

Latinos and Redistricting

**"Californios for
Fair Representation"
and
California Redistricting
in the 1980s**

By Douglas Johnson

The Rose Institute of State and Local Government
Claremont McKenna College
July 1991

Acknowledgements

This paper would never have been possible without the input and encouragement of a number of people. I would like to thank the many activists who participated in Californios for Fair Representation and discussed their experiences with me: Dr. Armando Navarro, Dr. Richard Santillan, Dr. Carlos Navarro, and Pedro Carrillo. I also thank Dale Van Atta, who followed Californios for Fair Representation's activities for the San Jose Mercury News, and whose interview with me provide an outside view of their activities. Finally, I thank Dr. Alan Heslop of the Rose Institute for his advice on this study, and Dr. Don Henriksen, Dr. George Blair, and Dr. Leroy Hardy for their editing and proof-reading assistance. Of course, any opinions in this paper are my own, and none of these scholars and activists bear any responsibility for any mistakes in it.

Table of Contents

1. 1981 Redistricting Presents Opportunities and Obstacles.....	2
2. Latino Participation in the Electoral Process	4
3. The Historical Gerrymandering of Latinos.....	9
4. Incumbent Protection - Redistricting's Driving Force.....	11
5. The Media Before Californios for Fair Representation	13
6. Californios for Fair Representation	15
7. Californios and the Media	17
8. Did CFR Improve Latino Representation?	20
9. Assemblyman Vasconcellos and the San Jose Californios.....	27
10. The Lessons of the CFR Experience.....	32

1. 1981 Redistricting Presents Opportunities and Obstacles

Between 1970 and 1980, the Latino community “nearly doubled” statewide,¹ making Latinos nearly twenty percent of the state’s population.² In 1981, a coalition of Latino groups and activists banded together as “Californios for Fair Representation” (CFR) in order to push for additional representation for Latinos in accordance with their increased numbers. But CFR ran straight into the brick wall of incumbency protection. As a result, CFR failed to gain any new Latino representatives in the Assembly or State Senate, though they did succeed in electing Latinos in both of California’s new Congressional districts. Latinos entered the 1981 redistricting cycle with four Latino assemblymen, three Latino state senators, and one Latino congressman, and finished the cycle with the same number of assemblymen and state senators, but three congressmen. This study will analyze whether these results deserve to be called a ‘success.’ In addition, a detailed look at CFR’s efforts in Santa Clara County will be used as an example of the activities of the CFR local branches. This study will also look at what lessons can be learned from the CFR experience, both by Latinos and by all Californians.

¹Navarro, Carlos, and Richard Santillan. “The Latino Community and California Redistricting in the 1980s: Californios for Fair Representation” The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2 (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1984) p.77 & 83[Hereafter referred to as The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2]

²Navarro, Carlos. California Redistricting and Representation: Los Angeles County’s Chicano Community (1982) p. 72.

CFR committed itself to a central goal of improving representation for California's Latinos:

We are committed to the basic and important principle of equality, not dilution of political representation for the Latino. And we are prepared to see this issue through until an acceptable plan is ultimately implemented, whether by the legislature or by the courts.³

In pursuit of this goal, CFR knew it faced a number of formidable obstacles: the lack of political clout due to the Latino community's poor record of participation in voting; the stereotype that Latinos were politically unable to organize effectively and hold together a political movement for an extended period of time; the traditional gerrymandering of the Latino community for partisan benefit; the tendency of the media to pay very little attention to either the redistricting issue or the Latino community in general; and, most importantly, the supremacy of "incumbent protection" in any redistricting controlled by incumbents.

Californios for Fair Representation did, of course, have some support behind it going into the 1981 redistricting cycle. The Latino community's growth from 1970 to 1980 meant that the line-drawers in 1981 would have to take the Latino community into account, and it gave CFR some concrete facts to use to attract media attention. In addition, thanks to the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College, Latinos had access to the computer and the demographic resources required to make an effective case for improving Latino representation to both the incumbent state legislators and in court (where redistricting was generally expected to end up, as it had in the 1970s). And finally, there

³Californios For Fair Representation, August 1981, repeated in The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2, p. 50.

were a number of active Latino organizations in various parts of the state, which could be brought together under the "Californios for Fair Representation" banner to gain publicity and provide the workers required to mount an effective statewide campaign.

The use of these existing Latino organizations suggests how CFR, regardless of its success or failure, was a major advance for the Latino community. Building on previous Latino political activities, which increased Latino political participation and representation primarily at the city and county level, CFR was another advance for Latinos into California's political decision-making arena. However, despite this support, CFR faced an uphill struggle in its fight for "fair representation" for the Latino community.

2. Latino Participation in the Electoral Process

For Latinos, the opportunity and problem both are results of *numbers*: the Latino community's size is growing astronomically, but too many of the new community members either *can not* and/or *do not* vote. If the Latino community does not make its voice heard at the ballot box, it is impossible to attain the power its size would seem to deserve. The Latinos' failure to vote in proportion to their numbers allows politicians such as California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown to get away with quotes such as "[Latinos are] fine people, but if they're not registered to vote, they can't help you very much... If you draw Chicano lines, you're drawing a Chicano seat - *maybe*."⁴ While Latino activists called Brown's remarks "insensitive,

⁴Luther, Claudia. "Latinos May Get Little in Redistricting" Los Angeles Times, April 30, 1981. sec. I, p.3.

arrogant, and disrespectful,"⁵ and accused Brown of suffering from "arrogance of power,"⁶ there was little the Latino community could do but make noise: they have neither the power nor the support in the state legislature to challenge Speaker Brown.

Latinos constituted 19.2 percent of the state's total population in 1980 (with 4.5 million Latinos), and over 45 percent of California's new residents between 1980 and 1985 were Latinos.⁷ The 1990 Census figures show Latinos now make up 26 percent of California's population, the second largest ethnic group in the state after Anglos.

Despite their large percentage of California's population, few Latinos hold an elected office, especially at the state level. Currently, there are four Latinos in the California Assembly, three Latino state senators, and three Latino congressmen.⁸ So Latinos are approximately 20% of California's population, but only 6% of its Congressional and state legislative representatives.

There is a variety of reasons why Latinos vote in such low proportions to their numbers, too complicated to look at in much detail here. However, some basic points must be discussed in order to dispel the stereotypes (as shown by Brown's comments) surrounding the low turnout. The major factor in the low percentage of Latinos voting is, simply, the large number of Latinos that are not American citizens. According to some estimates, as much as "one-third of California's adult Latinos are not citizens."⁹ But this does not account for all of the disparity in participation rates between

⁵Mendoza, Henry. "Speaker Brown's Views About Redistricting Hit" Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1981, sec. I. p.3.

⁶Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

⁷Mireles, Valerie. "Surging toward a Latino state" California Journal, January 1987, p. 19-21.

⁸"Final Election Results" Los Angeles Times, Nov. 8, 1990, sec.I, p. 9.

⁹Mireles, Valerie. "Surging toward a Latino state" California Journal, January 1987, p.19.

Latinos and Anglos. Another factor is the low median age of the Latino population: the median age for Latinos is 25.5, and for non-Latinos it is 32.9.¹⁰ These numbers break down nationally as follows: Latinos make up 8.1% of the U.S. population, but only 7.2% of the voting-age population. And the figure drops to only 4.8% of voting-age citizens. In sum, "While an estimated 72 percent of all non-Latinos are eligible to vote... only 41 percent of all Latinos are eligible."¹¹ In California, the problem is similar to the national problem: 58 percent of Latinos in California are not registered to vote.

While citizenship and youth are two major problems for Latino activists attempting to improve Latino voting participation, they still do not tell the whole story. If they were the only two impediments to participation, Latinos would constitute 4.8 percent of the actual voters. However, Latinos only constitute 3.9 percent of registered voters, and only 3.6 percent of people voting.¹² As Mark DiCamillo of the Field Institute said,

Voting is an act of habit among a segment of the population... and whites, because of their past frequency of voting, have the habit.¹³

There are a number of theories concerning why this "voting habit" has not developed in the Latino community. One idea, advanced by a prominent Latino activist, compares the Latino immigrant's experience with that of earlier immigrant groups, such as the Italians and the Irish: Latino immigrants want what every immigrant want: a job, a place to live, and

¹⁰Brischetto, Robert, "Latino Representation and the 1990 Census" in Redistricting in the 1990's: A Guide for Minority Groups. ed. William O'Hare (Population Reference Bureau, Inc., July 1990) p. 35. [Hereafter referred to as Guide for Minority Groups]

¹¹ibid., p. 36. The data is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census: 1989.

