BETWEEN GRASSROOTS POLITICS AND
THE ETHNICIZING IMPERATIVE OF THE MULTICULTURAL STATE:
LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS IN TORONTO

Patricia Landolt,
Luin Goldring,
and
Judith Bernhard

CERIS Working Paper No. 73

January 2009

Series Editor for 2008/09
Michael J. Doucet, PhD
Department of Geography
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5B 2K3
mdoucet@ryerson.ca

CERIS – The Ontario Metropolis Centre
The CERIS Working Paper Series

Manuscripts on topics related to immigration, settlement, and cultural diversity in urban centres are welcome. Preference may be given to the publication of manuscripts that are the result of research projects funded through CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre. All manuscripts must be submitted in both digital and hard-copy form, and should include an Abstract of 100-200 words and a list of keywords.

If you have comments or proposals regarding the CERIS Working Paper Series please contact the Editor at:
(416) 946-3110 or e-mail at <ceris.office@utoronto.ca>

Copyright of the papers in the CERIS Working Paper Series is retained by the author(s)

The views expressed in these Working Papers are those of the author(s), and opinions on the content of the Working Papers should be communicated directly to the author(s) themselves.

CERIS – The Ontario Metropolis Centre
246 Bloor Street West, 7th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V4
Telephone (416) 946-3110  Facsimile (416) 971-3094
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper examines the politics of Latin American immigrant incorporation in Canada with a focus on the relationship between community organizing, settlement and social needs and services, and the ethnic politics of Canadian multiculturalism. Our analysis focuses on organizational patterns and addresses questions about the kinds of organizations Latin Americans have developed over time, particularly the form and agendas of settlement-oriented organizations, the extent to which their agendas respond to longstanding and diverse ways of doing politics, the tensions that emerge between internal priorities and negotiations versus external opportunities and constraints, and the ability of different kinds of organizations to incorporate shifting/emerging priorities.

To address these questions, we examine the history of the two pan-ethnic organizations that are presently active in Toronto: the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples (CSSP) and the Hispanic Development Council (HDC). We consider how the two organizations navigate between a) governmental desires for channelled and orderly interlocution with a pan-ethnic Latin American subject able to present a “coherent” agenda of settlement-service needs, and b) in-group pressures, particularly from country of origin and sectorally-specialized Latin American organizations, to respond to diverse and changing needs and to sustain an explicitly political agenda.

1 This paper is based on research funded by SSHRC and CERIS (see notes 3 and 4). The authors are grateful to the project respondents for sharing their experiences of Latin American community organizing, and to Martha Barriga, Paola Bohórquez and Hanna Caplan for research assistance during data collection. This paper will be published as part of a Spanish language volume, as: Landolt, Patricia, Luin Goldring and Judith Bernhard. 2009. “Las Organizaciones de Migrantes Latinoamericanos en Toronto: Entre la Política de Base y el Imperativo de la Etnización.” In Angeles Escrivá, Anastasia Bermúdez y Natalia Moraes (eds). Migración y participación política. Estados, organizaciones y migrantes latinoamericanos en perspectiva local-transnacional. Colección Politeya. Córdoba: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Forthcoming (April).
State multicultural policy, particularly under conditions of scarce resources, favours working with small numbers of “representative” pan-ethnic organizations. However, establishing pan-ethnic organizations based on the presumption of a common language and cultural heritage obscures internal diversity. Such an approach imposes pan-ethnicity as the most relevant dimension of identity and social location and obscures other meaningful elements of social experience. Given the constraints set out by state-imposed ethnicizing politics, the organizational forms generated by Latin Americans help to define the terrain of immigrant politics and community building. Ethno-national country-of-origin groups, issue-specific pan-ethnic organizations, and pan-ethnic multi-service and umbrella agencies each engage in community building and politics. However, the room for political manoeuvring for each of them is limited, in various ways. Funding constraints and the traditional service-delivery model not only privilege pan-ethnic, multi-service, and lobby/umbrella organizations, but also constrain their actions. Although there is no room for ethno-national or country-of-origin-based organizations in the field of interlocution constructed by the state, these organizations continue to contribute to the broader institutional landscape, and their actions are connected, often indirectly, to the agendas set by pan-ethnic Latin American service-delivery and umbrella institutions. Similarly, issue-specific organizations that have a critical dimension to their activities (for example, feminist women’s organizations) may find their agendas mainstreamed into larger multi-service organizations, yet they remain important contributors in the agenda setting process. Our analysis provides insight into the experiences of Latin Americans, and their organizations, as they develop strategies to gain recognition as legitimate actors and stakeholders in the landscape of Canadian multiculturalism and community organizing. It also highlights tensions and contradictions in this process.

