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From the Director

With this issue, the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute (SHRI) inaugurates what hopefully will become a permanent feature on the New Mexico public landscape, a series of analyses on issues relating to the Hispanic population of the state written by faculty and other researchers at the University of New Mexico.

UNM researchers have at their disposal a wealth of important information which not only can, but should, become part of the public discourse and in this manner contribute to its positive development. For example, faculty associated with SHRI are currently investigating such topics as bilingual education, the impact of development on rural communities, the social significance of traditional culture, affirmative action, the economic welfare of Hispanic youth, land grants, language and identity, the contemporary and historical Hispanic literary tradition, and many others.

Through *The New Mexico Report*, our intention is to provide information and timely analysis on a number of important public policy and contemporary issues to a wide and diverse audience of government officials, educators, public institution administrators, non-profit organizations, leaders in the business sector, and the general public. In this first installment, Dr. Christine Sierra, associate professor of political science at UNM, examines the role that ethnicity played in the last two general elections, with special emphasis on the race for governor in 2002.

I welcome feedback from you, our general readership. Let us know what you think of the very idea of a "New Mexico Report," and your impressions of the information being provided. We can also do special reports on topics that are of particular interest to you.

The creation of *The New Mexico Report* would not have been possible without the support of Tobías Durán, Director of the UNM Center for Regional Studies.

Phillip B. Gonzales, Ph.D.

Hispanic Politics in New Mexico: A Look at Recent Elections

Christine Marie Sierra, Ph.D.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Hispanic population now constitutes the largest ethnic/racial minority group in the United States, surpassing the number of African Americans for the first time in history. This demographic change brings increased attention to the Hispanic population from the media, business, politicians, government officials, and the public at large. Both the national Republican and Democratic parties have stepped up their efforts to court the Hispanic vote as candidates for public office learn *español* to liven up stump speeches or connect with a constituency that is becoming increasingly diverse.

In part, because of the prominent role Hispanics play in New Mexico politics, the national media turned its spotlight on the state in the 2002 mid-term election. The state's gubernatorial race featured two major party Hispanic candidates, with one destined to be elected as the only Hispanic governor in the nation. The national press treated the race as somewhat of a novelty, even though the appearance of Hispanic candidates for major political office in New Mexico is common. The state's Hispanic voters, likewise, drew attention. New Mexican Hispanics account for 42% of the state's population and constitute the largest proportion (36%) of any state electorate. Additional attention came because two of the state's three congressional races involved serious contests between the major party candidates, in an election year when only a small number of competitive elections across the country would determine the balance of power in the U.S. Senate and House.

This first issue of *The New Mexico Report* provides a brief analysis of the Hispanic vote in New Mexico. Both the 2000 presidential election and the 2002 mid-term election highlight how Hispanics and other groups influence elections in this multicultural state.

An Ethnic Profile of the New Mexico Electorate

To illustrate the role of ethnicity in New Mexico elections, it is helpful to map out the state's electorate geographically by ethnic areas of concentration. Map 1 (p. 3) shows the ethnic composition of the voting age population in each of New Mexico's 33 counties. Counties are categorized according to the percentage of their voting age population (18 years of age or older) that is Anglo, Hispanic, and Native American, the state's largest racial/ethnic groups.

Map 1 and Table 1 (p. 3) show Anglos constituting the majority of the voting age population in 20 of the state's 33 counties: in 12 counties Anglos are over 60% of the voting age population; in 8 they are between 50% and 60%. Anglos are the dominant voting bloc (52.6%) in the state's largest county, Bernalillo, and in its wealthiest, Los Alamos (83.7%). Most of the other heavily Anglo counties border Texas in the south and east.

Hispanic voting age majorities are most heavily concentrated in the north-central region of the state. They are also found in Valencia County, Doña Ana (Las Cruces), and Hidalgo. McKinley and Cibola form a fifth category because of the significant presence of Native Americans among their voting age populations. American Indians are 70.2% of McKinley County's voting age population. No single racial or ethnic group claims a voting age majority in Cibola County, but Native Americans and Hispanics dominate, each with about one-third of the voting age population. Since Hispanics and Indians tend to vote similarly, they are combined (69%) to distinguish Cibola as a "predominantly Indian and Hispanic county." (San Juan County also contains a large percentage (33%) of Native Americans of voting age, but Anglos constitute a majority of the voting age population there (51.3%) and dominate its electoral outcomes, making it a "majority Anglo" county.) Santa Fe, Socorro, and Luna form a sixth category of "ethnically mixed" counties wherein no single group claims a majority of the voting age population.