¹²ibid., with data also from the same source, and taken from the Nov. 1988 election.

¹³McLeod, Ramon G. "Minorities Not Going to Polls - Whites Dominate Voter Turnout" San Francisco Chronicle, August 28, 1990

friends. For the Irish and Italians, the 'political machines' in New York, Chicago, or wherever, would get them a job with a regular paycheck, and would assist them in gaining citizenship, with the knowledge that the new citizen would then vote for the candidates of the 'political machine.'

Citizenship, registering to vote, and going out to vote were (according to this theory) all integral parts of the immigrant's settling process. For Latinos, these 'political machines' are not there, and it is left up to the immigrant to become a citizen, register, and vote on his or her own. For any immigrant, the overriding concern is housing and feeding his family: if citizenship and voting are not a part of the housing and feeding process, voting is going to get a very low priority. So the Latino's relatively poor participation rate (under this theory) is not a result of their race or community, but merely a result of the different socialization process they undergo, which results in the "voting habit" failing to develop as completely as among earlier immigrant groups.¹⁴

Another theory points to the socialization Latino immigrants bring from their native countries. In many of these countries politics and politicians are associated with terrorism and repression. For Mexican immigrants in particular, there is a pervasive view of elections as shams, with the victor chosen in advance by the ruling party leadership. Very little is done here in the United States to overcome this negative earlier socialization and to encourage participation in politics.

What these ideas demonstrate is that there are a number of sociological and political factors limiting Latino participation in politics. The common stereotype of Latinos' apathy being responsible for their lack of

¹⁴Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

political influence ignores the reality of the challenges Latinos face in developing the “voting habit.” These theories are more realistic explanations of current low participation rates and offer support for hope that the “voting habit” could still be instilled, especially among the estimated 2.7 million Latinos who will be able to apply for citizenship by 1992 under the 1986 Immigration Reform bill, approximately two million of whom reside in California. CFR was one step in involving the Latino community in politics and voting, and it built upon the earlier Latino advances in the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s. Examples of these earlier political drives include the organization of La Raza Unida political party and Edward Roybal’s races for the Los Angeles City Council, County Supervisor, and Congress.¹⁵

It is difficult to draw election districts with enough Latinos in them to constitute a majority of the population, and, because of the low voting rate of Latinos, drawing a district with enough Latinos to make them a majority of the *population eligible to vote* is even tougher. The *Garza v. County of Los Angeles*¹⁶ case is a classic example of this problem: in order to draw a district in which Latinos constitute a majority of the voters, it was necessary to draw a Supervisorial district with a population that is 71 percent Latino! While the Los Angeles County Supervisors’ districts are an extreme case due to their large size (approximately 1.5 million people in each), this case demonstrates the point that a district’s population must be overwhelmingly Latino in population to give Latinos a majority of the voters. While gerrymandering has “led to a deplorable lack of Chicano representation... and the shortage of political leaders denies the Chicano

¹⁵Interview with Richard Santillan, May 31, 1991

¹⁶*Garza v. County of Los Angeles*, F. Supp. 109 (Central District, California, 1990).

community the powerful personalities around whom it might rally on issues of importance,”¹⁷ it must be realized that long-term maximization of Latino representation requires overcoming not only the traditional gerrymandering, but also the other factors which contribute to their low participation rate.

3. The Historical Gerrymandering of Latinos

To quote California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, “The Hispanic people have little opportunity to correct the redistricting errors of the past because they lack political clout.”¹⁸ While Latinos are the largest minority in California, they consistently vote for Democrats. As far back as the 1950s and 1960s, “Spanish-speaking neighborhoods regularly returned huge Democratic majorities, but they exerted no political power of their own...” Latino communities have been considered by the line-drawers as “putty, to be shaped as necessary to maximize Democratic opportunities.”¹⁹ While on certain narrow issues Latinos vote with Republicans, the dominant trend is to side with the Democratic party.

Such views of the use of the Latino community during redistricting continued into the 1970s, when California entered the redistricting cycle with only two Latinos in the state legislature (Assemblymen Alex P. Garcia and Peter Chacon), and one Latino Congressman (Edward Roybal). In 1970 “less than 2 percent of the state’s elected officials” were Latinos.²⁰ The

¹⁷Santillan, Richard. “For Chicanos, a Louder Voice” Los Angeles Times. Mar. 5, 1981; sec. II, p. 7.

¹⁸Californios, p. 50.

¹⁹Quinn, Tony. Redrawing the Lines, 1961: A Study of the Redistricting Process in California (The Rose Institute of State and Local Government).

²⁰Santillan, Dr. Richard. “California Reapportionment and the Chicano Community: An Historical Overview 1960-1980” The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1. (Claremont, CA;

Latino assemblymen introduced a bill calling for the creation of “six to eight Assembly seats, two or three Senatorial seats, and two or three Congressional seats” for Latinos.²¹ Despite their numbers in the state and the first attempts by Latinos to lobby for more seats,²² the Latino community was again dismembered in the name of incumbent protection: “East Los Angeles was hung there, like a side of beef, for incumbent senators to hack and slice at to insure that their districts would be spiced with the proper light proportions of Mexicans.”²³ The Latinos’ only gain in the Assembly, State Senate, and Congressional plans drawn in 1971 was one Latino assemblyman.²⁴

Due to a stalemate between the Democrat-controlled legislature and Republican Governor Ronald Reagan, the 1970s redistricting ended up in the hands of the State Supreme Court, which drew its own lines, resulting in four Latinos in the Assembly in 1980, three Latinos in the State Senate, and one Latino congressman. While the Court’s plan did increase Latino representation, the increase was “certainly not an increase at all comparable to their state population at the time.”²⁵

In the 1960s and again in the 1970s, the Latinos were excluded from the line-drawing. Acknowledgement of the Latinos’ concerns was made in the 1970s, but when the actual lines were drawn by the legislature, the

The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1981) p. 49-50. [Hereafter referred to as The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1]

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 56

²² Various Latino activists organized in different parts of the state, but there was no unified statewide organization (see The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1 for additional detail on these groups)

²³ Sillas, Herman. “Dear State Senators: Whatever Happened to East Los Angeles? (It’s Missing),” Los Angeles Times. Feb. 21, 1973., as in The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1, p.66.

²⁴ The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1., p. 69

²⁵ *ibid.*

Latino communities were again hacked up “like a side of beef.” The Democratic party, which controlled the legislature’s line-drawing in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, consistently ignored the wishes of the Latino community:

The Democratic political leadership during periods of redistricting has deliberately dispersed Chicano voters throughout many districts in order to maximize the number of Democratic candidates who would be guaranteed a significant number of Chicano “hip-pocket” votes. The direct result has been the dilution of Chicano voting strength, making it extremely difficult for Chicanos to elect their own candidates or to present themselves as a powerful voting bloc capable of influencing the decisions of either party.²⁶

The Latino community in the 1970s was unable or unwilling to punish the Democrats, and continued to vote solidly for Democrats. One attempt at independence by Latinos in the 1970s consisted of the formation of their own party, La Raza Unida. But La Raza Unida eventually disbanded, stripping the Latino threat to desert the Democratic party of its force, and by 1980 the Latino community once again solidly supported the Democratic party.²⁷

4. Incumbent Protection - Redistricting’s Driving Force

There is one constant in redistricting, regardless of year, state, and partisan control: when incumbents draw the lines, the incumbents will be protected. In the words of Jesse Unruh, Speaker of the California Assembly in the 1960s, “Reapportionment is designed by incumbents, for incumbents, as a service to incumbents.”²⁸ In the 1970s, the same idea

²⁶Santillan, Richard. “For Chicanos, a Louder Voice” Los Angeles Times op-ed, Mar. 5, 1981; sec. II, p.7.

²⁷Santillan, Richard. “The Latino Community in State and Congressional Redistricting: 1961-1985” Journal of Hispanic Politics. Vol. 1, No. 1., 1985. p. 56-69

²⁸The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1, p. 38.

came up again from Walter Karabian, Assembly Majority Leader: “When you start talking about reapportionment you’re talking about a man’s political career.... I can’t envision legislation which would sacrifice the present incumbents.”²⁹ Again in the 1980s, this time from Assembly Speaker Willie Brown: “You cannot, and I don’t think the house will support, dismembering any incumbent just to achieve a racial minority district.”³⁰ Latinos have run head-on into this ‘brick wall’ of incumbent-protection redistricting which locks Latinos out of all but a few offices. In the line-drawings done by the Democratic-controlled California state legislature in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Latinos gained a total of *one* Assembly seat (1971 plan) , and *two* Congressional seats (1981). These results are over a *thirty-year* period!³¹

Partisanship is a distant second to self-preservation when it comes to redistricting. However, one of the more curious aspects of redistricting is the alliance between Republicans and Latinos which appeared for the first time during the 1970s and was repeated in equally shaky form in the 1980s. This ‘alliance’ was driven by pure self-interest, as Republicans dropped any pretense of supporting Latino empowerment as soon as the talk turned to making *Republican* districts into Latino districts. Phil Burton’s 1981 threat to change Republican Congressman John Roussetot’s district into a Latino district (which eventually elected Matthew Martinez)³² shattered the never-

²⁹The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1, p. 38.