KEY WORDS: Immigrant incorporation; community organizing, state policy, multiculturalism, Latin Americans, Canada.
# Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ................................................................................................................................. i  
KEY WORDS ........................................................................................................................................ ii  
INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................ Page 1  
METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................................................................... Page 3  
DIVERSE PATHWAYS INTO SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES ............................................. Page 4  
MAINSTREAMING DIVERSITY: NEGOTIATING A PANETHNIC AGENDA FOR LATIN AMERICANS. .......................................................................................................................... Page 11  
    El Centro para Gente de Habla Hispana (CSSP). ........................................................................ Page 12  
    Hispanic Development Council (HDC). ....................................................................................... Page 16  
CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................................................ Page 19  
REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................................. Page 21
INTRODUCTION

Toronto’s Latin American population has sustained an eclectic and dynamic range of community organizations since the early seventies when immigrants from the region first began to arrive in the city in large numbers. Latin Americans have a history of being extremely active and building a wide range of organizations (see, especially, Schugurensky and Giginiewicz 2006). With time, Latin Americans have expanded beyond the early, first-generation-dominated agenda to one that is relevant to both first and subsequent generations. The former focussed on immediate settlement issues, including employment, social services, education, and women, issues that remain relevant because of the ongoing arrival of immigrants from the region. The latter address an expanding set of issues and interest groups, including political representation, anti-racism, youth, professionals, and the arts. These changes in the social and political agenda are part of the ongoing process of settlement and incorporation, as well as being an outgrowth of Latin Americans’ accumulated capacity building and institutional learning. They involve parallel and overlapping sets of negotiations regarding agenda setting and the politics of identity construction within and between Latin American ethno-national organizations, and between national and pan-ethnic Latin American organizations and Canadian institutions, including the state.

In this section of the paper, we examine the politics of Latin American immigrant incorporation in Canada, with a focus on the relationship between community organizing, settlement and social needs and services, and the ethnic politics of Canadian multiculturalism. Our analysis is focussed on organizational patterns and addresses questions about the kinds of organizations Latin Americans have developed over time. In particular, we were interested in the form and agendas of settlement-oriented organizations, the extent to which their agendas have been able to respond to longstanding and diverse ways of doing politics, the tensions that have emerged between internal priorities and negotiations versus external opportunities and constraints, and the ability of different kinds of organizations to incorporate shifting/emerging priorities. Addressing these questions provides insight into the experiences of Latin Americans and their organizations as they develop strategies to gain recognition as legitimate actors and stakeholders in the landscape of both Canadian multiculturalism and community organizing.

Two concerns animated our examination and provided a rationale for our focus on settlement and social services. First, immigrant community organizations, such as those that are funded to deliver settlement and social services in Ontario, create spaces where immigrants can do politics and work for social change (Bloemraad 2006). In Canada, the state has traditionally identified organizations that provide settlement and social services as an important site of social and political socialization and incorporation (Chute 2004). Since the 1950s, federal and provincial governments have partnered with non-state actors, including churches, ethno-national, multi-ethnic, and neighbourhood-based organizations to define the immigrant settlement agenda and fund social services for newcomers (Lanphier and Lukomskyi 1994). Beginning in the 1980s, the much-celebrated “Canadian model” of settlement-service delivery has been based on delivering services through community organizations funded by the state (Richmond and Shields 2005). Settlement and social service agencies are, thus, an important institutional arena of political socialization and a bridge to broader host-society political engagement (Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001).
Second, in Canada, ethnicity is a central component of the politics of recognition, and specifically of immigrant incorporation. A distinctly Canadian mode of ethnicization is given by the multiculturalism policies that organize settlement and social services, as well as other arenas of encounter between the state and civil society. Conceptually, three dimensions of an ethnicizing politics of recognition can be discerned. First, racialization and cultural identity formation processes have served to emphasize the distinctiveness of groups based on ethnicity, religion, language, nationality, customs, and the like. Multiculturalism policy celebrates, indeed demands, ethnic distinctiveness (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002; Bloemraad 2006; Breton 1984; Statistics Canada 2003). Second, at the same time, the tremendous diversity of immigration source countries and regions, together with geographic dispersal across the country and within cities, has encouraged organizing based on a small number of multi-national, pan-ethnic blocks (Anisef and Lanphier 2003). Racialization processes also have tended to impose seemingly arbitrary, simplifying, and ahistorical categories on non-white populations (Anderson 1991; Das Gupta 1999). There, thus, has emerged a parallel pressure for populations to constitute overarching and easily identifiable (racialized) pan-ethnic blocks. The result has been a tension between state policies and funding directives that stress distinctiveness based on very particularistic (folkloric and reified) cultural markers of identity and those that channel organizing along broad, acceptable pan-ethnic lines such as language (for example, Hispanic, Francophone) or region (for example, Latin American, South Asian). Third, the pressure to organize based on ethnic identity, whether framed as hyper-distinctive or as more homogenous, racialized, and pan-ethnic, has imposed cultural traits in general (Levitt 2005) and ethno-nationality in particular, as the most relevant dimension of social experience and has served to obscure intersecting identities of class, race, religion, migration experience, partisan commitments, gender, and the like (Glick Schiller, Caglar, and Guldbrandsen 2006).²

