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**Consequences of interest group political mobilization: A case
study of the Puerto Rican Political Action Committee (PRPAC)
of Connecticut**

Cruz, Jose E., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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CONSEQUENCES OF INTEREST GROUP POLITICAL MOBILIZATION:
A CASE STUDY OF THE PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL ACTION
COMMITTEE (PRPAC) OF CONNECTICUT

by

JOSE E. CRUZ

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

1994

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Abstract

CONSEQUENCES OF INTEREST GROUP POLITICAL MOBILIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PRPAC) OF CONNECTICUT

by

José E. Cruz

Adviser: Professor John H. Mollenkopf

This dissertation analyzes the Hartford-based Puerto Rican Political Action Committee of Connecticut (PRPAC). It traces its origins and development and its impact within the Puerto Rican community and on the city of Hartford. PRPAC represented an instance of interest articulation mediated by ethnicity, a form of identity politics. Identity politics was the medium for and outcome of interest group political mobilization. Its consequences were both salutary and problematic. In Hartford's political-economic context ethnicity facilitated political agency and access to power but it also limited the extent to which Puerto Ricans were able to exert coalition power. This was compounded by non-ethnic factors such as PRPAC's mobilization strategy, the character of its relations with individuals and institutions, features of the policy process, and the disconnect between campaigning and governing. We conclude that interest articulation is determined by the strategy, focus, and structure of political action. Also, we find that while there is a positive relationship between identity and power, in a polarized political setting, pluralist power succession is problematic.

Acknowledgements

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I am also grateful to many individuals who helped me and/or sustained me along the way. I cannot name them all but all have my deepest thanks. I am especially grateful to: Jeffrey Gerson, Olga Jiménez-Wagenheim, Jennifer Kaylin, Felipe Pimentel, Lucy Potter, Doris Suarez, Louise Simmons, and Stephanie Wiles.

My work at The National Puerto Rican Coalition (NPRC) brought me to Hartford and facilitated access to key political actors in the city. The role my tenure at NPRC played in the development and completion of this dissertation is a good case study of the interplay between interests and institutions and also an instance of identity politics that is best described by the technique known to artists as *mise-en-abîme*.

Special thanks go to Pedro Juan Hernández, the archivist at the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs in the United States, and his staff, Carlos Bruno, Felipe Morales Millán, and Catrize Ortiz, who kindly guided me through seventy boxes of documents on Puerto Ricans in Hartford housed in the Department's collection. My appreciation also goes to all the individuals in Hartford who graciously consented to share their knowledge about Puerto Rican and Hartford politics with me. I thank especially Edwin Vargas, Jr. for his unconditional willingness to share his experience.

In the course of this research I found that closets and basements were repositories of substantial holdings on Puerto Ricans in the city, and these were typically kept in mind-boggling disarray in dusty boxes, file cabinets, and other odd containers. This dissertation has rescued some of the history that now dissolves slowly in these unlikely repositories. Hopefully the Connecticut Historical Society or a like-minded institution will do something about this soon, before the rest disintegrates into oblivion. I thank Juan Brito and Juan Fuentes for giving me generous access to their invaluable collection of newspapers and photographs. Eddie Pérez, from Trinity College, facilitated the field work by arranging accommodations at Trinity during a one-week stay in Hartford. Nick Nyhart, executive director of the Legislative Electoral Action Program (LEAP) in Hartford, generously allowed me to do

substantial xeroxing of LEAP's extensive clippings collection at no charge. John Rogan, area director of the New England Farmworkers Council (NEFC), also shared generously materials from NEFC's files.

No one is more important to me and no one has been more important to my work than my parents, relatives, and children. I dedicate this work to my extended family as a humble recognition of the fact that without them I am nothing.

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Chapter 1 - Consequences of Interest Group Political Mobilization: Framework of the Study

Introduction

To assess the consequences of interest group political mobilization this dissertation analyzes the Hartford-based Puerto Rican Political Action Committee of Connecticut (PRPAC). It traces the origins and development of this group and its impact within the Puerto Rican community and on the city of Hartford. PRPAC represented an instance of interest articulation mediated by ethnicity, a form of identity politics. In this case, identity politics was both the medium for and outcome of interest group political mobilization. Its consequences were both salutary and problematic.

In Hartford's political-economic context ethnicity facilitated political agency and access but it also limited the extent to which public policy served as an instrument of power. This limitation was compounded by non-ethnic factors such as PRPAC's mobilization strategy, the character of its relations with individuals and institutions, features of the policy process, and the disconnect between campaigning and governing. We conclude that interest articulation was determined by the strategy, focus, and structure of political action. Also, we find that while there is a positive relationship between identity and power, in a polarized political setting, pluralist power succession is problematic.

As an embedded case-study, the analysis of PRPAC is

nested within two additional analytical units: the Puerto Rican community in Hartford and the city itself. Although each chapter is written chronologically, the overall exposition is thematic. We begin with a review of Hartford's history, followed by a political history of the Puerto Rican community in the city. We look at the city as a changing commonwealth and Puerto Rican political development as the expression of two interrelated transitions: from ethnic awareness to power awareness and from interests to interest group. We define ethnic awareness as a sense of self that is shaped by the politics of place, that is, by the types of relationships that emerge in a particular socio-political setting. Power awareness refers to a sense of how certain actors come to be favored by the polity.¹ The notion of interest assumes a distinct community with social, cultural, political, and economic needs. The notion of interest group assumes that these needs become salient and are formally articulated in the political process. We argue that ethnicity was the substance of interest articulation and its forms were collective action, brokered representation, and interest group mobilization.

Why Hartford? Why PRPAC?

Because we used Puerto Ricans as a case study, it was appropriate to explore our hypotheses in a political setting

1. The notion of power awareness was suggested to me by Lloyd Rogler, *Migrant in the City; The Life of a Puerto Rican Action Group* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 5.

that would yield the most representative results. The selection of a medium-sized city, such as Hartford, was thus justified. Since Puerto Ricans arrived on the mainland, New York City has been the central locus of research about this group.² Before 1980 the majority of Puerto Ricans lived in New York City. The 1980 census, however, revealed that while New York had the largest community on the mainland, the majority of Puerto Ricans lived in other states throughout the country. The 1990 census shows that only one third of Puerto Ricans in the United States live in New York City compared to 43 percent in 1980. During this period growth was most pronounced in medium-sized cities, that is, jurisdictions with populations between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants, such as Hartford. While the Puerto Rican experience elsewhere has been

2. Puerto Ricans have lived in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. In 1844 the family of José de Rivera moved from New York to Bridgeport, Connecticut. According to the 1860 census for New Haven there were 10 Puerto Ricans in the city one of which appears to have fought in the Civil War. v. Helen Harrison, "Edward Johnson House," *Bridgeport Daily Standard*, 31 October 1914; Neil Hogan, "The Actual Enumeration: New Haven and the U.S. Census," *Journal*, The New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1991, pp. 9, 17.

analyzed,³ relatively speaking, little is known about Puerto Rican enclaves outside of New York City.

The concentration of Puerto Ricans in smaller urban (and in some cases, suburban) settings impinges upon the notion that the study of the New York Puerto Rican community is sufficient to understand the Puerto Rican experience elsewhere in the United States. The New York experience is hardly the Puerto Rican experience writ large, as Fitzpatrick has stated.⁴ In other words, the appropriateness of a focus on New York City must be questioned if the idea is to generate insights relevant to the study of Puerto Ricans in other places. As Angelo Falcón has noted, the New York experience is "limited and...it may in fact be unique, imposing an

3. v. e.g. Anne Akulicz de Santiago, *The Puerto Rican Community of Milwaukee: A Study of Geographic Mobility* (Milwaukee, WI: Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1980); Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, *Organizing Puerto Rican Migrant Farmworkers: The Experience of Puerto Ricans in New Jersey* (New York: P. Lang, 1988); Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Mirén Uriarte-Gastón, *Organizing for Survival: The Emergence of a Puerto Rican Community*, Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1988.

4. Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans, The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 76. Although a decade later he recognized the new pattern, its implications were not explored. v. Joseph P. Fitzpatrick and Lourdes Travieso-Parker, "Hispanic Americans in the Eastern United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (March 1981), pp. 98-110.

inappropriate model on the other half of the Puerto Rican people in the United States."⁵

In terms of size, New York City compares somewhat to only three of the 21 cities with the largest Puerto Rican populations in the United States (Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia). Hartford is comparable to seven of these cities (Bridgeport, CT; Elizabeth, NJ; New Haven, CT; Orlando, FL; Paterson, NJ; Springfield, MA; Yonkers, NY). In terms of the proportion of the total population that is Puerto Rican in comparable cities, New York compares to none while Hartford compares with Bridgeport and Paterson. On the other hand, while New York is the only big city where the Puerto Rican population is over 10 percent of the total population, there are 12 medium-sized cities with Puerto Rican populations that are at least 10 percent of the total. (see Table 1)

The Puerto Rican experience in the United States is increasingly framed by the parameters of life in these cities. While these parameters do not necessarily have a differential effect on aggregate socio-economic status, they can have an impact on political participation and representation. If that is the case, Hartford could be more useful than New York to understand the Puerto Rican experience in the United States.

5. Angelo Falcón, "A History of Puerto Rican Politics in New York City: 1860s to 1945," in James Jennings and Monte Rivera, eds. *Puerto Rican Politics in Urban America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 39.

We chose to study PRPAC because as "an organized body of individuals who share some goals and try to influence public policy"⁶ it fits the category of an interest group. Also, PRPAC provided a good case in point to explore the consequences of interest group political mobilization as a form of identity politics. We were interested in knowing the role ethnicity played in the process of interest articulation. To put it differently, we wanted to explore the relationship between identity and power. Does identity politics facilitate access to power? If so, what is the context in which it is most effective? As an expression of particularism, what are its dangers? PRPAC provides a good proxy to answer these questions. Our answers are offered not as universalistic dictates, but as partially explanatory yet highly suggestive statements.

This analysis adds to the body of knowledge on Puerto Rican politics in American urban settings; it provides information useful to inter-city and inter-group comparisons regarding interest group political mobilization, and helps answer questions concerning the nature of the political process, the proper role of actors, and the relationship between the civil and political society. The study also helps understand the politics of Hartford and highlights interesting features of its political process.

6. Jeffrey Berry, *The Interest Group Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), p. 5.

Framework of the Study

PRPAC's history must be understood in the context of Hartford's political system. While the concept of political system is usually understood to mean the structure of governance, the character of extra-governmental pressures (the party system, interests groups, and so on) and the orientation of policy,⁷ we explore Hartford as a politico-cultural setting. This means that we review the city's history in order to provide broad characterizations of its political culture and to establish the place the Puerto Rican community has occupied within it. This analysis covers up to the post-World War II period. The development of the Puerto Rican community is analyzed from 1950 to 1991.

We begin at Hartford's founding in 1636 because past and present are always intertwined. History can be at times linear, sometimes cyclical, and it can also move in a spiral--what is lived today is all but an earlier drama taking place at a higher level. History can also be regression; Santayana's oft repeated statement about the conditions in which the reiteration of history becomes inevitable is well-known but it nevertheless needs to be established. In the process of doing so the analyst uncovers the continuity, or lack thereof, of history and thus reveals precedents, parallels, new

7. v. V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, 4th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1958), p. 158.

information, fresh (or old) insights which can help current actors formulate prescriptions for future action.⁸

In Hartford, the WASP-Republican tradition has confronted immigrants ever since the Irish began to arrive. Immigrant groups in turn have incorporated elements of that tradition and have clashed with many of its continuities as well. It is thus critical to bring a new generation face to face with its heritage. An honest account of one's predecessors can be a sobering influence on how one thinks about current predicaments and challenges, and, more importantly, on how one decides to tackle them.⁹ If change is a matter of choosing among competing options through communicative action one should know one's way around history in order to decide what to keep and what to toss out.

As to the study of the Puerto Rican community the starting point is obligatory: the Puerto Rican settlement in Hartford began to coalesce as a fledgling community during the 1950s. It is important to review the political development of this community to show the protracted nature of interest

8. A similar point is made by Salisbury in "Urban Politics: The New Convergence of Power." v. Robert H. Salisbury, *Interests and Institutions, Substance and Structure in American Politics* (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), p. 262.

9. For a somewhat similar point v. Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven M. Tipton, *The Good Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 174.

articulation and how it responds to both endogenous and exogenous factors.

The choice of a cut-off date is more deliberate. By 1991 PRPAC had ostensibly become the most significant force in Hartford's electoral politics and some public policy outcomes could be assessed. By the end of 1990, the Puerto Rican representatives at the state and city council level had completed two terms in office. While this is by no means a sufficiently extended period of time to allow for a measure of significant policy impacts, it is a reasonable time in which to begin to gauge the policy initiatives brought about by the Puerto Rican representatives and their linkage to PRPAC, as well as changes in the political and cultural climate of the city associated with PRPAC's brand of identity politics.

Research Questions

The questions this study answers are: What does the experience of PRPAC say about the political mobilization of Puerto Ricans in Hartford? What is the impact of such mobilization on public policy? What judgements can be made about its consequences? Puerto Rican political representation has increased significantly in a short span--how has this happened? What are the implications for the concept of power?

Descriptive Hypotheses

These questions will be examined in reference to four hypotheses. First, While Puerto Rican political mobilization in Hartford follows a path that is unique to their place

within the city's political system, there are important similarities between the Puerto Rican experience and more general models of political mobilization.

The political mobilization of a group occurs in the context of the political system but also in relationship to the characteristics such group brings to bear upon the political setting. In the Puerto Rican case, the responses the political system has shaped can be summarized as machine, moderate, and militant models of political mobilization. Baver has defined these respectively as styles based on: 1. the political manipulation of voters through control of social service delivery networks and patronage; 2. bargaining and compromise, using reform movements within the Democratic Party as point of entry; and, 3. bargaining and compromise combined with demand-protest actions that confront partisan structures and the policy establishment head-on.¹⁰

Background characteristics of Puerto Ricans have shaped a mainland/homeland dilemma which is typical of immigrant communities. The resulting ambivalence was described by Glazer and Moynihan in *Beyond the Melting Pot*. There they suggested that Puerto Ricans in New York would not organize as rapidly and effectively as other groups because their attitude of dependency towards a paternalistic government of Puerto Rico

10. v. Sherrie Baver, "Puerto Rican Politics in New York City: The Post-World War II Period," in Jennings and Rivera, *Op. cit.*, pp. 43-59.

was transferred to the government of the city.¹¹ While Estades provided some evidence to refute this thesis,¹² the notion of a dual allegiance has fostered models of political mobilization based on the distinction between mainland- and island-centered agendas. According to Jennings, island-centered political mobilization has been the dominant mode of organization and action throughout Puerto Rican communities for the better part of the twentieth century. He dates mainland-centered political mobilization to the 1970s.¹³

Second, the entry of PRPAC into the policy-making sphere has not been destructive of political responsibility.

According to Lowi interest-group liberalism compromises the state's responsibility to the general interest. He argues that once the policy-making power of the state is surrendered to outside parties conflict-of-interest becomes entrenched as a principle of government.

With this argument he echoes Madison's position (which is also elaborated by Locke) that no faction should be judge and

11. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot; The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1970), pp. 108-110.

12. v. Rosa Estades, *Patterns of Political Participation of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Rio Piedras, PR: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1978), pp. 35, 86.

13. v. James Jennings, "Introduction: The Emergence of Puerto Rican Electoral Activism in Urban America," in Jennings and Rivera, *Op. cit.*, pp. 3-12.

party to its own cause.¹⁴ In cases where a policy output produces a program "split off with a special imperium to govern itself"¹⁵ the boundary between judge and party is lost and the group endowed with the mandate becomes a "structure of power with impressive capacities to resist central political control."¹⁶ Once central political control is undermined political responsibility withers and is ultimately obliterated.

Third, extra-partisan inputs provided by PRPAC have been inclusive at the levels of participation, definition, and accountability.

In his discussion of these levels of policy-making Lowi presents a three-fold argument against extra-partisan inputs. First, to the extent that these inputs take place, participation must be delineated according to the interests represented. Lowi sees the tendency of groups to exert influence beyond their membership (or constituency) as a "conspiracy to shut the public out."¹⁷

14. Federalist #10, *The Federalist Papers*, intr. by Clinton Rossiter (New York: Mentor Books, 1961), p. 79; John Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government," in *Social Contract*, intr. by Sir Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 73.

15. Theodore J. Lowi, "The Public Philosophy: Interest Group Liberalism," in Pietro S. Nivola and David H. Rosenbloom, eds. *Classic Readings in American Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 279.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

Second, for policy definition to be inclusive it must be laid out along amorphous lines. The argument here is that definitions that follow the outline established by particular groups prevent the formulation of alternative definitions laid out according to universal criteria.

Lastly, to be meaningful accountability must be substantive as well as functional. This means that policy outputs must be subject to the authority of public officials lest their evaluation be based on narrow, self-serving criteria.

Fourth, rather than creating privilege, PRPAC has broadened the sphere of representation for Puerto Ricans. Their actions cannot be described as conservative; they have shifted the balance of political inequality.

Do groups such as PRPAC ultimately create privilege? One answer is that they do so by introducing hierarchy within the society. According to Lowi this is a consequence of interest-group legitimacy. "The more clear and legitimized the representation of a group or its leaders in policy formation," he writes, "the less voluntary is membership in that group and the more necessary is loyalty to its leadership for people who share the interests in question. And, the more clear the official practice of recognizing only organized interests, the more hierarchy is introduced into the society."¹⁸

18. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

Another question is, can these groups be described as conservative? Conservatism here is understood as an attitudinal pattern, an ideology, and a set of practices that weakens the foundation of popular government by shutting the public out, by substituting elites for masses, and by resisting innovation and change.

Review of the Literature: Theoretical Frameworks

The questions of what interests are, what role they ought to play, and what consequences different forms of interest articulation have, concerned some of the greatest political theorists of all time. In America the problem of interest groups also has a large history.

Four theoretical frameworks are relevant to the question of how interests are articulated and achieve access to power. Power elite theories emphasize hierarchical arrangements in which command and control functions flow from the top and economic interests are paramount.¹⁹ In the pluralist view, political processes are open-ended, interests are diffused, and no single interest holds a permanent monopoly on the command and control functions of power.²⁰ Neo-corporatism,

19. v., e.g., C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); Arnold M. Rose, *The Power Structure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953); G. William Domhoff, *Who Really Rules* (Santa Monica: Goodyear Publishing, 1978).

20. v., e.g., Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Edward Banfield, *Political Influence* (Glencoe, IL: The

a 1970s development, suggests that the state can undercut the autonomy of interests by deliberately creating and institutionalizing groups. It grants them input prerogatives in exchange for surrender of control over their agenda.²¹ Neo-corporatist theory distinguishes between interest articulation and interest intermediation; the former implies process, the latter action. Lastly, the "dominant political coalition" approach is relevant to the question of interest articulation and interest representation through power. This approach, rather than deny the pluralist possibility of access, qualifies the process by specifying how the level of resource capability of political actors shapes and influences the rules that govern how coalitions become dominant, how they favor certain interests, and the conditions under which they either persist or decay.²²

Free Press, 1961); Nelson Polsby, *Community Power and Political Structure* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Robert J. Wast, *Power and Pluralism in American Cities* (New York, Westport, CT, London: Greenwood Press, 1987).

21. v., e.g., Phillipe Schmitter, "Modes of Interest Intermediation and Models of Social Change in Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies*, 10: 1 (April 1977), pp. 7-38 and "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *Review of Politics* 36 (January 1974), pp. 85-131; Leo Panitch, "Recent Theorizations of Corporatism: Reflections on a Growth Industry," *British Journal of Sociology*, 31: 2 (June 1980), pp. 159-187.

22. v. e.g. John H. Mollenkopf, *A Phoenix in the Ashes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), especially Chapter 2; Clarence N. Stone, *Economic Growth and Neighborhood Discontent* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976) and *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1964-1988* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

Each framework is laden with assumptions that suggest how and which interests will access power. In power elite theory the game is rigged in favor of certain players. The pluralist model suggests a fair play among interests. Neo-corporatism is a mixed-outcome model in which universal access to power is tainted by state control of both process and action. The dominant political coalition approach sees a continuous structure of influence and power infrequently penetrated but not altogether impervious to challenge.

Insofar as hierarchical control, self-determination, co-optation, stability, and change co-exist within political systems, all four theories have something to contribute. Peterson made this point when he argued that the different approaches to the study of community power all "have captured one aspect of local politics."²³ In fact, these distinctions sometimes fail to hold in the work of the theorists within one or another camp. Stone argues, for example, that one can find elements of diffusion and instability in Hunter's concept of community power²⁴ and his own work is not a total rejection of pluralism²⁵ but an attempt to break the elitist-pluralist impasse.²⁶

23. Paul E. Peterson, *City Limits* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 5.

24. Stone, *Economic Growth...*, fn. 16, p. 228.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

26. Stone, *Regime Politics...*, p. xi.

Review of the Literature: Assessments

Assessments of interest group political mobilization cover the gamut from Panglossian to Martinesque.²⁷ The positions taken by Madison and Calhoun stand within the middle range of such conflicting assessments, with Madison arguing that the political mobilization of interests--known to him as factions--introduce a spirit of partisanship in tension with the public interest and Calhoun arguing that government is bound to incorporate all groups within the society by giving each interest "either a concurrent voice in making and executing the laws, or a veto on their execution."²⁸ States, not social groups, were Calhoun's analytical unit and he emphasized the veto power. But as a principle he agreed that the popular will was best articulated by interest groups. He concluded that if all groups partook of the policymaking process all individual interests would be served.

Other assessments include Truman's, who suggests that while group claims make public policy incoherent this helps assure the viability rather than the decomposition of the political system in the long run. Political instability and disruption, he argues, is in no way "inherently a consequence

27. In Voltaire's *Candide*, the reader might recall, Martin is the dejected scholar whose staunch pessimism does not allow him to see any good whatsoever in human affairs.

28. John C. Calhoun, *A Disquisition on Government*, excerpted in Bernard E. Brown, *Great American Political Thinkers*, vol. 2 (New York: Avon Books, 1983), p. 24.

of the existence of such groups," while it might result from not recognizing the legitimacy of group claims.²⁹ According to Key, interest groups perform a necessary representative function. They reduce the scope of possible conflict by sparing the government the task of ironing out differences within issues and within groups; the government is left with the task of mediating between opposing groups. While he recognizes the oligarchic tendencies of the pressure system, these are not inevitable. "If the system of organized groups did not exist," he concludes, "it would have to be contrived."³⁰

Schattschneider qualifies the representative function of interest groups. He writes that "The notion that the pressure system is automatically representative of the whole community is a myth....Pressure politics is a selective process ill designed to serve diffuse interests."³¹ Interest group mobilization is a skewed process with a distinctive upper class bias. In *Who Governs?* Dahl found a pattern of resource allocation that gave certain interests privileged access to power. He argued, however, that this did not translate into absolute control over politics because the pattern was one of

29. David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 517, 523-24.

30. Key, *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-160, 162-163, 166.

31. E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press, 1960), p. 35.

dispersed inequalities.³² Lowi, on the other hand, argues that interest group political mobilization leads to the "parceling out [of] public authority to private parties,"³³ which makes government a holding company for partial interests.

Other inquiries into the consequences of interest group political mobilization emphasize either mixed or positive outcomes. Mollenkopf, for example, sees interest group political mobilization as a process of group development with important impacts on policy making. These effects, he argues, are contingent, that is, determined by "the structure of interest and power which encases the particular issue."³⁴ Browning, Marshall, and Tabb assume that political equality depends on interest representation in public policy and thus articulate a theory of political incorporation that attempts to specify the mechanisms that will make political representation more likely.³⁵ Berry recognizes that the growth of interest group politics has furthered the democratic

32. v. Dahl, *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

33. Lowi, *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

34. John H. Mollenkopf, "On the Causes and Consequences of Political Mobilization," Paper prepared for delivery at the 1973 meeting of the American Political Science Association, p. 20.

35. Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall and David H. Tabb, *Protest is not Enough, The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 240-242.

process by broadening representation although at some cost to the political system,³⁶ a position shared by Dahl.³⁷ Gittell concludes that organized group action makes better citizens of engaged individuals and promotes more responsive public policies.³⁸ In a similar vein, Salisbury suggests that "whatever malaise the American polity has lately suffered from interest-based politics," might be traceable to the weakness rather than strength of membership-based interest groups.³⁹ This a point akin to the general thrust of the work of Walker and his associates who argue that the interest group system "allows for the expression of concern about emerging new problems" thus making the political system more responsive and adaptive.⁴⁰

On the role ethnicity plays in the mobilization of interest groups we find a variety of emphases. To the questions, does ethnicity facilitate access to power? and, what are the consequences of interest group political

36. Berry, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

37. Robert A. Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 1, 31.

38. Marilyn Gittell, *Limits to Citizen Participation* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 21.

39. Salisbury, "Interest Representation: The Dominance of Institutions," *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

40. v. Jack L. Walker, Jr., *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp. 13-14.

mobilization as a form of identity politics?, the literature gives various answers.

In general, the premium that the political culture puts on unity out of diversity--e pluribus unum--is reflected in analyses that emphasize how multi-culturalism transforms into homogeneity. This emphasis has affected the analysis of ethnicity in American politics. In urban theory the quintessential exponent of this emphasis was the Chicago School with its view of immigrant social life in the inner city as a "unilinear process of assimilation."⁴¹

Writing in 1964, Milton Gordon declared that the study of the nature of group life itself--ethnic, racial, and religious--had been substantially neglected.⁴² He argued that the salient fact in American inter-group relations was structural separation alongside cultural assimilation,⁴³ but in his formulation of some of the issues raised by ethnic relations in the United States in the 1980s, the emphasis on the extent to which the dominant culture successfully obliterated otherness could still be felt.⁴⁴ A decade later

41. David Ward, *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City, 1840-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 170.

42. Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 1, 6.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

44. Milton Gordon, ed. "America as a Multicultural Society," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (March 1981), p. viii.

analysts continued to dread the centrifugal effects of difference, especially in view of the antagonistic emphasis of certain versions of identity politics.⁴⁵

According to Clara Rodríguez, in life as well as in research, ethnicity has been suppressed. This is so due to the mutually reinforcing combination of socialization pressures and deeply ingrained prejudice.⁴⁶ Yet the extensive literature that Rodríguez herself cites shows that ethnicity has been given a great deal of attention by researchers. What is true is that there has been a tension between celebrations and dismissals of ethnicity, as well as middle-of-the road approaches in which it is neither seen as an indelible value or an aberration.

Banfield and Wilson see ethnicity as part of a general cultural ethos that compromises the principles of "good government." They find ethnicity most effective politically among lower class groups in a context of weak party organization. Larger and more concentrated groups have higher voting turnout and thus are more effective in the process of

45. v. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Eleanor Heartney, "Identity Politics at the Whitney," *Art in America* (May 1993), pp. 42-47; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), pp. xxv, xxvi and *passim*. According to Said, however, identity can also lead to integration if it allows the outcasts find a place for themselves in the society. v. pp. xxvi, 312-315. Said's narrative is world-historical but it nonetheless applies.

46. Clara E. Rodríguez, *Puerto Ricans, Born in the U.S.A.* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 50.

power.⁴⁷ Glazer and Moynihan argue that ethnicity is an affective tie that facilitates the articulation of interests and gives the state a criteria to disaggregate distributive shares.⁴⁸ The facilitating thesis is seconded by Bailey and Katz who specify the strength of ethnicity not in its inner sources but in the "discriminatory practices of the majority,"⁴⁹ thus suggesting that identity politics can make power more responsive by forcing it to rectify such practices. Cummings adds a class focus to the "victimization" approach to argue that ethnicity fosters a brand of urban liberalism rooted in the principles of political equality and economic justice.⁵⁰ Portes and Bach advance the notion of ethnicity as a resource that abets socio-economic mobility⁵¹ while de la Garza, et.al. found ethnicity to be a divisive concept that

47. Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson, *City Politics*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 46, 95, 131, 170, 171, 230.

48. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity, Theory and Experience*, Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 8, 15.

49. Harry A. Bailey and Ellis Katz, "Ethnic Groups and Political Behavior," in *Ethnic Group Politics*, Harry A. Bailey and Ellis Katz, eds. (Columbus, OH: Merrill Political Science Series, 1969), p. 60.

50. Scott Cummings, *Immigrant Minorities and the Urban Working Class* (Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, 1983), pp. 8, 9, 126.

51. Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

shaped negative Anglo attitudes towards Mexican-Americans. They also found, however, that it was a tool used by the latter to secure economic and political benefits.⁵²

In sum, in the literature on interest groups the observed consequences of interest group political mobilization are multiple. Some analysts view interest group political mobilization as the process through which the public interest is defined; it broadens representation, and corrects the biases of public policy. Others agree that it illustrates the contingent character of the process of power, that it is the venue for fruitful policy trade-offs, but does not necessarily improve the democratic process. A third assessment is that it introduces partial and temporary considerations into the process of government, reduces and impairs state capacity, and accounts for democratic dysfunctions.

As to the role ethnicity plays, in some cases it is seen as a negative factor. That is, it distorts the political process by undermining policies that focus on the public interest. As a deviation from a universal set of values, ethnicity exacerbates conflict and promises only disharmony. On the other hand, ethnicity is thought to provide a criteria that sharpens the focus of public policy and thus allows the

52. Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Robert D. Wrinkle, and Jerry L. Polinard, "Ethnicity and Policy: The Mexican American Perspective," in *Latinos and the Political System*, F. Chris Garcia, ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 438.

state to better serve an heterogenous population with diverse needs. And finally, in the view of some, ethnicity can provoke divisions but it also enriches liberal ideology and practice.

Definitive conclusions regarding the role and impact of the pressure system are difficult to formulate on the basis of the extant literature. The assessments offered cover the gamut of possible judgments from positive evaluations, to mixed reviews, to forceful indictments. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is either beneficial or pathological, with a middle-ground of assessments that see it as a condition that produces mixed outcomes.

Is it possible that there might be a kernel of truth in all these assessments? Here we use them as a frame of reference to specify how identity politics broadens representation, the degree to which it corrects the biases of public policy, whether it undermines political responsibility, the extent to which it reinforces conservatism, and its implications for the concept of power. As noted above, a focus on PRPAC will yield answers that are specific to Puerto Ricans in Hartford.

Organizing Concepts

The discussion that follows seeks to specify our understanding of key concepts in a minimal way. The emphasis is methodological rather than substantive. In other words, our purpose is to lay out the rudiments of our approach to the

subject at hand and to explain, albeit cursorily, the key terms in our conceptual vocabulary.

Our narrative draws from the pluralist and dominant political coalition approaches to the study of urban politics. From pluralism we incorporate the proposition that all groups within the society can at some point be part of the political decision-making process and thereby have access to power. From the dominant political coalition approach we integrate the notion that political action is shaped by the configuration of systemic settings.⁵³ From these two notions we derive two propositions: 1. that the building blocks of political action are the various sets of interests and interactions operating within state, society, and market; and 2. whether a certain group will be able to access power at a given point in time depends on how it reconciles what it is capable of doing with what the systemic setting allows.

Capability is substantiated through interest articulation and feasibility is measured by how interest articulation produces political effects. In the context of our case study, we conceptualize the interplay between capability and feasibility as a transition from ethnic awareness to power awareness and from interests to interest group. This is a process of incorporation which, following Shefter, we define

53. Mollenkopf, *A Phoenix in the Ashes*, pp. 37-43.

in terms of accommodation and stability⁵⁴ rather than effective representation of interests in policy making.⁵⁵ Incorporation thus indicates relations within the social, political, and economic arenas of the polity and presupposes acceptance of prevalent behavioral norms, and a functional level of personal satisfaction. It can entail assimilation but does not require it; and it does not preclude access to power and/or influence over public policy.

Kathleen Neils Conzen refers to some of these criteria as "significant stages" in a process of integration. By referring to one of these "stages" as "absorption into the economy" she seems to suggest that integration requires insertion into the labor market.⁵⁶ We do not see them as stages at all. Even though we do establish several analytical distinctions in the narrative that follows (e.g. settlement- collective action- brokered representation, and so on) we assume that different forms of interest articulation exist simultaneously and that the inner transitions that interest articulation entails are

54. v. Martin Shefter, "Political Incorporation and Containment: Regime Transformation in New York City," in John H. Mollenkopf, *Power, Culture, and Place*, (New York: Russell Sage, 1988) pp. 135-157.

55. v. Browning, et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

56. v. *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836-1860* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 2.

not evolutionary.⁵⁷ Also, we do not make labor market attachment a test of incorporation. For our purposes the important question is whether interests are articulated as claims to be satisfied through the political process.

According to Moe, interest articulation occurs in two basic arenas. In the electoral arena, the focus of action is representation. In the public policy arena, action focuses on who gets what.⁵⁸ While this is a useful distinction there are instances of interest articulation that combine interest representation (electoral emphasis) and interest advocacy (public policy emphasis). In the example of PRPAC we find attempts to merge both approaches in the continuity of praxis across electoral and institutional settings.

Glazer and Moynihan argue that what makes an ethnic interest group different from a mere interest group is the affective tie that ethnicity provides.⁵⁹ Ethnicity gives the process of interest articulation an added dimension without excluding the advancement of interests as an important outcome. Our contention is that this dimension is not merely

57. For a critique of the major assumptions of evolutionary approaches with a focus on Marx, v. Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 22-23 and Chapters 3 and 4.

58. v. Terry Moe, *The Organization of Interests: Incentives and the Internal Dynamics of Political Interest Groups* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) pp. 1-2.

59. Glazer and Moynihan, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

affective; in other words it also incorporates rational-instrumental parameters. Also, it should not be dismissed or feared as passion. Instead, it should be welcomed, albeit with trepidation, as a social and political phenomenon that has important effects. It triggers, legitimizes, and structures political action but it can also place limitations on the extent to which action can have substantive effects.

Next Steps

Within this framework we now proceed to substantiate our case. The following chapter reviews Hartford's history with a view towards placing the Puerto Rican element in the city in its proper context. Chapters three and four trace the political development of the Puerto Rican community in the city. Chapter five continues this analysis by focusing on PRPAC. The final chapter outlines our assessment of interest group political mobilization.

Ultimately, this study is an attempt to take a realistic look at interest group mobilization as an expression of identity claims. Over fifty years ago, V.O. Key warned against the pitfalls of particularism.⁶⁰ Many have echoed his admonitions since and we embrace all the well-known reservations about the predominance of partiality.⁶¹ The

60. Key, *Op. cit.*, pp. 166-168.

61. Identity politics is not exempt from aberrations but these should be seen as cautionary rather than invalidating. For some of the paradoxes and ambiguities of identity politics compare the recent accounts of Nicholas Lemann, "Black

working assumption here, however, is that identity politics is a quest for power and that power, although it can corrupt, is not corrupt by nature but a legitimate, necessary, useful, and inescapable relationship.

Nationalism on Campus," *The Atlantic* 271:1 (January 1993), pp. 31-47. and James Traub, "The Hearts and Minds of City College," *The New Yorker*, 7 June 1993, pp. 42-53.

Table 1 U.S. Cities with Large Puerto Rican Concentrations, 1990

State & City	Tot.Pop.	PR	%
CA			
Los Angeles	3,485,398	14,367	0.4
CT			
Bridgeport	141,686	30,250	21
Hartford	139,739	38,176	27
New Haven	130,474	13,866	11
New Britain	75,491	10,325	14
NY			
New York City	7,322,564	896,763	12
Rochester	231,636	16,383	7
Yonkers	188,082	14,420	8
NJ			
Camden	87,492	22,984	26
Elizabeth	110,002	12,062	11
Jersey City	228,537	30,950	14
Newark	275,221	41,545	15
Paterson	140,891	27,580	20

Source: U. S. Census Bureau.

Table 1, Cont.

State & City	Tot.Pop.	PR	%
MA			
Boston	574,283	25,767	4
Lawrence	70,207	14,661	21
Springfield	156,983	23,729	15
OH			
Cleveland	505,616	17,829	4
PA			
Philadelphia	1,585,577	67,857	4
Reading	78,380	11,612	15
FL			
Miami	352,548	72,827	20
IL			
Chicago	2,783,726	119,866	4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Chapter 2 - *Hartford, The City and its Politics*

Introduction

In this chapter we conduct a selective review of Hartford's history to establish the roots and character of its political culture. We develop three characterizations based on three periods.

After the founding, the original features of Hartford's political culture are laid out. This period goes from 1636 to 1784 when Hartford incorporates, thus completing the transition from settlement to city. We denominate this period the Christian commonwealth. The cut-off date emphasizes the fact of incorporation and the beginnings of municipal government. It is not meant to deny the clear signs of secularization that can be detected in Hartford's pre-revolutionary politics.

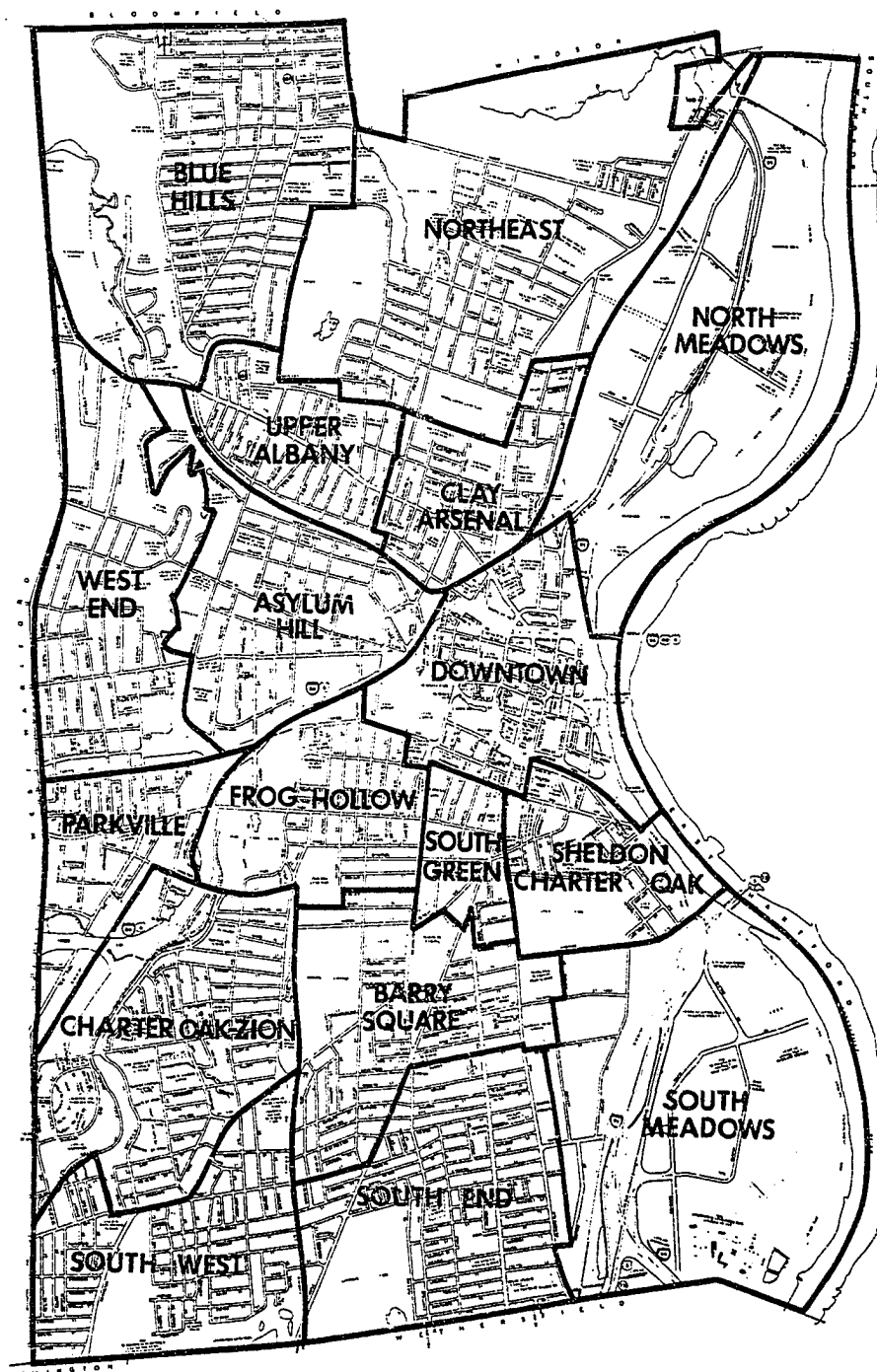
After 1784 the initial pattern changes. The city is established and grows. An entrepreneurial political elite develops in the context of formal boundaries between church and state. No longer a means to achieve salvation, politics is now an enterprise. In the political society, passions are substituted by interests. The Republican party is created in 1856 and after the Civil War it makes significant inroads in the structure of power.

This is a transitional period. Its upper boundary is, roughly, 1910. The political system can be characterized as a secular commonwealth. Hartford is, however, still heavily

influenced by the ideology and attitudes associated with the Christian commonwealth. Religious figures continue to exert political influence, anti-immigrant feeling is strong, and attempts by women to make inroads into politics are resisted.

Finally, there is the modern period which extends from 1910 to the present. The business-dominated political culture that struggles to emerge at the turn of the century flourishes during the first decades of the twentieth century. Hartford becomes a business commonwealth although, like elsewhere, the city's liberalism is abetted by the New Deal. During the postwar years the Democrats lose some ground and the business credo regains momentum in the city. Eventually they recuperate and Hartford becomes a one-party city. It is within the context of this one-party business commonwealth that Puerto Ricans begin to effectively assert social and political claims.

Map 1 The City of Hartford



CITY
NEIGHBORHOODS

The Christian Commonwealth

The course of Hartford's history is tied to the political vision of Thomas Hooker, the city's founder, but also to a social praxis that both sustained and militated against this vision. As a community Hartford was Hooker's brain-child and in the beginning Hartford and Connecticut were one and the same.

Two years after making their case before officers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony on 3 September 1634, the settlers of Hartford left Massachusetts. They were primarily interested in more land. Hubbard writes: "all the places on the sea coast being already preoccupied, there was no place left free, capable to receive so many hundred families in the year 1633, 1634, and 1635, if this River of Connecticut had not been possessed immediately after their first discovery thereof."⁶² On 15 October 1635, a group of "pioneers" left Newtown. Seven months later, on 31 May 1636, Hooker and his followers set out to the land the Indians called Suckiaug, meaning "black earth." Once there, they called it Newtown--after the Massachusetts settlement--and in 1637 renamed it Harteford, after an English town.

Hooker had a large family to support and most likely he personally needed more land. But there were larger motives to his departure. Hooker was concerned with the proper balance

62. William Hubbard, *A General History of New England, From the Discovery to MDCLXXX* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 170.

between the business of God and the business of the world. The members of his congregation were often advised to separate the public from the private thus leaving enough room in their lives for godly affairs. This separation did not necessarily imply a conception of politics and religion as separate spheres. Hooker's conception of the body politic was informed by the idea of a Bible commonwealth and thus religion and "politics" were one and the same. Salvation was the end and the commonwealth was the context and the means to that end.

Miller recognizes that there were differences with regard to the principle of the elect between Massachusetts and its spin-offs.⁶³ In Hartford's case there is no hard evidence that such differences motivated the migration. The truth is, however, that, compared to Massachusetts, the democratic leanings of the political order established in Hartford were more pronounced.

In Hartford, Hooker preached for a greater role of the people in government. In 1638, in a notable sermon, he articulated the principles that would form the basis of the Fundamental Orders of 1639, the compact that brought together the settlers of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield into a commonwealth.

Hooker emphasized three points in his sermon: 1. the divine right of the people to choose their rulers; 2. the

63. v. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper Row, 1964), pp. 16-47.

right to exercise this choice through elections; and 3. the power of the people to set limitations upon the prerogatives of their representatives. His insistence on the accountability of elected officials to the people, who remained the ultimate source of authority, rather than on the consecrated Puritan value of submission to power and the concomitant notion of the sovereignty of magistrates, although not exceptional, was remarkable.

In the Fundamental Orders, the first of modern written constitutions, the foundation of authority rests in the consent of the people expressed through the electoral process. The document called for a form of separation between church and state which Connecticut's founding fathers chose to ignore as they erected a government based on and dominated by the leaders of the Puritan Congregational Church.

The Orders placed no limitation on the franchise, another aspect of it that was ignored in practice, but subordinated the judiciary to the control of the legislature (known then as the General Court), a relationship that was modified in 1818.

In many respects Hooker was as good an orthodox Calvinist as anybody else. His *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, published in 1648, was mainly orthodox Calvinist doctrine; yet his writings had more emphasis on the popular foundation and limited character of government than was common among his

fellow Puritans;⁶⁴ this mix had important repercussions for politics in Hartford. For, even if government was theocratic, it was built on proportional representation and sanctioned by popular power. Political authority was based on consent expressed through elections.

Congregationalists believed that their choice of ministers ought to be free. But once ordained they were expected to spend their lives in service to the community that had elected them. This was a concept of religious leadership that spilled into politics. Hartford, like New England, "diffused political power through the mass of her freemen, and then concentrated it again in a few chosen leaders."⁶⁵ Political dynamics of concentration and diffusion, found by some to define the nature of modern urban power,⁶⁶ go back a long way in Hartford.

Elected officials were called upon to "preserve the liberty and purity of the gospel of our lord Jesus," and most did it for life. It was with good reason that, during the course of his controversy with New Haven, which resulted in

64. Alfred H. Kelly and Winfred A. Harbison, *The American Constitution, Its Origins and Development*, 5th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p. 40.

65. James C. Welling, *Connecticut Federalism or Aristocratic Politics in a Social Democracy* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1890), p. 34.

66. v. Bertram M. Gross and Jeffrey F. Kraus, "The Political Machine is Alive and Well," *Social Policy* 12:3 (Winter 1982), 38-45.

the removal of the colony's Federalist collector, Jefferson said about office-holding in Connecticut that "vacancies by death are few; by resignation none."⁶⁷

Hartford's government during the period between 1660 and 1783 was dominated by the family of William Pitkin, called by them "William the Immigrant."⁶⁸ Pitkin arrived in Hartford in 1659, six years after the displacement of the Dutch. He had a legal education, training as a minister, a reputation for godliness, and substantial wealth. These assets contributed to his remarkable success.

Pitkin was one of the most important political leaders in Hartford and Connecticut. He established a dynasty that between 1701 and 1785 ran the town and the colony by occupying 15 major offices and serving a combined total of 272 terms during an 84 year period. The Pitkins also dominated the offices elected by the Third Society, a new parish that William the Immigrant helped establish among the settlers of the east side of the Connecticut river in 1693-94, and the offices of the town militia as well.

"The Pitkin family," writes Daniels, "bound firmly the East Society of Hartford, the Town of Hartford, Hartford County, and the colony of Connecticut into a tight, adhesive

67. Quoted in Welling, *Op.Cit.*, p. 42.

68. This abbreviated account is taken from Bruce C. Daniels, *Connecticut's First Family: William Pitkin and his Connections* (Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1975).

unit."⁶⁹ This was consonant with an organic conception of society which saw the polis as an extension of the family thereby making the former a replica of sorts of the latter. The family was, literally, "the mother hive, out of which both those swarms of state and church issued forth."⁷⁰

Dynastic control of Hartford's government was justified by Puritan values. Elite rule was predicated on the concept of "the Elect." A notable Puritan, John Winthrop, articulated this concept as follows: "the best part is always the least, and of that best part the wiser part is always the lesser."⁷¹ Therefore the few ought to govern. Also, in a society structured according to functional rankings, residents such as the Pitkins were prominent in virtue of both education and wealth and thus fated to occupy positions of leadership. Moreover, the electoral process was structured so that incumbents were at an advantage over less known candidates, another feature, associated by some with modern institutional

69. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

70. Thomas Cobbett, *A Fruitfull and Usefull Discourse Touching the Honor Due from Children to Parents and the Duty of Parents Towards their Children*, quoted in Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), pp. 133-134.

71. Quoted in Joseph H. Twitchell, "Hartford the Birthplace of the Written Constitution," in *Hartford in History*, Willis I. Twitchell, ed. (Hartford: Press of the Plimpton Mfg. Co., 1899), pp. 74-75.

development,⁷² that has a long history in Hartford. On election day, freemen voted by writing, on separate ballots, the names of 12 candidates out of 20 listed in order of seniority of public service. This gave the edge of public recognition to the first 12 candidates; moreover, since only affirmative votes counted, candidates with more blank than written ballots could still be elected.⁷³

Thus, in Hartford's mixture of theocratic and democratic tendencies, theocracy had the upper hand. The product was a Christian political culture, organicist in its underpinnings, dynastic in its structure, and dominated by elites, whose authority was popularly sanctioned. The Christian commonwealth benefitted especially from the Puritan rejection of the idea of progress. Other factors buttressed the conservatism of this period: the rural character of the developing society; the outmigration of thousands of citizens in search of greener pastures beginning in 1770, and the absence of a comparable wave of immigrants that might have injected some vigor into the society, economy, and politics of the town.

The Secular Commonwealth

Finding itself impoverished after the Revolutionary War and unable to advance commercially under town government,

72. v. Nelson Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review* LXII:1 (March 1968), 144-168.

73. Welling, *Op.Cit.*, p. 40; Robert J. Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979), pp. 33-34.

Hartford chose to incorporate. Its municipal charter was granted by the General Assembly in May of 1784 and it gave the new city an enlarged structure of government that was better equipped to formulate policy. Previously the business of government was handled by a handful of officials; now the structure included the office of the mayor, a board of aldermen, a common council, and various commissions. For fifty years the mayor's duties would be to preside over the council and to act as a judicial magistrate. Before incorporation, citizens were directly liable for the actions of their government; now they were not, so long as they paid their taxes. This freed them to pursue all kinds of private activities.⁷⁴ The process was not without contest.

The opponents of incorporation charged its proponents with using "various Arts and Misrepresentations of the design and tendency of said act of incorporation,"⁷⁵ to secure support. A memorial signed by 71 inhabitants claimed that incorporation was not necessary, would be too costly, and bring ruin to many.