³⁰Luther, Claudia. “Latinos May Get Little in Redistricting” Los Angeles Times, April 30, 1981, p. 3+.

³¹Note that Latinos did gain an additional three Latino state senate seats from the 1973 plan done by the State Supreme Court’s Masters.

³²Quinn, Tony. Carving Up California: A History of Redistricting in California, 1951-1984. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1986), p.25-6.

solid alliance in 1981, as the Republicans fought just as hard to protect their incumbents from Latino encroachment as did incumbent Democrats.³³

Jesse Unruh's testimony on redistricting before the California Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights summarizes the "incumbency protection" focus of the redistricting process:

I would suggest,... [incumbency protection] is what would govern this reapportionment at both the Assembly, the Senate and Congressional level. That is the way it is done.... They will first of all make a deal to protect themselves. Secondly, they will attempt to give their party whatever advantage there is. Thirdly, they will look after other groups who manage to get the most pressure on them after that.³⁴

Even an organized, effective movement and lobbying effort would still only be fighting for the leftovers of each redistricting.

5. The Media Before Californios for Fair Representation

While the 1970s did see the beginning of support in the mainstream media for the Latino struggle for empowerment, there was still a general lack of interest and a widespread belief that the Latinos were incapable of organizing a serious statewide political movement and turning out to vote in very large numbers. "We had a real credibility problem in terms of the 'establishment' [including the media] accepting our figures and our statements".³⁵ The Latinos' inexperience with the redistricting issue and lack of knowledge concerning how to involve, educate, and use the press in pursuit of the Latinos' goals were a definite drawback. There was also a

³³ibid., p. 26-7

³⁴ Unruh, Jesse, in Navarro, Carlos, unpublished dissertation, California Redistricting and Representation: Los Angeles County's Chicano Community. (1982) p. 37-8

³⁵ ibid., p.69

deeper misunderstanding of the Latinos' situation by the media which influenced the coverage of the Latinos' attempts to improve representation in the 1970. One quote is particularly revealing of the media's lack of awareness of the real obstacles facing Latino activists:

The failure of the Mexican-American community to press its case in redistricting....[in part resulted from] little in the way of assistance coming from Mexican-American political and community groups.... there was no organized pressure on legislators to bring into the open the community's stake in the redistricting process. In fact, pronounced apathy marked the Mexican-American community during the entire redistricting process.³⁶

The media fail to acknowledge the real obstacles to Latino empowerment, such as the widespread lack of citizenship, and the shortage of upper-class Latinos who could bankroll an effective representation drive. The dismissal of gerrymandering of the Latino community as easily preventable if the Latinos just were not so "apathetic," does grave injustice to the Latino community and provides a giant obstacle which must be overcome before Latinos can begin to influence the line-drawers in the state legislature. Latinos must demonstrate that they are a political group capable of organizing and mobilizing in sufficient strength to command the attention of the media and the legislators before Latinos can even expect to have any real influence on the actual line-drawing. *Californios for Fair Representation* was an attempt to do that.

³⁶Rosenlieb, Jay "Racial Politics and Representation: Chicanos and Redistricting" Claremont Journal of Public Affairs, vol. 7 (summer 1980), p. 40-43, reprinted in The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1, p. 133. He is referring to the 1970s redistricting cycle.

6. Californios for Fair Representation

In January of 1981, the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College sponsored a conference called "California Redistricting and the Chicano Community in the 1980s," which brought together Latino activists from across the state. The activists, some of whom were involved in previous Latino attempts to improve representation and others who were newcomers to the redistricting issue but had been active in organizing the Latino community on other issues, discussed presenting a united front to the public, the media, and, most importantly, the state legislature for the 1981 redistricting cycle.³⁷ Many of these activists met again at Claremont McKenna College on April 25 and formally organized Californios for Fair Representation,³⁸ with the stated purpose "to transform the dream of fair representation into reality," according to CFR's executive director, Armando Navarro. More specifically, CFR set out three tasks for itself:

(1) establishing a statewide coalition of Latino groups under the CFR umbrella; (2) providing spokespersons to testify before the Assembly and Senate Committees on Elections and Reapportionment; and (3) developing, presenting, and lobbying for CFR Assembly, Senate, and Congressional model redistricting plans.³⁹

Californios for Fair Representation brought together in one organization local groups already working on redistricting in the San Jose and Fresno areas, and organized local groups in other areas with sizeable Latino populations. Where large Latino populations existed but no one was

³⁷Santillan, Richard. The Rose Institute's Chicano/Hispanic Project, (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1982)

³⁸ The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2. p.55.

³⁹ibid.

active on the redistricting issue, the statewide CFR staff encouraged local Latino activists to get involved in redistricting. CFR's full-time staffers researched who were the active Latinos in the area and convinced them of the importance of becoming involved in the redistricting process. These recruited leaders then brought their existing grass-roots organizations into play in support of CFR. Either CFR-organized groups or groups affiliated with CFR were active in attempting to improve representation for Latinos in Sacramento, Santa Clara/San Jose, Salinas, Fresno, San Bernardino/Riverside, San Diego, Orange County, and Los Angeles.⁴⁰

Each of the local organizations lobbied their legislators and brought speakers and observers to the hearings held by the state legislature around the state. CFR left most of the negotiating and local planning to the local branches, while the statewide CFR organization provided technical and demographic information and coordinated the local groups' activities.

One of the biggest changes in the actions of CFR from previous Latino efforts to influence redistricting was that CFR drew detailed redistricting proposals. In order to do this, CFR utilized the computer equipment made available to them by the Rose Institute. CFR's research arm surveyed all the local branches of CFR, and then combined their suggestions into computer-drawn proposals. These proposals were released to the press, and served as a template for all other plans to be compared against (especially the plan actually drawn by the state legislature).

⁴⁰Interview with Armando Navarro on Nov. 12, 1990

7. Californios and the Media

The presentation to the media of Californios for Fair Representation's proposed districts provides an example of one area where CFR was very successful: maximizing media exposure. CFR's proposals were the topic of newspaper articles across the state, including (but not limited to) the San Jose Mercury, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Sacramento Bee, and the Los Angeles Times (which had three articles on the proposed assembly plan alone). This statewide coverage was the result of hard work on CFR's part, which had already familiarized the media with CFR through a number of earlier press conferences. With its staff carefully coordinating simultaneous press conferences, CFR demonstrated to the press that CFR was a group with statewide influence.

Another aspect of this impressive media exposure campaign by the Californios for Fair Representation was the Latinos' domination of the hearings held across the state by the Assembly and State Senate redistricting committees. Article after article referred to CFR-affiliated speakers dominating the committee hearings: "A parade of witnesses representing Latino groups made a renewed pitch for increased legislative representation," said the Los Angeles Times.⁴¹ Later in the year, the Sacramento Bee reported "A parade of witnesses from Chicano organizations testified in support of uniting San Jose's Hispanic neighborhoods."⁴² Other tactics employed by CFR in earning media exposure included picketing, bringing local activists to Sacramento to lobby

⁴¹Gillam, Jerry, and Claudia Luther. "L.A. County Latinos Promised Chance for More Legislators" Los Angeles Times, March 7, 1981; sec. II, p. 1.