Ethnic Voting in New Mexico: The 2000 Presidential Election

Hispanic voters in New Mexico have been long-time supporters of the Democrats, 60 to 70% of them affiliating with the Democratic Party and upwards of 60% voting for Democratic presidential candidates. Non-Hispanic whites or "Anglo" voters tend to favor Republican presidential contenders. Voting results for the 2000 presidential race are a case in point. Map 2 (p. 4) shows in the presidential race of 2000, Republican candidate George W. Bush carried 20 of the state's 33 counties. He won all of the "predominantly Anglo" counties and all but three of the "majority Anglo" counties, the exceptions being Grant, Colfax, and, most notably, Bernalillo.

Democrat Al Gore won all four of the "predominantly Hispanic" counties and the two "predominantly Indian + Hispanic counties." The candidates split the "majority Hispanic" counties, with Gore winning in Doña Ana, the second most populous county in the state, and in Taos, in the Democratic Party stronghold of northern New Mexico. Among the "ethnically mixed" counties, Bush won Luna and Gore won Santa Fe and Socorro counties.

Al Gore carried the state of New Mexico by only 366 votes. Exit polls showed Gore receiving 66% of the Hispanic vote and Bush 32%. Anglos, who cast close to 60% of the total votes in the election, favored Bush over Gore, 58% to 37%. While Hispanics made Gore more competitive, he actually drew his winning margin from the remaining electorate: predominantly African American and Native American voters (García and Sierra, forthcoming).

The 2002 Mid-term Election

In New Mexico, Hispanic candidates and Hispanic voters figured prominently in the 2002 mid-term election. While well-established ethnic voting patterns appeared, some important exceptions also occurred. Map 3 (p. 4) compares county election results in the 2002 electoral contest between Democrat Bill Richardson and Republican John Sánchez with those in the previous 1998 mid-term election, in which incumbent Republican Governor Gary Johnson defeated Democrat Martín Chávez (the current mayor of Albuquerque). The dark blue counties favored the Democratic candidate in both elections, Chávez (1998) and Richardson (2002). These core Democratic areas in the north-central part of the state have heavy concentrations of Hispanic or Indian + Hispanic voters. All dark blue counties also voted for Al Gore for president in 2000.

In red are 9 "predominantly or majority Anglo" counties that voted consistently for the Republican gubernatorial candidates, Johnson in 1998 and Sánchez in 2002. All went for Bush in 2000. Map 3 highlights those "swing" areas (shaded in light blue) that supported Republican Johnson in 1998 but swung toward Democrat Richardson in 2002. Notably, Richardson "recaptured" for the Democrats the electoral jewel of Bernalillo county and neighboring Sandoval and Valencia counties, and added to his winner's column 7 mostly Anglo counties in the eastern part of the state that usually vote Republican (Gastil, Jenkins-Smith, and St. Clair, 2002).

According to a KOAT-TV/*Albuquerque Journal* exit poll by Research & Polling, Inc., Anglo voters slightly favored Sánchez over Richardson, 48% to 46%, with 6% supporting Green Party candidate David Bacon (margin of error +/- 3.8%). But Hispanic voters gave a whopping 75% level of support to Richardson (23% to Sánchez).