As a result, the capacity to dialogue with, and make demands on, state and non-state bureaucracies has come to rest on the ability of all groups, except the White Anglo-Saxon establishment, to constitute themselves into coherent and palatable ethnic collectives, and to sustain “community” organizations that reflect and represent the ethnic collective’s needs, priorities, and agendas. In this context, in-group and out-group organizational negotiations often have emerged as a critical site of political learning, socialization, and incorporation. The ethnicizing politics of recognition, thus, can be seen to be at play in the definition of settlement and social service agendas, the delivery of programmes, and the institutional arrangements through which these are organized. Ethnic and ethno-national identity formation processes have been found to intersect with both a) the top-down bureaucratic manoeuvres of who should receive settlement services, for how long, via what institutional channels, with what sectoral priorities in mind, and so forth and b) the in-group negotiations around agenda setting.

² Whether religion or ethno-nationality are considered most important may depend on the group, and certainly changes over time. Religion was a key dimension of ethnic politics in Canada prior to the 1950s. Since 9/11 it has become a central “concern” again.
METHODOLOGY

Our analysis of Latin American immigrants in Toronto draws on data collected as part of a broader study called *Social Cohesion and International Migration in a Globalizing Era: Transnational Solidarities and Newcomer’s Incorporation in Canada*. We conducted eighteen thematically organized focus group interviews with just over one hundred Latin American and Canadian participants between October 2004 and June 2005. Other data came from focus groups conducted with community activists from four refugee migrant populations including, Chileans, Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, and Colombians, and from a focus group with seven participants who were invited based on their direct involvement in Latin American umbrella organizations. We also made use of material from individual interviews conducted in 2000-2001 by Luin Goldring, and individual follow-up interviews conducted by Landolt and Goldring in 2007 and 2008.

Through this research, we have been able to identify two overlapping organizational patterns in which the *ethnicizing* politics of recognition of Canadian multiculturalism are in play. Moreover, we have been able to trace how ethnic politics emerge and are contested as a) country-of-origin-based and b) pan-ethnic Latin American immigrant organizations define and refine settlement and social-service agendas. In the next section, we focus on country-of-origin-based organizations. For each new wave of Latin American immigration, country of origin has been an important starting point for community development, including the constitution of formal and informal organizations engaged in settlement issues. Ethno-national organizations have helped migrant families meet many of their early settlement needs through fairly informal mutual-aid arrangements. It has been found that each migrant population develops a settlement agenda that reflects its distinct migration experience; social, economic, and political competencies; and ways of doing politics. Settlement issues can be said to intersect both discursively and organizationally with other group-specific priorities, such as the transnational politics of exile or the search for professional and business opportunities. Furthermore, it is apparent that, in Toronto, country-of-origin or ethno-nationality based organizing does not dwindle over time. It has been ongoing and changing, and has produced a Latin American political landscape that is layered, sectorally diverse, and politically complex.