The proponents of incorporation rejoined with a memorial signed by 209 inhabitants and the "Act for Incorporating a Part of the Town of Hartford" was passed. The original

74. William Waldo Hyde, "Our City Government," in *Hartford in History*, Willis I. Twitchell, ed. (Hartford: Press of the Plimpton Mfg. Co., 1899), pp. 235-249.

75. William DeLoss Love, *The Colonial History of Hartford* (Chester, CT: Centinel Hill Press, 1974), p. 349.

corporate name was "The Mayor, Aldermen, Common council, and Freemen of the City of Hartford," which in 1859 was changed simply to "The City of Hartford."

The corporate charter served the city until 1821 and provided for an annual meeting of the freemen in March to elect the mayor--who held office at the pleasure of the General Assembly--four aldermen and not more than 20 councilmen. These met as the court of common council to handle the affairs of the city. Freemen also chose a clerk, a treasurer, and two sheriffs. Tax matters required the approval of freemen and they had the prime authority over court of common council by-laws. A city court was established to hear, try, and determine all contract matters not related to land titles and injuries as well; it was presided over by the mayor and two aldermen who served as judges.

The first freemen's meeting was held 28 June 1784 and Thomas Seymour was elected Hartford's first mayor. The elected aldermen and councilmen were, for the most part, incorporation activists. Nine were replaced during the next five years, but seven of these replacements belonged to the same cohort. Jeremiah Wadsworth, for example, under whose leadership the insurance business began in Hartford in 1794, was one of the replacements and he served as alderman, councilman, and before that, as Hartford's representative in the councils of the state for a total of twenty-four years until his death in 1804.

Seymour's was not a popular election; he remained in office for twenty-eight years until his resignation in 1812. The first popularly elected mayor was Nathaniel Terry. A member of the city's financial elite, Terry occupied the office from 1824 to 1831. During this period the city was dominated by notables. Their conspicuousness in public affairs prompted a historian of the city to write: "Indeed, wherever one finds in the records, newspapers or manuscripts of those years, the details of any new enterprise, which it was thought would be for the up-building of the City of Hartford or the welfare of its inhabitants, there the names of these citizens testify to their devotion."⁷⁶

Their names also testify to their interest, as the case of Jeremiah Halsey and Andrew Ward illustrates. Halsey and Ward offered to finish and furnish the city-based State House building if they were given the money already raised and a strip of land between New York and Pennsylvania known as the Connecticut Gore. The General Assembly agreed only after modifying slightly the terms suggested and soon thereafter Halsey and Ward were selling stock for the Connecticut Gore

76. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

Company.⁷⁷ The Gore project ultimately went awry but the new State House was built, as promised, by 1796.⁷⁸

On 13 July 1784 the court of common council appointed a committee to prepare city by-laws and these were later approved by the freemen. The new government sought to improve the regulation of trade and commerce by appointing inspectors for everything exported. Weights and measures were standardized and punishments for fraud were set. Streets were marked, monuments were erected, highways were named; ordinances were passed to deal with problems that contemporary readers cannot but assess with a chuckle: pigs were restrained from running up and down the streets and cattle, sheep, horses, and geese were suppressed from the urban flow as well.

Between 1784 and 1853, when the limits of the city were for the first time extended, Hartford was a beehive of activity and change--in 1789 a fire department was organized; in 1792 the Hartford Bank was incorporated "to facilitate commercial operations." New streets were laid out in 1797, the city was divided into fire wards, and bridges, wharves, and channels to promote up-river trade were built or improved.⁷⁹ In 1815, power was granted to the council to license and

77. Marion Hepburn Grant, *In and About Hartford* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1978), p. 37.

78. Joan W. Friedland and Wilson H. Faude, *Birthplace of Democracy* (Chester, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 1979), p. 22.

79. DeLoss Love, *Op. cit.*, p. 356.

regulate carmen, truckmen, butchers, petty grocers, peddlers and the keepers of restaurants and taverns. In 1835 the construction of sewers was also entrusted to the council and in 1859 the limits of the city were extended a second time.⁸⁰

During the post-revolutionary period Hartford had an enterprising civil society soaked through with change and a rigid political society dominated by a handful of characters. The changing geography of the city provided a counterpoint to its political stability.

To offset the rigidity of the political structure elections were conducted every year until 1825 when the council fixed the term for the office of mayor at two years, "subject, however, to be removed by the General Assembly."⁸¹ This formal mechanism did nothing to prevent the hegemony of incumbents. But in 1850 the Democratic state legislature approved a charter revision establishing ward-based representation. This allowed the newest group of immigrants to achieve representation. Irish ethnic succession was off to a start with the election of James Mulligan, from the 6th ward, in 1852. It would take the Irish another fifty years to rise to the top (see Table 2).

80. J. Hammond Trumbull, *The Memorial History of Hartford County* (Boston: Edward L. Osgood Publisher, 1886), pp. 386-387

81. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

After the Civil War, as the conservative politics of the state began to change in tandem with the arrival of new immigrants so did politics in the city. The changing demographic composition of the city was noted by one observer in 1869: "Hartford itself has greatly altered...A new and different people seem to move in the streets. Few, comparatively, are known to me."⁸² Although for most of the nineteenth century the political society remained firmly in control of the Protestant elite,⁸³ this was a signal of the transformation from Yankee to Irish enclave that would change the face of the city's political system. Immigration forced the liberalization of the civil society but it also gave rise to a wave of anti-Catholic/anti-immigrant sentiment that tainted the politics of the city.

By the turn of the century, a business-dominated political culture marked by a Republican-Democratic balance of power and anti-immigrant sentiment began to consolidate. Electoral contests between 1890 and 1900 were a contrapuntal dance between Democrats and Republicans, a factor that kept the business ethos in check. The influence of religious figures was peripheral yet important. Women began to make political inroads but these were resisted by the parties.

82. Quoted in Joseph Lieberman, *The Power Broker* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), p. 22.

83. E.S. Grant and Marion Hepburn Grant, *The City of Hartford, 1784-1984* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1986), p. 13.

The Republican party organized in Connecticut in 1856, and by the turn of the century their electoral support in Hartford city was considerable. Support increased after 1865 in part because the Yankees associated the Republicans with the Unionist cause. The Democratic party was rejected on opposite grounds. Republicans were also a bulwark against the pressures that threatened the hegemony of rural and town interests. In the city, they favored established and emerging business interests. Yankee flight to the Republican party was further encouraged by the Democratic nomination for President of William Jennings Bryan in 1896.

The Republicans were the anti-immigrant and pro-town party. Their rallying cry was politics as business. Fiscal responsibility was their main interest. They were for "good government." An editorial note in the 1 October 1890 edition of the *Hartford Courant* refers to the town Republican caucus as a mechanism whose function ought to be "to nominate the best men that can be had." The main Republican concern was with selecting men who would see to it that the town's money was spent wisely.

The antipathy and alarm that the rising influx of immigrants generated in other large cities such as New York were felt in Hartford as well. This was a torch that the Republicans were not shy to carry. The attacks were

spearheaded by the fellow traveler *Courant*.⁸⁴ Immigrants and machine politics were thought one and the same and a number of evils were ascribed to the combination. Tammany Hall was considered a prime example. As such it was a constant target of criticism and attacks. While the Democrats in Hartford did not have an organization comparable to Tammany Hall, they were credited with having a comparable social base. In an obvious reference to immigrants, the *Courant* declared in its 4 November 1891 edition that "The strength of the democratic party, the country over north Mason and Dixon's line, is in the ignorant vote of the big cities."

Between 1894 and 1900 Republicans maintained electoral majorities in the city's common council (see Table 3) just as their favored governmental structure--the town system--began to erode and was ultimately replaced. Republican ascent, however, was somewhat compromised by the fact that voters would support them at one level (say, by electing a Republican mayor) and the Democrats at another (say, by giving them a majority within the board of selectmen, the town's ruling body), constantly mixing the partisan base of power. In 1890, for example, the Republicans dominated the common council while the Democrats controlled the majority of town offices. Also, Republican gains in one election were often reversed in

84. "No newspaper more zealously desires and labors for republican success than the *Courant*," reads an editorial dated 5 November 1891, p. 4.

the next with partisan control swinging back and forth rather frequently.

The influence of religious figures was felt more in the discussion of issues than in the development or implementation of policy agendas. Hartford's voters, for example, were frequently asked to approve liquor licensing and they invariably did so to the chagrin of clerics. In 1890, for example, 252 saloons had been licensed compared to 29 pharmacies. According to the Rev. George Leon Walker of the First Church of Hartford, this was an appalling asymmetry since saloons were "open doors going down to hell for the weak and unwary," dreadful "sinkholes of seduction."⁸⁵ In 1891, Walker again blasted the proliferation of saloons in the city while adding other items to his discussion of a policy agenda for the city. In a sermon entitled "Our City's Welfare," Walker discussed a safe water supply and the development of a general market as the issues of the day. His exhortations were grist for the mill of the civil, not the political society.

Yet the influence of figures like Walker could still be felt in how they set the tenor of public debate. They also were able to mobilize support and resources for specific initiatives. The first urban renewal project in the city, and one of the earliest in America, was conceived by the Reverend Horace Bushnell in 1853 and completed nearly twenty years

85. *The Hartford Courant*, 9 November 1891, p. 2.

later. This initiative razed the slums that lined the Hartford tanneries but instead of substituting them with new housing it gave the city the beautiful Bushnell Park, named after the Reverend in 1876 by a resolution of the city council. In the 1890s Emily F.G. Holcombe, the wife of the president of the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance, enlisted the support of Rev. Walker in her successful effort to obliterate the tenement houses on Gold Street, the last of Hartford's nineteenth-century slums.

In Connecticut, women were granted the right to vote in 1893. They could use it only on school matters. In Hartford, a majority of qualified women exercised their limited right: 701 out of 800 registered women voters cast their ballots to choose members of the board of school visitors and the high school committee.⁸⁶ The women's vote in the state totalled 3,806, half of which was in Hartford county and half of that in Hartford town.⁸⁷

On 21 June 1895 the Joint Select Committee on Woman Suffrage of the state legislature reported favorably on an act proposing to allow women to vote in all meetings and city elections "as if she were a qualified male voter." Two additional concurrent bills reflected the tug-of-war over the woman question. One proposed to repeal the 1893 law that had

86. *The Hartford Courant*, 3 October 1893, p. 1.

87. *The Hartford Courant*, 4 October 1893, p. 6; 11 October 1895, p. 6.

given them a limited right to vote; the other contemplated granting them the right to vote for president.⁸⁸ On 28 June the bill granting women the municipal vote was passed in the House. There was an interesting debate in which one of the legislators argued that women were too good to be thrust into politics where "Satan has such influence."⁸⁹ But on 1 July the Senate rejected the bill granting municipal suffrage to women, effectively killing the measure.⁹⁰

Initially women were not discouraged. They rallied, argued for the creation of a women's party, presented candidates to both Democratic and Republican caucuses, and considered running independent ad hoc slates if party responses were not favorable. In the 1895 election a group of women declared the Democratic party the friend of all women in Hartford, and requested the nomination of two for positions on the high school committee and board of school visitors. The Democrats chose not to nominate them. When an alderman questioned their judgement, he was not given a reply. After threatening to run an independent slate one woman, Lizzie

88. The Hartford Courant, 22 June 1895, p. 6.

89. The Hartford Courant, 29 June 1895, p. 7 (This page has the date incorrectly printed as 13 July 1895).

90. The Hartford Courant, 2 July 1895, p. 10.

Bacon, became part of the Democratic ticket; two others ran on the slate of the Prohibition party.⁹¹

Turnout decline among women voters was sharp between 1893 and 1895. Two years after being allowed to cast ballots the number of registered women voters nearly doubled (from 800 to 1,091) and yet only about a third (from 701 to 328) voted, for a 50 percent decrease from the 1893 figure. This was explained largely in terms of the limited character of the franchise. But resistance to their entry into the political arena was also a factor that stifled their electoral thrust. They had no control over the selection of candidates which were nominated by male-dominated caucuses. Apathy was also felt to be an explanatory variable.

In 1897 only 165 women voted. The next year only 127 cast their ballots and in 1899 only 76 went to the polls.⁹² The decline in women turnout coincided with the deterioration of Democratic fortunes. Democratic despondency was so high in 1899 that the party chose to abstain from campaigning during the municipal election except in two wards. The next year Republicans captured all offices, except city collector, in a landslide victory. All five seats on the 1st ward, a Democratic bulwark since 1896, went Republican and they

91. The Hartford Courant, 3 October 1895, p. 5; 4 October 1895, p. 5; 7 October 1895, p. 6; 8 October 1895, p. 1.

92. The Hartford Courant, 6 April 1897, p. 6; 5 April 1898, p. 7; 4 April 1899, p. 12.

increased their majority in the common council. Voter turnout was 10,350 or 69 percent of the 15,061 registered electors.⁹³

The Business Commonwealth

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, even when Connecticut was largely an industrial state, Hartford was a national insurance center. Although the city was the nucleus of the state's financial and trade sector, it had a balanced economic life. Compared to other cities Hartford was not a leading center in terms of the value of manufactured production. Bridgeport was first in this regard. Hartford was fourth, trailing behind Waterbury and New Haven. In Hartford county, however, the city and New Britain were the leading manufacturing centers.

The combination of a healthy economy and Republican hegemony had definite consequences. During the 1920s the belief that scientific management principles could be used to resolve all major economic problems was prevalent in Hartford. Businessmen enjoyed considerable standing. They represented efficiency and rationality and these became widespread values. How did this happen?

Business has had privileged standing in the city for a long time. Hartford not only gave birth to the insurance industry--historically a powerful fraction of the corporate

93. *The Hartford Courant*, 3 April 1900, p. 1.

sector--but was also a significant manufacturing center. Economic prosperity, anti-immigrant cum anti-machine campaigns, mostly waged by the *Hartford Courant*, and the good electoral fortunes of the Republicans, made the regular calls for "businesslike government, without concern for the feelings of the would-be bosses and spoils-mongers"⁹⁴ a reality in Hartford.

During this period the consolidation of a business-oriented political culture was also the result of efficient organization, systematic lobbying, and extensive linkages with public officials by business. The business community was tightly and efficiently organized in the Manufacturers Association (MA) and the Chamber of Commerce. The MA published a monthly magazine, *Connecticut Industry*, which reported on taxation, employee relations, foreign trade opportunities, and so on. Under E. Kent Hubbard, executive secretary of the MA, the association also published a weekly bulletin for its members which reported on bills and legislative hearings.⁹⁵

Politically, the business credo translated into anti-labor efforts and propaganda. Campaigns for the open shop were central during this period as well as efforts to undermine the desirability of unions. Yet the organizational style of non-

94. The *Hartford Courant*, 9 April 1895, p. 6.

95. Herbert F. Janick, Jr., *A Diverse People, Connecticut 1914 to the Present* (Chester, CT: The Pequot Press, 1975), p. 24.

business institutions and the configuration of political conflict often failed to mirror the class-cleavages embedded in this ideology. The clergy, for example, adopted a business style in its charitable operations and supported the business-oriented tenets of so-called good government. On specific issues like support for measures liberalizing Sabbath restrictions and the rejection of prohibition, the interests of business, lower class migrants, and ethnic minorities would sometimes coincide.

Hartford briefly deviated from the business credo in 1928. This was the year of Al Smith's presidential candidacy and his whistle-stop tour of Connecticut. Thousands cheered the Happy Warrior as he visited the state, especially in the city where between 100,000 and 150,000 people gave him a warm welcome. After his visit the *Courant* ran this headline: THOUSANDS ACCLAIM SMITH IN HARTFORD'S GREATEST OF OVATIONS.⁹⁶ Harding and Coolidge had won in Hartford by large margins in 1920 and 1924. In 1928 the city belonged to Al Smith in what was interpreted as a triumph for Catholic, working-class immigrants.

Yet for all its anti-democratic qualities and fissures, the business credo was widely held; until the Great Depression began to hit the state. In Hartford, for example, the United States Rubber Company shut down its facility in 1929 and by

96. Quoted in Lieberman, *Op.Cit.*, p. 33.

the winter of 1930 the city had 6,500 jobless residents to contend with. During the winter of 1930 the mayor of Hartford, Walter Batterson, assured a senator from Massachusetts that local citizens would take care of themselves. This would not come to pass.

Governor Trumbull and the Republican party adopted a policy of ignoring the plight of the cities and as a consequence of this business-as-usual attitude the voters decided to elect Wilbur Cross in 1930, the first Democrat elected governor in almost 15 years. Cross won by a slim majority composed of a portion of the Republican rural and upper-class vote and the ethnic vote in the cities. He carried Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, and Bridgeport by wide margins.

The response of business was manifold. Some of its leaders retreated; others fought the new liberalism and a third sector adapted. Thus during the New Deal business played a dual role as gatekeeper and facilitator of the policies effected by the Roosevelt coalition. For the first time since 1894 the Republicans were reduced to minority status in Hartford.

Cross' reign came to an end in 1938. Several financial scandals in his administration and an alliance between the Socialists and the Republicans gave the governorship to Raymond Baldwin, a Republican attorney who believed that business should be friendlier to the federal government, less

hostile to labor, and more in favor of government intervention in social policy. Baldwin won by 2,688 votes and the GOP took back four congressional seats and one U.S. Senate seat. Hartford remained Democratic.

The isolationist fever that engulfed Connecticut during the early stages of Hitler's aggression, embodied in the "America First" campaign, succumbed after the fall of France in June of 1940. The change in sentiment coincided with economic growth stimulated by war production. Workers from all parts of the country began to merge in Connecticut lured by the prospects of lucrative jobs. Hartford was the center of the aircraft industry. In 1941, 18,620 newcomers came to the city. During the war period (between 1940-1943) 130,000 workers moved into the state, more than two-thirds settling in Hartford, Bridgeport, and New London. In 1942, the recruitment of workers expanded to include all of New England, the Midwest, and Puerto Rico. This effort was led by the Electric Boat Company of New London assisted by the United States Employment Service through a special office in Groton. The War Manpower Commission also played a role.

In the 1943 municipal election, the Republicans carried the city of Hartford for the first time since 1935. This meant that Hartford elected a Republican mayor, not that the Republicans had fully succeeded the Democrats. The door to the mayoralty was opened by Democratic boss and mayor Thomas J.

Spellacy when he resigned in the midst of a financial crisis,⁹⁷ created in part by his decision to stop borrowing to pay municipal expenses. Spellacy was a conservative Democrat and his power was based on a coalition with the Republicans. This coalition was hardly weakened by his resignation; the change from Democratic to Republican mayor was nominal, not substantial. City voters continued to support the Democrats at other levels. For example, in the presidential election of 1944 Roosevelt did better in Hartford than he had in 1940. While the Italian vote fell to 65 percent from 72 percent in 1940, support from the Jews and the Yankees rose. Declining Irish support was arrested and French-Canadian and black areas held steady giving Roosevelt 80 and 75 percent of their votes respectively.⁹⁸

Spellacy ran in the following election and this time his coalition fell apart. He was defeated by his Republican opponent by more than 10,000 votes. In spite of its acknowledged "normal republican predilections," the *Hartford Courant* endorsed Spellacy.⁹⁹ The newspaper recognized him

97. Jack Zaiman, "Moylan Elected Mayor in Landslide Vote Republicans Increase Council Majority," *The Hartford Courant*, 7 November 1945, p. 1. Spellacy resigned, specifically, over a dispute concerning residency requirements of municipal employees. v. "Thomas Spellacy, Connecticut Aide," *The New York Times*, 6 December 1957, p. 29.

98. John W. Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), pp. 200-202.

99. *The Hartford Courant*, 1 November 1945, p. 8.

for his interest in the city's welfare rather than on trying to please any group that would support him. The voters, however, rejected his bossism and administrative record,¹⁰⁰ and punished him for deserting them in 1943. This defeat set the stage for the reforms of 1946.

While at the state level Hartford stood virtually alone in its support of the 1946 Democratic candidate for Governor, Wilbert Snow,¹⁰¹ at the city level voters continued to reject the Democrats. After their 1945 victory, Hartford's Republicans renewed their attacks on the city's form of government. Janick echoes their arguments when he writes: "The main obstacle to progress in Hartford was an antiquated form of government based on ward representation, favoritism, and patronage."¹⁰² This was a very old charge. In the city, ineptitude, corruption and mediocrity were seen as the order of the day. In response, the Citizens Charter Commission (CCC) campaigned for a change of structure. CCC has been labeled a tool of businessmen and professionals, but its appeal was inter-partisan and wide. Since its inception in 1945 and during the following year, when it became the Citizens Charter Committee (CCCM), its members and most vocal supporters

100. *The Hartford Courant*, 1 November 1945, p. 8; 2 November 1945, p. 16.

101. *The Hartford Courant*, 21 November 1946, p. 2. In the local campaign, Republicans spent \$12,016 compared to \$4,359 by the Democrats. Snow won in Hartford by 11,745 votes.

102. Janick, Jr., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 84-85.

included former mayor William Mortensen, a Republican, Judge Abraham Ribicoff, a Democrat, The League of Women Voters, and the wife of Hartford's Democratic boss, Elizabeth G. Spellacy, who acted as its co-chair. The Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce and the Manufacturers Association were also prime movers in the effort.

Appeals to support charter revision by CCCM emphasized that the council-manager form of government would make government efficient and keep tax rates down. Some argued that the new charter would reform the civil service, give city employees new protections, establish a merit system, increase job security, and encourage a better pension plan. Claims that it would destroy collective bargaining and obliterate municipal unions were vigorously contested. Another argument in favor was that it would enfranchise the 25,732 independent voters that were barred from seeking office through the parties. Candidates for ward representation under the existing form of government were handpicked by the party bosses--a non-partisan system would bring openness to government by allowing a wider public to serve. A spokesman for a professional organization conceded that graft or corruption were not prevalent among city employees. This, however, was no reason to keep an inefficient form of government which did not allow, among other things, for systematic planning. Efficiency, not corruption, was the issue.

Opposing views included that the proposed charter undermined democratic principles, that reform was unnecessary, and that non-partisanship would hinder progress by eliminating inter-party competition. Some voiced a concern with communistic tendencies in the proposed charter. Others thought it an attempt to impose a dictatorship. Without the support of the parties, went another argument, working people would be shut out of the electoral process; it was estimated that a candidate would need \$10,000 to run a non-partisan campaign. One local judge blasted the intent of reformers by arguing that charter revision was the brainchild of "every discredited and disgruntled politician of the past." Finally, it was suggested that through bloc-voting the city could end up ruled by officials from one geographical section, one political party, labor radicals, racketeers or an interest group unrestrained by the veto power of the mayor.¹⁰³

On 3 December, in fourteen of Hartford's fifteen wards, the voters supported the CCCM by adopting non-partisan elections and giving power to a nine-member city council elected at large. The council appointed a city manager to run the city. "The citizens are at last on top," declared *The Hartford Times*.¹⁰⁴ But were they?

103. v. *The Hartford Courant*, 6 November thru 15 December 1946.

104. Quoted in Janick, Jr., *Op.Cit.*, p. 85; v. also Keith Schonrock, "Republican State Ticket Sweeps to Victory, City's Democrats Give Snow 11,745 Plurality, GOP Making Gains In

The year 1946 brings to resolution two important trends in Hartford. On the one hand, the consolidation of Republican control of the city, which culminated with the revision of the Charter, not only altered the structure of government but buttressed the legitimacy of the business credo in local politics. Although both machines joined in opposition to Charter revision, the level of intra-party dissension was high. The pro-efficiency and pro-business sectors of the Republican and Democratic parties carried the election in conjunction with their counterparts among independent voters. Democratic and Republican anti-revision voters ended up in the minority and many simply did not turn out.

On the other hand, a process of power succession within the Democratic party was completed, in the sweep that made John Bailey the Democratic boss of Hartford. This changed the composition of the party elite that ruled the city's Democratic politics for the previous 25 years. After the 1943 mayoral disruption, Bailey challenged Spellacy and came out a winner. Two years later Spellacy was no longer the boss of Hartford. His massive electoral defeat convinced the Democrats that new leadership was needed. This helped Bailey's rise to power. In 1946, Spellacy and Bailey threw their political weight behind opposite camps in the Charter revision fight-- Spellacy for it and Bailey against it. Bailey commanded the

Congress Contests," *The Hartford Courant*, 6 November 1946, p. 1.

party but Spellacy was not entirely devoid of supporters within the rank and file. Such division worked against Bailey. With power succession and Charter revision completed the Democratic party was simultaneously renewed and ineffectual in Hartford.

The Business Commonwealth in the Post-War Years and Beyond

In 1948 the Hartford Democratic machine was controlled by an Irish-Italian combine. The state level was the focus of their activities. As a matter of fact, the Democratic party did not pay much attention to nonpartisan contests in Hartford until 1953 when John Bailey decided to devote a great deal of resources on that year's municipal election. Not since 1946 had the Democrats run a serious campaign in the city. The renewed interest grew out of two reasons: local Democrats needed support to compete with the powerful CCCM and requested the assistance of the party. Bailey, for his part, saw an opportunity that he could not pass up, namely to bring a solid bloc of local supporters into the party fold. The Republicans cried foul. Bailey's entrance violated the spirit of the new charter, they said. Bailey denounced them as the power behind the CCCM throne. The contest became a partisan election within a non-partisan system. The result was that nearly 50 percent of registered voters participated, the largest response since the triumph of non-partisanship in 1946. The Democrats staged a comeback. Eight of the nine elected council members were registered with the party.

The return of the Democrats in the city was followed by increasing black demands and suburban flight. In the mid-1950s observers in Hartford predicted that blacks would explode in anger if their socioeconomic situation was not improved. The 1950s was indeed a period of militancy for blacks. They organized, demanded, and obtained a voice in municipal affairs. John C. Clark, Jr. was elected to the city council in 1955. The *Hartford Chronicle*, a black newspaper established by Urban League member George Goodman, took off. The NAACP attacked landlords, which were characterized by councilman Clark as "vicious rent gougers."¹⁰⁵

Suburban flight intensified during this period. In 1950 the city's population peaked at 177,397 and subsequently began to decline (see Table 4). A large segment of a middle class made prosperous by the war left the city. During the 1950s, 56,000 people moved into Hartford and 95,000 left. Blacks and the newly arrived Puerto Ricans were being left behind. For Puerto Ricans at least, initially this was not a problem. Early migrants remember the city during this decade as a place where jobs were abundant and life was good.¹⁰⁶ But as industries also fled to avoid the burdens of urban taxes, traffic, and deterioration, the prospects of poor blacks and incoming Puerto Ricans began to look less bright.

105. Janick, Jr., *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

106. Interviews with Eugenio Caro and Juan "Johnny" Castillo, 14 August 1992, and José Garay, 25 January 1993.

During this decade, however, political changes occurred that would benefit both blacks and Puerto Ricans later on. The introduction of primaries in 1955 changed the dynamics of politics both in the state and the city. Initially, the proposed primary legislation exempted localities of less than 5,000 residents, effectively placing the burden of intra-party competition on the Democrats. Another provision introduced by the Republicans required that a would-be challenger receive 20 percent of the vote in a party convention to qualify for running a primary. The bill did not pass. Then on a special session of the legislature on 22 June an amended bill, eliminating the 5,000 threshold exemption, passed both houses and was signed into law.

Near the end of the decade legislation was also passed banning discrimination in housing for reasons of race, religion or nationality in residences of five or more contiguous units. Only a few states had such statutes. This placed the land of steady habits in the avant garde of civil rights legislation in the country, but only as a result of pressures for such legislation from urban blacks and liberals with urban constituencies within the Democratic party.

Political reforms in 1964 redressed the imbalance in representation between big cities and small towns in the state. Early in that year two lawsuits challenged Connecticut's apportionment of Assembly and Congressional seats as unconstitutional. Hartford was the site of the talks

held between Democrats and Republicans seeking for a state-based rather than a court-imposed solution. John Bailey consulted with the state delegation in Washington. As a result a proposed solution reconciled the one-man-one-vote standard with the protection of Congressional incumbents. The state legislature approved the plan. State reapportionment, however, did not proceed until after the national election. By December the parties reached agreement on a 36 member Senate and 180 member House. Drawing the lines was another matter. By mid-January of the following year a number of towns, including Hartford and Bridgeport, remained without new lines. A compromise was reached and on 19 January 1965 the Assembly approved a Democratic-Republican plan calling for 36 Senate members and 177 House seats, with 44 of the latter coming from Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and Stamford.

These reforms provided added opportunities for urban minorities to seek electoral representation. A new Constitution, approved by voters in city and state by a two-to-one margin in 1965, buttressed these gains and added new ones: the party lever was made optional, segregation and discrimination were prohibited, worship was made a right instead of a duty and the word "Christian" was removed from the religious article; free public elementary and secondary education was guaranteed, the University of Connecticut was

created, and a home-rule guarantee was established, applicable to all communities throughout the state.¹⁰⁷

Just as these reforms were being debated a conflictive process of ethnic and power succession began to unfold in Hartford. Four days before the new constitution was voted in, Democratic intra-party conflict broke wide open as it became known that an alliance between Democrats and Republicans in the council had been forged to wrest control of patronage from Boss Bailey and the Democratic town chair, Robert Killian. It was the old guard versus the new guard and, on the face of it, the Italians against the Irish. Councilman Francis DeLuco, son of Hartford's first Italian-American mayor, Dominick DeLuco, had orchestrated the alliance as a result of his frustration with the party's leadership. Tired of watching the patronage fly by him, DeLuco approached the Republicans. Three Democratic and four Republican councilmen joined forces and wrested control of the city council from Bailey's minions thus effecting a power realignment.¹⁰⁸

Although the ethnic factor was apparent in it, this episode also signified a new power succession cycle--just as a young, energetic Bailey had succeeded Boss Spellacy twenty years earlier, now a group of Young Turks, led by George Ritter, Thomas Corrigan, and Francis DeLuco, wanted in and

107. *The Hartford Courant*, 15 December 1965, p. 16.

108. Jack Zaiman, "Bolt Led by DeLuco," *The Hartford Courant*, 10 December 1965, p. 1.

him out. The desired change did not promise a shift in the correlation of interests to be served by the council; the drive was generational and ethnic-related and the key issue was power. Bailey, however, did not lose complete control of the party in Hartford; the party was shaken but it did not crack. Power succession had begun (with control of patronage) although the ruling elite kept its grip on the party itself.¹⁰⁹

Political reforms combined with inter- and intra-party competition should have suggested to minority communities that openings were available and inroads could be made through incorporation strategies. This indeed happened, but by 1967 collective action had the upper hand. Bridgeport, Waterbury, Middletown, New Britain, Stamford, Norwalk, and New London all experienced riots in that year. The worst incidents occurred in Hartford for three consecutive summers. In July and September of 1967 blacks took to the streets. In April 1968, following the murder of Martin Luther King, North End youth surged through this section throwing bricks and stones at police and firemen while chanting "You Killed Martin Luther King." On Labor Day of 1969 they raged over the killing of a black youth. Janick states that arrests during the Labor Day riot included "for the first time" a large number of Puerto

109. Idem., "Pressure Grows on Bailey to Return Home," *The Hartford Courant*, 12 December 1965, p. 3B.

Ricans.¹¹⁰ But a large number of Puerto Ricans were arrested in August when they were the protagonists of an earlier disturbance (see Chapter three).

The turmoil was followed by important changes in the city's political economy, some of which had been in the making for some time. After partisan elections were restored in 1967, the Democrats achieved control of the mayoralty and the city council in 1971. Hartford was now a one-party city dominated by the Democrats. Inter-party competition waned. Intra-party divisions and the politics of identity waxed. Electoral contests began to be fueled by racial, ethnic, and geographical factors.

Looking south to New Haven, the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce had spearheaded the return to partisanship in 1967, hoping to establish a strong-mayorality that, following Richard Lee's example, would spur downtown development. Thus, business continued to figure prominently in public affairs although the composition of capital had changed.

Historically, both manufacturing and services have been significant in Hartford. This was true as late as 1965 when manufacturing and service jobs were about 20 percent each of the total non-agricultural employment in the city. In 1970, however, service jobs were 19 percent of the total while

¹¹⁰. Janick, Jr. *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

manufacturing jobs decreased to 15 percent. By 1975, manufacturing jobs had been reduced by half to 9 percent of the total, while service jobs had climbed to 23 percent. Changes in the proportion of jobs in the financial, insurance, and real estate sector were also significant during this period. These climbed from 24 percent of the total in 1965 to 26 percent in 1970, to almost one-third (31 percent) of the total in 1975 (see Table 5).

In the context of Democratic control, business activism, and economic change, Nicholas Carbone, who went from neighborhood activist in the 1960s to real estate developer in the 1980s, made his way into the city council. First appointed in 1969, he subsequently became deputy mayor and the city's most powerful political figure for a decade. In this role he acted as catalyst and linchpin of initiatives that rode the wave of Hartford's political and economic changes.

To some extent the post-industrial transformation of Hartford made no difference to Carbone's agenda. The focus of his strategy for tackling Hartford's social and economic ills was an alliance between public and private power represented respectively by the city council and the Chamber of Commerce. His role model was Arthur Lumsden who in his capacity as chief executive of the Chamber of Commerce brought together the politicians, opinion leaders, and the corporations. "Out of this kind of interaction," Clavel writes, "there developed an approach to public-private cooperation...whereby the business

leadership would take initiatives to preserve those aspects of the city that it valued."¹¹¹

Yet in terms of specific policies seeking to increase employment and revenues, the changing composition of the economy and the agenda of business itself left few alternatives to a strategy linking redistributive measures to downtown development. Business wanted to make Hartford a better place for itself and in Carbone it found the analogue to Lee in New Haven. To enact policies that increased employment and revenues, Carbone needed the corporate sector. This meant working together not with the manufacturing principals of yesterday such as Colt, Fuller Brush, Royal Typewriter, and so on but with the insurance giants of the moment such as Travelers, Aetna, CIGNA, Phoenix Mutual, and so on. According to Carbone, in order to have redistributive impact, public policy had to go with the flow of current corporate preferences and interests. And the development strategies pursued by these corporations favored office construction, gentrification, and real estate speculation, as well as upscale retail centers rather than neighborhood revitalization, housing construction or neighborhood retail outlets.

¹¹¹. Pierre Clavel, *The Progressive City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p. 21.

Carbone's regime has been characterized as progressivel¹² when in fact it was a mixture of autocratic, technocratic, and neo-corporatist tendencies strategically focused on linkage policies and downtown development. His defeat in 1979 combined with the emergence of a new breed of corporate managers whose ties to the city were nurtured by careerism rather than civic commitment. Because most did not live in the city their relationship to the urban environment was circumstantial and detached. In this, however, they were not an exception to a general pattern. Between 1960 and 1970 the number of jobs in the city increased by 16 percent while the number of jobs held by Hartford residents decreased by 8 percent. By 1980 the number of jobs had increased by 24 percent but the proportion of jobs held by city residents had declined by 21 percent (see Table 6). The point is that among Carbone's successors, none was able to nurture the public-private linkages he developed; those who tried found a stratum of corporate actors with diminished stakes in the city and therefore less inclined to support urban policies on the basis of enlightened self-interest.

In sum, the structural context in which Puerto Ricans began to effectively assert their claims included political

112. v. Ibid.; Harry C. Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), pp. 159-163; Eve Bach, Nicholas Carbone and Pierre Clavel, "Running the City for the People." *Social Policy* 12, no. 3 (Winter 1982): 15-23.

reforms, civic unrest, one-party dominance, and corporate-centered development. Carbone's neo-corporatist experiment (the Citizens Lobby¹¹³) excluded them; his control over the party organization and autocratic style limited their access to partisan positions and candidacies but it also steeled their resolve. Their sense that neighborhood needs (and nested within these, Puerto Rican needs) were subordinated to corporate needs, prodded them to act against a lopsided development strategy and against Carbone himself. One-party politics stimulated extra-partisan organization and action. In short, contextual constraints doubled as inducements to organization and action. Let us now turn to a description of the interactions that cast the articulation of Puerto Rican interests as a form of identity politics.

113. In 1978 Carbone organized this group to advance his policy agenda at the state level. In that same year a rift developed between Carbone and Governor Ella Grasso. For reasons of space these two interrelated processes have not been analyzed here.

Table 2 Ethnic Succession in Hartford, First Elected Mayors

Year/Mayor	Ethnicity/Race	Succession Interval ¹
1902/Ignatius Sullivan	Irish	73
1917/Abraham S. Bordon ²	Jewish	77
1953/Dominick J. DeLucco	Italian	83
1971/George A. Athanson	Greek	73
1981/Thirman L. Milner	Black	105

¹ Years between approximate date of arrival and election. For blacks the benchmark is 1876, the year they were granted the right to vote in Connecticut. Slavery was abolished in 1848, in the state. Blacks first came to Hartford in 1765. ² Bordon was president of the Board of Aldermen and acting mayor. Jews are the oldest group of ethnic immigrants in Hartford. Their presence in the city dates from 1659. The benchmark for the succession interval is 1840, which is when a Jewish settlement begins to take shape.

Table 3 Republican and Democratic Representation Hartford City, 1893-1900

	1893		1894		1895		1896	
	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D
Elected	14	26	29	11	20	20	37	15
Held Over	3	5	3	5	6	2	3	4
Common Council	17	31	32	16	26	22	40	19
Majority	14 (D)		16 (R)		4 (R)		21 (R)	
	1897		1898		1899		1900	
	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D
Elected	40	10	41	9	35	16	42	8
Held Over	7	3	8	2	8	1	7	3
Common Council	47	13	49	11	43	17	49	11
Majority	34 (R)		38 (R)		26 (R)		38 (R)	

Source: The Hartford Courant 4 April 1893, p. 2; 3 April 1894, p. 1; 2 April 1895, p. 3; 7 April 1896, p. 1; 6 April 1897, p. 6; 5 April 1898, p. 7; 4 April 1899, p. 12; 3 April 1900, p. 1.

Table 4 Total, Puerto Rican, and African-American Population in Hartford, 1950-1990

Year	Total	Puerto Ricans		African-Americans	
		Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
1950	177,397	*	*	12,654	7.1
1960	162,178	*	*	24,855	15.3
1970	158,017	8,543	5.4	44,091	27.9
1980	136,392	24,615	18.0	46,186	33.8
1990	139,739	38,176	27.3	54,338	38.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Hartford Capitol Region Council of Governments. * Census data not available. Census figures for Puerto Ricans are not entirely reliable except to show the sustained growth in numbers of Puerto Ricans in the city.

**Table 5 Selected Types of Non-Agricultural
Employment in Hartford, 1965-1980**

Employment Sector	1965		1970	
Total	117,780	100.0%	134,450	100.0%
Manufacturing	23,100	19.6%	20,030	14.9%
FIRE*	28,450	24.4%	35,040	26.1%
Services	21,900	18.6%	25,690	19.1%
Government	12,980	11.0%	20,530	15.3%
	1975		1980	
Total	124,450	100.0%	143,180	100.0%
Manufacturing	11,600	9.3%	12,210	8.5%
FIRE	38,020	30.6%	45,200	31.6%
Services	29,023	23.3%	34,560	24.1%
Government	20,870	16.8	27,720	15.9%

Source: Connecticut Department of Labor
statistics assembled by Louise Simmons.

*Financial, insurance, and real estate.

**Table 6 Resident/Commuter
Employment in Hartford 1960-1980**

1960

Total Jobs	115,840	100.0%
Hartford Jobs	55,628	48.0%
Commuter Jobs	60,212	52.0%

1970

Total Jobs	134,450	100.0%
Hartford Jobs	42,281	31.4%
Commuter Jobs	92,169	68.6%

1980

Total Jobs	143,180	100.0%
Hartford Jobs	33,556	23.4%
Commuter Jobs	109,624	76.6%

Source: Department of Planning,
Hartford Connecticut, Hartford
State of the City, September
1983.

Chapter 3 - Puerto Ricans in Hartford: From Settlement to Collective Action

Introduction

This mostly descriptive chapter traces the interplay between ethnic awareness and power awareness in Hartford's Puerto Rican community. We have defined ethnic awareness as a sense of self that is shaped by the politics of place. Power awareness is shorthand for a sense of how certain political actors come to be favored within the polity. Our thesis is that the combination of ethnic awareness and power awareness gave Puerto Ricans a window of opportunity to articulate their interests and to seek political gains. Initially their needs and concerns were addressed through charity and other socializing agencies. Subsequently, they sought gains by formal organizing. In the late 1960s, collective action gave their claims visibility. This added impetus to their efforts to gain political access and gave a sharper focus to their political agenda.

Ethnic Awareness: An American Otherness

It was not something that the likes of Horace Bushnell would have preferred to hear but Florencio Morales, a social worker who had been in the employ of the Community Renewal Team (CRT), Hartford's leading anti-poverty agency for over two decades, said it anyway. "The Hartford community must understand Puerto Ricans as Puerto Ricans....Yes, we are

Americans, but we don't look like Americans. Americans must look for what the Puerto Rican has to offer."¹¹⁴

Bushnell was a preacher who equated Protestantism with Republicanism and saw immigration and the Catholicism of immigrants as a threat to the American heritage. In his eyes, Hartford's Irish were simply material for "the alms houses, the prisons and the potters' fields."¹¹⁵ His vision of newcomers was in keeping with the idea that took hold in Connecticut, however briefly, in 1855 when the voters elected William T. Minor, a Know-Nothing governor who in his inaugural address questioned the fitness of immigrants to become citizens.

The notion of an American otherness articulated by Morales rang both alien and true to many in and around Hartford. It was alien to those who, in the spirit of Bushnell and Minor, connected the Puerto Ricans with the so-called "heritage of the sugarcane cutter," which reportedly made them "turn to guile and wile and the steel blade."¹¹⁶ To dubious Connecticut eyes Puerto Ricans presented too many "rough edges

¹¹⁴. Gerald A. Ryan, "Need for Involvement in Community is Seen," *The Hartford Courant*, 20 November 1965, p. 1.

¹¹⁵. Grant and Grant, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹¹⁶. Craig M. Pearson, "'Last Migration' Brings 12,000 Puerto Ricans to Connecticut, Revives Old Problems," *The Hartford Courant*, 25 April 1954, p. 1.

and blank spots"¹¹⁷ and the fact that the newest of the new spent most of their free time quartered in camps owned by the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association (STGAA), did not forestall mean expressions. As a barber from nearby Windsor put it: "You hear talk they're treacherous and carry knives. We don't like to have them around too much."¹¹⁸

Yet, this otherness was precisely what made Puerto Ricans not just a group of people with foreign ways but also a living reminder of previous chapters in the history of the American polity. Residents of the neighboring town of Meriden watched in amazement entire families--mother, father, sibling, and uncle--parading from home to school to escort a single Puerto Rican child to kindergarten.¹¹⁹ "They are strangers," reads a 1957 account, "facing pretty much the same things other immigrants confront: isolation from the rest of the community because of their language, their strange ways, their poverty and their tendency to stay together."¹²⁰ In Hartford this feeling was often tempered by the idea that, like previous waves of new Americans, this one would ultimately adapt and assimilate. Thus, while it had been difficult to get them to

117. Craig M. Pearson, "Puerto Ricans Need Aid in Language, Customs," *The Hartford Courant*, 23 May 1954, p. 21.

118. Dan Gottlieb, "Puerto Ricans Come By Air to Harvest Tobacco Crops," *The Hartford Times*, 13 September 1958, p. 26.

119. Pearson, "Last Migration..."

120. Dan Gottlieb, "Newest Neighbors Number About 3,000," *The Hartford Times*, 4 May 1957, p. 3.

wear warm clothing in the winter¹²¹ and Puerto Rican men had to be told that it was "not considered good taste to comment...about the looks of the girls that pass by in the street,"¹²² in the end they were thought of as "good people" whose problems would disappear given time and instruction booklets in Spanish that primed them on the ways of the new polity. "If the citizen newcomers follow the pattern of the immigrants before them," wrote a journalist for the *Hartford Courant* in 1954, "their first generation will gain only a foothold. Their language and 'foreign' culture will be a block to better jobs, the education and the homes most Americans are used to. But their children, and their children's children, will gradually break the barriers."¹²³

A Diverse Lot

Puerto Ricans coming to Hartford in the 1950s were from diverse backgrounds. Some were rural folk from the semi-isolated mountain regions of the island who came to work the tobacco farms. Others came from the island's larger towns--such as Ponce in the south--with skills that mismatched the jobs they took upon arrival. "Recent migration statistics,"

121. "Puerto Rican Relations in Community Vary," *The Hartford Times*, 10 May 1957, p. 7.

122. Gottlieb, "Newest Neighbors..."

123. Craig M. Pearson, "'Too Little, For Too Many' Brings Puerto Rican Migrants to the State," *The Hartford Courant*, 2 May 1954, p. 4.

reads one story of the early 1950s, "indicate that less than a third of the Puerto Rican newcomers are classified as unskilled workers....draftsmen take jobs as restaurant workers, school teachers become machine operators and carpenters work as maintenance men."124

According to one early account, "The Puerto Rican has come from New York City or direct from the island. He has come by invitation to fill critical labor-shortages in industry and agriculture. He has come to seek opportunities outside of the big isolation of Manhattan. He has come in answer to one of his strongest compulsions, the family."125

In 1950, there were an estimated 900 Puerto Ricans in the state of Connecticut. Between 1951 and 1953 this number shot up steeply with the migration of about 10,000 Puerto Ricans to the state. This was no doubt a large number but not in comparison to New York City, which hosted over 375,000 Puerto Ricans in 1953.

In 1954, Bridgeport had the largest concentration in the state with about 8,000 Puerto Ricans. The original nucleus had moved to the city to work in the war industry under the sponsorship of the War Manpower Commission. New Haven had

124. Ibid.

125. Pearson, "'Last Migration...'"

about 1,000 in 1954, Meriden 700, and New Britain and Hartford roughly an equal share of between 300 and 500.¹²⁶

At the peak estimate for 1954, Puerto Ricans represented less than half of one percent of Hartford's population in 1950, a true hidden minority, too few to be perceived or recognized. But it was precisely in that year that the city first took notice of them under circumstances that were less than propitious to Puerto Rican residents and nonresidents alike.

Coming Into the Public's Eye

On 2 March 1954, four members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party took their claims for Puerto Rican independence directly to the United States Congress, not in the form of a signed petition nor through a formal process of consultation, but with guns in their hands. They placed themselves on the visitors gallery, just above the floor of the House of Representatives, and from there opened fire.

The assembled congressmen were slow to react at first; many thought that the sounds were those of firecrackers. Only when some started to fall under the impact of the bullets all realized what was happening. The bullets penetrated the table of the majority leader, a few chairs around it, and struck near the table of the minority leader. Most congressmen escaped unharmed; five were wounded.

¹²⁶. *Ibid.*

One of the nationalists fled the scene but the other three were quickly overcome and disarmed as they tried to escape. Later that night, Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, and Andrés Figueroa Cordero confessed to the shootings. Irving Flores, who had been arrested at a bus station in downtown Washington, denied he was a participant.

For maximum publicity, the shooting date had been picked to coincide with the opening of the InterAmerican Conference at Caracas, Venezuela, where all a dumbfounded John Foster Dulles could say when confronted with the news was: "What?"

A note found in Lebrón's purse read: "Before God and the world, my blood claims for the independence of Puerto Rico...I state that the United States of America are betraying the sacred principles of mankind in their continuous subjugation of my country."¹²⁷

The nationalists wanted to alert the world that Puerto Rico was not the showcase of democracy touted by the United States at the United Nations and elsewhere in Latin America, but a colony of an imperial power. The United States was not Puerto Rico's senior partner but its ruler. It had masterminded and controlled the repression of pro-independence advocates on the island of which the most visible example was

127. Clayton Knowles, "Five Congressmen Shot in House By 3 Puerto Rican Nationalists; Bullets Spray from Gallery," *The New York Times*, 2 March 1954, p. 1.

the jailing in a federal prison of the nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos.

The reactions to the shooting, however, were highly unsympathetic. In Puerto Rico and Washington the attack was characterized as "savage and unbelievable lunacy"¹²⁸ and "contrary to our belief and our peaceful nature," an instance of "the misbehavior of a very few."¹²⁹ In New York, Felipe N. Torres, a Puerto Rican assemblyman from the Bronx, introduced a resolution condemning the shooting, which the state assembly approved.¹³⁰ And in Illinois, a group of twenty-one Puerto Ricans presented themselves at Hines Veterans Hospital in Maywood, a suburb of Chicago, to donate blood as a gesture of sympathy for the wounded representatives. "We want to show the American people that the people of Puerto Rico do not hate them," said Luis Martínez, a bodega operator. "The nationalists are not representative of our native country. We are proud to be citizens."¹³¹

The day of the shooting a Grand Jury indicted Pedro Orozco Sánchez, a twenty-four year old Puerto Rican from

128. Peter Kihss, "Puerto Rico Head Calls 'It 'Lunacy'," *The New York Times*, 2 March 1954, p. 19.

129. "F.B.I. and Police Dig For Plot Roots Here," *The New York Times*, 3 March 1954, p.

130. "Assembly Condemns Shooting," *The New York Times*, 4 March 1954, p. 10.

131. "Puerto Ricans Donate to Illinois Blood Bank," *The New York Times*, 4 March 1954, p. 10.

Hartford, on charges of threatening to kill President Eisenhower. Sánchez had been arrested on a nonsupport charge and while being fingerprinted said: "What did I do, kill Eisenhower?" The charge was brought on the basis of that statement.¹³²

The next day the *Hartford Times* ran a story titled "Local Puerto Ricans, Few in Number, Deplore Shootings."¹³³ In it Julio Falcón, a Puerto Rican liaison officer for tobacco workers, expressed his dismay over the incident. Defined as transient tobacco and apple harvesters, Puerto Ricans were said to be unhappy about the shooting. The report included a message from the Fire Chief of Puerto Rico to "the fire chiefs of every town and city in the United States," reassuring them that "the vast majority of the people of Puerto Rico are indignant at the unbelievable and criminal aggression of which the members of the United States Congress have been victims." Then the reporter proceeded to remind the citizens of Hartford that no significant number of Puerto Ricans applied for relief or actually were on welfare. They were also informed that of those Puerto Ricans who had decided to settle in the state, more did so in towns and cities along the Connecticut shoreline--Bridgeport, New Haven, Guilford, and New London--than in Hartford.

