

125.12

Untitled Speech, "At a time
in our American society when
the question of civil rights is
a burning issue...", "typescript,
N.d.

At a time in our American society when the question of civil rights is a burning issue and the question of poverty becomes a national problem, it is apropos to study minority groups who are the victims of inequality of opportunity and the recipients of less than their share of the national products and comforts. Perhaps more studies have been made of the American Negro and their problems than any other minority group in this country. They continue to remain in the national limelight and their recent protest movements are embarrassing to a democratic nation to say the least. The American Indian is all but forgotten as a national minority, perhaps because of their relative isolation, their concentration in certain areas of the United States and their small numbers comparatively speaking. They have, of course, their problems which continue unresolved, but which are of no great concern to the nation as a whole.

The Chinese and Japanese minorities are no longer the threats that they were perceived to be in earlier times and with restricted immigration, a persistent fact, and their own resolutions of Americanization, a continuing effort, they have ceased to pose a "great problem" except perhaps in particular geographical localities where their concentrations are high. The Puerto Ricans, a mixed "minority" both racially and socially, represents more recent population movements and presents some problems at a national scale, but since the concentrations

are limited to a very few urban centers, these centers, in particular New York City, bear the brunt of this new movement.

The Cuban immigration is the latest population movement overwhelmingly concentrated in Dade County, Florida, but not an issue of concern to the nation as a whole. The Jewish problem is a changing phenomenon and because of the great strides which they have made as a group in American society, their problems are slightly different from those of other minorities.

There are other minorities such as the Norwegians, the Mennonites, the Amish, the Philippines, the Italians, the Germans, and the Catholics, but these minorities are becoming more and more invisible and in many instances they themselves are members of the dominant group.

The Spanish-speaking people, the subject of this report, are just now beginning to be recognized nationally as a significant minority although this population, concentrated in the Southwestern part of the United States, has been in the American scene since the 1600's. Our interest in studying this minority stems from many sources. If we use the rubric Spanish-speaking for the total population, we find that this is one of the largest ethnic minorities in the United States and we find also that it is one that has been studied the least. If we speak about poverty, we find that the great majority of these people live

in an impoverished condition whatever criteria of poverty is used. If the question of denial of civil rights is raised, we find that for this population, particularly in the Southwestern states and in areas of high concentration, there are many denails of civil rights. There appears to be no question that prejudice from the dominant group is a problem as yet to be overcome.

Discrimination in its subtle and not so subtle forms is a constant fear for many members of this group. Inequalities of opportunities in the areas of housing, education and employment are reoccurring problems for this population. If we look into the question of migratory labor, we find this population well represented in this type of subsistence living. The population movements on an international interstate and intrastate character finds us concerned with this population.

We propose then in this report to present some basic historical and demographic data about this population limiting our study to the five Southwestern states in which they are concentrated. We will look into the question of population growth and population mobility. We will examine the problems of educational achievement and school drop-outs. We will raise questions about employment and unemployment. We will investigate the housing conditions. We will attempt to determine voting patterns and we will summarize the problem of migratory labor as it affects this population.

To Speak of Many Labels

The Spanish-speaking population of the Southwest is a most heterogeneous group both biologically and culturally. It is not an easy task to delimit the group and quite often it defies definition. It is next to impossible to find a term which is descriptive of the total population and which is acceptable to the variety of subgroupings within the population.

The term used by the United States Census Bureau, "white persons of Spanish surname", does not include the many people who identify themselves with the Spanish-speaking population, but who do not have a Spanish surname. The more general term, the Spanish-speaking people, does not include a large number of people who consider themselves to be members of the group and are so identified, but who linguistically may not be able to speak Spanish although they carry with them a great deal of the historical cultural tradition of the group.