Map 1. Race and Ethnicity of Voting Age Population in New Mexico Counties, 2000

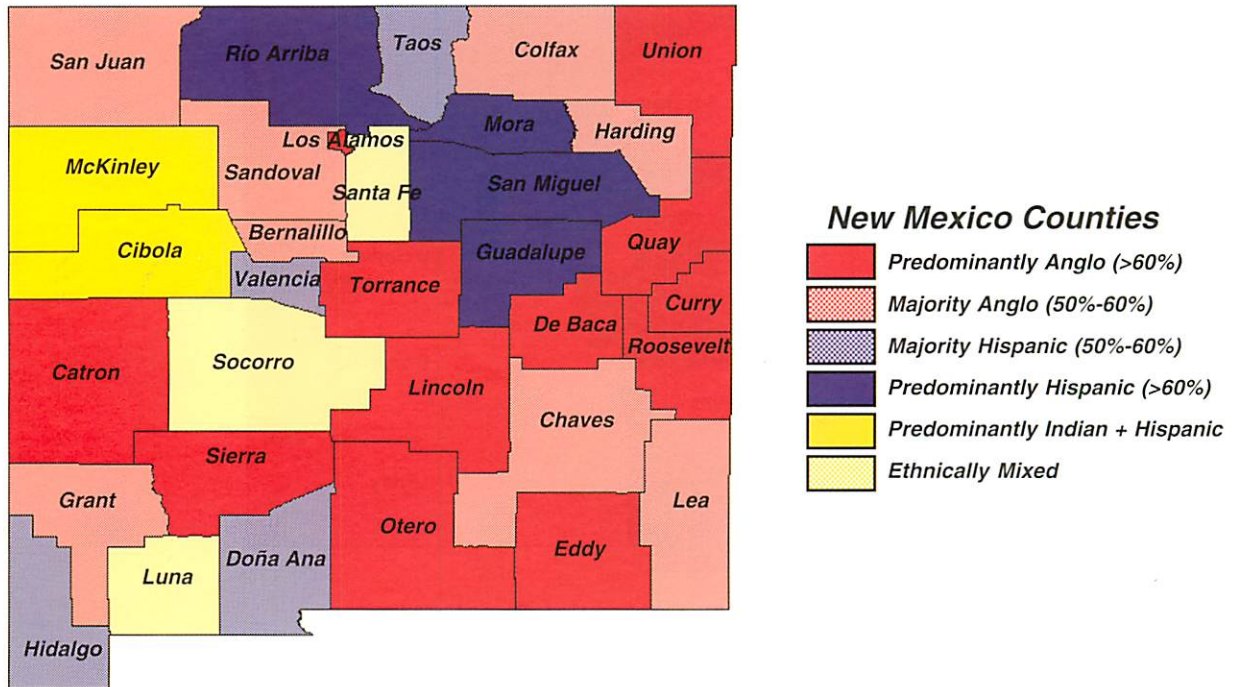
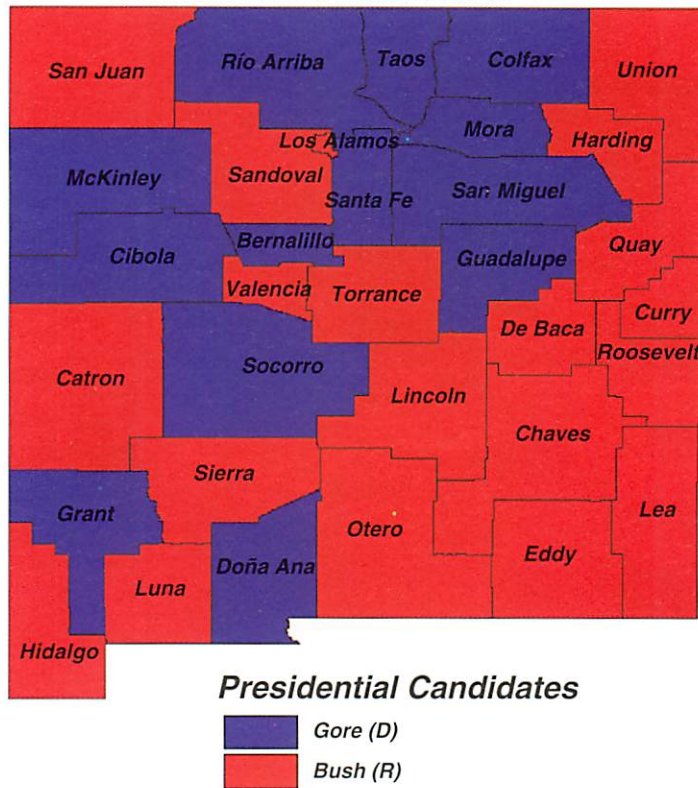


Table 1. Racial & Ethnic Composition of Voting Age Population in NM Counties, 2000

Predominantly Anglo (> 60%)	Majority Anglo (50% to 60%)
Catron	Bernalillo
Curry	Chaves
De Baca	Colfax
Eddy	Grant
Lincoln	Harding
Los Alamos	Lea
Otero	San Juan
Quay	Sandoval
Roosevelt	
Sierra	
Torrance	
Union	
Majority Hispanic (50% to 60%)	Predominantly Hispanic (> 60%)
Hidalgo	Guadalupe
Taos	Mora
Valencia	Río Arriba
Doña Ana	San Miguel
Predominantly Indian + Hispanic	Ethnically Mixed
Cibola	Luna
McKinley	Santa Fe
	Socorro

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Matrices PL1, PL2, PL3, and PL4.