132. "'Threatener' Indicted," *The New York Times*, 3 March 1954, p. 14.

133. *The Hartford Times* 3 March 1954, p. 25.

Although far from the scene of the crime, this was an inauspicious moment for Puerto Ricans in Hartford. And no one, perhaps, understood this better than Pedro Orozco Sánchez. It was a counterproductive way of becoming visible but then seldom are communities allowed to choose the way they come into the public's eye.

Early Migrants

Family brought Zoilo Caraballo and Julián Vargas to Hartford; others, like Pablo Román, left Puerto Rico simply to transcend familiar boundaries. In addition, there were all the transient farm workers who, beginning in 1951, and looking for relief from seasonal bouts of unemployment on the island, had come to harvest the tobacco fields and wound up staying. As an occupational group they were defined, not so much by what they had to offer the economy, but by what the economy had to offer them, namely jobs in restaurants, stores, factories, and farms.

Pablo Román came to Hartford in 1950. "When I came here," he said to a *Hartford Times* reporter in 1957, "there were maybe three, maybe four Puerto Rican families."¹³⁴ The son of a Puerto Rican landowner from the coastal town of Mayagüez, Román had completed high school and knew English when he moved to the states, first to Michigan, where he and his brother worked in a mushroom factory for eighteen months, and then to

¹³⁴. "Pablo Roman a Puerto Rican Pioneer in City," *The Hartford Times*, 8 May 1957, p. 14.

Hartford, where he arrived invited by his sister and prompted by his desire to see more of the country. All that Hartford had to offer him were blue-collar jobs, which, in the economic climate of the 1950s, were still seen as ushering in a better life.

From a meat refrigeration plant, Román moved on to a factory and then to G. Fox and Co., where he became in charge of filling orders in the stockroom of a gift shop. From G. Fox, Román went to work at the Statler Hilton, where he hoped to become a waiter.

Unlike Román, Zoilo Caraballo had only three years of schooling before he had to begin working to help support his thirteen siblings.¹³⁵ In Yauco, a hilly Puerto Rican town famous for its flavorful coffee, Caraballo worked on a farm seven days a week. As an *arrimao* (sharecropper), he had a house provided by the landowner but his weekly pay amounted to a meager \$8.75.

Caraballo wanted his children to go to school and the nearest one was about a mile and a half away. The children had to cross a river by stepping over stones and during the rainy season, this was dangerous. A move to rent-free government housing sent him farther away from his job and with the increased distance, the cost of feeding his family grew as

135. Daniel Gottlieb, "Puerto Ricans like Life Here, They're Crowded but Optimistic," *The Hartford Times*, 6 May 1957, p. 12.

well. All the while a brother-in-law who was working on a farm in Pennsylvania would write him about the opportunities there: plenty of work and \$46 a week.

In Pennsylvania, Caraballo worked shifts of sixty-six hours a week and missed his family terribly. He had a sister living in Hartford who suggested he move there. Once in the city, Caraballo landed a job in a tree nursery and later, after starting as a laborer, became a machine operator at Royal Typewriter.

At Royal Typewriter, newcomers like Caraballo would communicate with foremen through Spanish phrase cards while taking advantage of on-the-job classes in English. These were given by the Bureau of Adult Education of the city's Board of Education and the company paid half of the one-hour sessions.¹³⁶

Soon Caraballo sent for his wife, who started working in a tobacco factory and, in two months, with their combined \$52 in savings, they sent for their two daughters. Of life in Hartford, Caraballo liked best the cold weather and the better pay.

Julián Vargas had heard about Hartford from resident friends. As a "railroad engineer" the \$8 a day that he earned was a good wage by Puerto Rican standards. Yet it was not

136. "Puerto Rican Relations in Community Vary," *The Hartford Times*, 10 May 1957, p. 7.

enough to feed a family of ten and in 1953 he and his family moved to Hartford.

Vargas arrived in the city with \$500--a gift from his mother--and for two years he steadily saved money made from killing chickens at Hartford Live Poultry. A diagnosis of diabetes prompted him to quit his job and invest his savings of \$350 on a jeep, a license, and a load of vegetables from New York City.

Life as a peddler, however, did not turn out to be what the doctor had ordered and after some setbacks Vargas established the first Puerto Rican bodega in Hartford. In 1956, *La Popular, Bodega Hispana* opened its doors at 1579 Main Street, in the Clayhill neighborhood that hosted the first Puerto Rican enclave in the city.

A few other Puerto Ricans arrived earlier and under different circumstances. Olga Mele, for example, came in 1941 married to an American serviceman. Her husband's connection with the military and her education, gave her security, comfort, and a middle-class perspective.¹³⁷ But Román, Caraballo, and Vargas were the more typical members of the burgeoning enclave.

137. Mele was the first Puerto Rican to receive the Jefferson Award for community service, both at the state and national level, in 1977.

Socialization

Still lacking a shared sense of place, politics for this new group of citizens was a rare but not absent endeavor. At this early stage there were few signs of "mobilization on the basis of belief which redefines social action."¹³⁸ The community was also very small and therefore the most salient stirrings of organization were felt in nearby Bridgeport. There Antonia Pantoja, a social worker originally from the island who later was the driving force of *Aspira* and the National Puerto Rican Forum in New York City, led the effort. While Hartford's Puerto Ricans had a comparable organizational dynamo in the figure of Olga Mele, they had, understandably, no seasoned leadership and no generalized beliefs of the kind that bring coherence to social experience and open up paths of opportunity.

These immigrants to Hartford did, however, have common enough aspirations: the education of their children, better employment, payment of debts, home ownership. Some saw politics as a path of opportunity. Aside from her church activities, Mele, perhaps the first Puerto Rican in the city, acted as a job-developer of sorts and helped register Puerto Ricans. By 1955 she and others had formed the first Puerto Rican Association in Hartford, a civic group that included voter registration among its proposed activities. Yet at this

138. Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 8.

point, society, not politics, was at the center of their activities and social life was the framework in which those activities were analyzed.

Between 1951 and 1953, no Puerto Rican newcomer to Hartford was convicted, fined or sent to prison by the state's Superior Court. Only in two cases were Puerto Ricans charged with crimes severe enough to bring them before the high court and both resulted in acquittals.¹³⁹ "Thefts by Connecticut's Puerto Ricans," reads a 1954 account, "are virtually unknown. Law enforcement officials from throughout the state can recall fewer than five in the past three years."¹⁴⁰ Common crimes were often misdemeanors such as drunkenness, breach of peace, and motor vehicle infractions, usually, driving without a license.

But such particulars did not prevent city court officials from declaring the Puerto Rican "a problem," which made Hartford the only Connecticut city to do so in 1954. On the 9 May 1954 edition of the *Hartford Courant* one state official was quoted as saying: "they're not moral or immoral--just unmoral," and another declared: "I don't think we have much to

139. Craig M. Pearson, "Connecticut's Puerto Ricans Strive with Language, Living," *The Hartford Courant*, 9 May 1954, p. 1.

140. *Ibid.*

worry about. As soon as times get a little rougher they'll all be going back to New York or to Puerto Rico."¹⁴¹

Not knowing what to make of this Puerto Rican "problem" these officials decided that it was best to place it in the netherworld of the unmoral and, ultimately, to explain it away--back to the tropical zone where it had originated. Certainly the experience of the early migrants provided some grounds for this attitude.

During the summer, tobacco companies would recruit between five and eight hundred Puerto Ricans, mostly men, who would go back to the island at the end of the season. Some were hired to work in orchards during the summer and early fall. As if to emphasize their status as temporary workers, they were housed in barracks inside the farms and rarely, if ever, did they venture into the city. Such isolation was the experience of even those who had come on their own, with other plans. "I was very lucky," said Angel Colón, who had left the town of Comerío in 1951. "I got a job on what you call the bull gang [a crew of laborers]. I worked there for seven years. I used to go to sleep early every night to save money. I never went any place."¹⁴²

For Colón, and for many others as well, that statement: "I never went any place," meant just staying put until the end

¹⁴¹. Ibid.

¹⁴². James M. Owens, "Hard Working Family Asks Only Fair Share," *The Hartford Courant*, 22 March 1959, p. 1.

of the harvest. But it can also be interpreted to mean that, contrary to the hopes of their hosts, for many there were few chances of returning to Puerto Rico. Some could not afford to go back; others simply preferred to stay. Said Juan "Johnny" Castillo, who came to Hartford in 1953:

I would say that [Hartford] was the perfect city. Coming in you found a good environment, there was housing, everything was good. Farmworkers would come into the city to visit family or friends and they liked it. They would find jobs, because there were plenty of jobs then, and they preferred to make \$8 or \$10 in a factory than making \$4 in the farms.¹⁴³

In 1953 less than twenty Puerto Ricans were on welfare in the city.¹⁴⁴ The following year welfare enrollment was still low and there were no indications that, among Puerto Ricans who met the one-year residency requirement, more applied than other groups in proportion to their number.¹⁴⁵ According to Housing Authority reports for 1954 only five Puerto Rican families were living in projects in Hartford and four others had recently become eligible for low-rent housing.

The extent to which Puerto Ricans rely on the mechanisms devised by the state to protect its less fortunate citizens has always been a sensitive point in communities throughout the mainland--whether in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia or

143. Interview in Spanish with Juan "Johnny" Castillo, 14 August 1992.

144. Pearson, "Connecticut's Puerto Ricans..."

145. "Local Puerto Ricans, Few in Number, Deplore Shootings," *The Hartford Times*, 3 March 1954, p. 25.

Hartford. And so it was that in 1959, Felisa Rincón de Gautier, the mayor of San Juan and the first woman to be elected as such in Puerto Rico, long before Patience Sewell Latting's time¹⁴⁶, proudly referred to the fact that of 6,000 Puerto Ricans in Hartford only 120 received public assistance.¹⁴⁷ This evidence, according to Rincón de Gautier, proved that Puerto Ricans moved to the U.S. for gainful employment. She was both right and wrong: by 1960 the Welfare Department was already concerned about the high proportion of the caseload that was Puerto Rican. According to their records, in July 1958, 12 percent of the caseload in the city was Puerto Rican; in July 1959 it was 16 percent of the total. By their estimates Puerto Ricans were 3 percent of the total population.¹⁴⁸

Socialization proceeded in tandem with growth. By 1957 the estimated number of Puerto Ricans in Hartford was 3,000. In only three years they exceeded their numbers tenfold, in

146. Patience Sewell Latting was the first woman mayor of a U.S. city comparable in population to San Juan. She was sworn-in on 13 April 1971 as mayor of Oklahoma City. v. Joseph Nathan Kane, *Famous First Facts*, (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1981), p. 365. Felisa Rincón de Gautier was appointed mayor of San Juan on December 1946 and elected on 2 November 1948. She served for twenty-two years. v. Ruth Gruber, *Felisa Rincón de Gautier* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1972).

147. James M. Owens, "Puerto Ricans Aided here By Own Dept.," *The Hartford Courant*, 19 March 1959, p. 1.

148. Inter-Office Report of Manuel E. Royo to Eulalio Torres, 13 January 1960. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 33.

part due to the attraction of a booming state industry, in part due to intercity migration between Bridgeport and Hartford. "In Hartford and 100 other cities, Puerto Ricans are filling labor shortages in every type of industry," reads one account. In a mixture of apology and analysis it also points out that according to *Time* magazine "the crime rate of Puerto Ricans in New York was much lower than that of other groups in the lower income brackets...Other figures show that Puerto Ricans are hard workers. More than 90 percent of them in New York are completely self-supporting--a high percentage for a group where so many are late-arrivals...Of course, they have a perfect right to come to the U.S. There are no immigration barriers because all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens."¹⁴⁹

These caveats did not prevent a spokeswoman from the Greater Hartford Council of Churches from reassuring the city that the newcomers were "definitely not an overflow from New York."¹⁵⁰ This was considered necessary in view of the image, held by many in Hartford, of the "knife-flashing, drinking and fighting Puerto Rican"¹⁵¹ from New York. And comments made by none other than the Governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Muñoz Marín, added to the bad press these Puerto Ricans

149. "Booming Industry Attracts Puerto Ricans," *The Hartford Courant*, 5 May 1957, p. B1.

150. Daniel Gottlieb, "Newest Neighbors Number About 3,000," *The Hartford Courant*, 4 May 1957, p. 3.

151. "Puerto Rican Relations in Community Vary," *The Hartford Times*, 10 May 1957, p. 7.

received. In an interview given to the *Hartford Courant* early in 1959, Muñoz said that problems such as juvenile delinquency were unknown in Puerto Rico "until some of the families returned and their children brought bad habits...that they had learned in New York City."¹⁵²

Actual behavior was far more benign than what this image implied. A common complaint about Puerto Ricans was that they would disappear from work for three or four months at a time, only to come back undaunted by their unexplained absence saying, simply, "wife sick" or "go to Puerto Rico for Christmas." Because they were not required to take special classes to become citizens they were considered to lack an important incentive that had been a factor in the incorporation of other immigrant groups--the Germans, Poles, and Italians. Still, in 1956 about 200 Puerto Ricans had registered to vote, a fact that came as a big surprise to many in the city.¹⁵³

In 1958 the STGAA brought 984 Puerto Rican workers to Connecticut under an arrangement with the government of Puerto Rico and the state.¹⁵⁴ This was quite a leap from the original 300 workers brought in 1951 when their recruitment

152. James M. Owens, "Average Migrant Found Law-Abiding Citizen," *The Hartford Courant*, 16 March 1959, p. 1.

153. "Puerto Rican Relations in Community Vary," *The Hartford Times*, 10 May 1957, p. 7.

154. Dan Gottlieb, "Puerto Ricans Come by Air to Harvest Tobacco Crops," *The Hartford Times*, 23 September 1958, p. 26.

program began.¹⁵⁵ The increase coincided with the first signs of the formation of a Puerto Rican settlement in the South Side of Hartford,¹⁵⁶ although no significant community would emerge until much later. Also for the first time, workers were paid 90 cents an hour or on a piecework basis. Housing in the Association's camps, where they were quartered, was free and came with three meals a day for \$2.10, which was deducted from the workers' pay. Although they disliked the food, they ate it all, as anyone doing hard physical labor would. There was also a deduction for medical insurance which many resented.

By 1959 Puerto Rican numbers in the city had increased 100 percent in two years from 3,000 to 6,000. No longer were they reported to be mismatched for their jobs. Few in Hartford would have believed that the findings of the 1948-49 Columbia University study that "the migrants are more likely to have had industrial experience than members of the labor force in Puerto Rico; more likely to be skilled, and less than half as likely to be unskilled,"¹⁵⁷ applied to the Puerto Ricans coming to their city.

155. Gerald A. Ryan, "Newest Minority Finds Ways of City Strange," *The Hartford Courant*, 14 November 1965, p. 1A.

156. Madelyn Colon, "Puerto Rican Americans," in *How the Other Half Lived*, edited by Robert E. Pawlowski, (West Hartford, CT, 1973), p. 84.

157. Clarence Senior, *The Puerto Ricans, Strangers--then Neighbors* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), pp. 90-91.

To Hartford residents, the growing settlement on the North Side and the spotty groupings developing near the South Green Park and the Chapel Street area, as well as those in Frog Hollow and Parkville, were enclaves of uneducated and unskilled workers fit for no work other than harvesting tobacco farms.

Page A1 of the 15 March 1959 edition of the Hartford Courant features a most interesting set of photos of two groups of Puerto Ricans. One photo was taken in the town of Orocovis, Puerto Rico, and shows three men squatting on their heels talking idly. The other photo, taken in Hartford, shows a similar group of men in the same attitude; only the falling snow separates them geographically.

At the time, the parallel must have been as much illustrative of a resistance to change habits that did not fit the new environment, as an indication of doubt on the part of Hartford's citizens regarding the capacity of Puerto Ricans to be anything other than what they had always been. The caption's lead--"It's their way"--indeed suggests resigned acceptance of a form of behavior that was, at the least, strange. The contrasting images were striking and to some extent charming. The dissonance of the Hartford scene must have provoked comments noting the odd ways of the newcomers; in all likelihood it made not a few question their sanity as well.

Puerto Ricans had come to Hartford to work in the farms; to do the work that no one else would do; to be, as the Reverend Andrew Cooney, pastor of the Sacred Heart Church of Hartford, put it years later, the Germans of their day,¹⁵⁸ in reference to the fact that German immigrants had preceded them in some neighborhoods. Standing--or squatting, for that matter--on street corners was not what was expected of them and for that they were either sent home or arrested.

Easing the Transition

Help for Puerto Ricans in Hartford--to ease the transition from a mostly rural to an urban environment, to increase their familiarity with new customs and a new language--came first from the Greater Hartford Council of Churches and this assistance went as far back as 1952.¹⁵⁹ Also in 1952 the government of Puerto Rico expanded the Migration Division of its Department of Labor to cover the Hartford-Massachusetts region. The Hartford office acted as liaison between the tobacco growers and contract workers recruited in Puerto Rico.

A guide printed by the Council of Churches in Spanish gave the newly arrived their first lessons in acculturation: "In this country one uses only the name of the father and not that of the mother as in Puerto Rico. For example, Juan

158. Gerald A. Ryan "Road to Better Life is Paved by Hard Work," *The Hartford Courant*, 15 November 1965, p. 1A.

159. Owens, "Average Migrant..."

Antonio Garcia Lopez in this country is called Juan A. Garcia."¹⁶⁰

The Council's concern was molded by the immediacy of the migrant's problems--their lack of clothing for the cold weather and their utter ignorance of what their new home was like. But some within the Council were quick to realize that more formal, institutional responses were necessary. Thus in 1956, the San Juan Catholic Center (hereafter referred to as San Juan Center) was established on Albany Avenue by Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien. By 1959, the Center offered family counseling, helped write letters, translated documents, and gave its clients referrals to other providers.

The opening of the San Juan Center did not preclude more modest initiatives such as Mille Marchese's program for non-English speaking children at Barnard-Brown school, also begun in 1956, when five Puerto Ricans were enrolled there.¹⁶¹

At the Migration Division classes in conversational English and instruction booklets covering everyday life situations were available to anyone coming to Hartford from the island.¹⁶² By 1967 the office was telling its recruits,

160. Daniel Gottlieb, "Newest Neighbors Number About 3,000," *The Hartford Courant*, 4 May 1957, p. 3.

161. Gerald A. Ryan, "English Classes Opening Portals to Better Jobs," *The Hartford Courant*, 16 November 1965, p. 1A.

162. James M. Owens, "Puerto Ricans Aided Here By Own Dept.," *The Hartford Courant*, 19 March 1959, p. 1.

indirectly, that even for transient workers a modicum of acculturation was the best way of staying out of trouble:

In the city you should not walk alone through alleys and should not gather in groups in front of Hispanic businesses or in street corners. Americans are not used to the joyful banter characteristic of our race and to them a friendly but loud conversation between three or more people is sign of an argument or the beginning of a riot.

If you go to the city with more than \$15 or \$20 and you get drunk or decide to visit unfamiliar apartments you risk losing your money and ending up in a hospital.¹⁶³

All the while the Greater Hartford Council of Churches continued its charitable efforts and in 1959, with the United Church Women of Greater Hartford, it co-sponsored a project to train fourteen women to go to the homes of Puerto Ricans to teach them English. These women saw their pupils twice a week for an hour on each visit. They used the Laubach system of instruction in which pictures were utilized to identify letters. The emphasis was on the sound of letters, not their form--in this way the pupil did not need to be literate to learn English and the teacher could spare herself the trouble of learning Spanish.

Although more systematic than before, these initiatives were still affected by the quality of residuum that has characterized the charitable spirit throughout much of its

163. Standard orientation prepared by Gilberto Camacho for newly arrived contract workers, circa 1967. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 500.

history.¹⁶⁴ They were needed and welcome but in large part these independent charities alleviated the distress only of those individuals whom they noticed.

To most Puerto Ricans in Hartford these efforts did not begin to address their reality. Rather than disappear, problems seemed to become worse. For example, the lack of housing was compounded by the unsanitary conditions of what was available, discriminatory practices, and long waiting for public units. The problem of low pay and a high standard of living was exacerbated by high rents and the common practice of landlords charging above the city council's welfare fair rent formula.

Unable to complain in English, Puerto Ricans relied on interpreters to tell public officials all about these problems.¹⁶⁵ But in October 1959, Gilberto Camacho, an organizer with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Chicago office, was transferred to Hartford to coordinate the services of existing social agencies to Puerto Ricans, establish a worker education program, and an orientation program to incorporate Puerto Ricans into the American way of life. This, Camacho had to pursue not just in Hartford but in cities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well. In Hartford, Camacho's

164. Daniel J. Boorstin, *Hidden History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 202.

165. Dan Gottlieb, "30 Puerto Ricans Reveal Housing Problems to Clark," *The Hartford Times*, 26 March 1959, p. 29.

first promise was to establish an organization of Puerto Ricans.¹⁶⁶

Power Awareness: A New Sense of Self

In April, 1964, two thousand Puerto Rican workers arrived to work in the tobacco fields. A similar group had come to the Hartford area in the previous year, and according to Gilberto Camacho, the similarity was not just in their numbers but, also, in that they were coming "to take jobs which apparently are not acceptable to area residents."

It is unlikely that Camacho shared the wishful thinking of many in 1954 concerning the place of Puerto Ricans in Hartford. Ten years later he nonetheless echoed that thinking by predicting that "the group would dwindle as Puerto Rico's agricultural and industrial programs develop further."¹⁶⁷ This did not come to pass.

In 1964, about 20,000 people lined up to watch the celebration of the first Connecticut Puerto Rican Day Parade, a festivity designed "to honor the state's Puerto Rican population and to encourage voter registration and participation in the coming election."¹⁶⁸

166. Dan Gottlieb, "Organizer Appointed for Puerto Ricans," *The Hartford Times*, 16 October 1959, p. 4.

167. "2,000 Puerto Ricans Due on Area Farms," *The Hartford Times*, 13 March 1964, p. 17.

168. "Puerto Ricans Parade to Celebrate State Day," *The Hartford Courant*, 5 October 1964, p. 19.

The parade began at the intersection of Main and Ely Streets and marched through the city to Dillon Stadium. A vendor at the corner of Main and Buckingham streets sold miniature Puerto Rican, American, and Confederate Flags. Paraders would buy these and buttons of the Beatles, some of which read: "I'm Bugs About the Beatles."

About 3,000 marchers filed into the stadium for a rally. John Davis Lodge, a Republican candidate for the Senate and Thomas J. Dodd, Jr., son of the Democratic senator, spoke to the crowd. "The fault [for low voter turnout] lies not with the Puerto Ricans," said Lodge, "but with the state of Connecticut...which demands that every elector be able to read any portion of the state constitution in English."¹⁶⁹

Camacho could not see it yet but it was apparent that members of the Puerto Rican community, rather than dwindling were increasing in numbers and beginning to take steps towards getting organized. The celebration was not just a momentary escape from the grim facts of life in poverty and isolation. In comments made to the local press in 1961, San Juan's mayor Felisa Rincón de Gautier had indicated that the yearly celebration of St. John the Baptist day¹⁷⁰ marked the time when "all Puerto Ricans on the mainland wish they could come

¹⁶⁹. Ibid.

¹⁷⁰. On this day the Catholic faithful in Puerto Rico dipped themselves in the ocean to commemorate the baptism of Christ and to ward-off evil spirits. In Hartford, the only place a Puerto Rican could dip herself was her bathtub.

back."¹⁷¹ Perhaps she was right. But by 1964 there were dim but perceptible signs of an important shift in attitude.

As a group, Puerto Ricans had begun to develop a new sense of political self, to move out of the fringes into the realm of political alignment. However tentative, their identification with the political parties existed, and the parties in turn had begun to realize that theirs was a presence that needed to be recognized. Such was the message and symbolism of that first Puerto Rican Parade.

The year after the parade, Nicholas Carbone first became involved with the Puerto Rican community while working for the campaign of George Ritter, who was running for city council. As one of Ritter's citywide campaign coordinators, Carbone brought María Sánchez, a Puerto Rican pioneer in the city, into the effort in an attempt to register and get out the Puerto Rican vote in support of Ritter.

Carbone's approach had both a sense of strategic planning and an urgency that was grounded in an immediate goal. Unlike Camacho, Carbone and others within the Democratic Party saw an emerging community: the Puerto Ricans were in Hartford to stay. The feeling was that if Puerto Ricans were duly recognized and incorporated, everyone else would be better off in the long run.

171. Linda and James Owens, "Puerto Ricans Prepare for Rejoicing," *The Hartford Courant Magazine*, 18 June 1961, p. 7.

"We were looking to win an election and every vote was important," said Carbone recalling his more self-interested motives. "[We] wanted them to identify with the Democratic Party in the city. There's very little patronage per se in the city...so the best thing we had [to offer] for involvement of the community was to be involved in the policy decisions that the city was going to be making."¹⁷²

Formal Organizing: Adapt, Assimilate, Fight

That same year stirrings of organization initiated by the Puerto Ricans began to be felt. Camacho's promise had run ahead of him as four groups formed to cover the gamut of Puerto Rican needs in the city.

In February, the Puerto Rican American Association of Connecticut formed to promote employment opportunities and voter registration. In April, the Spanish American Association of Hartford was organized to assimilate migrants in the social and cultural life of the city. Camacho had helped this group. In May he reported to his supervisor:

the Association is formed by a group of young Puerto Ricans anxious and willing to push themselves and to help the Puerto Rican community in matters pertaining to education, housing, employment, registration and voting. They are specially interested in Puerto Rican youngsters and have started a drive to raise funds to build their own "Casa de Puerto Rico."¹⁷³

172. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

173. Letter of Gilberto Camacho to Robert Little, 5 May 1965. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 374.

Also in 1965, the Latin American Action Project was established to provide services and information on employment and housing. And during the summer the first specifically political organization of Puerto Ricans was established. On Tuesday, 20 July 1965, fourteen Puerto Ricans met at the North End Democratic Club on 36 Barbour Street to organize the Puerto Rican Democrats of Hartford. José Cruz, a public school teacher, was elected president. Julián Vargas, whose business ventures were an example of both incorporation and economic success within the community, became vice-president. Flavio Reverón, a community organizer with the Migration Division's office in Hartford was elected secretary and María Sánchez, who later was and remained until her death a key member of the Democratic party, became the group's treasurer.

The president-elect described the role of the group in no uncertain terms: "We have to make this community our community, and make it help us fight our problems. We have to show people around us that we can live with them and successfully adopt their way of life."¹⁷⁴

This was more than what Carbone and his associates wanted from Puerto Ricans, at least in the short-term. Those two simple sentences revealed a program that transcended the immediacy of an electoral contest. Puerto Ricans wanted to deliver a message that, in fact, spoke as much, and perhaps

174. "Puerto Ricans Organize Democratic Political Club," *The Hartford Times*, 21 July 1965, p. 17.

more, to themselves as to everyone else in the city. The message had an explicit call for action: adapt and assimilate but also fight the problems plaguing the community.

Other Puerto Ricans, however, were not as willing to adopt the "fighting" part of the formula. The comments of Irene Montalvo were representative of this side: "I'd never believe it if someone told me the Puerto Ricans were picketing. We'd never do that. To us picketing is like showing off. It offends people. We go the other way. You can never argue rights."¹⁷⁵

In this view to show the community's worth it was preferable to go slowly, educating the public through civic activities and cultural events, and grooming Puerto Ricans for individual success. Furthermore, there was skepticism that Puerto Ricans could form an organization for purposes other than to promote and enjoy their culture. The reasons for this were not given and the very example of the Puerto Rican Democrats of Hartford was ignored. Instead, history was turned into prophecy: since Puerto Ricans had never organized to combat social evils it was unlikely that they ever would.

A reporter for the *Hartford Courant* put it this way: "Leadership has always been lacking among Puerto Ricans here, and that which has advocated sudden change and urged a strong voice in behalf of better opportunities has usually fallen

175. Gerald A. Ryan, "Old Customs Still Cling as New Problems Arise," *The Hartford Courant*, 19 November 1965, p. A1.

under the weight of political apathy, civic passiveness and the ever-present resignation to a second-rate standard of living."¹⁷⁶

Yet the feeling that involvement in the community was needed so that the public could learn about Puerto Ricans not just in light of their contacts with the welfare worker, the family relations officer or the policeman,¹⁷⁷ was there to be tapped.

"[They] are the city's most exploited tenants and their housing is the city's worst," said Juanita Williams, the supervisor of the city's Housing Department's North End field office, in November of 1965.¹⁷⁸ With rent payments averaging about \$8 to \$10 per room per week, Puerto Ricans paid 20 percent higher rents than any other city dwellers. And discrimination kept them from choosing better housing. "I go to the apartments," said Haydee Feliciano, from the San Juan Center, "They think I am Italian. Then they look at who I bring with me. They ask, 'are they Italian too?'...I'm sorry, the apartment is rented."¹⁷⁹

Collective Action

176. Gerald A. Ryan, "Need for Involvement in Community is Seen," *The Hartford Courant*, 20 November 1965, p. 1.

177. Gerald A. Ryan, "Process of Adjustment is Slow, Often Painful," *The Hartford Courant*, 18 November 1965, p. A1

178. Gerald A. Ryan, "Families Are Crowded to Reduce Rent Costs," *The Hartford Courant*, 17 November 1965, p. 1A.

179. *Ibid.*

Early in 1966 the Latin American Action Project was already delivering on its promise to provide information on housing conditions and it was bad news. A survey of 200 families in the North End's Tunnel area confirmed what many, albeit anecdotally, already knew: Puerto Ricans lived in inferior housing and paid inflated rent prices. "The general housing picture is nearly identical to that of the Negro in the North End," the survey report declared.¹⁸⁰ The Tunnel was the area of the Clay Hill neighborhood of Hartford's North End, which, at the time, hosted most Puerto Rican families in the city.

In 1967, only two years after the Puerto Rican Democrats of Hartford had promised to combat the problems besieging Puerto Ricans, the prophecy of its detractors seemed fulfilled. "The English language continues to create the same problems for the Puerto Ricans that it did ten years ago," reads one account.¹⁸¹ That and discrimination--the most clear sign of the failure to assimilate--were the top two problems forestalling the fulfillment of the group's agenda.

Instead of action the collective response had been continued, and sometimes self-imposed, isolation.¹⁸²

180. Douglas Hill, "Puerto Ricans' Housing Found Poor and Costly," *The Hartford Times*, 9 February 1966, p. 1B.

181. Federico Campbell, "Language Top Problem of Immigrant," *The Hartford Courant*, 10 May 1967, p. 17.

182. Federico Campbell, "'Reluctant' to Seek Homes in Non-Spanish Area," *The Hartford Courant*, 13 May 1967, p. 6.

Groping for an explanation, a frustrated José Cruz put the blame on the continuous flow of uneducated migrants from the agricultural regions of Puerto Rico,¹⁸³ while Joseph Monserrat, Director of the Migration Division of the Puerto Rico Department of Labor, and Santiago Polanco Abreu, then Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner in Washington, pleaded for tolerance from the public by emphasizing that 80 percent of Puerto Ricans were white.¹⁸⁴

There was no news about Puerto Ricans at the beginning of 1969. It was not until July that they made their way into the papers. Coverage began on a positive note with a story about the Puerto Rican Families Association, a self-help group at Charter Oak Terrace that met one Sunday each month at 19 Shultas Place to discuss ways of helping Puerto Rican families during emergencies. The Association had been created in 1967. Two years later it had broadened the scope of its activities beyond the South End and had begun to develop a program to encourage the academic performance of Puerto Rican children. That summer the group was awarded a \$4,000 grant by the CRT to honor 22 high school and junior high students who had graduated with a better than "B" grade average.¹⁸⁵ Awards

183. Federico Campbell, "Language Top Problem of Immigrant," *The Hartford Courant*, 10 May 1967, p. 17.

184. "Plea for Tolerance Sounded," *The Hartford Courant*, 25 September 1967, p. 1.

185. John Sherman, "Puerto Rican Unit Finds a Way," *The Hartford Courant*, 11 July 1969, p. 19.

were presented to the students by Mayor Ann Uccello, not knowing that a month later she would be referring to Puerto Ricans as "hoodlums" and "agitators."

On Friday, 1 August 1969, a *Hartford Times* story reported on the celebration by Puerto Ricans of Santo Cristo de la Salud (Holy Christ of Well-Being) day in Hartford. This was a big festival originally from the town of Comerío, where many Puerto Rican families in the city came from, which was sponsored by the *Asociación de Comerieños Ausentes, Inc.*, a group of twenty-eight members that had formed in 1967.

It was a story of seemingly painless ethnic succession. The Puerto Rican festival substituted the Italian feasts that were no more, after redevelopment succeeded in obliterating the Italian community of the East Side. The opening event, a dance, was to be held at the Russian American National Center on Wethersfield Avenue. A mass would follow at Sacred Heart. In 1959, in an early display of cohesiveness, a group of Puerto Ricans including early settlers such as María Sánchez, Olga Mele, and Nilda Torres had succeeded in removing the church's pastor, Father Joseph Otto, and moving their masses out of the basement.¹⁸⁶ This had been a German church. Now it was predominantly Puerto Rican. "It is good to have the Puerto Ricans celebrating in the street," said the *Times*,

186. Robert E. Pawlowski, *La Gente La Casa, The Development of Hartford's Puerto Rican Community*, (Hartford, CT: La Casa de Puerto Rico, c. 1991), p. 1; Interview with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

"with a dance in a Russian organization's hall and a Mass in a once-German parish church."

Another article, written in Spanish in the recently established section "*Connecticut Hispano*," made much of the fact that for the first time in Hartford's history, an official proclamation, declaring 3 August the day of Santo Cristo de la Salud, was written and published in English and Spanish.¹⁸⁷ Little did anyone know that a few days later, Puerto Ricans would take to the streets again; but the story reported in the city's papers would bear scant resemblance to the August 1st story, titled "Dancing in the Streets."

On the evening of Sunday, 10 August rumors circulated through Hartford's South Green that the Comancheros, a white Hells Angels-type motorcycle gang, had assaulted a Puerto Rican elderly person the night before at Friar's Restaurant on 165 Main Street.¹⁸⁸ Combined with the ill-feeling between Puerto Rican residents of the South Green neighborhood and the motorcycle gang, the rumors became the first sign of a gathering storm.

At the time "there was a lot of police brutality to begin with," recalled Antonio Soto, then a neighborhood resident and

187. Juan Fuentes, "La Alcaldesa Proclama Día del Santo Cristo de la Salud," *The Hartford Times*, 3 August 1969, p. 7B.

188. "Youths Hurl Rocks, Bottles At South Green; 10 Nabbed," *The Hartford Times*, 11 August 1969, p. B1. This address became an empty lot next to the offices of Jorge Simón, the first corporation counsel of Puerto Rican background appointed, on December 1990, by Hartford's city council.

community organizer. "The Comancheros was just a group that we used to throw bricks at because they would be kicking Puerto Ricans in the ass all the time. So when we had the incident at the Main Street bar, all hell broke loose."¹⁸⁹

The Comancheros' club was on Lawrence Street but Friar's was their regular hangout. According to their account, the victim had been slugged by a stranger after a bout of pushing-and-shoving. They alleged that the assaulted man was not elderly and a few days after the incident a newspaper story reported that the victim was "apparently 35 years old."¹⁹⁰

That night, however, Puerto Ricans were not confused by conflicting stories or troubled by doubts. "The rumor was enough to knock the top off the steam kettle that has been simmering for years," goes an account of the events.¹⁹¹ Nightly invasions of the Puerto Rican neighborhood by the Comancheros and the bricks that residents would hurl at them were the salient elements of their mutual hostility and dislike.

Crowds gathered, fights broke out, rocks and molotov cocktails flew. The first arrests were all Puerto Rican and this incensed the already heated rioters. Cars were set

189. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991.

190. "Cycle Gang: The Storm's Eye," *The Hartford Times*, 13 August 1991, p. 1.

191. Bill Ryan, "City's Puerto Ricans Ask: Who Speaks for Us, Senor?," *The Hartford Times*, 15 August 1969, p. 1.

ablaze. A motorcycle shop was firebombed and around 1 a.m. someone broke into a mattress company setting between 20 and 30 mattresses on fire. The motorcycle gang was seen in the area throughout the night but no members were arrested. This led to charges that the police were singling out Puerto Ricans while looking the other way where gang members were concerned.¹⁹² Antonio Soto saw it precisely that way: "The cops turned their dogs on us," he recalled, "and the Comancheros had started the [incident], so we realized even further that the cops were more against us than the Comancheros were and it just got totally out of hand."¹⁹³

On Thursday, 14 August, after four days of bottle-throwing and window-smashing marked by tear-gassing and arrests, María Sánchez, the only Puerto Rican member of the Democratic Town Committee at the time, requested a meeting with city officials to resolve the tensions underlying the rioting. Earlier, she had placated a crowd of about 150 young men who had gathered at the intersection of Park and Main Street. City Manager Elisha Freedman was not convinced that a meeting was needed. "This seems to be a problem that can best be resolved through existing neighborhood organizations," he told a *Hartford Times* reporter.¹⁹⁴

192. Barry Wanger, "More Help Pledged for Puerto Ricans," *The Hartford Times*, 13 August 1969, p. 1.

193. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991.

194. "Puerto Rican Leader, City..."

After some equivocation on the part of the concerned parties, a meeting was finally held that night at the South Green Multiservice Center on 99 Main Street.¹⁹⁵ As the proceedings unfolded Sánchez, Nicholas Carbone, and Freedman listened patiently. The participants complained that although they had been attacked, only Puerto Ricans had been arrested. Some mentioned unreasonable searches and arrests. In one case, a man was arrested after a police officer found a chain, baseball shoes and gloves, and a baseball bat in the trunk of his car. Another explained that he had been arrested while telling people, in Spanish, not to throw rocks at police cars. This prompted police chief Thomas Vaughan to promise that interpreters would be hired to work full-time at the front desk of the police station, and that more Puerto Rican policemen and civilian aides for investigative work would be hired.

Near the end of the meeting, councilman George Athanson, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for mayor, urged the Puerto Rican community to run a candidate for city council. That was a good idea, thought many, but it would not happen for some time.

195. Bill Williams, "Success of Talks to Officials Pleases City Puerto Ricans," *The Hartford Times*, 15 August 1969, p. B1.

The day after the meeting, police once again used tear gas to break up groups of Puerto Ricans near the South Green.¹⁹⁶ In a ghastly, although downsized, reminder of incidents elsewhere in the country, dogs were unleashed unto the small crowd. Disgusted with what they saw, José Garay and José Rivera, two of only four Spanish-speaking officers in the city's police force, refused to obey orders to tell people to disperse. That evening they placed a call to the patrol captain, Theodore Napper, to express their protest, and subsequently filed a complaint.

A week later, on Tuesday 19 August, 150 Puerto Ricans met in the South Park Methodist Church to charge police brutality and sadism during arrests.¹⁹⁷ Four councilmen--Carbone, Athanson, Collin Bennett, and Allyn Martin--bore the brunt of people's anger at the absence of Chief Vaughan and City Manager Freedman. Garay and Rivera were present but declined requests to relate their complaints.

During the previous week, 53 arrests had been made and a number of those charged claimed that it had been for unjust reasons.¹⁹⁸ At the meeting, two men displayed wounds

196. "2 Officers to Face Duty Quiz," *The Hartford Times*, 21 August 1969, p. B1.

197. Edward Rudd, "Angry Meeting Airs Complaints On Police Tactics in Disorders," *The Hartford Courant*, 20 August 1991, p. 35.

198. Bill Williams, "Rights Unit: Probe City Force, 'Unjust' Arrests Claimed by Board," *The Hartford Times*, 20 August 1969,

inflicted by police dogs and 20 Puerto Ricans who had suffered arrest were lined up at the head table to give their names to the Human Relations Commission's Director Arthur Johnson. To Johnson's embarrassment, it quickly became apparent that most of them had already filed complaints about which nothing had been done yet.

The meeting ended shortly after James Frazier, treasurer of the Hartford branch of the NAACP, admonished Puerto Ricans with words that none took to heart. "If you don't think you're colored like me," he told the group, "you've got something to learn." He exhorted Puerto Ricans to join the NAACP but without waiting for a response, proceeded to walk out.

Two days after the meeting, the press announced that Garay and Rivera faced disciplinary hearings for refusing to obey orders. A week later, Elisha Freedman announced that a full investigation into the disturbances--including citizen's complaints--would be conducted and reported to the city council by the end of September.¹⁹⁹ This consoled the Puerto Ricans; they had no way of knowing that the investigation would never take place.²⁰⁰

By the end of August, Puerto Ricans were confronted with an unexpected assessment of the riots. According to Bill Ryan,

p. B1.

199. Don Campbell, "Full South Green Report To Be Given to Council," *The Hartford Times*, 26 August 1969, p. 4B.

200. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

a reporter for the *Hartford Times*, until 1969 Puerto Ricans had caused Hartford no trouble.²⁰¹ But suddenly the South Green was "a place of broken store windows and police throwing tear gas and people screaming defiance." A conflict with a motorcycle gang had turned into an event of social and political significance and "after years of inaction, the Puerto Ricans were angry and making their presence known."²⁰²

Resentment of Puerto Ricans came to the surface in Ryan's article. The expressions in which it was couched were particularly hard. A fireman from the South Green was quoted as saying: "They are pigs, that's all pigs. A bunch of them will be sitting around drinking beer and when one is finished...he just throws the bottle anywhere....They dump garbage out of their windows. They live like pigs." An unidentified South End resident said: "They insult women on the street. They ought to go back to hell where they came from."²⁰³

Ryan probably didn't even think that these harsh words would bring much in their trail. But Puerto Ricans were highly offended. No later than the day after the story was ran they reacted, once again, with violence. This time the reaction was

201. Bill Ryan, "Puerto Rican Trek to Hartford Began in 1945 with Farm Jobs," *The Hartford Times*, 31 August 1969, p. 1A.

202. *Ibid.*

203. *Ibid.*

not entirely spontaneous. Two community leaders, Alejandro LaLuz and Ramón Quiroz, began to stir things up, enticing the community to respond to the insults. In the process they accused María Sánchez of collaborating with the *Hartford Times* simply because her profile was the promised feature of the story's sequel.²⁰⁴

Two days before Ryan's story, on Friday, 29 August, Dennis Jones, a sixteen-year-old black youth was killed by a West Hartford police officer.²⁰⁵ Two days after the killing, just as the *Hartford Times* ran its story about Puerto Ricans, a tenement fire in a black neighborhood killed three residents.

A week of looting, arson, and widespread violence followed. Once again Puerto Ricans, this time along with blacks, commanded center stage. Events now led to the imposition of a state of emergency. A 12-hour mandatory curfew was imposed. In the end, at \$1.17 million, damages were more than double the losses during the disorders following the assassination of Martin Luther King.²⁰⁶

Violence was so intense that at the end of the first day and a half of rioting, hundreds of blacks and Puerto Ricans

204. Interview with Eugenio Caro, 14 August 1992.

205. "Full Curfew Tonight for Hartford," *The Hartford Times*, 2 September 1969, p. 1.

206. *The Hartford Times*, "Damage from City Disorders Reaches \$1.17 Million Mark," 14 September 1969, p. B1.

had ravaged a 40-block area of the North End throwing fire bombs, bricks, and sniping at police and firemen from rooftops and windows. Sixty-seven stores were looted, one policeman was shot, and 133 individuals were arrested. Forty-seven percent of those arrested were Puerto Rican, mostly charged with breach of peace or failure to disperse.²⁰⁷

Violence was random. This was particularly evident in the extensive damages suffered by a branch of the Hartford Public Library and the attacks inflicted upon the Hartford Board of Education headquarters. The day after the riot broke out, witnesses were already declaring that it was the worst Hartford had ever suffered. The mayor concurred,²⁰⁸ not knowing that there was more yet to come. Somehow, the scenario of overturned cars, electrical appliances left behind by hasty looters, garbage, broken glass, and police cars with flat tires, made further damage difficult to imagine.

Yet fifty fires broke out, and fifty people, including three policemen and two firemen, were reported injured between 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, 2 September, and 12:30 a.m. Wednesday, 3 September.²⁰⁹ The second night the trouble spread further, from the Clay Hill and Arsenal neighborhoods in the North

207. "Looting and Destruction Deplored by the NAACP," *The Hartford Times*, 2 September 1969, p. 4B.

208. "Disorder Called Worst Yet in Hartford by Witnesses," *The Hartford Times*, 2 September 1969, p. 7B.

209. "Curfew On Again Tonight," *The Hartford Times*, 3 September 1969, p. 1.

Side, to the South Green and Charter Oak areas in the South. By 8:00 a.m. Wednesday, 266 arrests had been made on charges such as violation of curfew, breach of peace, attempted arson, breaking and entering, and loitering. Almost half of the arrested were Puerto Rican.²¹⁰

On Thursday night, 70 more arrests were made. By Friday, 5 September, over 500 people had been arrested and the curfew was revoked.²¹¹ Four people had been shot. The following Monday, Mayor Uccello lifted the state of emergency with a plea for help from the suburbs. "The suburbs must absorb some of the population of the inner city," she said. But the plea was not helped by her analysis of the disturbances: "This activity was instigated by agitators and carried out by hoodlums...who would steal no matter what the social conditions."²¹² Then she proceeded to echo the words of Wilber Smith, an NAACP officer and mayoral candidate, who earlier had cautioned the white community not to issue a "blanket indictment of all Negroes and Puerto Ricans."²¹³ Blanket indictments, however, were not easily resisted. Even María Sánchez had angrily generalized, calling Puerto Rican

210. "266 Persons Charged by Police Following Second Violent Night," *The Hartford Times*, 4 September 1969, p. 4B.

211. "Curfew Lifted for Tonight; State of Emergency Stays," *The Hartford Times*, 5 September 1969, p. 1.

212. "Mayor Asks Suburbs' Help," *The Hartford Times*, 8 September 1969, p. 1.

213. "Looting and Destruction Deplored..."

rioters hoodlums. To some extent she was right. Her newsstand on Albany Avenue was attacked shortly after her remarks.

According to Uccello, the lawbreakers were not representative of the Puerto Rican or black community. It was never clear who the suburbs should welcome, law-abiding blacks and Puerto Ricans or those who would break the law anywhere. Republican Collin Bennett explained the events differently. The riot was evidence of a "poor relationship and lack of communication between the city government and members of the Spanish-speaking community. This segment of our society feels that there is no one to represent their interests in city hall, and this has been partly responsible for the increased tension...between the Spanish-speaking community and our city government."²¹⁴ Yet another assessment was offered by Father Segundo Las Heras, a Spanish priest with close ties to the Puerto Rican community. In a newspaper interview, he combined elements offered by Mayor Uccello and Councilman Bennett, recognizing that agitation had played a role, referring to the bitterness and disgust of ghetto dwellers over their living conditions which had turned anger into violence, and adding the language barrier as the main cause of Puerto Ricans' inadequate education and lack of integration.²¹⁵

214. "Puerto Rican on City Staff Will be Proposed Tonight," *The Hartford Times*, 8 September 1969, p. 4B.

215. "Ghetto Priest: Let's Bring People Together," *The Hartford Times*, 11 September 1969, p. B1.

During the crisis, the Puerto Rican leadership and its allies scrambled to get outside help and attention. The Reverend Charles Pickett, a former head of the Spanish Action Coalition, a group that had formed in late 1967, called Polanco Abreu's successor as Resident Commissioner in Washington, Jorge Luis Córdova Díaz, and asked for a local appearance. His hope was that Córdova would unite the leadership and bring appeasement within the community.²¹⁶ Córdova demurred. He was following the debate in Congress on electoral reform and did not want to miss it, he said. Also, the governor of Puerto Rico had not asked him to go to Hartford. And further, he was concerned that his visit might be construed as interference in local affairs by the government of Puerto Rico.

Later that day Pickett joined others at a meeting at the South Arsenal Neighborhood Development Corporation (SAND), a black agency, to discuss community unity. City officials had been asked to attend but none responded. There were about forty people in attendance, mostly Puerto Ricans. The central disagreement revolved around strategy. Some felt that more militant action was needed, others decried militancy.

The group agreed to call for a halt of federal funding to the city until an investigation of the disturbances was conducted. The following day, Alejandro LaLuz, President of

216. "Top Puerto Rican Invited to City," *The Hartford Times*, 10 September 1969, p. 4B.

Puerto Rican Action for Progress, announced that all funding agencies would be wired, including the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Health, Education and Welfare, and the Office of Equal Opportunity as well. Telegrams would also be sent to Connecticut's Governor, John Dempsey, and Mayor Uccello.

"The needs of the Puerto Ricans in Hartford are not being fairly or adequately served," read the telegram. Signed by the Spanish Action Coalition, Puerto Rican Action for Progress, the Spanish American Association, the *Comerieños Ausentes*, and the *Hijos de Santurce*, the telegram claimed that, compared to other cities in the state, Hartford was not acting in good faith towards Puerto Ricans. The city's leadership as well as the federal government were warned that inaction would lead to more violence. "We demand that all funds be suspended pending an impartial investigation by your office," the signatories declared.²¹⁷

Mayor Uccello had no comments to the telegram. But Reverend Las Heras, upset by the use of the word "demand" rather than "request" in the telegram resigned as Chair of the Spanish Action Coalition. "I certainly think we're getting a younger, very vocal group in SAC," said Reverend Pickett, commenting on the resignation, "and their attitude is that

217. "Coalition Loses Ally Over Wire," *The Hartford Times*, 11 September 1969, p. B1.

they are just not going to be pushed around anymore."²¹⁸ This was a familiar syndrome, earlier experienced by a generation of urban-born blacks who, dissatisfied with the strategies of their elders, had resorted to confrontational methods to back their demands for political and socioeconomic equality.²¹⁹

A spokesman for the signing group explained that Puerto Ricans were tired of playing games. "We are all trying to keep things cool but there's only so much we can do," he said, especially since the riot had brought to the surface the issue of fairness.²²⁰ For example, a call from the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce for tough measures against those arrested during the disturbances struck a sensitive chord. Puerto Ricans felt that looters and arsonists should be punished but "at the same time we would like to hear the mayor be as strong for the punishment of others who violate the law, such as slumlords."²²¹

The same day these complaints were heard, the Greater Hartford Community Council announced a membership meeting for the 23rd of September in which the program title was "Our Puerto Rican Fellow Citizens." Gilberto Camacho was scheduled

218. *Ibid.*

219. Janick, Jr., *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

220. "Coalition Loses Ally..."