In the fourth section of the paper, we focus on the politics of Latin American pan-ethnic, multi-service agencies. Toronto’s Latin American community has helped build different types of multi-national social service organizations and networking structures. Indeed, institutions such as the Centre for Spanish Speaking People (CSSP) and the Hispanic Development Council (HDC) have been forced to navigate between the competing agendas and interests of a profoundly diverse immigrant population and the necessity to present a homogeneous and coherent “agenda of needs” to state and non-state stakeholders and funding institutions. In spite of the overarching tendency to

---

3 The project was led by Michael Lanphier of York University and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). For details on the Latin American component of the project see [www.yorku.ca/cohesion/LARG/html/largindex2.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/cohesion/LARG/html/largindex2.htm)

4 *The Civic Engagement of Latin Americans in Toronto* (CELAT) project was conducted by Luin Goldring with funding from the Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement.
organize around standard concerns of the early settlement process and fairly benign issues that
generate broad-based support, more critical sectoral and intersectional agendas always have been
an important element of Latin American community activism and settlement work. Latin American
community activists and social-service workers have developed considerable specialization within
the social-service sector including work on anti-racism, feminism and women’s issues, seniors, gay
and lesbian issues, and schooling.

In an ongoing process of negotiating agenda setting, seeking out funding, and relating to both
external and community constituencies, more contentious agendas have entered and transformed the
established institutional spaces of the Latin American settlement and social-service mainstream.
Several examples can be presented to underscore the complex relationship among multi-service,
pan-ethnic agencies, and between them and both ethno-national (that is, country-of-origin-based)
and sectoral organizations. Moreover, the results of our analysis highlight the multiple levels of
community organizing that underlie the more visible activities of pan-ethnic, multi-service agencies,
and which work as counterweights to state-influenced ethnicizing processes. The latter tend to
narrow the field in terms of players and voices, the former push for a wider set of concerns, which
may be too political for pan-ethnic, multi-service, and umbrella organizations.

DIVERSE PATHWAYS INTO SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The Latin American population of Canada is quite heterogeneous in terms of its modes of
entry, immigration status upon entry, and countries of origin. Mata (1985) characterized Latin
American migration to Canada as occurring in four waves, based on changes in Canadian
immigration policy and events taking place in countries of origin. The first was the “lead wave” of
European-origin step-migrants, which included people arriving through the early 1960s. Second, in
the late 1960s and early 70s, was the “Andean wave” of Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Peruvian
economic migrants. Third came the “coup wave” of political refugees from Chile, Argentina, and
Uruguay, which started in 1973 and continued through the later 1970s. Fourth was the “Central
American” wave that fled civil wars during the 1980s. This was also the period during which large
proportions of Dominicans, Bolivians, and Ecuadorians arrived, leaving countries affected by early
neo-liberal restructuring (Phillips 1999). More recent data suggest a fifth wave that began in the
1990s and has been characterized by the further diversification of modes of entry and of the
socioeconomic background of newcomers. Latin American migration to Canada now includes a
growing number of unauthorized migrant workers from Costa Rica, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina,
an expansion in government-run, temporary migrant-worker programs, and a new stream of
independent-class immigrants, mostly professionals and entrepreneurs, from Mexico, Colombia, and
Argentina (Goldring 2006; Veronis 2006).

Table 1 draws on 2001 and 2006 Canadian Census data to provide a breakdown of the Latin
American immigrant population by country of origin and period of arrival. The data largely confirm
the existence of five migration waves associated with different regions of Latin America. They also
demonstrate that no single source country dominates the migration flow. The largest share of
Chileans, for instance, arrived between 1971 and 1980, in the period following the 1973 coup and
Table 1. Latin American Immigrants and Non-Permanent Residents: Country of Birth by Period of Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>3,180</td>
<td>2,790</td>
<td>3,980</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>1,785</td>
<td>19,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>3,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>1,765</td>
<td>2,345</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>5,075</td>
<td>2,725</td>
<td>18,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>10,995</td>
<td>7,190</td>
<td>4,805</td>
<td>2,325</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>26,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>3,520</td>
<td>2,935</td>
<td>6,845</td>
<td>25,305</td>
<td>3,405</td>
<td>42,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>3,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>3,515</td>
<td>4,240</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>9,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>3,165</td>
<td>1,310</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>6,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>4,285</td>
<td>2,165</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>12,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>23,780</td>
<td>14,725</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>43,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>6,215</td>
<td>6,405</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>15,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>2,705</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>5,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1,445</td>
<td>2,140</td>
<td>4,865</td>
<td>9,660</td>
<td>14,450</td>
<td>16,520</td>
<td>11,550</td>
<td>60,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>4,695</td>
<td>3,840</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>9,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>2,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>2,330</td>
<td>5,660</td>
<td>8,245</td>
<td>5,385</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>23,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>2,285</td>
<td>1,385</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>7,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela [3]</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>3,165</td>
<td>4,260</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>11,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Latin Amer.</strong></td>
<td><strong>4675</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,905</strong></td>
<td><strong>38,985</strong></td>
<td><strong>77,275</strong></td>
<td><strong>90,045</strong></td>
<td><strong>82,430</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,515</strong></td>
<td><strong>331,190</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Columns a, b, c, d: Elaborated from the 2001 Census of Canada, Table 9 (Statistics Canada 2001) and Columns e, f, g: 2006 Census of Canada. Statistics Canada, Catalogue Number 97-557-XCB2006007.

