



Constructing Identities in Mexican-American Political Organizations: Choosing Issues, Taking Sides

Benjamin Marquez

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The formation of a group identity has always been a major preoccupation of Mexican American political organizations, whether they seek to assimilate into the dominant Anglo society or to remain separate from it. Yet organizations that sought to represent a broad cross section of the Mexican American population, such as LULAC and the American G.I. Forum, have dwindled in membership and influence, while newer, more targeted political organizations are prospering—clearly suggesting that successful political organizing requires more than shared ethnicity and the experience of discrimination.

This book sheds new light on the process of political identity formation through a study of the identity politics practiced by four major Mexican American political organizations—the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, the Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation, the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce, and the Mexican American Women's National Association (now known as MANA—A National Latina Organization). Through interviews with activists in each organization and research into their records, Benjamin Marquez clarifies the racial, class-based, and cultural factors that have caused these organizations to create widely differing political identities. He likewise demonstrates why their specific goals resonate only with particular segments of the Mexican American community.

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