Map 2. 2000 Presidential Winner by County in New Mexico



Map 3. Vote for Governor in 1998 and 2002 by Party of Winning Candidate, New Mexico Counties

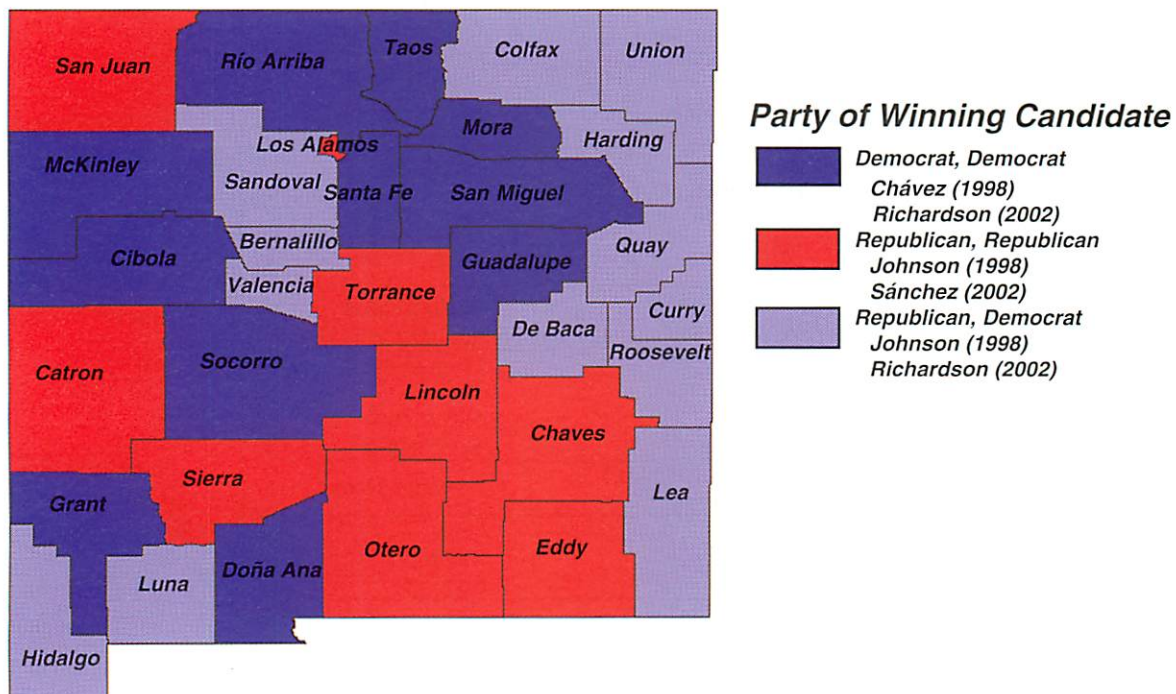


Table 2. State of New Mexico, Official 1998, 2000, 2002 General Election Results for United States Representative - District 01					
Year	Party	Candidate	Votes	Winning Vote Margin	Percentage
1998	Republican	Heather Wilson	86,784	11,744	48%
	Democrat	Phillip J. Maloof	75,040		42%
	Green	Robert Anderson	17,266		10%
	Write-In		78		0%
2000	Republican	Heather Wilson	107,296	15,109	50%
	Democrat	John J. Kelly	92,187		43%
	Green	Daniel Kerlinsky	13,656		6%
2002	Republican	Heather Wilson	95,711	18,477	55%
	Democrat	Richard Romero	77,234		45%

Sources: NM Secretary of State, Official Election Results by Office 2002, 2000, and 1998, <http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Election/Results.html>

With big Hispanic and substantial Anglo support, Bill Richardson decisively defeated John Sánchez, 55% to 39%. Green Party candidate, David Bacon, received 5% of the total vote. (Exit poll data for other ethnic/racial groups is not available.) Against Republican hopes, Sánchez failed to cut into traditional Hispanic voting, while Richardson drew Anglo Republicans into his camp. Among party identifiers, the exit poll showed that Richardson claimed 21% support from Republicans while Sánchez garnered only 11% support from Democrats.

The Power of Incumbency

Two federal-level races pitted Hispanic Democrats against formidable Republican incumbents. Gloria Tristani, granddaughter of New Mexico's former longtime Democratic Senator, Dennis Chávez, proved no match for the state's senior senator, Republican Pete Domenici, who defeated her 65% to 35%. Exit polls showed Domenici's popularity spanning virtually all demographic groups: young and old, Anglos and Hispanics (63% supported him), and men and women. Tristani came out on top among Democratic Party identifiers, but only by a meager 14 points, 57% to 43%. The challenger who aspired to become the first Hispanic woman in the U.S. Senate went down against a popular incumbent, loaded with name recognition and a campaign war chest.