A more general term "Latin American" carries a certain connotation of "foreignness". Such a term may be used by members of the dominant and minority group in polite company to avoid the more perjorative term "Mexican". But the term Latin American is not appealing to Spanish Americans or to Mexican Americans. To call the people "Mexicanos" may exclude many Latin Americans. (The term Mexicanos, however, as used by Spanish-speaking people when speaking in Spanish

is one of the more acceptable terms to them. The label Mexican is offensive because of the derogatory and perjorative nature of the term as used in the Southwest, particularly by Anglos.¹

The term Spanish Americans, while very useful and descriptive of Spanish Americans, is not liked by Mexican Americans and Mexicans. Such a term properly defines those Spanish speaking people who came to this country via Latin America in the early sixteen and seventeen hundreds, even before there was a United States and certainly before there was a Mexico. Since Mexico did not become a nation until the 1840's, the term Spanish American properly identifies the population and their descendants who were not Mexicans until the 1820's and who were Mexicans only for a twenty-five to thirty year period. Many people feel, however, that those people who use the term Spanish American, do so in order to renounce their Mexican background and to avoid affiliation with Mexican Americans and Mexicans.

The Spanish Americans in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, in certain parts of California and Texas, have often been called Hispanos or Spanish colonials. In New Mexico, Manitos, diminutive term for brother (Hermano), has often been used, but to call ~~oneself~~ oneself Hispanos or Spanish colonial quite often is perceived as attempting to be snobbish or "uppity". Many people

argue that they do not like to be called any kind of hyphenated Americans:

they ask why can't we just be called American, which we are. Most of the people,

the great majority under study, are, of course, citizens of the United States.

The majority are Americans of Mexican descent. A considerable number are

Spanish Americans. And a large number are Mexicans who have come to this country

recently. One would find also in the Southwest many Latin Americans from

countries other than Mexico, and, of course, a small number of Puerto Ricans.

Another sizeable group of Spanish-speaking people are the Philipinos who in 1960 numbered 176,310, but who do not come within the scope of this study.²

The Puerto Ricans and the Latin Americans will also be left out of this study.

The rubric "Spanish surname" will be used throughout this study as a term which encompasses and describes the most people and is the least offensive.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Americans of Spanish and Mexican Descent

The Spanish were the first Europeans to explore extensively the western hemisphere and to establish colonies in South and North America. Having established themselves fairly well in South America and present Mexico, they moved from (what is now) Mexico City into the northern portions of New Spain,

part of the present American southwest. One of the first colonizing efforts which followed the great exploration expedition of Coronado in 1540 was that which was led by Juan De Onate in 1598. This colonizing expedition went as far north as northern New Mexico. The Spanish established a colony called San Juan, which is very close to the present town of Española, New Mexico. This first settlement in New Mexico established twenty-five missions by 1630. However, in 1680, the Indians revolted and all of the Spaniards were either killed or driven out.³ Twelve years later, Diego de Vargas reconquered the province, and established foundations for the settlements that exist to this day.⁴ It is in these New Mexican villages that the heritage of 16th century Spain existed, isolated and relatively undisturbed, with few significant changes until the 1940's.

After this first settlement the Spanish established settlements in Texas (1640) and then at a later date parts of California and Arizona were colonized. For a period of some 250 years, the Spanish people in the southwest led a rather precarious existence, being in a relatively hostile environment and very much isolated from each other. In spite of the relative isolation and the harsh environment the Spanish settlements flourished and Spanish culture was established

in the present United States, but not without a variety of admixtures from the indigenous population.⁵ In a word, they were removed from the mainstream of European historical developments between the 1600's and 1800's. Nor were they involved in the great revolutionary movements of the early 1800's, although one of these movements affected them in the sense that between 1810 and 1823 when New Spain successfully completed its revolt from Spain, these people became Mexicans for a brief period of time. Even the great westward movement of Americans did not affect the villagepeople to a very large extent because of their geographical isolation. Of course, the peoples of Santa Fé and other centers felt the impact of the Americans as did the people of Texas where, by 1836, Americans outnumbered the Mexicans the hostility engendered between the two groups expressed itself in a successful revolution, resulting in the formation of the Republic of Texas. Some ten to twelve years later, the tensions between the United States and Mexico became so great that they led to the Mexican-American War in which, by the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the territory north of the Rio Grande became part of the United States. Thus, in the 1800's the Spanish people in what is now the United States were by nationality first Spanish, second Mexican, and then American (1849). It has been said that by 1850 there were 100,000 Spanish-Americans in the United States.⁶

