explain the reasons of massive out migration from the Dominican Republic. Bray argues that the reasons of migration are not only rooted on political repression but that economic development and capitalist penetration created a middle class that lateron could not find jobs or resources to support their lifestyles. That is the reason why Dominican

immigrants in the United States are basically middle-class people.

Early studies of Dominican international migration stressed the rural origin of the Dominican migrants (Hendricks 1974; Gonzalez 1970 and 1976). More through research has shown that Dominican migrants are more likely to be from an urban area, have much higher level of literacy, and are relatively more skilled (Gurak 1982; Grasmuck 1982; Pessar 1982; Ugalde, Bean and Cardenas 1979).

Dominicans migrants in the United States reached the number of 237,350 by 1980 (1980 census). Large numbers of Dominicans also have been entering the United States each year under temporary visitor visas, over 100,000 each year since 1969 (Bray 1984:219). An unknown number of Dominicans are presumed to enter the United States illegally each year, either by overstaying visitor visas, entering through Puerto Rico, or other means. By 1990 the total number of Dominicans in the United States including legal residents, the undocumented, and children born in the United States was estimated at between 300,000 and 800,000 (Daily News August 17, 1990). The 1990 census showed 500,000 Dominicans in the United States.

COLOMBIANS

Studies on the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba offer an socio-economic as well as a political explanation on

the reasons of migration. In the case of Colombia, I have not found any study pointing at a social, economic or political analysis of Colombia migration to the United States.

The 1970 United States census reported the presence of 63,538 Colombians in the United States (Cruz and Castano 1976). Elsa Chaney (1976) stated that Colombian numbers were as high as 100,00 to 250,000 during the 1970s. At present, it is estimated that 350,000 Colombians live in the United States.

Cruz and Castano (1976) state that between 1936 and 1945 1,825 Colombian immigrants were admitted in the United States. During the 1945- 1965 period, a total of 55,004 Colombian immigrants were admitted. Of these, 14.6 percent arrived before 1955, while 85.4 percent arrived between 1956 and 1965. The third period begins when the Immigration Act of 1965 came into effect. From 1966 to 1975, 64,427 Colombian were admitted to the United States.

CHAPTER 3

GENERAL APPROACHES TO ETHNICITY AMONG IMMIGRANTS

There are several different perspectives on immigrant adaptation. The assimilation school comprises many classic studies of European immigrants in the United States. These include the work of such sociologists and historians as Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) on Polish peasants, Handlin (1963) on the urban Irish, Child (1943) on the second generation Italians, Wittke (1952 and 1970) on the Germans and Irish, and Blegen (1969) on the Norwegians. It also includes writers as Milton Gordon (1964) who applies this unidirectional model to non-European groups.

The assimilationist perspective defines the situation of immigrants as involving a clash between conflicting cultural values and norms. The native majority represents the "core" to which immigrants are peripheral. Assimilation occurs by the diffusion of values and norms from core to periphery. These values and norms are gradually absorbed by immigrants, bringing them closer to the majority. The process, also sometimes called acculturation, is generally seen as irreversible, though it may take different lengths of time for different groups.

Gordon (1964) defines acculturation as the precondition for

is an extensive participation of immigrants in primary groups of the core society; amalgamation, which is the intermarriage between immigrants and natives; and identificational assimilation, which is the development of a common national identity based on the symbols of the core groups.

According to Gordon (1964: 61), there is no necessary linear relationship between the different types of assimilation beyond the stage of acculturation. Learning the norms and values of the society may lead to an immediate reduction of prejudice and discrimination, with both groups, however, choosing to remain apart in terms of social interaction. Identificational assimilation may occur in the absence of amalgamation, and even of extensive structural assimilation. But it is the latter process, extensive primary-level interaction between immigrants and members of the core group, that Gordon defines as central to full assimilation.

Throughout his book, Gordon (1964) defines three alternative outcomes of the acculturation-assimilation process, labelled, respectively, anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. Anglo-conformity (Gordon 1964: 84-114) refers to as the complete surrender of immigrants' symbols and values, and their absorption of the core culture. The process culminates in identificational

assimilation, though it may not lead to structural assimilation, or to the total elimination of discrimination and prejudice. The melting pot (Gordon 1964:115-131) is the situation when assimilation results in a blend of the values, norms, lifestyle, and institutions of the different groups, both core and peripheral. This is manifested, for example, in "American" food, in the incorporation into the English language of a number of foreign expressions, and in the adoption of symbols and festivities brought by different immigrant groups. Cultural pluralism (Gordon 1964: 132-159) refers to a situation in which immigrants are able to retain their own culture, modified by contact with the core, but still preserved in some distinct character.

The basic insight of the assimilation viewpoint is that contact between a new foreign minority and an established majority will lead, through a series of stages, to an eventual merging of values, symbols, and identity. This integration into a single society and culture is held to be a good thing. For the majority, such a merging represents a guarantee of social stability with a degree of enrichment provided by elements of new cultures. For the minority, it offers the possibility of access to positions of higher prestige and power and the promise of a

better future for their children.

Several quite different perspectives, such as the colonialist, split labor market, and dual economy theories, view immigrant adaptation from other perspective. From these perspectives, as presented by Portes and Bach (1985) and Piore (1979), greater knowledge of the core language and culture by new immigrants, and greater familiarity with members of the dominant group, do not necessarily lead to more positive attitudes and more rapid assimilation. Such conditions can lead precisely to the opposite, as immigrants discover their objective economic position and are exposed to racist ideologies directed against them. These theories share the idea that immigrant groups may learn the language, become thoroughly familiar with the values and life styles of the majority, and be completely integrated into the economic structure, but still not abandon their distinct cultural traits and self-identities, and may even resist further assimilation. These perspectives on immigrant adaptation emphasize ethnic consciousness and the resilience of ethnic culture as instruments of political resistance by exploited minorities.

Another set of scholars (Glazer 1983: Glazer and Moynahan 1968; Greely 1974; Suttles 1968) note the

functional advantages of ethnicity, ranging from the moral and material support provided by ethnic networks, to the political gains made through ethnic bloc-voting. From this viewpoint, it pays to preserve ethnic solidarity, which is often the only edge that immigrants and their descendants have to advance in the broader society. Research supporting this position has dealt primarily with the experience of "white ethnics", descendants of European immigrant groups, though the theoretical perspective has been extended to non-white minorities. Greely (1974), for example, points out that ethnic resilience is not a cultural "lag" from pre-modern times, but rather is the communal basis on which modern social structure rests. Far from constituting a "social problem," ethnic bonds represent one of the few sources of emotional support and social solidarity left in the modern urban context.

Other theories agree with this latter position, but focus on the origins of ethnic solidarity. They emphasize the experiences of immigrant groups, which, though acculturated to dominant values and norms, have been rebuffed in their attempt to seek entrance into the core society. Such rejection is a necessary consequence of the subordinate position of immigrant minorities in the labor market and of the ideologies employed to legitimize it. Blauner (1977)

argues that the rejection experienced by immigrants and their descendants in their attempts to become fully assimilated constitute a central element in the reconstitution of ethnic culture. Olzak (1980) states that this culture is not a mere continuation of that originally brought by immigrants, but is a distinct emergent product. It is forged in the interaction of the group with the dominant majority, incorporating some aspects of the core culture, and lending privilege to those aspects from the past that appear most suited in the struggle for self-worth and mobility.

A more recent study views ethnic divisions as mere reflections of class divisions. Hirschman (1982) states that several variants of the class interpretation of persisting ethnic differentiation exist, but the unifying theme is the focus on economic rather than cultural factors as determinants of ethnic inequality, and an emphasis on structural instead of individual factors in the explanation of rates of assimilation.

Bean and Tienda (1987:11) criticize this viewpoint, making the following points: (1) that members of ethnic groups who combine high levels of economic success with strong ethnic identification present a troublesome inconsistency for theories that would see ethnicity and class as nearly perfectly overlapping categories; (2) that ascriptive

traits are far less salient determinants of ethnic group boundaries than are socially-constructed membership rules; (3) that ethnicity is predominantly a social phenomenon organized around outwardly visible physical and cultural differences between two or more groups; (4) that the fact that ethnic boundaries can be changed by group members to make the collectivity more or less inclusive requires a dynamic conception of ethnicity, and a view that is sensitive to the historical setting in which it occurs; (5) and finally, that whether an individual is a member of an ethnic group depends not only on outwardly visible ascriptive traits, but also on the person's active identification with a particular ethnic group.

Bean and Tienda (1987:11) argue that ethnic boundaries are defined by a constellation of social forces, including the degree of ethnic and racial antagonism in the host society, and call attention to the social construction of ethnicity. The common sense of nationality, which constitutes the minimum criterion for ethnic identification, emerges only after immigration, and after the ensuing process of social comparison between the newcomers and members of the majority groups. The extent to which ethnic boundaries become clearly defined then varies directly with the reception the new group experiences in the

host society.

Yancey, Erickson, and Juliani (1976) have elaborated a useful theory of the social construction of ethnicity. Their work on European immigrants and their experiences in becoming part of American society illustrates their ideas about the social construction of ethnicity. Starting with the notion that the expression of ethnicity is a variable, Yancey etal.. identify several factors that contribute to the emergence of ethnicity among immigrant groups. These include the legal and political guidelines determining who can immigrate; the need for, and availability of wage labor; the changing structure of industry; and the ecological configuration of urban areas. They argue that these structural variables played an important role in shaping the differing integration experiences of European immigrants. They claim that these supra-individual variables better explain the residential and occupational concentration of foreign-born groups than does the traditional notion of a cultural disposition or preference for certain types of work.

Residential and occupational concentration are crucial to the formation of ethnic group solidarity in that they produce common interests, lifestyle, and friendships. When the ethnic experience includes rejection, discrimination, and

oppression, ethnic ties provide a ready system of support for groups that are readily distinguishable by race, national origin, and/or language. Time of immigration is also crucial because changes in employment opportunities and changing demands for various skills occur as the economy has shifted from goods to service production.

The Problem Of Latin American Immigrants Ethnic Consciousness

Comparative studies on Latin American migrants to the United States have focused mainly on three nationality groups - Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans (Nelson and Tienda 1985; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Walton 1981). These studies focus on processes of migration and the analysis of census data rather than on processes of settlement and community formation. A more recent academic concern, however, is how to interpret ethnicity in the case of the U. S. Spanish-speaking population (Bean and Tienda 1987; Murgia 1991; Padilla 1985, 1987; Portes and Truelove 1987; Shorris 1992).

Bean and Tienda (1987) recognize the complexities involved among the nationally diverse Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. They argue that although the Spanish-speaking presence predates the emergence of the American nation, its emerging political strength and national visibility, resulting in part from both high

fertility and the continued influx of new immigrants, presents a challenge for students of ethnic stratification. As the flow of immigrants from Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean into the United States continues to increase the size of the Spanish-speaking population, "a partially unified" sense of pan-ethnic identity does seem to be emerging among Latinos of different national origin groups.

Portes and Truelove (1987), however, focus on the absence of a firm, collective self-identity among this population. They stress its great diversity, despite the apparent "commonness" of language and culture. They point out that under the same "Latino" or "Hispanic" label are found individuals whose ancestors lived in this land at least since the time of independence, and others who arrived only last year. "There are substantial numbers of professionals and entrepreneurs, along with humble farm laborers and unskilled factory workers; there are whites, blacks, mulattoes, and mestizos; there are full-fledged citizens and unauthorized aliens; and finally among the immigrants, there are those who came in search of employment and a better economic future and those who arrived escaping death squads and political persecution at home" (Portes and Truelove 1987:360).

Portes and Truelove (1987) also argue that, aside from divisions between foreign and native-born, there is no difference of greater significance among the Latin American population than that of national origin. Nationality does not stand simply for different geographic places of birth. It serves as a code word for the distinct history of each major immigrant flow, and its pattern of entry and adaptation to American society.

Portes and Truelove (1987) observe that the complexity of Spanish-speaking ethnicity, a consequence of these diverse national origins, leads more often to differences than to similarities among the component groups. A second difficulty they stress is that most Spanish-origin groups are not yet settled, but continue expanding and changing in response to uninterrupted immigration, and to close contact with events in their home countries.

Portes and Truelove (1987) also point to labor market characteristics which show disparities among Spanish-speaking groups. Here Puerto Ricans are in the worst socioeconomic situation, a fact manifested by high levels of unemployment, female-headed households, and poverty, and correspondingly low levels of education, occupation and income. Male Puerto Rican wage levels fall 18 percent below the average for

non-Spanish-speaking white men (Reimers 1985). Mexicans occupy an intermediate position between Puerto Ricans and Cubans, at 67 percent below the overall U.S. wage level. A more favorable situation is that of Cubans whose occupation, family income, and self-employment rates come close to the U.S. average, as do those for the "other Spanish." All remaining Latin American nationality groups together fall 12 percent below U.S. wage levels, between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans.

Other scholars have also found significant disadvantages in occupational and earnings attainment for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and a small but consistent advantage for Cubans (Nelson and Tienda 1985; Portes and Truelove (1987), however, state that findings do not clarify why discrimination operates differentially among presumably similar groups, and not at all in certain cases. They conclude that there is no alternative but "to dig into the particular characteristics and history of each group in search of suitable answers." They call for abandoning the general label "Hispanic" in research and also leaving behind the residual category "other Spanish." This is necessary, they argue, because these categories are too heterogeneous to lead to a valid explanation.

The complexities of Spanish-speaking ethnicity have been

discussed more recently by several articles in a special issue of the **Latino Studies Journal** (1991). These papers deal with three broad topics. First, they discuss the implications of the use of the terms Latino and Hispanic for ethnic identity. Murgia (1991) argues that a pan-ethnic label such as Hispanic or Latino has advantages as well as disadvantages, and he advocates dual-level ethnic identity. Second, there is a discussion of the instrumental aspects of the terms Latino and Hispanic for ethnic groups, government agencies, and other groups. Maldonado (1991) argues that the use of global terms should be avoided, or used only for the most general of administrative aims, and with explicit recognition that such uses tend to be based in bureaucratic and political purposes. Third, several authors deal with the definition and desirability of one term over the other. In this sense, Valle (1991) argues that Mexicans Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, Hispanics, Puerto Ricans and Central Americans increasingly appear inclined to build a common cultural community. There is a willingness to extend the boundaries of ethnic identity, and there is a preference for a pan-ethnic term, whether the term be "Hispanic" or "Latino." But at the same time it is apparent that Latinos do not want to lose their cultural distinctiveness based on national origins. Like Valle Murgia agrees on the utility of a dual level ethnic identity,

a public ethnic image suited for work and school, and a private ethnic identity used among family and friends.

Still there are ethnographic and political questions to be answered that the positions discussed above do not address. First, what happens when different Latin American ethnic groups share the same geographical, residential and/or occupational space? Second, what happens to the "dual" ethnic identities when people of different Latin American national backgrounds collectively take action to face problems affecting them all as one Spanish-speaking population?

Latino Cooperation In Particular Cities

With a focus on politics, the ethnicity of Spanish-speaking groups acquires a particular significance. Spanish-speaking people occupy the lower rungs of America society and suffer job discrimination (Reimers 1985). It is in dealing with state programs we will see, with affirmative action, the welfare system, the criminal justice system, the schools, and the electoral system that different Spanish-speaking groups may become homogenized in pan-Latin American terms (Portes and Truelove 1987).

First, as Totti argues the political awareness of Spanish-speaking origin groups has developed in the United States. Totti adds that in the case of the Chicanos, the

Afro-American civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s demonstrated the value of mass organizing for gaining equality. With the end of the Bracero program in 1964, Mexican-origin agricultural workers began to organize for better conditions. Cesar Chavez's United Farms Workers (UFW) organizing efforts in California, and the land struggles of Reies Tijerina in New Mexico, combined political mobilization efforts and traditional cultural symbols, with appeal to a wide spectrum of Mexicans Americans. By the middle 1960s, Chicanos were aggressively asserting their ethnically-defined interests in a variety of organizations (grassroots or barrio, professional, and university students), and demanding a better place within the general society (See Totti 1987).

Puerto Rican political organization in the United States was effected by the legal status of Puerto Ricans which facilitated their migration to the mainland, created a shifting population constantly going back and forth. The unresolved political status of Puerto Rico also encouraged direct interest in island politics and affairs. Candidates for public office there campaign in New York for the support of those who might return to Puerto Rico at election time.

The establishment by the commonwealth of Puerto Rico of an office in New York in 19 interfered with the development

of a local cadre of leaders. When New York politicians were confronted with a community problem, they consulted the representatives of the Commonwealth government instead of going to the barrios; the Democratic party showed no interest in organizing poor Puerto Ricans. The Reform movement within the Democratic party, basically middle class with middle class agendas, also showed little interest. The Black Civil Rights Movement, and the maturing of the Chicano movement, served as an inspiration in the development of Puerto Rican political organization and identity. Another push to organize came from the Great Society federal anti-poverty program, which bypassed the local political party machine and encouraged local leadership (Totti 1987).

Both Chicano and Puerto Rican political organizations operated through the 1960s within nationality lines. Puerto Ricans in New York City did not ally politically with other Spanish-speaking groups, most of whom were not citizens and could not vote (Shorris 1992). Such organizing began to change significantly in the 1970s. The "new immigrants" began to accept their permanence and interest in the local political process, and as the state began to manage its minorities across Hispanic nationality divisions. The emergence of a wider Spanish-speaking identity and

the birth of organizations promoting pan-Latino political and social enfranchisement began with daily interactions in the neighborhoods of New York or Chicago, or any other city where two or more Spanish-speaking groups interact.

Padilla's work (1985 and 1987) is illustrative of how Latino

ethnic consciousness is created. Padilla provides an analysis of the process of Latino/Hispanic ethnic group formation in the city of Chicago. He examines the conditions that enabled Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans to transcend the boundaries of their respective nationality -and culturally- based communities, and to adopt a new and different collective "Latino" or "Hispanic" identity during the early years of the 1970s.

Padilla (1987) argues that the experience of inequality in areas such as education and employment was shared by Spanish-

speaking ethnics from different geographic communities in Chicago. This provided the overall structural framework linking these groups. In this sense, the manifestation and salience of Latino ethnic identity and solidarity were operative within specific situational contexts, or at certain times, in the urban life of Spanish-speaking groups. Still

following Padilla's argument, there remain other situational contexts when the individual national identification of a particular group (i.e. Mexican American, Puerto Rican, or Cuban) is more suitable for mobilization. In this way ethnic behavior among Spanish-speaking groups may be expressed alternatively in either individual national, or in wider Latino terms.

Further, Padilla advances the notion that the sharing of structural and cultural (language) commonalities among two or more Spanish-speaking ethnic groups is not sufficient to activate pan-Latino ethnic mobilization. "Mobilization" and "identity" must be viewed as two empirically distinct "Latino ethnic" processes. Latino ethnic **identity** symbolizes basic identification as a language-based population, while Latino ethnic **mobilization** represents action resulting from the interaction among two or more Spanish-speaking groups.

In this sense, Padilla argues that Latino ethnic mobilization has been excited or energized by certain governmental and public policies, the result of the expansion and involvement of the state in the social and economic life of American society. In other words, the expansion of the role of the polity and its creation of policies and programs--in civil rights laws, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action--facilitate Latino "connectedness,"

leading to interaction and mobilization as one "homogenous language population" (Padilla 1987).

As Padilla's work shows, politics is an essential element in homogenizing the Spanish-speaking community. But the two groups he focused on in Chicago, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, lived in two geographically separated neighborhoods. This is not the case in the neighborhood I will discuss in the chapters that follow. Here in Corona, Queens, people of diverse Latin American nationalities coreside, mixed together on streets and in apartment buildings.

CHAPTER 4

LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS IN NEW YORK CITY

As we have noted in previous sections, the reasons for migration are always shaped by the expansion of modern capitalist relations in the countries of origin. Puerto Rican emigration was shaped by the economic changes occurring in the island after the United States invaded and took political and economic control of it in 1898. Mexican emigration to the United States was shaped by the result of the Mexican American war and the expansion of the U.S. territory as well as by the socioeconomic changes going on internally in Mexico. In the Cuban experience, the reasons to migrate were both economic (with the turn from capitalism to socialism and the economic blockade imposed to the Cuba by the United States) and political. Dominican emigration is also related to political and economic changes due to the penetration of U.S. capital in the island before and after of the 1965 invasion (Bray 1984).

In each of these cases economic and political elements shaped migration flows in particular ways. None of these flows were identical. Each was marked by different factors and each occurred at different time periods. Nevertheless when these national groups converged in the U.S., in the same residential and/or work spaces, sharing the same language, the formation of ethnic identities, and social, cultural, and

political alliances becomes possible.

The Occupational Structure of Spanish-speaking Groups In New York City

It has been argued by Sassed-Koob and others that the waves of new immigrants coming from several Latin American and Caribbean countries to the United States, and specifically to New York City, were functional to the economic changes occurring in the city. The new Latin American immigrant labor force during the three decades from 1960 to 1990 has been concentrated in very specific sectors of the economy. This concentration has allowed the large contingent of Spanish-speaking people from different national backgrounds to share the same work space.

Sassed-Koob (1985) explains that there are three general trends that are consistent with the economic base capable of absorbing an expanded immigrant work force. First, the highly specialized service sector has expanded significantly, particularly after 1976. This sector provides many low-wage jobs. Second, foreign investment in New York City increases significantly after 1976 and played a central role in the growth and recovery of certain sectors of the economy, including manufacturing and construction. Third, the departure of capital from the area affected labor-intensive

manufacturing unevenly. That is what Sassed-Koob calls a "down-graded manufacturing sector", one where sweatshops and industrial homework are common forms of production. This down-graded manufacturing sector has expanded in the city.