Notes:
[1] Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

[2] Non-permanent residents are persons from another country who, at the time of the census, held a Work or Study Permit, or who were refugee claimants, as well as family members living with them in Canada.

military intervention (Diaz 1999). Similarly, the table captures the movement of Central Americans who left countries marked by violence and civil war during the 1980s (Kowalchuk 1999a; Kowalchuk 1999b). Overall, the top Latin American source countries for immigrant and non-immigrants combined are Mexico (18 per cent), El Salvador (13 per cent), Colombia (13 per cent), and Chile (8 per cent).

Three significant features mark Latin American migration to Canada: 1) the largely involuntary nature of migration flows; 2) the presence of political violence both as a root cause of exit from countries of origin and as an organizing principle of community narratives about why the group is in Canada; and, 3) the long arm of the Canadian state in managing the entrance and settlement of Latin American refugee and immigrant populations (Basok and Simmons 1993; Landolt 2008; Landolt and Goldring 2006; Nolin 2006). Statistical sources and a review of government entry policies towards Latin Americans confirm the prevalence of refugee migration.

The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB)\(^5\) shows that, during the period from 1980 to 2001, close to one-third of Latin Americans (31 per cent) who were granted permanent residence status actually entered the country as either refugees or asylum seekers. Thirty-seven per cent entered under the “family class” category and thirty per cent entered as part of the “independent class.” Forty-three per cent of the Latin American immigrants recorded in the IMDB entered Canada through a special program associated with refugee migration (Rootham 2005). For example, special measures were invoked for political prisoners from El Salvador and US-resident Salvadorans and Guatemalans who wished to file an asylum application in Canada. Although not captured in the IMDB, approximately 10,000 Chileans entered Canada between 1973 and 1978, 7,000 of whom also entered under special categories and programs associated with refugee flight (such as, emergency ministerial permits and the Chilean Political Prisoners Program) (Diaz 1993). In recent years, a growing number of Mexican applicants have also made refugee claims in Canada. While their acceptance rates have been uneven and generally low, this new pattern has meant that Mexico now has become one of the top refugee source countries for Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees 2007).

Across the Latin American population, country of origin or ethno-nationality has been an important point of departure for creating all sorts of community organizations, including partisan groups, sports and religious clubs, and more issue-specific associations.\(^6\) Within this general trajectory, conditions of exit from countries of origin, especially the degree to which departure is forced or voluntary, the duration and modalities of state-sponsored violence, and the Canadian context of reception have been important factors determining both the modes of and basis for organizing among Latin American newcomers (Landolt and Goldring 2006; Portes, Escobar and Walton Radford 2007). Migrants leaving relatively well-defined political conflicts, who have been able to enter Canada as refugees, have maintained fairly stable political bases of organization.

\(^5\) The IMDB is a government-managed database of the landing records and selected fields from the personal income tax returns of landed immigrants to Canada from 1980-2001.

\(^6\) The only clear exception to this trend has been Latin American indigenous organizations, of which there are a few. These have little contact with ethno-national organizations and prefer to work with Canadian First Nations groups.
Examples of this pattern include refugees from Chile and El Salvador (Diaz 1999; Kowalchuk 1999b; Landolt 2008). In contrast, those leaving contexts where political violence was more generalized and produced widespread fear, have either had difficulties developing stable community organizations or have tended to organize in ways that avoid dealing with home country politics. The former pattern can be seen among Guatemalans (Dunn, Pottie, and Mazzeo 2000; Nolin 2006), and the latter among Colombians (Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring 2006). Immigrants and refugees from other countries, where civil conflict has not been as important or clearly articulated, have organized in various ways, most of them also deeply enmeshed in ethno-national identity. Ecuadorians and Peruvians, for instance, have created sports and cultural groups (Romero 1985).