⁴²Cooper, Claire. "Reapportionment Plan Threatens San Jose Assemblymen" The Sacramento Bee, March 14, 1981; p. A5.

the incumbents, candlelight vigils, and, in its biggest media event, a sit-in in the State Capitol building which resulted in eleven members of CFR being arrested in front of news cameras from across the state.⁴³ Coverage of the sit-in extended nationwide, with televised reports on stations from as far away as Washington State.⁴⁴

Media exposure was essential to the Latinos in the 1981 redistricting cycle because CFR lacked the financial resources to do many of the typical lobbying methods (television advertisements, targeted mailings, etc.), and had to find another method of establishing itself as an organized and influential group. As Jesse Unruh's classic observation states, "Money is the mother's milk of politics," and CFR was severely lacking that 'mother's milk.'⁴⁵

To gain respect from the media and the state legislature, CFR turned to motivating the local activists of the Latino community. By bringing thirty, fifty, or a hundred speakers to a redistricting committee hearing, CFR appeared to command a considerable following among Latinos: even if there was very little political activism among the Latino community as a whole, there was a group of very active Latinos who turned up at different hearings across the state. "The few made themselves appear to be many," in the words of one such Latino activist.⁴⁶ As Armando Navarro, CFR's Executive Director, put it, "If people think you've got power, you've got power... 'media magic' is key."⁴⁷ By turning out at least 15 to 30 Latinos for

⁴³Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

⁴⁴Interview with Dr. Richard Santillan on Nov. 27, 1990.

⁴⁵Total expenditures by Californios for Fair Representation have been estimated to be \$22,500, compared to budgets for each of the State Legislature's redistricting committees which reached into the millions, according to The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2, p. 55.

⁴⁶Interview with Dr. Richard Santillan on Nov. 27, 1990.

⁴⁷Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

each committee hearing, CFR forced the incumbents and media to listen to what it had to say.

Organizing a large turnout at redistricting hearings was one of the central roles of each local branch of CFR. This involved a number of steps: identifying and motivating activists in the local Latino community, discussing with them the importance of the redistricting issue for the Latino community at large, and getting them to show up and speak at the hearings.⁴⁸ At this task, CFR excelled. The organization's very name, "Californios," appealed to a sense of pride among Latinos, by reminding them that they were here before California was even a part of the United States, and, while they used to run this state, they have been thrown out of power and must struggle for fair representation. CFR also emphasized the importance of increased Latino representation to virtually every issue affecting the Latino community, from bilingual education to crime to low-cost housing.⁴⁹ Through hard work, long hours, and thousands of miles of driving up and down the state,⁵⁰ Californios for Fair Representation overcame the Latinos' traditional feelings of alienation and their resulting lack of participation in the American political process, and CFR earned statewide exposure and respect as a serious political movement. Regardless of any representational gains, this respect for Latinos as a serious political force is a major gain for the Latino community. As one Los Angeles Times reporter wrote, "If there is one thing that [Assembly Elections and Reapportionment Committee chairman and Latino] Alatorre

⁴⁸Interview with Pedro Carrillo on Oct. 20, 1990

⁴⁹Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

⁵⁰ibid.

and his loyal opposition in Californios proved this year, it is that Latinos are capable of more political sophistication than they have shown in the past.”⁵¹

8. Did CFR Improve Latino Representation?

Success at motivating local Latino groups, acknowledgement of Latinos as a serious force in California politics, and success at influencing the media can all be cited by CFR as major gains for the Latino community that continue to this day. The CFR experience contributed to later gains by Latinos, including victory in the *Garza* case and Gloria Molina's election as the first Latino Los Angeles County Supervisor. However, CFR was formed “to transform the dream of fair representation into reality,” and the primary measure of judging CFR's success must be whether or not Latino representation was improved.

At first glance, the changes in representation for the Latino community are disappointing: there was “not much to brag about” as far as increased representation of Latinos was concerned.⁵² Before redistricting, there were four Latino assemblymen and three Latino state senators in the California state legislature, and, after redistricting, those numbers remain the same. However, at the Congressional level (the “safety valve” of California redistricting, as new seats do not have sitting incumbents needing protection⁵³), CFR made excellent strides, as another Latino-majority district was created, and a third Latino managed to play off two Anglo challengers against each other to win in a 47% Latino district that

⁵¹del Olmo, Frank. “Latinos Get a Break in Assembly Remapping” Los Angeles Times. Nov. 5, 1981; sec. II, p.11.

⁵²Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

⁵³Ibid.

was actually drawn for an Anglo Democrat. Latinos tripled their numbers in the California Congressional delegation. Though in some parts of the state the Latino community is still split between districts, the Latinos' attempts at the Congressional level were a success, especially when contrasted with the complete lack of new Latinos at the Assembly and State Senate levels.

But whether CFR's attempts at improving representation at the state Assembly and State Senate levels was a complete failure since no new Latinos were elected to the state legislature depends on whom you ask, as there are a number of divergent views on this issue:

(1) Latinos made "major gains" at the Assembly level with the creation of sixteen Assembly districts with thirty percent or more Latino population, even if no new Latinos were actually elected, says one leader of the San Jose branch of CFR,⁵⁴ and "Four or five of the [seven] local branches of Californios were pleased" with the increased concentrations of Latinos in the Assembly districts in their areas, even though the concentrations were still not high enough to elect a Latino.⁵⁵

(2) "Latinos have won important victories in the Assembly and Congressional reapportionment plans but have lost ground in the Senate plan" concludes John Huerta, associate counsel of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and CFR steering committee member.⁵⁶

(3) Dr. Santillan and Dr. Carlos Navarro concluded, "While it is true that CFR redistricting gains fell short of their goals, CFR did have a

⁵⁴Interview with Pedro Carillo on Oct. 20, 1990

⁵⁵Interview with Dr. Richard Santillan on Nov. 27, 1990.

⁵⁶Huerta, John. "For Latinos, Reapportionment Is Representation" Los Angeles Times, Sept. 27, 1981; sec. IV, p.3.

significant impact upon the 1981 redistricting by forcing the legislature to increase the level of Latino political influence in several Congressional and Assembly districts.”⁵⁷

(4) Non-Latino observers, including Tony Quinn in his book Carving Up California, were generally more negative: “In the end, [CFR] went meekly along with the Democrats,... In the past two redistrictings, Hispanic communities had been divided to spread their voting base among various Anglo Democrats... exactly the same thing happened again.”⁵⁸ “What [Alatorre] gave the Hispanics was meaningless: they could not elect an Hispanic in any of these new ‘over 30 percent Latino’ districts.”⁵⁹

Whether the 1980s redistricting was a major gain or just a few minor victories for Latinos cannot be decided simply by looking at how many Latinos were elected. With a pure ‘number of Latinos elected’ measure, CFR was definitely a failure. But ‘representation’ is more than just having members of your ethnic group elected. Defining “Representation” is far beyond the scope of this paper, but it is generally acknowledged to include a consideration of the ability of a group to have its concerns listened to and acted upon. Latino activists proclaiming the increased number of ‘influence’ (30% Latino or greater) Assembly districts a success say that incumbents from these districts now pay more attention to Latino concerns and appear more often at Latino forums and events. These incumbents also often support Latinos in races for local offices such as school board, city council, and county supervisor.⁶⁰ It appears true that the changes at the

⁵⁷The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2, p. 76-7.

⁵⁸Carving up California, p. 13-14.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 52.

⁶⁰Pedro Carrillo made a special point of Assemblyman John Vasconcellos’s noticeably increased involvement in the San Jose Latino community after Vasconcellos’s district increased from 22.3%

Assembly level aided in improving Latino representation at the local level. But this is not enough to claim victory. The key to the declarations of victory for 'influence districts' is that such districts "make it likely that Latinos will be elected in seven districts with 40 percent or more Latino population... If they use their growing political clout well, Latinos can at least insure that there are more Latino incumbents in the Assembly 10 years from now, when the time will come to slice up the pie again."⁶¹ The assumption made by the writer of this article, and by most of the activists who proclaimed the 30 percent districts a victory, was that such districts would be possible for a Latino to win when the incumbent retired or moved up, allowing an 'open' election, where there is no 'incumbent advantage' for the Latino candidate to contend with. The complication that developed in the 1980s is that, of those 16 Assembly districts over 30 percent Latino, two are controlled by blacks and five others still have the same incumbent today in 1990 that they had in 1980! After excluding the three Latino-majority Assembly districts already held by Latinos before the 1980 redistricting⁶², that leaves Latinos chances in only the six Assembly seats which were 'open' at least once from 1982 to 1990 (ADs 25, 31, 33, 35, 72, 80). Of these six, only one (AD 80) is over the forty percent Latino mark, and that one is only 49.5% Democratic,⁶³ making it all but impossible for a Latino to win in any of these districts (Stephen Peace, an Anglo Democrat, was elected to represent AD 80). Though it appeared after 1981 that the Latinos would increase their numbers in the California Assembly during the 1980s,

Latino to 31.6% Latino, (figures from California Redistricting '81, the Morrill/Rose Institute Model Plan and The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2, p.110)

⁶¹del Olmo, Frank. "Latinos Get a Break in Assembly Remapping" Los Angeles Times, Nov. 5, 1981; sec. II, p.11.