One consequence of these trends is increased socioeconomic polarization in the city's occupational structure, especially in the borough of Manhattan. This polarization consists in an expansion of high-income professional jobs, a decline of middle-income white collar jobs, a decline of well-paid-blue-collar working class jobs, and an increase of low-wage service and manufacturing jobs. This shift to a service economy has increased income polarization and created a much larger share of low-wage jobs. In 1980, almost 11 percent of all jobs in finance, insurance and real estate were low-wage and required few, if any, technical skills or language abilities. As Sassed-Koob points out, due to this economic recomposition of New York City, new immigrants are concentrated in the service industry, occupying the lower rung of these industries, and in the apparel industry, in what is called the "down-graded manufacturing sector". The following table shows that by 1980 employment in the apparel industry was 36 percent of new immigrants; in private household work, 37.6 percent; in eating and drinking establishments, 33 percent; in nursing facilities, 31.7 percent; and motels and hotels, 31 percent. It is clear that

the new immigrants to New York City are not dispersed throughout the workforce, but are concentrated occupationally, thus creating opportunities for interaction and shared experience.

TABLE 1-1

NEW YORK CITY INDUSTRIES AND THE NEW IMMIGRANT LABOR FORCE

INDUSTRY	NEW IMMIGRANTS EMPLOYMENT	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	% NEWIM. TO TOTAL
Private Household	11,520	30,620	37.6
Apparel	42,760	118,540	36.1
Eat and Drink Est.	36,820	110,640	33.3
Nursing Facilities	9,820	30,960	31.7
Motels and Hotels	7,860	25,420	30.9
Misc. Manufact.	9,520	32,080	29.7
Hospitals	41,660	185,820	22.4
Construction	15,120	77,960	19.4
Grocery Stores	8,920	47,040	19.0
Banking	21,540	125,320	17.2
Real Estate	11,540	71,660	16.1
Insurance	8,720		11.3
Printing/Publis.	7,760	74,280	10.4
Total	492,760	2,897,880	17.0

Source: Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia Pessar, 1991:170.

The Residential Structure of Spanish-speaking Groups in New York City

There is a pronounced tendency, both in the past and today, for immigrants to be concentrated geographically in certain areas. About 40 percent of all legal immigrants live in the ten largest cities of the United States. Up to 1975, New York was still the largest recipient of immigrants, followed by California. Together, these two states received almost half of all new immigrants. The 1980 census showed a total population for New York City of 7.7 million. Of these, 1.4 million were Spanish-speaking persons.

Census data for New York City show an increase from 1970 and 1980 in the number of tracts containing Latino residents, and in the number of tracts with over 50 percent Spanish-speaking residents. Comparing the 1970 and 1980 censuses, of Spanish-speaking persons, the most marked increase took place in Queens and Staten Island, as it is shown in the following Table.

TABLE 2-1

POPULATION OF SPANISH-SPEAKING ORIGIN OR DESCENT IN NEW YORK CITY BY BOROUGH, 1970-1980

Borough	1970	1980	Change	
			#	%
Bronx	407,322	396,730	-10,592	-2.6
Brooklyn	392,575	392,118	- 457	-0.1
Manhattan	312,722	335,803	23,081	7.4
Queens	153,691	262,422	108,731	70.7
Staten Island	12,320	18,884	6,564	53.3
Total N.Y.C.	1,278,630	1,405,957	127,323	10.0

Source: Sassed-Koob, 1985.

Within those boroughs the Spanish-speaking population is concentrated in specific neighborhoods. According to **New York Newsday**'s analysis of 1990 census data, New York remained a highly segregated city. The white exodus of recent decades continued from community districts in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Latino, Caribbean, and Asian immigrants took their place. The Black population continued to grow, as people from the English-speaking Caribbean "flocked to Flatbush and East

Flatbush" (**New York Newsday**, March 17, 1991). The Asian American population is centered in Queens, particularly Elmhurst and Flushing.

The largest influx of Latinos --mainly Dominicans and Colombians--was found in northern Queens, in Manhattan, Washington Heights, and in the Bronx's University Heights-Norwood area. The **Newsday** study showed that fifteen of the 25 census tracts showing the largest increase in Latino population citywide were found in the Queens neighborhoods of Sunnyside, Woodside, Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst, the area of my research. Manhattan's Community Board 12 in Washington Heights experienced the greatest numerical increase in Latino population, as the census counted almost 35,000 more than in 1980. But the Bronx remained the borough with the largest Latino community overall, with more than 500,000 counted in 1990.

The Spanish Language and Latino Identity

The reasons for migration, and migration processes, differ among Latino groups. But occupational and residential concentration are two elements helping in the constitution of a common Latino group identity. The central element uniting this diverse group, however, is a perceived shared cultural background, in contrast to the larger American culture, with the Spanish language at the center. The structural

underpinning as discussed in previous sections of this chapter is the political-economic position of most Latinos within American society, and their common relationship to the state apparatus and to American politics.

Language is a powerful force since, unlike other migrants in the United States, Latinos from different ethnic backgrounds share the same language. Based on this, Latinos also are interconnected by a powerful and complex system of Spanish-language mass media. As Totti (1987:539) points out, the Spanish-language media in the United States include sixty-five newspapers, sixty-five magazines, sixty-seven television stations, and 430 radio stations. Most major Latino television markets have at least two competing Spanish-language stations. The New York area is covered by Channel 47 and Channel 41.

Totti (1987) explains about the importance of Spanish and bilingualism among Latinos in the United States. Totti says:

> The maintenance of Spanish and the ideal of bilingualism and formal bilingual education are immutable tenets of identity among Latinos. In 1980 eight out of ten Hispanics interviewed in the New York metropolitan area favored formal bilingual education. A nationwide survey found, irrespective of national origin and length of residence in the U.S., that bilingualism was the personal goal of most. In ordinary everyday discourse, even among

fully bilingual or English-dominant Latinos, Spanish continues to preserve a special notion of self. Like Guarani among bilingual Paraguayans, it's the voice of the soul; uttering a few words of Spanish signifies a separation from the dominant culture and a symbolic unity. The force of Spanish among Latinos, in intraethnic and interethnic encounters, lies in its ability to compress many contradictory symbols in the search for power, reflecting exclusivity, nostalgia, and/or respect among speakers. (Totti 1987: 539-540).

Studies on Latin American Immigrants in New York City and the Situation of Queens

In spite of the shared language, and the occupational and residential concentration of Spanish-speaking groups of different national backgrounds, the major ethnographic studies on Latin American immigrants in New York City have focused only on one single national group: Castro (1982) and Chaney (1976) on Colombians; George (1984), Hendricks (1974), and Pessar (1982) on Dominicans. Moreover, few studies analyze the processes of local community formation in distinction to immigrant adaptation at the household or individual level.

It is my assumption that the local setting is essential

to understand ethnic and political organization and the emergence of ethnic identity. Pessar's study of Dominicans does not even identify where in New York City her informants reside. George (1984), on the other hand, with a focus on Washington Heights, shows the importance of the local political structure and ethnic mix for Dominicans resident there. The earlier research of Chaney (1976) and Hendricks (1974) in Jackson Heights and Corona did take the local context into account, but it screened out the non-Colombian (for Chaney) or non-Dominican (for Hendricks) Latin American residents in these multi-nationality areas. In Queens, the reality of many nationalities living in the same neighborhood requires a focus beyond single groups. Such a setting is the basis of this study in a multi-nationality Latino community in Corona, Queens.

I chose Corona, among other reasons, because that northern Queens Neighborhood has one of the strongest Latin American concentrations in New York City. The Latin American population of **Corona** was 71.1 percent in 1990. As indicated earlier, these residents are people from each of the countries of Central and South America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba).

Residential concentration of people sharing the same language, Spanish-, yet differentiated by national origins,

migratory experiences, cultures, and skin color is the subject of this study. We will see how they found ways to develop common activities. Block cleaning campaigns, schools for ethnic folk dancing, religious gathering, provision of social services, a permanent presence on local community boards, coalitions to support political candidates, and voter registration campaigns are among the activities that occur in Corona, all carried out by contingents of differenting Spanish-speaking nationality groups.

This development, which reflects and builds a pan-Latino identity, emerges more through the activities of women than that of men. It emerges through solutions of daily life problems for working class women. It also emerges through social service politics linking women of different classes. And it emerges in the effort of middle class Queens Latin American to build pan-Latino cultural organizations, and to achieve Latino political power in the formal political arena.

CHAPTER 5

THE LEADERSHIP OF LATIN AMERICAN FEMALE IMMIGRANTS

This study analyzes the social construction of Latino ethnicity in the everyday activities and leadership roles of Latin American female immigrants in Corona, Queens, in New York City. As Weber (1968) would define it, it is in everyday life activities "rooted in the need to meet ongoing, routine demands" that the leadership of Latin American female immigrants is created (1112). In Weber's sense, charisma or leadership is an individual characteristic and "the mission and the power of its bearer is qualitatively delimited from within, not by an external order. Normally the mission is directed to a local, ethnic, social, political, vocational or some other group, and this means that it also finds its limits at the edge of these groups" (Weber 1968:1113).

Latin American female leadership in the neighborhood of Corona emerged in part from the need to secure for Latino residents the services that the broad society failed to provide. In addition, it is also clear that some female leaders in Queens aimed at creating a Latino political voice in the broader society. Both activities were centered and organized around ethnicity. In this sense, these activities could be said to be "qualitatively delimited from within", and more importantly found their "limits at the edge" of the

Latino group. However, the impact that these activities have had on the broader society, involving other ethnic groups and formal political institutions, has established ties with the external order, and in some cases, the external order has been critical in outlining the strategies of Latina leaders. Also the "limits" of their activities grew wider in the sense that their involvement with the external order has created opportunities that shape the nature of the emerging Latino ethnic group. As an example, the cultural activities developed by the Ollantay Center for the Arts[1] were oriented at its formation in 1977 to disseminate Latin American culture through theater, painting exhibitions, and writer's presentations. Through the years, Ollantay reached further and further into the external order, and expanded its horizons by becoming involved in activities beyond the Latin American community, but which helped that community to achieve a better position in Queens and New York City's political arena.

Weber also states that political "charisma rejects as undignified all methodical rational acquisition, in fact, all rational economic conduct... In its pure form charisma is never a source of private income; it is neither utilized for the exchange of services nor is it exercised for pay, and it

---

[1]Ollantay is a well-known cultural organization in Queens. In Chapter 7 I detail the activities of this organization and its role in the creation of pan-Latin American identity, and the role of its women leaders.

does not know orderly taxation to meet the material demands of its mission, rather if it has a peaceful purpose, it receives the requisite means through sponsors or through honorific gifts, dues and other voluntary contributions of its own" (1968: 1113).

The leadership of Corona Women is voluntary and in most cases they do not receive any economic reward. In some instances, women that started as community leaders were appointed to hold official positions in formal political bodies. Such is the case of several well-known leaders who during the years of my research occupied paid positions at Queens Borough Hall, becoming "appointed leaders of the bureaucratic order."

While gender escaped Weber's analysis of charisma and leadership, his general statement still is important in spotlighting some aspects of female leadership by Latinas in Corona and Queens. Other aspects of that leadership are better addressed by women scholars who have studied women and politics. Politics is an important element defining the leadership role of Latinas in Corona. Despite the fact that many of the activities of these women do not fit a traditional definition of politics, their activities are uniting an ethnically diverse Latin American community and the consequences of their activism have reached into the wider

society.

The work of Tilly and Gurin (1990) and Bookman and Morgen (1988) are recent attempts to explain women in politics outside the tradition that sees politics as limited by state/power relations. Their work has tried to broaden and expand the definition of politics and power in order to fully understand women in politics.

Gurin and Tilly defined two forms of women's political participation. First, they pointed to the form usually called "politics", which includes pressure group politics, electoral politics, and leader-initiated action change in the distribution of power and resources. Second, they pointed to what they called the "protopolitical", which includes direct collective appeals to authorities. The base of this form of "politics" is voluntary organization, and the base of protopolitical activity is solidarity, and "everyday life community."

Other women's activities that are also based on solidarity and everyday life community do not necessarily challenge authorities in the traditional sense. For instance, several of the activities of Latina women in Corona do not challenge authorities directly but those activities have created unity and identity that eventually would support appeals or challenges. Again, that authority is not only an

authority which emanates from state/power relations, but includes challenges to the authority exercised by husbands, fathers, brothers, or boyfriends.

Morgen's definition of politics extends to any "attempt to change social and economic institutions that embody the basic power relations in our society" (1987:4). This defines a continuum of action aimed at consolidating or maintaining grassroots solidarity, or at changing the nature and distribution of power in many particular cultural contexts. Power, in this scheme is seen as "a social relationship between groups that determines access to, use of, and control over the basic material and ideological resources in society" (Bookman and Morgen 1987:12). From this perspective, Bookman and Morgen stated that the activities of women aimed at challenging unequal power relations within any set of relations of the social order is political. As Foucalt would say, both private and public domains are sources of power, and inequalities are exercised within both.

As Bookman and Morgen (1988) have pointed out, much has been said about female political participation and leadership. Female political participation and leadership have been studied within the traditional ways of doing politics-State-public domain-political parties, union activism, electoral politics, political movements (Baxter and Lansing 1980; Davis

1981; Eisenstein 1983; Evans 1978; Flammang 1984; Freeman 1975; Githens and Prestage 1977; Giddings 1984; Janiewsky 1985; Klein 1984; Kenneally 1978; Mandel 1981). Few studies deal with non-traditional ways of doing politics (Bookman and Morgen 1988; Cockburn 1977; Haywoode 1994; Kaplan 1982; Sacks 1988; Susser 1986).

To understand female leadership in Corona it is necessary to go beyond the conventional definition of politics. Kaplan's definition of "female consciousness" opens the scope of studying female political participation and leadership. Kaplan argues that "female consciousness" accepts the gender system of a society; indeed, such consciousness emerges from the division of labor by sex, which assigns women the responsibility of preserving life. As part of being female, women learn to nurture, a task with social as well as psychological effects. Women of the popular classes perform work associated with obligations to preserve life, such as jobs range from shopping for necessities to securing fuel and to guarding their neighborhoods, children, and mates against danger.

By accepting these tasks, women with "female consciousness" demand the rights that these obligations entail. The collective drive to secure those rights that results from the sexual division of labor sometimes has

revolutionary consequences insofar as it politicizes the networks of everyday life, as Kaplan points out. Women organize and mobilize their communities to pursue the objectives and tasks stated above. For instance, Kaplan explains how women of Barcelona united their entire community to struggle for basic services from 1910 to 1918. Many of the activities I researched do fit Kaplan's definition of "female consciousness".

Thus the activities and leadership of Latin American women in Corona are multiply political. First of all, the activities of Latin American grass-root women aimed at providing resources to the community politicize their communities. The example of a block association is illustrative. While organizing clean-up campaigns, these women become acquaintanted with community boards, sanitation officials, and police precincts, and begin to understand the social and political organization of institutions in their city. Through their interaction with these institutions and officials, women recognize the importance of voting to have a voice in decision making bodies that will affect the development of their communities. And it is also through this political interaction that Latin American women learn about disadvantaged position of Latinos in the wider social order.

The activities of middle-class women are also political.

The formation of cultural institutions has served to create a pan-Latino voice not only within the Latino community but at countrywide citywide levels. The activities of women directing social services institutions have also created an awareness of the situation of Latinos, leading to complaints to Immigration and Naturalization Service, to voter registration campaigns, to the organization of classes to prepare for United States citizenship. The political activism of these and other leaders in the community of Corona made possible a Latino district that elected Nydia Velasquez to Congress (its first Puerto Rican female member) during the election of 1992.

Latin American female immigrants of Corona interact in an ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood. They share their blocks and apartments buildings with indians, Greeks, Philippinos, Koreans, but also with people of different Latin American nations. As we shall see, the construction of a pan-Latino identity begins through everyday life activities of Spanish-speaking women in the neighborhood and in the workplace.

PART ONE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 2 argued that the problem of Latin American ethnicity had to begin with the acknowledgement of certain key complexities. The first section of this chapter looked at these complexities by analyzing the history of migration of the various Latin American immigration groups, namely Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Colombians.

Chapter 3 discussed the problem of Latin American ethnic identity from both classical and more recent theoretical approaches to ethnicity. Here I have argued that the creation of a Latino ethnic identity is related to a shared experience of inequality in areas such as education and employment. A pan-Latino ethnic consciousness or identification is created based on two distinct elements that Padilla (1987) defined. One is Latino ethnic identity that symbolizes basic identification as a language based population, and the other is ethnic mobilization that represents action resulting from the interaction among two or more Spanish-speaking groups.

Chapter 4 argued that there are key elements shaping that pan-Latino identification. I argued that when Latin American national groups converged in the United States, in the same residential and/or work spaces, sharing the same language, the formation of ethnic identities, and social, and cultural, and political alliances become possible.

In this vein, the local setting is essential to understand ethnic and political organization and the emergence of ethnic identity. In Corona, Queens the reality of many nationalities living in the same neighborhood has required a focus beyond single groups. As it was stated above, residential concentration of people sharing the same language, Spanish, yet differentiated by national origins, migratory experiences, cultures, and skin color is the subject of this study. In the following chapters we will see how they found ways to develop common activities.

Chapter 5 argued that the development of a pan-Latino identification have emerged more through the activities of women than that of men. Latin American females in Corona have build a "female ethnic consciousness" that have enabled them to be more aware of the problems that the community faces than Latin American men. In this view women are more active in finding solutions of daily life problems for working class women; providing social services to the community; linking women of different social classes through social and cultural politics.

PART II

CHAPTER 6

A SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF CORONA

INTRODUCTION

It is winter in Corona. The snow covers the neighborhood. It is 7:00 a.m., Monday. At Junction Boulevard, dozens of men and women rush to the IRT train station. Colombians, Dominicans, Indians, Black Americans, Ecuadorians, Chinese, Salvadorians, Sikhs, Koreans, Argentineans, Greeks, and Cubans are waiting for the number 7 train to arrive on the west-bound track, going to Manhattan. At the other side of the platform, the train stops. Nobody exits. The train continues toward Flushing,
empty. Now the Manhattan-bound arrives and stops. Amazingly, the platform empties. In just one second, the platform is full again, with this great ethnic mixture that is Corona.

It is 8:00 a.m. Two Indian women take their children to school. They walk along Roosevelt Avenue going east. At 98th Street they meet three Colombian women who are also taking their children to Public School 19, located at 99th Street and 41st Avenue. They do not greet.

Four Spanish-speaking women are leaving the building at 41st Avenue and 97th Street. They have to rush to be on time at the sweatshop. On their way they meet fellow

workers from Colombia, Cuba, and Korea. They stop at Rafael's grocery store to buy hot coffee. Rafael, a Dominican, opened up his business over two hours ago.

It is 10:00 a.m. There are fewer people around the train station now. The Dominican woman who owns a beauty parlor at Roosevelt Avenue near the 103rd Street IRT station meets the Colombian woman who owns the clothing store next to her. They greet each other and comment on how the snowfall spoiled the weekend. The Colombian woman whispers in the Dominican woman's ear that she has sold her business to another Dominican woman.

It is noon and the neighborhood is quiet. Only a few women pull their shopping carts out of the Key Food supermarket on National Street facing Corona Plaza. The CCQ office that helps immigrants with their INS papers across from the supermarket is crowded. Inside are people from all over the world. Most of the people who work there speak Spanish, and may also speak English, but not Greek, or Chinese, or Hindi. It is another hard day for the women who staff CCQ.

At the post office, around the corner, there are more people speaking Spanish standing on the waiting line.

Store owners complain there are few customers. The owners realize that nobody shops on Mondays.

It is 3:00 p.m. Latin American, Indians, and a few Chinese women wait for their children to leave school. They form separate groups, both outside and inside the PS 19 school yard. They are talking about a soap opera; about the cousin who is coming from Colombia and needs a room; about the sales at the Junction Boulevard stores; about the good babysitter taking care of a younger daughter; about their prospective turns in "la sociedad," the rotating credit association.

On the corner of 45th Avenue and 99th Street there are two grocery stores, one on each corner, both owned by Dominicans. Across the street is a Laundromat, and next to it there is a tire repair shop. Several groups of school children run in different directions. One runs to one of the grocery stores. Others run to their mothers. A Salvadorian woman waves to her child from the Laundromat. One group of Dominican women walks in front of another group of women from India, each group taking their children home, and planning what to cook for supper.

It is 6:00 p.m. The same crowd of people who rushed to take the train to work this morning now walk back without any rush. It is 7:00 p.m. and the streets look deserted.

It is summer in Corona. The heat covers the neighborhood. It is 1:00 p.m., Saturday. Few people took the

number 7 train this morning. Rafael's grocery store opened two hours later than usual. It is Saturday, and Corona residents start the day late.

A short while later it seems that half Corona has arrived at Junction Boulevard. The stores are full. It is necessary to wait in line to get a table in a restaurant. A dozen people wait in a doctor's office. Two Spanish-speaking women argue with a African man who is selling leather belts on the sidewalk.

At 41st Avenue near 99th Street, a brand-new car was abandoned two days ago. Today just the car's skeleton remains.

A woman is hurt by a piece of glass that fell from the train tracks while walking along Roosevelt Avenue. This happened at 3:00 p.m., and at 4:30 p.m. she is still laying down on the sidewalk waiting for an ambulance to arrive.

It is 5:00 p.m. and drug pushers start their business at
104th Street and Roosevelt Avenue.

The weekend passes with shopping at the streets along Roosevelt Avenue, and barbecuing and playing soccer in Flushing Meadows-Corona park.

Monday arrives with the same oppressive heat. I see two women with their kids going to a sweatshop to work. My

Dominican landlady's granddaughter learned to eat with chopsticks in a Korean-owned sweatshop.