A central concern in our work has been the organizational trajectory of four refugee migrant populations, specifically, Chileans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Colombians. These four national-origin groups capture the range of Latin American immigrant experiences in Toronto. First, they represent three moments in the history of Latin American migration to Toronto, the 1970s coup wave, the 1980s Central America wave, and the 1990s diversified wave. Furthermore, each group can be said to reflect a different migration experience, and each has brought with it a distinct set of social, economic, and political competencies. Furthermore, each has developed different ways of doing politics. Upon arrival in Toronto, each group also faced a different settlement landscape and institutional opportunity structure. The ways of doing politics that groups bring have been found to shape both what they define as their settlement agenda and the organizational arrangements through which they carry it out. Indeed, sketches for country-of-origin-based organizing can be used to capture the distinct organizational patterns and the different institutional locations through which groups enter into the settlement and social-service landscape of multicultural Toronto.

The largest wave of Chileans arrived in Canada following the 1973 coup d'état that overthrew Socialist President Salvador Allende. Chilean refugees faced a sparse settlement and social-service landscape, one that was ill equipped to deal with either the needs or the ways of doing politics for a militant, well-organized, Spanish-speaking population. Chileans drew on party-based friendships and secondary contacts – the warmth of the parties – to constitute networks of mutual aid through which they found housing and employment, and developed a sense of community (Landolt and Goldring 2006). Early organizational efforts by Chileans reflected both their pre-migration political socialization within Socialist Chile and their ongoing ties to Chilean political parties in exile and to the underground opposition still in the country. As a consequence, Chileans developed a dual structure of activism that included Chilean political party-based associations and an inter-party umbrella organization named the Toronto Chilean Society. Certain of their imminent return home, Chileans’ political work focused on Chile and included fundraising for partisan organizations, conducting outreach and education with Canadians around human rights violations and repression, and denouncing the role of Canadian corporations in their country. Concern about the settlement process for refugees emerged almost as an afterthought, and was explicitly woven into the exile agenda. In organizational terms, a Chilean settlement agenda was developed within Chilean-designed and controlled institutions. For example, the Toronto Chilean Society created the President Salvador Allende School (EPSA, Spanish acronym) to both develop Chilean children’s Spanish-language skills and teach them Chilean history, while also strengthening their self-esteem. The philosophy of the EPSA reflected the dual agenda of exile: to promote the healthy participation of Chilean children and youth in the Canadian educational system, while also preparing them for
an eventual return home. A second example can be seen in the Barrabases Sports and Cultural Club, which carried out solidarity and fundraising work for the underground resistance in Chile at the same time that it trained and sponsored soccer teams that participated in local city leagues.

The bulk of Salvadoran and Guatemalan migration to Canada occurred in the 1980s as a result of civil war and widespread political violence. Intense lobbying by a national network of refugee rights advocates pushed the Canadian government to establish measures for the regulated and authorized entry of Salvadoran and, later, Guatemalan refugees (Ferris 1987; Garcia 2006). Thus, unlike the parallel movement to the United States, Central American migration to Canada did not tap into existing migration networks but was, instead, a state-managed refugee flow. In Toronto, and Southern Ontario more generally, Central Americans accessed a variety of settlement and social services through ethno-specific, Spanish-speaking agencies and front-line workers, as well as through faith-based, non-governmental organizations (such as, Mennonites and Quakers) with growing expertise in the settlement of refugee populations. Given the absence of broadly defined, pre-migration social networks and the role of external actors in managing the Central American settlement process, informal mutual aid networks among co-nationals brought together only small groups of kin and friends and largely emerged more as a complement to state-funded services.

Early organizational efforts by Central Americans in Toronto suggest the existence of a bifurcated political landscape. First, transnational partisan organizations charted a local agenda that reflected the strategic priorities of home-country-politico-military organizations, that is the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG, Spanish acronym) and El Salvador’s Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN, Spanish acronym). Such partisan organizations did not participate directly in refugee resettlement, and moved to constitute an agenda of settlement and incorporation as a complement to transnational politics. They focused on cultural and heritage preservation and political education that was organized through committees and subgroups contained and controlled within partisan organizations. In this arrangement, there was little contact or dialogue with relevant Canadian institutions.