⁶²Latino Peter Chacon's 79th AD is only 25% Latino according to 1980 Census data.

⁶³Eu, March Fong. Report of Registration (California Secretary of State, October 1990) p.43.

incumbents staying in their safe seats and the increasing Republican population in the eightieth Assembly district combined to block any gains by Latinos in the Assembly. Many Latinos still point to the increased attention and support paid by the incumbents to Latino candidates and issues, but the fact is that while such attention to Latino issues is a major gain, the support for Latino candidates ends abruptly above the county supervisorial level: should any Latino attempt to run against the incumbent in one of these 'influence' districts, he or she would suddenly find the incumbent pulling out all the stops to defeat him or her. So this 'support for Latino candidates' is a dead-end as far as long-term representational gains for the Latino community is concerned.

While CFR's success at improving registration at the Assembly level is still debated, it is universally acknowledged that the State Senate redistricting plan was a disaster for Latinos. Senator Daniel Boatwright, chairman of the Senate Elections and Reapportionment Committee, raised Latinos' hopes in early 1981 when he repeatedly pledged to increase Latino representation:

It is absolutely essential that we create new Latino seats in Los Angeles County... I can tell you that they [Latinos] will get far better representation in terms of numbers than they have now... The unfortunate activities [gerrymandering Latino communities] of past decades should not, and will not, be repeated."⁶⁴

Senator Boatwright, however, could not deliver on his promises. In the words of Armando Navarro, "When it came time to produce, [Sen. Boatwright] did not produce."⁶⁵ According to CFR, the State Senate plan

⁶⁴Gillam, Jerry, and Claudia Luther, "L.A. County Latinos Promised Chance for More Legislators" Los Angeles Times. Mar. 7, 1981; sec. II, p. 1.

⁶⁵Gillam, Jerry, and Claudia Luther. "Democrats in State Senate Unveil Redistricting Plan" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 3, 1981; sec. I, p.1.

dispersed the Latino communities in Los Angeles, Fresno, and Santa Clara counties. In San Jose, the Latino community was split between *four* State Senate districts, the most Latino district having only a 25 percent Latino population. The plan protected the two existing Latino State Senate districts, making one 71 percent Latino and the other 54.1 percent Latino, but left no other districts over thirty percent Latino:⁶⁶

Latinos... have lost ground in the Senate plan.... The State Senate design... is absolutely devastating to all Latinos who live outside Orange County... for the rest of California it provides no opportunity for increased representation despite Latino population growth.... Latino political groups have yet to decide whether to challenge the final outcome in the courts.⁶⁷

The Latino community faced a major dilemma once the redistricting lines were signed into law. Some members of CFR felt that the lines drawn, especially for the State Senate, violated the Voting Rights Act, and that Latinos should challenge the plans in court. Other Latinos were satisfied with the 'influence districts' in the Assembly and the new Latino Congressional districts, and did not wish to antagonize further the Democrats in the legislature.

One consideration against starting a lawsuit was that a number of difficulties faced any court challenge, the most daunting of which was the enormous cost of seeing a lawsuit all the way through the legal system to the State Supreme Court (and possibly all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court). By the time the plans were signed, Californios for Fair Representation had disbanded due to a lack of money for the statewide organization and a shift of focus to local issues and elections by many of the

⁶⁶La Ganga, Maria. "Latino Group Urges Veto of Remapping" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 5, 1981; sec. I, p. 24.

⁶⁷Huerta, John. "For Latinos, Reapportionment Is Representation" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 27, 1981; sec. IV, p. 3.

local branches, such as the Los Angeles CFR branch's push for Latino representation on the city council.⁶⁸ Another hindrance was that many local groups were happy with the Assembly and Congressional plans, and were willing to live with the senate plan on the grounds that two out of three was much better than previous Latino experience, and they did not wish to antagonize further the incumbents (whom they must work with on other issues).⁶⁹

Another consideration was the argument from the Democrats in the legislature, who argued (and MALDEF eventually agreed with them) that they lacked sufficient legal grounds to challenge the plans under the Voting Rights Act which existed at the time (note that this is before the 1982 amendments). At the time, the key test for discrimination was the 'regression test,' under which a plan is legal as long as it does not actually degrade a minority group's representation. MALDEF claimed the plans all met this standard. However, one MALDEF representative was already on the record saying "Latinos... have lost ground in the Senate plan."⁷⁰ According to the Rose Institute's analysis, "In Santa Clara County, there has been a dispersal of Hispanic votes."⁷¹ The Latino community in Fresno suffered a similar dispersal under the senate plan. While it is possible that the problems of the State Senate plan were, indeed, insufficient for legal challenge, that is open to debate. In fact, the Republican Party actually set out to challenge all three of the Democratic plans on Voting Rights Act grounds, and had discussions with Latino activists concerning their acting

⁶⁸Personal Interview with Armando Navarro on Nov.12, 1990

⁶⁹Personal Interviews with Pedro Carrillo (on Oct. 20, 1990) and Richard Santillan (on Nov. 27, 1990)

⁷⁰Huerta, John. "For Latinos, Reapportionment Is Representation" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 27, 1981; sec. IV, p. 3.

⁷¹Analysis of Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plans. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1981), p.1.

as plaintiffs in the case. However, in one of the many moments of shortsightedness that marked the California Republican Party's conduct in the 1980 redistricting cycle, the Republicans stopped pursuing the case just before it went to court in order to focus the party's energy on the Sebastiani redistricting initiative, and, in so doing, ignored their Latino allies, who, of course, did not appreciate such treatment and told the Republican party they no longer had any desire to be a part of the Republicans' lawsuit. The Republicans eventually lost Sebastiani to a legal challenge and wanted to return to the original lawsuit approach,⁷² but the opportunity was gone.

There seems to have been at least the groundwork to justify a lawsuit on voting-rights grounds. While no one outside of MALDEF's discussions at the time can say for certain, their reason for not going to court could have been similar to one of the reasons behind many of CFR's local groups opposition to a lawsuit: a reluctance to antagonize the Democratic incumbents, and a desire to move on to other issues. In MALDEF's case, the "other issues" included lawsuits against both the city and county of Los Angeles, charging unlawful dilution of Latino voting power (MALDEF eventually won both cases).

9. Assemblyman Vasconcellos and the San Jose Californios

What happened in redistricting Santa Clara County is a classic example of the victories and losses of Californios for Fair Representation statewide. Over the course of approximately eight months, the local branch of Californios went through a number of stages: setting of grand goals for

⁷²Interview with Dr. Richard Santillan on Nov. 27, 1990.

Latino representation; generating an impressive amount of media coverage and support; negotiating with local incumbents (on both friendly and not-so-friendly terms); running into the 'brick wall' of incumbency protection; and, finally, compromise with the Democratic establishment resulting in an 'influence district.' This district failed to elect a Latino to state-level office in the 1980s, but its incumbent is now more open to and involved with Latino concerns and willing to support Latinos for local office,⁷³ resulting in increased representation for Latinos at the local level, though not at the state level.

CFR in the San Jose area was led by Pedro Carrillo, who had already formed the Committee for Fair Reapportionment to fight for improved representation for Latinos in San Jose prior to the organization of CFR. The Committee for Fair Reapportionment joined the Californios organization, and set about its first goal: winning respect and exposure from the local media, which in the Santa Clara Valley consists primarily of the San Jose Mercury News (the San Jose Californios also received attention from media outside of the Santa Clara Valley, most notably from the Sacramento Bee⁷⁴).

A column by Mercury News reporter Dale Lane supporting the Latinos appeared in the San Jose Mercury News in February of 1981, and was quickly followed by a supportive editorial in March.⁷⁵ Then, in June, Pedro Carrillo and Dale Lane traveled down to the the Rose Institute at

⁷³Interview with Pedro Carrillo on Oct. 20, 1990.

⁷⁴Cooper, Claire. "Reapportionment Plan Threatens San Jose Assemblymen" Sacramento Bee. Mar. 14, 1981; p. A5.

⁷⁵Lane, Dale. "Hispanics lobby for 'safe' districts after realignment" San Jose Mercury News, Feb. 18, 1981; and "Politics and Reapportionment" San Jose Mercury News editorial, Mar. 6, 1981.