Corona lies in the northwest quadrant of Queens, New York City, just west of Flushing Creek, and south of Flushing Bay. Corona today is a multi-ethnic neighborhood and through its long history it has been an arrival point for immigrants. At present, Corona's residents include immigrants from the Caribbean, Central and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe; there is also a long established population of white Americans of Italian origin.

Corona's local economy includes both a service and a manufacturing sector. The history of Corona begins with the development of a farming economy oriented to Manhattan. The manufacturing component emerged in the 19th century and expanded during the 1890s, with the emergence along Corona Avenue of Jewish-owned sweatshops.

Politically, Corona Plaza fits into the structure of New York City as part of Community Boards 3 and 4. The political status (non-U.S. citizens) of many of the Corona immigrant population precludes electoral political participation. As we shall see, however, their churches, civic and advocacy organizations, and grass-root networks are their tools of political activism.

CORONA PAST AND PRESENT

Corona's first immigrant residents were farmers arriving in the 17th century.

> Corona presented to the eye a scene of thick forest land on the upland along Junction Boulevard yielding to gently rolling open meadow as one moved east, until at a point a little beyond 114th Street the land subsided into a vast swampland long Flushing Creek, covered with waving grass and teeming bird life. The creek itself was in colonial days a broad body of water and was fed by several tributary streams like Horse Brook that meandered through a wide area and drained the uplands to the West and South. Flushing Creek received enough water from its tributaries and the springs in the meadows to keep its waters fresh and sweet and this, along with the abundant pasturage on its banks, was a powerful attraction to the first Europeans who viewed it. (Seyfried 1988: 1).

The earliest settler, Seyfried points out, was Robert Coe who was born in Suffolk County, England, in 1596. In 1634 he came to America, and settled in Hempstead. In 1652 he moved to Newtown, the larger township division that includes present-day Corona. In 1684 Abraham Joris Brinkerkoff of Holland bought 400 acres on the Flushing Meadows. Other British settlers came to the area in the 18th century.

Rural life continued long into the 19th century. The census of 1875 listed 801 persons in Corona. In that period, Seyfried suggests, the Anglo-Saxon element was still strong. There was also an important, and more recent, Irish and German population. At the turn of the century, other ethnic groups appeared--Italians, Jews, and French (Seyfried 1988:9).

From this ethnic variety, by the early 1900s Italians became the predominant group in Corona. Italian immigrants started to move into Corona in the 1890s, and seemed to have settled mostly along Corona Avenue and its side streets. The Italians were the majority among new arrivals in Corona after the late 1800s, although the Jewish presence was also important in the neighborhood. The first half of the 20th century is the period of Italian predominance in Corona. By the 1960s a new wave of immigrants began to move into the area. Latin Americans of diverse national origins were the largest group that now began to settle in this then mainly white, Italian neighborhood.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN CORONA 1950-1990

Corona can be divided into three major neighborhoods, namely North Corona, Corona Plaza, and Corona Heights. As can be seen in Map 1 North Corona encompasses the space between Northern Boulevard, Junction Boulevard, 37th Avenue, and Flushing Bay. Corona Heights boundaries are 45th Avenue on the north, the Long Island Expressway to the south, and Junction Boulevard and Flushing-Meadow-Corona Park to the west and east respectively. Corona Plaza, the heart of this research, is located between North Corona and Corona Heights. Its boundaries are 37th Avenue to the north, 45th Avenue to the south, Junction Boulevard to the west and Shea Stadium to the east.

Demographic changes in the three Corona neighborhoods has been dramatic during the last forty years. While in 1950 the population census did not count any Latin American people in Corona, in 1960, the census counted 1007 Puerto Ricans in the area. Beginning in 1970 the Population Census started to count people of Spanish-speaking origins or "Hispanics" under the same label. The Latin American population grew from 15,515 in 1970 to 40,821 in 1990. The white population decreased by the same measure that the Latin American population grew. The African American population also increased significantly during the period. The Asian

population began to move into the area during the 1960s, reaching the figure of 1,763 people of Asian origin in 1970, and increased to 7,734 by 1990 (See Table 1-3).

TABLE 1-3

CORONA POPULATION 1950-1990

	1950	1957	1960	1970	1980	1990
White	44,390	32,912	31,742	33,299	16,932	10,060
Black	5,299	8,758	9,815	12,236	18,370	17,916
L. A.	N.A.	N.A.	1,007	15,515	27,345	40,821
Asian	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1,763	3,596	7,734

Source: Prepared by Roger Sanjek, Hiang-shui Chen and Milagros Ricourt from Census Population data.

Taking a closer look at North Corona, Corona Heights, and Corona Plaza, it is evident that even though the Latin American presence is important in all three neighborhoods, it is Corona Plaza which has had the largest Latin American presence. From 1960 to 1970 the Latin American population in Corona Plaza exploded from 562 people to 8,392 people. In 1980 the Spanish-speaking population almost doubled in size (to 15,465), and by 1990 there were 19,549 people of Latin

American origin residing in Corona Plaza. The white population decreased from 19,653 in 1950 to 2,114 in 1990. The African American population also increased until 1980 when it started to decrease. The fastest growing group since 1970 has been the Asians. Asian figures grew from 318 in 1970 to 2,606 in 1990. (See Table 1-4).

TABLE 1-4

CORONA PLAZA POPULATION 1950-1990

	1950	1957	1960	1970	1980	1990
White	19,653	16,463	15,852	7,863	4,128	2,114
Black	285	1,499	2,173	3,384	2,752	2,143
L.A.	N.A.	N.A.	562	8,392	15,465	19,549
Asian	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	318	663	2,606

Source: Prepared by Roger Sanjek, Hiang-shui Chen and Milagros Ricourt from Census Population data.

By 1970, North Corona was a predominantly African-American community. Between 1970 and 1990, however, the African-American population declined as dramatically as it had risen between 1950 and 1970, while the Latin American population soared from 28 in 1960, to 1,317 in 1970, to 4,181 in 1990, practically equal in size to the African-American

population (See Table 1-5).

TABLE 1-5

NORTH CORONA POPULATION 1950-1990

	1950	1957	1960	1970	1980	1990
White	4,607	1,876	1,362	175	222	246
Black	4,426	6,955	7,330	7,425	6,357	4,661
L.A.	N.A.	N.A.	28	1,317	1,757	4,181
Asian	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	64	166	167

Source: Prepared by Roger Sanjek, Hiang-shui Chen and Milagros Ricourt from Census Population data.

Corona Heights, on the other hand, was predominantly white through 1980. The white population saw a significant decline between 1950 and 1957 and an even sharper decline between 1970 and 1990 so that the neighborhood is no longer predominantly white. During the last four decades the white population has gone from 18,247 in 1950 to 7,065 in 1990, ceding place to 14,832 Latin Americans, 4,741 Asians, and 2,406 African-Americans (See Table 1-6).

TABLE 1-6

CORONA HEIGHTS POPULATION 1950-1990

	1950	1957	1960	1970	1980	1990
White	18,247	14,573	14,525	17,238	10,751	7,065
Black	448	304	312	438	2,150	2,406
L.A.	N.A.	N.A.	417	4,202	8,666	14,832
Asian	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	496	2,460	4,741

Source: Prepared by Roger Sanjek, Hiang-shui Chen and Milagros Ricourt from Census Population data.

In spite of these demographic changes, Corona has specific areas that still preserve an Italian flavor. A few Italian bakeries still operate in Corona Plaza. St. Leo's Roman Catholic Church in Corona Heights has an Italian mass, along with English and Spanish ones.

In Corona Heights, William Moore Park, also known as "Spaghetti Park," is surrounded by two Italian restaurants, the Lemon Ice King, a pork store, two salumerias, a pastry shop, and a pizzeria. But behind these Italian stores, the Latin American residential presence dominates numerically, and grows more and more everyday as the Italian numbers decline.

The owner of Vito's Deli, an Italian woman in her 50s

commented that the pizzeria across the street was not a pizzeria anymore. "Somebody who speaks Spanish bought the place." The owner of Vito's Deli herself now includes rice and beans on her menu. While I was there, on a Wednesday at 1:00 p.m., several women who were Spanish-speakers came into the place for lunch. They work in the sweatshop around the corner. The waitress, a Puerto Rican, suggested the rice and beans she cooked that morning.

THE ECONOMY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Corona today is not merely the images that a history of Corona reflects, or a set of recent changes in demography. Corona is also the cultural set of sights, sounds, and aromas which vary according to the creativity of the diverse national groups that are its contemporary inhabitants. In Corona each ethnic group, for example, has erected store signs which reflect places or meanings left behind in their countries of origin. Each individual will associate with these signs a different cultural framework depending on their national and cultural background.

Many of the store names in the neighborhood have a meaning reflecting historical accounts, place-names, saints or virgins of their countries of origin. Dominican stores are typical for their names, "La Altagracia" (The Dominican virgin); "El Cibaeno" (person from "El Cibao", the north-

central region of the Dominican Republic). Argentinean and Uruguayan bakeries and restaurants also exhibit names related to their country, like a bakery name "Rio de la Plata".

In research conducted by the New Immigrants and Old Americans Project during 1986, ten people of different nationalities, and speaking Spanish, Korean, Cantonese, Taiwanese, and Mandarin, collected data on 438 businesses in the south half of Corona Plaza and in Corona Heights. After distributing a sheet to merchants that explained the survey, cosponsored by the Corona Community Development Corporation, the survey staff gathered data on the following: owner nationality; language spoken; number of employees; age of business; and type of business.

In Corona, 43 nationalities were present in addition to American. They included people from Central and South America and the Caribbean. They also included people from several Asian countries, mostly from China, Korea, and India. Italian and Greek were also present as well as white Americans of other European background (See Table 1-7).

TABLE 1-7

CORONA'S BUSINESS BY NATIONALITY

Owner	Percent
American	11.2
Italian	21.7
Latin American	36.1
Asian	11.0
Greek	3.0
No Answer	17.0

More than one third of Corona's business were owned by Latin American. Of these, Dominicans owned 64, Colombians 28, Cubans 10, Ecuadorian 16, and 43 belonged to other Latin Americans. Whites were one-seventh of the population, but owned one-third of the businesses, while Afro-Americans, the second largest population in Corona overall, were not represented at all among the businesses surveyed.

The types of business in Corona are very diverse, but there are a few categories which are numerically significant. 1. There are 45 automobile-related business (10.5 percent

of the total businesses found in Corona), including gas stations, auto insurance, parking lot, auto parts, auto repair, and auto tires. Latin American own 18 of these businesses.

2. There are 33 grocery stores in Corona, which make up 7.5 percent of the total businesses. The majority, (30) are Latin American owned.

3. There are 10 real estate firms in Corona, some 2.3 percent of the local business. Latin American own (5) of these.

4. There are 27 restaurants in Corona, 4.6 percent of the total businesses. Most of these are ethnically-specialized, and are an important symbolic aspect of the community's multi-ethnic composition. Ten of these businesses are owned by Latin Americans.

5. The survey counted 39 sweatshops in Corona.

A large number of all these businesses (42.8 percent) have been recently established within the past five years. This is especially true for those businesses owned by new immigrants. American and Italian businesses are older than those of the other ethnic groups. More than half (51 percent) of American business are over 10 years old. Chinese and Korean businesses are just 1 to 5 years old. The majority of the Latin American businesses are also young,

most established within the last ten years, or since 1977.

When my participant observation began early in 1987, I revisited several Corona businesses owned by Latin American women. These were all stores I had contacted during the summer of 1986 while conducting the business survey. The first one I visited was Lucy's clothing store, at the corner of 43rd Avenue and National Street. During the summer, this store was closed, and reopened in September when I contacted the owner and interviewed her. She was a Colombian woman, age 35, married, with two daughters. I had returned to see Lucy in December 1986, but I found she had sold the store to a Dominican woman. When I arrived in February 1987 to set an interview date with the store's new owner, there was still another store in the same location (a plastics shop).

Pura's clothing store was across the street from Lucy's. Pura is a Dominican, in her 50s, a widow, and the mother of two teenage girls. I met her during the 1986 survey. By 1987, I stopped by her store now and then and we talked. Pura's store had been closed for several weeks. I met her on the subway, and I asked about the store. She said that she had a lot of problems both with her daughters and economically, but she was not going to close the store. I said I would stop by. She said not to come Mondays or

Tuesday because she did not open the store those days because there are no customers. A while after our meeting in the subway, I planned to visit her store. But first I stopped by Bienvenida's Bridal and florist store at 102nd and National Streets. Bienvenida is a Dominican in her 40s, married, with three children. At Bienvenida's I found the store open, but with a new owner, a Colombian man. I asked him why Bienvenida sold the store if the business was successful. He said she was tired, and that she was now sewing bridal gowns at home.

Near Bienvenida's had been another clothing store, one that belonged to a Puerto Rican woman. Now, in the same place, I found a sportswear shop owned by a Dominican man who refused to give me any information about the whereabouts of the former store owner.

I finally went to Pura's. I greeted her and asked: "Pura, what is going on around here that people are selling their stores?" She smiled and said she was almost ready to sell too. "The problem", Pura said, "is people do not shop anymore. People's salaries go to the landlord's pocket. Rent in business location is raised every year." She said she has not bought any new merchandise in months because she does not have capital to invest. She showed me around, explaining that her merchandise was old and did

not attract customers. She said she would like to obtain a loan to buy new merchandise, and to improve her business.

Many stores had to close during the year of my research due basically to rising commercial rents. I argue that women entrepreneurs are more at risk due to two reasons. First, women traditionally are not seen as entrepreneurs and this affects their credibility in a male dominated economic world. And second, besides the pressure of raising capital for a business, women have to raise children and take care of husbands and do other household tasks, creating a major obstacle in the development of their extra-household activity.

Nearly 60 percent of the businesses in Corona have fewer than five employees. Only 2 percent have more than 30 employees. The local economy is not a large source of employment beyond that of the many small-scale entrepreneurs. The only firms that offer a large source of jobs are garment shops. The majority of Corona people travel to Manhattan or other parts of Queens to work.

GARMENT SHOPS IN CORONA'S ECONOMY

It was in the mid-19th century when the first factories were established in the area, after the opening of the LIRR Northshore line in the 1850s. The earliest of these was the china and porcelain works of William Broch. Broch and his family emigrated from Prussia in 1850. He and his sons worked first in porcelain manufacturing. About 1866 they went into business for themselves, opening their own firm in Corona.

In 1879 the Long Island Straw Works was manufacturing various types of women's straw hats. They produced 800 to 1000 hats per day, and employed about 75 men and women. By the 1880s, manufacturing was expanding in Corona. William H. Broch opened a machine shop in 1884. In 1889, the Corona Tile Manufacturing Company was opened.

The history of what would be Corona's most lasting type of business began in 1891. As Seyfried (38-39) records, in January that year, the Cloakmakers' Union of New York struck for an increase in wages, and warfare broke out between the large manufacturers and the small contractors who in turn hired immigrants to sew caps and cloaks. A sweatshop operator named A. Epstein disapproved of the union's strike call. He moved to Corona in order to evade the strike, and in a house on 109th Street in Corona Heights, he started making cloaks and caps with eight of his former employees.

By the 1890s there were several of these garment shops operating in Corona Heights. Seyfried (39) mentions a silk factory operating in Corona Heights about 1895. The owner, Abraham Jacobs, employed 20 by the beginning of the new century. Jewish sweatshop owners were watched very closely by public authorities because they were employing underage Italian and Jewish school girls. Jews owned at least a dozen shirtwaist factories on Corona Avenue and nearby side streets. The factories provided employment to the Italian and Jewish girls in the neighborhood who began to work, generally, at age 14.

Through the years Corona has continued as a center of garment shop operation and employment. Illegal sweatshops today even operate in basements, in rooms in apartment buildings, in locations that used to be bars, and often in places without windows or proper light. A description by Michael Freitag (New York Times, 1987) describes the condition of many sewingshops in Corona today.

> From outside, the building in Corona, Queens, looked as if it had been abandoned years ago. A layer of grime coated the windows and a rusting metal gate stretched across the storefront (...) Inside a small factory buzzed with activity. Along cluttered aisles, dozens of women hovered over sewing machines, chatting in Spanish as they

furiously assembled dresses that would be later sold for $80 a piece. Near the entrance, a punch clock read 9 A.M. even though it was only 8:10.

Unlike A. Epstein who first moved to Corona to run away from union pressures, modern manufacturers have their offices in Manhattan. It is their contractors (primarily Chinese, Korean, and Dominican) who set up their shops in working class neighborhoods, with lower rent and a large immigrant population. Contractors usually employ women from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America (Waldinger 1986). More than 65 percent of the contractors, the General Accounting Office points out, do not comply with minimum requirements in terms of safety, minimum wage, child labor, and unemployment compensation (New York News June 27, 1989).

Sweatshops are small factories that, under a contract, sew and press apparel for a manufacturer that owns, designs, cuts, and ships the material. These shops usually assemble women's and children's apparel--blouses, skirts, and dresses that must be produced quickly but skillfully to keep up with changing fashions (Freitag 1987).

In a 1981 survey, Roger Waldinger counted 89 garment shops in 13 Corona census tracts representing all North Corona, Corona Plaza, and part of Corona Heights (personal communication from Roger Waldinger to Roger Sanjek). The 39

shops we counted in the 1986 business survey, covered only part of these 13 tracts, but indicate little change over these years.

In summary Corona's local economy has two dimensions.

First, a look at Corona's businesses reveal a service economy. Grocery stores, real estate offices, auto-repairs shops, restaurants, and clothing stores are the principal businesses in the neighborhood. These are typical services used by members of the residential community. These businesses do not provide a large number of jobs, and they draw upon productive activity largely located elsewhere. Corona reflects the shift from goods production to service provision that has occurred in recent decades at a wider New York city level. As many have noted (Sassen 1983, Tabb 1982, Waldinger 1986), manufacturing jobs have declined considerably, while employment in the service sector has increased.

But paradoxically, a study of Corona's economy reveals the continuity of certain forms of manufacturing. Once again, this local pattern is explained by the shift from goods to services in New York City. As Sassen-Koob (1983) argues, it is due to the recomposition of the economic structure in advanced capitalist locations. With a reduction of jobs

in the upper segments of the manufacturing sector comes a parallel increase in the low-wage work force.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 offered a description of the neighborhood of Corona. It took first a look at Corona's population. Corona's residents include immigrants from the Caribbean, Central and South American, Asia, Africa, and Europe. There is also a long established population of White Americans of Italian origin. Analysis of census data showed that demographic changes in Corona has been dramatic during the last forty years. In terms of the Latin American population, it grew from 15,515 in 1970 to 40,821 in 1990.

Chapter 3 also argued that Corona's local economy includes both a service and a manufacturing sector providing a significant number of jobs to Corona's residents. The service sector includes automobile related businesses, grocery stores, real estate firms, and restaurants. More than one third of Corona's business were owned by Latin Americans. The manufacturing sector has been historically formed by sweatshops and through the year Corona has continued as a center of garment shop operation and employment.

Corona's economy reveals both the emergence of a service

sector and the continuation of certain forms of manufacturing.

CHAPTER 7

GRASSROOTS WOMEN: INTERACTION IN DAILY LIFE

Corona Latin American female residents have managed to develop informal alternative community networks to meet many of their most basic needs. Facing problems of housing, work, income and childcare, women take into their own hands the search for solutions by building upon their most immediate community contacts -- other Latinas. The creation of these networks is at the root of creation of a Latin American community in Corona. In spite of different cultural and political backgrounds, residents of many different Latin American nationalities interact and learn to cooperate across the lines of ethnic identity in many of their basic daily activities.

A pan-Latin American identity is thus shaped in this neighborhood where residential and job concentration makes for a diverse Latin American immigrant population. Most importantly and unlike Asian immigrants, the language shared by Latin Americans--Spanish--is essential to shaping the pan-Latin American networks that emerge at the grass-root level. A similar process occurs among Latin American male immigrants, particularly in workplace. The activities of women in the development of these informal alternative community networks are wider than workplace concerns and although they stem from

household and family concerns, these need resources and services at the community level. Among the most crucial of these are:

1. *Finding a place to live when immigrants first arrive in the U.S.*
2. Finding a first job
3. Enhancing immigrant income
4. Locating childcare

In this chapter I first profile the 33 women who provided data on the process and creation of informal community networks in Corona. I next turn to the role of two Corona women in local block associations, organizations which link Latin American immigrants to other Corona residents, particularly to the neighborhood's established white American population. In conclusion, I then analyze how these activities are related to the development of a Latin American community in Corona, and to the development of a pan-Latin American identity.

PROFILE OF GRASS-ROOTS WOMEN INTERVIEWEES

The 33 grass-roots women whom I interviewed were encountered in many different settings during the course of my fieldwork. These included the First United Methodist Church of Corona, the Elmhurst Hospital Prenatal clinic, and my local neighborhood Laundromat and supermarket. Other women

informants included my 1987-1988 roommates, the mother of a fellow research team member, and several women contacted through Zunilda, a woman whose daughter I was helping with school work.

In terms of nationality, this sample consisted of women from the Dominican Republic (9), Puerto Rico (7), Colombia (7), Ecuador (6), Uruguay (1), Peru (1), Cuba (1), and one Dominican born in the United States. In terms of age, the majority were over 40 years old, and the rest between 20 and 40. As data also show, 8 lived in Corona Plaza, 7 in Corona Heights, 6 in North Corona, and 2 elsewhere in northwest Queens.

Most of these women were permanent residents of the United States. Only one was undocumented, and three others were citizens of the United States. As the following table shows, their work experience is varied, and to some degree it corresponds to the length of time they have been living in the United States.