The race for Congressional District 1 proved a closer contest, but, ultimately, the power of incumbency prevailed. On election night, Democratic State Senator Richard Romero seemed to be headed to a stunning upset over the Republican incumbent, Congresswoman Heather Wilson. However, absentee ballots gave Wilson her margin of victory. Table 2 (above) shows Wilson increasing her margin of victory in each of her congressional races. In 2002, she enjoyed strong support from the Republican Party faithful and added about a quarter of the Democratic Party identifiers to her vote totals. Romero did well, but not well enough, among Hispanics,

who supported him over Wilson 56% to 44%. Anglos gravitated decisively towards Wilson, voting for her 62% to 38% for Romero.

The Big Picture: A Declining Electorate

Recent elections reaffirm Hispanics' longstanding influence in New Mexico politics, a distinction which sets the state apart from others with large Hispanic populations. At the same time, New Mexico shares with states across the country a disturbing trend of citizen disengagement in the electoral process. Voter turnout in New Mexico, for Hispanics and Anglos alike, has declined significantly over several decades. In the late 1980s, registered voters in Hispanic and Anglo counties turned out to vote in the 70 to 80% range. In the 2000 presidential election, average turnout among registered voters in New Mexico's counties ranged from 55% to 65%, while less than half of the eligible electorate (i.e. voting age population) cast a ballot. (See Table 3, p. 6) The 2002 mid-term election likewise showed a downward trend in turnout among registered voters, declining from 56.7% in 1998 to 52.8% in 2002.

Declining participation rates in electoral politics are a cause for concern. To have public officials and policy issues decided at the ballot box by a numerical minority, and a shrinking minority at that, does not make for a strong representative democracy of broad, collective, and diverse interests. For Hispanics who proudly point to the central role they play in state politics, a challenge awaits: revitalizing electoral participation to engage new voters and retain the old ones, so as to ensure that Hispanic politics remain vital, expansive, and inclusive in the long term.

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Table 3. New Mexico Voter Turnout, Racial and Ethnic Summaries, 2000 and 2002

2000 Election	Total Voting Age Population 2000	Total Registered 2000	Votes Cast 2000	% Turnout by Total Registered	% Turnout by Voting Age Population
Predominantly Anglo (>60%)	191,268	140,173	88,223	62.9%	46.1%
Majority Anglo (50% to 60%)	672,123	503,571	327,428	65.0%	48.7%
Majority Hispanic (50% to 60%)	195,685	136,587	83,905	61.4%	42.9%
Predominantly Hispanic (>60%)	58,610	48,268	27,077	56.1%	46.2%
Predominantly Indian + Hispanic	64,137	44,322	24,464	55.2%	38.1%
Ethnically Mixed	128,649	100,612	64,510	64.1%	50.1%
State of New Mexico	1,310,472	973,533	615,607	63.2%	47.0%

2002 Election	Total Registered 2002	Votes Cast 2002	% Turnout by Total Registered	% Turnout by Voting Age Population ¹
Predominantly Anglo (>60%)	133,512	73,748	55.2%	38.6%
Majority Anglo (50% to 60%)	489,628	263,661	53.8%	39.2%
Majority Hispanic (50% to 60%)	134,870	65,848	48.8%	33.6%
Predominantly Hispanic (>60%)	49,482	24,167	48.8%	41.2%
Predominantly Indian + Hispanic	43,711	20,620	47.2%	32.1%
Ethnically Mixed	99,091	54,186	54.7%	42.1%
State of New Mexico	950,294	502,230	52.8%	38.3%

¹ Estimates based on U.S. Census 2000 data.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Matrices PL1, PL2, PL3, and PL4 and NM Secretary of State, Party Registration and Official 2000 and 2002 General Election Returns, <http://www.sos.state.nm.us>.

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Research & Polling, Inc. KOAT-TV/*Albuquerque Journal* exit poll, November 5, 2002, courtesy of Brian Sanderoff, President, Research & Polling, Inc.

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SHRI is located at 1829 Sigma Chi Rd., NE, on the UNM campus. SHRI may be reached by phone at 505-277-2965, or by e-mail at shri@unm.edu. SHRI would like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Center for Regional Studies at the University of New Mexico.

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