221. *Ibid.*

to speak about the "Puerto Rican Heritage and the Shock of Mainland Living," and Antonio Soto about "Organizing the Puerto Rican Community."²²² Ten days later the President of the Puerto Rican Parade Committee, Feliciano Martorell, announced that the Parade would bring Puerto Ricans from more than ten towns in the state to march on 28 September from West Avon to a rally on Bushnell Park.

The theme of the parade was "Register and Vote." So it had been since 1964, when it was instituted. But in the context of the recent disturbances and the claims of disfranchisement that had surfaced, the old theme acquired a freshness and urgency that it had not had before. This was felt in Martorell's pronouncement: "From now on we are going to show the administrators throughout the state that we want improvements in the areas of housing, employment, education, health and civil rights."²²³ This was a comprehensive agenda, and it was articulated with an emphasis that meant serious business.

The meeting on 23 September gave Puerto Rican leaders an opportunity to reiterate the main points in their social agenda. Once again, longstanding grievances were aired. Tales of rejection and misunderstanding were offered. Complaints

222. "'Puerto Rican Citizens' To Be Council Subject," *The Hartford Times*, 11 September 1969, p. 8B.

223. "Puerto Ricans to March," *The Hartford Times*, 21 September 1969, p. 6B.

about inadequate education, poor medical care, and expensive housing were also heard. In his talk, Camacho deplored mainland ignorance of Puerto Rican culture. He also referred to the barriers to progress Puerto Ricans faced. "We migrate to Hartford to better ourselves," he said. "We are told of a lack of skilled labor. A Puerto Rican comes here with \$100 in his pocket. Where can he find an apartment?" Soto's presentation emphasized the relationship between the well-being of Puerto Ricans and the city's welfare. "If we have problems, you have problems," he told the leaders of the Council, and then blamed the Labor Day week disturbances on lack of support of Puerto Ricans from city and state officials.²²⁴

These themes were further hammered into the city's consciousness the day of the parade. To a reporter, Feliciano Martorell said that it was time to make the political establishment more responsive to Puerto Rican needs. Since 1964, the parade had reminded the city that Puerto Ricans were physically there. "From now on," he said, "we are going to show [everyone] that we are not only here, but that we want improvements...We plan to follow through with our plans of

224. "Puerto Rican Ideals Said Misunderstood," *The Hartford Times*, 24 September 1969, p. 4B.

bettering and upgrading the whole concept of the Puerto Rican around the state."²²⁵

After the dust of the riots had settled Córdova Díaz made his appearance. At the Parade's closing rally, he explained the riots as a confrontation between two cultures but then corrected himself. "Actually, what I think we have seen is not a confrontation between Puerto Ricans and other Americans but an outbreak of the same conflict that is troubling this entire country." The rioting, protests, and unrest afflicting the nation, he said, were signals of conflicts "between the young, the poor, the black--and the more experienced, perhaps the more affluent..."

In his own way Córdova Díaz intimated that the Puerto Ricans's was a problem of power rather than ethnicity; from our standpoint, the riots can be understood as a moment in which they crossed the bridge between ethnic awareness and power awareness. Ultimately, they would attain progress through politics, not society. "It is the weight of our votes that will gain us respect," he concluded.²²⁶ But the obvious corollary to a concept of political action was the concept of community and community meant ethnic-based needs. For Puerto Ricans legal citizenship was an anomaly; they were

225. "Puerto Ricans to Parade Today," *The Hartford Times*, 28 September 1969, p. 2B.

226. "Need for an Understanding Puerto Rican Day Theme," *The Hartford Times*, 29 September 1969, p. 1B.

not aliens but many were excluded from voting de jure by the literacy requirement. They were not completely marginal to politics but the prevailing perception was that their interest in the political process was nil. Speaking to a reporter, Camacho, in a reversal of his 1964 attitude, downplayed characterizations of Puerto Ricans as transient. The Puerto Rican community in Hartford was still young; yet according to Camacho their roots were already firmly planted.²²⁷ Puerto Ricans were in Hartford to stay and, as Martorell had put it, their presence was no longer an issue. The crucial question now was how to command the attention of the political society, how to move from social visibility to political access.

227. *Ibid.*

Chapter 4 - *Puerto Ricans in Hartford: From Collective Action to Brokered Representation*

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the process whereby Puerto Ricans first obtained political representation. It asks two questions: On balance, what were the effects of the 1969 riots? And, what did Puerto Ricans do to go from social visibility to political access?

We proceed from the following assumptions: that the ability of a social group to influence the allocation of resources in an urban setting depends on the distribution of assets--such as education, language and job skills, money, connections, leadership, and so on--that help it acquire influence; these are the factors that enable or thwart interest articulation and, as a corollary, political agency. These assets, combined with demographic size and level of social organization, can make the difference between disfranchisement and power; although outcomes are unpredictable, the difference lies in whether interest articulation assumes the form of claims to be satisfied through the political process. We also assume that the urban environment is a set of "overlapping spheres of action and interaction"²²⁸ in which the outcome of any effort to

228. Jeffrey R. Backstand and Stephen Schensul, "Co-evolution in an Outlying Ethnic Community: The Puerto Ricans of Hartford, Connecticut," *Urban Anthropology* 11 (Spring 1982), p. 14.

acquire influence and/or power will be determined by the kind of conflict and cooperation elicited by the structure of political choices available to each group. Consequently, we look at the process of power as a set of interests and interactions in which knowledgeable and capable agents constantly assess their life status and life chances hoping to, at some point, alter the course of recurrent political patterns.

Within that framework we look at the internal assets Puerto Ricans had at the beginning of their third decade in the city. We analyze the factors that helped them accumulate political capital and the structure of political choices available to them as well. We define political capital as the balance of assets and liabilities that defines organizational capacity and the level of knowledgeability that enables political action.

Political Assets

One asset that the 1969 riots gave Puerto Ricans was visibility. Sylvia Vargas, the state Queen of the 1969 Puerto Rican Parade, could sense this. The press was accessible and anxious to help rebuild the image of Puerto Ricans. This was explained, in part, out of a sense of guilt, given the role that Bill Ryan's story in the *Hartford Times* had in triggering the Labor Day riots. But also, historically the press had been largely sympathetic and willing to portray Puerto Ricans in the best possible light. "I could speak English, I was a nice

girl and future social worker," Vargas recalled. "I said all the politically correct things and because they wanted to put forth a positive image of the Puerto Rican I got a lot of press."²²⁹ By the standards of a disfranchised community so did Rosa Delia Crespo, a sixteen-year-old who had been selected Queen of the Hartford chapter of the Parade, with the *Hartford Times* reporting on the dance where she would be crowned.²³⁰ But by journalistic standards coverage was mixed, with some stories reported prominently and others simply buried on pages 4 or 6 of the B section.

Still, the frequency of press coverage was good even if the stories didn't always report on issues of substance. A sample of headlines from that period suggests the mixed character of the issues covered: PARADE QUEEN CHOSEN; PUERTO RICANS TO MARCH; PUERTO RICAN IDEALS SAID MISUNDERSTOOD; PUERTO RICANS NAME MARSHAL FOR PARADE; PUERTO RICANS TO PARADE TODAY; NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING PUERTO RICAN DAY THEME. Yet the underlying message in every single one of the stories was this: Puerto Ricans exist, they wish to incorporate, and they will do so regardless of what the host community thinks.

Press coverage in 1970 was also mixed, with front page reporting in six out of the ten stories written that year.

229. Interview with Sylvia Vargas, 1 August 1991. Vargas' maiden name in 1969 was Carrasquillo.

230. "Parade Queen Chosen," *The Hartford Times*, 19 September 1969, p. 4B.

These articles continued to stress the incorporation message, but they also analyzed the difficulties encountered by the Puerto Ricans in the process. PUERTO RICANS PLAN TO ORGANIZE; JOBS, FRIENDS DRAW PUERTO RICANS TO "DESIRABLE" HARTFORD; AMERICAN DREAM SUFFOCATING; ETHNIC NEED: POLITICAL MUSCLE, are some of the headlines of stories written during this time.

Collective action also stimulated unity and formal organization. Responding to the question, What do you remember about the 1969 riots?, Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas, a resident of Hartford since 1959 who was elected to the city council in 1980, said:

That was one of the incidents that contributed to the unity of the Puerto Rican community. It generated a lot interest in the goals of community improvement, building our own organizations, and developing our own political efforts--not that there weren't others, like María Sánchez, interested in these things and working in the community--but I think that's when the community began to unite.²³¹

Olga Mele was one of the most socially active members of the community and had numerous connections throughout the city. She also was sanguine about the community's response to the riots: "Not that many people condemned the riots and criticism was only made behind closed doors." The problem, in her view, was that Puerto Rican needs were subordinated to the needs of blacks. "With all the anti-poverty programs blacks would always overlook us. Everytime there was a new program

²³¹. Interview in Spanish with Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas, 10 August 1992.

blacks would give us nothing and we were tired of that," she said.²³²

Juan "Johnny" Castillo was not as politically involved as Mele but had a good grasp of how people felt due to his neighborhood activities, especially the baseball tournaments he and others organized. He remembered how the treatment of Puerto Ricans by the authorities had prompted feelings of bitterness and disgust. His assessment suggests that, despite the destruction and violence, the riots were an affirmation of ethnic needs that united the community.

Castillo: The riots were a movement for recognition. María Sánchez did a lot to stop the rioting, to maintain communication with the police, the firefighters and the general public. There was no division whatsoever within the community. People were not ashamed [about the riots]. In reality, we were very angry because we were all portrayed as savages but it wasn't like that; all we wanted was recognition and it was not just one group [of Puerto Ricans] but all throughout the city.²³³

The riots had two other notable consequences. Three days into the disturbances the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving announced that it would give \$78,640 to the Greater Hartford Community council to hire a full-time community organizer to work with Puerto Ricans. The three-year grant would allow the organizer to be the liaison between the council and community residents. This provided seed money to

232. Interview in Spanish with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

233. Interview in Spanish with Juan "Johnny" Castillo, 14 August 1992.

later establish La Casa de Puerto Rico, the first Puerto Rican anti-poverty agency in the city.²³⁴

From Puerto Rico, Governor Luis Ferré declared that his government would study the possibility of sending representatives to Hartford to assess Puerto Rican needs and to work with the state's governor to deal with those needs. For years Gilberto Camacho had been pleading with his superiors in New York for more resources for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's office in Hartford to no avail. As recently as August of 1969 he had written to them with a request for an assistant, claiming to be under enormous pressures and feeling unable to handle them on his own. In response, he was curtly told that no assistance was forthcoming and to put a stop to his requests.²³⁵ Camacho, however, continued to make his requests and used the riots to bolster his argument. When the Republicans captured the governorship in 1970 he shifted his focus. In a letter to Governor Thomas J. Meskill he said:

The time has come for the Office of the Governor to be staffed with a Special Assistant knowledgeable in background, experience, an[d] academic education

234. Juan Daniel Brito, "Cumplió Años La Casa de Puerto Rico," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) June 1986, p. 5.

235. Letter of Gilberto Camacho to Francisca Bou, 25 August 1969; Letter of Francisca Bou to Gilberto Camacho, 28 August 1969. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

of the idiosyncrasy of the Puerto Rican Americans.²³⁶

Meskill did nothing. But the idea was planted and the position was created four years later by Ella Grasso, his Democratic successor.

Political Liabilities

Politically, Puerto Ricans continued to be invisible despite involvements that spanned over a decade. Olga Mele had been a catalytic agent within the community since the 1950s, both individually and as part of the pioneering efforts of the San Juan Center. According to Mele: "We began registering voters in 1950....I helped the *Americanos*²³⁷ get the Puerto Rican vote. I registered María [Sánchez] in 1955, I believe, and her husband and her whole family."²³⁸

There was no one single cause but rather many factors that kept Puerto Ricans at the margins. In 1970, the Puerto Rican community was still young, not just in a demographic sense, but in terms of acculturation, skills, political strength, and experience. The prejudice many felt against Puerto Ricans was also a factor. This was substantiated in 1972 in a report commissioned by Nicholas Carbone. The authors

236. Letter of Gilberto Camacho to Thomas J. Meskill, 5 December 1970. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

237. *Americanos* is the word island-born Puerto Ricans use to refer to nonHispanic whites. Blacks are called *Morenos*.

238. Interview in Spanish with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

found that perceptions of Puerto Ricans in the South Side of Hartford were largely negative and that a significant number of residents favored limiting their numbers in the area.²³⁹

Real and Perceived Deficits

No one illustrated the combination of real and perceived deficits better than María Sánchez herself. Said Carbone:

I remember when we ran María for the school board and she spoke broken English. She wasn't an attractive woman, she was heavy, so where would you take her? How did you sell her? How did you get people to vote for her? And how [did] you get over the prejudice that she spoke with a thick accent? So we didn't take her into a lot of neighborhoods....You had to be practical as you were trying [to get her] on the school board.²⁴⁰

Juan "Johnny" Castillo's daughter, Yolanda, was elected to the city council in 1991. The following year she became the first Puerto Rican to be selected Majority Leader by the council. Although she was dubbed a neophyte as a candidate, by 1991 she was sufficiently familiar with the workings of the Democratic Party to be able to manage the intricacies of its politics and the electoral process. This is an advantage that her father, and many Puerto Ricans like him, did not have. Castillo said:

When I came here I knew nothing [about politics]. My political affiliation came through my family. I knew about the Populares [the Popular Democratic

239. Morton Coleman, *Interest Intermediation and Local Urban Development*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1983, p. 210.

240. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

Party in Puerto Rico] but here [I knew nothing].²⁴¹

Castillo's situation was not as difficult as that of other migrants. When he arrived in Hartford in 1953 he had a high school diploma, knew English, and quickly found work at Royal Typewriter. Yet, throughout his years in the city, Castillo had only peripheral involvement in politics. The comparative advantages he had upon arrival suggest that for those that, despite less cultural resources, were more involved, politics must have been more of a challenge.

In the late fifties and early sixties Olga Mele spent countless hours helping her compatriots get jobs. According to Charles J. Quinn, Director, in 1965, of the Adult Counseling Service of the Hartford school system, "the natives [of Puerto Rico] were not interested in what we had to offer. Until we received the support of Olga and a few other field workers, we were unable to reach the people we desired to help. She became the link, our means for helping the community."²⁴²

Mele would take people by carloads to workplaces all over the city doing her utmost to persuade personnel officials to hire them. As Sister Margaret Johnson, from the Sacred Heart Church put it, she used "the most diplomatic manner possible. Thousands of excuses she found from employers for not hiring

241. Interview in Spanish with Juan "Johnny" Castillo, 14 August 1992.

242. Letter of Charles J. Quinn to Peter K. Orne, 19 February 1977.

the Puerto Rican, but to her; there was no barrier."²⁴³ In the process, Mele came across countless individuals whose skills were just not up to par with the requirements of the available jobs. Mele recalled:

The men we worked with were destitute, they had nothing to offer but we helped them. I went from factory to factory [but] first they had to be interviewed by a representative from the Labor Department. And he would see that they only had a second grade education, or were illiterate, farmworkers, or had never worked and so he would say, "No there's nothing." So I would find them jobs where no English was needed--moving laundry bags or putting laundry into washing machines.²⁴⁴

Mele conceded that Puerto Ricans had difficulties adapting to the demands of life outside the island. In Hartford, frequent arrests did not prevent men from saying, whenever they had an opportunity, "Ay que lindas piernas tienes" [what beautiful legs you have] to the women passing by. Prospective employers were often baffled when Puerto Ricans kept their heads down during interviews; Mele had to coach her recruits, insisting they had to look the Americano in the eye, goading them out of their shyness, even telling them what to say. Some men "didn't know the system," Mele declared, and thus would prefer to stay home with their families and live off welfare rather than work; they did not

243. Sister Margaret Johnson, Sacred Heart Church, "Interesting Facts About Mrs. Olga Mele, Vocational Counselor at South Green Employment Center," typed document, no date.

244. Interview in Spanish with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

consider voting because the electoral process and the candidates were not familiar to them.²⁴⁵

According to the Reverend Andrew Cooney, whose job was to help the newcomers overcome the adaptive hurdles they faced:

Many of the Puerto Ricans have shown that it is not their nature to think things through. They are far from dull, simply people from the tropics not previously exposed to complicated situations. Many are child-like and have to be led, but this does not mean they are incapable of doing good work.²⁴⁶

The Puerto Rican must be made feel welcome, he added, must be shown the way to good jobs, must be given encouragement to become a good citizen. He also recognized their need for help to fight unscrupulous landlords that "exploit the confused and bewildered immigrants by charging excessive rents in crowded slum apartments."²⁴⁷

Community Cleavages

In her 1970 analysis of the state of the Puerto Rican community, Janet Anderson of the Hartford Courant wrote about the divisions among the Puerto Rican leadership, noting that at least 30 individuals lay claim to such title, each one with a differing viewpoint. "We don't have leaders, we have speculators," said Alejandro LaLuz to Anderson. True leaders,

245. Ibid.

246. Joseph A. Owens, "Center Helps To Ease Way For New Arrivals From Puerto Rico," *The Catholic Transcript*, (Hartford, CT) 19 January 1956, p. 10.

247. Ibid.

he added, must come from the community "with intellectual honesty and in the spirit of sacrifice." Pedro Meléndez, from the Department of Community Affairs, declared: "We should organize for one common thing--to solve the poverty in our community." And Julio Quiñones, a businessman, said: "Our leaders are not united now, but this doesn't mean they cannot be. We're going to break out of this hole in the next two years."²⁴⁸

With all the issues that divided the community, it is not surprising that this did not happen, at least not within the timeframe predicted by Quiñones. And as more Puerto Ricans came to the city, a new enclave--and new divisions--developed. Displacement due to willful neglect of properties and redevelopment also contributed to the movement of Puerto Ricans from the Clay Hill to the Park Street area.²⁴⁹ Juan Fuentes, a Hartford resident since 1963, witnessed this transformation:

Our people lived in the North End. They began to move to Park Street when housing displacement began in the North End. That began to happen around the 1970s when they started demolishing buildings. Some buildings burned and others were burned on purpose.²⁵⁰

248. Janet Anderson, "Ethnic Need: Political Muscle," *The Hartford Courant*, 19 March 1970, p. 1

249. v. "Vecinos Denuncian Desalojan Puertorriqueños," p. 1; "Inseguridad Para los Puertorriqueños," p. 3; and "La Destrucción de Las Areas Hispanas," p. 5, *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), September 1978.

250. Interview in Spanish with Juan Fuentes, 1 August 1991.

Max Fernández, a director for over fifteen years at TAINO Housing, a community and housing development agency, agreed that displacement had been a force shaping enclave formation, moving Puerto Ricans around the city from the North End to the South Green, from Congress Street to Frog Hollow, out of Main and into Park Street. Developers would promise to include low-income housing in their projects and then, citing changing economic conditions, would change their plans. "Development, when it's done," concluded Fernández, "doesn't include our people."²⁵¹

Residential fragmentation resulted in cleavages between North End and Park Street residents. María Sánchez, for example, was unhappy when La Casa de Puerto Rico moved from Albany Avenue in the North End to Wadsworth Street closer to the South Green and Frog Hollow enclave. To her mind the move meant that South End Puerto Ricans would benefit, leaving the North End forlorn. Politically, this meant that Puerto Ricans from different neighborhoods would eye each other with suspicion making electoral coalitions more difficult to effect.

The militant/moderate split that provoked the resignation of Rev. Las Heras from the Spanish Action Coalition (SAC) in 1969 also began to be felt within the community between militant and moderate organizations. On the moderate side,

251. Interview with Max Fernández, 6 August 1991.

organizations such as Services for Puerto Ricans, created during the summer of 1970 with the blessing of Councilman Collin Bennett, proposed a strategy of government and foundation fundraising to provide services.²⁵² The militant tendency never proliferated, but the People's Liberation Party (PLP) illustrates it well. This was an organization of Puerto Rican youth, modeled after the Young Lords Party (YLP), which was created during the fall of 1970. That November they seized a vacant store on Kennedy Street shouting "Power to the People!," and declaring it would be used to distribute free food and clothing, and as a community information center.²⁵³ A month later, José Claudio, the seventeen-year-old chairman of the party, declared: "We tried to deal with City Hall...with no results. The North End and South End ghettos are in terrible condition--and the city has not lived up to its promises. Hartford needs more demonstrations."²⁵⁴

The creation of the PLP was the most extreme example of the generational gap that also divided the community, with a younger and more impatient group of activists challenging the older leadership. These Young Turks were eager to be "part of

252. "Puerto Ricans Hold Meeting," *The Hartford Courant*, 9 July 1970, p. 49.

253. W. Edward Wendover, "Puerto Rican Group Seizes Vacant Store," *The Hartford Courant*, 24 November 1970, p. 1.

254. Jackie Ross, "City Community Center Opened by People's Liberation Party," *The Hartford Courant*, 16 December 1970, p. 38.

the action" while professing to being tired of "playing games." Cutting across divisions between militants and moderates, young and old, were differences in strategy--with some arguing for alliances with the blacks, others pressing for the creation of a third party-type Puerto Rican pressure group, and a three-way split over the solution to the status of Puerto Rico.

Accumulation of Political Capital

Demographic Growth

To bolster their claims Puerto Ricans could count on growing numbers. According to local estimates (see Table 7), by 1970 the Puerto Rican population had almost tripled in one decade. Twenty years after settlement, the Census Bureau counted 8,543 Puerto Ricans, a figure well below the estimate of over 20,000 provided by the Hartford Courant.²⁵⁵ By the Census count, Puerto Ricans were 5.4 percent of the city's population in 1970; by local estimates they were 12.6 percent.

Even if we accept the Census count, it is clear that during the 1970s Puerto Rican numbers grew significantly. According to Census figures, by 1980 Hartford's Puerto Ricans had almost tripled their numbers from 8,543 to 24,615. This represented an increase of 13 percentage points, from 5.4 to

255. v. Janet Anderson, "Ethnic Need..." Kernstock offers an estimate of about 18,000 by multiplying the Puerto Rican school population in 1969 (4,441 children) by four, the size of an average Puerto Rican family. v. Elwyn Nicholas Kernstock, *How New Migrants Behave Politically, The Puerto Rican in Hartford, 1970* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), p. 106.

18 percent of the total population. In contrast, the Census count for blacks showed a small increase from 44,091 in 1970 to 46,186 in 1980. This represented an increase of 6 percentage points from 27.9 to 33.8 percent of the total population.

But sharp population increases did not occur just during the 1970s. Population estimates indicate a 300 percent increase by 1956, 50 percent growth between 1956 and 1957 and between 1957 and 1958, and a 186 percent jump between 1961 and 1970. Using Census figures the 1960-1970 increase comes down to 22 percent, still a respectable change.

The 1970 jump in numbers coincided with a new national migratory pattern of Puerto Ricans. Between 1965 and 1980 their so-called "revolving-door" migration to the United States resulted in fluctuating rates and high numbers of return migrants. But in 1969, when the Puerto Rican population in Hartford appears to have had the highest growth rate since 1956, Puerto Rican migration to the mainland also registered its highest level since 1955.²⁵⁶

Demographic growth had economic and social consequences that strengthened the community. For example, by 1970 there were 40 to 60 Puerto Rican-owned businesses and supermarkets carrying Goya foods in the city. Social life in the community indicated a new sense of self, distinct yet integrated, which

256. Rodríguez, *Op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

was expressed and signified through the broadcasts of a Spanish radio station, two Spanish theaters on Main and Park Streets, and dances at the Lyric Club on Park Street.²⁵⁷ Connecticut had no Spanish newspapers, but two national dailies--*El Diario-La Prensa* and *El Tiempo*--circulated locally.²⁵⁸ In 1973, Hartford welcomed the first bilingual community newspaper in New England, *La Prensa Gráfica*, and Puerto Ricans throughout the state were able to enjoy the Spanish broadcasts of Dinorah Maldonado and Yolanda Carrera, hosts of the local TV programs *Adelante* and *Barrio* respectively.

The implications of growth, especially during the 1970s, were not immediately apparent to everyone in the city. Only some of Hartford's most astute politicians were able to figure out the consequences of demographic trends. They knew that, to survive politically, they needed to integrate and coopt the newcomers.

By 1965, Nicholas Carbone was already arguing that Puerto Ricans had to be incorporated or else the opportunity to forge a permanent alliance would be lost. Later on he would refer to

257. Janet Anderson, "Jobs, Friends Draw Puerto Ricans to 'Desirable' Hartford," *The Hartford Courant*, 15 March 1970, p. 1.

258. Letter of Gilberto Camacho to Carmen Cortés, 30 August 1971, Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

the experience of blacks, in which he saw an important lesson, to further his argument.

Carbone: One of the lessons we learned at the Board of Education was that...when blacks were coming up during the 1950s and becoming a part of the Hartford community the Board didn't understand the demographics....The result of that is when the NAACP made an effort on talking about affirmative action...we had basically a white middle-class teacher community with very few blacks. That was in the late 1960s and there was a lot of tension.²⁵⁹

Once at City Hall, Carbone supported the long-standing efforts of María Sánchez and Esther Jiménez, a field worker with CRT, to deal with the educational needs of the increasing number of Puerto Rican children in the school system. School enrollments clearly indicated a growing Puerto Rican presence and, according to Carbone, it was best to act swiftly rather than wait. Inaction meant that before long school officials would face a "gigantic problem." Therefore, "We then talked to the Board [of Education to start] recruiting teachers from Puerto Rico so we could match our growing population," Carbone said.²⁶⁰

In 1971 a teacher recruitment program, known as the Teachers Corps, began operations out of the University of Hartford, funded by the federal government. The program was conceived in the late 1960s by Perry Alan Zirkel, a professor at the University, and María Sánchez.

259. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

260. *Ibid.*

Leadership Development

The second tool that helped increase the political capital of Puerto Ricans was leadership development. As noted in the previous chapter the institution that took the earliest interest in Puerto Ricans in the city was the Catholic church. It was through the church that the first cadre of Puerto Rican leaders asserted themselves. There were political involvements at this stage but the main concerns of these early activists, most of whom were women, were cultural.

Baseball also played a strong role in the political socialization of Puerto Ricans and the development of political leadership. For many, the activities of the various teams provided cultural solace away from the home country. Baseball tournaments were structures of dissociation: from the rigors of work, from economic preoccupations, from the melancholy of nostalgic feelings. One of the earliest sports associations, the Julián Vargas League, also served as a social network that brought party regulars, such as Vargas, and ordinary citizens, such as Juan "Johnny" Castillo, together to exchange views on issues, fostering their involvement in civic and partisan activities. It was a letter from Castillo, in which he sang the praises of Hartford's abundance of work and sought help in organizing a baseball

league, that brought Eugenio Caro, who was elected to the city council in 1987, to Hartford in 1956.²⁶¹

The community agencies also were a petri dish for leadership.²⁶² Long before landing a position at Aetna Life Insurance, Mildred Torres, the first Puerto Rican to serve on the city council, had been involved with the city's social service agencies; before his election to the council, Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas had been the director of the Spanish American Center, an agency he helped establish in the mid-1970s to provide social services to Puerto Ricans. Yasha Escalera, the first Puerto Rican Executive Director of the San Juan Center, began to develop his statewide political network through his work as president of the Connecticut Association of United Spanish Administrators (CAUSA), an association representing Hispanic agencies established in 1974. According to Escalera, "in the early seventies [Puerto Ricans had] an emerging political presence not only in Hartford but in most of the small towns. What was more developed were the civic organizations and nonprofit organizations. So whatever political activity [there was] took place via that route."²⁶³

261. Interview with Eugenio Caro, 14 August 1992.

262. A point first made about Puerto Ricans in New Haven by Lloyd Rogler, *v. Op. cit.*, and about Puerto Ricans in New York by James Jennings, *v. Puerto Rican Politics in New York City* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977).

263. Interview with Yasha Escalera, 21 February 1993.

The teacher program that Zirkel and María Sánchez put together became a source of leaders; Edwin Vargas, Jr., the first Puerto Rican to challenge the Democratic machine, was brought to Hartford by Sánchez under this program. Other participants, like Edna Negrón and Calixto Torres, also went on to assume positions of prominence within the community. In 1977, Torres played a role in the organization of what later crystallized as PRPAC; in 1990 Negrón took over Sánchez's Assembly seat after her death in 1989.

In their attempt to coopt promising individuals machine politicians nurtured their eventual challengers. They could not foresee that cooptation could succeed only partially. Initially, Puerto Ricans played the incorporation game; eventually, they would challenge and displace their mentors. Examples of these are Edwin Vargas, María Sánchez, who clashed with Carbone in 1977 and in a race for an Assembly seat defeated her old associate Abe Giles in 1988, and Yolanda Castillo, who had a brief association with former State Representative Arthur Brouillet.

Similarly, dissatisfaction with the work of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Hartford office encouraged the emergence of new leaders. According to the office's field representative, Gilberto Camacho, the Puerto Rican leadership had more than multiplied. This was, to him, a sign of political maturity, a reflection of the increasing number of agencies serving the community in Hartford and elsewhere in

the state. It was also a sign of what he called "resentment on the part of many of our initiatives on behalf of the community."²⁶⁴

An unintended consequence of leadership development was increased factionalism as the emerging cadre of activists competed for pre-eminence within a growing but still small community. During his tenure at the Spanish American Center, Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas had a gentleman's agreement with Yasha Escalera, then Director of the San Juan Center, not to encroach on each other's turf; Zayas' group would serve Puerto Ricans from downtown Hartford to the south and the San Juan Center would continue to focus on Puerto Rican neighborhoods in the North End. This was the exception, not the rule. Factionalism within political groups was also common, in part because of the absence of a consensus regarding the best strategy to advance the interests of the community. Puerto Ricans, like blacks and others, were caught in the dilemma between advocacy and services that structured much of the actions and arguments over welfare policy and social change during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Also, as noted earlier, in addition to these conflicts, Puerto Ricans had other ideological fish to fry.

264. Memo from Gilberto Camacho to Manuel A. Casiano, Jr., 21 May 1970, Section 8, p. 5, Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

But elite competition had a positive side: recognized leaders had to prove their mettle and in the process new activists emerged. Competition also fostered attempts to make elites and groups coalesce. For example, in 1973, La Casa de Puerto Rico created a group to bring together organizations and individuals, much as the Spanish Action Coalition had tried to do earlier. Called the Forum for Participation, it tried to provide a unified voice for Puerto Ricans, seek joint funding for projects, and define areas of responsibility for other organizations. The Forum also intended to advocate on behalf of Puerto Ricans, especially on redevelopment issues. This effort yielded nothing. But later on, around 1974, a somewhat similar version of the concept became operational under CAUSA's new umbrella.

Organizational Efforts

Formal organizing built upon and expanded existing resources. Institutionally, the budding presence of Puerto Ricans could be best appreciated in the community groups and agencies. In the 1950s, political action was not absent but they organized mostly for religious and cultural purposes. The San Juan Center provided a mix of social services but it did not become a Puerto Rican controlled organization until 1974. During the 1960s, cultural concerns combined with heightened political concerns. These were blended in the Puerto Rican Parade Committee. For a number of years Gilberto Camacho tried to transform the Parade organization into a federation of

community groups but was not successful. In 1969 the first umbrella group incorporating Puerto Ricans, the Spanish Action Coalition, gradually gave way to La Casa de Puerto Rico. La Casa in turn generated a number of spin-offs, such as TAINO Housing Development and the Hispanic Health Council. The network that these developing entities formed became a source of leaders and contacts that buttressed political action.

Puerto Ricans first became involved in the political process in 1957, when the Democrats approached them for support. Said Olga Mele:

That happened when the San Juan Center got into politics. They were not supposed to do it because they were a social services agency but Nilda Ortíz, who was the social worker, and Reverend Cooney, were approached to help with the Puerto Rican voters and we began by registering them and they were used as bullet votes for James Kinsella.²⁶⁵

In the 1955 election, Kinsella had sought a second term on the city council.²⁶⁶ During that contest he became embroiled in a mayoral fight with two other Democrats--Mayor Dominick J. DeLucco and councilman Joseph V. Cronin. At the time Hartford had nonpartisan elections and to become mayor Kinsella needed to be the top vote-getter of nine elected candidates. This did not come to pass as Joseph Cronin won the position with 24,608 votes against his 22,793. This was the

265. Interview with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

266. Jack Zaiman, "GOP Headquarters Active Despite Election Policy," *The Hartford Courant*, 1 November 1955, p. 11.

election when blacks, for the first time in the history of Hartford, elected one of their own, John C. Clark, Jr., to the city council.²⁶⁷

When he tried again, in 1957, to capture the mayoralty, Kinsella made sure that no available vote was wasted. At the time Puerto Ricans were a negligible demographic force but every single vote counted. Kinsella was elected by a margin of more than 4,500 votes.²⁶⁸ Clearly, he did not need the Puerto Rican vote to win, but he courted it and they supported him.

As said before, Puerto Ricans began to organize politically in 1965. Yet at times it was difficult to draw the line that separated politics from social services. The record suggests that service groups were more successful than political organizations; the former had more resources, clearly defined short-term objectives, and more stable leadership. This was the case of the San Juan Center, described earlier, and also of some of its spin-offs, such as the Spanish Action Coalition. SAC was organized late in 1967 by a group of Protestant and Catholic clergymen and Puerto Rican leaders as an umbrella organization for Puerto Ricans

267. Jack Zaiman, "Bailey Urges Democrats To Work For Election of 6," *The Hartford Courant*, 2 November 1955, p. 8; Idem, "Cronin Wins Smashing Victory Charter Committee Elects Five," *The Hartford Courant*, 9 November 1955, p. 1.

268. Jack Zaiman, "Kinsella Swept In As Mayor Democrats Take Council 6-3," *The Hartford Courant*, 6 November 1957, p. 1.

and others in need. In January of 1969 it was described by the Hartford Courant as "A little-known group which is emerging as the most unified voice among the city's Spanish-speaking population."²⁶⁹

SAC was a membership group with no formal structure, no staff, and no offices. Its work consisted of mobilizing the community around issues with support from the churches. In contrast with the San Juan Center, it was not dedicated exclusively to Puerto Ricans. Its membership was white, Hispanic, and black. According to Antonio Soto:

What made it strong was the fact that just about everybody who was involved in any community issues in all these different ethnic groups was part of it. We had an agenda that included more seats in the council, voter education, we needed Puerto Rican firefighters and policemen, and [an] end to police brutality, a whole number of things.²⁷⁰

The group, however, did not last long. After the 1969 summer riots, Puerto Ricans within SAC created La Casa de Puerto Rico with the financial assistance of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and SAC "little by little dissolved."²⁷¹

During the 1970s, Puerto Rican efforts to organize politically were marred by the uneven ratio of issues to resources. Political and social issues competed for the

269. John Sherman, "Spanish Action Coalition Plans Information and Social Center," *The Hartford Courant*, 31 January 1969, p. 27.

270. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991.

271. *Ibid.*

attention of a limited number of activists who often found themselves spread rather thinly. Nicholas Carbone described the situation well when he said:

You'd go to one meeting at CRT and you'd go to the next meeting, same people--and it was to do something with the schools. You'd go to another meeting, same group of people; they were there to deal with a health issue. You'd go to another meeting, same group of people, an elderly center. I'd go to a political meeting, same group of people.²⁷²

Referring to the openings generated by the 1969 riots, Antonio Soto expressed a similar thought, adding that it was not a matter of few but better:

Soto: The problem we faced at the time was, Who the hell do we begin to move into those situations where political opportunities happen? At the time we were beginning to get Puerto Rican professionals, because [before] there weren't any, you basically had tobacco workers and factory workers, we had a couple of people who thought of themselves as super leaders but in reality they lacked [leadership skills].

Interviewer: The moment was ripe for Puerto Ricans to make political inroads but the actual Puerto Ricans who would occupy positions were not there?

Soto: There were some but they were not interested, they were scared. It was still a young community; the average age was 16 years old.²⁷³

Despite these difficulties groups proliferated. Between 1952 and 1964 the Hartford office of the Migration Division of the Puerto Rico Department of Labor assisted in the formation of nearly twenty-five groups, providing leadership seminars

272. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

273. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991.

and direct organizing. Between 1952 and 1960 the Division spent over 50 percent of its time organizing the community. In part due to the number of self-generated initiatives and partly due to its lack of resources, by 1965, six years after Camacho had promised to step up the office's efforts in that area, it dedicated no more than 30 percent of its time to such activities; by 1969 no resources were devoted to organizing except for assistance provided to existing groups after the 1969 riots. By 1970 the number of groups in the Division's service area numbered in excess of 50, although it is impossible to tell how many were social, political or how many were based in Hartford.²⁷⁴

Proliferation was indicative of another key feature of the process of group formation: frequent and troublesome starts and stops. Groups would often last more than a year but most were not able to become coherent or effective. The Puerto Rican Democrats of Hartford, organized in 1965, came and went leaving what some regarded a small record of accomplishment. José Cruz, the group's first president, said:

We conducted awareness programs in the community, we registered voters, and on election day we got out the vote.

Interviewer: What was the group's biggest accomplishment?

274. Memo from Gilberto Camacho to Manuel A. Casiano, Jr., 21 May 1970, Section 4, p. 4, Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10. Recall that the Division's service area included Connecticut and other states.

We got María Sánchez into the Town Committee. She gave us a voice there and subsequently she became an important figure in Hartford politics. She then became a member of the Board of Education and that was an offshoot of the [group's work].²⁷⁵

According to Sydney Schulman, a Hartford lawyer with a long record of involvement with Puerto Ricans in the city, the group lasted for a number of years maintaining a loose operation up until 1979. In his view it never had a clear agenda or a program of action, a defect that compromised its accomplishments, and its activities were limited to the occasional endorsement of candidates.²⁷⁶ Said José Cruz:

[That] describes the situation very accurately. At the time the leadership lacked education and know-how and the question was, How can our community leaders prepare themselves? The answer was: practical experience, which meant that we learned the hard way. So the criticism is valid. At the time we focused on the short-term, we did not have enough foresight, nor the education, to look beyond that, but we laid the ground for later accomplishments.²⁷⁷

The group never formally disbanded; but it was riddled with sufficient infighting and personality conflicts that it never became coherent enough to transform itself from a loosely knit network of people into a formal organization. Juan "Johnny" Castillo, who knew some of the group members, said that the group quickly divided over partisan rivalries and over the distribution of the spoils of political

275. Interview in Spanish with José Cruz, 27 January 1993.

276. Interview with Sydney Schulman, 15 January 1993.

277. Interview in Spanish with José Cruz, 27 January 1993.

participation.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, in the early 1970s one of the group's presidents, Angel Ocasio, tired of what he felt was utter neglect of Puerto Ricans on the part of the Democrats, decided to join the Republican party taking some of the club's members with him and thus debilitating the group further.²⁷⁹

According to Cruz, factionalism was ideologically benign--mostly personality conflicts--but organizationally deadly. From his description it becomes clear that the group's membership was both small and overcommitted, with some dividing their time between the group and several other community organizations. "There was a whole bunch of other groups at the time. We were in all of them trying to move forward towards integration within the city," said Cruz.²⁸⁰

Also early on, the GOP organized a small political club to incorporate the Puerto Ricans; this club remained in existence into the 1970s. But after a massive defeat suffered at the hands of the Democrats in 1966, Republicans made no significant efforts to involve Puerto Ricans.

On 21 May 1970 Gilberto Camacho reported to the National Director of the Migration Division in New York that:

278. Interview in Spanish with Juan "Johnny" Castillo, 14 August 1992.

279. Interview with Yasha Escalera, 21 February 1993.

280. Interview with José Cruz, 27 January 1993.

During the years 1968-1970 the age of contract workers has ranged from 19 to 28 years old. Only a few hundred are over 30 and a significant minority is between 16 and 19 years old. Not many have experienced the hardships of farm work. Also, this new generation has been influenced by the socio-economic revolution and the protest movements that are shaking the nation. This new generation feels compelled to demand ideal working conditions that the farmers cannot provide.²⁸¹

In this report Camacho mentioned the existence of a small sector within the leadership of the community that "influenced and supported by the anti-establishment movement participates and encourages Puerto Ricans to protest and rebel."²⁸² Nineteen months later the *Movimiento Pro Independencia* (MPI) formally began its activities in Hartford, targeting its organizing efforts to the "new generation" of farmworkers Camacho had written about. "The struggle has begun in Hartford," reads the first issue of *Mete Mano*, the group's bulletin, "and the exploiters of our people are trembling." A section of the bulletin titled *El Trabajador Migrante en Los Campamentos Agrícolas* [The migrant farmworker], described the housing provided to farmworkers as concentration camps and referred to Puerto Ricans as "slaves of the tyrants ruling our

281. Memo from Gilberto Camacho to Manuel A. Casiano, Jr., 21 May 1970, Section 2, pp. 17-18, Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

282. *Ibid.*, Section 4, p. 4.

homeland."283 "I wonder," wrote Camacho to his boss in New York, "whether the Division will provide the Hartford office with the resources necessary to fight, not only the radical groups that already exist, [namely the PLP] but also the *Movimiento Pro Independencia* which has now begun to operate in our service area."284

After its November 1971 convention in Puerto Rico the MPI became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). The PSP was notorious for alienating people with its ramrod approach. Yet in Hartford it represents a form of interest articulation that, although unwelcome in Democratic and Puerto Rican circles, had a significant impact in the process of accumulation of political capital. The contribution of the PSP is often neglected, frequently attacked, but should not be dismissed. Its efforts provided much needed impetus to a number of grassroots campaigns. The group also brought attention to bear on the plight of Puerto Rican farmworkers, the most disadvantaged sector of the Puerto Rican community in the city and the state.

During the 1970s the efforts of Puerto Ricans to organize politically in Hartford flourished but were either short-lived

283. *Mete Mano Bulletin*, I:1, MPI Hartford, Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

284. Letter of Gilberto Camacho to Nick Lugo, Jr., 12 November 1971, Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Archival Collection, Box 10.

or not effective. According to Yasha Escalera "there have been [many] Democratic clubs but they would flash at the election and go away...whenever there was an election there would be no real follow through, the political effort was very disorganized, once the campaign was over there was no documentation of what the vote was."²⁸⁵ In many cases the would-be organizers were not able to even get beyond discussing what to do. Hartford had plenty of failed attempts. Speaking in 1991 Mildred Torres said:

A [Political Action Committee] has been discussed and attempted, oh God, for over 20 years... but every time it was discussed there was always a group or faction that [said] "No, it's got to be Republican" [or] "No, it's got to be Democrat" [or] "No, if that person participates I won't participate," and so always something interceded to break down the discussion²⁸⁶

In 1976, a decade after the Puerto Rican Democrats of Hartford organized, another effort was launched in the city by the special assistant to Governor Ella Grasso, Andrés Vázquez. The Puerto Rican Democratic Club was an attempt on the part of Vázquez to create a power base and penetrate the city's town committee to secure support for the governor.

Vázquez realized that local town committee chairs had much to say about key appointments and thus decided to organize Hartford to get a grip on that source of influence. He was also prompted by the lack of a self-sufficient Puerto

285. Interview with Yasha Escalera, 21 February 1993.

286. Interview with Mildred Torres, 1 August 1991.

Rican political network in the city. By 1978 Vázquez abandoned this effort after declaring his interest in a city council seat. As a result the group faded.²⁸⁷

Paradoxically, these multiple initiatives, false starts, flashes in the pan, and so on, while a symptom of the difficulties, incoherence, and precariousness of organizational efforts, also kept the organizing momentum. The experience of the most repudiated of efforts, the PSP, provided resources and strategic insights. In 1976-77, just as the PSP was blowing itself to pieces in Puerto Rico and New York, Puerto Ricans in Hartford began to cash-in on the political capital accumulated in over two decades. Ex-members of the PSP contributed by shifting the focus of their activities to the electoral process and the Democratic party.

Structure of Choices: Brokered Representation

In Olga Mele's view, Puerto Ricans were shortchanged by the Democrats. Political candidates would seek Puerto Rican support but would use their office to benefit their own group, themselves personally or both.

María helped [Abe] Giles [a black party regular] a lot. That man used the votes of Puerto Ricans for personal gain. I never liked that. But you know, María was alone, there wasn't a group that could say, "Fine we'll vote for you but what are we going to get?" María never did that. Edwin [Vargas] is the only person that has done that, thank God.²⁸⁸

287. Interview in Spanish with Andrés Vázquez, 3 March 1993.

288. Interview in Spanish with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

Antonio Soto had similar thoughts about how the Democrats treated Puerto Ricans in the 1960s. Dissatisfaction with the Democrats led him to join the Republican party. It all began with a knock on his door by a fellow Puerto Rican, Jesús "Wito" Martínez, who asked Soto to become involved in politics. Martínez was convinced that such involvement would benefit Puerto Ricans, although according to Soto, he could not precisely say how. "Sure, why not," Soto said. The next thing he knew, the Republican town committee chair, Albert Miller, wanted him to join the party.

Soto: [Albert Miller] said, "Well, if you become involved with the Republican Party, I'll do something for you." And I said, "What would you do for me?" He said, "What, do you think the Democrats are doing something for you?" And I said, "No, they aren't doing shit. They know they got our votes, therefore they don't do crap for us, so I'm disgusted with them." He said, "I can make you a town selectman if you become a Republican," and I said, "OK, but I don't want to sit around and talk to you guys and you guys not listen, I want to be part of the action."²⁸⁹

Soto quickly discovered that he had given something for nothing. Had his bargain been struck in the nineteenth century when selectmen controlled Hartford town, it would have meant something. But this was the 1960s. Selectmen simply registered voters, one of the few town functions that the Act of Consolidation of 1896, which brought together Hartford town and city, did not transfer to city commissions. When María Sánchez got wind of his deed, she went after him but was

289. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991.

unable to bring him into the Democratic fold. "That's how I met María Sánchez," Soto said. "She was a gung-ho Democrat and she immediately heard of the Puerto Rican Republican and she wanted to see who the hell it was. So I got the first punch in the face by her: '¿Qué carajo tú haces con esa gente?,' [What the hell are you doing with those people?] she said. She kept me in check; I knew she was watching my ass so I had to be cool."²⁹⁰ Two years after his appointment, Soto was elected and then resigned after making sure that another Puerto Rican got the seat.

The bargain that gave Soto his seat among Hartford's selectmen constitutes the earliest instance of a structure of choices based on brokered representation. Interestingly, despite their strong identification with the Democrats, Puerto Ricans were first put in the political spotlight by the Republicans. In 1966 Dolores Sánchez, a Puerto Rican businessman, ran for the State Senate to represent the second senatorial district encompassing the northern half of Hartford. According to fellow Republican José Garay, this nomination showed that Republicans were more responsive to Puerto Ricans than the Democrats.²⁹¹ José Cruz had a different, more sensible, analysis:

Our community was overwhelmingly Democratic and the Republicans were trying to gain our favor. So they

²⁹⁰. *Ibid.*

²⁹¹. Interview in Spanish with José Garay, 25 January 1993.

promised Dolores heaven and earth, he was not recognized by the community as a leader, and he fell for it.²⁹²

Puerto Ricans did not support Sánchez; they also failed to use his candidacy as a bargaining chip to wrest concessions from the Democrats. In retrospect, Sánchez's defeat by Boce W. Barlow, Jr., the first black to be elected to the upper house of the state legislature, was seen by some as a double whammy.²⁹³

In 1971, another Puerto Rican Republican ran for city treasurer. William J. Pérez, an attorney, opposed city treasurer John J. Mahon, a nine-term incumbent first elected in 1953. The 1971 election was the second held under the partisan system restored in 1967. Not since 1941 had the Democrats won a partisan election; this encouraged the Republicans who had won the previous two contests. After going through a tough primary the Democrats managed to keep everyone within the fold, ran a unified ticket, and won.²⁹⁴ Pérez received 7,890 votes against Mahon's 20,887.²⁹⁵

The first Puerto Rican to run for city council, René Rodríguez, was also a Republican. After joining the Army in

292. Interview in Spanish with José Cruz, 27 January 1993.

293. *Ibid.*

294. Jack Zaiman, "Show of Unity By City Party Carries Democrats To Victory," *The Hartford Courant*, 3 November 1971, p. 18.

295. *The Hartford Courant*, 3 November 1971, p. 45.

1964 Rodríguez moved to Hartford in 1966 where he worked as an assembler in the firearms division of Colt Industries. Later he went on to become a successful businessman. He surfaced as a candidate in 1973, the same year that María Sánchez ran for the Board of Education. Rodríguez had no name recognition and shortly before the election the *Hartford Courant* indicated that his was one of three Republican candidacies that had failed to excite major public interest.²⁹⁶ While his bid failed, Rodríguez received only 928 votes less than María Sánchez who came in third in the Board race with 4,955 votes.²⁹⁷

Brokered Representation: A Closer Look

Brokered representation brought a few Puerto Ricans into political positions between 1962 and 1979. The Republicans gave Puerto Ricans opportunity; the Democrats gave them power. The key power broker during this period was Democrat Nicholas Carbone. Carbone helped elect María Sánchez to the Board of Education in 1973 and made possible the appointment of Mildred Torres, Antonio Soto's sister and a political player in her own right, to fill a vacancy at the city council in 1979.

296. "City Election Sees 17 Candidates Vieing for 11 Posts," *The Hartford Courant*, 5 November 1973, p. 38; David S. Barrett, "Democrats Expected to Retain Majority on Council," *The Hartford Courant*, 5 November 1973, p. 38.

297. "GOP Takes Bridgeport Amid Upsets; Athanson, Council Re-Elected in Sweep," *The Hartford Courant*, 7 November 1973, p. 1.