TABLE 1-8

FIRST JOB AND 1986-88 ACTUAL OCCUPATION

	First Job	1986-88 Job
1.Factory	29	11
2.Factory combined with informal sector		3
3. Informal Sector	1	6
4. White Collar Job	3	3
5. Retired		3
6. Retired Combined with informal Sector		3
7. Unemployed		3
8. Public Assistance		1

The women in better-paying positions are usually those who have been living longest in the United States. Those in the best economic position, including three of my informants with white collar jobs, have lived in the United States for more than twenty years, or were born here. Several now-retired homeowners used to be garment workers when they arrived during the 1960s and 1970s. Some of these long-established women were still employed, but only seasonally.

Belisa, for example, is a Dominican woman who migrated to the United States in 1960, owned a house in Woodside, and attended the Corona Methodist church. She worked during the summer in an elegant restaurant in downtown Manhattan as the lady's room attendant, and enjoyed sizable tips. Few of these women who arrived in the 1960s ever lived on public assistance. Among them only Maria, a Puerto Rican in her 60s, had always lived on welfare since her arrival in New York City in the 1960s.

Another segment of my informants had been living in the city for less than ten years. Six of these women were working in the informal sector of the economy as babysitters and house cleaners in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Queens.

The rest of these more recent arrivals were factory workers. All of them worked in garment shops in Manhattan, except for one who worked in Corona. Some of these women, however, complemented their factory income with informal economic activities in the neighborhood. Mercedes, for instance, made "empanadas" (meat or cheese-filled dumpling or patties) at home to sell to restaurants and neighbors during the weekends. Such informal activities are typical in Corona. It is quite common to see women of different Latin American nationalities selling a wide variety of merchandise along Roosevelt Avenue and Junction Boulevard. During the summer, on Sundays, and on holidays, it is also common to see women selling beer or food in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

The last group of informants were unemployed, and they defined themselves as housewives. All of them told me of their desire and need to work. Some mentioned that having to care for small children did not allow them to work. One of these women told me that she had been looking for a job for more than four months. Another was eager to work, but did not have a green card.

In terms of housing and living conditions, and except for those longer-resident women who were better off, most of the recent immigrants lived in rented basement apartments where cold in the winter, heat in the summer, and darkness during the day were the most outstanding characteristics.

All of these women dreamed of returning to their countries of origin. Most saved money to invest there, or were already building houses. One of the factory workers was building a two-story house in the Dominican Republic. A Uruguayan woman held a life insurance policy and a savings account back home in Montevideo. A Ecuadorian woman had built a house in Manta, a town on the coast of Ecuador, and expected to move to it when her husband retired. At the same time, this woman, like others, hoped to buy a house in Corona to avoid high rents. Belisa, one of my oldest informants, traveled very winter with her husband to their house in La Vega, a town in "El Cibao", the north-central region of the Dominican Republic.

There was always a nostalgic feeling expressed when talking about their home countries. Liria, for instance, grew poetic at the end of our interview, saying "From here I still can feel the smell of the storm reaching Montevideo." Vilma spoke of her fear of growing old in a strange country where elders are confined in "golden jails."

Whether long-term or more recent immigrants, these women had all in one way or another become involved in preserving their cultural values. Vilma, for instance, had forbidden her children to speak English at home, even though she recognized that they would stay here in the event she and her husband returned to Ecuador. Liria attended the Uruguayan school in Jackson Heights every Saturday. She explained that she supported the school "one hundred percent because there children and adults from La Cuenca de la Plata learned their history and customs." Zoraida was proud to have reached her goal of raising her two daughters as "authentic Dominicans," as I noted when I met Cuquita, her younger daughter, at the Methodist church. Cuquita was an executive in an advertising agency in lower Manhattan. Both Zoraida's daughters were established here, however, and they did not plan to return to the Dominican Republic.

In many cases, the women had also resisted involvements with the English-speaking institutions of New York City. Belisa, a Dominican who spent more than 16 years working in a

garment shop, told me that she got involved in her union only because of the benefits it offered. She never believed in the union, she insisted, because it was run by communists who wanted to destroy capitalism, and without capitalism immigrants were dead. She was asked several times to run for union offices but she refused because she felt that the union did not support women, and "they just wanted pretty faces to be used in the shop negotiations." She preferred to get involved in her church's social activities, and thereby to help people really in need.

Elena, a Colombian, was another woman who worked in garment shops, in both Corona and Manhattan, over more than 18 years. She said that she always avoided working in factories where there was a union. She explained that unions were for white workers (Italians and Jews) because all the information was in English (She was referring to 1960s and 1970s). She had the sense they just wanted to steal the workers' money. She never became involved in any organized activities. She used a private Cuban babysitter for her four children while she worked--"There they could eat their own food and speak Spanish." Dulce Milagros, a Dominican who worked in a factory in Brooklyn, said she did not join the union because the company offered her very good benefits.

Most of these women, however, were involved in informal activities with other Latin American women in their

neighborhood or workplace. Dulce Milagros, for instance, participated in a rotating credit association organized by a Guatemalan woman at work. She told me that with the money she "saved" in it she was building a house in the Dominican Republic. She also organized carpools to work.

FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE

My own experience in looking for an apartment in Corona is illustrative of the housing situation in the neighborhood. I searched for an apartment over several months in Corona during 1986. During that time I contacted real estate offices and many individuals.

My first contact was a Colombian man who advertised an apartment in **El Diario**, the Spanish-language New York City newspaper. It was a small basement apartment with one bedroom, a living-dining room, a bathroom, and a kitchen. He was renting it for $700 a month. I never called him back.

Soon afterwards, one day I took a walk through North Corona along 38th Avenue. I asked several people I met on the street about apartments. Everybody had the same answer: "apartments are impossible around here." One woman told me she had ben looking for an apartment for three months because she lived in a basement and she wanted to change to a more comfortable location. Feeling a little frustrated, I decided to stop by a restaurant and eat. In the restaurant I asked

the lady behind the counter if she knew about apartments for rent in the area. She answered in a "Cibaeno" accent (from the Dominican Cibao region), that apartments are very difficult here. While I was eating, the waitress approached me and asked if I knew of any available apartments. I said that I was looking for an apartment myself. She told me she was living in a very small basement unit on 47th Avenue. She wanted to move out but she did not have time to look because she worked seven days a week. I asked her if she was the restaurant owner's relative. She said he was her husband, and the lady behind the counter was her sister.

Next I decided to inquire at a realty office. I went to one located at 97th Street and Roosevelt Avenue. There I talked to Nubia, a Colombian woman. She showed me three apartments. We went first to see an apartment at 43rd Avenue close to 108th Street. The owner, a Colombian man, lived downstairs. He was renting the upstairs apartment in a two-story house. When we arrived he was playing Colombian music, very loud. He also seemed to be drinking. The apartment was huge and beautiful. It had two bedrooms, a living room, a dining room, a big kitchen, and a bathroom. The price was $700. Nubia said the apartment could be rented for much more. I liked it and its price, but I did not like the landlord.

Then we went to 46th Avenue. Two Koreans were renting the attic of a two-story house. They were asking $850 for a

one-bedroom apartment, a kitchen-living dining room with a small bathroom, and roaches coming out of the paper-thin walls.

We could not see the third apartment on Corona Avenue near 102nd Street because nobody answered the doorbell. We returned to the realty office. Nubia wanted me to leave a deposit. I said I would come back the next day. She then took me into a kind of conference room where she literally tried to detain me. She called in Mr. Osorio, the realty office owner. Mr. Osorio, a Colombian, operates his firm with a staff of more than ten people, including Chinese, Korean, and Indian employees. Mr. Osorio told me that the first apartment was a bargain. I agreed, but first of all, I did not like the landlord, and second, I was not ready to pay the realty firm the equivalent of two months' rent. They finally allowed me to leave after I swore I would return the next day.

I did not return, but I kept in touch with Nubia. At first, she was very upset with me because I never rented the apartment. But she kept calling me, asking me immigration questions because she knew I was working as a volunteer at Concerned Citizens of Queens (CCQ). She told me she came to the United States on a tourist visa and she was looking for someone to marry in order to obtain permanent resident status. She also wanted to know if she could register at Queens

College without having all her immigration papers in order. I told her to call Queens College, and after that she never called me again.

I continued to walk in Corona searching for apartments. On one of my walks I saw an ad placed on a door which read "For Rent." I immediately called the number written on the ad. Someone from Aghata Realty, a Corona firm, answered the phone. I was disappointed. I was not in the mood to deal with a realty company again, but the office was only one and a half blocks away from the apartment. I told the lady on the phone I would be there in one minute. Once I arrived, I spoke to the owner, a Colombian man.

He said that there were two apartments for rent, one downstairs, and the other upstairs. Both were two-bedroom units. The only difference was that the apartment downstairs had the privilege of front and backyards. I went to see the apartment and I was taken with the downstairs one. They were both $800 but the realty man could reduce the price to $750. I left a deposit and said I would come back the next day.

It was 3:00 p.m. when I arrived at Aghata Realty the next day. The office was closed. I took a walk and went to see "my" apartment. There I saw somebody inside the apartment, moving furniture. I rang the bell and a Colombian woman opened the door. I asked her if she was moving in, and she said yes. Frustrated, I came back to Aghata Realty. The

realty man greeted me, very friendly. I did not return the greeting. Instead, I asked why he had rented the apartment. He said it was not his fault but that of the apartment's landlord. I asked him to return my money. He became hostile.

He told me he gave the deposit to the landlord. I did not believe him. I sat down and I said I was going to sit there until he decided to return my money. He started to make phone calls, trying to ignore me. I stood up and said I was going to call the police. He said he would give me back half the money. I said no, under no circumstances. I was about to leave to call the police when he decided to return the full amount.

My experience looking for an apartment in Corona on my own was similar to some Corona residents I found. But many other Corona residents had managed to tap into informal informational networks as they found solutions to their housing situation. This is in fact how I found my first apartment. Weeks after my realty adventures somebody from the community took me to a Greek woman who was renting an apartment, without a broker. Two days later I had moved into the neighborhood.

Renting out a room in their apartment is a common way that residents provide known newcomers with their initial housing. "My cousin is coming from Ecuador next week, and I'm

saving that room for her and her son." That was the way Minerva answered a friend Dominican woman, who thought Minerva had a room for rent in her apartment. The same course awaited Haydee, who came from Ecuador in 1978. A cousin of hers found a room for Haydee in a Colombian friend's apartment. Haydee lived in that room for three months until she became acquainted with the neighborhood and was able to rent her own apartment.

Francisca came to New York from the Dominican Republic knowing no one. She got her permanent residency through her mother who was also Dominican but became a U.S. citizen, and was living in Puerto Rico. Francisca did not know where to go since all her family was in the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. A Dominican woman encountered on a bus gave her a phone number of a woman who rented rooms in Corona. She lived there for several weeks but she did not like the place. There were too many people of different nationalities living there, and she did not feel secure. One day, while taking the bus, she met Mireya a Dominican, my second landlady, and they started talking. Mireya ended up giving Francisca her phone number because Mireya was also renting rooms. Francisca then moved into Mireya's apartment. Her husband came a year later, and they both lived at Mireya's for almost two years. Their five children were then granted permanent residence status, and they moved into a basement unit not very far from

Mireya's. Francisca got this apartment through her fellow room-renter, Luz. Luz worked in a garment shop on 45th Avenue in Corona. She announced at work that a friend of her's was looking for an apartment. A Colombian co-worker told Luz about the basement unit that cost just $400, and was soon to be available. Francisca contacted the landlord, and rented it for her children.

When Liria's husband arrived by himself in the United States from Uruguay he first lived in Queens because several of his Uruguayan friends were living in the borough. When his wife and daughters were ready to come to the United States, he had to look for an apartment. He spent two months searching before his family arrived. After paying $1000 to a super, he got a one-bedroom apartment in Kew Gardens. The family lived there very uncomfortably, for two months. At that point, a Uruguayan family they met through the Uruguayan school in Jackson Heights
told them that a third Uruguayan family had a two-bedroom apartment for rent in Corona. They have lived there since then.

FINDING A JOB

As we have seen, kinship and home country ties are often used to locate housing, a problem that an isolated immigrant without such ties tackles with much more difficulty. Jobs are

the next hurdle, and here the informal community network quickly begins to pass beyond kinship and home country to incorporate a wider pan-Latin American community.

Milagros came to the United States from the Dominican Republic in 1973. She lived at first with her aunt in Queens. Her cousin took her to her first job, a sewing shop in Manhattan. She did not know how to operate the machines and was assigned to work in "el piso" (cleaning the merchandise). One day she met a Dominican woman in the subway. Milagros told the woman about where she was working and how much she was paid. The Dominican woman then took Milagros to the factory where she worked in Manhattan, and Milagros has since worked there for five years, at better pay than her first job.

Haydee arrived from Ecuador in 1978, and did not know how to operate a sewing machine. Her cousin took her to a sweatshop owned by a Dominican woman in Corona where she practiced until she became a skilled "operadora." After that, she was taken by her cousin's friend, also Dominican, to a factory in Manhattan where the pay was greater.

When Liria came to the United States from Uruguay in 1983 she wanted to work but did not have any work experience. She had never worked for pay in her life. Her husband's friend's wife, an Argentinean, took her to the factory where she was working.

Ines first job was in a factory in Corona. Ines worked there for five years. The factory owners were Jewish and her co-workers were Italians and immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries. She left that job because another friend of hers, a Cuban, told her that in her workplace they were paying better. The owners in this factory again were Jewish and the co-workers were Latin Americans, Greeks, and Jews. She worked there for only seven months (up to the first month of her pregnancy) at which time all the workers were laid-off. Another friend, also a Cuban, then introduced her to a sewing shop in Manhattan. After her daughter was born, she bought a sewing machine, and she began to work at home. Several of her friends, who included women from Colombia, Cuba, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic, got together to receive lots of unassembled garments and divide up the work. The supplier, a Cuban, owned a factory on Corona Avenue and 108th Street, but also distributed material for home work in the neighborhood. When Ines' daughter was three years old, Ines went to school and completed a cosmetician course. After that she spent ten years working in beauty parlors, but she developed an allergy that made continuing this work difficult, and at that point went back to work in the sewing shops of Corona.

Luz came to the United States from the Dominican Republic in 1975. A Colombian woman introduced her to her first factory job, and since then she has worked in the garment

industry. In 1987 she was working in a Korean-owned sewing shop in the same huge factory loft building on 45th Avenue in Corona. The building's ground floor houses three different sweatshops as well as other businesses, including a bronze and iron works. The second floor houses several other sewing shops, one of which is where Luz works.

The entrance to the Korean shop is blocked with boxes, but one can peer over them to see about twenty sewing machines buzzing inside, and dresses and other garments hanging on racks. Luz's sewing machine is in the back of the shop where she sews sleeve pads into dresses. Luz has been working for her Korean employer for more than seven years. She began as a clothes presser, and now she is a senior worker who enjoys her boss's confidence. She is well-known not only among her fellow workers, but also among the Latin American women's and men's community of garment workers of Corona, and is a source of information about work in this industry.

When I shared an apartment with Luz for several months in 1987, we took frequent walks to the park. Latin American women and men of many nationalities often approached her to ask for information about jobs in the garment industry. She would offer information without hesitation, or she would refer the person to somebody else. Once, I was with Luz in Linden Park to attend a summer concert. An orchestra from Colombia and a "Perico Ripiao" (a typical group from the Dominican

Republic) were performing. After the concert a Dominican man approached Luz to ask her if at her workplace they were looking for a presser. Luz told him that they hired one last week. After that we met a group of Colombian women. They all knew Luz. We sat and chatted for a while. During the conversation Luz and the other women shared information not only about available jobs but also about housing and babysitters.

ENHANCING IMMIGRANTS' INCOME

Almost all of my Corona informants had participated in "sociedades," and "sanes," or rotating credit associations.

As Bonnett (1981) points out, rotating credit associations have long operated in South China, Japan, and West Africa. Bonnett also explains that these associations differ with regard to membership size and criteria, amount of funds, and sanctions imposed on members. Despite these elements of variability, they are an important form of indigenous financial institution. In his study of black West Indian immigrants, Bonnett looks at the historical roots of their rotating credit asscciations and how they "brought the West African trait, which has survived in their native lands, to the United States and England, where they used it to finance small business, to buy houses, to operate grocery

stores, tailor shops, jewelry stores, [and] real estate operations" (Bonnett 1981:5).

Rotating credit associations are also found among many Latin American ethnic groups. Velez-Ibanez (1983) outlines their importance to Mexicans in both Mexico and the southwestern United States. He also shows that rotating credit associations are distributed in Guatemala and Peru. Sassen-Koob (1983) reported rotating credit associations among the new wave of Latin American immigrants in New York, and my fieldwork identified their operation among almost all the Latin American nationalities I encountered.

Zoraida, a Dominican who migrated to the United States in the early 1960s, told me that many Dominicans, like her, bought their homes in those years, with capital from a "sociedad." Wages were low in the 1960s, but home prices in Corona were then very cheap, she said. "When people told me to put myself in a sociedad I was scared. I had to pay $50 every week, and we had three children to feed." But she did, and within a year she had saved enough money for a down payment on a house.

Dulce, also Dominican, and married but without children, came to the United States in the mid 1970s. She told me that the rotating credit groups are set up so people can help each other. "One of my co-workers, a Guatemalan woman, organizes it at work. We contribute $50 every week for ten weeks, and

we get $500 when our one turn comes." Dulce is building a house in the Dominican Republic with the money she is getting in the credit rotating group.

FINDING CHILDCARE

Because Latin American immigrant women need to work for cash incomes, childcare has became a central concern among the Corona residents I interviewed.

Ines migrated in 1963 from Colombia. At that time she had three children. She had to go to work, but she was very concerned about finding a person to take care of her children. She was relieved when a Argentinian friend of hers introduced to her a Cuban woman who babysat in her home in Corona. Ines felt comfortable with the Cuban woman because she knew her children were going to eat familiar food there, and they were going to speak their own language.

Luz, the Dominican garment factory worker who came to the United States in 1975, has a seven year-old daughter. From the time her daughter was born, Luz has had to worry about babysitting because she is a single working mother. First, she found a Colombian woman in the neighborhood who took care of her baby while Luz worked. Then the Colombian woman moved, and Luz next paid a Cuban woman to take care of her daughter Elizabeth. When Elizabeth was three year-old, Luz enrolled her at the First United Methodist Church of Corona nursery

school, a short walk from both her apartment and her workplace. But Luz's work schedule did not allow her to pick up Elizabeth at the nursery school at closing time, so she hired a Puerto Rican woman who baby sat the little girl each afternoon until Luz finished work. During the summers, Elizabeth went to the sweatshop with Luz. There Elizabeth learned how to eat with chopsticks from the Korean owner and supervisors.

Other women, who are past the point in their life cycle where they require childcare become providers of childcare to working women. Nieves came to the United States from the Dominican Republic during the 1960s. She worked in a sweatshop, and eventually bought a house in Corona. She raised three children, who each became professionals, and then finally retired. But she was bored at home. Her husband was always out, and she was tired of watching T.V. alone. She spoke with several mothers at her church, and she then began to take care of children as a paid babysitter. The children she took care of were from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia.

Teresa, from Peru, is separated, and is the single parent of two teenage daughters. She decided not to work outside her home, but rather to mind children in her house. She takes in children from two to five years of age. At the time of my interview, she was taking care of four children, two

Dominicans, one Colombian, and one Ecuadorian.

LINKS TO CIVIC POLITICS

During my research in Corona I met two women who were active in their blocks associations, Ana Lopez and Mireya Banks, both Dominicans.

The 98th Street block association in Corona Heights is very prominent in this heavily immigrant part of Corona. The block association is led by an Italian female, and several Latin American individuals are active. In 1976 the Italian woman founder, Carmela George, organized the first cleanup campaign in the neighborhood. After that, every year in May all the neighbors get together to clean out their closets and basements, to sweep the streets, and to repaint the embankment wall along 45th Avenue which abuts the Long Island railroad track. The railroad does not clean its embankment, where people dump trash and paint grafitti. Carmela George is also a member of Community Board 4, and uses this connection to call this problem to the attention of the LIRR. On the cleanup days, neighbors drive their cars away so that a Sanitation Department sweeper can clean the side gutters. A Sanitation Department collection truck also makes a morning-long stop. People of all nationalities on the block bring out old refrigerators, furniture, tree branches, trash barrels, wooden planks, and other things to throw out.

98th Street houses Irish, Polish, Italian, Chinese, Korean, Indian, and Latin American residents, including Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Bolivians. Mireya Banks is the block association vice president. She is in charge of contacting all Spanish-speaking neighbors. Carmela George and Mireya Banks distribute fliers for the cleanup in a four-block area (from Junction Boulevard to National Street, and from 45th Avenue to Corona Avenue) to urge participating in the event. Carmela and Mireya also write the letters to the Sanitation Department for their assistance and cooperate with CB4 in order to obtain the permit they receive every year.

Ana Lopez is one of the best known leaders in the Spanish-speaking community of Queens, and also has a city-wide reputation. During late 1970s and early 1980s, Ana Lopez organized her own block association, at 92nd Street and 37th Avenue in Corona Plaza. During an interview she told me that she was very concerned about her neighborhood "going down". There was drug dealing, smuggling, and vandalism. The streets were in awful condition, and buses were unable to travel on them. For three years she led the struggle. The association met several times with Assemblyman Ivan Lafayette but it did no good. Finally they went to Queens Borough Hall. There they became so persistent in their complaints that the street was finally fixed.

Ana Lopez is also a member of CB3, and founded a cultural organization, Padre Billini Association. In addition, she is active in the Queens Democratic Party, the United Latin Americans of Queens, the Ollantay Center for the Arts, and is often present in many political or cultural activities in Queens and sometimes elsewhere in the city.