In spite of the changes in nationality, and in spite of the great westward movement of Americans, the Spanish settlements in the United States remained essentially Spanish folk societies up to the turn of the century. This, of course, was more true of those who lived in mountain villages in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. It is still surprising to many, however, that up to 1940, this population was still highly resistant to acculturation and the majority have never been completely assimilated to the American way.⁷

The Mexican-American population in the United States was relatively insignificant until about 1920. In the period between 1910 and 1930, the large immigration from Mexico took place. These people were primarily workers who came as far north and east as Detroit to work in the fields, to work with the railroads, to work in the industrial expansion of the southwest and to work during the First World War when there were many opportunities in heavy industry. Many were fleeing the Mexican revolution of 1910 and its bloody aftermath. There has been a continuing immigration through the years with the possible exception of the depression years when so many Mexicans were repatriated.⁸ These people and their descendants we call Americans of Mexican descent; some, of course, are not U. S. citizens, but most have become naturalized or are U. S. citizens by birth.

It is difficult to know how many Mexicans have come into the United States

during the years.⁹ It is next to impossible to get accurate figures for some of the following reasons. The Bureau of the Census has never been able to get an accurate count of the Spanish speaking. In 1930 the Census attempted to enumerate them under the heading "Mexican". The instructions to the enumerators were "all persons born in Mexico or having parents born in Mexico who were not definitely white, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese".¹⁰ According to Saunders (1949), the difficulty with this definition, aside from the confusion of racial and cultural concepts that it contained, was that it excluded persons whose grandparents, great-grandparents, or even more remote ancestors had come to the southwest by way of Mexico. He states that in New Mexico, as an example, only 61,916 "Mexicans were enumerated in 1930 when it was a matter of common knowledge that the Spanish-speaking made up half the population of the state, or something over 200,000 persons".¹¹ In 1940, the Bureau of the Census dropped the classification "Mexican" and to enumerate the Spanish-speaking and other foreign language groups, they asked the question, "What was the principal language other than English spoken in your home during your childhood?"¹² This question, however, left out a large number of Spanish-speaking whose principal language was English during their childhood. In 1950 and 1960, the census

attempted an enumeration by Spanish surname. This criterion brings perhaps the most accurate count but it does leave out a number of people who identify themselves with the Spanish-speaking but who do not have a Spanish surname.¹³

Another reason for the undercount is that a number of Mexicans enter the United States illegally and become "lost" in the United States. As late as 1954 it was estimated that more than one million had entered the United States illegally.¹⁴ This has generally been called the Wetback migration, and in 1953 the Border Patrol apprehended 750,000.¹⁵ Although the Wetback movement is evidently not the big problem that it was following the Second World war, it is still undoubtedly a significant migration to the United States. Since these are illegal entrants, it is, of course, impossible to get an accurate figure. About the only accuracy in the figures are those who are actually apprehended and deported.¹⁶ It has been possible, however, for individuals to be apprehended and deported two or three times even during the same day.¹⁷

Other types of immigrants are the Viseros or the passport Mexicans. These are individuals who come to the United States legally under a passport program and primarily for work in the United States. It is reported by Father Wagner that in the fiscal year 1961, there were 230,000 passport Mexicans who came into the United States.¹⁸ Of these, a certain number get lost in the United States.

Although they come to work for specific employers, there is no law that will prohibit them from moving to any other part of the United States.

The Bracero program, which is essentially a contract between the United States Government and the Mexican Government for agricultural employees, brought, in 1961, 291,000 Braceros or Mexican nationals into the United States. The very great majority of these Mexicans, however, are returned to Mexico at the end of their contract.¹⁹

The last type of Mexican immigrant to the United States is the commuter. These are legal entrants into the United States who generally secure a card designated as Form I-151 issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service which permits them to reside and to work permanently in the United States. This is generally called the commuter practice. It is difficult to know how many of these commuters work in the United States, but it is estimated that 50,000 (including Canadians) would be an accurate figure.²⁰

Relationships Between the Spanish-Speaking and the Anglo²¹

Since the first contact between the Spanish-speaking and the Anglo there has always existed an underlying current of suspicion, a degree of antagonism, animosity and covert hostility between the two groups, despite the fact that on an individual basis persons from both groups have formed firm, loyal and

long-lasting relationships, and some intermarriage has occurred between Spanish-speaking and Anglos. What is surprising is the fact that such few acts of violence of a general nature have taken place. If the cultural orientation of the Spanish-speaking were not so steeped in passivity, fatalism, acceptance and non-aggression the history of the relationship between the two groups would be an entirely different story.