Mele is correct in her charges against the Democrats. Yet if Puerto Ricans were electoral fodder, this was not just due to the cunning of hoodwinking Democratic politicians. The model described by Cornwell applies: political submission rested on the assumption that political independence was surrendered in exchange for something more essential-- political appointments, jobs, programs, services.²⁹⁸ If Puerto Ricans were not able to actually make the exchange yield the expected reward, it was partly because they lacked the wherewithal, and to some extent the disposition, to specify their claims and to make the machine accountable. Further, even when the resources and the disposition were there, the choices were restricted. To many, this appeared to be the case even as late as 1979. Recalling the appointment of Mildred Torres to the city council in that year, Jerry Zayas said:

There were meetings and negotiations. María had political savvy but at the time Mildred was better equipped to work in the council. But it was Nick Carbone's decision, the group had no choice but to go along because it was Mildred or nothing. At that time we didn't have the political muscle we have today.²⁹⁹

Mary Ellen Flynn, a Democratic regular, offered an amendment to this assessment:

298. Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr. "Bosses, Machines, and Ethnic Groups," in Lawrence H. Fuchs, ed. *American Ethnic Politics* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1968), p. 199.

299. Interview in Spanish with Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas, 10 August 1992.

Interviewer: Was the decision to choose Mildred made by Nick or by the group of Puerto Ricans he dealt with?

Flynn: I would say they gave Nick the name. I wouldn't say Nick would do that [impose his choice]. Knowing Nick no, if he told you a group went [to him with a recommendation] he's telling you the truth....Nick wouldn't lie...if there was a group and that was the name he was told to go with he would honor that.³⁰⁰

What this suggests is that the structure of choices available to Puerto Ricans in the 1970s was as much configured by the political muscle they could objectively exert as it was by the subjective perception they had of their bargaining power. The subtext in Zayas statement is this: Carbone and the Puerto Ricans eyeballed each other and the Puerto Ricans blinked first. Torres was not the only choice but they gave in to Carbone's desire thinking that if they challenged him an opportunity would be lost. Flynn implicitly suggests that a little more staying power could have carried the Puerto Ricans farther. But the record suggests that this would have been unlikely. Yet, the ambivalence in Zayas' assessment of the situation--Mildred was the best candidate/It was Carbone's decision--also suggests that the decision to go along was the result of conviction as well as compromise.

Mildred Torres' account of the process lends some support to this judgment. From her testimony the picture that emerges is one in which Carbone is firmly in control but the Puerto

300. Interview with Mary Ellen Flynn, 12 August 1992.

Ricans decide based both on self-determined preferences and a pragmatic awareness of the limits to their choices. She said:

The Hispanic political leadership had been after Nick, who was the controlling factor in the Democratic political machine, to have a Puerto Rican seat and so when that opportunity arose they went to him and said: "You have no excuses now, there's a vacancy and we want it and you committed it and you are gonna give it to us." "So who is the candidate to be," he asked,..."Who do you want?" So there was a lot of discussion and a lot of talk. Edwin Vargas surfaced as a candidate. Edwin had a very bad reputation in this town, he still carries some of that baggage; [he] was very much identified with the Socialists, and the community at that time, and I think still today [has] an ogre mentality about Socialism and Communism, so he wasn't a very attractive candidate. María Sánchez identified herself as a candidate and people felt that she had the seat on the Board of Education and she should stay there. I was approached by a group of my peers and asked if I would be interested. I said "Sure, why not? I know the political system. I know how it works."³⁰¹

The accounts of Zayas, Flynn, and Torres indicate that the choices made on behalf of the community were determined by the tension between the actual and perceived resistance of the power brokers to acquiesce to Puerto Rican demands. In 1991 Carbone declared that:

The argument I used back then [1969] was, if people have to fight you for political power they will never become your ally; if you give it to them before they take it away from you then you can share with them and you have a permanent alliance.³⁰²

301. Interview with Mildred Torres, 1 August 1991.

302. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

Puerto Ricans never knew this. To them the opposite was apparent: Carbone would share power only according to his own timing and on his own terms. This followed logically from his reputation and actual ability to control and influence people. Also, Puerto Ricans were affected by the impact of Carbone's political style. As Mary Ellen Flynn put it:

If [Nick] had a thing in his head he was going to do it and there was no talking to him; you could talk to him and he said yes but he was going to do just as he pleased anyway. I don't think [he] ever did anything that he didn't think it was right. The only thing is that if he thought it was right he didn't want to hear anybody else telling him it was wrong. He just went forward. It got to a point that you just didn't talk [to him].³⁰³

In the eyes of Puerto Rican leaders, Carbone's resistance to demands for increased representation was just as strong in 1979 as it had ever been before. But the cumulative effect of that resistance, embodied in Torres' crisp recollection of how Carbone was approached-- "You have no excuses now, there's a vacancy and we want it and you committed it and you are gonna give it to us"--combined with the opportunity to break it, giving the Puerto Ricans the chance to eventually alter a structure of choices in which their role was not to act but to react.

Structure of Choices: Puerto Ricans and Blacks

Browning, Marshall, and Tabb have suggested that while the stimulus of black demand-protest substantially increases

303. Interview with Mary Ellen Flynn, 12 August 1992.

Hispanic activity of this sort, the resistance of a dominant coalition does not appear to have any effect on the development of Hispanic demand-protest.³⁰⁴ They define demand-protest as "mobilization efforts including violent and nonviolent protest...and more traditional demand-articulation tactics such as mass turnouts at city meetings, press conferences, neighborhood meetings, petitions, and formal and informal exchanges with city officials."³⁰⁵

For Puerto Ricans in Hartford, emulation and resistance factors had an inverse effect in the development of brokered representation. On the one hand, the political experience of blacks in the city ran parallel to that of Puerto Ricans and thus did little to provide a stimulus to action along similar lines. By the time black representation was achieved, for example, Puerto Ricans had barely begun to settle in Hartford. This meant that the reservoir of shared experience that was necessary for them to begin to emulate black actions was simply not there. The Spanish Action Coalition tried to provide some cross-pollination of efforts but its presence was short-lived. Groups such as the NAACP were not attractive to Puerto Ricans and its patronizing attitude became especially clear during the 1969 riots. Thus to a large extent Puerto Ricans had no example to follow except their own.

304. Browning, et.al., *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

305. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

As the community developed and Puerto Ricans found themselves living side by side with blacks, a subordinate relationship did emerge. This is best illustrated by Mele's earlier reference to the relationship between María Sánchez and Abe Giles, which lasted well into the 1980s. Another example was the quasi-monopolistic control of the distribution of program services that blacks exerted during the 1960s. About this Mele said:

Blacks care only about blacks and they use us. All this time they have used us politically. They work for themselves not for us. At CRT I worked with blacks for a long time and I noticed that. I had a program for the families of alcoholics and the blacks looked for money for their programs but not for mine.³⁰⁶

It was not that Puerto Ricans did not have bonds of solidarity with blacks or that Puerto Ricans did not benefit from the programs that blacks controlled. It was rather that Puerto Ricans had overestimated the degree to which black activism could incorporate their interests. During the 1969 riots blacks saw themselves as leaders and Puerto Ricans as followers. That, according to Soto, "opened a lot of people's eyes because a lot of people thought that because we were all minorities we were in the same boat."³⁰⁷

Two years after the riots, at a meeting sponsored by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, foundation officials

306. Interview with Olga Mele, 6 August 1992.

307. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991.

were told by a group of Puerto Rican community leaders which included José Cruz and Eugenio Caro, that in funding the black-controlled CRT they would be wasting their money. They protested the fact that no Puerto Ricans were involved in CRT's decision-making process and "even though CRT serves many Puerto Ricans," there was no Puerto Rican delegate agency.³⁰⁸

If the experience of blacks stimulated Puerto Rican choices and actions, it did so in negative ways. The process involved more conflict than emulation. Throughout the years, black-Puerto Rican coalitions developed. To some extent these were prompted by abstract notions of racial/ethnic solidarity but these were shared mostly by Puerto Rican progressives and radicals. If Puerto Ricans (or blacks) could challenge whites on their own they would gladly do so. But this approach was (and is) limited by Hartford's demographic reality: no single group had the numbers to impose its agenda upon the others; in addition, identity politics did not allow Puerto Ricans (or blacks) to successfully portray themselves as a universal class. In that context, cooperation was rather forced and Puerto Ricans kept an eye on blacks (and viceversa) not so much to emulate their actions as to prevent black advancement at their expense.

308. Janet Anderson, "Foundations to Seek Methods To Aid Puerto Rican Students," *The Hartford Courant*, 2 November 1971, p. 25.

Politically Determined Choices

The testimonies of Mele and Soto suggest that the stimulus to action was intra-partisan and internal to the community. Initially, the Democrats sought the involvement of the San Juan Center, the Republicans sought Soto, and then convinced Dolores Sánchez to run; Mele got María Sánchez involved and María became the mentor of many others. William Pérez had been a Democrat all his life. Yet he ran as a Republican in 1971 because he knew that Democratic resistance would be impossible to surmount. "The Democrats had been in control for so long," he said, "that the only opportunity for a Puerto Rican was with the Republicans. The Democrats were shut tight. The Republicans knew that blacks were solidly in the Democratic camp so there was also an environment of opportunity for a Puerto Rican wanting to get in."³⁰⁹

While in the early days the most significant organizational venture involving Puerto Ricans, the San Juan Center, was initiated and controlled by the Church, the first attempt to organize was autonomous; so were the majority of efforts that followed the San Juan Center. The candidacy of Dolores Sánchez was the first instance of Puerto Ricans being used in the competition among parties. The effort failed and remained a rare example. Hartford's one-party system was challenged by the Republicans from time to time but their

309. Interview in Spanish with William J. Pérez, 30 January 1993.

attempt to use the Puerto Ricans to that purpose was inconsistent and weak.

Meaningful Brokered Representation

The first successful instance of brokered representation involving a post of significance did not come until 1973. In November of that year, the Democrats were seeking reelection to the city council on their record. They had a 4 to 1 voter registration lead. Nicholas Carbone, aged thirty-seven at the time, was the council's majority leader and had completed a second term in office after occupying his seat by appointment in late 1969.³¹⁰

By 1973, María Sánchez had been a Hartford resident for 20 years and was the owner of Henry's Newspaper Stand on 246 Albany Avenue.³¹¹ She was interested in a seat on the Board of Education and had also wanted to be in the city council for some time. According to Soto,

María wanted to sit on the council and Nick Carbone would not let her.

Interviewer: How did he manage to do that?

Soto: [Carbone's argument was simply] the time is not right. You are gonna get in there and you are going to be all alone and you are not going to have anybody on your side...They made her feel that she

310. David S. Barrett, "Democrats Expected to Retain Majority on Council," *The Hartford Courant*, 5 November 1973, p. 38.

311. Sánchez advertised her business for the first time in the community press in the premier edition of *El Observador-The Observer*, 16 July 1976, as "Maria's Newsstand."

just wasn't ready. They did mention the accent or the lack of English but never her appearance.³¹²

Ready or not, in 1973 Sánchez did run for a seat on the Board of Education. Her liabilities had not dissipated, yet the Democratic machine supported her. This support did not come easy. Carbone's initial choice for candidate had been Edna Negrón who bluntly told him to go to hell when he suggested that she was better than María Sánchez. "My English was good but María had the experience and the guts to do the job," said Negrón, "Besides, she had accomplished a lot--the bilingual program, the teachers corps--in spite of her 'broken English' and lack of education. So the community stood solidly behind her and we forced Nick to accept her."³¹³ A meeting was held at the Caminemos Adult Learning Center on Albany Avenue where that message was forcefully reiterated to Carbone by the fifty or more participants--they were all for Sánchez and that was that.

During the campaign, Sánchez was indeed publicly recognized as an experienced advocate of bilingual education. Her endorsement by the Democratic party was emphasized and juxtaposed to the greater political, administrative, and educational experience of other candidates. Her candidacy was considered a gauge of partisan influence and strength as well

312. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991. I was unable to interview María Sánchez before she passed away in 1989.

313. Interview with Edna Negrón, 29 January 1993.

as a symbol for a community with no political representation.³¹⁴

Aided by the resources of the Campaign Committee of the Bilingual Task Force, an advocacy group organized by La Casa de Puerto Rico, she became the first Puerto Rican elected to public office in Hartford. Shortly after the election the Hartford Courant declared her campaign the cheapest ever financed by the Committee, with receipts totalling \$910.³¹⁵

Brokered Representation and Beyond

By 1977 brokered representation had not produced any increases in Puerto Rican elected officials. In that year, due to the sustained pressure exerted by teachers, parents, students, and community leaders, led by María Sánchez and Edwin Vargas, who at the time was treasurer of the Hartford Federation of Teachers, the Board of Education declared 6 January, Three Kings Day, an official holiday.³¹⁶ During the summer Governor Ella Grasso made bilingual education mandatory in all school districts with twenty or more students whose primary language was not English.³¹⁷

314. Laurence Cohen, "Race for Board of Education Appears to Be a Question of Personalities," *The Hartford Courant*, 3 November 1973, p. 23.

315. "Campaign Task Force Spent \$910. for Sanchez," *The Hartford Courant*, 22 December 1973, p. 33.

316. "Dia de Reyes," xerox of news clipping, 1977.

317. "Gobernadora Firma Ley Educacion Bilingüe," *El Observador-The Observer*, (Hartford, CT) 15 July 1977, p. 10.

In September, La Casa de Puerto Rico filed suit in U.S. District Court claiming job discrimination against Puerto Ricans by the Hartford Fire Department.³¹⁸ Almost two years later, firefighters left the scene of an accident twice before knowing there was a boy under a collapsed roof. Several neighbors had tried to tell them, but their broken English was not up to task and the firefighters spoke no Spanish; by the time the firefighters figured it out the boy had died.

The death of Julio Lozada prompted La Casa to push harder to increase the number of Hispanic firefighters in the city. As a result the Fire Department agreed to recruit and train Hispanics and to give preference in hiring to those passing the qualifying exam.³¹⁹ This was a small but important victory. Yet it was almost ten years after the 1969 riots, and this and other accomplishments did not seem to measure up to the problems still facing the community.

The 1977 Synthesis

The year 1977 offers a ripe moment in the history of the Puerto Rican community. At that time, several strands of political development came together in a strategy that synthesized several models of political mobilization and leadership. Although the process was not entirely coherent,

318. Michael Regan, "Hispanics Claim Job Bias By City Fire Department," *The Hartford Courant*, 14 September 1977, p. 49.

319. Interview with Sydney Schulman, 29 January 1993. v. also Paul Frisman, "Boy's Death Stresses Need for Minority Officers," *The Hartford Courant*, 1 July 1979, p. 29.

one can appreciate its integrity in the end result: actions that shifted their focus from island to mainland driven by leaders that combined militant and moderate styles of action.

"By 1977 the Democratic machine had failed to nominate a Puerto Rican candidate for city council," said Edwin Vargas.

He added:

When Carter was elected [Nicholas] Carbone had direct connections with the White House and [he] used those connections to promote Hartford as a model for urban development. But Carbone's progressive vision was marred by his alliance with the corporate sector to reinvest in Hartford to develop the downtown commercial center and this did not benefit local minorities. The beneficiaries were the region--in terms of jobs for suburban residents--and the developers.³²⁰

Carbone disagreed:

Anytime I called the White House...I asked for 10 million dollars for the city of Hartford, I asked for a UDAG grant, for the office of economic development to run a demonstration project in Hartford....We sued the suburbs, the city of Hartford, and we won the lawsuit, that they were using community development block grant funds wrong....These were all federal grants we were getting that were going into city agencies, the programs La Casa [de Puerto Rico] ran, the Hispanic Health council, where do you think all those monies came from?...We also won a lawsuit against the electricians in which we got blacks and Hispanics into the building trade. We created minority contractors.³²¹

The lawsuits were indeed filed. But Carbone's claim of success goes against the facts: in 1976 a federal judge did find for the city and issued a permanent injunction barring

320. Interview with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 31 January 1989.

321. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 30 July 1991.

the suburbs from using CDBG monies until their housing plans incorporated the needs of low-income residents. In 1977 this decision was reversed and Hartford's suit was dismissed by a U.S. Court of Appeals.³²²

Carbone's actions reflected the intent to right certain wrongs but they were not sufficient to quell the discontent that prompted challenges to his leadership in 1977 and that swept him out of office in 1979. Puerto Ricans in particular had begun to develop a political agenda that went beyond the indirect benefits of federal grants. This had become patent after the 1969 riots, when they decided that the programs that served the community should be run by Puerto Ricans themselves. Now the issue was not just programs but power. Programs had been in existence since 1956. The War on Poverty had expanded that arena. Thus access to power seemed the next logical step. Also, it held the promise of redistribution either through patronage, public policy or radical change.

Initially, the strategy was to join the Democratic Party and work from within to exact programs and services. María Sánchez was the embodiment of this alternative. As she herself put it:

322. For a summary of Hartford's lawsuit against the suburbs v. Kenneth J. Neubeck and Richard E. Ratcliff, "Urban Democracy and the Power of Corporate Capital: Struggles Over Downtown Growth and Neighborhood Stagnation in Hartford, Connecticut." In *Business Elites and Urban Development: Case Studies and Critical Perspectives*, edited by Scott Cummings (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 324-326.

One of the reasons why I'm with the Democratic Party is to see what can be done for those of us who are here that are suffering the consequences of the decisions that are made without consulting the 30,000 Hispanics that live in this city.³²³

A second alternative was to work outside the party, challenging the city council, mobilizing the community to demand services. The 1969 riots were a spontaneous expression of this strategy, the PLP was its initial articulation, and the PSP embodied the most sustained attempt to put it into practice.

In the 1970s the Young Lords made a few forays into the city but were never able to take root in Hartford. The clonish PLP, whose organizer, José Claudio, was a Young Lords disciple, came with a bang and left with a whimper. The PSP, on the other hand, was considered subversive and anti-American. When its work on mainland issues was not rejected outright it was appreciated for what it really was: a strategy to gain adherents to the cause of independence for Puerto Rico. A latter group, the Committee of 24, erupted onto the scene and within a few months its leader, Eugenio Caro, was proposing to dissolve it into a coalition for an independent and progressive Hispanic vote³²⁴ (see Chapter five).

323. Video recording of forum held in Spanish at Immaculate Conception Church, Park Street, Hartford, 7 January 1979.

324. "Nueva Coalición," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), February 1979, p. 9.

The intersection between these two strategies, these versions of insider and outsider politics, was aided and abetted by the parallel actions of, and conscious linkages between, many actors. But two individuals embody and best exemplify the convergence of the two alternatives. They have been chosen as examples not to deny the contribution of others but because they represent the earliest instance of the synthesis between militant and moderate forms of interest articulation and mobilization.

José LaLuz is a Puerto Rican from the town of Ciales who moved to Connecticut with his parents in 1964 at the age of fourteen. Continuous fistfights with his Italian schoolmates at Bulkeley High School drove LaLuz back to Puerto Rico shortly after coming to Hartford. "I told my parents, 'Someone is going to die here and it's not going to be me.' They asked me what I wanted to do and I said, 'I'm going back to Puerto Rico.'"³²⁵

In Puerto Rico, LaLuz joined with the independentistas. Upon return to the States he joined the Students for a Democratic Society at Springfield College. In 1969-70, while Puerto Ricans in Hartford were putting forth their social and political agenda, LaLuz helped coordinate a national strike protesting the U.S. bombing of Cambodia. LaLuz:

I was in New York for a while and then I went to Connecticut. There I helped organize several

325. Interview in Spanish with José LaLuz, 6 July 1989.

chapters of the *Movimiento Pro Independencia* before it became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. In the PSP I was responsible for organizing the farmworkers and we created the *Asociación de Trabajadores Agrícolas* [Farmworkers Association] and the *Comité de Apoyo al Trabajador Agrícola* [Farmworkers Support Committee]. Wilfredo Vélez and I and a whole bunch of Reverends and Ministers did this until about 1974-75. Then I was asked to be the Organizing Director of the PSP and went back to New York until 1977 when the party divided.³²⁶

Party responsibilities took LaLuz all over the Northeast. But it was in Brooklyn that he met his first wife, Isabel Carrasquillo, who was the sister of Sylvia Vargas, Queen of the 1969 Connecticut Puerto Rican Day Parade and wife of Edwin Vargas. In 1975, Edwin Vargas was President of the Hartford chapter of the PSP and this brought him into regular contact with LaLuz. But it was the link provided by the Carrasquillo sisters that cemented their relationship. Up until he left Hartford in 1989, LaLuz was regarded as Vargas's main strategist and right-hand man.

In Hartford, LaLuz and Vargas articulated and put in practice a strategy that combined bargaining and compromise, using open challenges to the Democratic Party as point of entry and platform, with demand-protest actions that confronted partisan structures and the policy establishment. Within the PSP, LaLuz had been part of a faction that advocated such a strategy. He, and many others as well, argued for a mainland-based agenda rather than the continuing

326. *Ibid.*

subordination of mainland struggles to the status issue.

LaLuz:

We became heretics. The party line was that we had to wage [Puerto Rico's] national liberation struggle in the United States.

Interviewer: Puerto Rico had priority and the movement here was the rear guard of the movement on the Island?

LaLuz: Exactly. So there was a struggle within the party. Some people tell me now that we could have taken over the party. At the time I was just fed up with the whole thing. I said to myself 'Whether Menshevik or Bolshevik I'm going forward,' and that's how we came up with the idea of a non-partisan political action committee and we organized an informal coalition to support Edwin [Vargas] as an independent candidate [in 1977]. Today I see that what we were saying made sense because people supported the effort whereas [the PSP] ended up nowhere. The battles we had in the PSP laid the ground for many initiatives later on.³²⁷

For his part, Vargas used the labor movement as a vehicle to blend militant and moderate models of leadership within the framework of a mainland-centered model of mobilization. Like LaLuz, Vargas went back to Puerto Rico in the 1960s and returned to the States in 1972, not to organize anti-war demonstrations but as a federally funded public school teacher. Although Vargas did not deny his Socialist credentials he insisted that he was never an official member of the PSP.

During the 1970s, Vargas also became critical of the PSP. He argued that the party in the United States was a fan club

327. *Ibid.*

for the independentista movement on the island, nothing more than a glorified "committee in support of Puerto Rican independence." His criticism was not anti-independence or anti-socialist. Instead, he proposed that any U.S.-based mass movement of Puerto Ricans worthy of the name had to focus on mainland issues. The emphasis had to be on efforts to win and secure democratic rights using the electoral process as the arena and means to representation and power.

The two key formative influences in LaLuz's and Vargas's political development were socialism and, as a corollary, labor. From SDS LaLuz went to the PSP, a shift that took him from organizing students to organizing workers. In Hartford, Puerto Rican farmworkers gave LaLuz a point of entry to the community and the issues around which he sought to combine mainland- and island-based agendas. The labor movement gave Vargas a job and a platform. As a teacher in the city he gravitated towards the union. As a labor official he then began to pursue political goals--mostly to advance a Puerto Rican agenda. In their outlook, class was inseparable from ethnicity. Labor was a vehicle for action, the labor movement provided resources, standing, and an institutional base. But the substance and wellspring of their political commitment was rooted in a deep sense of ethnic solidarity. As individuals they could be teachers or assistant city managers (a position that LaLuz held in 1988), property owners or renters, labor officials or media personalities (as Vargas was through a

local TV program); but as men they could not escape, nor did they want to, being Puerto Rican.

When Vargas declared his candidacy for city council in 1977, the PSP suspended him from its ranks. During one of its regular meetings, held on 27 August 1977, the Central Committee of the party rescinded Vargas's membership due to the "violation of democratic-centralism and party rules in your decision to run for office without consulting first with the party."³²⁸ Vargas was amused by the sanction. His response was to reiterate that he had never been an official PSP member. He considered their action ludicrous.

According to Antonio Soto, María Sánchez thought that Vargas was "a young, punky, arrogant son of a bitch." Soto said:

Ed didn't have a lot of friends in Hartford and a lot of people didn't trust him because Ed was part of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and all of a sudden he said: "I'm not part of that anymore." María hated Socialism. One day the socialists said they wanted to march in the Parade and she was dead set against it and they never marched. She got everybody in the committee to vote no, [saying to the Socialists] you are going to ruin our image.³²⁹

328. Letter of Andrés Torres to Edwin Vargas, 25 September 1977.

329. Interview with Antonio Soto, 5 August 1991. Soto's claim that the Socialists never marched in the Parade is not accurate. When their request to participate in 1971 was granted, Gilberto Camacho wrote: "This office helped create and structure the Puerto Rican Day Parade in 1964. By 1966 we were forced to withdraw after the Parade began to be dominated by radicals and extremists." Letter of Gilberto Camacho in Spanish to Carmen Cortés, 30 August 1971. Department of Puerto

Yet in 1977, Sánchez supported Vargas. This prompted a sharp denunciation from José Garay, a Republican candidate for city council, known in the community for having refused to obey orders to help disperse the Puerto Rican mob during the 1969 riots. Garay was miffed by a letter sent to area businessmen in which a group supporting Vargas and Sánchez, who was seeking a second term at the Board of Education, referred to them as the only "Spanish" candidates in the election. Garay issued a press release accusing Vargas of being anti-American and demanding an explanation from Sánchez for her "alliance" with a past president of the Socialist party. "I do endorse the general Hispanic position on education, housing, and employment, but do not believe that leaders like Sánchez and Vargas have helped the Hispanic community--indeed, they have been part of the problem," said Garay.³³⁰

In early August, Carbone had defeated Vargas's attempt to get the endorsement of the Democrats. Vargas responded by declaring his intention to take on Carbone in a primary. Of the six Democrats on the council, Carbone had been the lowest vote-getter since 1973. And by 1977, his popularity and neighborhood support did not match his political power. "[Carbone] embodies the machine better than any other

Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 10.

330. Press Release of José Garay, October 1977.

councilperson," Vargas said, "and it is the machine which has been insensitive to the needs of the Hispanic community."³³¹ The next day Andrés Vázquez, a Vargas supporter, added: "The only way you can participate in this city is to challenge the machinery. We take the people out to vote election after election, and what do we get? Unemployment, discrimination, housing I don't have to describe to you. So what do we have to lose?"³³²

Vargas immediately proceeded to collect signatures to force the primary. But at a meeting in Hartford's Summit Hotel he was pressured to desist. Carbone:

What I explained to Edwin then was that if he ran, if he forced a primary we were going to beat him. It would cost the party money and once we did that there was no future [for him] with the Democratic party. If he wanted to see what his strength was he should run as an Independent and that would allow him to do voter registration and build a political organization.³³³

In what he felt was an unprecedented deal, Vargas said he would run as an Independent if Carbone agreed that the next vacancy in the council would go to a Puerto Rican.³³⁴ "Don't give him anything, Nick, crush him, you've got to crush

331. Michael Regan, "City Man Prepares for Race," *The Hartford Courant*, 9 August 1977, p. 25.

332. Michael Regan, "Two Challenge City's Parties," *The Hartford Courant*, 10 August 1977, p. 37.

333. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 4 March 1993.

334. Interviews with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 31 January 1989; 15 June 1992; 19 November 1992.

him," María Sánchez reportedly said at the meeting.³³⁵ This attitude, however, if it indeed was there, dissolved shortly afterwards when Sánchez decided to support Vargas's independent candidacy. According to Vargas, Carbone agreed to appoint a Puerto Rican as soon as possible but this was a commitment he had previously made with Sánchez.³³⁶

During the campaign Puerto Ricans were not unified behind one candidate. For example, the endorsement of the Hispanic Democratic Reform Club, a loose organization of Puerto Rican community leaders and activists, went, among others, to Carbone, Vargas, and Garay. In a controversial move, the Club decided not to endorse María Sánchez for re-election to the Board of Education "on the basis of her record" and charges of issuing a bad check to the State Gaming Commission.³³⁷ The chair of the Club's Candidates Assessment Committee was María B. González, a school teacher whose own record as councilwoman ten years later was blasted by party members and the voters as well.

Vargas obtained support from the Hartford Federation of Teachers and the Greater Hartford Labor council. A group of

335. Interview with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 31 July 1991. Carbone had no recollection that Sánchez said this. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 4 March 1993.

336. Interview in Spanish with Juan Fuentes, 13 February 1993; interview with Nicholas Carbone, 4 March 1993.

337. "Candidates Backed by Hispanic Club," *The Hartford Courant*, 30 October 1977, p. 16C.

volunteers interchangeably calling themselves "People for Vargas" and "Comite Vargas Para Consejo" [Vargas for Council Committee], organized press conferences, placed ads in the community newspapers, and distributed campaign flyers listing an impressive array of supporters. Dorothy Billington, president of the teachers federation, declared: "Mr. Vargas has his hand on the heartbeat of the Spanish community, as well as the Hartford community."³³⁸

The Democrats ran on their record as the party that had won increased state and federal aid, while Vargas ran as the advocate of a state income tax to increase aid to local schools.³³⁹ Carbone was reelected with 11,845 votes while Vargas ran a distant 13th in the 16-candidate race with 2,547 votes. Of the elected councilmen, the lowest vote-getter--also an Independent--received twice as many votes as Vargas and even Garay outdid him with 2,809 votes.³⁴⁰ But no matter. For the first time Puerto Ricans had ran against the party but not with the Republicans. In doing so, they had begun to use the tools that would later help them bypass the party: resort to the media, pressure exerted through extra-partisan

338. "Teachers Union Picks Four," Xerox of news clipping. c. 1977.

339. Michael Regan, "3 Mayoral, 16 City Council Candidates Running for Election," *The Hartford Courant*, 30 October 1977, p. 16C.

340. "Hartford Results," *The Hartford Courant*, 9 November 1977, p. 1.

alliances, and grassroots mobilization, to develop an autonomous power base, and to force the hand of party leaders.

A Promise Fulfilled, A Will Bypassed

On 7 November 1978, Hartford councilperson Barbara Kennelly was elected Secretary of State by a margin in excess of 150,000 votes. At the December 11 meeting of the city council, councilman Robert Ludgin introduced a resolution calling for public hearings so that candidates interested in filling the vacancy could be "interviewed publicly regarding their background, their attitudes and their inclinations and so that the public may have an opportunity to express their ideas concerning said appointment."³⁴¹

Ludgin supported the appointment of black civil rights activist Wilber Smith. Edwin Vargas understood that Carbone's commitment to fill the next vacancy had been the direct result of his 1977 candidacy and therefore felt entitled to the appointment. According to José LaLuz it was never explicitly said that the vacancy would go to Vargas but implicitly he understood that to be the case.³⁴² Vargas argued that the original commitment was modified in three different ways after it was offered. The first "revision" was that offered by LaLuz; the second version was that the vacant seat would go to someone in the Puerto Rican community, selected by the

³⁴¹. *Journal of the Court of Common Council*, 1977-79, vols. I-II, p. 1432.

³⁴². Interview in Spanish with José LaLuz, 6 July 1989.

community itself. The third version held that the seat would be occupied by one of Carbone's minions, someone selected by Carbone's Puerto Rican circle with his approval.³⁴³ Carbone himself firmly claimed that there was only one version: the latter; and further, that, as noted earlier, the original commitment was with María Sánchez, not with Vargas. About this the truth might never be known. But it is likely that Carbone simply deceived Vargas, leading him to believe that he had gotten something in exchange for his agreement to forego a primary.

Carbone: I had had a meeting with the community leaders, I don't know whether it was 1977 or 1976, and told them that the next vacancy on the city council I would try to fill it with someone from their community which is going to be picked by the 35 leaders.

Interviewer: And we are talking about the group that was associated with María Sánchez.

Carbone: Yes. Even when I met with Vargas and María to talk about his running as an Independent we talked about the community selecting a person to fill the vacancy [who] was acceptable to me.³⁴⁴

Vargas began discussing his interest in a council seat with community leaders and councilmembers as early as June 1978, shortly after rumors that Kennelly's seat might become available began to spread. A newspaper account reads: "Edwin Vargas, who ran as an independent last November, is optimistic

343. Interview with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 19 November 1992.

344. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 4 March 1993.

about filling one of the vacancies."³⁴⁵ After Kennelly's election, on 4 December, Andrés Vázquez declared his candidacy announcing that "my conviction that this vacancy should go to a Puerto Rican is above my own personal interest in the position."³⁴⁶ On 30 December, Mildred Torres announced at a press conference that she wanted the appointment. "I understand municipal government and I'm not wedded to any politician. My interest is to serve the city of Hartford and Hispanics," she said. At a Democratic town committee meeting held on 2 January, María Sánchez also declared her interest in the seat. From outside the community, Jack Dollard, an architect, Mary Ellen Flynn, a public school paraprofessional at the time, and Loretta F. Fox, a real estate broker, were also candidates. Two other Puerto Ricans, Félix Ortíz and María B. González, were interviewed but they quickly withdrew in support of María Sánchez.

Meanwhile, Carbone publicly acknowledged the commitment to fill the vacancy with a Puerto Rican, bluntly stating that the applications of non-Puerto Rican candidates would be filed for future reference.³⁴⁷ From interviews with Carbone,

345. "Posible Vacante en el Consejo Municipal," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), June 1978, p. 1.

346. "Hispanic on City Council," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), December 1978, p. 7.

347. Juan Fuentes, "Carbone En Espera Decisión de Líderes Puertorriqueños," *El Observador-The Observer*, (Hartford, CT), Xerox of clipping, day and month missing, 1979, p. 4.

Vargas, and Torres it is apparent that three sets of players approached Carbone vying for the seat. María Sánchez represented the Puerto Rican party regulars and wanted the seat for herself. Mildred Torres was the figurehead for Puerto Rican Democrats who were within Sánchez's sphere of influence but, on this issue, not completely within her camp. A mixture of radicals, populists, and activists, some of them marginal to the party but longing to be on the inside, rallied around Edwin Vargas.

After Carbone told him that the right to determine who would fill the vacancy was not his but the Puerto Rican community's, Vargas, in consultation with José LaLuz and Hartford's Catholic Bishop, Peter Rosazza, decided that the best way to force Carbone's hand was to take him at his word. That was the genesis of a community forum held on 7 January 1979, during which over three-hundred Puerto Ricans gathered in the basement of Immaculate Conception Church to hear its candidates. To organize the forum, LaLuz enlisted the support of Oscar Nieves, an officer of the Hartford Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, who produced a press release announcing that:

We are not happy with the process being used by Deputy Mayor Nick Carbone in identifying a Hispanic candidate for the council vacancy that will occur when councilwoman Barbara B. Kennelly resigns to become Secretary of State.

Mr. Carbone is indicating that Mildred Torres is the leading contender to fill that vacancy, when the Hispanic community and the citizens of Hartford

were not even aware that she was interested in the position. The Hispanic candidates that have expressed interest in the position apparently are not even been considered by Mr. Carbone. At the same time, Mr. Carbone is saying that he will accept the recommendation of the Hispanic community in this decision.³⁴⁸

This press conference was covered only by the community press and, according to one of the participants, Vargas, LaLuz, and Nieves were there; it is likely that the event took place at the Commonwealth's office.³⁴⁹

Mildred Torres knew nothing about the press conference, which is not surprising since it was staged to question her legitimacy as a candidate. This is her version of how her candidacy and the forum came about:

What we did was we went I guess to Nick and we said: "Maria is on the Board of Education, she should stay there, and Edwin is a loose gun. He doesn't know anybody and we are not sure that we can trust him."

The Democratic party, to get out from under, suggested that we might want to hold some kind of public thing. So we did. The three of us got together with our seconds if you will, mine was Alberto Ibargüen and Edwin's was, of course, José LaLuz, and I don't remember who María's was. We arranged to publicize it on the radio and to hold a forum at the basement of the church on Park street and for the three of us to come and speak on why we were interested and what we felt we could accomplish, Oh, I'm sorry there was a fourth candidate, Andy Vázquez.³⁵⁰

348. Press Release of Oscar Nieves, c. December 1978. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 371.

349. Interview with Andrés Vázquez, 3 March 1993.

350. Interview with Mildred Torres, 1 August 1991.

While this suggests that the idea of holding a forum came from within the Democratic party, that was not the case. Torres' phrase "to get out from under" suggests that once the forum became a reality Carbone did what he could to help win a victory for her. But although Torres, as well as Vargas, did mobilize their supporters, Carbone denied having supported Torres' effort.³⁵¹ He accepted the forum for what it was--an attempt to force his hand--knowing that it would not change his mind. Carbone said:

I told Eddie Vargas, "You don't change the rules; so I sit down and negotiate with you, this 12 people, and its 12 people who are going to make the decision. You couldn't get the 12 people to vote for you so you went to a priest to call a forum, that wasn't the deal. I don't care if you get 2,000 people, I don't care if they all come to City Hall, that wasn't the deal I made...."³⁵²

At the forum, the first to speak was Eugenio Caro on behalf of the Committee of 24, a group of activists that had formed in the fall of 1978 to protest a series of derogatory ethnic jokes published in *Swank*, a New York-based pornographic magazine (see Chapter five). The Committee, Caro said, had decided not to support any candidate. In 1975 Caro had sought a council seat with no success. By 1979 he believed that brokered representation precluded political effectiveness. Also, in his view, the leadership of the community was caught between trying to satisfy the funders of social service

351. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 4 March 1993.

352. *Ibid.*, 30 July 1991.

programs and the people, with the latter being on the losing end of the equation.³⁵³

All candidates agreed that Puerto Ricans in the city were in bad shape. All saw the vacancy as an opportunity to make public policy more responsive to Puerto Rican needs.

Vázquez was an assistant to Governor Ella Grasso, but spoke more like an Alinsky-type organizer than a government insider. "The whole educational system is worthless and has to be changed," he shouted at one point in response to a comment about education from the audience.³⁵⁴

María Sánchez was fiery in her tone but essentially pragmatic. Cast as a party regular she also sought to win support by references to her own problems. These she offered as evidence of her commitment to community issues. "I know the problem," she said about housing, "because I suffer it myself. I also live in a building where the rent is too high and it gets cold in the winter. I make no promises, because in the council it will be one against eight, but if elected I will do my best."

Vargas spoke as a radical outsider, lashing out against the "big corporations" and criticizing municipal neglect of Puerto Rican neighborhoods. "As our people begin to move into

353. Stephanie Sevick, "Hispanic Activist Battles Negativity," *The Hartford Courant*, 22 April 1979, p. 42.

354. This and subsequent quotes are from video recording of forum held in Spanish at Immaculate Conception Church, Park Street, Hartford, 7 January 1979.

a neighborhood the city begins to move out," he said. "The city abandons those neighborhoods in terms of maintenance, police protection and yet property taxes for small businesses on Park Street are \$3.00 per sq.ft. while Travelers, Aetna, and G. Fox pay \$1.50."

Torres, like Sánchez, offered no promises. She was thrown on the defensive when her connection to Aetna was brought up. There was some booing and hissing and the moderator had to ask the audience to behave. "That's a personal question and it has nothing to do with her political position," snapped the moderator, Calixto Torres. The crowd began to applaud as Torres struggled to raise her voice above the din. "Thank you, thank you," she said. "That is indeed a personal question but I would like to say that I've always had to work, I've always worked with the community on nights and weekends. The council's business is not only conducted during the day. I work for an insurance company because I have to support my family." At this point the crowd erupted, in a mixture of cheers and jeers. As the clapping, shouting, and whistling began to subside the moderator once again begged for order. "One more time I'd like to request the public to keep this forum at the highest possible level," he said.

The audience, however, saved its loudest reaction for the responses to a question from the president of the PSP in Hartford. "Do you think," asked José Ramos, "that the educational development of our community requires the

discussion of the political situation of Puerto Rico and how do you plan to deal with it?"

Vargas responded first:

The political situation of Puerto Rico is of great interest to me and when I came to Hartford I put a lot of my energies to that issue. But after being here for a while, dreaming about going back, I realized that I had married and had two children, born here in Hartford. I realized that there was a growing Puerto Rican community that is here to stay. When I realized that I said to myself, "Caramba, the political situation of Puerto Rico is important but, isn't also important the political situation of Puerto Ricans in Hartford, where we are born, live and die?" So, even though I read the newspapers and try to keep up with events on the island, and I would oppose any actions against the will of Puerto Ricans there, and I want their rights to be respected, my main concern has to be the future of our children here in the United States.

Vázquez agreed with Vargas but then restated the PSP position that any decision on the status issue would depend on the development of the Puerto Rican community in the United States. "So we have to develop enough political muscle," he said, "to influence the U.S. Congress and decide what's best for Puerto Rico."

Torres offered a variation on this theme: "whatever happens there affects us here. What I'm trying to do is to make the information on all positions available to all so that we can be informed to make sure that we have a say in what happens there even though we live here."

Only María Sánchez was in full agreement with Vargas. Always the consummate politician she answered the question

without showing a trace of her deep disdain for its proponent. "What happens in Puerto Rico makes me sad," she said, "and I wish luck to those that are fighting for what they believe Puerto Rico should be, but as for me, my priority is to get involved here for the benefit of what is ours."

The forum ended with a straw poll in which Vargas received 157 votes to 100 votes for Torres, 17 votes for Vázquez, and 15 votes for Sánchez.³⁵⁵ The results were delivered to Thomas Ritter who was chair of the Town Committee's selection panel. Ritter and the organizers agreed to keep the results of the vote secret but to the astonishment of many they were trumpeted the next day in the *Hartford Courant*. The community press denounced the *Courant* not knowing that the results had been leaked by José LaLuz.³⁵⁶

Afterwards, there were claims of manipulation, of packing the church with people from Bridgeport and other outsiders in order to tilt the vote in favor of Vargas.³⁵⁷ "I can't say that's true," said the forum's moderator, Calixto Torres. He recognized that perception as valid, however, given the mobilization of many people who previously had not been

355. David S. Barrett, "Selection Unit Backs Sanchez for Council," *The Hartford Courant*, 10 January 1979, p. 41.

356. Interview with José LaLuz, 6 July 1989.

357. Interviews with Mildred Torres, 1 August 1991; 2 March 1993.

publicly involved.³⁵⁸ In any event, the forum achieved its purpose: to reduce Carbone's standing among ordinary Puerto Rican citizens and to provide ammunition for the charge that the democratic will of the community had been bypassed. In terms of the selection process the forum was insignificant. Carbone said:

I had incidences when we had civil disturbances in the city where the police union [collected] ten thousand petitions for me not to change the gun guidelines. So I wasn't gonna be impressed by who could drag out a hundred and fifty people to a forum. That was not how you chose the members of the council. That's why I said the forum had no influence. We were looking at qualifications, their understanding of government, their ability to work as a team.³⁵⁹

Thus spoke Nixon when he was asked if the mass demonstrations against the war had had any effect on his decision-making. None whatsoever, he adamantly declared. Besides the obvious differences between Nixon and Carbone, the council vacancy and the Vietnam war, there is one that is important in our case: Nixon was wrong but Carbone was right.

On the morning of 8 January radio station WTIC announced that: "Hartford's Spanish community would like to have a voice on the city council, and is now eyeing the seat recently vacated by Barbara Kennelly. Chosen the most likely to succeed

358. Interview with Calixto Torres, 7 August 1991.

359. Interview with Nicholas Carbone, 4 march 1993.

in the balloting is a Hartford schoolteacher, Edwin Vargas."³⁶⁰

Before the town committee's selection panel made its decision, Carbone told them that Mildred Torres was his candidate. He met with the committee members for two hours making his case, to no avail.³⁶¹ On 10 January the panel announced its endorsement of María Sánchez, who was recognized as community oriented, having a good record as a Board of Education member, and enjoying the support of the three Puerto Rican town committee members.

That same day Vargas and Vázquez withdrew their candidacies in support of Mildred Torres. At a press conference, Eugenio Caro, flanked by the three contenders, announced the endorsement of Torres by the Committee of 24. Caro explained that the Committee had decided to interview Torres because her support seemed to be growing and gave her the endorsement after questioning her on topics such as housing, education, and employment.³⁶²

360. Transcript of News Highlights, Radio Station WTIC-AM/FM, 8 January 1979.

361. Juan Fuentes, "Concilio Tiene Ultima Palabra," *El Observador-The Observer*, (Hartford, CT) 20-30 January 1979, p. 6.

362. Karlynn Carrington, "Puerto Rican Unit Endorses Torres For Council Seat," *The Hartford Courant*, 11 January 1979, p. 38.

According to Vargas "unity was necessary to avoid loss of the seat."³⁶³ "I was approached by [Mayor George] Athanson [who had a quarrel of his own with Carbone] but went along with Carbone," said Vargas. "I was afraid that a Democratic party with no Hispanics under its wing would lose federal funding for youth programs."³⁶⁴ The same day that the *Hartford Courant* and WTIC were predicting his victory, he was with Vázquez, Torres, José LaLuz and Calixto Torres relinquishing that possibility, after realizing that his chances were nil.

On 22 January, a petition signed by seventeen Puerto Ricans requested the appointment of Mildred Torres. Her bid was also supported by councilman Raymond Monteiro. María Sánchez had always wanted a council seat; she was endorsed for the position by the mayor and several other councilmembers. The same Hispanic Democratic Reform Club that had refused to support her in 1977 continued to lobby on her behalf.

Two days later, the resolutions in favor of Smith and Sánchez were withdrawn. Carbone had the five council votes needed to ratify the appointment of Torres. On 25 January 1979, she became the first Puerto Rican to occupy a seat in the city council with five votes in favor, two absences, and one abstention.

363. Barrett, *Op.Cit.*

364. Interview with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 31 July 1991.

A New Model for Political Action

Brokered representation insured a Puerto Rican presence in the council in each and every subsequent term. But after 1977 the system was not the same. The power brokers were not sidestepped but now they could no longer dictate their choices without some effort. The change was not in the result, as the Torres' case indicates, but in the process. It is not clear whether by 1979 Puerto Ricans realized that they could be bold, that they could challenge the party; that even if they could not get exactly what they wanted they could still achieve something by resorting to power assertions of their own. But this is what they objectively accomplished. They did it in 1973 by forcing Carbone to accept the candidacy of María Sánchez for the Board of Education. In 1977 Edwin Vargas flaunted a challenge and failed but in the process planted the seed for what later became PRPAC. In 1979 he tried again and at least made it impossible for Carbone not to honor a commitment to appoint a Puerto Rican to the council.

Puerto Ricans did not act monolithically; Carbone was not subject to strategically clear and unified pressure. Although there was an empowerment impulse within Carbone that favored Puerto Ricans,³⁶⁵ it did not mean that he would share power

365. Some of it is revealed through his record, noted in Boyte, *Op. cit.*, pp. 159-163; Clavel, *Op. cit.*, *passim*; and Bach, *et. al.*, *Op. cit.* pp. 15-23; it also comes through in my own interviews with him and in the opinions of him of some in Hartford.

out of the kindness of his heart. Puerto Ricans had to exert pressure, challenges were necessary to access power. Puerto Ricans were faced with strategic differences and factionalism. Paradoxically, these divisions worked in their favor as they translated into a multiple set of pressures bearing on Carbone. Unity was provided by the goal. The factions involved represented the elements of what eventually became a new model for political action. "Eventually" is the key word here because as the process unfolded what was apparent was that Puerto Ricans still could not avoid the reach of Carbone's long arm.

In 1985, a threat to what came to be known as the Puerto Rican seat in the council, then held by Nancy Meléndez--who alternated between being a white-collar worker and welfare mother--served to unite Puerto Ricans behind the efforts of an invigorated PRPAC. It was not the type of Christian unity that many seek as they enter the political arena, but a unity fraught with conflict. For Puerto Ricans in Hartford 1985 was a Machiavellian moment. It is at this point that interest group mobilization becomes a permanent feature of the electoral strategy of Puerto Ricans, in a model whose features correlated with the style and approaches of the 1979 factions: backroom negotiation, of which María Sánchez was the ultimate practitioner; extra-partisan alliances, represented by Torres and Vargas, and community pressure, which was the contribution of the motley crew of populists, socialists, and community

people that were active in the city since 1970 and in 1977-79
came out in support of Vargas.

**Table 7 Estimated Population Growth
Puerto Ricans in Hartford, 1954-1970**

Year	U.S. Census	Local Estimate	% Change
1954	-	500	
1956	-	2,000	300
1957	-	3,000	50
1958	-	4,500	50
1959	-	6,000	33
1961	-	7,000	17
1969-70	8,543	20,000	186

Sources: The Hartford Courant; The Hartford Times (1958 only); U. S. Census Bureau. Census figures before 1970 not available.

Chapter 5 - Interest Group Political Mobilization: The Puerto Rican Political Action Committee of Connecticut

Introduction

In this chapter we show how the transition from interests to interest group was facilitated by ethnicity. Based on the premise that an important issue in incorporation is whether interests are articulated as political claims, we focus on political representation as the medium and outcome of that transition. We show how in order to expand political representation Puerto Ricans mobilized at two levels simultaneously: within and without partisan and governmental structures. Using three cases, we argue that while Puerto Ricans were reluctant to effect challenges within the party they were quick to organize in response to perceived threats to the physical and moral integrity of the community. These expressions of identity politics provided the substance of political mobilization in a search for respect and concrete political advantages. PRPAC emerged in the pursuit of such advantages as the most effective form of interest group mobilization. The chapter concludes by decoding Puerto Rican political mobilization to explain the emergence and swift access to power of Puerto Ricans in Hartford.

The Mary Heslin Vacancy

At the end of January 1975, an editorial in *La Prensa Gráfica* titled IT'S ABOUT TIME!, declared:

The Hispanic population in Hartford now exceeds 42 thousand.... In the recent state elections, many Hispanics contributed with their votes, and with their efforts as volunteers, campaign workers, to the Democratic landslide victory. The time has come for Nicholas Carbone and the Democratic Party to reciprocate. We are not asking for special favors. We are talking about political realities.³⁶⁶

Part of the political reality in 1975 was the fact that Puerto Ricans had never succeeded in obtaining representation working outside the Democratic machine. This the editor of *La Prensa Gráfica* was quick to emphasize. The opportunities provided by the Republican party had not been fruitful in Hartford's one-party system. Radical demand-protest had brought visibility and had forced some political responses but by its very nature could not accomplish much by way of representation.