CONCLUSION

THE INCORPORATION OF A WIDER PAN-LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

This analysis of grassroot women's lives has stressed the interactions occurring in daily life. We have pointed to how solutions to everyday problems--locating a place to live, finding a job, enhancing income, and finding childcare--move women beyond the ties of kinship and nationality to wider community contacts. These activities are important in building a base for pan-Latino identity among Corona's Spanish-speaking residents. We have also seen how these informal activities relate to formal politics in the activities of two local block association leaders.

Kinship and home country ties are most often used to locate housing, an immigrant's first everyday problem. As the following table shows, 25 of my 33 informants used a contact person of their own nationality to find a place to live. Many of these were also relatives.

TABLE 1-9

FIRST CONTACT PERSON TO FIND A PLACE TO LIVE, A JOB, ENHANCE IMMIGRANTS INCOME, AND CHILDCARE

CONTACT PERSON	FINDING...			
	place to live	job	extra income	childcare
same nationality	25	2	3	0
other L.A. nationality	3	24	28	28
indirectly other L.A..*	2	5	2	0
TOTAL	30	31	33	28

* The contact person was from the same nationality, but gathered information from persons of different Latin American nationality.

In finding a job, enhancing income, and finding childcare, however, the informal community network quickly begins to move beyond home-country contacts. These activities build on and reinforce a wider pan-Latin American community as information and assistance crosscuts nationality lines among Corona's Spanish-speaking residents.

Through the activities of Ana Lopez and Mireya Banks, we

have seen how block associations helped them to relate to and understand more about formal politics. Mireya Banks' contacts with CB4 and the Sanitation Department allowed her to learn how these two formal institutions operate. Mireya became a member of a Queens Democratic party club after she became a citizen of the United States. And more importantly, since Mireya worked in a block association of many different white, Latin American, and Asian nationalities, her political experience is not related to only one single nationality, but even has moved beyond a pan-Latin American identification.

Ana Lopez, on the other hand, through her activities in her block association and her interest in cultural issues has become a well-known leader among the Latin American of Queens. Ana Lopez's political identity at these wider levels more centrally reflects a pan-Latin American discourse, as will be seen in more detail in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 8

RELIGION: FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF CORONA

There are about thirty houses of worship in Corona. St. Leo's (Corona Heights) and Our Lady of Sorrows (Corona Plaza and North Corona) are the two Roman Catholic parishes in the neighborhood. Several Protestant churches are also important in the Spanish-speaking community, namely the First United Methodist Church, the Union Evangelical Church, and smaller Baptist and Pentecostal churches (see Danta 1989).

The first church in Corona was the Evangelical church, in 1870. Earlier, a Corona woman, Mrs. Mary E. Page contributed the use of her house for a Sunday Bible school. Mrs. Page had been giving Bible classes to children in her home on Junction Boulevard since August 1868. While the church was being built, the congregation met at the Leverich home in Junction Boulevard. In 1870 the first sermon was preached in the new church (Seyfried 1987:40).

The second church was the Roman Catholic Our Lady of Sorrows in 1872. According to Seyfried (1987) in the late 1860's there were more than a dozen Catholic families living in Corona. The nearest Catholic churches were at Flushing. The church was formally organized in 1870, and on July 9, 1872 a little wooden country church was dedicated and placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Sorrows. The old church building

over the next 25 years became inadequate for the needs of the increasing number of German and Irish families in Corona, and in 1896, eight additional lots were bought. In 1899 construction began on a new church and on September 16, 1900 it was dedicated.

The growth of churches in Corona was more slowly paced after these two came into existence. Ten years later in 1880 a Methodist congregation was formally organized. Mr. Stephen Baker, owner of Baker's Grove, donated two lots on National Avenue for a church. A Sunday school was organized before the church was ready. The congregation was financially unable to continue the construction. In 1885 Mr. Baker made another donation to the congregation of a new and larger site 100 feet square on the northeast corner of 43rd Avenue and 104th Street. On September 27, 1885 the Corona Methodists held a fund-raising service and donations amounted $3,000. This sum was almost enough to build the church's facilities. The church was enclosed in January 1886 and dedicated on May 16 1886 (Seyfried 1987:40).

In 1903, St. Leo's Church was organized as a mission to the growing Italian community. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jewish community supported two synagogues, one on 52nd Avenue and the other on 54th Avenue, both in Corona Heights. Afro-American presence in the neighborhood was more noticeable in North Corona. Early in

this century the first Black American population started to move into North Corona. The Rvd. James Stanton of Brooklyn began a Methodist mission to Corona's Black Americans in 1912, and in 1913 bought out the abandoned St. Stephen's Lutheran Church on 102nd Street (Seyfrid 1987:54-55).

Many of these houses of worship remained through the years. Others failed to survive and disappeared. With the advent in the 1960s of a new wave of immigrants, mostly from Latin American and the Caribbean, the composition of churches in Corona has changed dramatically.

Several older churches have started bilingual services, including the two Catholic parishes, and others have became Spanish-speaking. These churches have also been instrumental in the adaptation and survival strategies of many new immigrants (Danta 1989). These churches have developed programs to assist the community with social services that the city fails to provide. For instance Our Lady of Sorrows houses Ana Lopez' Programs and holds other important community programs.

This chapter will analyze the activities of the First United Methodist Church of Corona. While the two Roman Catholic churches of Corona, St. Leo's and Our Lady of Sorrows, attract a considerable number of the Spanish-speaking population of the neighborhood (see Acosta 1989), their social activities in the community are insignificant compared with

those developed by First United Methodist. As Aida Gonzales, an Ecuadorian and the Director of Cultural Affairs at Queens Borough Hall pointed out, the First United Methodist Church of Corona is well recognized by Community Board 4 as the only Spanish congregation to establish linkages between church and community through its provision of social services.

First United Methodist is a church of Latin American immigrants--largely women, and led by women, including its pastor. The members have developed a set of social programs to serve the Corona community, and connect their work to pride and concern for their Latin American cultural backgrounds and language. In this regard, it is essential to document the activities of this church and its influence in the creation of a pan-Latin American identity in Corona, and more widely in northern Queens.

THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF CORONA

The First United Methodist Church of Corona is a church in which the pastor, and many of its social program directors and lay leaders are women. The church draws its immigrant congregation --80 percent of whom are female-- from almost every country of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Central and South America. Its Pastor, Reverend Dilca Lebron-Mazariego, is from Puerto Rico. Both the pastor's sermons and the activities of its members give evidence to an awareness of

the situation of Spanish-speaking people in an ethnically diverse society. The active community programs that its members have organized make this Corona church different from many other local churches.

The Methodist church integrates its Spanish-speaking membership through many activities. These include religious services, fraternal hours, activities in member's homes, international dinners, mother's and father's day celebrations, summer trips, a choir, a ministry to people who live alone, and children's, women's and men's associations. They have developed service programs, including a senior citizens' center, a pre-kindergarten school, and a summer school. The church also sponsors a committee on social issues. The congregation shares its building with a Korean Methodist congregation.

Earlier English-language Methodist congregations had occupied the First United Methodist Church building in past decades, but by 1964 church services were no longer held. That year a group of Spanish-speaking women began to evangelize in the Corona subway station and in the streets. A few months later a group of Dominican and Puerto Rican women and men celebrated the first Spanish language service, led by Reverend Juan Sosa, a Cuban pastor. Today, the church's membership has reached 150, and includes professionals (teachers, medical doctors, technicians, social workers), blue

collar workers, and retirees, several of whom are local homeowners who formerly worked in the garment industry.

Diversity is recognized among the church's membership in terms of nationality. The pastor stressed in an interview how the Spanish-speaking nationalities in the church differ from each other. When speaking, for example, one has to be careful because a harmless Spanish word in one country can have an offensive meaning in another country. As a Puerto Rican, like others from the Caribbean, she often jokes and laughs. But the demeanor of other nationalities, like Salvadorans and other Central Americans, can be different. One Salvadoran said, "With the war at home--not knowing what is happening to family members who have to live with a gun always ready--we cannot easily joke and laugh."[1]

RELIGIOUS SERVICE

The life of the church centers around weekly services. On Sundays the worship service is celebrated at 10:00 a.m., followed by Bible classes and the "Fraternal Hour." By 9:30, however, there are people already inside the church. Some talk to each other, others pray at the altar, and sometimes a corito (a short Spanish song) is sung spontaneously. The service starts promptly at 10:00 o'clock with a formal prayer

[1] This interview was conducted when El Salvador was still in war.

of invocation, asking God to accept their worship and prepare the congregation for the service. A solemn organ prelude accompanies the praying. Next, a hymn is sung. An excerpt from the Old Testament is then read, followed by a prayer in which the pastor asks God for peace and justice in the world, for religious freedom for those who cannot worship openly, for comfort for the hurt, for wisdom, for assistance to those who are hungry and homeless. The congregation then recites together "The Lord's Prayer."

During these prayers, many of the congregants gather at the altar to convey to God their respect and their concern for the afflicted. After the prayers comes a moment of release--a cheerful singing of **coritos** exploits the rhythm of drums, piano, an occasional tambourine, and the hand clapping of the congregation. Next follows the welcome and greeting ceremony during which the pastor circulates through the church, hugging and kissing those in attendance. The whole congregation joins her, also moving around the church, greeting each other, and singing a welcoming song written by one of the members. Usually the song ends as the pastor and congregants are still embracing in the open display of spontaneity so characteristic of Latin Americans.

After the greeting ceremony the Pastor announces the activities of the church for the coming week. An excerpt of

the New Testament is then read, and the Pastor's sermon follows. Reverend Lebron's sermons always refer to both of the morning's Bible passages; to this she adds a social as well as a personal message. In the sermon a church member learns about social justice, pride in her or his language and ethnic identity, and proper stewardship of resources. After the sermon, the offering, a hymn, and the benediction conclude the service.

The content of the sermons relates the church to the social realities of the world outside its walls. Once, after the tragedy of Howard Beach, the pastor read a letter in which the United Methodist Church of the New York Conference condemned the horrifying incident in which several young white men killed a black man. On another occasion she preached about hypocrisy and explained how it is condemned by God's commandments. She mentioned how here on earth some thieves are called magnanimous when they give away money, food or clothes. People think they are generous but what they do is to exploit, or even steal from the same people they pretend to help. But God knows that they are thieves and impostors. Those people who accept God, and practice the commandment of "love your brothers and sisters" are seen as generous in God's eyes.

On the Fourth of July, 1988, the pastor called the attention of everyone in church to the issue of the creation

of strong ethnic pride among each of the congregants and their children. She said that many of our children are suffering from a crisis of identity because they grow up in a society which does not recognize them as part of it. At one stage in their lives they discover that they are not North Americans, and may then reject their own ethnic background. One can speak the language with no accent, but our last names always identify us as Latin Americans. Some parents do not encourage their children to speak Spanish and to be proud of a culture as rich as the North Americans'. This may force children to be ashamed of their background. The pastor encouraged every person present in the service to teach their children both Spanish and English, to talk to them about their countries of origin, and to teach them to be proud of their ethnic background. She finished the sermon saying: "We have to thank God for our ancestors, and for making us wise enough to be bilingual."

Her sermons also promote the idea of being good stewards of our bodies, our belongings, and of nature. In several of her sermons I have heard her urge congregants not to throw away clothes and furniture in good conditions because somebody else might need them. On another occasion she talked about loving our brothers and sisters with the same intensity as we love ourselves. If one does not love herself or himself, one fails to love her or his sisters and brothers. We love

ourselves by taking care of our bodies, minds, emotions, and souls. This is a fundamental commandment of God, she added. If we love our brothers and sisters we will not be able to steal, or fool or abuse our neighbors, the pastor concluded.

Social Activities in the Church

When the service is over people gather for Bible classes in several groups formed according to age. There are different groups of children, another group of teenagers, a group of young adults, and several groups of older adults. After the Bible classes, everybody gathers in the church again. Several **coritos** are sung before each group sends a representative to the front to share the lessons of each class. Children are encouraged to do their presentation in Spanish, but some give a bilingual report, using both Spanish and English. Following the presentation, people celebrating birthdays, or those with special reasons to give thanks come to the altar and openly thank God. The gathering finishes with more **coritos**.

At this point, everybody descends to the church basement for the "Fraternal Hour." There congregants enjoy coffee and snacks which are offered every week by a different member of the church. The members chat, share experiences or information, and socialize with their friends and visitors.

During the "Fraternal Hour" I frequently had the

opportunity to learn about friendship ties among church members. I also learned how much at home people feel in church. Marta, for instance, is a Guatemalan woman who came to the United States five years ago. A neighbor took her to the church where she became a member in 1987. She told me during an interview that she loves the church because there she found "a family" and she learned how to live at "her best", whether confronting abundance or scarcity.

Liria is from Uruguay. She lives in Corona with her husband and two daughters. She was brought to the church by her neighbor, becoming a member of the church with Martha in 1987. She says she feels very comfortable in church--in it she feels like she has recovered her home, the warmth of her land, and the love of her friends in a strange country.

It is in the Fraternal Hour that friendship is continuously recreated. It is there that arrangements are made to visit church members who are sick. It was during the fraternal hour that several members who live alone organized a support group. During the fraternal hour plans are made to take the flowers that decorated the altar to a member, or sometimes a non-member, of the church who is sick at home or in the hospital.

The church's activities are not over on Sundays. On Monday night a prayer service is celebrated in members' homes, rotating from house to house each week. There congregants pray

together, give testimonies, sing **coritos**, and socialize. Usually food is served after the prayer service, and conversations are prolonged for hours. On Wednesday congregants gather in church for a Bible class conducted by the pastor.

Community Involvement

Church activities also reach out into the community. A senior citizens center was created in 1979 by the church's second pastor, Reverend Alejandro Lafontaine. He first thought of the idea of creating the center when he saw several Spanish-speaking elders gathered in the park near the church. The need for a senior citizen center was there in the park, he thought, where hundreds of years of Latin American experience in this country and in their countries of origin was exposed to the calamities of the weather. One year later the center was opened.

The director of the center is Maria Maine, a Puerto Rican woman. She explained in an interview that the center has a capacity for only 75 people but today there is a waiting list of 600. In an interview conducted by my colleague Ruby Danta she learned that the Spanish-speaking women attending the center are mostly from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. There are also several local Italian-American women and men who attend. The members appreciate the center

because it gives them the opportunity to converse in their own language, and to share experiences with people of their own backgrounds. There is only one other senior citizen center open weekdays in Corona, and it is attended mostly by Italians. A Dominican woman attending the Methodist center reported this other center to be inhospitable to Spanish-speaking people.

A pre-kindergarten school was created in the early 1970s by the church's first pastor, Reverend Sosa. The United Methodist pre-school was started not only with the intention of instructing children in Protestant doctrine, but also to fill a need in the community. There is no other daycare center in Corona. Corona residents face an overcrowded school system which gets worse each year. As one church member pointed out, "If we did not offer a daycare center many parents would be worried where to leave their small children." The school is directed by another Puerto Rican woman.

The church also holds a summer school every year. In 1988 I volunteered at the school. Some fifteen children of different nationalities attended the summer session. The theme of the Summer school was "peace with justice", and all the activities were related to this theme. Peace songs were taught to the children, and sung through the summer. Lessons were taught on racial and economic equality. Children expressed what they had learned in plays, paintings, and arts

and crafts.

Several time during the year a free distribution of clothes and household appliances is organized in the church yard. In the spring of 1987 I observed people from many nationalities--including non-Spanish-speaking persons--stop by to take the free articles. An Indian woman took a kitchen pan and several plates. Several Chinese women chose clothes and children's books. Overall, there were more Spanish-speaking women than any other group. Few men attended the event. A free food pantry is also available to help needy people in the community. Church members donate the food.

The church sponsors a committee on social issues that meets once a month. During its meetings committee members identify community needs and organize activities around them. Several lectures for both church members and the community have been offered on subjects including alcoholism, drug addition, and assistance to undocumented immigrants. One presentation was on domestic violence in Spanish-speaking households.

The committee has also taken up a concern with SIDA or AIDS. Among the goals of the committee is to teach the congregation about the illness, and to create a sub-committee to visit people with AIDS. This concern with AIDS puts into practice a theme from one of the pastor's sermons. She said that like leprosy in the past, AIDS today is an illness that

frightens everyone in society. There are Christians, she told the congregation, who when they see someone with AIDS say that he or she is paying for their sins. But we are no one to judge. We must do what Jesus did with the "leprosos." He loved and healed them without asking if they were sinners.

The church's everyday activities as well as its involvement in community affairs reflect a commitment to doing social justice--in a spirit of love and humility. The church's social programs give it prominence in the community, and provide services to a growing immigrant population that formal political bodies fail to address. The programs also have a strong impact on the church's members political beliefs, and reinforce national and pan-ethnic values in a community that sees its children swimming in a sea of identity confusion. The programs also seek to teach new immigrants to live their lives as stewards of their own resources, and to illustrate for people how to act to create a just world.

The account that a lay leader of the church gave me of her reactions to a case of racial and gender discrimination illustrates that the church's practices are in accord with its members' social outlooks. She commented in an interview:

> The principal of my school is the only bilingual principal in the Borough of Queens. She is Dominican and has two PhDs, one in linguistics and the other in reading. Look--few people have that.

> She also has experience in both administration and curriculum techniques. This woman is part of the condition of discrimination that has existed in the United States. Look--discrimination in her case is double. She is discriminated against not only because she is Spanish-speaking but also because she is a woman.

The Dominican woman she referred to was appointed as the principal of a junior high school, but she was "boycotted by the white school staff." She finally won back her position with the support of the Black and Latin American school staff, as well as with community support. At the end of the interview, the United Methodist member made the following remark:

> We are mixed. At least Puerto Rico has a mixture of races that is the same as yours. [I am Dominican]. We have the Spanish, the African, and the indigenous elements. These are the three basic elements of our culture. Then why do North Americans feel threatened by us? It is something inexplicable. Look--the Puerto Ricans migrated in the 1930's during the years of the Depression, looking for a better life. But when they got here they found wages of misery, starvation in some cases, and the worst living conditions. Currently

> you go to certain places, and they see you are a little dark and they deny you entrance. I am not against North Americans. There are good people here. What I resent is that our people have been marginalized. Look at the jails. They are full of Blacks, Latinos--the majority of them Puerto Ricans. These people's way out of frustration has been drugs and crime.

The members relate their activism and social concerns to the historical development of the Methodist Church. Methodism was founded during the 18th century by John Wesley, an Anglican pastor of British origin. The first Methodists were opposed to slavery, industrial exploitation, and war. Today's United Methodists inherit this social orientation. In their Creed they affirm God's creation of nature, and they advocate a responsible human stewardship of God's creation. They rejoice in their communities, families, and sexuality. They endeavor to protect the rights of men, women, children and elders; to improve the quality of life of each individual; to defend the rights and dignity of ethnic and religious minorities. They also advocate for the eradication of social and economic misery, committing themselves to reaching peace through justice.

In pursuing this creed, the First United Methodist Church of Corona is deeply involved in its surrounding community.

The members cannot judge the community's reaction to their work by the litter thrown by passersby on the church lawns, or by the incidents of break-ins and vandalism that have occurred in recent years. Instead, they accept the judgments of Latin American community members and leaders who see this church as one committed to the pressing issues that Latin Americans confront in Queens. They welcome new members and those who share their building and use their social programs-- Latin Americans, Koreans, Italians, and others alike.

They continue their social programs, regretting only that their space is not sufficient for expansion, and that their buildings are old and in need of constant repair. They look to the future with a "Pro Edifice" fundraising campaign to rebuild physically the church they build spiritually and socially through their services and community activities. As an institution in Corona, this church not only unifies a Spanish-speaking population of diverse nationalities (as do other local churches--see Danta 1989), but it also brings together grassroots working class and professional middle class Latin American immigrants.

CHAPTER 9

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL SERVICE POLITICS

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the residential streets and apartment buildings of Corona are ethnically mixed. In addition to housing white Americans and Asian immigrants, there are Latin Americans of many different nationalities. This Latin American diversity marks workplace, shopping strips, and churches. Often, Latin American working-class women who have lived in the neighborhood for a longer period of time than most immigrants become centers of information about jobs, informal childcare, schools, and financial opportunities. Their activities are important in creating a pan-Latin American community among the nationally diverse neighborhood residents. A few Latin American women of different social backgrounds, however, some of whom are also residents of the neighborhood, are contributing to the creation of pan-Latino consciousness and organization through their social service activities.

Three organizations that helped immigrants with English classes, offered advice on housing rights and immigration law, and supported school board candidates (Concerned Citizens of Queens and Hispanos Unidos de Woodside), or that ran senior citizen and daycare centers (The United Methodist Church of Corona) flourished in the northwest Queens area that includes

Corona during the time of my fieldwork (1986-1988). Each of these service organizations were founded, directed, and in great part staffed by women.

This chapter will profile the aims, structure, and work of each of these organizations, and the key female leaders whom I observed and interviewed during 1986-1988.

Concerned Citizens of Queens.

As holders of expired tourist or student visas, some of Corona's Latin American residents face problems regarding their immigration status. Many of these immigrants arrived before 1982 and therefore were eligible to obtain permanent status (the "Green Card") through the Amnesty and Registration Program of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Law (IRCA). Others who arrived illegally, or who arrived legally but overstayed their visas, later than 1982 face problems with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and needed legal advise about options available to them. In addition, there is considerable awareness among people of Spanish-speaking origin of the advantages of citizenship in the United States. In Corona, many legal immigrants feel that being a U.S. citizen is important to achieving a better life in this society, and they seek citizenship classes and counseling. Many private lawyers offer help, but the costs are expensive for most Corona residents.

Concerned Citizens of Queens was founded in 1981 by Haydee Zambrana, a Puerto Rican in her mid-thirties, mother of two teenagers, and divorced. Zambrana did her elementary education and part of her intermediate schooling in Puerto Rico. She came to New York as a teenager, finishing high school in Queens. She then went to Queens College for her B.A., and later completed 30 credits toward a masters degree in economic development at Pratt Institute.