A second set of Central American settlement initiatives developed under the auspices of Canadian institutions, particularly within faith-based, non-governmental organizations such as the Quaker Refugee Committee and the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice. Examples of this organizational pattern include: the Central American Community of Toronto (CONCENTO, Spanish acronym), the organization Mutual Support among Central American Refugees (AMERCT, Spanish acronym), and Action for Refugee Men (ARM). These groups were dominated by Salvadorans, but also included Guatemalan refugees. Such groups were bound together by a transnational narrative of political refugeeship, and a commitment to social justice in a framework of political diversity. Early activities focused on information sharing, accompaniment, celebrating and preserving cultural heritage, and recovering from the traumas of the civil war. Such initiatives served as a staging ground for a woman’s group, an annual family summer camp retreat, a short-lived agricultural cooperative, a soccer team and, later, a soccer league, and the first steps towards the establishment of housing cooperatives for Salvadorans and Guatemalans.

There has been a trickle of Colombian migration to Canada since the 1960s and two detectable waves more recently, one in the 1980s and another that began in the late-1990s and has
continued to the present. Between 1990 and 2004, 29,236 Colombians became permanent residents in Canada; close to fifty per cent of whom were recognized as refugees (Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring 2006). Given decades of politicized violence and the recent escalation and para-militarization of conflict, a generalized climate of fear and distrust can be said to permeate social contact in Colombia and among refugees and migrants settled abroad (Guarnizo, Sanchez, and Roach 1999; Hristov 2009). Public acknowledgment of the causes of the violence and its links to migration processes have been both contentious and rare (Diaz Barrero 2007; Guarnizo, Sanchez, and Roach 1999; Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring 2006). In Toronto, Colombians have tended to distance themselves from each other, and in particular from overtly partisan or explicitly political activities and organizations. New arrivals have been found to resolve the majority of their early settlement needs individually within a well-organized social-service landscape.

While a broad set of economic, political, and cultural issues of settlement and incorporation have animated Colombian community organizing, there has been minimal formal collaboration or informal overlaps across agendas or organizations. Friendships and pragmatic, issue-based affinities have served as the glue that holds together collective projects and organizations, and even here it has tended to be for the duration of a specific initiative and rarely has accumulated towards a more stable and broad-based or multi-sectoral institutional presence. The kinds of issues around which Colombians have organized include: ethno-national celebrations, traditional charity work, and information sharing related to unreasonable delays in family reunification (Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring 2008). In some cases, Colombians have developed their activities independent of existing settlement and social agencies, at times there has been collaboration with established agencies, but it often has been short-lived and perfunctory.

The most institutionally stable dimension of the Colombian settlement agenda has been around the issue of business investment opportunities and professional degree recognition. A number of business and professional organizations and virtual groups have emerged with the mandate of facilitating economic incorporation. These groups have sought to facilitate the exchange of information and discussions about work-related difficulties among Colombians. The Canadian-Colombian Professional Association has been among the most visible of these professional organizations. Efforts to expand the group beyond its Colombian membership to capture a Latin American constituency have failed. In terms of organizational location, Colombian business and professional groups tie into a broader trend characteristic of “diversification wave” Latin American migration, as well as moving beyond the more traditional institutional purview of the settlement-services sector to connect with the mainstream immigration policy circle. Indeed, the first decade of the twenty-first century has been a period of effervescence for Latin American pan-ethnic (but largely Mexican and Colombian based) business and professional organizations. A Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and a Hispano American Expo were both initiated in 2004. Also in that year, the Canadian Association of Latin American Professionals, Trades People, and Entrepreneurs (CALAPTE) was organized, and it quickly capitalized on the hotly debated issue of the underutilization of immigrant skills in Canadian labour markets (Reitz 2005).

---

7 See http://www.promptinfo.ca/CALAPTE.html
To summarize, the five Latin American migration waves that characterize the population’s presence in Toronto (and Canada) have developed very different settlement agendas over time that reflect each group’s distinct migration experiences, ways of doing politics and the changing institutional landscape they encountered in Canada. The Chilean settlement agenda reflected the importance of partisan organizations and the predominance of an exile agenda. Settlement concerns emerged as part, and a complementary parcel of, a transnational political agenda focused on both regime change in Chile and the eventual return of the exiles. Among Central Americans, settlement issues have been discursively in dialogue with transnational politics, but have tended to be organizationally distinct. While transnational partisan organizations associated with country-of-origin opposition groups constitute settlement projects, it has been the more autonomous work of refugee mutual-aid organizations that has fostered the development of a coherent Central American settlement agenda. Finally, in the Colombian case, the settlement agenda has been adamantly apolitical and issue-based. In a migrant population overwhelmed by mistrust, friendships, and pragmatism have served as the basis for generating an ethno-national settlement agenda.