The editorial argued that representation should reflect demographic changes that had made Puerto Ricans a substantial community. It suggested that they had paid their political dues, especially in support of Democrat Ella Grasso during the 1974 gubernatorial campaign, and thus should be given something in return. The editorial was directed at Nicholas Carbone, the recognized Democratic power broker in Hartford. While it argued that Puerto Ricans no longer needed to depend on Carbone's "good intentions," it recognized that in a process of brokered representation the last word was his. Some

366. "It's About Time!," Editorial, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 31 January 1975, p. 2.

within the community wondered how and when they would be able to bypass Carbone but no challenge occurred.

Instead, a group of community leaders met with councilman Richard Suisman to suggest Lionel DeJesus, a lawyer with Neighborhood Legal Services, to fill the Heslin vacancy. Suisman demurred. Allyn Martin, the only black in the council, proposed that a black be appointed. He suggested George Goodman, a columnist with the *Hartford Times*, and Thomas Harris of the Chamber of Commerce. Carbone declared that he would support the best qualified candidate regardless of race or ethnic origin.³⁶⁷

Meanwhile, a group of Puerto Rican women launched a new group. In March 1975, Diana Alverio, Doris Roldán, and Mildred Torres formed *Voto Boricua* (Puerto Rican Vote) to fight voter apathy in the Hispanic community throughout the state. "We congratulate the organizers of *Voto Boricua*," said Daniel E. Gold, senior vice-president and general manager of WSFB-TV Channel 3 of Hartford, on a TV editorial. "They are encouraging the Spanish-speaking people to become Connecticut voters. They are increasing their political power and they are helping to restore a most laudable tradition of political activism."³⁶⁸

367. David S. Barrett, "Puerto Rican Lawyer Pushed for Council Seat," *The Hartford Courant*, 23 January 1975, p. 68.

368. Transcript of WSFB-TV Channel 3 Editorial, 20-21 March 1975. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival

Although its organizers were based in Hartford, the group had a Middletown address and intended to register voters statewide. During the summer, notices were sent to community leaders, community groups, and organizations interested in conducting voter registration drives to come to a statewide meeting on 5 August 1975 at the Spanish American Development Agency in Bridgeport. The purpose was to formulate a strategy in preparation for a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss the obstacles to registration posed by local officials.

But Voto Boricua apparently was not enough. In July, Doris Roldán and sixteen other women representing seven towns throughout the state gathered at the YWCA in Hartford to form *Mujeres Unidas for Justice, Equality, and Reform (MUJER)*. The acronym *MUJER* means "woman" in Spanish and according to Roldán it reflected "the marriage and integration of two cultures, that of the Spanish and Anglo American."³⁶⁹ The group had non-partisan goals but was willing to work in coalition with partisan groups. Its objectives were political because, as Roldán put it, "it's about time we realized that politics affects all of us one way or another in our daily

Collection, Box 429.

369. "A Feminist-Humanist Organization," *MUJER* newsletter, 13 July 1975.

lives."³⁷⁰ They made Connecticut's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women their target and reduced initially ambitious goals to the single pursuit of Puerto Rican representation within the Commission.

Both groups emerged to fill perceived gaps. There were no other efforts focusing on voter registration or the specific needs of women. Others in the community were focusing on getting a seat on the city council. But having a Puerto Rican woman appointed to complete Heslin's term was not pursued as a strategy to address those needs.³⁷¹

By August, 1975, the Heslin vacancy was still open. Early that month a group of Puerto Ricans (all men) met with black leaders at the Comerieño, a Cafe on Walnut Street, to discuss what to do about filling the vacancy. Puerto Ricans made allegations that blacks were manipulating them. The attitude on both sides did not seem conducive to an alliance based on compromise. The meeting was called by black Senator Wilber Smith, then representing the 2nd District, and it ended with the Puerto Ricans publicly suggesting that blacks wanted to use them to serve their own agenda.³⁷² According to one of the Puerto Rican participants:

370. "Mujeres Unidas for Justice, Equality & Reform," *MUJER* newsletter, c. July 1976, p. 2.

371. Interview with Diana Alverio, 8 June 1993.

372. "Lideres Negros Buscan Alianza?," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 1 August 1975, p. 1.

The meeting broke apart because Wilber walked in and said...this is a political meeting not a social services meeting and then he looked at me. He didn't want me in the meeting. Félix Irizarry [another participant] blew up at him. And Wilber instead of letting it go kept going, saying "we don't have to get with you, you have to get with us, we came here first, you are behind us, until you guys understand what you have to do you're not going to get anyplace."³⁷³

Without a black/Puerto Rican alliance and with Puerto Rican efforts focusing on different courses of action, the Democratic party was able to choose a replacement for Heslin without paying heed to black or Puerto Rican needs.

The Heslin episode coincided with extra-partisan organizing but it did not provoke a concerted rush of political mobilization. Instead, it reflected the persistence of a pattern Puerto Ricans had followed since their earliest efforts to gain representation. Up until the 1969 riots they had worked diligently within the parties, mostly with Democrats, exchanging electoral support for limited gains. During the 1970s they began to organize outside the parties in challenges to the establishment, without altogether abandoning the previous strategy. As the community grew, layers of emerging action were added to existing layers of experience thus creating a more diverse, even if not entirely coherent, pattern of political action. Aside from the PLP and the PSP many left-of-center groups were created, some of which, like

373. Interview with Yasha Escalera, 21 February 1993. Like María Sánchez, Wilber Smith passed away before I was able to interview him.

Acción Progresista Puertorriqueña, created in 1967, *Hijos de Borinquen de Hartford*, formed around 1974, and the *Asociación de Trabajadores Agrícolas (ATA)*, in operation since the early 1970s, were part of the old layers and also added to the emerging one. Most straddled the anti-establishment/within-the-system political divide. ATA, for example, synthesized radical, community agency, and mainstream politics in the support it got from sources such as the PSP, the San Juan Center, and liberals within the Catholic church.

But the efforts of such groups had no bearing on the selection of a replacement for Heslin. Once the meeting at the Comerieño broke out, it was clear that if a black was selected it would not be at Puerto Rican expense. Yet Puerto Ricans could not influence the process on their own. Despite the militant tone of *La Prensa Gráfica's* editorial, Puerto Ricans did not put their money where their mouth was. No serious challenge was effected and as a result John Bailey's daughter, Barbara Kennelly, was appointed to fill the vacancy.

This episode was representative of the reluctance to openly confront the machine, not just with words but with action. Yet there were other instances in which Puerto Ricans were not shy about demand-protest activities. These typically involved perceived assaults to the moral and physical integrity of the community. The most prominent examples of this pattern of action were the mobilization following the 1975 redevelopment proposals of the Capitol Region Council of

Governments (CRCOG) and the Greater Hartford Process (GHP), and the protests over the 1978 publication of derogatory ethnic jokes about Puerto Ricans in a pornographic magazine based in New York.

Greater Hartford Process

The first casualties of post-war redevelopment in Hartford were the Italians when the construction of Constitution Plaza, conceived in 1957 and completed in 1962, obliterated their East Side neighborhood. Except for its residents, few lamented the destruction of Little Italy. Post hoc evaluations recognized that the ethnic enclave provided security and a sense of community to those who lived there.³⁷⁴ But in the contemporary public's mind this enclave was synonymous with urban poverty and decay. No matter how colorful, Little Italy filled with run-down tenements, small businesses, and pawnshops, and in the minds of Hartford's top corporate executives it had to go. Constitution Plaza was followed by the Windsor Street project, another initiative that forced the relocation of numerous citizens, mostly blacks.

Neither of these projects eliminated urban blight. Constitution Plaza won Hartford an "All American City" designation. Its complex of offices, retail stores, hotel rooms, and parking spaces was honored as a "monument to civic

374. Pawlowski, "Introduction...", *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

energy."³⁷⁵ To blacks and Puerto Ricans on the North End these symbols of successful redevelopment were also "a reminder of the gap between the rich and the poor in...[the] city."³⁷⁶ The Windsor Street project literally reinforced racial segregation by erecting a barrier of buildings between downtown Hartford and their neighborhoods.

By early 1969, executives from United Aircraft, Connecticut General Life Insurance, Aetna Life and Casualty, and Travelers Insurance formed the Greater Hartford Corporation, ostensibly to deal with the problems associated with decaying urban structures and suburban sprawl. In 1970 a subsidiary, the Greater Hartford Process, Inc., was created. By 1972 GHP had developed an ambitious \$800 million, 15-year plan to renovate Hartford. GHP's operational arm, the Greater Hartford Community Development Corporation, or "Devco," was in charge of managing GHP's integrated plan for 29 towns in the north-central area around Hartford.

Politically, the "Hartford Process" was inspired by the perceived need for a regional government for Greater Hartford. Because the city's mayor was not its chief executive officer, she was not eligible to serve on the regional council of elected officials. Hartford's representatives at the Capital Region Planning Agency were not appointed by the mayor or the

375. Janick, Jr., *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

376. *Ibid.*

city manager and thus could not act as their spokesmen for long-range planning. The absence of an authoritative voice speaking for Hartford on behalf of regional government handicapped the effort.³⁷⁷

Although the demise of GHP is complicated, it can be safely said that it ultimately failed by rejection--from voters fearful that in a regional scheme their power would be diluted by the suburbs³⁷⁸ and from citizens angry at the perceived elitism and utter disregard of GHP for their concerns (more on this below).

Pierre Clavel writes about GHP with great fondness for the large-scale social engineering that it represented. It was a "truly regional approach," programmed to build new towns, move as many as 20,000 people from their neighborhoods, to then use its profits to subsidize the revitalization of the North End. "Much attention was paid to social issues," he writes, "and Greater Hartford Process tried to work with the neighborhood groups in the North End." His explanation for GHP's failure is terse: "It fell victim to shifts in the political climate that made social engineering more difficult

377. The regional council of elected officials and the regional planning agency consolidated in 1973 to form the Capital Region Council of Governments. Hartford's voice within this body was still not that of its mayor.

378. Neal R. Peirce, *The New England States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), pp. 217-220 and Grant and Grant, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

and it succumbed to increasing interest rates."³⁷⁹ In Clavel's explanation of GHP's demise Puerto Ricans are invisible although they played an important part.

In 1971, Eugenio Caro left the Hartford Police Department and shortly thereafter went to work with American City Corporation, led by James Rouse, a mortgage banker turned urban developer. This group had been granted a \$350,000 contract from GHP to develop a methodology to conduct a "life-systems" and institutional study of Greater Hartford.³⁸⁰ Caro's job was to organize workshops and other activities in the Puerto Rican community. After this stint, Caro went to work for GHP. Peter Libassi, who in 1977 became a special assistant to HEW's secretary, John W. Gardner, was its chair. Shortly after leaving GHP, Caro circulated a copy of a GHP confidential memo, dated 20 November 1974, outlining a proposed "geopolitical or demographic strategy for the city."³⁸¹ Feeling that the contents of the memo were explosive, he submitted it to the board of directors of La Casa de Puerto Rico, of which he was a member. La Casa made the contents of the memo available to the press and a public outcry soon followed.

379. Clavel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

380. Coleman, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

381. Hartford Process Memo, 20 November 1974, Reprinted in *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, p. 7.

The memo read in part: "Puerto Rican immigration must be reduced. Efforts should be made to consolidate the welfare dependent elements of this population in Clay Hill and in eastern Frog Hollow, using Section 8 housing rehab to provide quality relocation resources in these areas and in the suburbs." Other sections suggested a policy of physical removal of low-income residents and segregation of resources to encourage the return of suburban residents to the city and prevent further middle-class flight. This included the selective allocation of education services, into areas where residents had the "financial ability to pull out" and away from the ghettos.³⁸²

This was not the first time that it had been said that the best Puerto Rican policy the city could adopt was one of containment and relocation. Understandably, Puerto Ricans were sensitive to "send them back to where they came from"-type innuendoes. Their leadership was not appeased by the softening effect of the word "quality" in the section proposing relocation resources; quality or not, these efforts were construed as "machinations that strike at the very root of our community's survival."³⁸³ According to Caro, La Casa de Puerto Rico quickly joined forces with others to mobilize the

382. Hartford Process Memo, *loc.cit.*

383. Open letter of Edna Negrón Smith to Olcott Smith, reprinted in *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, pp. 5-6.

community by showing that the Hartford Process "was not in the interests of the city's poor but a strategy to keep them in certain neighborhoods and to prevent others from coming into the city."³⁸⁴

Two days after the memo was made public, between 1,500 and 2,000 Puerto Ricans rallied to protest. On 21 January, they gathered at Sacred Heart church on the city's North Side and St. Peter's church on the South, thereon marching towards the recently inaugurated Civic Center, where they were joined by residents from neighboring communities. At the rally, spokespersons expressed their outrage at the memo's proposals which, in their view, represented "an infringement of our rights under the Constitution." While there was great anxiety and tension in the air, the rally ended with no confrontations. According to one account "the participants showed how much they respect law and order."³⁸⁵

Libassi tried to muffle the controversy by declaring the memo's proposals illegal, unconstitutional, and largely irrelevant. Both the NAACP and the Black Political Leadership of North Hartford repudiated the memo as a racist attack against blacks, Puerto Ricans, and poor people in general. The NAACP refused to give in to pressures from Puerto Ricans urging the resignation of blacks on the Hartford Process

384. Interview in Spanish with Eugenio Caro, 14 August 1992.

385. Calixto Torres, "Protestan Manifestaciones de Process," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, p. 1.

Board. The group claimed that such action would leave blacks and Puerto Ricans unrepresented within GHP. For its part the Black Political Leadership of North Hartford exonerated Libassi of any responsibility for the memo and strongly supported the continuation of GHP.³⁸⁶ The National Director of the Migration Division of Puerto Rico's Department of Labor, Rafael Torregrosa, expressed dismay at the memo's recommendations but found comfort in Libassi's admission that they were unconstitutional. He called for a better understanding of the role of migrants in American society and for GHP to demonstrate charity of spirit.³⁸⁷

Both reactions generated controversy and division between blacks and Puerto Ricans and among Puerto Ricans themselves. "The only way I can begin my analysis of the statement by the NAACP," wrote the editor of *La Prensa Gráfica*, Juan Fuentes, on 31 January 1975, "is by saying IT STINKS." The position taken by the black group was considered an insult to Puerto Ricans and a reiteration of black paternalism. As soon as the memo surfaced, the Puerto Rican members of the Hartford Process Board, Sarah Romany and Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas, resigned in protest. Puerto Ricans had taken the lead in the controversy and now blacks claimed that only they could insure

386. "Statement from NAACP" and "Senator's Smith's Statement," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, pp. 3, 6.

387. Rafael Torregrosa, "Our people are Here to Stay," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 10 February 1975, p. 8.

the representation of Puerto Rican interests at the Board, suggesting that Romany and Zayas, while there, did not count. "Thanks, but no thanks," said Fuentes, "we are capable people, we have well-prepared people that can help us with our problems."³⁸⁸

Other Puerto Rican leaders were aghast at the timidity of Torregrosa's protest. A PSP spokesperson charged that Torregrosa's concern with restrictions to Puerto Rican immigration was simply a sign of desperation, an expression of fear at the consequences of not being able to fulfill the plans of his government to ship one million Puerto Ricans to the United States by 1980. The PSP thought that both the message and the messenger were inadequate. Nothing short of a statement of protest from the Governor of Puerto Rico himself would suffice.³⁸⁹ Speaking for *La Casa de Puerto Rico*, Edna Negrón Smith declared: "An explanation is owed to the Hartford Community as a whole and irresponsible statements such as those voiced by Mr. Peter Libassi dismissing the significance of this memorandum cannot be tolerated."³⁹⁰

From the onset, the Hartford Process emphasized its concern with the quality of life in the city as a whole. This

388. Juan Fuentes, "Gracias NAACP," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, p. 2.

389. José LaLuz, "Racism, Hartford Process, La Historia de Una Conspiración," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 17 February 1975, p. 2.

390. Negrón Smith, *Op.Cit.*

concern was presented as somehow in contradiction with a focus on specific groups. According to Puerto Rican leaders, this was confirmation of GHP's reluctance to accept accountability.³⁹¹ Who spoke for the city as a whole? Theoretically it should have been City Hall, specifically its at-large representatives. But they were not seen as having a voice independent from GHP. To be sure, the council was not dominated by GHP but the two were, indeed, close.³⁹² Although the council was of little operational help to GHP,³⁹³ in some instances their relationship resembled that of interlocking directorships.³⁹⁴

The memo was not an off-the-wall proposal concocted by irresponsible staff. But the backlash against it was so strong that GHP's officers had no choice but to pretend that it was a fluke. A 1972 letter suggesting a financing mechanism for the redevelopment of North Hartford that would shelter the city from a public referendum was also portrayed in this way.³⁹⁵ Efforts were made by GHP and public officials to

391. Ibid.

392. Louise Simmons, *Labor and Neighborhood Organizing in the Context of Economic restructuring: Six Organizations in Hartford, Connecticut*, Ph.D. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February, 1991, p. 128.

393. Coleman, *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

394. v. "Councilman, Process, & CRCOG, Indicted by Feds.," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 10 February 1975, p. 1.

395. "Devco Proposed 'Lease-Back Arrangement' to the City," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, p. 1.

show that Hartford Process had formulated hundreds of ideas over the years and that it made no sense to single out the proposals in the memo and the 1972 letter. But to the minds of many these two documents revealed a consistency of anti-neighborhood purpose. The letter in particular was seen as evidence that GHP was intent on determining the fate of whole communities without the consent of their residents. GHP's secretive behavior, exposed by the press, certainly gave credence to this view. "For years we have suspected that illegal, exploitative, and racist plans were being put together behind closed doors," declared Edna Negrón Smith at a press conference in February. "Now we know it for a fact."³⁹⁶

The memo and the detachment with which it dealt with its subject was felt to be perverse. The rally held by Puerto Ricans was orderly but other responses were shrill. A member of the Hartford Board of Education, for example, suggested that the proposed policy of containment was comparable to the Nazi policy of confining Jews to ghettos.³⁹⁷ The Board decided to impose a communication ban on GHP that lasted for several years. The PSP argued that the memo was evidence of a conspiracy against Puerto Ricans orchestrated by the corporate sector in Hartford, its subsidiaries in Puerto Rico, and the

396. "Devco Sirve a Intereses Privados," *Loc.Cit.*

397. Open letter of Maggie W. Alston, printed in *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 31 January 1975, p. 2.

island's government. To the PSP, the Hartford Process brand of redevelopment was not a misguided strategy but a calculated attempt to destroy a bothersome national minority that refused to assimilate.³⁹⁸

Early in February, evidence of specific wrongdoing on the part of GHP was revealed. According to *La Prensa Gráfica*, a 1974 report prepared by the Office of Equal Opportunity of the Department of Housing and Urban Development had found that the CRCOG had violated provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. CRCOG had allowed GHP to exert undue influence in the selection of a national consulting firm headed by Anthony Downs, in disregard of a recommendation from its Technical Committee to hire a local 60 percent minority-owned firm. The GHP argument was that the recommendation of a local minority-owned firm known for its civil rights advocacy would make white suburban communities less likely to accept plans for fair housing. The report concluded that "program objectives with respect to minorities were defeated or substantially impaired" by CRCOG's "acquiescence to racial hostility in the structuring of the project and the consultant selection process."³⁹⁹ Puerto Ricans accused CRCOG and GHP of suppressing the report's findings and vowed to sustain their

398. LaLuz, *Op.Cit.*

399. "Councilman, Process, & CRCOG, Indicted by Feds.," *Loc.Cit.*

effort to convince GHP's financial backers to withdraw their support.

By the end of the month, the anti-GHP campaign took a satirical turn when a coalition of labor, community, and leftist groups led by Puerto Ricans awarded Process a so-called "Tory Award" for its "service to the rich and powerful in Hartford, its racist and undemocratic practices concerning the future immigration of Puerto Ricans into Hartford, and its secret meetings and conspiracies to bypass citizen participation." Members of the coalition intended to offer the award to Peter Libassi in his office at 100 Constitution Plaza. He was not present to receive it but they left it there nonetheless: a mock one-way ticket to Nova Scotia and a rail for GHP to leave Hartford.⁴⁰⁰

Pressure against GHP continued to mount and in March, blacks and Puerto Ricans began to mend fences. The black organization Blue Hills Civic Association unanimously voted to join Puerto Ricans in their repudiation of the proposals outlined in the GHP memo and in their request for a public meeting with GHP's Board. In a letter sent to the Chairman of the Board, the Association stated: "We believe that the Greater Hartford Process has the responsibility to prove by

400. "Process Presented Tory Award for Racist Practices," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 24 February 1975, p. 1.

actions its intentions toward the minority groups in the city of Hartford."⁴⁰¹

By the time the GHP memo was made public, the Hartford Process was severely handicapped. After spending millions of dollars in initial investments, its key projects had been shelved. Although repudiation of the memo was nearly universal, it had been made public by Puerto Ricans and thus they could legitimately lay claim to the straw that broke the camel's back. According to Neubeck and Ratcliff, "The controversy cost Hartford Process further legitimacy,"⁴⁰² and although Process continued to meander through Hartford's political landscape for several years, it was effectively killed in 1975.

Swank Magazine Incident

The Swank magazine incident followed the independent candidacy of Edwin Vargas. This episode generated a new instrument that, although more ecumenical than the PLP or the PSP, incorporated their nationalistic inclination. In a 1970 survey, Kernstock found that Puerto Ricans were willing to put aside ethnicity when it was expedient to do so.⁴⁰³ They identified with their peers but were not shy about supporting or seeking help from members of the out-group if that would

401. "Process Memo Affront to Hartford-BHCA," *La Prensa Gráfica*, (Hartford, CT), 7 March 1975, p. 1.

402. Neubeck and Ratcliff, *Op. cit.*, p. 324.

403. Kernstock, *Op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

help their cause. From this he proceeded to rule out ethnicity as a political factor. Five years later the Swank magazine affair showed that ethnicity was indeed a powerful mobilizing factor. This event set the stage for the creation of PRPAC and the crystallization of an effective form of identity politics that put Puerto Ricans in the political limelight.

In 1978 Puerto Ricans were confronted with the triple whammy of redevelopment, unemployment, and relative political invisibility. Although they continued to reside in the North End, the area around Park Street had already become recognized as the Puerto Rican enclave in Hartford. By September of that year community newspapers were openly speculating about the impact of governmental neglect, increasing evictions, suspicious fires, and subsequent demolition of buildings in and around Park Street. These features signalled the twisted course that redevelopment was beginning to take in Hartford. The Greater Hartford Process was on its last legs and what redevelopment activities remained had some of the trappings of a quasi-Faustian developmental scheme: the scale was not gigantic, the scope was not long-range, and the purpose was not integrative, but the desire to create something new was predicated on the senseless destruction of the old.⁴⁰⁴ In some cases, destruction served no creative purpose whatsoever.

404. v. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), pp. 74-76.

Puerto Ricans seemed to be just one step ahead of the bulldozers and the arsonists.

Regarding employment, a September editorial in the community newspaper *Qué Pasa* concluded: "The employment situation of Puerto Ricans has not improved."⁴⁰⁵ Between 1963 and 1972, the city had lost 26,400 manufacturing jobs, a reduction of 36 percent.⁴⁰⁶ These kinds of jobs, which Puerto Ricans not employed in farm work had come to occupy throughout the 50s and 60s, had been substituted in large part by positions created under the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). Now CETA jobs were being cut back drastically and Puerto Ricans were feeling a disproportionate impact.⁴⁰⁷

Redevelopment and unemployment were joined by the relative invisibility of Puerto Ricans in the political sphere and their low level of electoral participation. With hopes that it would encourage broader participation, Connecticut had made the party lever optional in 1965 (it was eliminated altogether through constitutional amendment in 1986). This

405. "Inseguridad Para Los Puertorriqueños," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), 2: 8 (September 1978), p. 3.

406. José E. Cruz, "Puerto Rican Elected Officials in the United States," in National Puerto Rican Coalition, 1993 *Directory of Puerto Rican Elected Officials*, (Washington, D.C.: NPRC, 1993), p. 6.

407. National Puerto Rican Coalition, *Assessing the Impact of Federal Cutbacks on Employment and Training Opportunities for Puerto Ricans, Summary of a Seven-City Study*, September 1983, p. 19.

change was supported overwhelmingly in Hartford. In 1967, partisan elections had been restored in the city. By appealing to both independent voters and to those that strongly identified with the political parties these changes should have favored political participation among Puerto Ricans. Also, the elimination in 1976 of literacy requirements to register should have encouraged higher registration rates among this group. Yet the low rate of electoral participation was recognized as the third problem still keeping Puerto Ricans down. The context was only partially favorable to participation. Table 8 shows how in voting districts with large numbers of Hispanic voters, with Puerto Ricans being nearly 90 percent of Hispanics, these were removed from the registration lists in disproportionate numbers. In 1990, in five out of the nine districts where 30 percent or more of the voting age population was Hispanic, the purging differential ranged from 5 to 10 percent. This no doubt blunted their participatory edge but within the community some simply exonerated Puerto Ricans from responsibility for their political behavior while others concluded that they were just apathetic.

Not all was gloom and doom, however. In June, the mood of the community was festive. Hartford's mayor, George Athanson, had made an appearance at the Park Street Festival to preside over an awards ceremony. Throngs of people had witnessed in jubilation the ordaining of Father Peter Rosazza, known

affectionately among Puerto Ricans as "Padre Pedro," as Bishop of Hartford. In July, Ella Grasso had made appearances before the San Juan Center's baseball league and the San Juan Center headquarters where she was given an effusive welcome by Yasha Escalera, the center's director, and community notables Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas and Andrés Vázquez. After her victory, the latter would go on to become the first Puerto Rican special assistant to the governor in the history of the state. In September, at the annual Puerto Rican parade held in Bridgeport, the Hartford delegation offered the participants a taste of Puerto Rican music. By mid-October community newspapers, labor and community activists, and local businesspeople had finished a voter education-registration campaign.

Such was the context in which the *Swank* magazine incident developed. In August 1978 the *New York* magazine published the following ethnic jokes:

Tell me the truth, said the man, would you allow your daughter to marry a Puerto Rican or a circus monkey? It depends, responded his friend, does the monkey work full-time?

Puerto Ricans really like to work. One opened up a jewelry store recently. The problem is he got caught by the police.

What do they call a beautiful woman in Puerto Rico?
A foreigner.

When a Puerto Rican woman says "my man" she means
"any man."

Why is it that Puerto Ricans don't commit suicide?
You cannot kill yourself jumping out a basement
window.

How do you count the number of Puerto Ricans in New
York? Count the number of basements and multiply
them by fifteen.

Why do Puerto Ricans wear pointy shoes? So they can
kill the roaches piled up in corners.

One hundred-fifteen Puerto Ricans died last
night...their bed broke.

Puerto Rico wants to be the 51st state. What should
its name be? The welfare state.⁴⁰⁸

If any community previously organized politically in
response to a joke, its history is hidden from view. This is
what Puerto Ricans did in Hartford. The PSP leadership asked
Caro to organize a response. "You're the only one who can
start something here," he was told by the president of the
party's local chapter. After 22 years in Hartford, Caro had
gained much recognition in the community through the baseball
leagues, his work as a policeman, and his involvement with La
Casa de Puerto Rico. Most recently he had played a key role in
the fight against the Greater Hartford Process. In October, he
called a community meeting and 120 people attended. "If
anybody is interested in following up on this issue," Caro
told the gathering, "please sign." Twenty-four of those
present signed-up and thus the Committee of 24 was born.⁴⁰⁹

408. "El Insulto de Swank," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), 2: 10
(November 1978) p. 7.

409. Interview in Spanish with Eugenio Caro, 14 August 1992.

On November 7, the night Ella Grasso was re-elected, the Committee organized a march and rally which gathered over 400 people. It was called the "Dignity March" by the community press, and participants protested in front of City Hall and the headquarters of the Democratic party. The group not only condemned the racist tone of the jokes but also demanded better coverage of Puerto Rican issues from the local media and better economic opportunities from the local government.

The marchers held signs that read: DOWN WITH PREJUDICE; CHANNEL 3 YOU'RE JUST LIKE SWANK; EQUALITY OF RIGHTS FOR RICH AND POOR; OUR WOMEN ARE DECENT; BORICUAS UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED. At the Democratic headquarters, they were met by a dumbfounded group of campaign workers who at first thought the crowd was celebrating Grasso's victory. After all, Puerto Ricans had worked very hard for her during the campaign. Caro explained the real issue and told them that the crowd wanted Grasso to condemn Swank magazine. "We are not here to congratulate you or to tell you that we are on your side," said Caro, "We are here to tell you that we are tired of being used and tired of the status quo. We want Ella and we want to tell her that we want dignity not demagoguery; we want employment and housing. We want to tell her that we are tired of being humiliated."⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰. "La Marcha de la Dignidad," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 2: 10 (November 1978), p. 3.

In retrospect, one is forced to wonder how frustrated with their government Puerto Ricans were in 1978 that they felt the need to pin such substantial demands onto a protest about ethnic jokes. On the other hand, one could interpret the spin as indicative of tactical cleverness. By turning an ethnic issue into a political issue, the Puerto Rican leadership had seen an opportunity to broaden and deepen the scope of conflict and had taken it. Or alternatively, what now seems a smart move was simply a gut reaction. This is how one of the members of the Committee of 24 put it: "It was the straw that broke the camel's back. Combined with the lack of housing, employment, and education, the insults became intolerable. We just could not let it pass without doing something about it."⁴¹¹ In any case, when the governor-elect arrived on the scene the crowd jeered, waving signs and Puerto Rican flags.

There was a second demonstration on 13 November and, according to Caro, the Committee decided to take advantage of the momentum generated by the protests to work on social issues and to keep an eye on City Hall. "That's when we declared war on [councilman] Robert Ludgin because he was against us. Every two weeks we would bring 500 or 600 [people] to City Hall--even the gangs participated."⁴¹² Recalling

411. "El Comite 24 un Año Despues," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 2: 8 (December 1979), p. 8.

412. Interview in Spanish with Eugenio Caro, 14 August 1992.

what surely was an exciting time Caro inflated the number of people attending the protests organized by the Committee. Some have suggested that the rash of protests that followed the Swank incident were encouraged by Ludgin and others within the council as part of their ongoing feud with Carbone; anything that made Carbone look bad, such as frequent picketing at City Hall, strengthened their cause. But this was just coincidental. The timing of Puerto Rican unrest no doubt hurt Carbone. But its causes--displacement due to redevelopment, unemployment, lack of representation in the council, and a general sense that they got no respect--were neither artificial nor manipulated by the council.

It is important to note that the Committee of 24 was not the only group of Puerto Ricans active at the time. Also, while the Swank magazine incident did help unify the community, it did not resolve the conflicts and tensions that had previously prevented unified action. Puerto Ricans continued to be divided along partisan, organizational, and ideological lines. The legitimacy of community leaders who "after assuming their positions forget about our people"⁴¹³ continued to be questioned. Furthermore, while Puerto Ricans appeared to respond with relative ease in moments of critical urgency, they had trouble sustaining the momentum that follow-up required.

413. Roberto Laboy, "Nosotros, Puertorriqueños," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 2: 11 (December 1978), p. 6.

For example, by December of 1978, the group Vecinos Unidos, which had been active for some time around housing and redevelopment issues affecting Puerto Ricans on Park Street, seemed tired. They had recently walked out of a meeting with business and city officials, disheartened by the unwillingness of all parties to take responsibility for the problem at hand. Luz Santana, an organizer with the group, had asked why Pratt and Whitney-United Technologies Corporation had created an employment training program for suburban residents while leaving inner city Puerto Ricans out in the cold. The corporate representative's response was: "That program was created and developed by the Chamber of Commerce, not by us. We have no need for a program aimed exclusively at one group." To this, the representative from the Chamber of Commerce rejoined that "the situation" was not their problem. The city's representative, Nicholas Carbone, shot back: "Why is it that you have put Hartford aside?"⁴¹⁴

The group had also sponsored a community meeting with the Director of Hartford's Housing Authority and with the cooperation of WLVH, the Latino radio station, it had been advertised for over a week. At the meeting, the organizer wondered why the hundreds of Puerto Ricans living in sub-standard housing were not there. "An outsider," he later wrote, "would have concluded that the Puerto Rican community

414. "Confrontan Cámara," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 2: 11 (December 1978), p. 3.

has no need for better housing."⁴¹⁵ *Vecinos Unidos* did not disappear in 1978; but by 1983 an ideological conflict finally took its toll and the group divided.⁴¹⁶ Given the contrast between the upswing generated by Swank and the apparent slowdown of mobilization around other issues, one is forced to wonder whether Puerto Ricans needed anything other than ethnic slurs to mobilize as they did.

By the end of 1979, the Committee of 24 was struggling to broaden its membership to counter attacks that it was an elite group that gave access only to carefully chosen people. A spokesperson for the group declared that the Committee was open to anyone while warning that only those who were willing to work long and hard were actually welcome.⁴¹⁷ According to Caro the Committee dissolved due to ideological clashes within the group. The group had been able to sustain its momentum once the moment of crisis that prompted its formation had subsided, but it could not ultimately squash the splintering forces threatening it from the inside. The group, however, did not go out with a whimper. It left in its trail a record of sustained protest, sharp denunciations, and angry demands; its example testified to the possibility of unified action.

⁴¹⁵. Laboy, *Op. cit.*

⁴¹⁶. v. "Nueva Organización: Vecinos Unidos en Acción," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 21 December 1983, p. 11.

⁴¹⁷. "El Comité 24..."

Shortly after the Mildred Torres episode (i.e. getting her on the council after Barbara Kennelly's resignation in 1978), Caro issued a call for the formation of a coalition of groups to work for increased political representation independently of the political parties. The objectives of the coalition would be to increase the level of voter registration and voter turnout, identify candidates, and provide a forum for voter education.⁴¹⁸ This was, in essence, the concept that later crystallized as PRPAC. In the absence of a reform movement of significance in Hartford, the challenge this new vehicle would face was how to force, from the outside, the Democratic machine to be more responsive to Puerto Ricans on the basis of a self-described independent and progressive platform; in facing this task ethnicity would prove to be a decisive factor.

Prelude to PRPAC

In November 1979 Nicholas Carbone's ten-year reign in Hartford came to an end. Carbone was a radical voluntarist who believed that anything was possible through politics. His regime was a hard-driven attempt to bypass the institutional weaknesses of city government--at-large representation, low-pay for councilpersons, minority party representation by statute, and a ceremonial mayor. While some have argued that these features have buttressed the power of the corporations

⁴¹⁸. "Nueva Coalicion..."

to dictate policy,⁴¹⁹ in Carbone's case they provided openings for the enactment of broad-based redistributive policies through a complex model of political entrepreneurship that combined an autocratic style, a populist ideology, and a neo-corporatist attempt to rally grassroots support for specific policies. Carbone's linkage and tax policies promoted downtown development as a way of enhancing revenues, but they failed to arrest neighborhood decay. This prompted the formation of a neighborhood-based challenge slate in the 1979 city council race, led by Mayor George Athanson and Councilman Robert Ludgin. Ironically, Athanson and Ludgin were supported by the same forces Carbone was most keen on helping--blacks, Puerto Ricans, white-ethnic neighborhoods--in part because they continued to feel left out politically, in part because Hartford has come to develop, in contrast with one of its long-standing traditions, a strong distaste for autocratic, long-term incumbents. After having him at City Hall for ten years, people were tired of Carbone and felt that he had too much power.

To balance their slate, Athanson and Ludgin needed a Puerto Rican. With help from María Sánchez and José Garay, the Republican who had lost his bid for city council in 1977, they found their candidate in Antonio González, a Democrat from Sánchez' circle who owned a grocery store and was well-known

419. Neubeck and Ratcliff, *Op. cit.*, p. 308.

in the community.⁴²⁰ Because González was not the best candidate, many could not understand why he had been chosen to run. The reason was simple: ethnicity outweighed qualifications. Also, there was no one else available. Says Garay:

They wanted me and we had many meetings. I had until February 28 to switch parties so that I could be on the Democratic slate during the primary. I was not convinced I should do it. I told them "I want to do something but this is not my party. But I'll get you a candidate." I talked to Jerry Zayas and he declined. I talked to Olga Torres and she said no. I talked to other people to help me find someone willing to go against Carbone. In the end we had no choice but Tony González.⁴²¹

González might not have been the best choice but in the September primary he defeated Mildred Torres, the Puerto Rican incumbent, by a little over a thousand votes. In 1980, however, the big news about him was that he had been found to be married to two women without ever having divorced. This made him liable to criminal charges of bigamy and more importantly, from a political point of view, it threatened to destabilize Athanson's coalition, which quickly became dominated by Ludgin.

420. Interview with Antoinette Leone Ruzzier, 12 August 1992; interviews in Spanish with José Garay, 14 August 1992; and Juan Fuentes, 1 February 1993.

421. Interview in Spanish with José Garay, 14 August 1992.

At the council it became apparent that González was way in over his head.⁴²² He was not prepared to lead but was ready to follow. He had a gut feeling about certain issues but even on those he could not articulate policy positions and had to depend on his allies.⁴²³ Councilman Ludgin, who succeeded Carbone in the powerful deputy mayor position, did not mind; González' vote was in his pocket and he needed it so badly that he was one of the few willing to overlook González' growing reputation as a wife batterer and then the bigamy charge. "These things happen," he declared, "I don't think González acted in bad faith."⁴²⁴

Bad faith or not, the revelation of bigamy sealed González' political future. The following year he "chose" not to run and Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas was nominated by the Democratic party in his stead.

By April 1981, several individuals were being suggested as candidates for González' seat, including Mike Borrero, a professor at UCONN, Yasha Escalera, then Special Assistant to Governor William O'Neill, and Alberto Ibargüen, then a vice president at Hartford National Bank. A fringe candidate, Antonio Santiago, also surfaced. Two separate voter

422. Interview with Antoinette Leone Ruzzier, 12 August 1992; interview in Spanish with José Garay, 14 August 1992.

423. v. Juan Daniel Brito, "Primarias Demócratas," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 8 September 1983, p. 11.

424. "Acusan de Bigamia a Concejal Hispano," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) July 1980, p. 1.

registration campaigns were also unfolding, one led by Alfredo Rodríguez, who had been associated with the 1974 effort on behalf of Ella Grasso, and another spearheaded by the Concilio Latinoamericano Para el Avance Laboral (Labor Council for Latin American Advancement), an AFL-CIO organization locally headed by Edwin Vargas and José LaLuz.

On 28 July, the Hartford Democratic town committee met at Hartford High. Three hundred Democrats--including voting members and guests--attended the convention where Jerry Zayas won the endorsement over the candidacy of Mike Borrero 38 votes against nine. Zayas' name had not been mentioned in the community press but he was favored by María Sánchez and Mildred Torres. Despite her defeat by González in 1979, Torres still had influence over Democratic town committee members. She and María Sánchez got the party leadership to go back on a promise to Edwin Vargas that Borrero would replace González.

Vargas, then president of the Greater Hartford Labor Council, criticized the nomination because of Zayas's employment with Northeast Utilities. Zayas declared not to be worried about the attack from Vargas but clarified that he had been a community activist long before working for this company. "For ten years the community has known me and my work through the Puerto Rican Parade, and as director of the Spanish American Center," he said.⁴²⁵ Borrero and Santiago

425. "Comite de la Ciudad Endosa Candidatos," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) July-August 1981, p. 8.

were also critical and pledged to run in a primary as independents. Santiago criticized the town committee for choosing Zayas "behind the community's back." None of this amounted to much. Zayas was easily elected with 11,356 votes.

Parallel to the Puerto Rican drama, the Democratic convention witnessed an even more significant power play. Blacks had sought the endorsement for mayor of Thirman Milner, a two-term former state representative, who lost it to incumbent Athanson. In September, Athanson defeated Milner in a primary. Milner successfully challenged the result in court and easily rode to victory in the November election with overwhelming support from blacks and Puerto Ricans. This was a first in Hartford's history and a largely symbolic but important victory for blacks.

Within the Puerto Rican community, Milner got support from Borrero and his allies. Since the Democrats had "double-crossed" Borrero, Edwin Vargas and others encouraged Puerto Ricans to support Milner as a way of paying them back in-kind. Milner's bid was assisted by local appearances from Puerto Rican Congressman Robert García who came to Hartford invited by the ad hoc group, organized by Borrero, Puerto Ricans and Hispanics for Political Progress. During his appearances García emphasized the need for mutual support among blacks and Puerto Ricans. This note was echoed by others. Thus, even though Milner did not have a close relationship with the community, his candidacy appealed to Puerto Ricans because he

was a black "outsider" whose challenge gave them vicarious satisfaction.

After the election, in a sober yet optimistic editorial, *Qué Pasa* declared that with Milner's election the importance of an alliance between blacks and Hispanics had been demonstrated. "The black community has recognized that Hispanic support was crucial to Milner's election," and further, "Gone are the days when artificial barriers separated these two communities. Gone are the days when Puerto Ricans and Hispanics used racial epithets to refer to blacks. The time has come for these groups to join hands and face the challenges of the future."⁴²⁶

Puerto Rican support was not of the *quid pro quo* type--this was acknowledged by *Qué Pasa* and by Milner himself. Borrero was praised for giving his support without asking anything specific in return. Incredibly, this was seen--by *Qué Pasa* at least--as a sign of political maturity; it was the long-term vision of progress for all, not the short-term spoils of victory, that were seen as important.

Perhaps this was mere rhetoric intended to blunt the accusation that Milner's mayoralty would be tilted in favor of his supporters. In response to these attacks Milner was quick to declare that he would be "the mayor of Hartford, not of one

426. "Las Posibilidades de Trabajo Conjunto entre la Comunidad Negra e Hispana," Editorial, *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) November 1981, p. 7.

specific group."⁴²⁷ Puerto Ricans would soon find out about the veracity of this claim. For the time being, a defeated and vengeful Ludgin continued to be the main source of concern for Puerto Rican leaders, as he unleashed a probe of the San Juan Center. Ludgin was concerned that CBDG monies were being used to organize tenants and to lobby for more housing. More specifically, his intent was to punish the Center for its role in the overnight occupation of City Hall by a group of homeless Puerto Ricans during the Thanksgiving holiday.⁴²⁸

But this was not all. Two other key concerns were articulated: the low number of registered voters and the never-ending factionalism among competing elites. With approximately 6,000 registered voters, Puerto Ricans were 12 percent of the electorate. But According to Borrero, voting age Puerto Ricans were a potential 38 percent of the voters. Thus, efforts to increase registration and turnout were seen as key in making them a powerful voting bloc. According to Borrero, "we can be the swing vote in Hartford, if we use our votes intelligently and work in unity."⁴²⁹ Next to

427. "Historico Triunfo de Milner," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) November 1981, p. 1.

428. Juan Brito and Pedro Espinoza, "Hotel Hilton ¿Solucion o Burla?" *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) November-December 1981, p. 3; C.L. Smith Muniz, "Ludgin Calls for Probe of San Juan Center," *The Hartford Courant*, 15 December 1980, p. C1; Interview with Max Fernández, 6 August 1991.

429. Mike Borrero, "A Propósito de las Pasadas Elecciones," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) January 1982, p. 15.

Borrero's statement, the new director of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's office in Hartford wrote: "We must take a hard look at our situation. We've had enough personality conflicts...It's about time that the so-called leaders begin to work together in a broad-based coalition...Let's drop our pet peeves and hidden agendas."⁴³⁰

Elite competition was certainly a problem, but in addition to that Puerto Ricans did not seem to be able to get a grip on the structure of representation. By the summer of 1982, Zayas had left the council. Once before he had left a position of importance within the community with disastrous effects. Shortly after Zayas' resignation as director of the Spanish American Center to take a position with Northeast Utilities, the Center began to experience serious difficulties which jeopardized the fulfillment of its mission. For this Zayas could not be blamed except that his departure, then and now, was a sign of how difficult public service was for the members of the Puerto Rican community's precarious elite.

Zayas had been politically involved since the early 1970s. Before running for the council he had been the first Puerto Rican to sit on the city's Redevelopment Commission, a gift Puerto Ricans had received from above during Carbone's regime. He had also been a member of the Board of the Greater

430. Carlos Piñeiro, "Mis Felicitaciones," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) January 1982, p. 15.

Hartford Process. Yet, in retrospect, he admitted to being ill prepared for the council job.

Zayas: I have to be frank with you. With all my contacts and experience I was still not fully aware of how demanding the job of a councilperson can be, that is, if you want to be effective. The needs of our community were simply overwhelming. The potential for voter frustration, and actual dissatisfaction, was very high. I also wanted to change my personal life. I had been so involved that I had neglected my family, so I wanted to rectify that.⁴³¹

At the time, councilpeople did not get paid enough to be full-time representatives, and this must have also been a factor in his decision.⁴³²

Before leaving his post, Zayas recommended Olga Torres as his successor. Several others within the community began to eye the seat and a meeting was held at *Aquí me Quedo*, a Puerto Rican restaurant, to manage the emerging factions and to strategize. Yasha Escalera was a key player in this process.

Escalera: When Jerry resigns here's where the problem comes up because we all agreed that we were going to go through a process to deal with the vacancy for Jerry's position and that's really where [councilmen Frank] Borges and Rudy Arnold cut a deal and put in Olga Torres.

Interviewer: Who did they cut a deal with?

Escalera: With Olga, because they had the votes. We wanted to go through a community process. They said [to her] you don't have to go through a community process, it's the council that decides. So we felt,

431. Interview in Spanish with Gerardo "Jerry" Zayas, 10 August 1992.

432. In 1989, pay for councilpersons was raised from \$4,000 to \$15,000 a year, still a negligible amount.

we [meaning] the people that [were] active politically, myself and Carmen Amore, Nancy [Meléndez] it was probably ten or twelve of us. We met at Aquí Me Quedo I remember that day. And there were three or four of us whose names were on the hopper for the seat.

Interviewer: But this was just a network of people, not a formal group.

Escalera: Right, there was not a formal group. CHAD was now formalized at the state level but at the local level there were still some divisions going on. Everybody's kinda jockeying to get some political thrust.

Interviewer: Were there any meetings with Borges and Arnold concerning this issue?

Escalera: Yeah, we all put together a meeting. We told them what we wanted to do but the problem was that we all agreed that was what we were going to do at lunch. We [then] went to a meeting at 5:00 p.m. [and] Borges basically called Olga and said I've got the votes for you. If you want to wait two weeks do what you want but we got the votes and we are going to do it tonight.⁴³³

Torres succeeded Zayas. By the end of the term, she decided to run for the 1983-85 council. Although she was endorsed by the Democratic party, she rejected the nomination. She felt that the Democratic slate needed more Puerto Rican representation and did not want to be used as a token by the party. Thus she chose to run with a challenge slate of labor leaders and community activists which included Edwin Vargas. As a result, Torres's original allies, still smarting over her decision to bypass the "community selection process" in 1982, withdrew their support.

433. Interview with Yasha Escalera, 21 February 1993.

Originally the challenge slate included Nancy Meléndez-- at the time she was Director of the New England Farm Workers Council--as candidate for the Board of Education. Although Meléndez had committed herself she had doubts. Prodded by María Sánchez she began to consider deserting the challengers to run with the endorsed Democrats. According to Sánchez, if Meléndez didn't the seat that Puerto Ricans had secured in 1979 would be lost. Escalera added:

We [he and Sánchez] talked with Nancy about running. Nancy called me and all I told her was "Nancy if you are going to do this you have no private life. Don't do it just for the glory." She said she understood and then I went away. She said I don't know if I'm going to do it and that's when I left and then the next day, boom!, they pushed it, she went through; María convinced her [to run with the Democrats for city council].⁴³⁴

At the November election, the challenge slate was defeated. Olga Torres lost but Nancy Meléndez was elected and the Puerto Rican seat on the council was kept. Puerto Ricans ended badly divided. María Sánchez and her minions were disappointed and angry at Torres for "dissing" the Democrats. The challengers, which included Edwin Vargas and (behind the scenes) José LaLuz, felt betrayed by Meléndez, who did not bother to tell them she had reconsidered her earlier commitment. Before long, however, Meléndez-- facing problems of her own at the council--would become the rallying point for a coalition of forces that crystallized as a fledgling PRPAC.

434. *Ibid.*

The PRPAC

Permutations of a Concept

At this point it is necessary to review the various permutations of the concept that evolved into PRPAC in 1985. In 1976 Andrés Vázquez tried to organize a statewide Democratic club with a strong base in Hartford as a vehicle for the 1978 Ella Grasso campaign. This effort did not go very far. The embryonic concept of PRPAC emerged in 1977 with the independent candidacy of Edwin Vargas. The next year, the stalwarts of this campaign, calling themselves the Puerto Rican Political Action Committee, outlined a process to guide the selection of a Puerto Rican to fill the expected Kennelly vacancy at the council. In 1979 Eugenio Caro, using the Committee of 24 as a model, advanced the idea of PRPAC in his call for the formation of an independent, progressive coalition to promote voter education and to seek political representation. Also in 1979, Cecilia LaLuz referred to a group named *Caucus Político Hispano* whose purpose was to insure the grassroots involvement of citizens in the governmental process. In her *Qué Pasa* column "Apuntes Políticos," LaLuz argued that while it was fine for different groups with various strategies and ideologies to co-exist, efforts should focus on penetrating the Democratic Party.⁴³⁵ In 1981, the Spanish Democratic Club was formed

435. Cecilia LaLuz, "Apuntes Políticos," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 2: 6 (June 1979), p. 5.

as a vehicle to achieve unity among community leaders and party regulars. Its main purpose was to gain recognition from the Democratic party. Some of its members proceeded to form, also in 1981, the Puerto Rican Democratic Club of Greater Hartford, which came together to support the candidacy of Jerry Zayas, presided over by Olga Torres. Competing with this group was the Puerto Ricans and Hispanics for Political Progress. This was essentially a vehicle for the failed candidacy of Mike Borrero. Once Borrero assumed the direction of the National Puerto Rican Forum, it faded from view. All these groups had overlapping memberships.