Zambrana's intention to help the Latin American community of Queens developed from her job in a lawyer's office in Jamaica, Queens. There she came to realize the needs of the Spanish-speaking community in the northwest portion of Queens, including the neighborhoods of Corona, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. Most of the Latin Americans who came to her office in Jamaica had problems with immigration, housing, and English. In 1981 She quit her job, and took another which allowed her more time to create a non-profit organization to help the Latin American community of Queens. Between 1981 and 1984 she worked at night at a police precinct in a Queens neighborhood and during the day she developed CCQ at an office on Roosevelt Avenue in Elmhurst. She worked at the police department until 1984 and thus paid the CCQ office rent. When I interviewed her there, there was still a sleeping bag which she used to sleep for one or two hours early in the morning to get some rest between the two

jobs.

Since 1981, CCQ has offered immigration counseling services which include applications for U.S. permanent resident status, visa petitions for relatives, and citizenship classes and application papers. Later, the organization began a housing advise program, crime prevention seminars, English as a second language classes, and voter registration drives. CCQ has processed thousands of records of people who have applied for U.S. citizenship. In 1981, Zambrana said they took more than fifty applications every week to the INS office.

In 1986 CCQ became involved in new projects related to the 1986 IRCA immigration law. That year CCQ was funded to operate an information hotline to publicize the new amnesty and registration procedures. More than 500 calls were answered daily through this hotline. In 1987 CCQ was funded by the INS to process immigrant documents for those who might qualify for legalization or amnesty. With these new sources of program support, in 1987 CCQ moved to a larger office in Corona Plaza on Roosevelt Avenue, and expanded its staff. Maritza Sarmiento-Radbill, an Ecuadorian woman in charge of the amnesty and registration program, explained to me that by 1988 CCQ filed thousands of registration and amnesty application forms, and accompanied hundreds of applicants to their INS interview.

The organization's staff was mostly female during the period of my fieldwork and included staff members in addition to Zambrana and Sarmiento-Radbill. The three most important programs developed by the organization, were directed by women. It is interesting to point out that several male attorneys worked in the organization, but all of them were under female supervision.

The creation of CCQ has served to bring assistance and advocacy to thousands of immigrants facing problems with the INS, negotiating the New York housing system, or trying to learn the English language. Specifically, CCQ has provided solutions to many Corona residents in terms of obtaining green cards, amnesty, or citizenship. Several of my informants had utilized CCQ for one reason or another.

Marta's case is illustrative of other illegal in the United States. Marta lived in the basement of a two-story house in Corona. The basement has no windows and no room divisions. Bed, dining table, sofa, and kitchen are all in the same room, one as big as a regular apartment living room. I went to visit her for an interview early in the morning during February 1987. We sat at the dining table. Before the formal interview started, we chatted for a while about how she came to the United States, and how she met Damaso, her male companion with whom she shared the basement room.

Two years before in Guatemala, Marta's home country, a

female friend of her brother called him from New York. She wanted to know if he could find a "girl" to do domestic work in the house where she was working in Long Island. Marta brother's friend was living in Flushing, Queens, and worked as a domestic for a Jewish family in Long Island.

Her brother asked Marta if she wanted to go to the U.S. to work for the family. Marta became enthusiastic about the idea of coming to New York, if not about the job that was offered her. She went to the U.S. consulate that same week along with some bonds her brother kept in her name to prove her economic solvency. Amazingly, she said laughingly, she got a tourist visa for a period of five years permitting travel between Guatemala and the U.S.

The Long Island Jewish employer sent Marta $500 in U.S. currency because she could not exchange Guatemalan currency for U.S. dollars unless she left an equivalent amount in Guatemala, to be returned to her when she came back. In less than fifteen days after the first call Marta was at work in Long Island. She described the Jewish family she came to work for as "modernized" because they were not religious. The family lived in a very fancy house, where Marta now met her brother's female friend. Marta was put in charge of cleaning the house and doing the laundry.

Two weeks after Marta's arrival her female employer and her children went on vacation to Florida. The husband stayed

at home. He started to make sexual advances toward Marta. Marta refused to respond. The man got angry, and when his wife came back from vacation, Marta was fired.

Her brother's female friend took Marta to her own apartment in Flushing. Through the newspaper Marta found another similar job in New Jersey. The family was also Jewish but less "modernized" than the first one. Marta said that the man wore a traditional beard and yarmulke. This male employer refused several times to pay her week's salary and she had to remain in the house over the weekends because she did not have money for transportation. At the same time she said that she was starved because she was provided with only coffee in the morning, and sardines at noon, although dinner was better. She ended up hating sardines, and stealing crackers to survive.

Her friend's husband, also Guatemalan, then helped her to find a job in a pizza factory in Flushing. When she was working there she met Damaso, a Dominican, and later moved into his basement apartment in Corona.

In 1988 Marta still faced the problems of her illegal work status. And now she was even scared to go out because at the last job she had in a factory in Long Island, INS officials raided the building, and many of the workers like Marta, had to flee to avoid being caught and deported.

In spite of Marta's legal status in the United States,

she has managed to work off and on because of her friends and neighbors connections. Her neighbors are Ecuadorian and Colombians. She had visited CCQ several times, and had followed their advice in terms of immigrant rights. Damaso, Marta's boyfriend, also came for help to CCQ to get his amnesty papers in order. One of CCQ's lawyers then went with Damaso for his INS interview.

Vicente, a Dominican, has been more fortunate than Marta. Vicente came to the United States illegally in 1961, through Puerto Rico. He has lived in Queens since that time. In 1987 he was granted permanent residence through the IRCA amnesty program. CCQ helped him to file the proper papers, and accompanied him to the INS interview. Before 1987 he managed to find jobs and locate services in the United States through friend and neighbors, but he could not seek out such opportunities openly on his own.

Nelly, also Dominican, came to the United States in 1987. She graduated from college in the Dominican Republic with a business degree. She was unable to find a job in her country after graduation. Desperate, she bought a phony passport and a permanent resident card, and paid to have her picture pasted in both documents. She then entered the U.S., although she was almost apprehended by INS authorities. After a year in New York, Nelly married an Afro-American, and she then got a green

card. It was a lawyer from CCQ who helped her with the papers to obtain her permanent resident status.

As mentioned, all of my other Corona interviewees were legal residents, but like other Spanish-speaking immigrants, several were seeking U.S. citizenship. These individuals pointed out two reasons to change their status. One is the desire to influence political decision-making in their communities and city- wide. The other is the conviction that, with U.S. citizenship, immigrants may better their economic status in U.S. society. Many Latin American community leaders have expressed themselves on this issue. CCQ was the first Latin American organization in northwest Queens to begin citizenship classes for immigrants, and to provide assistance in filling out citizenship applications.

Like white American led-civic groups elsewhere in Corona and Elmhurst (See Sanjek 1992), CCQ sponsored a community Christmas tree-lighting, first in 1986 while still at its Elmhurst location.

Zambrana was still actively building her organization during 1988. Through either CCQ, or perhaps through other organizational vehicles, she hoped to develop, first, a study of the Spanish-speaking voting population in Queens; second, working contacts with INS officials who can give access to statistics on Spanish-speaking applicants and on the impediments that they face in securing United States

citizenship; and third, a strategy document on the relationship between citizenship and the Latin American vote in this country. For Zambrana, only through the acquisition of political power will it be possible to develop a strong and prosperous Latin American community here in New York.

Hispanos Unidos de Woodside

Although younger and less established than CCQ, Hispanos Unidos de Woodside is a similar organization created in this north Queens neighborhood in 1988. Guadalupe and Rosario are the organization founders. Guadalupe migrated to the United States in 1978 from Honduras where she was an accountant. She came to the United States for a short vacation, but she married and remained here. Rosario also came to the United States in 1978 from Honduras. Like Guadalupe she came for vacation. She then also got married, had a baby girl, and decided to stay in the United States.

Guadalupe and Rosario got started by helping other Spanish-speaking individuals to fill out INS, welfare, job applications, and Socials Security forms in their own apartments in Woodside. They also would accompany these neighbors to appointments, help them with the English language agency bureaucracies. They offered these services as favors, until they came to realize the need for creating an organization.

Hispanos Unidos now seeks to help Spanish-speaking individuals with INS, welfare, job applications, and Social Security forms and papers. Guadalupe and Rosario also began English classes for their neighbors. But they soon realized that a significant number of people attending the classes were unable to read and write Spanish. They then started literacy classes in Spanish.

Hispanos Unidos has also organized campaigns to rid its Woodside neighborhood of drugs and crime. They first organized a Halloween party to prevent youth crime during that holiday. After receiving permission from the local police precinct they organized the party in the middle of a street closed officially for that purpose.

First United Methodist Church of Corona Senior Citizen Center

The First United Methodist Church of Corona's senior citizens center was the only one in Corona that served the Latino community in 1988. Before it began there was only one senior center and it served the Italian community exclusively. As we have noted, the senior citizen center was originally the idea of pastor Alejandro Lafontaine.

In 1988 Reverend Dilca Lebron-Mazariego was the pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Corona, which then housed both the senior citizens center and a daycare

program. Rvd Lebron was a 40 year-old Puerto Rican married to a Salvadorian and mother of a two year-old son. She completed her BA and the third year of a masters in divinity degree in Puerto Rico. In 1977, she was selected for a student exchange program at the University of Pennsylvania. After she finished her studies there, she planned to return to Puerto Rico but she was offered the opportunity to enter another master's course in theology in New York City, and she accepted. After that, she decided to stay in the United States, and received a call from a congregation in the Bronx. In 1985, she was assigned to Corona.

One of Rvd. Lebron's main concerns is the creation of leadership within the congregation. She views this as a way of expanding the church, and establishing a strong base that will not disappear when she leaves. She believes firmly that women are very important in developing such leadership. She explained that women's active role in church leadership exists within a historical context. "Now is the moment", she told me, "of women's liberation from prejudice and thoughts, and this helps men to understand female leadership and also to make ourselves, women, understand how much our leadership is needed."

Rvd. Lebron is committed to a ministry serving both the congregation and the community. In terms of the community, she is a strong supporter of the two service programs that

were operating in the church when she arrived. In addition, she regularly offers counseling to married and unmarried couples, and to people with drug and alcohol problems, including persons who are not Methodists. In 1988 a free church pantry was operating for people who come in need of food. At the same time, a fund was created to help members of the church who lose their jobs, or face costly health care, or have other financial difficulties. The church also organizes its outdoor community give-away of clothing and furniture every spring and fall. The give-away is open to all Corona community resident, regardless of ethnic background or religion affiliation. I observed the spring 1987 give-away event. Early in the morning, the church members began to move furniture, kitchen and home appliances, and clothing from the church garage. As soon as all the articles were placed on tables and racks in the church yard, people from the neighborhood started to enter and to pick through these articles. I observed not only Latin Americans but also Chinese and Indians among the people taking away articles from the church yard.

In 1988, Maria Maine, a church member and also Puerto Rican, was the director of the First United Methodist Church Senior Citizen Center. She was still finishing her B.A. in social work when she began to work at the center as a bookkeeper in 1980, and in 1981 she became the center's

director.

A mother of two teenagers in 1988, Maine was divorced for several years, but she remarried with another church member, a Costa Rican, in 1988. Maine grew up in New York, and told me that her Puerto Rican-born mother was blind, and did not know how to speak English. Maine had to accompany her to her "face to face" interviews at the welfare office. During that time, she realized how badly Spanish-speaking people were treated in public agency offices. She committed herself to study social work in order to help her people. She remains very involved in her community; besides her work and church activities, she formerly served on her local community board.

When Maine became the director of the center in 1981, few Spanish-speaking elderly then attended, and the center was filled up by local Italian senior citizens, even though it was funded to service Spanish-speakers. She began a radio outreach campaign, and soon expanded the numbers of Spanish-speaking elders who by 1988 were the majority.

The women I have portrayed in this chapter were concerned with problems facing no single Spanish-speaking nationality. Some of them speak comfortably of "Hispano" or "Latinoamericano" interests and political power, and seek to achieve results around specific concerns of Spanish-speaking people in general. The director of the senior citizens

center, for instance, encountered discrimination against non-English speakers through her mother's experience with public agencies. Today she directs an institution that welcomes all Spanish-speaking users of its services, without distinction as to nationality. The mission of CCQ and Hispanos Unidos de Woodside is the same.

CHAPTER 10

LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL POLITICS: MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN

Few Latin Americans in Queens are voters, and the large Latin American voting-age population in most of cases cannot vote because they are not U.S. citizens. In this situation, Latin Americans leaders who wish to advance the interests of the diverse Spanish-speaking community well understand that political influence through other channels than voting becomes important in affecting the city's power structure. This requires leadership and mobilization as well as ideological advancement of pan-Latino identification. In previous chapters we have seen the grass-roots basis for potential mobilization and leadership, and examined the political aspect of social services aimed at Queens' Latin American population. We now turn to links between culture and politics.

Since the 1970s, Queens has witnessed the creation of several Latin American immigrant organizations oriented toward cultural affairs. These organizations help to perpetuate immigrant cultural values in the host society, and in several cases may thus reinforce national ethnic identities. But cultural organizations also operate within the power structure of the host society, and their leaders interact with elected and appointed government officials and civic leaders

beyond the Latin American population. Some of these leaders speak as Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians, and so on, but others speak on behalf of a wider pan-Latin American level of organization.

In this chapter, I wish to focus on the cultural politics of creating a pan-Latin American identity rather than the organizations and activities established for separate nationalities. In the same years that these events occurred, in Queens and elsewhere in the city, Puerto Rican, Colombian, Ecuadorian, and other Latin American nationality parades and public festivals were emerging. In Queens, however, a series of organizations that have organized under pan-Latin American cultural umbrellas also were created. The key organizations and activities I will discuss are the Ollantay Center for the Arts founded in 1977; the Father Billini Association founded in 1978, and the Queens Festival's Pueblo Hispano, first organized in 1986.

In each of these organizations, women again played key organizing roles. As we will see in detail, several of these Latin American women also have been involved in other forms of pan-Latin American political activities, as social service organization founders, appointed members of Community Boards, and electoral political strategists.

In Nunez-Berger's view the activities developed by Ollantay and other organizations in Queens have served to build and provide leadership to the Latin American community of Queens. She stated that in the late 1970s, "the city knew we were here but we were considered trouble, and today we are recognized by the Mayor and Borough Hall, we are gaining respect." (**New York Newsday**, November 18, 1986).

OLLANTAY CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Ollantay in Jackson Heights is the only Latin American organization in Queens that develops cultural and artistic activities beyond a particular national origin according to its director Pedro Monge, a Cuban. Ollantay conducts workshops, concerts, theater, and art exhibitions, all in a pan-Latino basis. Ollantay is the name of an Inca play that survived the arrival of the Spanish conquerors. It was based on the life of Ollantay, who was an Inca warrior. Ollantay fell in love with the Inca or king's daughter, but could not marry her because he did not have the appropriate lineage. They eloped together. They fought against the Inca and Ollantay formed his own settlement. They had a daughter together named Ima Sumac. Monge chose the name Ollantay because it reflects the aboriginal heritage of Latin American theater, which has roots not only in a Spanish or African backgrounds, but that combines these three elements.

Monge is the executive and artistic director of Ollantay Center for the Arts, which he founded. Monge is also the chairman of the cultural affairs committee of Community Board 3 and participants on the cultural task force of New York State Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus. Monge was born in Cuba and came to the United States in 1961.

Ollantay started its programs in Queens in 1977, and it was developed by a group of Latin American individuals concerned with spreading Latin American culture in the United States. Ollantay's Board of Directors counts several women who are leaders of the Queens Latino community. Among these are Haydee Zambrana (Puerto Rican), founder and director of Concerned Citizens of Queens; Aida Gonzalez (Ecuadorian), Director of Cultural Affairs at Queens Borough Hall; Nayibe Nunez-Berger (Colombian), president of Ollantay in 1986, and a major activist of the Colombian community of Queens; and Ana Lopez (Dominican) director of the Asociacion Benefica Padre Billini, and a community activist.

In Monge's words, Ollantay does not follow any political, religious, or national ideology. One of the most telling things about Ollantay is that its board of directors includes individuals from different Latin American countries. Ollantay artistic presentations are not exclusive to any single Latin American country. For instance, Ollantay sponsored the first

Latin American Writers' Conference in New York City. The conference took place on two Saturdays in 1987. Fifty writers from different Latin American countries attended the conference on each day.

Monge emphasizes that the only cultural organization serving the entire Spanish-speaking community of Queens is Ollantay, and contrasts this with other cultural organizations in the community. These organizations do not operate with a pan-Latin American viewpoint. Teatro Thalia, for instance, is the only Spanish language theater in Queens. It presents plays to a mostly Cuban public with a taste for traditional Spanish theater. There are other artistic groups such as "Nuevo Panama" and Colombian and Salvadoran folkloric groups, all formed by professionals or by sponsors who want to perpetuate their national artistic traditions in New York.

Over the years there have been changes within Ollantay. For instance, they have opened their space to Black American and other non-Spanish-speaking artists, and in 1986, Ollantay sponsored an exhibition of Afro-American painters. The theater, workshops, music, and readings, however, are all performed by Spanish-speaking artists.

For Pedro Monge the work of Ollantay is essential because it is helping to unite Hispanics of different nationalities. Monge believes that in Queens and through the United States,

it is important that people from all the different Latin backgrounds come together. The other important effort is to present Latin culture to the non-Hispanic public. It is thus a dual contribution. One is preserving our artistic and cultural and the other is presenting it to others for better understanding.

In 1986 Nayibe Nunez-Berger was the president of Ollantay. Nunez-Berger is a psychotherapist who is the assistant clinical director and social work supervisor for Family Court Mental Health Services in Jamaica, Queens. Nunez-Berger was also the director of public relations for the Colombia Civic Center in Elmhurst. She is married, 39, and born in Cali, Colombia. She has been living in the United States since 1962.

PADRE BILLINI ASSOCIATION

This association was formed in 1978 by Ana Lopez and two other Dominican friends. The site of its operation is Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic church in North Corona. The goal was to teach and propagate Dominican culture in the United States and to help Dominican children coming from divorced or separated homes. They started in 1978 with only Dominican dances, but the organization soon expanded to teach Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Colombian dances. This change was seen as essential to building a wider Latin American base of support. From eight children in 1978, the association had

expanded during the period of my fieldwork to 140 children. They also teach Dominican literature.

Ana Lopez is an example of a grass-root block association leader who has developed into a cultural and political activist. A Dominican now in her fifties, she came to the United States in 1961 with her husband and her two children. Her husband opened a supermarket in Washington Heights which in few years became a chain of supermarkets covering the upper west side of Manhattan.

When she first came to the United States she wanted to work using her training as a nurse, but she could not get a job because she did not speak English. She wanted to work anyway, so she went to school to learn how to sew. After the course she got a job in a garment factory. Her husband then forced her to stop working, so she quit.

She divorced in 1967 when her husband sold everything and went back to the Dominican Republic. He left her $5,000 and a house in Jackson Heights. After the divorce, she moved to Jackson Heights and went back to work in the garment industry. She also took courses to learn English and qualify as a nurse. When she finished she applied for a job in Elmhurst Hospital. Following several rejections she finally got a job in the emergency room where her function was to move patients in their wheelchairs from one unit to the other. From there she

moved to a job as supervisor of the medical department in a shipping company. She worked there until 1981. After that she dedicated herself to work only for her cultural organization since by then her two children had graduated from college and professional schools, and were married. Her son is a lawyer and her daughter a psychologist.

Besides her activities with La Asociacion Benefica, during my 1986-1988 fieldwork Lopez was a member or participant in almost all the Spanish-speaking organizations or activities in Queens. She was a member of the advisory council of the local city hospital (Elmhurst Hospital). She was second coordinator of an important political organization, United Latin Americans of Queens (ULAQ). She was member of the council of her church, Our Lady of Sorrows, a member of Community Board 3, and president of her block association. She also organized a team of children for a summer street cleanup contest in 1987, representing Community Board 3.

During 1986-1988, children participating in the dance group performed their dances at nearly every cultural affair in the community of Queens. For instance, the Ballet Folkloric Padre Billini performed Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Colombian dances in each of the Three Kings Celebration at Elmhurst Hospital during the years of my research. This ceremony marks the feast of Epiphany which is celebrated

widely in Latin American countries and elsewhere, but observed only as a church calendar holiday by most Christians in the United States.

As Sanjek (1990) points out, the Three Kings Day program at Elmhurst hospital may be viewed as "ceremony of incorporation" where "symbols of ethnic diversity and expressions of pan-ethnic communal harmony overtly are use to organize events."

The Three Kings Day started to be celebrated at Elmhurst Hospital in 1982. The team of ethnographer of the Old Americans and New Immigrants project of Queens College started to attend the event in 1986. The noon-time ceremony is attended by hospital officials, Community Board members, and other influential local politicians such as Ray Bermudez, a Puerto Rican business leader in Jackson Heights, and a CB3 member.

As observed by Roger Sanjek and myself, in 1986 the event began as 30 children from the Public School 69 choir assembled on the stage. There were 10 boys, and 20 girls in this ethnically mixed group. Several could be easily identified as East Asian, others as Latin American, Indian, and a few were white Americans. The PS 69 choir sang several songs. One was about Hanukkah, the "Festival of Lights". Other was a solo "Home for the Holidays," performed by an East

Asian boy. For the closing, the kids sang "We wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a happy Hanukkah, we wish you a happy holiday, and a happy New Year".