Claremont McKenna College to look at the possibilities for Latinos in the Santa Clara Valley:

With the aid of... a political science major at Claremont, the Mercury News fed specifications into the Rose computer for a hypothetical San Jose Assembly district likely to be favorable for a Hispanic candidate... The "district"... is not a proposal, just an example of what could be done.... This make-believe unit has a Hispanic population of 38.7 percent. Pedro Carrillo... said his computer work shows it is possible to devise a San Jose district with 44 percent Hispanic population. "That would be ideal," he said.⁷⁶

This interaction between Carrillo and the Mercury News reporter, and the chance for the media to be so immersed in the details of the redistricting process, were major factors in the support for CFR in the Mercury News, which included the eventual endorsement by the San Jose Mercury's editorial board of the redistricting plans proposed by CFR (the only plan to receive such an endorsement from the Mercury News).⁷⁷

Once successful with the media, Carrillo and the Californios focused their attention on the local incumbents. CFR and the incumbents negotiated on a variety of points, including what CFR considered the actual boundaries of the Latino community that should be unified in one district (to create Carrillo's 44 percent Latino district), and the incumbents' concerns regarding losing their political bases to the new district.

While Carrillo felt that the incumbents were receptive to CFR's messages, there were definite obstacles to the creation of a Latino district:

"Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, who supported Hispanics on most issues and was a strong voice for affirmative action in the Legislature, bitterly resented the notion that he should give

⁷⁶Lane, Dale. "Redistricting: Hispanics clash with incumbent legislators" San Jose Mercury News. June 9, 1981; p.3B

⁷⁷Interview with Pedro Carrillo on Oct. 20, 1990

up his own seat to make room for an Hispanic. Affirmative action stopped at reapportionment's door."⁷⁸

The other Santa Clara Valley incumbents were even more reluctant to sacrifice the Latino parts of their districts: "It makes no sense for a Democratic Legislature to concentrate all those votes in one district,"⁷⁹ said Assemblyman Alister McAlister.

In CFR's Assembly district proposal, CFR gave in to the incumbents' concerns about protecting Anglo Democrat Dominic Cortese (a first-term incumbent, who won his seat in 1980 with a slim 1,000 vote margin) and proposed a district only 34 percent Latino,⁸⁰ abandoning their initial hopes for a 44 percent Latino district and choosing not to follow the Rose Institute's Model Plan, which collapsed Cortese's district and included a 37 percent Latino district in San Jose.⁸¹ The district eventually passed by the state legislature (and endorsed by Carrillo and other Latinos) kept Cortese's Latinos in his district (which became 19 percent Latino), and made Vasconcellos's district 32 percent Latino. While this was a gain for Latinos, in that they went from 24 to 32 percent of Vasconcellos's district and much of the Latino community was unified in that district,⁸² there were two major disappointments for CFR: the Latinos in Cortese's district were isolated; and the remaining Latino community was put in Vasconcellos's district, instead of McAlister's. This second point was important because McAlister was planning to run in 1982 for a State Senate seat specifically designed for him,⁸³ leaving his Assembly seat open. A seat

⁷⁸Carving Up California, p. 13.

⁷⁹Lane, Dale. "Hispanics threaten court action to gain legislative seats" San Jose Mercury, June 11, 1990; p. 11A.

⁸⁰The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2, p. 110.

⁸¹California Redistricting 1981. The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1981.

⁸²Interview with Pedro Carrillo on Oct. 20, 1990

⁸³Carving Up California, p. 14.

being open is one key to Latinos having a shot at any district, especially in the less-than-majority-Latino 'influence' districts. Assemblyman Vasconcellos, on the other hand, is still in office today in 1990. Vaconcellos's continued tenure representing the 25th Assembly District has effectively 'locked out' Latinos from a shot at an Assembly seat in the Santa Clara Valley.

The state legislature's Senate and Congressional plans for the Santa Clara Valley were disastrous for Latinos. The Latino community was split among a number of Anglo Democratic incumbents in classic 'dispersal-gerrymander' fashion. The Latino community in San Jose, though too small to make up a majority of even one State Senate or Congressional district, was split by the Democrats between *four* State Senate districts (SDs 11, 12, 13, and 17, with Latino populations of 7, 16, 23, and 23 percent, respectively) and between *three* Congressional districts! (CDs 10, 12, and 13, with Latino populations of 28, 10, and 12 percent, respectively). The division of Santa Clara County in the Senate plan was so blatant that Assemblymen Vasconcellos, McAlister, and Cortese all refused to vote in favor of them.

One fact to note is that overall CFR did have some success in negotiations with the incumbents, and the result was the 'influence' Assembly district. Pedro Carrillo attributes this gain in large part to the give-and-take between the incumbents and CFR. While it is impossible to theorize what a more militant approach would have gained, it is interesting to consider what prompted Carrillo and the Santa Clara Valley Californios to adopt the more accommodating approach towards the incumbents, as opposed to the more militant approach advocated by some members of CFR. While it can be understood why CFR in general might choose the compromising approach, Carrillo is generally viewed as a "militant, grass-

roots activist,” and a member of the more militant wing of the Latino community in San Jose.⁸⁴ But, in redistricting, Latinos are challenging the same legislators who were usually the Latinos’ allies on many other issues. A desire to avoid antagonizing these legislators and the Democratic establishment undoubtedly played a role in the decision to take a less-militant approach.

Pedro Carrillo and the Santa Clara Valley Californios, in the end, were “very pleased” with the creation of the ‘influence’ district, mainly because of the increased support for the Latino community that Assemblyman Vasconcellos gave after redistricting, including Vasconcellos’s support for Latino candidates (including Carrillo) in local campaigns for school boards and city council during the 1980s.⁸⁵ This support aided the San Jose Latino community in being “quite effective” at winning local offices, and contributed to the feeling in the San Jose and other (outside of Los Angeles) local branches of CFR that they did not feel a lawsuit was necessary: CFR felt it “did well enough to want to continue to work within the process,”⁸⁶ despite the failure to gain any Latino legislators from Santa Clara County.

10. The Lessons of the CFR Experience

In 1983 and 1984, a survey was conducted of eleven of the top figures from the Californios for Fair Representation organization, asking them what were the major strengths, weaknesses, and lessons of the CFR

⁸⁴Interview with Dale Lane on Nov. 30, 1990.

⁸⁵Interview with Pedro Carrillo on Oct. 20, 1990

⁸⁶Interview with Dale Lane on Nov. 30, 1990

experience. The survey results pronounced CFR's success at bringing together virtually all of California's diverse Latino organizations in one organization and CFR's effective use of the media to improve Latinos' political image and influence the two major strengths of CFR. According to the CFR leadership, the most serious weakness was the shortage of funding: \$22,500 is simply not enough money to maintain a statewide organization for an extended period of time, no matter how dedicated its members. The two most important lessons of the Californios for Fair Representation experience were that the Latino community is able to unify and mobilize statewide on an issue when given the proper leadership and support, and that the self-preservation instinct is all-encompassing for state legislators when it comes to redistricting.⁸⁷ Pedro Carrillo also notes the importance of having Latinos in positions of influence within the state legislature, as the Latinos' gains of 'influence districts' were in part a result of Assemblyman Alatorre's influence as chairman of the Assembly Elections and Reapportionment Committee.⁸⁸

Dr. Santillan and Dr. Armando Navarro consider CFR's experiences with the media one of the major lessons of the 1980s redistricting cycle for Latinos: with effective use of the media, "the few can appear to be many," and groups lacking the money to conduct typical television and targeted mailing campaigns can achieve similar influence by convincing the media (and, through the media, the state legislature) that they are a major political force that must be acknowledged and listened to. "If people think you've got power, you've got power."⁸⁹

⁸⁷The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2, p. 74-76

⁸⁸Interview with Pedro Carrillo on Oct.20, 1990.

⁸⁹Interviews with Armando Navarro (on Nov. 12) and Dr. Richard Santillan (on Nov. 27, 1990).

Another lesson for Latinos pushing for improved representation today is that, while Latinos within the state legislature can be a great help in opening doors and pushing Latinos' positions, they can also be a definite threat to 'outside' Latino movements. CFR was hurt by Latino legislators' public remarks criticizing the organization: then-Assemblyman Matthew Martinez, for one, said CFR showed "a total lack of sophistication."⁹⁰ While CFR already had a solid reputation with the media by that point, such comments could destroy an organization's credibility if they came earlier in the redistricting cycle.

Latino incumbents also complicated CFR's work by preferring to strengthen their own districts' Latino percentages rather than give up some of their Latino constituents for use in creating a new Latino district. Assembly district 56 (now held by a Latina, Lucille Roybal-Allard) is a classic example, having a 78 percent Latino population. While the elections of these incumbents to office were all advances for the Latino community, CFR, like La Raza Unida in the 1970s, was especially important due to its focus on the Latino community rather than on any one Latino candidate.