The closest of these to the 1985 PRPAC, in terms of membership, goals, and structure, was the Puerto Rican Democratic Club of Greater Hartford. "We are called the Puerto Rican Democratic Club," read the minutes of its 14 December 1981 meeting at Manny's Cafe on Park Street, "yet we are not affiliated with any political party." The minutes of its next meeting, held at the offices of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico on 17 December 1981, refer to the group as the Puerto Rican Political Action Club.

The instrument that developed in 1985 was all of these initiatives and something else. Like a newborn infant, it incorporated various "family" traits while having characteristics of its own. It was a brand-new entity grounded in the experience and resources of a succession of preceding efforts. The actors were not necessarily aware of the genesis

of their initiative nor of the continuity between past and present. They could not, like the individual who delves into his past, look at photographs in a family album to establish the resemblance. It is only in retrospect that the links are apparent.

The Trouble with Nancy

In 1984, Edwin Vargas told a reporter from *Qué Pasa* that so long as Puerto Rican representatives maintained links with the big corporations they would not be able to faithfully articulate the interests of the community. In his view, political virtue correlated with grassroots support. Because she was employed by a corporation, Nancy Meléndez, said Vargas, failed to meet that standard.⁴³⁶ Others felt that Meléndez deserved kudos for her council resolutions addressing housing, education, and employment issues. Early in 1984 she had nominated Mildred Torres and Ramón Pacheco, a Puerto Rican lawyer, for the Personnel and Redevelopment Commissions respectively. This was considered by some "a taste of the good things yet to come from the new Puerto Rican representative."⁴³⁷

436. Tony Hernández, "Edwin Vargas: Líder Sindical y Activista Puertorriqueño," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 24 February-18 March 1984, p. 3.

437. "Mildred Soto y Ramón Pacheco Nominados a Posiciones en el Gobierno Municipal," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) 15 April-1 May 1984, p. 1.

Within the council Meléndez clashed almost immediately with black rookie councilman Charles Mathews over the appointment of a new city manager. A Puerto Rican candidate had emerged during the selection process and the rumor was that he was gay. According to Yasha Escalera: "Charlie Mathews came and told a group of us that no way that he was going to support a Puerto Rican that was gay, because that wasn't good for us...I don't know [whether] that was the issue but basically that's when Nancy decides that she [is not going to support Mathews]. And at this point Nancy is just crazy enough that nobody is really sure where she is."⁴³⁸ The record shows that Mathews's rift with Meléndez was over the appointment of a black city manager which the latter did not favor; the gay Puerto Rican issue did not make it to the papers. Her vote was crucial and by refusing it to Mathews, she made possible the selection of Italian Alfred Gatta.

Escalera: By this time Nancy is beginning to have a lot of problems too. She has no job, she was one of the best campaigners that I've worked with. But when she had to be in that position now it gets a little more detailed and I think it was difficult for her to deal with the pressure. She was constantly putting herself in very controversial roles and taking stands that put her in a central position but when the pressure came she had difficulty dealing with what she had done. Eventually she left and went to Florida.⁴³⁹

438. Interview with Yasha Escalera, 21 February 1993.

439. *Ibid.*

Before leaving Hartford, Meléndez decided she would run for a new term.

In 1985, councilmen Mathews and Frank Borges rebelled against Democratic town chair Jim Crowley and ran a challenge slate in a primary. Hartford had a black mayor and two black councilmen and yet Mathews argued that blacks were excluded from the so-called four pillars of power in the city. Gatta was the city manager, the treasurer was Pete Kinsella, Irish, the deputy mayor was Alphonse Marotta, Italian, and the corporation counsel was Richard Goldstein, Jewish.

Mathews' argument was that blacks were one-third of the city and therefore deserved a corresponding share in the power structure. In his view, at least one of the "pillars of power" should be in African-American hands and there should be more blacks in the council. According to Edwin Vargas the Puerto Rican leadership had no problem with this concept at the time. But they did not support Mathews because of his attempt to take over the Puerto Rican seat occupied by Nancy Meléndez. Also, Mathews and Borges were opposed to linkage policies, low-income housing, and were seen as mouthpieces for developers and the big corporations. Puerto Ricans thus sided with party boss Jim Crowley and the Democratic machine.

Vargas: Charlie Mathews and Frank Borges were riding high on the North End. Their cause [for black representation] was just but they made the fatal mistake of trying to replace Meléndez with Abe Giles' son, [Radames] who...was born of a

Puerto Rican mother, but culturally was black.⁴⁴⁰

Mathews' strategy was to run a slate composed of three blacks from the North End and three whites from the South End, cutting off the Puerto Ricans. "We were sympathetic with Mathews but we didn't like the idea of black power at Puerto Rican expense," Vargas said.⁴⁴¹

As a result of a conversation between Eugenio Caro and José LaLuz, a leadership meeting was organized to discuss the situation. In a moment of rare unity, all the factions represented came together in support of Meléndez. This was remarkable given the mixed reviews of her performance and the profound aversion of her that the likes of Vargas and LaLuz felt. But radicals and conservatives, party regulars and outsiders, the old-guard and the Young Turks, all jumped onto the Meléndez bandwagon demanding not just the preservation of the Puerto Rican seat but also a second seat in the council. At a press conference widely covered by the local media, José LaLuz declared: "We have witnessed the growth of our community and at this time rather than reducing our participation it might be more appropriate to think that we deserve at least

440. Interview with Edwin Vargas, Jr. 30 July 1991.

441. Ibid.; v. also "Nancy Meléndez Va A La Reección," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) July 1985, p. 3; Juan Daniel Brito, "Comité de la Ciudad Apoya Candidatura de Meléndez," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) July 1985, p. 16.

two seats in the council."⁴⁴² Also, in a joint article, Vargas and LaLuz called for black and Puerto Rican unity. They pointed out that Puerto Ricans had made possible the election of Hartford's first black mayor in its history. They warned against divisions fostered by inter-group competition for resources such as had doomed black-Hispanic coalitions in New York and Chicago.⁴⁴³

Within the Democratic party, support for Meléndez was spearheaded by Democrats Working Together, a name chosen to project and exploit an image of unity vis-à-vis the divisiveness created by Mathews' challenge. Puerto Rican support coalesced around an invigorated PRPAC. In May, group leaders met with Mayor Milner in an attempt to ease the tensions between blacks and Puerto Ricans. The point they emphasized was that their attack against Charlie Mathews should not be interpreted as an attack against the black community.

Within PRPAC a campaign committee was established. Its division of labor reflected the character of the campaign's unity. It was as follows: Carmen Amore, a business leader, supervised the registration of new voters; José LaLuz, formerly with the PSP, handled the press; Mildred Torres, a

442. "Apoyo a Nancy Melendez," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) April 1985, p. 1.

443. Edwin Vargas, Jr. and José LaLuz, "The People of Hartford Address the Visiting Mayors," *The Hartford Courant*, 18 April 1985, p. D9.

white-collar worker with Aetna and current PRPAC president, acted as treasurer; and Edwin Vargas, a labor leader, headed the campaign. Previously, Vargas had declared Meléndez unfit to represent the best interests of Puerto Ricans; now he was enlisting support from the Hartford Federation of Teachers, from the schools superintendent, and other individuals in her behalf. One of his talking points for a meeting held on 15 May reads: "Discussion of need to keep unity of group led by Nancy Meléndez. Don't allow others to divide us, let's keep our differences of opinions [sic] among each other. Try to anticipate controversial issues ahead of time if possible and discuss them in the group honestly."⁴⁴⁴

At the convention in July, Meléndez obtained the endorsement of the party courtesy of Jim Crowley and his supporters. In September, Mathews and his slate ran against the endorsed candidates in a primary. The endorsed Democrats easily defeated the challengers. Although the primary victory was almost synonymous with a victory in November, Meléndez' supporters went all out in their efforts to get out the vote. They provided child-care, transportation, and literally got voters out of bed to make sure they went to the polls, in some cases waiting for them while they dressed.⁴⁴⁵ Meléndez was

444. Edwin Vargas, Jr., Xerox of talking points, meeting of 15 May 1985.

445. "Getting out Vote Means Doing it All," Xerox of news clipping, 1985.

re-elected. It was the first time since 1979 that the same Puerto Rican representative had served a full-term and gained a second chance at the council.

The Aftermath: Legitimacy and Success

PRPAC was not created in 1985 but it was in that year that the group crystallized as the expression of an interlocking model of political mobilization, that is, one incorporating bargaining, demand-protest, and extra-partisan alliances. When, in October, the group organized the relief effort in response to a mudslide in a small town in Puerto Rico it was recognized beyond the Puerto Rican community as a legitimate organization, not just for political purposes but for humanitarian purposes as well. From PRPAC, Nancy Meléndez and Peter Ayala, who joined in 1984 and then became its treasurer, led the statewide effort. They formed an ad hoc vehicle, the *Comité de Auxilio a Puerto Rico*, which collected nearly \$250,000 to help the families of the 180 people that died as a result of the disaster.⁴⁴⁶

Between 1985 and 1990, PRPAC became prominent in the Hartford political scene. In 1985, in a bit of symbolic, island-based politics, PRPAC lobbied the school board to adopt a resolution naming Old Kinsella school after the leader of the 1868 revolt against Spanish colonialism on the island,

446. Interview with Peter Ayala, 7 August 1991; v. also "Solidaridad con Puerto Rico," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) October 1985, p. 20.

Ramón Emeterio Betances. That same year, Edna Negrón Smith became principal of the renamed school. When the election of Thomas B. McBride to the city council in November created a vacancy at the Board of Education, PRPAC insisted publicly that a Puerto Rican should be appointed. Meanwhile, María Sánchez had been waging her own campaign within the Board and after much wrangling over the candidate, Puerto Rican María González-Borrero, a PRPAC member, was appointed by unanimous vote, in January.⁴⁴⁷ The group also highlighted the lack of Hispanic administrators in the public schools. After a series of meetings with key policy-makers its leaders succeeded in obtaining the appointment of several Puerto Ricans to administrative positions in the school system and the city, including principals, a city personnel director, an assistant city manager, and others.

During the 1987 legislative session PRPAC worked with state representatives to insure passage of the Direct Mail Voter Registration Bill. This legislation did not mean much to the goal of increasing Puerto Rican registration but was favored by PRPAC for the sake of increased voter registration in general. PRPAC got Puerto Rican representative José Lugo, from Bridgeport, to support the measure and Lugo in turn secured the affirmative vote of other legislators. During that same session it helped defeat an English-only proposal

447. "María González-Borrero Elegida a Junta de Educación," *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT) February 1986, p. 1.

sponsored by the right-wing Senator Tom Scott. Key figures in this battle were Peter Ayala, from PRPAC, and future state representative Juan Figueroa, who worked with La Casa de Puerto Rico. Figueroa moved to Hartford from California in 1983, after graduating from law school. He quickly became involved in the community but was not prominent before this campaign.

Also in 1987, PRPAC united with the white, liberal-progressive, People for Change (PFC) coalition to elect Marie Kirkley-Bay, an African-American, and Eugenio Caro to the city council. PFC had recently coalesced as a "third party," essentially to wrest the three minority seats in the council from the Republican party. When the Democrats refused to endorse Eugenio Caro--who was considered "erratic," too radical, and a loose cannon⁴⁴⁸--nominating María B. González, a Puerto Rican teacher, instead, PRPAC stalwarts bolted out of the convention chanting "Brouillet, Come November We'll Remember." Another slogan was, "Brouillet, We'll See you in the Streets."⁴⁴⁹ Arthur Brouillet, a French-Canadian public school teacher, was singled out because he had been a key voice against Caro and had brokered González's candidacy. He was also representing the 3rd assembly district which was now a Puerto Rican rather than a

448. Interview with Arthur Brouillet, 8 August 1991.

449. Interview with Danny Pérez, 2 August 1991.

French-Canadian stronghold. Dissatisfied with this situation and with Brouillet's patronizing style, Edwin Vargas and others in PRPAC had been mulling over the idea of having a Puerto Rican representative for the 3rd district. Thus there was an anti-Brouillet sentiment in the air that the Democratic convention galvanized.

When Caro was rejected the leaders of PFC saw their opportunity and took it. To their eyes a PFC-PRPAC coalition would bring together the expertise of a cadre of progressive activists well-versed in electoral politics, and the grassroots mobilization and support of the Puerto Rican community.⁴⁵⁰ Their landmark victory--Caro and Kirkley-Bay were elected on their slate--tested the effectiveness of this combination and confirmed the legitimacy of PRPAC. It also showed how important to a Puerto Rican victory was the support of whites, blacks, and progressives from the West and North sides of the city. PFC--which united not just white liberals and Puerto Ricans, but also labor activists, blacks, gays and lesbians--nearly ousted the Republicans from the council. For the first time in the city's history, Republican representation had been reduced to one councilman. María B. González was also elected. Most PRPAC members had nothing but contempt for her but the community press celebrated her

450. Interview with William Hagan, 30 July 1991.

victory.⁴⁵¹ Formally, Puerto Rican power was on the rise, but substantively González proved to be a disaster and a great embarrassment to her supporters.⁴⁵²

Following up on its threat to Brouillet, in March of 1988 PRPAC achieved control of the Democratic town committee for the 3rd assembly district. After this victory, PRPAC boasted its "new clout" within the party, to help unseat Crowley who was replaced by Mary Phil Guinan, a progressive Democrat from Hartford's West End, as party chair. In exchange, Edwin Vargas was elected Assistant Treasurer. "This is the first time," wrote Vargas, "that the Puerto Rican community elects one of its own to the five member executive committee of the Democratic party."⁴⁵³ Another Puerto Rican, Raúl Rodríguez, was elected secretary.

During the summer and fall of 1988 PRPAC registered over one thousand new voters in the 3rd and 6th assembly districts. Encouraged by the 1987 PRPAC-PFC victory, Juan Figueroa agreed to join in the March 1988 effort to take over the 3rd district town committee and to run against Brouillet. Since a state seat was at stake, PRPAC broadened its alliance with PFC by including the Legislative Electoral Action Program (LEAP) in

451. Juan D. Brito, "El Triunfo de los Vecindarios," p. 3; and "Necesitamos Cambios en Hartford," p. 4, *Qué Pasa* (Hartford, CT), December 1987.

452. Interview with Arthur Brouillet, 8 August 1991.

453. Edwin Vargas, Jr., "Chronology of the Puerto Rican PAC, Inc.," Xerox. No date.

the pro-Figueroa effort. LEAP was formed in 1980 by activists seeking to establish a progressive presence in the state legislature.⁴⁵⁴

In a September primary, Figueroa and Brouillet battled for the Democratic nomination. Once again, the marriage of electoral know-how, provided by PFC and LEAP, and grassroots mobilization and support, provided by PRPAC, proved crucial to success.⁴⁵⁵ Two other factors were equally important: Figueroa's appeal as a candidate and demographic changes in the district which gave him a 2½ to 1 victory margin.

Black-Puerto Rican conflict gave María Sánchez the impetus to run in the 6th district as she found herself ousted from the district's town committee. According to the town committee chair, Abe Giles, Sánchez simply failed to come to the meetings and did not sign a consent slip that would qualify her as a candidate. He saw her exclusion as "her mistake." In his view, this "mistake" could have been easily corrected but "nobody seemed to want to."⁴⁵⁶

454. v. Diane Henry, "Connecticut Journal," *The New York Times*, 20 July 1980, Section 23, p. CN3; Antoinette Martin, "Expanded Coalition To Aid State Liberals," *The Hartford Courant*, 11 March 1982, p. C1.

455. These distinctions are somewhat forced since membership in these groups overlapped. Edwin Vargas, for example, was president of PRPAC, and a member of PFC and LEAP, which he helped create.

456. Interview with Abraham "Abe" Giles, 3 August 1991.

Sánchez's view of her exclusion was not as bland. She saw it as the blacks squashing the Puerto Ricans and also as a personal betrayal by Giles, whom she had supported for well over a decade. A mixture of ethnic indignation and personal anger gave her the drive to run a primary against Giles. Because she did not support PFC in 1987, PFC endorsed her candidacy but did not work for her in 1988. PRPAC endorsed Sánchez and its members participated in her effort. She also benefitted from voter registration efforts organized by PRPAC. The combination of extremely hard work by her network of supporters in the North End and her appeal as a candidate Puerto Ricans could identify with, gave her a victory in the September primary, although by a narrow 33-vote margin.

According to an analysis of the primaries, "What is clear after Wednesday is the emergence of the Puerto Rican community in Hartford politics. The contrast in the political status of Puerto Ricans a year ago and today could not be more stark."⁴⁵⁷ In November, Figueroa and Sánchez went on to the state capitol to represent two heavily Puerto Rican districts; but symbolically they went on to represent the Puerto Ricans of Hartford.

In 1989, PRPAC scored another set of victories. It engineered the election of Frances Sánchez, a public school

457. Mark Pazniokas and Bill Keveney, "Puerto Ricans Show Power in City Primaries," *The Hartford Courant* 16 September 1988, p. 1.

teacher, to the city council and, in collaboration with an ad hoc coalition, of Carmen Rodríguez, an education administrator, and Pedro Ramos, a social worker, to the city's Board of Education. After his election in 1987, Caro considered going back to the Democratic fold but he was convinced by Edwin Vargas that the PFC venue was his best bet.⁴⁵⁸ As a result Caro was re-elected.

The objectives of the 1989 campaign were ambitious. PRPAC and its allies intended to re-elect Caro, place Frances Sánchez in the city council, and achieve control of the Board of Education by electing a majority slate including a liberal white, an African-American, two Puerto Ricans and a representative of the gay community. They were not able to dominate the Board of Education but all Puerto Rican candidates got elected which amounted to a net gain in terms of political representation.

On November of 1989 María Sánchez was found dead in her apartment, probably of a heart attack. In life she had played a large role in Puerto Rican development and PRPAC soon found that in death she also had a role to play. The search for her replacement in 1990 led to a clash between PRPAC's leadership, some of its members, and the leadership of the so-called Puerto Rican "old guard," a term used to refer to Sánchez, her

458. Interviews with William Hagan, 30 July 1991 and Frances Sánchez, 6 August 1991.

associates, and La Casa de Puerto Rico.⁴⁵⁹ PRPAC had supported María Sánchez in 1988 but it did not have a strong group of members or supporters in Sánchez's turf, the North Side. The campaign to replace her gave PRPAC an opening to extend its theater of operations and truly become a citywide force. Within PRPAC, Eugenio Caro and Jack Cullin, who was its treasurer at the time, held the view that the replacement should be selected by Sánchez supporters in the North Side, that is, those who had worked directly for her and had traditionally been in her camp. Outside PRPAC, Yasha Escalera, who had been María Sánchez campaign manager, was adamantly opposed to any PRPAC inroads in the North Side. Escalera was willing to let PRPAC participate in the process but not as a major player; ultimately his network would designate a successor. The conflict over process overlapped with turf issues and old personal rivalries, threatening the loss of a seat that Sánchez had won narrowly.

After interviewing four candidates, PRPAC decided that Edna Negrón (formerly Edna Negrón Smith) was the best. Negrón was a school principal with a long record of community involvement--most notably in the promotion of bilingual education and in the fight against the Greater Hartford Process--and thus satisfied both elitist and populist requirements. Escalera's "María Sánchez Committee"--a network

459. This paragraph and the next are based on my interview with Edna Negrón and Jack Cullins, 28 July 1991.

of campaign workers and community activists in the North End--also ruled in favor of Negrón. A fifth candidate, policeman Edwin García, was initially encouraged by Edwin Vargas but after Negrón was endorsed he refused to accept the result and decided to enter the primary contest between Negrón and Giles. Giles wanted his seat back and had been endorsed by the Democratic party. With the situation out of control and fearing that a split Puerto Rican vote would lead them to defeat, PRPAC decided not to campaign for Negrón or García. Negrón won the primary and went on to replace Sánchez after easily winning the required special election. Her victory was celebrated but it also left behind a divided community and a badly bruised PRPAC. PRPAC acted rationally when it decided not to wage a battle it was not sure it could win; but some of its allies were not impressed by PRPAC's pragmatism and saw its neutrality as political cowardice.

Yet the following year the group's leadership risked its very existence in an all-out challenge against an old nemesis--Charles Mathews, who was now Hartford's deputy major--and the six Democratic members of the city council. Frustrated by Mathews insistence that blacks would not allow more than two Puerto Ricans on the council and by Frances Sánchez' alignment with Mathews, PRPAC decided to throw its weight behind mayor Carrie Saxon Perry in her campaign to replace the six Democratic councilpersons with a slate of candidates more responsive to her.

In this power play, five sets of factional interests clashed. One set involved Mathews and his supporters in the council. They had a stake in installing a mayor who would respect the institutional roles prescribed by the council-manager form of government to advance a corporate-oriented set of policies for Hartford. In this set up, the deputy mayor, namely Mathews, would call the shots.

The second set involved Mayor Perry and her supporters. Here the stakes were power and representation. Perry wanted a council that would allow her to become a de facto strong mayor and charter revision to institutionalize the change. In her view, this would give all citizens a voice in the development of a policy agenda to promote the economic well-being of Hartford.

The third set included PFC and PRPAC. Both groups wanted effective representation of progressive and Puerto Rican interests in the council. PRPAC wanted a council that reflected Hartford's demographic reality. In the city's nine-member council this meant one-third of the seats for blacks, whites (or white-ethnics), and Puerto Ricans each. There were two Puerto Rican councilpersons already so all they were asking for was one more. PFC saw an opportunity to capture an additional minority seat and to open up the policy process. Thus in exchange for supporting Perry they exacted a commitment to open the Democratic caucus. Perry also agreed to support PFC's candidates in the general election.

The fourth set encompassed the Italians and other white-ethnics of Hartford's South Side. The issues here were also representation and power. The Italians felt cut-off by a black dominated city council but they also wanted to arrest the increasing influence and gains Puerto Ricans had made. That they chose to collaborate with Perry was a sign of both tactical cleverness and weakness, since rather than obliterate the rising Puerto Ricans all they could do was contain them.

Blacks constituted the fifth set. They were split between Mathews and Perry in a division that itself reflected cross-cutting corporate-oriented, middle-class, and populist agendas. Containment of Puerto Ricans was also part of the black agenda. Within the Mathews' camp the elements of this strategy were securing a pliant Puerto Rican in the council's Democratic majority (namely, Frances Sánchez) and keeping Puerto Rican representation at the current level. Mayor Perry's version of containment was more liberal. It allowed for three Puerto Rican representatives split between the Democrats and PFC but only within an obedient council.

What began as a PFC-Perry coalition became a PRPAC-Perry coalition during the primary campaign and election. PFC did not disappear; it provided volunteers and resources. But its leadership deferred to Vargas and PRPAC. Vargas' charismatic leadership, extensive network, strategic insights, and

limitless energy, made him a key player during the campaign.⁴⁶⁰ Thus by the end of 1991, under Vargas' leadership PRPAC helped oust deputy mayor Mathews and the six Democratic incumbents who supported him. Puerto Ricans were now one-third of the city council. Eugenio Caro was re-elected as a PFC candidate and newcomers Fernando Comulada, a businessman, and Yolanda Castillo, a city employee and the daughter of Juan "Johnny" Castillo, were elected on Carry Perry's slate.

The year before, PRPAC had secured the appointment of a Puerto Rican, Jorge Simón, as corporation counsel⁴⁶¹ and now it had obtained a commitment from Perry that the presidency of the city's Democratic town committee would go to Vargas.

After Perry's victory the council began rotating the position of deputy mayor among its members. The Democratic caucus was opened to PFC members. These arrangements proved ineffectual and short-lived. Perry's coalition soon divided and broke apart when key members became disillusioned with her

460. Author's participant-observation. This became apparent to me in various meetings and strategy sessions I had the opportunity to attend during the primary campaign; it was also acknowledged by William Hagan, a founder and key PFC member, in a post-election conversation.

461. Born of a mixed Cuban-Puerto Rican marriage, Simón considered himself Puerto Rican. Many Puerto Ricans questioned the authenticity of his ethnic identity, especially those that came to disagree with his decisions and actions as corporation counsel.

leadership. Perry was also dogged by charges of corruption and failure to deliver on campaign promises. The council reverted to the old structure and a new coalition of five members emerged. In this majority council Puerto Ricans held three votes.⁴⁶²

Thus within the short span of ten years Puerto Ricans found themselves going from zero representation to institutional preeminence. Their grip on power was, however, fragile and the relationship between Puerto Rican powerholders and PRPAC problematic. The transition from interests to interest group was facilitated by identity claims. Social and economic demands were enveloped by ethnicity. To facilitate preeminence, identity politics rode the wave of demographic strength, leadership development, and organizational efforts. But, alas, it would not be easy to turn coalition dominance into coalition power.

Decoding Political Mobilization

What explains the emergence and meteoric rise of Puerto Ricans in Hartford? Despite many other types of efforts, such as those described here and in earlier chapters, Puerto Rican politics during the 1970s was to a large extent the politics of the social service agencies. Daniel Bell and Virginia Held

462. Don Noel, "Mayor Perry pledged open government, but she hasn't delivered," *The Hartford Courant*, 3 February 1992, p. C13; Brett Deutsch, "Council Members Form Majority to Control City Government," *The Hartford News*, 5-12 August 1992, p. 1; Steve Walsh, "Mayor Brought Down Her Own House?," *The Hartford News*, 26 August - 2 September 1992, p. 1.

write that "The community action provisions of the Poverty Act of 1964 established the basis for neighborhood organization by community groups."⁴⁶³ At the national level Jeffrey Berry sees the rise of interest group activity in connection with the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.⁴⁶⁴ Puerto Ricans in Hartford, however, began to organize as early as 1955. They nurtured this impetus on an impulse for economic betterment but also on cultural needs, especially in the context of how they were perceived and treated by the larger society.⁴⁶⁵ Between 1956 and 1975 economic betterment was largely pursued through community agencies. This explains in part why the array of groups that existed in 1975⁴⁶⁶ did not account for much in the political process in the strict sense; they were busy developing programs, chasing grants, managing resources, and providing services. Other groups were either organizationally marginal, politically stigmatized,

463. Daniel Bell and Virginia Held, "The Community Revolution," *The Public Interest* 16 (Summer 1969), p. 144.

464. Berry, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

465. "The discriminatory practices of the majority of the society have been important in making ethnicity politically salient and in causing the formation of secondary groups based on ethnicity." Harry A. Bailey, Jr. and Ellis Katz, "Ethnic Groups and Political Behavior," in Harry A. Bailey, Jr. and Ellis Katz, eds. *Ethnic Group Politics* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1969), p. 60.

466. There were at least 12 organizations providing various services. By Census figures this meant one group/agency for every 700 Puerto Ricans in the city; by local estimates, the ratio was 1,600 to one.

and/or ran out of steam relatively quickly.

Third sector politics drew wedges among political players. The conflict between Wilber Smith and Yasha Escalera at the Comerieño meeting is one example. The linkage between politics and social services generated political capital but it also presented important constraints for independent political action. These constraints were of the kind that blunted the critical edge of groups caught in the transition from "protest to program"⁴⁶⁷ during the 1970s.

There was a small group of Puerto Ricans that included Julián Vargas, María Sánchez, Esther Jiménez, and Antonio González, who were recognized within the Democratic party. Yet with only the voice of Sánchez in the town committee and the fact that as party regulars these pioneers ranked rather low in the partisan pecking order, their claims for increased representation were either ignored or kept at bay. As a matter of fact, within this group, only Sánchez had sufficient recognition and standing to warrant references to her as the only Puerto Rican notable with political credibility and influence in Hartford.⁴⁶⁸

467. Gittell, *Op. cit.*, p. 79. I was not able to confirm allegations that during the 1977 campaign Nicholas Carbone threatened to prevent agencies such as La Casa de Puerto Rico and the San Juan Center from receiving additional public funds if they supported Vargas. But this is highly plausible and, to the extent that it was the case, another expression of the limits of community agency politics.

468. Kernstock, *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

Regarding the community at large, it is interesting to note how a participant-observer characterized the Puerto Rican factor in the demise of the Hartford Process. Coleman writes: "The organization of a politically apathetic Puerto Rican community occurred due to its opposition to the Process memo."⁴⁶⁹ This statement both understates the role Puerto Ricans played and reveals nothing about how their involvement crystallized. Puerto Ricans were a barely visible minority with low levels of voter registration and participation. But as a community they were clearly struggling to make themselves seen and heard. The view of the community as apathetic prior to the mobilizations of 1975 and beyond was nonetheless widespread.

Based on her interviews of "influential Puerto Rican men in Hartford" in the early 1970s, Madelyn Colon drew a portrait of Puerto Rican politics whose most prominent feature was a largely ineffectual and unqualified cadre of leaders lacking substantive issues, and whose practice was tinged with shades of corruption. She wrote: "There is a definite apathy on the part of Puerto Ricans in the city...Frequently, Puerto Ricans have no time to become completely involved."⁴⁷⁰

In retrospect, it is apparent that the "lack of leadership," "personalism," and opportunism that Colon saw,

469. Coleman, *Op.Cit.*, p. 221.

470. Colon, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

signified a competition among elites struggling to gain the allegiance of a politically marginalized but otherwise vibrant community. If the community was apathetic, why did so many "leaders" bother to get involved?

In his study of Puerto Rican political behavior in Hartford in 1970, Kernstock came to conclusions similar to, but far more extensive than Colon's. The author surveyed a representative sample of the community. He found them unable to conceptualize or understand anything beyond the simplest ideas and unwilling to communicate with community or political leaders. Yet 36 percent of his respondents claimed membership in at least one club and those most frequently mentioned were the Sacred Heart Society, the Spanish Action Coalition, and the Parent Teachers Association. These groups covered the gamut of religious, cultural, political, educational, and social concerns of the community. Furthermore, 26 percent of the respondents said to have attended rallies and/or political meetings at one time or another. Over 50 percent of respondents indicated involvement in political activities such as membership in a political party (25.7 percent) or campaigning for or against a candidate (26 percent), although very few (12 percent) contributed money. An apathetic community?⁴⁷¹

In the process of political development of Puerto Ricans

471. Kernstock, *Op. cit.*, pp. 131, 133, 219.

Kernstock only saw incoherence. He made further political socialization totally dependent on the emergence of a charismatic leader that synthesized the raw energy of the uneducated rank-and-file with the professionalism of the college educated.⁴⁷² While charismatic leadership would prove to be important in the 1970s and beyond, his conclusion begged the question of how political socialization had been possible up to that point. Also, going against the grain of his own findings, he offered a prognosis that was dismal: "It does not seem likely that traditional indigenous leadership can be developed" given that whites and blacks were blocking the opportunities for power, Puerto Rican organizations were controlled by cliques, and Puerto Ricans didn't seem to be willing to participate and lend their support to most of the existing groups.⁴⁷³

Finally, Kernstock found that ethnic correlates did not appear to have much impact in the political behavior of Puerto Ricans. The case of Dolores Sánchez, the Puerto Rican businessman who was soundly defeated in Puerto Rican districts by his Democratic opponent in 1966, was offered as a prominent example. "The propensity for trust with respect to indigenous leaders was hardly sufficient to overcome a greater inclination to place mutual trust in the political leadership

472. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

473. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

of the city's proven power brokers--regardless of their race and ethnic backgrounds."⁴⁷⁴ In fact, the author concluded, "there seems to be little opportunity for [Puerto Ricans] to play a significant role as an ethnic bloc in Hartford's political arena."⁴⁷⁵ Despite some very interesting findings which suggested otherwise, the author insisted that Puerto Ricans were not, and could not be, a factor in the city's political life.⁴⁷⁶

By these assessments the statement that the offensive portions of the GHP memo thrust Puerto Ricans into action begs the question how such mobilization was possible at that point in time. Given the previous assertions of political insignificance, incoherence, and political apathy, it would seem that mobilization sprung out of thin air and thus it is difficult to understand. The emergence of PRPAC and its victories become equally incomprehensible. Why were they able to mobilize as they did? Why did PRPAC crystallize in 1985 and not in 1975 when the reaction against Hartford Process brought mobilization to unprecedented heights?

Political Responses to Exogenous Factors

The political-economic context provided both opportunities and constraints. This context can be summarily

474. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

475. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

476. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

described as a one-party political system in which private power exerts a considerable influence on public policy.

Although insurance companies have been prominent in Hartford, the city once had a strong manufacturing base. Hartford's manufactures ran the gamut of products from horse nails, plumbing and heating supplies to atomic reactors, and space hardware. Historically, the tobacco industry was significant but has declined. For Hartford residents, economic restructuring was a synonym for selective economic contraction. As manufacturing jobs disappeared, the service sector grew but jobs for city dwellers declined. Thus in 1980, the labor force participation of Hartford residents was lower than in 1960, even though between 1965 and 1980 the number of jobs in the city increased by 22 percent from 117,780 to 143,180. As the commercial-real estate boom of the 1980's ended, the service sector took a turn for the worse, leaving many stranded on the unemployment lines.⁴⁷⁷ Table 9 illustrates how during this period Hartford was the only one of seven cities in the state to suffer reductions in the number of jobs in the financial, insurance, and real estate sector in addition to losses in manufacturing jobs. These losses were partially offset by gains in the agricultural, forestry, fishing and mining, transportation, and business and repair sectors. Thus, while Hartford's labor force

477. Kirk Johnson, "Hartford, Its Boom Over, Sees Downtown Decaying," *The New York Times*, 22 August 1990, p. 1.

participation rate remained stable it did not do as well as the state and six other cities (See Table 10).

Since its transformation from a secular to a business commonwealth, a business-oriented ideology that favors private power has tended to prevail in Hartford. During the 1950s and 1960s the power of the insurance companies to dictate redevelopment policy, for example, was nearly complete; Constitution Plaza is a testament to that power. During the 1970s corporate influence was significant but not monolithic: this is the period during which Carbone used his links to the corporations and the White House to effect redistributive policies; in this case the arrangements that gave City Hall a slice of the profits from the operation of the Civic Center is the best example. As noted earlier, an analysis of this period led Clavel and others to declare Hartford a progressive city, but these efforts had a strong autocratic and corporatist flavor, and ended up pitting the city against the suburbs, the governor against the city council, and blacks and Puerto Ricans against business and political elites.

Racial/ethnic conflict has been endemic. Restrictive voter registration procedures and literacy requirements to vote have depressed political participation. Peterson's outline of the features of local politics applies to Hartford: secretiveness, limited media coverage, low-emphasis on substantive issues, relative insulation of local officials from public pressures. In this context, he argues,

participation will be rare, group formation unlikely, but even if groups form they are bound to have little influence.⁴⁷⁸

For Puerto Ricans the immediate consequences of these characteristics and changes were unemployment, poverty, welfare dependency and political marginality. Low socio-economic status did not deter political action. In this highly charged and deteriorating environment they found plenty of causes to rally and mobilize: redevelopment initiatives, poor housing, and a sense that political representation favored downtown interests rather than the city's neighborhoods. This they did within the envelope of ethnicity.

The organizational life of this community has been intense and varied at all levels, with groups forming continuously since 1955 to serve the gamut of perceived needs from cultural affirmation, to research, advocacy, revolutionary change, and electoral representation. Even when the leadership was less well-prepared, organizing and mobilization were relatively constant. As more financially stable and better educated leaders emerged, political action became not necessarily more intense but more effective.

To the extent that the configuration of the economy promoted population flight to the suburbs, Puerto Ricans benefitted. Increasing Puerto Rican numbers in the context of a shrinking population resulted in added demographic muscle.

478. Peterson, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

And as whites left for the suburbs, the better prepared Puerto Rican leaders moved into the positions of power left behind. Economic changes favored outcomes that were ultimately dependent upon factors such as when and how they organized, the kind of leadership that interacted with other actors, and the kinds of coalitions they developed. In the absence of these subjective interventions white flight, for example, would have been irrelevant. And what's distinctive about these emerging patterns is that their common denominator was the ethnic factor.

The linear response pattern to political constraints posited by Peterson did not materialize; instead, the pattern was mixed and paradoxical. Political obstacles provoked selective involvement rather than alienation. Redevelopment policy, for example, which some informants correctly identified as dominated by private power, fueled political action--as a mobilizing issue and as a catalytic agent for neighborhood-based as opposed to downtown-oriented development. The secretiveness of the GHP incensed Puerto Ricans from the onset; dogged attempts to envelop GHP's proposals in the mantle of technical rationality did not insulate Carbone and the city council from heated attacks.

The mixed and paradoxical character of Puerto Rican political action becomes clear in the perceptions of system responsiveness guiding it. At various times and with some degree of overlap, Puerto Ricans perceived the political

system as unresponsive (e.g. in the assertions by the PLP that they had "tried to deal with City Hall with no results," and PSP allegations of collusion between GHP and government officials); up for grabs (e.g. in the various attempts at penetrating the Democratic party), and as a countervailing power (e.g. in their efforts to have city or state officials help them redress grievances against corporations and other third parties).

Political Responses to Endogenous Factors

Puerto Ricans were able to mobilize because they had a history of organizational efforts behind them and a good measure of organizational resources before them. Demographic growth, leadership development, and organizational momentum were the internal factors that made their emergence possible. The latter included voter registration, initially carried out in the heat of electoral battles, and later through the focused efforts of groups such as *Voto Boricua*.⁴⁷⁹ They were able to act as they did in 1975 and beyond because their capacity for local action intersected with events that were perceived as insults to their dignity and/or attempts to place them on the losing side of a zero-sum game.⁴⁸⁰ The GHP memo

479. By the mid-1980s such efforts became well-funded and systematic through the *Atrévete* campaign of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in Hartford.

480. This is a key point in John Mollenkopf's "On the Causes and Consequences of Political Mobilization," pp. 4, 9. Here I have borrowed John Walton's phrasing in "Theoretical Methods in Comparative Urban Politics." v. *Beyond the City Limits*,

and later the ethnic jokes in *Swank* magazine helped previously existing resources coalesce into action. As noted in Chapter four, the rate of group formation both sustained the organizational impetus and put a strain on limited human resources. Puerto Ricans may not always have been effective but they were certainly not inactive; the combination of cumulative resources and crisis enabled their capacity for action.

In 1985 history, effective leadership, and a sense of crisis combined to catapult PRPAC into the political limelight. Despite the constant turnover among the elite, by the mid-1980s Puerto Ricans could count on a cadre of leaders marked by varying degrees of political savvy, relative financial stability, and a demonstrable commitment to political action. These leaders provided continuity, stamina, and direction to the emerging pool of teachers, lawyers, and white-collar workers that began to occupy newly available positions of influence and power. They also were able to manage inter-ethnic, ethnic-racial, and intra-partisan conflict to the advantage of Puerto Ricans by deftly making and breaking whatever alliances were necessary and by ruling out no methods, from back room wheeling-and-dealing to community pressure. Because of their positions within the

Urban Policy and Economic Restructuring in Comparative Perspective, edited by John R. Logan and Todd Swanstrom (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 253, 255.

community they commanded variable access to a network of grassroots supporters that were used to mobilize Puerto Ricans in general and Puerto Rican voters in particular. For example, Vargas developed his network as vice-president of the Hartford Federation of Teachers and host of his popular local TV program. Caro did likewise through baseball and other activities, including frequent ward-heeling and hanging out in highly visible spots. LaLuz was well-known as a community activist. Mildred Torres had a long association with the community agencies, particularly with La Casa de Puerto Rico. All of this took place in a context of intense in-group elite competition and out-group suspicion and rivalry.

Most importantly, political mobilization was driven by culture and language. In Hartford's changing political and economic landscape these have been constant concerns, determining responses as dissimilar as Olga Mele's religious initiatives and the mobilization against Swank magazine. The quest for economic progress was always there but "dignity" and "respect" were key catalytic agents, forceful enough to override external inducements to passivity. This "cultural" element made political mobilization a passage from ethnic awareness to power awareness. Interest articulation mediated by ethnicity--identity politics--facilitated political action. In other words, a sense of ethnic issues and needs correlated with a sense of the relative advantages of out-groups to shape and promote mobilization. PRPAC was not the only example of

the transition from interests to interest group but it was by far the most successful.

Like its antecedents, the 1985 process was reactive; Puerto Ricans acted in response to black efforts to shut them out in a power play. But the crucial difference was the willingness of virtually all factions to come together to tackle the challenge at hand. This willingness was predicated on the need to preserve ethnic-based political representation. The intervention was broad-based, efficient, and comprehensive. In other words, it incorporated the key factions, it was well-organized, and it benefitted from a temporary alliance with the controlling faction within the machine--represented by Jim Crowley--against the faction represented by Charlie Mathews.

1985 and Beyond

While the 1985 goal had a negative element--stop Mathews--the process generated a prospective agenda--that is, increased representation--and the victory encouraged the maintenance of the instrument--that is, PRPAC--in order to pursue a positive goal. A key factor in securing organizational maintenance was a smooth leadership succession. This provided continuity and renewed energy. When Mildred Torres resigned from the presidency of PRPAC, Eugenio Caro easily moved into that position; when Caro in turn stepped down, succession was effortless as Edwin Vargas quickly took command.

Effective leadership always raises the difficult question whether mobilization (as opposed to collective action) can occur in its absence. Vargas was as much a product of his circumstances as the circumstances of PRPAC's political development were a product of his intervention. Yet if he had not been there, PRPAC would have had to invent him. His leadership (with much assistance from José LaLuz) invigorated the group and made it more effective. Torres was a single parent suddenly confronted with the responsibility of raising her grandchildren; Caro was the head of a large family and had a history of unstable employment. In contrast, as an official with the Hartford Federation of Teachers and partner in a working marriage, Vargas's financial and personal position was more stable; he also had more and better connections, a clear and realistic mobilization strategy, and endless energy and drive.

We can now offer the following propositions based on the foregoing analysis. While political mobilization is more likely to occur and should render optimal benefits when local capacity for action intersects with a crisis that threatens to put a particular group at the losing end of a zero-sum game, this intersection does not occur by its own accord. In the absence of a subjective intervention, nothing will happen. Contextual factors are like a springboard: within limits they can catapult issues and actors centerstage.

Interests alone can foster political action, but

interests mediated by an affective tie, such as ethnicity, can make political mobilization more effective. Yet, if the goals pursued are negative and do not help formulate a prospective agenda, once these are accomplished the instrument needed to sustain mobilization is likely to dissipate. A prospective agenda and positive goals, even if these emerge in the heat of battle, are more likely to yield the opposite result.

A final element is partly idiosyncratic and relatively unpredictable: mobilization will bear institutional outcomes that persist over time depending on the capacity of political actors to endure sustained political participation and their ability to succeed themselves; this is the leadership factor which depends on how individuals perceive the political system, their role in it, and their capability to make things happen. This capability, as others have shown, is shaped by the nature of rewards accruing from political mobilization and the severity of sanctions that are imposed on them by individuals, groups, or the state. But it is also determined by the leader's ability to balance the demands of private and public life, her strategic vision, and network of resources.

We can safely say that demographic growth, leadership development, and relentless organizational efforts are key contributing causes of the political ascendancy of Puerto Ricans in Hartford. In other words, these are the agency factors that, in the city's particular political-economy context, made the difference between disfranchisement and

power. Identity politics gave these factors substance and significance. To be effective Puerto Ricans had to articulate their actions both within and without the political parties. We conclude that identity politics facilitated action, in a dynamic that included claims for political enfranchisement (e.g. the Heslin episode), responses to urban renewal (e.g. the battle against Hartford Process), cultural outrage (e.g. the Swank magazine incident), and culminated in a transition from interests (i.e. community actions) to interest group political mobilization, the most successful of which was PRPAC.

Table 8 Purging Differentials Between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Voting Age Population (VAP) in Selected Hartford Voting Districts*

Voting Dist.	Total VAP	Hispanic VAP	Non-Hisp VAP	Total Purged	Hispanic Purged
6	3,064	1,408	1,656	512	273
7	5,175	1,677	3,498	1,065	419
8	5,265	3,011	2,254	852	574
9	5,097	2,594	2,503	543	410
10	3,161	1,305	1,856	257	168
11	4,946	2,008	2,938	222	110
16	4,554	2,102	2,452	207	91
18	3,434	1,498	1,936	312	144
19	5,832	2,738	3,094	563	272

	Non-Hispanic Purged	% Hisp. VAP Purged	% Non-Hisp. VAP Purged	H:NH
6	239	19	14	5
7	646	25	18	7
8	278	19	12	7
9	133	16	5	10
10	89	13	5	8
11	112	5	4	1
16	116	4	5	-1
18	168	10	9	1
19	291	10	9	1

Source: 1990 Census data and Hartford's Registrar of Voters data for 1982 voting districts assembled by Allan J. Lichtman. *Districts where 30 percent or more of the voting age population is Hispanic.

Table 9 Changes in Manufacturing and Financial, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) Jobs in Hartford in Comparative Perspective, 1980-1990

	1980	1990	% Change
Connecticut			
Manufacturing	458,816	346,552	-24.5
FIRE	118,702	176,421	+48.6
Bridgeport			
Manufacturing	23,847	15,846	-33.6
FIRE	2,916	4,427	+51.8
Hartford			
Manufacturing	13,742	8,656	-37.0
FIRE	9,096	8,770	-3.6
New Britain			
Manufacturing	14,570	8,416	-42.2
FIRE	2,785	3,849	+37.9
New Haven			
Manufacturing	11,619	9,545	-17.9
FIRE	2,403	3,418	+42.2
New London			
Manufacturing	3,376	2,225	-34.1
FIRE	322	570	+77.0
Waterbury			
Manufacturing	18,410	13,904	-24.5
FIRE	1,927	3,156	+63.8
Windham			
Manufacturing	2,730	1,737	-36.4
FIRE	337	561	+66.5

Source: 1990 Census sample data assembled by Office of Policy and Management, State of Connecticut.

**Table 10 Hartford Labor Force
Participation Rates in Comparative
Perspective, 1980-1990**

	Percent of Persons 16 and Over in Labor Force	
	1980	1990
Connecticut	65.3	69.0
Bridgeport	59.8	64.6
Hartford	60.4	60.5
New Britain	64.4	65.3
New Haven	56.4	62.5
New London	63.9	68.1
Waterbury	60.8	65.0
Windham	63.1	64.9

Source: 1990 Census data assembled by
Policy Development & Planning
Division, Office of Policy &
Management, State of Connecticut.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion: Consequences of Interest Group Political Mobilization

Introduction

This chapter compares the hypotheses formulated with the evidence from the case study, and discusses the implications of our findings for the relationship between identity and power. We began by wondering how identity politics broadens representation and whether it corrects the biases of public policy. Following assessments of interest group mobilization in the literature we sought to confirm whether it undermines political responsibility and the extent to which it reinforces conservatism within the polity. From our concern with the relationship between identity and power we set to specify the path of Puerto Rican political mobilization in Hartford.

To address these issues we draw on the preceding narrative and analysis and elaborate three previous points: 1. that the political context in which Puerto Ricans practiced identity politics both constrained and enabled political action as well as access to influence and power. We see this as an interest articulation dynamic determined by the interplay between capability and feasibility; 2. that PRPAC is an expression of identity politics. Therefore, as a capability factor ethnicity was a key link to power; and finally, 3. that as a form of identity politics, interest group political mobilization has consequences that are both welcome and problematic.

The City as Political Context

The place known as *Suckiaug* to its earliest inhabitants and Newtown and Harteford to its English settlers is radically different from what we know today as Hartford. Yet its history shows continuity as well. There is, for example, the liberal-conservative continuum that has given the city its own distinctive pendular pattern of political development. Today, as before, Hartford is not just a hybrid of tradition and reform; it also alternates between the old and the new, the same and different, between progressive politics and a yearning for the middle-of-the-road.

There are other characteristics that appear to be constants: periodic waves of outmigration mixed with a regular flow of immigrants; an instrumentalist view of politics, first seen as a means to personal salvation and later as a method for achieving equality and justice; a commitment to constitutionalism and popular government; and power arrangements based on a concentration-diffusion pattern. The changes in the "agenda of urban resource allocation" that Salisbury correlates with good government political reforms in the 1940s have been fought out in Hartford since the turn of the century. What he calls "politics for profit" (votes give power, power provides favors, favors provide votes) has not broken down in Hartford--another element of continuity between

present and past.⁴⁸¹

According to Coleman, the city is in the middle-range between business-controlled and citizen-controlled urban settings.⁴⁸² In Neubeck's and Rattcliff's view "No single theory of urban political economy adequately captures the rich complexity, tensions, and dynamics that are involved" in Hartford.⁴⁸³ In their analysis of Carbone's regime they conclude that it left "a legacy of increased expectations...about what the government could do."⁴⁸⁴

The city, however, has not always been a middle-of-the-road case. Its Federalist and later Whig politics, anti-union sentiments, and distaste for Jeffersonian democracy made it a hub of conservatism in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, Hartford's tradition of theocratic rule based on popular consent found expression in a business commonwealth where the corporate bias of public policy was frequently offset by class, racial, ethnic and neighborhood challenges. In the Puerto Rican case, economic changes and political reforms aided and abetted ethnic-driven accommodationist and demand-protest strategies to obtain economic, social, and political advantages. Hartford's

481. v. Salisbury, "Urban Politics: The New Convergence....," *Op. cit.*, p. 268.

482. Coleman, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

483. Neubeck and Ratcliff, *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

484. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

demographic reality and one-party system has made coalition politics indispensable to access power. This has not precluded coalition dominance by a single group. Yet economic contraction and fiscal stress have imposed severe constraints on the exercise of coalition power. As Edwin Vargas puts it: "We have arrived when power is not a matter of who gets what but of who gets left out."⁴⁸⁵

Our historical review suggests that the dynamism of Hartford's political system is partially grounded on the persistence of inequality. Religious conflict, cleavages between city and town, liberals and conservatives, Yankees and immigrants, Republicans and Democrats, business and labor, white-ethnics and blacks, blacks and Puerto Ricans--all signal forms of political inequality, although in some cases they signal more than that. Political inequality has both limited and enabled political action. Yet what does its persistence tell us about how the political context impacts on political action? What are the implications for the analysis of interest group political mobilization as a means of achieving political equality?