Sister Naughton, the Roman Catholic hospital chaplain, then read the Three Kings Day story from the Bible. The feast of the Three Kings, or Epiphany, commemorates these events. Then she said that "the three wise men represent each of us in this room--East and West, North and South, Jewish and non-Jewish. God was here for all people, no matter what color, what age, what size... We celebrate our oneness as people and as a family. That's the good news. But some of our family suffer from poverty, violence, and domination." She finished with a prayer: "Take the side of the lowly, welcome the newcomer, defend the stranger... Bring us together in peace, justice, love, through your son, Jesus Christ."

The Padre Billini dance group was then introduced. Before the performance, Ana Lopez addressed the audience in Spanish and English. The group was formed of six girls and six boys in folkloric costumes: the girls wore long, colorful skirts, and white blouses; the boys white pants and shirts, and straw hats. They danced merengues, plenas, and cumbias, dances from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Colombia.

In 1988, Ana Lopez was also working to establish regular piano, violin, and classical guitar classes twice a week at

Our Lady of Sorrows. For the 1988 school year they had funds from the Borough President's office and the Queens Council from the Arts to start a workshop to help children with their homework. Lopez sees the need for the workshop as urgent because the great majority of the children's parents do not speak English and the children do not have anybody at home to help them with their school work.

PUEBLO HISPANO AND THE QUEENS FESTIVAL

One of the most important activities developed by Ollantay was the creation of the "Pueblo Hispano" (Hispanic Village) in the Queens Festival in 1986. The Queens Festival started in 1975 and is celebrated every year in the month of June at the Flushing Corona-Meadow Park. The Festival runs for two days, a Saturday and Sunday, and attendance runs in the hundreds of thousands.

In 1986, the festival grounds housed scores of tents, kiosks, booths, and stages. **The Daily News**, the Parks Department, churches, Vietnam Veterans, the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, the YMCA, women's organizations, colleges, and the New York Telephone company had arranged themselves into a network of tents and booths. Food vendors occupied many of the kiosks while, on different stages, music from Ghana, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Colombia, or the United States was performed, surrounded by balloons, a Frisbee competition,

EMS ambulances, and a roller skating competition. Behind the kiosks baseball and soccer games were going on, as could be seen any weekend in the park. The "Pueblo Hispano" was located across from the Asian Village (see Chen 1992). But unlike the Pueblo, where one common language was spoken by all nationalities represented, the Asian Village featured separate Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian, Korean, and Filipino pavilions. A long empty pool divided these two pan-ethnic settings.

The "Pueblo Hispano" was created by Ollantay and co-sponsored by several Latin American organizations, including Father Billini Association, Colombian Civic Center, United Latin Americans of Queens, Concerned Citizens of Queens, and radio station WADO. The "Pueblo Hispano" itself consisted of a combination of constructed elements that traced Latin American indigenous and Spanish heritage. At the entrance was an Inca pyramid; at the center of the "Pueblo Hispano", a Taino (Caribbean Indian hut); at one side of the village, a Spanish ship. A big tent housed an exhibition of Latin American arts and crafts. A stage featured artistic presentations with groups from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Panama, and Puerto Rico performing dances and music. Several small stages offered fashion shows and theatrics presentations. Concerned Citizens of Queens had its own tent where people were registered to vote.

The "Pueblo Hispano" was surrounded by tents and kiosks selling Latin American food and beverages from different countries. The Argentinean kiosk had a T.V. were customers could watch the world soccer tournament (the World Cup). On that Sunday, the Argentinean team won the World Cup and people from all over Latin American cheered the winning team.

As is the tradition since the Queens Festival started, in 1986 the festival parade started at 2:40, a visual panorama of the ethnic diversity in Queens. This year the parade was headed by police motor cycles followed by six mounted officers on horses. Next came a jeep with an American flag and an artillery gun, surrounded by three veterans in battle fatigues. Claire Shulman, the Borough President and U.S. Senator Alphonse D'Amato came next in the first of four V.I.P. golf carts. Next brass band, and the Old Bethpage mummers band, followed a city EMS ambulance.

Pedro Monge of Ollantay and George Ortiz Claire Shulman's advisor for Hispanic Affairs[1], then led the "Pueblo Hispano" contingent--the Billini dance group led by Ana Lopez, with about twelve pre-teens, and another dozen older boys and girls; and then three Colombian dancers.

Next came a group of dancers and clergymen led by a

---

[1]Ortiz lost his job a short after the Queens Festival. Since then, Ivonne Garcia, a Nicaraguan woman, has held this position.

Lebanese flag and an American flag. The Asian village banner of the Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts came next. Lion dancers followed, and then two Korean farmer's dance groups: one of about thirty children, and the other, Binary, of the Young Korean American and Service Education Center. An Indian flag preceded about twenty teenage and younger girl dancers. The Taiwanese tent group came next, with singers and musicians wearing traditional hats, and about twenty people in the green T-shirt of the Taiwanese tent. About twenty Panamanian dancers in folk costumes, followed by two police cars, ended the parade.

On stage 1, the formal program opened with Black American entertainer Teresa Merritt singing the national anthem. Borough President Claire Shulman was introduced next. She said:

> Welcome, welcome to our party. Yours and mine and everybody's. Isn't it a wonderful day. In a few days people from all over the world will be celebrating the Statue of Liberty. There is no place in this country that better symbolizes that statue than Queens county because of all the wonderful people that live here from all over the world. And live here in harmony. That is the greatest, and that is really something to celebrate. There is something here for everybody

today. The people that worked on this, hardworking people -- do you know how long it takes to put on a festival? It takes a whole year. Now I am sorry that the mayor's not here today, but he and I, and most of the City Council, were up all night trying to put together the budget for the City of New York, which has not yet been done, and after I leave here today, I must go back to City Hall to finish the job, because I must bring back the fair, a fair resources of the City's budget for this county.

CONCLUSION

Cultural politics have served as an important route of political access for Queens' Asians and Latin Americans, and as a large-scale annual "ceremony of incorporation" the Queens Festival is an important arena in the process. For Latin Americans who here represent themselves as a unified pan-Latino constituency, it is again female leadership that predominates.

CHAPTER 11

LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS IN QUEENS: WOMEN AND MEN

The politics of Latin Americans in Queens reflects different forms and channels of pan-Latino collaboration and identity. As we saw in previous chapters, latinas have created informal grass-root networks, and evolved and directed formal organizations since the 1970s. Each of the organizations has served to unite people from all over Latin America, creating pan-Latino collaboration. Several of the same leaders that emerged through these organizations were the ones taking the first steps toward the creation of a formal political voice among Latinos in Queens in the 1980s.

In 1985 the United Latin Americans of Queens (ULAQ) was organized, to seek political recognition of the Latino community the electoral politics of New York City. That same year, Queens Borough President Donald Manes appointed George Ortiz as his first "Hispanic Advisor." Also in 1985, Manes appointed Aida Gonzalez as the Director of Cultural Affairs for Queens. Gonzalez, by that time, was the president of the Queens Council for the Arts and a co-founder of the Ollantay Center for the Arts. Claire Shulman, the Borough President since 1986 has continued to appoint Latin Americans, mainly women, to work for her at the Queens Borough Hall.

The Latino presence in Community Board 4 is very

important.

The campaign for a Latino Judge in Queens was also an illustration of Latino concern on political recognition and power. More importantly was the 1990 redistricting process that gave Latino their own voting districts in New York City and particularly in Queens. The Latino involvement in this process was extremely important in confirming an awareness of the pan-Latino identity that have characterized north central Queens for decades.

This chapter will review several of these accounts identifying as the major protagonists of all these activities the Latin American women of Queens. I will also look at the politics of Latin Americans in Queens enhance pan-Latino identity. Finally I will analyze why women get more involved than men in this kind of activities.

UNITED LATIN AMERICAN OF QUEENS--ULAQ

In 1985 Thomas Marton sponsored a talk where several Chicano leaders talked about the housing situation in the United States at La Guardia College in Queens. Haydee Zambrana (founder of Concerned Citizens of Queens) and Pedro Monge (founder of Ollantay Center for the Arts) attended the meeting. After the event, both of them started to talk about the need to have a Spanish-speaking organization that include all Spanish-speaking nationalities present in Queens.

Zambrana and Monge organized a meeting and invited all the Latino community organizations in Queens.

That meeting was held at Ollantay. The meeting was attended by community leaders add businessperson. Among the participants were Ana Lopez (founder of Padre Billini Association), Aida Gonzalez (co-founder of Ollantay)and Nayibe Nunez Berger (co founder of Ollantay and member of the board of directors of the Colombian Civic Association). At that meeting they created ULAQ.

Few months later they organized another meeting with Congressman Marton in "El Inca" a Peruvian restaurant in Jackson Heights. That meeting was attended by more than 300 Latinos. During that meeting Marton advice the crowd to organize a "Hispanic" democratic club where all the Spanish-speaking people could belong even if they belonged to another democratic club. Marton said that the organization of ethnic clubs had made African-American and Greeks stronger within the Democratic Party.

Several community leaders agreed with Marton but they also recognize that the Spanish-speaking groups working at a local level were few. In spite of organizing a "Hispanic" democratic club, ULAQ had the idea of sponsoring a candidate with opportunity to win the next elections.

COMMUNITY BOARD 4

City government begins with the Community Board. The area of my research, Corona, corresponds to Community Board 4 (CB4). According to the Daily News, of the 14 community boards in Queens, Board 4 is the most racially diverse (Daily News October 19, 1989).

According to the Daily News, top issues at CB4 included overcrowded housing, overcrowded schools, and political involvement. All of these issues are related to the new immigrant population of the neighborhood of Corona and Elmhurst that is also comprised by CB4. The Daily News cited Charles Stidolph, CB4 chairman, when he said that new immigrants unable to afford prevailing rents, are jamming into two-family home, causing fire hazards and straining city services. About the schools, CB4 chairman was quoted by the Daily News when saying that the schools are among the most crowded in New York.

Political involvement has been brought to the scene by local leaders as Haydee Zambrana who believes that new immigrants and particularly Latinos must be brought into the political process to achieve a serious representation in city government.

In 1986 there were six Latino members at CB4. They were Haydee Zambrana (founder of Concerned Citizens of Queens--

CCQ), Garrie Negron, Angela Sonera (former director of the daycare center of the First United Methodist Church of Corona); Digna Torres, Clara Salas (co founder of CCQ), and Raul Lafayette.

LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN AT BOROUGH HALL

On September 12, 1985 Borough President Donald Manes invited 50 Spanish-speaking leaders to honor Spanish-speaking people efforts create their own organizations. During the meeting Manes said "In a relatively short period of time, the Hispanic community has become an important part of our cultural, economic, and political life in Queens." He noted that there were about 300,000 Latin Americans in Queens and added "while it is true that there is strength in numbers, numbers alone are not enough to affect significant change... It is ten unity of those numbers that makes the difference. It's a community that's getting together to act in one voice that makes a difference."

In July 1985 Manes appointed Aida Gonzalez as the director of Cultural Affairs for Queens. Previously Manes had appointed Jorge Ortiz as his adviser for Hispanic Affairs.

During the time of my research, Queens county had the largest number of women elected officials of any county in the New York State. The county is named after a woman, Queen Catherine Braganza, princess of Portugal, then the Queen of

England. Several institutions in Queens are also headed by a woman: the Queensborough Public Library, Queens College, the Queens Historical Society, the Queens Museum, the Queens Council on the Arts, and Queens Borough Hall.

With the advent of Claire Shulman as Borough Hall President in 1986 more opportunities were open to women at Borough Hall where Latinas have played a very important role. Ivonne Garcia was appointed in 1986 as Director of Hispanic Affairs and Aida Gonzalez as Director of Cultural Affairs. Ivonne Garcia and Aida Gonzalez were the only Latino representation at the Advisory Board of the Borough Hall.

MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON HISPANIC CONCERN

Mayor Edward Koch created a Commission on Hispanic concerns in 1986. During the commission's hearings in the Borough of Queens, the presence and participation of Latinas was very important.

On April 16, 1986, 23 people testified in front of the Commission. Eight of them were Latinas. Each of these people addressed the achievement and problems of the Latino community of Queens.

Fior Rodriguez, a representative of Helen Marshal, councilman for District 30, was the first speaker. She mentioned the renovated Latino merchants areas--Roosevelt Avenue, 103rd Street, Northern Boulevard, 37th Avenue,

Junction Boulevard-- the renovated homes, and the Jackson Heights Arts Center (Ollantay) as benefits to the neighborhood. In her opinion, there are still serious problem affecting the community. In her view, housing is a key problem, so is school overcrowding.

Grissel Sepulveda, aide to Assemblyman Sanders, of Manhattan, mentioned drop-out problems and drug activities. She recommended corporate and business programs to give jobs to school attenders as paid interns, with credits, and mentors of same ethnic backgrounds who has worked his way up from an impoverished background.

Haydee Zambrana, director of CCQ, said that Latinos are ignored by elected officials. Legal residents are applying for citizenship "like never before." Zambrana said that CCQ submits 60 to 80 citizenship applications every week and then people wait one year for an INS interview. She said that INS asks if women are "prostitutes or do you deal in drugs?" Such questions, she added were harassment and the Mayor should pressure on this.

Alice Cardona from the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, worked for Mario Cuomo. Ms Cardona said that there were many studies that were never implemented. She added that there are "Borough Presidents ignoring us. They don't want to talk to the Hispanic community." She stressed the need for low income housing.

Aida Gonzalez, Director of Cultural Affairs at Borough Hall, said that about two years ago, sensitivity began and two Latinos were appointed at Borough Hall. And with Concerned Citizens of Queens and Mrs. Zambrana pressuring, Latinos were added to the Community Boards in unprecedented numbers this year (1986).

Ana Lopez from "Father Billini Association" said that she had been a member of the Elmhurst Hospital advisory board for three years. Ms Lopez said that Latinos are seven at the Hospital Board and that the president is Latino. She said that one of the major problems at the Hospital is translation. She said that they have created a language bank program from volunteer translators. She added that the board is seeking for more Latino professionals.

Delia Finch from the Peruvian American Council of Goodwill and Flora Murillo from Casa Social Cultural Ecuatoriana de Nueva York also addressed the Commission. Mrs Finch advocated for learning English and quoted Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations.

The intervention of Latinas during the hearings was essential. Regarding Latinos, the participation was also significant. George Ortiz, assistant counsel to Claire Shulman, addressed the issue of housing, the need for Spanish translation and job training. Pedro Monge, director of Ollantay and Rene Rodriguez, from the Interamerican College of

Physicians were also present. Another group of Ecuadorian men also addressed the Commission talking about the Ecuadorian parade.

CONCLUSION

WHY MORE WOMEN THAN MEN

When I asked Latinas leaders why women were more involved than men, their answers were clear and accurate. Aida Gonzalez said that Latino men want the recognition of their own community, and are competitive with each other. Aida Gonzalez said that she had seen qualified women passed over and a man brought from outside for a leadership position in Hispanic organizations. But women, she added, have moved into the positions relating to the community; not competing with each other but working together. Hardy-Fanta (1993) acknowledged a pattern of gender differences in how Latino women and Latino men in Boston perceive politics and how their different perceptions inform their ways of mobilizing the community.

Aida Gonzalez also said that to do work in the community one needs time and devotion. In our communities, she added, the male has the responsibility of breadwinner and do not have the time to work for community affairs or they are very busy building their own businesses. A woman, she said, gets involved in community affairs because she has to take children

to school and she gets involved in P.T.A. and she gets involved in the establishment. As new immigrants, she said "we are very attached to our background." Gonzalez also said that there are organizations related to the political issues back home. Men organized foundrasing campaigns for the presidential elections of their countries of origin and they personally take the money back to their countries. That is a way of probing themselves and show their love for "La Patria" (The Homeland), Gonzalez pointed out.

Gonzalez also said that in terms of the local politics women are getting smart. They have realized about the vacumn and the need to work for a better community.

Elizabeth Mura, a Colombian journalist, told during an interview that Spanish-speaking women were more conscious about school functions in their neighborhoods. These women are the one who fight for bilingual education. They express themselves in simple ways and most of the time they do not know the English language. Although there is also a stronger preoccupation to learn English by women than men, she added.

Mura also said that in the Latino community men think of saving money to come back to their homelands. Women, contrary than men, think of their families, in learning the language to help children at school both homework and to communicate with teachers. Mura did a small research about adult Colombians enrollment in school. She found that in 1988 there were more

women than men enrolled in school. Colombian women were 60 percent of the Colombian students in La Guardia Community College. Mura concluded saying that the Spanish-speaking women were serious about getting involved in the United States political system. Women, she said, are thinking in building a family, providing for their children all the privileges that the United States society could offer. While men are thinking in returning to their countries of origin.

CHAPTER 12

THE CREATION OF A PAN-LATINO IDENTITY: GENDER, CLASS, AND POLITICS IN CORONA, QUEENS.

This study has analyzed the social construction of Latino ethnicity in the everyday activities and leadership roles of Latin American female immigrants in Corona, Queens, New York City. Throughout this study, I have documented and analyzed the conditions that permitted women of diverse nationalities to develop a collective sense of identity as "Latinas de Queens."

This study has drawn several conclusions. A detailed analysis of each of these conclusions follows.

1. The conceptual units of this study are class, gender, and ethnicity. These three concepts have shaped Latino female leadership in Corona and have also been functional to the formation of a pan-Latino identity in the community of Corona.

In terms of class, I have argued in Chapter one that social class is very important in defining the arenas and goals of these Latin American women's struggles. Working class women characteristics of affiliation and connectedness developed in kinship and grass-roots units shape the site of their struggles i.e. the household, friend networks and kinship networks.

Contrary to the traditional idea that middle class people define themselves according to their own individuality, this study documents the activities of middle class women as members and creators of a community. The point of departure for these middle class women is an awareness of the position of Latinos in Queens and citywide and how through their activities they could create a political voice in the city and build a better life for community residents. Middle-class women create and develop their own organizations. That is the case of social service organizations, cultural institutions, and political involvement. These women goals (both working class and middle-class) vary by class. Working class women advocate immediate, practical results in everyday concerns over housing, jobs, and child care. Middle-class women address the state-related domains of public resources and power.

This study cannot portray individuals effort and success, because those cases were not found here. This study portrays the communal nature of life in this urban environment. What makes the difference here is that women are the ones creating the networks, identifying their affiliations and connections to create a better community.

In terms of gender, I have argued in several of the previous chapters that women develop a "female consciousness" (Kaplan 1982) which emerges from the gendered division of

labor that assigns women the responsibility of preserving life. Through these activities considered an extension of female roles as mothers and wives, women construct the local community. As Haywoode (1994) noted the local community "reveals the links between the daily life of working class women and the infrastructure of neighborhood politics." Haywoode argued that working class women are responsible for the social construction of local community. In Haywoode's argument it is noted that "working class women define themselves primarily in terms of connection and affiliation rather than in terms of an individually constituted identity (...) *Working class women think of themselves as members of* overlapping networks that include families, kinship groups, friendship groups, groups of neighbors, neighborhood communities, religious and other formally defined organizations." (Haywoode 1994:1-2). These connections and affiliation vary according to social class. While working class women make connection at the grass-root level, middle class women make their connection and affiliation at an intermediary level in the community. The work of middle class women is located between the grass-root and the formal institutional system.

These connections and affiliations are an extension of women's role defined by the sexual division of labor in society. In other words, it can be said that community life is

an extension of private life giving some flexibility to the dichotomy between private and public spheres.

Through that extension of roles, women politicize their communities and in the case of Corona have created a unique identity that I call a pan-Latino identity. Within this dynamic Latinas create their community, making life easier for both men and women in the next generation. The work of Latin American women have made the foundation of a future community.

It is through the social construction of ethnicity that Corona's residents start to identify themselves as Latinos or Hispanos. It is through daily activities and political involvement that Latin American immigrants begin to find unity along new ethnic lines.

Chapter two discusses Latin American migration and the emergence of a pan-Latino identity. The chapter reviews literature on the causes and reasons of migration; the problem of Latin American ethnic identity from various perspectives; and the situation of Latin Americans in New York City and how waves from Latin America have affected residential and occupational concentration. Chapter two have different but connected conclusions. First, that migration flows from Latin American have been shaped by the expansion of modern capitalist relations in the countries of origin yet modern capitalist relations has taken different forms in each of these countries. This means that "none of these flows were

identical" (Chapter 2:49). Third, there are several factors shaping the ethnic identity of an heterogenous group of immigrants. These factors are: residential and occupational concentration of people from different countries of Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and the shared Spanish language.

Working class and middle class women leaders in the community of Corona interact in an ethnically diverse neighborhood. People from each of the countries of Latin American and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean share apartment buildings, take their children to the same schools, buy food in the same supermarkets, and grocery stores, buy clothing in the same stores, walk through the same streets, share the same post office, wash their clothes in the same Laundromat, and share the same work spaces.

Both working class and middle class women's objectives to organize and politicize the community are an extension of their roles as mothers and wives. These objectives are also permeated by an ethnic awareness. Different from assimilationist perspectives, ethnic solidarity is "often the only edge that immigrants and their descendants have to advance in the broader society." (Chapter 2: 36). Ethnicity and female consciousness interact to create what I call "ethnic female consciousness."

This study has told us about residential concentration of

people sharing the same language, Spanish, yet differentiated by national origins, migratory experiences, cultures, and skin colors. This study has shown how they found ways to develop common activities, through the activities of women with an "ethnic female consciousness." And it reflects and builds a pan-Latino identity.

2. I would say that both men and women are involved in politics and other activities in the community of Corona. However, it is women who are more visible. Women get involved in community affairs resulting from their "Female ethnic consciousness." Men on the contrary have the responsibility of breadwinner and do not have time to work for community affairs. Men are also busy building their own businesses and do not have time to work for community affairs. Men are more involved in foundriasing campaigns for the presidential elections of their countries of origin. When men get involved in activities in the host country is more related to a conventional definition of politics, i.e. party politics, elections, etc. Also men are more involved in sport politics in their communities. Men seeks personal recognition and are competitive with each other. Women, on the contrary have moved into important positions relating to serving the community and building networks and ways of collaboration among different people in the community.