Two of the most important lessons for Latinos as they approach the 1990 redistricting cycle are the following: first, they must take power through a more militant stance in negotiations with the legislature, instead of waiting for the legislature to give power to them; and, second, they must extend their coalition beyond the limits of the Latino community. As the complete lack of increased numbers of Latino representatives at the state legislative level (despite the 16 'influence' districts) proves, "Power is taken,

⁹⁰Mendoza, Henry, and Kenneth Reich. "Latinos Push for Political Power" The Los Angeles Times. Aug. 17, 1981. sec. I, p.3.

not given.”⁹¹ No legislators will ever voluntarily give up their own seat so that the Latinos (or any other minority) can have more representation. Incumbents will offer ‘tokens’ such as ‘influence districts,’ and may even support Latino causes somewhat more than previously, but they will never voluntarily give up their seats, thus locking Latinos out of the higher levels of government.

In addition to incumbents protecting their seats, the Latino community had problems in Los Angeles County and elsewhere with the African-American and Jewish communities, both of whom were already firmly entrenched in the state legislature (African-Americans primarily through the Assembly Speaker, and Jews through the Waxman-Berman political organization⁹²). Both of these groups told Californios “don’t even *think* about” weakening of their districts in Los Angeles County.⁹³ Because of their inability to negotiate and compromise with other minority groups, CFR’s proposals for districts had to exclude from its proposed Latino districts the considerable Latino populations in Los Angeles County Assembly and State Senate districts that were already held by African-Americans or allies of the Waxman-Berman political organization. By some estimates, the Latino populations of the African-American-controlled 46th, 47th, and 48th Assembly districts were large enough to make up over 80 percent of an additional Latino district, had CFR been able to pull them out of the African-American-controlled districts and combine them together.

⁹¹Personal Interview with Armando Navarro on Nov. 12, 1990

⁹²Luther, Claudia. “Two Democrats’ Hopes for Congress Ignite Redistricting Feud” Los Angeles Times. Aug. 31, 1981; sec. II., p. 1.

⁹³Interview with Dr. Richard Santillan on Nov. 27, 1990.

If Latinos ever want “to transform the dream of fair representation into reality,” they must follow the example of the African-American community in California, which today has seven percent of California’s population and eight percent of its elected officials,⁹⁴ including the Speaker of the California Assembly. African-Americans have forged alliances with other minority groups (especially California’s Jewish community) and work together for mutual advantage. Its own political skill, along with these alliances, has earned the African-American community a measure of combined “fear and respect” within the state’s “power circles.”⁹⁵ The Latino community must follow the African-American community’s example of using every available means of attracting allies and getting the community involved in the struggle for empowerment. As stated before, without the mobilization of the bulk of the Latino community (especially when a large part of that community becomes eligible to become citizens in 1992 under the 1986 Immigration Reform Act), the Latino community will continue to be underrepresented, no matter how active and influential its top leadership.

Another important change which needs to be made before the Latinos can achieve greater representation is that a more confrontational approach to the state legislature must be taken. The new Voting Rights Act amendments and the 1986 *Gingles* United States Supreme Court ruling have given minorities the standing needed for such a confrontational approach. The incumbents will always be willing to compromise up to the point where their own seats are threatened, but then they will give no more.

⁹⁴African American District Data (The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1990), with figures from the 1980 Census and the 1990 election results.

⁹⁵Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

Once again, the point is made: "Power is taken, never given." In the zero-sum challenge of California state legislative redistricting, the Latino community must force the incumbent Democratic establishment to give up some of its power. The 1982 Voting Rights amendments gave the Latinos the power needed to force such compromises, but Latinos still need to demonstrate that they have the will and ability to use that power. New, grass-roots activists must take the lead of the Latino movement and upstage the "East Los Angeles cabal" of Alatorre, Art Torres, Esteban Torres, Edward Roybal, and Gloria Molina, which today is the leadership of the California Latino community, or the Latino community will continue to be denied additional representation, for the members of this "cabal" all rely heavily on the Democratic establishment for support and thus are very unlikely to challenge that establishment. It should be remembered that in 1981 the Chicano Caucus, made up of Latino incumbents, was largely silent on the issue of redistricting, as the caucus was apparently unwilling to publically challenge the Democratic Party establishment. Using the new Voting Rights Act to challenge that establishment is exactly what must be done if Latinos are ever going to progress from having 'influence' districts to actual representation of Latinos by Latinos.

The Latino community in the 1980s declined to use all the means at its disposal to improve representation when it refrained from challenging the plans in court. A court challenge must be a viable option for Latinos in the 1990s if they are to gain the respect and influence they deserve and now have the ability to demand.

In the 1970s, Latinos first started making their voices heard in the redistricting discussions. But the Latino activists in the 1970s were

individuals rather than organizations, and there was no technical or demographic expertise nor grass-roots support backing the activist Latinos.

In the 1980s, Californios for Fair Representation gave the Latinos the expertise and state-wide organization required to form an active movement, and the Latinos demonstrated they “are capable of political sophistication to organize [the Latino] community on a statewide basis.”⁹⁶ While CFR failed to achieve the hoped-for gains in Latino representation, CFR was a definite step for the Latino community towards maturing into a statewide political force in line with its percentage of California’s population. CFR also gave Latino activist the momentum, expertise, and experience in dealing with incumbent representatives which led to their considerable success at the local level in the 1980s.

In the 1990s, Latinos must take two more major steps before they can be considered a ‘politically mature’ force in California. First, ‘politically mature’ does not mean ‘a co-opted member of the Democratic establishment,’ even if such integration does give slightly higher numbers of elected Latinos: as has been shown here, integration in the Democratic establishment is a dead-end of ‘influence districts’ lacking any realistic potential to elect Latinos. Even if 1990’s term limits are enforced, Latinos will probably continue to require districts 60-65 percent Latino in population in order to be elected in large numbers to state-level offices. An increase in the number of thirty-percent Latino ‘influence’ districts, while bringing some benefits to Latinos, cannot again be approved by the Latino community, which in the 1990s seems to have reached a point of political maturity where it is ready to elect its own members in large numbers. One

⁹⁶Quezada, Leticia. National President of Comision Femenil, Mexican Nacional Inc.. “Break for Latinos” letter to the Los Angeles Times. Nov. 13, 1981; sec. 2, p. 6.

sign of this political maturity in the 1990s is the taking of a second major step for the Latino political community: an alliance on redistricting with other minorities for mutual benefit.

Some of the activists and local organizations which made up Californios for Fair Representation are joining the 1990s version: the Coalition for Fair Representation. The major difference between Californios and the Coalition is that the 1990 version brings Latinos together not only with each other, but also with the Fund for the Feminist Majority, the National Organization of Women, the NAACP, and other minority groups with an interest in redistricting.⁹⁷

Some Latino organizations, however, have declined to join the new coalition. This division has led to a considerable decrease in press coverage of Latino concerns and redistricting efforts. According to one Latino activist, "The Latino community is very fragmented and does not appear to have the same energy [as in 1981], but only time will tell."⁹⁸ There is still time to influence the process, but it remains to be seen if Latinos will be able to organize effectively.