From the very beginning the Spanish-speaking were unable to cope with the aggressive behavior, imperialism and "manifest destiny" expressed by Americans.

In the early historical accounts of the contact between the two groups the arrogant and domineering behavior of the Americans coupled by their implicit attitudes of superiority are clearly shown and in many instances such behavior and attitudes continue to the present time with regard to inter-group relationships.

An examination of the factors affecting the relationship between the Spanish-speaking and the Anglo reveal certain cultural differences which proved to be barriers in the development of a common ground of understanding between the two groups. In the first place the language differences made communication difficult. Even today the "language handicap" is given, by Anglos and Spanish-speaking, as an important barrier to the full participation of the Spanish-

speaking in American society.

The differences in political backgrounds was another important factor leading to serious difficulties between the two people. "The English colonists who settled on the Atlantic seaboard brought to America the most liberal political practices known in the world of that day."²² Universal manhood suffrage, states' rights, local self-government, elective officers and trial by jury were commonplace and necessary to the Americans, but not part of the political background of the Spanish-speaking.

The Spanish-speaking were Catholic. The Anglos were mainly Protestant and would not subject themselves to either church or state domination. The Anglos were also better educated than their neighbors.²³ Between 1820-1840 Americans in the Southwest were living in Mexican territory under legal agreements with the Mexican government or as trespassers. For some of the reasons already cited it was not long before general animosity prevailed between the two groups which culminated in the complete domination of the southwestern area, politically and economically, by the Anglos. Since 1850 the developing patterns of social segregation (voluntary or involuntary) became so entrenched that they continue to the present time. During the past twenty years studies of specific areas dealing with the Spanish-speaking have well documented this position.²⁴ Thus, we find today a very large population living in a subordinate position

vis-a-vis the dominant society, and to a large extent living in social isolation.²⁵ The American public school system, to the extent that it is effective, has only recently begun to break down this isolation.

Socio-Cultural Differences

The Spanish-speaking people in the United States are a highly heterogeneous population, both biologically and culturally. No attempt is made here to present them as a homogeneous population. There does exist among them a strong group identification to "la raza" or to "nosotros los Mexicanos" and few differences exist among the majority of the people with respect to socioeconomic status.

The Anglo and Spanish-speaking groups are sharply distinguishable as to religion, economic status, occupational status, language, surnames, residence, and usually physical appearance. Ethnic distinctions along these lines are made by nearly all members of both groups. The Spanish are nearly all nominally Catholic and the Anglos are nearly all nominally Protestant. Political and economic control of the community is in the hands of the Anglos. There is not the slightest question of their superordinate position in relation to the Spanish as a whole, though certain individuals of Spanish background clearly receive personal respect and prestige well above that of many Anglos.²⁶

Although the above was written for a particular community, other studies in other sections of the country have reported similar findings. Most social participation, parties, picnics, dances, religious services, and participation in social and civic organizations is along ethnic lines. Marriages are practically endogamous.²⁷

We have already suggested some of the historical factors associated with the problem of the relationship between Anglos and the Spanish-speaking. We should now like to turn our attention to certain characteristics in the socio-cultural background of the Spanish-speaking which might help explain further the subordinate status of the group. These characteristics are found in most rural, agrarian, folk societies and are not necessarily peculiar to the population under study. The Anglos came from ^{Spanish} cultural backgrounds similar in many respects to the situation under discussion as they developed from an agrarian, rural society to an urban, industrialized society; they were not, however, confronted with the same problems in becoming Americans, as have the Spanish-speaking, nor did they have a large reservoir of potential immigrants who continued to migrate into the country, compounding the problems of the native and naturalized Spanish-speaking as he sought his place in American society.