For one thing, persistent inequality and the responses it has fostered suggest that it is inappropriate to characterize the current period as the age of special interests.⁴⁸⁶ In

485. Conversation with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 3 June 1993.

486. v. Roger Rosenblatt, "Special Interests," *The MacNeill-Lehrer Newshour*, Broadcast of 15 June 1993.

other words, the mobilization of interests, special or otherwise, simply means that societal divisions generate conflict. Conflict is endemic to politics; it is not a particular characteristic of the current period. Conflict persists while contexts and actors change. Thus it would be more accurate to talk about the mobilization of interests in the post-Cold War period, or in the context of economic decline, in the era of global accumulation, or as a form of identity politics. These circumstances, not the existence of conflict itself, make or break the case for political equality.

Persistent political inequality might also indicate the need to study the political mobilization of interests in light of the distinction between solvable and unresolvable conflicts.⁴⁸⁷ The assumption here is that it is possible and fruitful to distinguish between persistent political inequality and the great variety of specific patterns in which it is expressed. While this is an admission that political inequality will always be with us it is not a Platonic exaltation of immutable functional specialization. Neither is it a resigned acceptance of the status quo, but rather a recognition that some forms of inequality are greatly

487. Schattschneider, *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

preferable than others.⁴⁸⁸

We must always have an ideal that forces certain kinds of questions upon us: Is this what we want? Should we live like this? Are we doing what we should? But our answers to these questions should help outline the features of a historical project--what Castoriadis calls imaginary significations that ought to be instituted--rather than as a blueprint for the coming entelechy and the end of history.⁴⁸⁹ More specifically, we must look at the limited gains of interest group political mobilization as a point of departure for subsequent challenges rather than as proof that change is ultimately impossible or insignificant.

If political inequality expresses itself as a disjunction between desired representation and actual power, electoral politics should be able to effect power realignments that reflect demographic and economic changes within the society. These realignments, however, would still reproduce inequality in some form. This should be seen as a tension between "historical production" and "ultimate rationality."⁴⁹⁰ This attitude at least recognizes that politics is open-ended and

488. For an influential elaboration of this point v. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971).

489. v. Cornelius Castoriadis, "From Marx to Aristotle, from Aristotle to Us," *Social Research* 45:4 (Winter 1978), pp. 667-738.

490. *Ibid.*

that, like Puerto Ricans in Hartford, erstwhile outcasts can at some point become protagonists. The transitions from Christian to secular to business commonwealth in Hartford give credence to this thesis and invite suggestions that further transformations incited by new actors might still happen.

This admittedly is a sanguine view; but at least it is rooted in history. And while there is a respectable strand in the urban politics literature that sees political inequality as nearly insurmountable, even the most pessimistic scholars and analysts within this camp urge us, in the end, to "keep hope alive."⁴⁹¹

Identity Politics

The Puerto Rican case suggests that identity politics in Hartford was simultaneously an expressive process and one in which prior organization and instrumental-rationality played a significant role.⁴⁹² Mobilization was not solely driven

491. On this ambivalence v. Frank Bonilla, "Migrants, Citizens, and Social Pacts," in Edwin Meléndez and Edgardo Meléndez, eds. *Colonial Dilemma* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), pp. 181-188; Anthony Downs, "The Future of Industrial Cities," in Paul E. Peterson, ed. *The New Urban Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1985), pp. 281-294; David Harvey *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 274-278 and *passim*; and Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. xii, xiii, 359.

492. Expressiveness has been singled out as characteristic of identity-oriented social movements. Instrumental-rationality has been associated with social movements based on resource-mobilization. For a discussion that highlights the differences and commonalities between the two v. Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* 52:4 (Winter 1985), pp. 663-716.

by cost-benefit calculations; rationality also was mediated by psychosocial factors. Moreover, the purposive defense of identity (that is, ethnic awareness; for example, the Puerto Rican Parade) rather than collapsing into a solipsistic exercise (for example, overemphasis on Puerto Rican pride) led to the pursuit of concrete political advantages (for example, seeking representation through PRPAC).

Although the desire for economic betterment was there, the earliest forms of Puerto Rican association were religious and cultural. Examples include the *Legión de María* (Legion of Mary) and the *Rosario Cantado* (Sung Rosary) that Olga Mele joined and founded, respectively, in the 1950s; the various baseball leagues, the Puerto Rican Parade itself, the San Juan Bautista and Park Street Festivals, and so on. These initiatives, however, cut across their constitutive boundaries and spilled over into politics.

When Julián Vargas opened *La Popular*, *Bodega Hispana* it quickly became the meeting place for Puerto Ricans interested in politics. They did not meet to plot strategies to fight corporate power but to penetrate the Democratic party and to fight City Hall, if necessary. María Sánchez was a key member of this group and her interest in labor issues was never strong; her true cause was educational policy. As noted above, when Jesús "Wito" Martínez decided to recruit Antonio Soto for the Republican party he was convinced that politics was important for the community although he did not know exactly

why. Politics was seen not as the pursuit of abstract goods but as the means to achieve a citizens agenda whose goals were defined by ethnic needs. While community as well as elite concerns did not center primarily around issues of "industry and idleness," identity was intertwined with status. Employment and unionization issues were there but they were not given privileged standing. As a matter of fact, a key question that observers asked was whether Puerto Ricans would ever tackle issues other than those related to their culture.

Even Edwin Vargas, whose socialist credentials and association with the labor movement gave a tint of class analysis to his rethoric and strategy, recognized that ethnicity was a crucial mobilizing factor. Whenever his candidates happened to be on the ballot's row B his campaign slogan was "Vota por la B de Boricua" (vote for row B, for Boricua), Boricua being a common variation on the Puerto Rican gentilic. Was this an opportunistic utilization of ethnicity to advance economic interests? Many have made this claim about the relationship between ethnicity and status. David Ward summarizes this view when he writes that:

Ethnicity is a label to describe reactive responses of interest groups that have perceived detrimental alterations in the allocation principles of public policies. Their political loyalties do not, therefore, reflect their interests in ancestral foreign causes but rather their concern over threats to their well-being from competing interest groups.⁴⁹³

493. Ward, *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

But Vargas and PRPAC have been consistent about identity claims. The earliest usage of the slogan "Vota por la B de Boricua" that I found dates from 1983;⁴⁹⁴ in a 1993 primary, when PRPAC's candidate was placed on row D, the slogan was "Dignidad, Deber y Decencia," [Dignity, Duty, and Decency]. Unable to use a direct reference to identity, PRPAC appealed indirectly to Puerto Rican dignity, it highlighted the duty Puerto Rican leaders have to serve their community, and called for decency in the contest between interests.⁴⁹⁵ Puerto Ricans do not exercise a monopoly on these values. Yet they figure prominently in popular conceptions of what being Puerto Rican is about.

Opportunism, of course, can be consistent; but the crucial point is that ethnicity needs not be exclusively or predominantly related to a concern with an ancestral homeland to be authentic. To argue that ethnicity is a smokescreen for economic interests⁴⁹⁶ or a superficial index of social

494. v. Qué Pasa (Hartford, CT), 8 September 1983, p. 3.

495. Conversation with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 17 September 1993.

496. A claim made by Richard D. Alba, "The Twilight of Ethnicity Among Catholics of European Ancestry," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (1981), pp. 86-97; Irving Howe, "The Limits of Ethnicity," *The New Republic*, June 25, 1977, p. 19; Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1981); and Pierre Van Den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier-North Holland, 1981).

stratification⁴⁹⁷ reeks of behavioralist and false consciousness approaches to the rationales that political agents fashion to justify political action. To be sure, ethnicity has socio-economic referents but these are contingent; its distinctiveness is cultural. Gurak and Kritz, for example, compared Puerto Ricans with Hispanic immigrants to the Northeast in the 1970s to find that in the Puerto Rican case ethnic identity in the second generation correlated with low socio-economic status.⁴⁹⁸ Rogler, et.al, on the other hand, found that ethnic identity was strong regardless of higher levels of acculturation among second generation Puerto Rican families.⁴⁹⁹ While these findings are problematic they do suggest that ethnic identity is a complex process with a wide range of expressions from ancestral callings to leisure-time pursuits.⁵⁰⁰

497. As stated by Douglas S. Massey, "Social Class and Ethnic Segregation: A Reconsideration of Methods and Conclusions," *American Sociological Review* 46 (1981), pp. 641-50; and Ceri Peach, "Conflicting Interpretations of Segregation," in Peter Jackson and Susan J. Smith, eds., *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation* (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 19-33.

498. Douglas Gurak and Mary M. Kritz, "The Caribbean Communities in the United States," *Migration Today* 12:2 (1985), pp. 6-12.

499. Lloyd H. Rogler, Rosemary Santana Cooney, and Vilma Ortiz, "Intergenerational Change in Ethnic Identity in the Puerto Rican Family," *International Migration Review*, 14: (Summer 1980), pp. 193-214.

500. According to Herbert Gans these polarities describe authentic and symbolic ethnicity, respectively. The former refers to group membership, cultural values and practices while the latter involves a degree of identity and feeling

How did Puerto Ricans in Hartford articulate their identity claims? The answer to this question has three aspects. They regard the strategy, focus, and structure of identity politics in Hartford. Electoral politics was the key venue of interest group political mobilization. Mainland as opposed to island issues gave focus to political action and identity claims were made through a variety of approaches. We discuss these three aspects in turn.

Strategy: Electoral Politics

The assertion that before 1970 Puerto Rican electoral efforts in the United States were all but nonexistent is wrong.⁵⁰¹ In Hartford, electoral politics was a staple of Puerto Rican activities since 1950, when only a handful lived in the city. As the community grew in numbers, so did its involvement and the number of Puerto Rican candidates running for office. Electoral involvement was not sporadic or inconsistent; it was simply not prominent relative to the society at large.

The actions of "old guard" leaders such as Olga Mele, Julián Vargas, María Sánchez, and José Cruz, show the importance attached to electoral politics by the community's early leadership. Their politics quickly became the politics

that is secondary and can be easily satisfied privately. v. *The Urban Villagers* (NY: Free Press, 1982), pp. 235-236.

501. Such is the claim made by Jennings. He writes that efforts in this arena were "sporadic and inconsistent." v. Jennings, "Introduction...", p. 3.

of the local Democratic party. In 1964 they organized the Puerto Rican Parade under the slogan "Register and Vote;" the following year they formed the Puerto Rican Democrats of Hartford, although others had been working in local campaigns since 1955. When a younger cadre of community leaders emerged, those who responded to the "old guard" were prodded to enter electoral politics through the Democratic party.⁵⁰² There were other venues but, from the onset, electoral politics was the key component of a strategy for social and economic betterment.

Focus: Mainland vs. Island

In Hartford, the relationship between mainland- and island-based mobilization is complex, yet clearly tilted towards mainland-focused agendas.⁵⁰³ The archives of the Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs in the United States of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico contain a reference to 40 tobacco workers from the Hartford area who flew to

502. Interview with Calixto Torres, 7 August 1991.

503. The 1989-90 debate around the proposed plebiscite on the status of Puerto Rico and the surge of interest and mobilization it generated show that there is a complex middle ground between these two general models. v. Edwin Meléndez and Edgardo Meléndez "Introduction," in Meléndez and Meléndez, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-16; Angelo Falcón, "A Divided Nation: The Puerto Rican Diaspora in the United States and the Proposed Referendum," in Meléndez and Meléndez, *Op. cit.*; Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, *The Plebiscite and the Diaspora*, Policy Forum Proceedings, Gordon Jonathan Lewis, ed. (August 1993).

Puerto Rico allegedly to vote in the 1960 general election.⁵⁰⁴ In contrast, Puerto Ricans who settled in Hartford never even considered voting in the Puerto Rican election through absentee ballots; they visited the island, but more for pleasure than out of an interest in politics. The community was not as interested as the elite in electoral politics but this was dictated more by the conditions that fostered disfranchisement than by an exclusive concern with homeland issues.⁵⁰⁵

The most notorious island-centered event in local politics took place in 1983, when the group *Los Macheteros* stole over \$7 million from a Wells Fargo branch in West Hartford. The key operative in the heist was Víctor Gerena, a second generation Puerto Rican Hartfordian born in the Bronx. In his chronicle of the episode, Fernández shows how the class symbolism of the robbery completely overshadowed its political intent. Puerto Ricans (and others) cheered Gerena's feat not because they sympathized with his separatist politics but because it was a Robin Hood-type adventure; they were in awe of him because he represented a working-class David that had

504. Inter-Office Report from Gilberto Camacho to Eulalio Torres, 15 November 1960. Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, New York City. Archival Collection, Box 32.

505. Virginia Sánchez Korrol makes a similar point about Puerto Ricans in New York. v. *From Colonia to Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 183.

inflicted severe damage to a greedy, capitalistic Goliath.⁵⁰⁶

In 1986, PRPAC issued a resolution condemning as a civil rights violation the arrest of a group of independentistas in Puerto Rico in connection with the Gerena case. But one looks in vain for indications that this case moved Hartford's Puerto Rican community beyond a sporadic expression of solidarity. The campaign of the PSP and its allies to free those arrested and to publicize the island's colonial status was marginal.

When the 1989-90 debate on the proposed plebiscite on the status of Puerto Rico raised the question whether mainland Puerto Ricans should be allowed to vote, the overwhelming consensus in the community was that they should. In a policy forum held in New York, Edwin Vargas presented a spirited argument for participation but on that occasion he was representing the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights--a group with a programmatic interest in the status issue--not PRPAC. Still, Vargas began his presentation by regretting that the issue had surfaced to, once again, "threaten unity in our community", while simultaneously suggesting that it might be an ephemeral concern.⁵⁰⁷ The issue, in fact, was forced upon Congress and Puerto Ricans in the U.S. by island leaders; once Congress killed the initiative, mainland interest faded.

506. v. Ronald Fernandez, *Los Macheteros* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987), pp. 31-33.

507. Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

Hartford's Puerto Ricans went on with their lives, largely untouched by the brief controversy. PRPAC in particular kept itself busy figuring out how to make further inroads into local power.

Structure: Models of Political Mobilization

Hartford's Puerto Ricans have had their share of machine, moderate, and militant modes of mobilization. María Sánchez was the epitome of a ward-heeling politician, although her version of the political exchange was limited. Mildred Torres embodied the moderate model of mobilization. Although bargaining and compromise was the forte of the initial group of leaders that coalesced around her 1979 candidacy, she was also associated with the early PRPAC. The moderate model of mobilization highlights the use of intra-partisan reform as a vantage point for access. In Hartford, however, moderates carved out their entry in part through independent groups such as *Voto Boricua*, *MUJER*, and others. The access strategy was colored by a technocratic attitude that emphasized political acumen, systemic knowledge, and independence from partisan attachments. The militant model had a number of prominent incarnations, beginning with José LaLuz's father, Alejandro LaLuz in the 1960s, José Claudio and Eugenio Caro in the early 1970s, and Edwin Vargas and José LaLuz in the mid-1970s. In Hartford, as elsewhere, demand-protest combined with mobilization that took advantage of the resources provided by community agencies. As noted earlier, these emerged as

offshoots of the charitable spirit and were subsequently buttressed and expanded through state and federal programs.

In 1977, a machine-based attempt to gain access and representation evolved into a moderate effort and set the stage for an interlocking approach to interest group political mobilization, exemplified by PRPAC. This approach synthesized *quid pro quo* politics, moderate methods, and upfront challenges. It used bargaining and compromise, community pressure, and extra-partisan alliances as means to its ends.

Mobilization Effects

In Chapter one we hypothesized that: 1. the entry of PRPAC into the policy-making sphere has not been destructive of political responsibility; 2. that their input has been inclusive at the levels of participation, issue definition, and accountability; and that 3. it has not created privilege and cannot be described as conservative. We discuss these hypotheses in light of our findings and conclude with some reflections on the relationship between identity politics and power.

Political Responsibility

It seems hardly appropriate to qualify the entry of PRPAC into the Hartford policy arena as destructive of political responsibility. But to clarify the issue it is important to note that PRPAC's leadership understood "entry into the policy-making sphere" in a way more in line with Salisbury's

"politics for profit" and Banfield's political influence,⁵⁰⁸ than with a model in which interest groups are "winnowing out options,...negotiating and bargaining, and...arriving at consensus."⁵⁰⁹ Instead, PRPAC winnowed out Puerto Rican candidates and elected them to office, essentially losing track of them policy-wise until the next election. PRPAC members and public officials interacted in discrete electoral and policy power plays, but the group played a secondary role in defining the policy agenda and supplied no systematic input comparable to that provided by lobbyists.

The most salient policy power play in Hartford was the city's budget. If, for example, the school system was slated to suffer budget reductions, PRPAC would take a position against such cuts. They did so, not because the group followed the budget process or because any one member was charged with the task or was an expert, but because of the overlapping enrollment with the Hartford Federation of Teachers, a group with an obvious interest in school matters, of several of its members. This made input contingent rather than systematic.

In 1992, when the Board of Education proposed a privatization plan to deal with a budget deficit, PRPAC

508. Edward C. Banfield, *Political Influence* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1961), pp. 4-6.

509. v. W. Douglas Costain and Anne N. Costain, "Interest Groups as Policy Aggregators in the Legislative Process," *Polity* 14:2 (Winter 1981), p. 259.

mobilized along with others to denounce the plan. It also demanded that the two Puerto Ricans it had helped elect to the Board fight privatization, which they were reluctant to do. Some PRPAC members contributed to the debate on the proposal, but theirs was knowledge acquired as practitioners, not as experts. Their arguments were persuasive but doubts remained among many whether they were defending a policy or their own jobs.⁵¹⁰

PRPAC's lack of systematic involvement in the policy process was mostly due to its mobilization strategy, to how it related to other community groups and the candidates it elected, and to the circumstances of the process itself. Whether racism contributed is difficult to say. In any event, this factor could only sustain, not necessarily create, an exclusionary effect. A fourth factor was the strategy chosen by PRPAC to exert its influence.

Mobilization Strategy

PRPAC's forte was the "numbers game." The group knew that demographic concentration, voter registration, and voter turnout were the key elements of success. Its leadership mastered the art of coalition-building and relied on all kinds of alliances to advance the group's objectives. Edwin Vargas was notorious for his willingness to confederate with just

510. Author's participant-observation, Summer 1992. v. also, "Amenazan con Privatizar Servicios de Apoyo, *El Extra News* (Hartford, CT) 20 July 1992, p. 1.

about anyone--blacks and white-ethnics, progressives and reactionaries, labor groups, gay and lesbian groups, friends and former enemies. This was a mixed blessing for it helped PRPAC achieve victories but it also gave Vargas and by extension the group, a reputation for being too much of a fox and not enough of a lion. PRPAC knew how to elect candidates but it had a limited influence on policy. It did not match its Machiavellian deftness in the electoral process with a mastery over policy. This deficiency was readily accepted by PRPAC members who recognized that other groups had also failed in this regard (including at times the Chamber of Commerce).

According to Edna Negrón: "They should get involved. They are not involved in that process, hardly at all. That would be perfect, first to identify the kind of legislation that would impact our community and that ought to be put through." When asked if PRPAC prompted Puerto Rican community-based organizations to make up for this deficiency by using their expertise--for example, the Hispanic Health Council in the area of public health--Jack Cullin responded: "That doesn't happen. I don't think that we've [PRPAC] thought of it but that's a good idea."⁵¹¹

As a matter of fact, there were groups that kept close tabs on the policy process. Anyone reviewing the journal of the common council can easily see the many instances in which

⁵¹¹. Interview with Edna Negrón and Jack Cullin, 28 July 1991.

groups such as La Casa de Puerto Rico and TAINO Housing were dispensed special treatment, through council resolutions or specific exemptions. The presence of Puerto Ricans in the council was greatly favored and supported by these groups but, at least in the case of TAINO, it was not seen as the one factor that made things happen for the agency. According to one of its directors: "If we only had that without any credibility we wouldn't get things done."⁵¹² This meant that community groups put more emphasis on developing and maintaining their credibility than in using PRPAC as a policy rod.

Institutional and Individual Relations

While PRPAC could aggregate different positions on policy, it lacked the standing needed to perform that role. The concept of PRPAC emerged in the 1970s. It first took practical form in 1977. The group's leadership in 1990 had been involved in Hartford politics even before 1977. Yet by the late 1980s, its political rivals still thought of PRPAC leaders as arrivistes. According to Juan Figueroa:

The truce between the leading agencies and the leadership of the PAC has stood for only the past year and a half. There were a lot frictions before that, particularly between La Casa de Puerto Rico and some of the agencies close to La Casa and the PAC. It was an old guard vs. new guard issue with the PAC presenting itself as the avant garde...and agencies such as La Casa being portrayed as the conservatives....The idea of [PRPAC] bringing the agencies into the [policy] process is excellent but

512. Interview with Max Fernández, 6 August 1991.

the level of trust must be greater than what it is now.⁵¹³

The same can be said about relations between PRPAC and elected officials, even those it helped elect. But in this instance, personal ambitions compounded the problem of trust. Eugenio Caro, for example, always resisted efforts to make him PRPAC's man in the council. He aspired to be Hartford's first Hispanic mayor and felt that he needed a personal political base to prevent being bypassed by a younger, better educated Puerto Rican candidate. Caro did PRPAC's bidding only during critical electoral power plays; during the normal policymaking process he was stubbornly independent (some would rather characterize him as self-centered and unreliable). In any event, because it was not easy to deal with Caro, PRPAC did not go after him consistently.

PRPAC had a great deal of influence over Yolanda Castillo, one of the three Puerto Rican representatives in the 1991-93 council. Still, Castillo was no puppet--for example, she tried to steer PRPAC away from the privatization controversy--and her vote was only one-third of the Puerto Rican bloc at the council.

In other instances PRPAC was the victim of its own success. Its victories showed that shifting allegiances need not preclude electoral success, a lesson that was not lost on its allies. Some of these, after getting elected by PRPAC,

513. Interview with Juan Figueroa, 9 August 1991.

turned their back on the group to do the bidding of other coalitions both in and outside the Democratic Party.

In short, PRPAC did not have a lock on the loyalty of the candidates it helped elect. An example was the case of Frances Sánchez. Even though PRPAC brokered her candidacy and ran her campaign along with PFC, she turned around and refused to support positions favored by both groups. She also took sides against PRPAC in a conflict with Deputy Mayor Charles Mathews. During her 1991 reelection campaign, Sánchez waged bitter attacks against PRPAC. She was not re-elected but instead of fading from the political scene, she became PRPAC's Frankenstein.

The Policy Process

The circumstances of the policy process, combined with the character of representation and PRPAC's mobilization strategy, reduced further the chances of a systematic policy impact by PRPAC. For example, the legislative package that the Hartford delegation to the state legislature presents every session is susceptible to external input but this requires critical knowledge, access to policy networks or both. A month before the session begins the mayor's office and the legislative delegation meet to assemble the package. The process is open to all legislators regardless of rank and they are free to seek input from constituents, lobbies, individuals, and so on. Each legislator focuses on bills that are relevant to her and each has the option of endorsing each

bill. When the legislative session starts everything has been discussed and decided and all the bills are introduced simultaneously.

During his first legislative session, Juan Figueroa endorsed 74 bills and three resolutions. "In 1988, being new," he recalled, "I endorsed a great part of the package, I went to two meetings, and had no problems with the package but didn't have a critical eye for it either like I have now after three years of service."⁵¹⁴

Figueroa suggested that while he might not have had a "critical eye," PRPAC had no eye whatsoever in the process. Said Figueroa: "The PRPAC has essentially been a vehicle for campaign mobilization, a political instrument. In terms of legislative issues I've had an informal relationship with individual members. One of the things I wanted to do and haven't been able [to] was [to organize] an issues forum where the members of the PAC could discuss issues. I even prepared a questionnaire that was sent to the members asking them to identify the three most important issues for the Puerto Rican community but there are so many things to do that this one fell by the wayside."⁵¹⁵

At the state legislature, there are more committees requiring the attention of legislators than they can possibly

⁵¹⁴. *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵. *Ibid.*

attend, especially rookie legislators whose share of staff is apportioned by rank.⁵¹⁶ Edna Negrón, for example, sat on three committees--Commerce and Transportation, Education, and Public Health, while holding a full-time job as principal of a local school. To do her legislative work, she could rely on the assistance of a quarter of a legislative aide who "basically answers phones and might be able to write a letter." Committees meet twice a week, draft legislation, and hold public hearings. A member must master their dynamics before he can accomplish anything policy-wise. According to Negrón, the Hartford delegation endorses a significant number of bills without their members being consulted (that is, bills other than the Hartford package noted above). "We meet weekly, but there's always something that falls through the cracks," she said. Rookie legislators receive a crash course but they are really on their own in learning the ropes. "They give us [a] two-day [orientation] of what the departments are. It's sink or swim." Tracking down legislation, understanding the references, and keeping up with the volume of legislative proposals can be daunting. Negrón said: "How do I read a bill? I mean it's in English but the references are in Greek!"⁵¹⁷

Within the city council, the policy process is

516. This paragraph is based on my interview with Edna Negrón, 28 July 1991. All direct citations are from this interview.

517. A Puerto Rican variation on the phrase "That's Greek to me," used to denote unintelligibility.

fragmented. Power is shared by a weak mayor, the council, and the city manager. Since Carbone's defeat in 1979, the council has lacked a stable majority associated with the deputy-mayor, which is the position that holds effective power. In Hartford's one-party system, fragmentation makes policy dependent on a coherent Democratic caucus or a strong deputy mayor or city manager. These are the formal requirements. Typically they are impossible to meet or become ineffective if the level of racial, ethnic, and/or geographic conflict is such that the voting requirements for approval of resolutions, ordinances, and the like, cannot be met. The policy process in Hartford all but obliterates the separation between the civil and the political society. This facilitates power assertions by interest groups to the extent that they are strong enough (e.g. if they control key rewards), persuasive enough (e.g. if they can show that a policy option will yield a reasonable cost-benefit ratio) or clever enough (e.g. if they know how to exploit competitive advantages) to secure a majority within the council that favors their agenda. Thus the effectiveness of extra-partisan inputs depends on the combined impact of these attributes.

The leadership of PRPAC is unquestionably clever, but it has not been consistently persuasive or strong enough to exert Puerto Rican power. It's greatest handicap, however, has been its relative absence from the policy process itself.

Policy Strategy

Contrary to what Figueroa, Negrón, and Cullin suggest, PRPAC was not completely dissociated from the policy process. Yet, because they channelled their input at the state level as members of LEAP, their impact was indirect. Since 1986, PRPAC articulated policy objectives through LEAP's policy platform over which it had veto power. But once the legislative session opened, LEAP and not PRPAC pursued these objectives. LEAP typically used PRPAC to influence legislators that might be more responsive to Puerto Rican input, to mobilize the community, and to bring into the influence process the social and professional resource networks of PRPAC members and allies.

This strategy of mediated linkage, as well as its policy objectives, was, for the most part, autocratically conceived and articulated. When LEAP discussed a legislative package they heard from Edwin Vargas, not necessarily from PRPAC. Vargas consulted with PRPAC's membership but the extent to which these consultations were genuine or just pro-forma was variable. When Vargas stepped down from the presidency of the group in 1989 he continued to attend LEAP's sessions. It is likely that he did not want to give his successor, Ramón Arroyo, a social services administrator, access to LEAP's

network.⁵¹⁸ But Arroyo accepted the arrangement and did not show any interest in having such access.

A similar although more fluid dynamic developed at the city level. There the ostensible policy articulator was PFC, but PRPAC often took the initiative and provided leadership in discrete policy power plays. For example, in 1986 PRPAC joined an effort to have the council adopt linkage as a policy concept.⁵¹⁹ In their view linkage ought to include employment and training, and should insure that the trickle-down effect of development projects was felt in Puerto Rican neighborhoods.⁵²⁰ Another example was the privatization battle mentioned earlier. This proposed policy would have been felt mostly by Puerto Rican children and PRPAC was seen as the natural standard-bearer of efforts to prevent its enactment. Although the policy could have been imposed administratively, PRPAC drew councilmembers into the fray to exert pressure upon Hartford's Board of Education.

In other instances the group sponsored meetings with

518. As a rank-and-file member of PRPAC Arroyo kept the city registrars of voters on their toes, constantly questioning purging decisions and making sure that no Puerto Rican voter on the 3rd assembly district was illegally disqualified. As president he was less than mediocre. On 28 November 1992 Arroyo was arrested after allegedly soliciting an undercover detective posing as a prostitute. As a result he was ousted from the presidency of PRPAC.

519. It was this effort, actually, that led to the creation of PFC in 1987.

520. Minutes of PRPAC meeting of 17 April 1986.

local officials to express Puerto Rican concerns but these were sporadic and with no specific policy agendas. For example, in 1986 Edwin Vargas requested a meeting with City Manager Alfred Gatta. He wanted to discuss "the role of our community in your administration." Gatta was more than happy to meet but his response was as vague as Vargas's objective. Rather than focusing on Puerto Ricans he was interested in a discussion of the "issues that impact the city."⁵²¹

One of PRPAC's strategic objectives was to "promote and control" political appointments to influence policy on the basis of "loyalty to the organization."⁵²² This strategy, however, was stymied in part by Hartford's pluralist setting. As partisan control over the nomination and policy process waned, PRPAC's control did not correspondingly wax. By not being able to become a non-partisan political machine, its policy effectiveness was reduced.

Inclusiveness

Groups such as PRPAC claim to broaden political representation. The assumption is that interests within the civil society can be voiced within the political society only if members or advocates of these interests are included in the policy-making process. This assumption is fraught with

521. Letter of Edwin Vargas, Jr. to Alfred Gatta, 21 May 1986. Letter of Alfred Gatta to Edwin Vargas, Jr., 27 May 1986.

522. "Objetivos Estratégicos del Comité de Acción Política Puertorriqueño," 20 November 1986. Xerox.

problems. It is not probable that all interests can have their day in the policy process. When the range of participant interests widens, conflict is more widespread and the possibility of stalemate increases. Giving all interests their due suggests the possibility of policy gridlock and raises the issue of limited resources.

Still, one could argue that inclusion of the "leading interests" suffices. The pertinent question is then how to identify those interests. Or one could say that all interests can be satisfied piecemeal. Here the problem is how to set a policy queue and its ordering. Party decomposition complicates the issue further since it eliminates a key mechanism that traditionally brought order to the formulation of claims. An additional problem is that an identity between interest representation and the advancement of interests in general cannot be automatically assumed.

The recognition of these difficulties, however, does not diminish the appeal of identity politics because its claims, more often than not, are sculpted from beliefs that are impervious to argument. More importantly, however, it is often the case that the identification of policy issues and the willingness to tackle them requires the kind of personal stake and/or personal sensitivity that only the politics of identity provides. Bilingual education in Hartford required Puerto Rican advocates; although it is impossible to prove a negative, it is very unlikely that, despite his sympathy,

Carbone would have ever carried this issue to fruition on his own.

Does the rising influence of PRPAC mean that the public is shut out? There is, in fact, no easy answer to this question. Particularity can be representative if it elicits a sense of identity with the experience or issue at hand that transcends its original boundaries. This is, in effect, a feeling of empathy--what Marx called "species-being"--but it is even more than that. It is a sense that fosters, not just understanding, but integration as well, both in the sense of belonging to and belonging with. In other words, it gives coherence to the in-group and can help draw bridges between in-groups and out-groups. Identity politics transcends its particularity when it produces a collective good (e.g. clean water, a vivid concern of Hartfordians from turn of the century campaigns for a clean drinking water supply to the twentieth century movement to clean up the Connecticut river) or enduring lessons (e.g. identity politics is not exempt from reconciling power with authority). The process whereby this occurs is problematic (e.g. how does one know when it is actually happening? who is to say?) and can produce results to the contrary (e.g. deeper animosities and unresolvable conflicts).

We have seen how the public policy impact of PRPAC was tenuous. Although in a negative way, this not only safeguarded political responsibility by frustrating the incorporation of

a permanent bias on policy,⁵²³ but it also prevented, indirectly, the kind of monopoly over policy that is associated with the notion of shutting the public out. In other words, to the extent that PRPAC elected representatives and other officials who discriminated in favor of Puerto Rican interests to the detriment of the interests of other groups or the city at large, it failed the inclusiveness test. This did not happen, for two reasons. First, Puerto Rican interests were not unitary; and second, they were not per force distinct from the interests of others and/or the public at large.

We have seen how the choice of welfare instead of work was both approved and discouraged and how judgments did not necessarily exhibit an identity pattern. In the eyes of the State Welfare Commissioner, Puerto Ricans had a constitutional right to welfare; according to Olga Mele welfare was a handicap. But the most vivid example of an absence of unitary interests is provided by the varieties of conflict within the community and the multiplicity of organizational vehicles these cleavages promoted. And even though the organizational impetus of the community also reflected a certain division of labor this was more the exception than the rule. More often than not groups and individuals pursuing similar objectives competed on the basis of their different versions of community

523. This, of course, does not mean that political responsibility was safeguarded altogether. But the focus here is how this and other tests apply to PRPAC.

interests.

Within PRPAC's camp not everyone took ethnicity for granted. Juan Figueroa, for example, saw a tension between identity politics and public policy. He said:

I don't believe that our political efforts should be focused on ethnicity regardless of qualifications, beliefs or principles. And there's a lot of people who don't care who they have in a position as long as it is a Puerto Rican.⁵²⁴

Many others, like Figueroa, were willing to trade-off identity for "substance." Kernstock found this to be the case in 1970 and the finding startled him.

On the other hand, there were instances in which actions specifically directed at benefitting Puerto Ricans were also positive for all citizens. When PRPAC brokered the appointment of Jorge Simón as corporation counsel, it expected that he would channel his patronage to Puerto Ricans and Latinos. Although Simón turned out to be intensely independent in his judgments, he agreed with that role definition.

Simón: My job is one of those jobs which is of political patronage. It was given [to me] because of certain things that the Hispanic community has done....My policy has been that the city has been lackadaisical in providing opportunities for minorities...that's what I have pushed.⁵²⁵

Simón stabilized an office that was dysfunctional, directed the attack on developers whose buildings were being foreclosed for lack of payment of taxes, negotiated \$4 million

524. Interview with Juan Figueroa, 9 August 1991.

525. Interview with Jorge A. Simón, 30 July 1991.

in back taxes from developers, and prevented the city council from hiring a private firm to conduct negotiations with the municipal unions, thus saving the city half a million dollars in legal fees.

When the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union Foundation (CCLUF), in collaboration with PRPAC members, filed a complaint against Hartford's Republican and Democratic Registrars of Voters protesting existing purging practices, Simón was a firm ally. Its victory--although won on behalf of Latino voters--was a victory for all voters. It is true that no alternative criteria were laid out in this particular process--the defendants did not even respond, plead or otherwise defend themselves thus provoking a judgment on default--but the decision so clearly addressed both specific and general concerns that the absence of contest did not diminish the substantiveness of the outcome.

Were public officials exempt from accountability in this case? There is no evidence or indication that the court's decision undermined the ability of ordinary citizens to hold their local government responsible for an effective system of voter registration. On the contrary, the complaint was, in effect, an accountability mechanism, bringing the city to task for the fact that purging procedures showed a 5 percent differential between Latino and nonLatino voters, resulting in

a higher rate of disqualified electors among Hispanics.⁵²⁶

If Hartford had the local equivalent of iron triangles, PRPAC was not included in any. If anything, the entry and meteoric rise of PRPAC in Hartford's political scene heightened the vigilance of out-groups and forced public officials to be doubly mindful of their actions. Not knowing what to make of this phenomenon, white and black members of the power elite simply redoubled their efforts to keep public policy safe from the deleterious influence of special interests. In the civil service and third sector, blacks saw the emergence of Puerto Ricans as a challenge to their conquests. They were fearful that Puerto Rican gains would take away the power they had struggled hard and long to get. One effect of this attitude was that the accountability of public officials became an issue of special importance to them. And on the few occasions that Puerto Ricans and blacks healed their mutually inflicted wounds, the cost was new cleavages with whites.⁵²⁷

As suggested earlier, if anyone remains "shut out," it is not the "public" but Puerto Ricans themselves. Again, this is relative, but the fact remains that the integrative effects of

526. Santa v. Cimiano, Complaint, U.S. District Court, District of Connecticut, 30 October 1991; Exhibit C, Statement of Allan J. Lichtman, Ph.D., 31 October 1991, p. 5.

527. Don Noel, "Unity of blacks, Latinos comes at the price of schism with whites," *The Hartford Courant*, 21 December 1990, p. C15.

PRPAC's activities were felt mostly outside the policy process although they were no less important for that.

Broadening the Sphere of Representation

Action groups such as PRPAC often originate to combat perceived inequalities--of status and political access. Much of the initial impetus for the formation of this group was provided by the desire to overcome unemployment, low voter turnout, cumbersome and culturally inappropriate registration procedures, and inadequate political representation. PRPAC's progressive orientation is illustrated by the nature of its advocacy and its emphasis on change rather than continuity.

In what sense then can it be said that it undermines representation by creating privilege? Does it validate Lowi's claim that interest groups diminish the ability of the unorganized to participate, substitute elites for masses, and resist innovation and change?

As we have seen, the standing of PRPAC in the Puerto Rican community and the city at large was based on its ability to accumulate political capital. The more victories it scored, the more others recognized it as a force to be reckoned with. Yet even at the peak of its influence, its authority was not a given and at times it was precarious.

The experience of PRPAC suggests that a group will be more or less exclusive depending on its relative power and the degree to which other groups are more or less organized. Juan Figueroa's ethnicity vs. substance dilemma has not been a

prominent issue within PRPAC because, in his own words,

The relative power that we have is nothing when you compare it to the whites and to the blacks. After this election [November 1991] it may change quite a bit, but as we enter those growth stages those issues [i.e. ethnicity, qualifications, and so on] will gain in importance.⁵²⁸

Thus, while the leadership of PRPAC recognized that, to benefit the community, policies needed not be effected by Puerto Rican representatives, it also acknowledged that in a situation of relative powerlessness ethnicity was more likely to translate into substance than vice-versa. Put another way, groups like PRPAC rather than creating privilege for the in-group are a reflection of a structure of privilege that disproportionately benefits out-groups. Such is the reality PRPAC has attempted to change with limited success.

Vargas' 1977 campaign was a rejection of that structure, signified by an indifferent Democratic machine; the mobilization against Swank magazine was used to blast a structure of privilege that accorded lower status to Puerto Ricans; the Greater Hartford Process episode was an explosion of anger at another privileged structure, that is, the pattern of relations that crystallize as corporate power.

Ultimately, it is irrelevant whether a particular group creates privilege by introducing more hierarchy within the society. More hierarchy compared to what? Power cannot be fought with powerlessness; it is true that in the process of

528. Interview with Juan Figueroa, 9 August 1991.

broadening the sphere of representation PRPAC introduced more hierarchy within the society. But to the extent that it was successful, say by controlling the office of corporation council or by defeating privatization, it also diminished the level of hierarchical control that allowed public policy to be one-sided.

Identity Politics and Power

A discussion of the relationship between identity politics and power in Hartford must begin by emphasizing the point that this form of interest group political mobilization had limited impact upon longstanding social and economic inequalities afflicting Puerto Ricans. On the other hand, the power structure in the city was not foreclosed to erstwhile outsiders; the set of relations that we call power was permeable, that is, sometimes insulated, and sometimes penetrable. The notion of permeability is important because it suggests that recurrence co-exists with flux and that relational patterns can be changed over time.

This case study shows that pluralist power succession is possible yet problematic. The openings are there, the resources can be marshalled, the political capital can be accumulated, and even the least likely candidates can achieve institutional preeminence through coalition dominance. The difficulties, however, do not end there. While identity politics has abetted Puerto Rican access, it has not been equally useful in promoting Puerto Rican power. Several

mechanisms, revolving around the distinction between campaigning and governing, account for the discrepancy.

The distinction between campaigning and governing has long been part of the conventional wisdom in politics and political science. Achieving unity during a campaign is relatively easy because there is only one very clear goal: winning. Well-run campaigns are operational hierarchies, organizations that work with machine-like efficiency and precision; or so they should. PRPAC developed a reputation in Hartford for running campaigns in this fashion. Contest after contest it had the candidates, the signatures, the needed state certifications, the headquarters, the fundraisers, and a wide circle of volunteers registering voters, canvassing door-to-door, getting the vote out, and watching the polls for irregularities. None of this was done democratically. A great deal of centralization was required. PRPAC's leadership constantly made decisions unilaterally. Typically, during an electoral campaign, PRPAC members met infrequently, if at all. The emergence of dissent during a campaign made the chances that a membership meeting would be held even less likely. Campaigns were hierarchically organized and conservatively run. But once the campaign had run its course this momentum was not sustained. Once the elected representatives were in place, a shift in their relationship to PRPAC occurred. Three mechanisms account for this changed pattern.

We indicated earlier that PRPAC's success prevented the

group from developing a lock on the loyalty of its candidates. The cases of Caro and Simón suggest that public officials defect not just because they realize that there are other alternatives but also because when they enter into alliances with groups such as PRPAC, they bring a preexistent set of loyalties that can come into conflict with their loyalty to the group that favored their candidacy. These preexistent loyalties can be concrete--Simón's overriding commitment was to the Democratic party--or abstract--Caro's ostensible concern was with the democratic process and the welfare of the community.

A second mechanism is the effectiveness imperative. When Marie Kirkley-Bay defected from the PFC/PRPAC coalition that elected her, many were disappointed and surprised. She explained her actions very simply: the power in the council was in the hands of the Democratic caucus so it became apparent to her that "in order to promote the everyday's person agenda I needed to have a voice in that caucus." In her view, the coalition's agenda clashed with the effectiveness imperative.

They wanted to become a permanent third party and I said 'I won't do that.' As a minority party you can't chair a committee, so therefore you can't set the agenda. In contacts with business and others it is best to be in the majority party because they know you have a greater capacity to deliver. Therefore it would have been easier for me to work on housing issues and those issues that I thought

were important.⁵²⁹

Third, there is a "veil of ignorance" over both the candidates and their supporters eyes that begins to slip off shortly after the candidate takes office.⁵³⁰ This veil obscures certain goals, beliefs, ideological commitments, special concerns and interests, leaving in plain view only that which is relevant to the task of winning the election. Frances Sánchez had no idea what she was getting into when she accepted to be PRPAC's candidate against María B. González. As a public official, cleavages opened up in front of her that she never knew existed before. Her own views on issues and her perception of who it was most expedient to follow policy-wise created a gulf between herself and her supporters. The latter could not believe that she would not push resolutions calling for health care reform or condemning apartheid and were equally baffled. This caused a realignment that made her lose her seat and brought two other Puerto Ricans to the council in 1991.

These mechanisms mediated the relationship between identity and power. By introducing uncertainty, unpredictability, and flux they prevented the transformation of coalition dominance into coalition power, or in our case

529. Interview with Marie Kirkley-Bay, 6 August 1991.

530. This paragraph is based on interviews with William Hagan, 30 July 1991 and Marie Kirkley-Bay and Frances Sánchez, 6 August 1991.

from Puerto Rican access into Puerto Rican power. Also, insofar as interest group political mobilization represented attempts to correct distributive imbalances, a disjunction between mobilization and policy formation reinforced political inequality.

To some, identity politics means that blood is thicker than water;⁵³¹ but the previous account shows that a positive relationship between identity and power cannot be taken for granted. In the case of PRPAC this is all the more significant given that assertions by corporate power did not appear to be a factor in the erosion of its ability to control the candidates it helped elect.⁵³²

Although their terms are different, the evaluations of key protagonists of how identity affected power echoes the analysis above. Vargas remained convinced that Puerto Rican power was blocked by an Irish-Italian-Jewish network of political and economic entrepreneurs who constituted a permanent structure of influence in city politics;⁵³³ to

531. Todd Swanstrom, "Beyond Economism: Urban Political Economy and the Postmodern Challenge," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 15: 1 (1993), p. 56. Swanstrom, however, goes no further than saying that identity triggers political action.

532. This might be due in part to the fact that the budget process and other significant policy power plays were controlled by the city manager, who was not Puerto Rican. But even if the controlling factor was the rewards/sanctions wielded by corporate power our point would hold: blood is not always thicker than water.

533. Conversation with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 3 June 1993; 2 July 1993.

Figueroa's mind, Puerto Rican power was insignificant compared to the power of whites and blacks. Simón recognized the advances made by the community while all the same claiming that these had barely made a dent into the real structure of power.⁵³⁴ When declaring his intention to seek reelection in 1989, Caro reviewed policy accomplishments during his first term, while emphasizing that much more needed to be done.⁵³⁵

The Puerto Rican elite was right in feeling dissatisfied with its accomplishments. But we should not reify the inevitable disjunction between "is" and "ought" and use it as an excuse for political passivity. Political changes will always leave a residue of continuity that appears to nullify their intent. But change does happen and shifts in the dominant political coalition⁵³⁶ do affect not just the way, but also the context in which coalition power is exerted and the role that organized constituencies play.

Despite its limitations, the Puerto Rican case suggests at least two important salutary effects of interest group political mobilization. First, it can be a venue for the resolution of claims, the righting of wrongs, and the

534. Interview with Jorge Simón, 30 July 1991.

535. Statement by Councilman Eugenio Caro, Sr., People for Change, 22 June 1989. Xerox.

536. I use this term in reference to the interests represented within formal institutions and positions.

incorporation of previously excluded actors; it is both a component of and a corrective to power. Second, by enlarging the scope of conflict it can enlarge and deepen the sense of political community. By enlarging the pool of participants in the political society, such mobilization increases the level of political equality. By helping to change the face of power, PRPAC has enhanced the level of political responsibility.

More specifically, since Carmen Rodríguez was elected to the Board of Education in 1989, the number of Puerto Rican principals and vice principals has increased from 6 to 31 per cent of the total. Since 1991, the city has begun to do more business with Latino contractors and vendors. After Carrie Perry's re-election in that year, Puerto Rican department heads were kept and new ones were appointed. Puerto Ricans have also increased their membership in a number of boards and commissions including the Personnel Board, an important source of patronage.⁵³⁷

During the 1992 presidential campaign, the Clinton forces completely ignored the leading Puerto Rican organizations at the national level; in Connecticut, candidate Clinton visited *El Mercado*, a shopping center on Park Street, in the heart of the Puerto Rican community, and appeared on local Spanish-speaking TV broadcasts. Policy-wise this is insignificant and

537. Browning, et. al. found progress along similar lines in cities where bi-racial coalitions gained control of municipal government. v. Op. cit., p. 250.

suggests nothing about post-electoral roles in policy formation. But to Puerto Ricans it was a signal of a newly acquired sense of importance and developing power.

Earlier we indicated that the integrative impact of PRPAC was felt mostly around the periphery of public policy. What this means was best described to us by Edwin Vargas:

The PRPAC has changed the cultural climate of the city. Puerto Ricans now have more respect, attitudes towards gays have changed. Even within the community homophobic attitudes have softened.⁵³⁸

The reform of purging procedures spearheaded by CCLUF, PRPAC members, and its allies also provided for registration services in governmental agencies. Furthermore, it changed the rule that special assistant registrars could be authorized to operate only on an ad hoc basis by allowing them to register voters all year round. These changes righted specific wrongs yet were good for all.

This notwithstanding, there is no question that the direct impact of PRPAC was most strongly felt in the electoral arena and in discrete policy power plays. Their record was mixed, with persistent poverty in the community robbing elite gains of some of their luster, inroads made in the public schools structure of influence hampered by a relative disjunction from the policy process, and persistent divisions and conflict within and without the community coexisting with

538. Interview with Edwin Vargas, Jr., 20 February 1993.

the increased respect for otherness that PRPAC helped obtain for Puerto Ricans and their allies.

Perhaps the best example of this ambivalence is the enactment of Public Act 91-392 in October 1991. Crafted and sponsored by Juan Figueroa, this legislation forced all jurisdictions in the state to take specific steps to encourage affordable housing. The bill was part of a package that included legislation to hold discretionary state funds from towns failing to develop affordable housing. Although the legislators balked at the coerciveness of that approach, it was a signal that forced them to pass compromise measures that were nonetheless significant in breaking down exclusionary housing barriers.⁵³⁹ Figueroa was very close to PRPAC; PRPAC helped elect him, but they had little to do with this legislation. To be sure, this initiative did not spring, like Athena, from Figueroa's head. Many other actors were involved. But in the process of consultation and deliberation that preceded the legislation, PRPAC was only one voice among many, not a policy leader and a not a policy aggregator.

Coda

During the eighteenth century, political entrepreneurs promoted political and economic initiatives that transformed

539. Interview with Juan Figueroa, 9 August 1991; Jan Howard, "State Forces a Regional Approach to Housing," *The Weekly Star* (Newtown, CT) 10 August 1991, p. 1; Jan Howard, "State Legislation Seeks to Encourage 'Inclusionary' Zoning," *The Weekly Star* (Newtown, CT) 17 August 1991, p. 26.

Hartford. During the nineteenth century, city and state were inextricably bound in the transformation of national politics that resulted from the creation of the Republican party. During the twentieth century, the city's manufacturing base, its powerful insurance industry, its flow of immigrants and the ascendancy of the business credo gave Hartford an edge in the national division of labor.

These developments hinged on the political mobilization of interests. The post-war period inserted Puerto Ricans into this process. Their participation was fueled by ethnicity--identity politics gave substance to their claims. Thus, changes in the make-up of representation in the city were intimately tied, not just to demographic trends and population shifts, but also to this form of interest articulation.

Interest group political mobilization as a form of identity politics was not an exercise in Pareto optimality although, in the end, some outcomes clearly left all citizens better off. Puerto Ricans were able to achieve institutional preeminence but had limited success in transforming coalition dominance into coalition power. We have specified the factors and mechanisms that kept PRPAC from achieving one of its key strategic goals, that is, to control policy by becoming a non-partisan political machine. Because out-groups perceived Puerto Rican gains as their losses, Puerto Rican ascent was seen not as a corrective but as a reinforcer of political inequality. The challenge for identity politics was to ride

the wave of Puerto Rican interests and pride without exacerbating conflicts and suspicions of partiality. As in other urban settings, in Hartford this would prove to be achievable in campaigning but much more difficult in governing the city.

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