3. None of the existing theories on ethnicity could explain the significance of the construction of a new Latino ethnicity by the Latinas of Corona, Queens. These theories have ignored the role of women in shaping Latino ethnicity and the forms that ethnicity takes in the everyday life of the community leaders and residents. Latino ethnicity in Corona was not given. It took the work of women from both middle and working class background. The way women interacted created this identity along with the role of churches, service organizations, cultural institutions, political bodies, and grass-root organizations. The construction of Latino ethnic identification has been the work of women of different class backgrounds while building the community through collaboration and networking, while interacting among each other, while providing service for community residents, and while creating a political voice for Latinos in Queens.

External society helped to the creation of this identity, lumping Latinos together in the same residential neighborhood and the same work places. But this is not enough. It needed the work of people. It needed the work of women.

It is an identity that celebrates the old culture and the diversity within unity found and created in a new social envionronment. It is an identity of sentimental attachment to

the new--found here--and the old--brought from there. The case of Aida Gonzalez illustrate this point, Ms Gonzales had on her desk at Borough Hall a clay pot brought from Ecuador with an American Flag inside. The new identity is tied up with affectional networks and images along with the material culture--food, popular music. In this sense, the complexity of affection, sentiments and images meet with the material culture.

4. Latino identity or Hispanic identity? Do people identify themselves as Hispanos or Latinos? Do people identify themselves as Dominicans, Colombians or Ecuadorian?

In Chapter 1 I argued that "Hispanic" was a label imposed upon immigrants by American society: it is an official terms that define a minority or racial status separating "Hispanics" from other official categories: White, Black, Asian. I also argued that people in Queens attached cultural meanings and values to their own national identities. In the United States these national identities can be interpretated as "ethnicity", much as European national identities are the basis of ethnic groups in the United States. But unlike European or Asian groups, the Latin American of diverse national identities all share one

language-Spanish. Spanish also has a cultural meaning and

value to these immigrants, and provides a basis of communication and potential organization across ethnic lines. During the time of my research people use to identify themselves as "Hispanos" and "Latinos" with no difference in the terms. More than a government policy people identify themselves with either term because it reflects unity and therefore political strength.

5. Latinas' involvement in cultural, service, and party politics have been successful in the community of Queens. There has been a positive consequence, being influential in getting resources and evolving organizations in the community. It also has been successful in developing political campaigns--the case of Nydia Velazquez. Latinas (women) have been successful, not Latinos (men). Women regardless of their class background create networks, identify affiliations and connections in creating the community and its identity. This study has shown that women's involvement has several characteristics. First, women make best use of their individual resources and as Loury (1977,1978) will say, they may also be seen as resources for the individual. Second, they believe in the importance of concrete personal relations and networks of relations in generating trust, in establishing expectations, and in creating and enforcing norms (Granovetter

1985). And third, these women use social resources (networking, affiliation, and collaboration) to achieve their goals. Networking, affiliation and collaboration is translated into what Coleman (1990, 1994a, 1994b), Loury (1977, 1978), and Putman (1993) have defined as ***social capital.***

Middle class men, on the other hand, define themselves according to their own individuality which make it more difficult to establish any form of collaboration or networking that could be translated into trust and obligation among each other. Latino males are more concerned with politics of the nations where they come from. There they are concerned about national and transnational politics. This kind of politics is very different from community politics that I described in Corona.

Different from other Latino communities, women in Corona have developed long lasting networks and ways of collaboration. My research was completed in 1988. In 1994 I attended the opening ceremony of a Latino Cultural organization at the Borough Hall of Queens. I noticed that almost the same women were still active, united, and working together politically. Compared with elsewhere where you experience fragmentation and lack of unity in the community. According to my research (Ricourt 1994) Washington Heights

politics (dominated by Dominican males) have been very successful, however, many of the networking and collaboration among different Dominican people in the community has been destroyed at different levels in the community.

Corona's model, however, is not to be taken in other Spanish-speaking communities. Corona's model is unique and deserves further study to identify the features responsible for its success. The outcomes of this research are unusual. Only further research on other communities will indicate which model appears to be more common. Only a comparative study could indicate the different social processes at work that can count for these two different models and that might yield to ideal types.

6. The influence of civic involvement on society and democracy relate to my work. The work of women in Corona illustrate concretely the significance of civic society and how it works. Latinas have created "social trenches" to fight discrimination, lack of service in the community and to create a political voice among Latinos in the United States society.

Walton's attempt to explain the relationship between civic involvement, civic society and democracy illustrate my point. According to Walton (1993) civic involvement has been essential in the creation of democracy in Eastern Europe. He

mentions the case of "Solidarity" in Poland and how people formed "social trenches" to fight authoritarism. Yet the role of gender is ignored by the author.

The role of women is essential in the creation of civil society. According to Haywood (1994) it is women who often create, maintain and sustain community and hence civic society.

Putman's example of Italy communities where civic involvement was essential in the advancement of these communities. Putman (1993) translated civic involvement into social capital and mention that social capital is as important as other form of capital.

Women's activities in Corona illustrate a source of social capital that contribute to the social wealth of the community and society in general.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bach, Robert. Migration, Crisis and Theoretical Conflict. In **International Migration Today.** 6(2): 320-341. 1984.

Badillo-Vega, A., J. Dewind, and J Preston. Undocumented Immigrant Workers in New York City. In **NACLA**, 13 (6):2-44, 1979.

Bahn, Adele and A. Jaquez. One Style of Dominican Bridal Shower. In **The Apple Sliced**, ed. Wernon Boggs et all. New York: Praeger. 1984.

Baxter, Sandra and Marjorie Lansing, **Women and Politics: The Invisible Majority.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1980.

Bean, Frank D., and Marta Tienda. **The Hispanic Population of the United States.** New York: Russell Sage Foundation. 1987.

Beijer, G., Modern Pattern of International Migratory Movements. In **Migration**, ed. J.A. Jackson. London: Cambridge University Press, 1969

Blant, James, Are Puerto Rican a National Majority? **The Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought.** 12 (2-3). 1977.

Blauner, R., **Racial Oppression in America.** New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Blegen, Theodore C., **Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860**, 2 Volumes. American Series, No. 37. New York: Haskell House Publisher, 1969.

Bonnet, Aubrey W., **Institutional Adaptation of West Indian Immigrants to America.** Washington: University Press of America. 1981.

Bookman, Ann; Sandra Morgen, eds., **Women and the Politics of Empowerment.** Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1984.

Boyd, Monica., Occupation of Female Immigrants and North American Immigration Statistics. **International Migration Review.** 10 (1):73-79, 1976

Bray, D., Economic Development: The Middle Class and International Migration in the Dominican Republic. **International Migration Review.** 18 (2): 217-236. 1984.

Bryce-Laporte, Roy Simon. New York City and the New Caribbean Migration: A contextual Statement. In **International Migration Review,** 13 (2): 215-233. 1979.

Carrillo, T., "The Women Movement and the Left in Mexico: The Presidential Candidacy of Dona Rosario Ibarra," in T. Cordova, N. Cantu, G. Cardenas, J. Garcia, and C. M. Sierra, eds., **Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender.** (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, Center for Mexican American Studies): 96-113. 1986.

Castillo-Speed, L., "Chicana Studies: A Selected List of Materials since 1980". **Frontiers,** (11)66-84. 1992.

Castro, Maria, "Women in Migration: Colombian Voices in the Big Apple. **Migration Today** 10(3/4): 22-32. 1982

Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos "The History Task Force". In "Labor Migration Under Capitalism". New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979.

Chaney, Elsa. "Colombian Migration to the United States." In **Dynamics of Migration,** Part 2. ICP Work Agreements. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, Interdisciplinary Communication Program. 1976.

Chaney, Elsa, and V. Sutton, eds. **Caribbean Life in New York City: Socio-cultural dimensions.** New York: Center for Migration Studies of New York. 1987.

Chen, Hsiang-shui, **Chinatown No More: Changing Patterns of Chinese Organization in Queens, New York City.** PhD dissertation, City University of New York. 1990.

Child, Irvin. **Italian or American: The Second Generation in Conflict.** New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943.

Cockburn, Cynthia, **The Local State.** London: Pinto Press. 1977.

Cohen, S., and S. Sassen-Koob. **Survey of Six Immigrant Groups in Queens, New York City.** New York: Department of Sociology, Queens College, CUNY. 1982.

Coleman, James S. Foundations of Social Theory. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1990.

_____, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." In **American Journal of Sociology**. Volume 94. 1994 (a).

_____, "Social Capital, Human Capital, and Investment in Youth." In **Youth Unemployment and Society**. Ed. Anne C. Petersen and Jeylan T. Mortiner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1994 (b).

Cruz, Carmen and Juanita Castano. Colombian Migration to the United States. **Smithsonian Institute**. Washington. Occasional Monograph Series, 2(5): 41-86. 1976.

Danta, Rosalia, **Conversion and Denominational Mobility: A Study of Latin American Protestants in Queens, New York**. MA thesis, Queens College, City University of New York. 1989a.

_____, "Latin Americans in Protestant Churches: Reaffirmation of Culture, or Acculturation?" In **Worship and Community: Christianity and Hinduism in Contemporary Queens**, Roger Sanjek, ed., 30-42. Flushing: Asian/ American Center, Queens College, CUNY. 1989b.

Davis, Angela, **Women, Race, and Class**. New York: Random House. 1981.

Doeringer, Peter and Michael Piore. **Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis**. Lexington, Mass.: Heath. 1971.

Eisenstein, Sara, **Give Us Bread But Give Us Roses**. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1983.

Evans, Sara. **Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left.** New York: knopf. 1978.

Fernandez-Kelly, Patricia. "Mexican Border Industrialization, Female Labor Force, Participation and Migration." In **Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor**. Ed. June Nash and Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1983.

Flammang, Janet, ed. **Political Women: Current Roles in States and Local Government**. California: Sage 1984.

Foley, D. E., C. Mota, D. E. Post, and I. Lozano. **From Peones to Politicos: Ethic Relations in a South Texas Town, 1900-1977.** Austin TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Center for Mexican American Studies. 1977

Freeman, Jo, **The Politics of Women Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relations to the Social Policy Process.** New York: Mc Kay. 1975.

Frank, Gunder. **Latin American: Underdevelopment or Revolution.** New York: Monthly Review Press. 1969.

Fuentes, Annette, "New York: Elusive Unity in La Gran Manzana". **Report on the Americas.** Published by NACLA, Vol. XXVI, Number 2, 1992.

Garcia, F. C., ed. **Latinos and the Political System.** Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 1988.

George, E. "Ethnic Associations and the Integration of New Immigrants: Dominicans in New York City." **NYU Occasional Papers.** No. 41, New York Research Program in Inter-American Affairs. 1984.

_____, **Development and Cultural Change in the Dominican Republic.** New York: Columbia University Press. 1990.

Glazer, Nathan. **Ethnic Dilemma 1964-1982.** Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Glazer, Nathan, and D. P. Moynihan, **Beyond the Melting Pot,** Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968.

Giddings, Paula **When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America.** New York: Morrow, 1984.

Githens, Marianne and Jewel Prestage, eds., **A Portrait of Marginality: The Political Behavior of the American Woman.** New York: Longman 1977.

Gomez-Quinones, J. **Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise 1940-1990.** Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1990.

Gonzalez, Nancy. Peasant Progress: Dominicans In New York." **Caribbean Studies.** 10:154-171. 1970.

_____, "Multiple Experiences of the Dominican Workers." In **Anthropological Quarterly**, 49 (1)36-44. 1976.

Gordon, David M. **Theories of Poverty and Underemployment: Orthodox, Radical, and Dual Labor Market Perspectives.** Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath. 1972.

Gordon, M. **Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins.** New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Granovetter, M., "Economic Action, Social Structure, and Embeddedness." **American Journal of Sociology.** 91:481-510. 1985.

Grasmuck, Sherri. "The Impact of Emigration on National Development: Three Sending Communities in the Dominican Republic." In **NYU Occasional Papers**, New York Research Program in Inter-American Affairs. 1982.

Grasmuck, Sherri and P. Pessar. **Between Two Islands.** Berkeley: University of California Press. 1991.

Greely, A. **The American Catholic: A Social Portrait.** New York: Basic Books, 1977.

_____, **Ethnicity in the United States.** New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.

Gregory, Steven, "Race, Rubbish and Resistance: Empowering Difference in Community Politics. **Cultural Anthropology** 8: 24-48. 1993.

_____, "The Changing Significance of Race and Class in an African American Community. **American Ethnologist** 19: 255-74. 1992

Gurak, D. and M. Kritz, Dominicans and Colombians in New York. **Migration Today**, 10 (3/4):16-21. 1982.

Guzman, R. **The Political Socialization of the Mexican American People.** New York: Arno Press. 1976.

Handlin, Oscar. **The American People in the Twentieth Century.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

Hardy-Fanta, C., **Latina Politics, Latino Politics. Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston.** Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1993.

Haywoode, Terry. Working Class Feminism: Creating a Politics of Community Connection and Concern." Paper Presented at the American Sociological Association Meeting. August, 1994.

Hendricks, Glenn. **The Dominican Diaspora: From the Dominican Republic to New York City-Villagers in Transition.** New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University. 1974.

Hirschman, Charles. " American Melting Pot Reconsidered". **Annual Review of Sociology**, 9: 397-423, 1982.

Holtzman, E., and S. Williams. "Women in the Political World: Observations," in J. K. Conway, S. c. Bourque, and J. W. Scott, eds., **Learning about Women: Gender, Politics, and Power.** Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Janiewski, Dorothy, **Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community.** Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1985

Jennings, J., and M. Rivera, eds. **Puerto Rican Politics in Urban America.** Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1984.

Kaplan, Telma, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918. **Signs** 7:545-566. 1982.

Kenneally, James, **Women and American Trade Unions.** St. Albans, VT: Eden Press. 1978.

Khandelwal, Madhulika, **Indian Immigrants in New York City: Patterns of Growth and Diversification, 1965-1990.** Doctor of Arts dissertation, Carnegie-Mellon University. 1991

Klein, Ethel, **Gender Politics From Consciousness to Mass Politics.** Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1984.

Latino Studies Journal. Edward Murgia and Phyllis Cancilla Martinelli Eds., 2 (3) 1991.

Lerner, Daniel. **The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East.** New York: The Free Press. 1965.

Lopez, Alberto and James Petras, **Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans.** Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1974

Mandel, Ruth, **In the Running: The New Woman Candidate.** New Haven: Tichnor and Fields. 1981.

Massey, Douglas. "Hispanic Residential Segregation: A Comparison of Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans". **Sociology and Social Research** 65 (311-22) 1981

Marshall, F. Ray. "Economic Factors Influencing the International Migration of Workers." In **Views Across the Border: The United States and Mexico.** Ed. Stanley Ross. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press. 1978.

Massey, Douglas. "Hispanic Residential Segregation: A Comparison of Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans." **Sociology and Social Research.** 65:311-322. 1981.

Melville, M. B., eds., **Twice a Minority: Mexican American Women.** St. Louis: C. V. Mosby. 1980.

Mirande, A., and E. Enriquez. **La Chicana: The Mexican American Women.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1979.

Murgia, Edward and Phyllis Cancilla Martinelli Eds., A Special Issue on Latino/Hispanic Ethnic Identity. **Latino Studies Journal**, 2 (3), 1991.

Nelson, Candance and Marta Tienda "The Structuring of Hispanic Ethnicity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives." **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 8 (1985): 49-74.

Olsak, Susan. "Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization" **Annual Review of Sociology**, 9: 355-74, 1980.

Padilla, Felix, **The Latino Ethic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago.** Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 1985.

_____, **Puerto Rican Chicago.** Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.

Pardo, M. "Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists" Mothers of East Los Angeles", **Frontiers**, (11): 1-7. 1990

Park, Kyeyoung, **The Korean American Dream: Ideology and Small Business in Queens, New York.** PhD dissertation, City University of New York. 1990

Pessar, Patricia. "The Role of Households in International Migration and the case of U.S. Bound Migration from the Dominican Republic." International Migration Review. 16 (2): 1982

_____, "The Dominicans: Women in the Household and the Garment Industry. In Forner ed. 1987(a).

_____, "The Linkage Between the Household and the Workplace of the Dominican Women in the U.S. In Sutton and Chaney eds., **Caribbean Life in New York City: Socio-Cultural Dimensions.** New York: Center for Migration Studies. 1987 (b).

Piore, M.J. **Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies.** New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979

Portes, Alejandro, "Return of the Wetbacks." **Society** 11 (March-April):40-49. 1974.

_____, "Migration and Underdevelopment." **Politics and Society** 8:1-48. 1978.

Portes, A. And J. Walton. **Labor, Class, and the International System.** New York: Academic Press. 1981

Portes, A., and R. Bach. **Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States.** Berkeley: university of California Press, 1985.

Portes, A., and C. Truelove, "Making Sense of Diversity: The Recent Research on Hispanic Minorities in the United States. **Annual Review of Sociology,** 13: 359-385, 1987.

Putman, Robert D., "The Prosperous Community. Social Capital and Public Life." In **The American Prospect.** Spring: 35-42. 1993.

Reimers, Cordelia W. "A Comparative Analysis of the Wages of Hispanics, Blacks, and Non-Hispanic Whites" In George J. Borjas and Marta Tienda, eds., **Hispanics in the U.S. Economy.** Orlando, Florida: Academic Press, 1985.

Rinehart, S. T. "Toward Women's Political Resocialization: Patterns of Predisposition in the Learning of Feminist Attitudes," in R. M. Kelly, Ed., **Gender and Socialization to Power and Politics.** New York: Haworth Press. 1988.

Rodriguez, Clara, "Economic Factors Affecting Puerto Ricans in New York". In **Labor Migration Under Capitalism.** New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979

Sacks, Karen, **Caring by the Hour. Women, Work, and Organizing at Duke Medical Center.** Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1988

Sanchez-Korrol, V. **From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948.** Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1983.

Sanjek, Roger, **"The People of Queens from Now to Then."** Flushing: Asian/American Center, Queens College. 1988

_____, "The Organization of Festivals and Ceremonies among Americans and Immigrants in Queens, New York. In **To Make The World Safe for Diversity: Towards an Understanding of Multi-Cultural Societies,** Ake Daun, Billy Ehn and Barbro Klein eds., 123-43. Stockholm: The Swedish Immigration Institute and Museum and the Ethnology Institute, Stockholm University. 1992

Santos, Theotonio Dos. Imperialismo y Dependencia. Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones Era. 1980.

Sassen-Koob, Saskia, "Exporting Capital and Importing Labor: The Role of Women. In Mortimer and Bryce-Laporte eds., 1981.

_____, "Labor Migration and the New International Division of Labor." In **Women, Men and the New International Division of Labor,** June Nash and H. Safa, eds. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1983.

_____, "Changing Composition and Labor Market Location of Hispanic Immigrants in New York City, 1960-1980." In George Borjas and Marta Tienda eds. **Hispanics in the U.S. Economy.** Orlando, Fl.: Academic Press, 1985.

Sassen, Saskia, "Why Migration?" **Report on the Americas.** NACLA Vol. XXVI, Number 1, July 1992.

Shorris, Earl, " Latinos: The Complexity of Identity". **Report On The Americas**. Published by NACLA. Volume XXVI Number 2, September 1992.

Suttles, G., **The Social Order of the Slum: Ethnic Territory in the Inner City**. Chicago: University Press, 1968.

Susser, I., **Norman Street. Poverty and Politics in an Urban Neighborhood**. New York: Oxford University Press. 1982.

Tabb, Willian, **The Long Default: New York City and the Urban Fiscal Crisis**. New York: Monthly Review Press. 1982.

Tilly Louise A.; Patricia Gurin eds., **Women, Politics and Change**. New York: Russell Sage Foundation 1990.

Thomas, William and Florjan Znaniecki. **The Polish Peasant in Europe and America**. 2 Vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918.

Totti, Xavier, " The Making of a Latino Ethnic Identity. **Dissent**, Fall 1987: 537-542.

Ugalde, A., F. Bean, and G. Cardena, "International Migration from the Dominican Republic: Findings from a National Survey. **International Migration Review**. 13 (2): 235-254. 1979.

Valle, Maria Eva, "The Quest for Ethnic Solidarity and a New Public Identity Among Chicanos and Latinos". **Latino Studies Journal**, 2 (3), 1991.

Velez-Ibanez, Carlos, **Bonds of Mutual Trust**. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press 1983.

Villarreal, R. E., N. G. Hernandez, and H. D. Neighbor. **Latino Empowerment: Progress, Problems, and Prospects**. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1988.

Waldinger, Roger, **Through the Eye of a Needle: Immigrants and Enterprise in New York's Garment Trades**. New York: University of New York Press. 1986.

_____, "Immigration and Industrial Change in the New York Apparel Industry". In George J. Borjas and Marta Tienda, eds. **Hispanic in the U.S. Economy**. Orlando, FL.: Academic Press, 1985.

Walton, John, **Sociology and Critical Inquiry: The Work, Traditions and Purpose.** Third Edition. Belmont, Cit.: Wadsworth Pub. Co. 1993.

Weber, Max. **Economy and Society.** Berkeley: University of California Press. 1968.

Wittke, R., **The Irish in America.** New York: Russell and Russell, 1970.

_____, **Refugees of Revolution: The Germans' 48ers in America,** Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1952.

Yinger, Milton, "Ethnicity", **Annual Review of Sociology,** 11: 151-80, 1985.

Yancey, William; Eugene Erickson; and Richard Juliani, "Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation". **American Sociological Review** 41: 1976: 391-403.