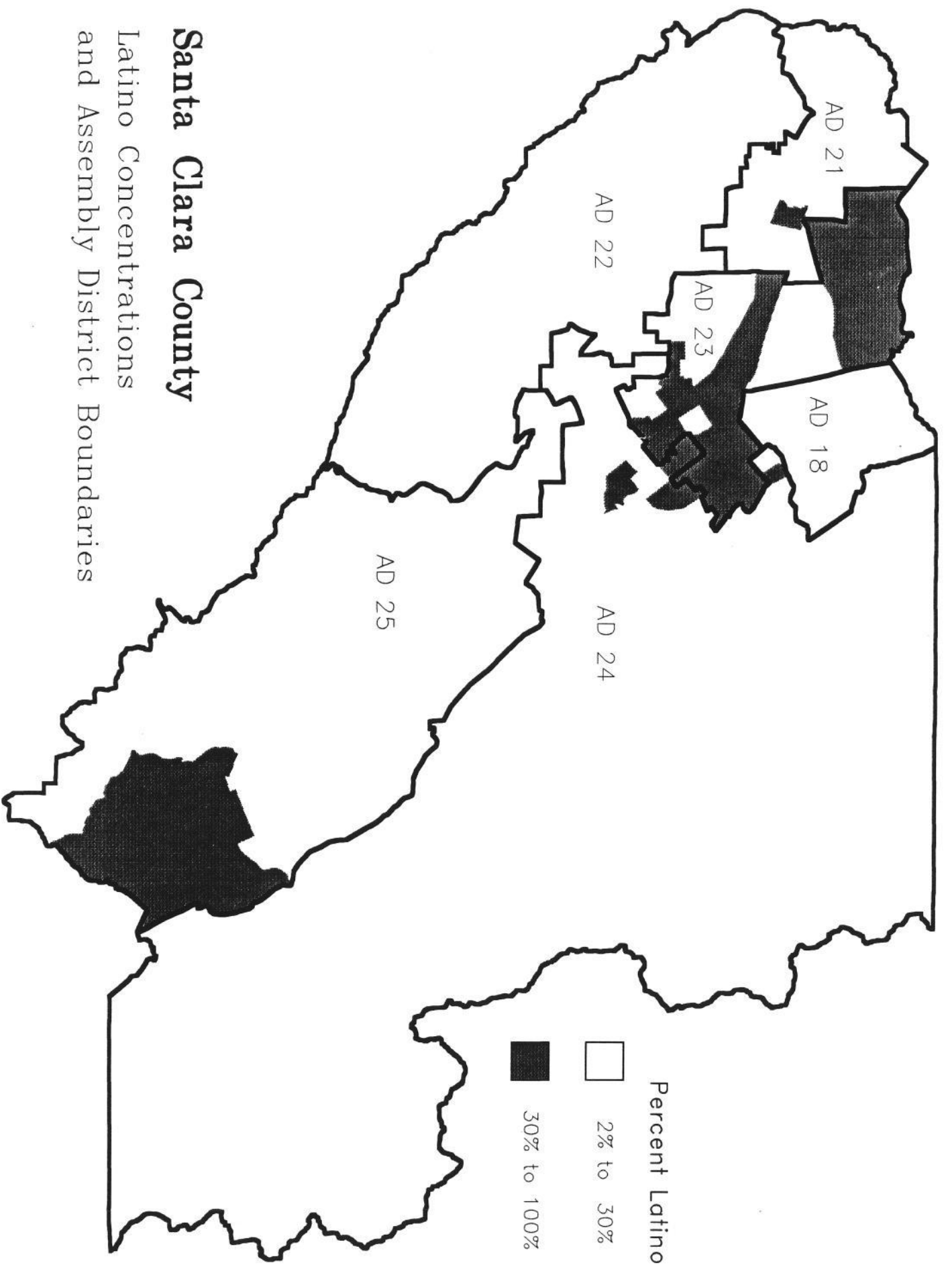
The alliance with other minorities, combined with the 1982 Voting Rights Act amendments and the 1986 *Gingles* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, could be the key to unprecedented gains for Latino representation. To get additional Latino representation, Latinos must demonstrate a willingness to challenge the state legislature's plans in court if they do not adequately address Latino concerns. The lawsuits against the city and county of Los Angeles are a good starting point for demonstrating such willingness, but it remains to be seen whether Latinos can overcome their

⁹⁷Interview with Armando Navarro, Nov. 12, 1990

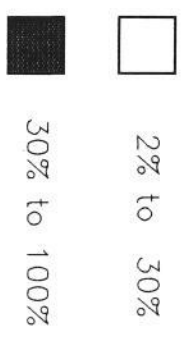
⁹⁸Interview with Richard Santillan, May 31, 1991

ties to the Democratic establishment at the state level enough to follow through with a court challenge to that establishment if necessary.

Santa Clara County
Latino Concentrations
and Assembly District Boundaries



Percent Latino



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Personal Interviews

- Carrillo, Pedro. October 20, 1990, at "Friends of Pete Carrillo Headquarters," San Jose, California.
- Lane, Dale. November 30, 1990, by phone.
- Navarro, Armando. November 12, 1990, and Nov. 19, 1990 at Claremont McKenna College.
- Santillan, Richard. November 27, 1990, and May 31, 1991 at California Polytechnic University at Pomona.

Books and Monographs

- Eu, March Fong. Report of Registration (California Secretary of State, October 1990)
- Hardy, Leroy. The Gerrymander Origin, Conception and Re-emergence. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1990)
- Hardy, Leroy, and Alan Heslop. The Westside Story: A Murder in Four Acts. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1990)
- NCSL Reapportionment Task Force. Reapportionment Law: The 1990s. (Washington, D.C.; The National Conference of State Legislatures, 1989)
- O'Hare, ed. Redistricting in the 1990s: A Guide for Minority Groups. (The Population Reference Bureau, Inc. July 1989)
- Quinn, Tony. Carving Up California: A History of Redistricting, 1951-1984. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1986)
- Quinn, Tony. Redrawing the Lines, 1961: A Study of the Redistricting Process in California. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government)
- Santillan, Richard. The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 1 (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1981)
- Santillan, Richard. The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Volume 2. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1984)
- Santillan, Richard. The Rose Institute's Chicano/Hispanic Project (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1983)
- The Official Redistricting Plans: Descriptions, Maps, and Summary Statistics. (Claremont, CA; The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1983)

Unpublished Materials

- Navarro, Charles S. California Redistricting and Representation: Los Angeles County's Chicano Community. (unpublished dissertation, 1982)
- African-American District Data. The Rose Institute of State and Local Government (1990).
- Analysis of Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plans. The Rose Institute of State and Local Government (1981)
- California Redistricting '81: The Morrill / Rose Institute Model Plan. The Rose Institute of State and Local Government. (1981)
- Latino District Data. The Rose Institute of State and Local Government. (1990)

Magazines and Journals

- Castaneda, Ruben. "Latino unity stalls in East LA" California Journal. Jan. 1987.
- Freedberg, Louis. "Latinos: Building power from the ground up" California Journal. Jan. 1987.
- Mireles, Valerie. "Surging toward a Latino state" California Journal. Jan. 1987.
- Santillan, Richard. "The Latino Community in State and Congressional Redistricting: 1961-1985" Journal of Hispanic Politics. Vol. 1, No. 1. 1985
- "Election 1990: District-by-district analysis" California Journal. Dec. 1990.

Newspaper Articles

- Bergholz, Richard. "A Challenge: Fair Plan for Redistricting" Los Angeles Times. Dec. 7, 1980.
- Cooper, Claire. "Reapportionment Plan Threatens San Jose Assemblymen" The Sacramento Bee. Mar. 14, 1981.
- del Olmo, Frank. "Latinos Get a Break in Assembly Remapping" Los Angeles Times. Nov. 5 1981.
- Gillam, Jerry, and Claudia Luther. "L.A. County Latinos Promised Chance for More Legislators" Los Angeles Times. Mar. 7, 1981.
- Gillam, Jerry, and Claudia Luther. "Democrats in State Senate Unveil Redistricting Plan" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 3, 1981.
- Gillam, Jerry. "Latinos Seek New Assembly District" Los Angeles Times. May 19, 1981.
- Huerta, John. "For Latinos, Reapportionment Is Representation" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 27, 1981.
- La Ganga, Maria L. "Latino Group Urges Veto of Remapping" Los Angeles Times. Sept. 5, 1990.
- Lane, Dale. "Hispanics lobby for 'safe' districts after realignment" San Jose Mercury News, Feb. 18, 1981.

- Lane, Dale. "Hispanics threaten court action to gain legislative seats" San Jose Mercury News. June 11, 1981.
- Luther, Claudia. "Latinos May Get Little in Redistricting" Los Angeles Times. April 30, 1981.
- Luther, Claudia. "Latinos Warn on Reapportionment" Los Angeles Times. Feb. 21, 1981.
- Luther, Claudia. "Latino Walkout Climaxes Session on Redistricting" Los Angeles Times. Aug. 5, 1981.
- Luther, Claudia. "2 Democrats' Hopes for Congress Ignite Redistricting Feud" Los Angeles Times. Aug. 31, 1981.
- McLead, Ramon G. "Minorities Not Going to Polls - Whites Dominate Voter Turnout" San Francisco Chronicle. Aug. 28, 1990.
- Mendoza, Henry. "Speaker Brown's Views About Redistricting Hit" Los Angeles Times. May 5, 1981.
- Mendoza, Henry, and Kenneth Reich. "Latinos Push for Political Power" Los Angeles Times. Aug. 17, 1981.
- Quezada, Leticia. "Break for Latinos" letter to the Los Angeles Times. Nov. 13, 1981.
- Reich, Kenneth. "Latino Coalition Submits Plan to Increase State Representation" Los Angeles Times. June 11, 1981.
- Santillan, Richard. "For Chicanos, a Louder Voice" Los Angeles Times. Mar. 5, 1981.
- "Politics and reapportionment" San Jose Mercury News ed., Mar. 6, 1981.