Each migrant group also has developed a different kind of organizational relationship with the Canadian settlement landscape. Chileans’ early agenda developed within autonomous, Chilean-controlled organizations that defined an agenda and then proceeded to enter into dialogue with the relevant Canadian institutions. The constitution of a Salvadoran and a Guatemalan settlement agenda occurred within two organizational spaces, each of which sustained a different kind of relationship with Canadian institutions. Transnational political organizations have developed autonomous initiatives that, unlike the Chileans’ organizational efforts, have not generated a sustained engagement with Canadian organizations. Non-partisan, settlement-oriented initiatives have emerged out of mutual-aid associations that are embedded within Canadian institutions and, in particular, within faith-based, non-governmental organizations. While this organizational space has generated important long-term relationships and dialogues of collaboration, it lacks the degrees of freedom characteristic of the Chilean pattern. Finally, while fairly new, the Colombian settlement agenda suggests a lack of transnational dimensions and a highly perfunctory relationship and absence of ongoing dialogue with the traditional settlement landscape. In other arenas, namely that occupied by immigrant professionals and their advocates, Colombians have been developing a strong organizational presence. While clearly beyond the scope of this paper, in our ongoing research we propose that the character of institutional relationships between a migrant population and Canadian institutions, that is both the range of sectoral contacts and the nature of the relationship (that is, autonomous, embedded, perfunctory, etcetera) has had cumulative consequences for trajectories of incorporation (Landolt and Goldring 2006).

Finally, the importance of ethno-national organizations and the specificity of their distinct ways of doing politics and defining priorities and agendas within and for the Toronto settlement landscape should not be underestimated. Chilean, Salvadoran, and, to a lesser extent, Guatemalan country-of-origin-based organizations have continued to be important institutional actors that “represent” their respective group in different institutional spaces and that have continued to participate in setting the agenda of the Latin American Toronto settlement and social-service landscape. In particular, first generation Chileans and Salvadorans have mended many of their in-group political fences and have created fairly ecumenical and politically progressive ethno-national organizations. After a post-dictatorship period of relative inactivity, in 2004 Chileans with a long
history of activism in transnational, partisan organizations created the Casa Salvador Allende Toronto (CASAT, http://www.casasalvadorallende.com/). Through this organization, Chileans continued to sustain a transnational agenda of concerns that includes gaining recognition and political voice in both Canada and Chile. For their part, also around 2004, Salvadorans associated both with transnational partisan organizations and settlement-oriented, mutual-aid groups came together to form the Salvadorian Canadian Association (ASALCA, Spanish acronym). The ASALCA seeks to improve the insertion of Salvadoran Canadians in society by promoting [Salvadoran] cultural values, working for social justice, and through organizing and participating in civil society (http://www.asalca.ca/). Both of these organizations embody the distinct migration and political trajectories of Chileans and Salvadorans in Toronto. To a high degree, they reflect transnational agendas, and each group’s commitment to a progressive politics of social justice shines through in its activities. This highlights the cumulative causality of organizational trajectories in which distinct migration histories, competencies, and ways of doing politics feed into the evolving settlement landscape. It is important to keep the complexity and diversity of this institutional landscape in mind as we turn to a discussion of the parallel constitution of a pan-ethnic Latin American settlement and social-service landscape.

MAINSTREAMING DIVERSITY: NEGOTIATING A PANETHNIC AGENDA FOR LATIN AMERICANS

Umbrella organizations, by virtue of bringing together a variety of members or affiliates, and addressing the needs of diverse constituencies, have to negotiate multiple demands, identities, and context-specific constraints. Latin American or Hispanic organizations in Toronto face the challenge of responding to extremely diverse in-group settlement and social-service needs and priorities in a context where government institutions and funding bodies are geared to supporting “one of each” per “group.” The construction of a recognizable and legitimate Hispanic/Latin American pan-ethnic subject involves clumping a variety of migrant populations on the presumption of shared language (Spanish) and cultural heritage (Latin American or “Hispanic”). Piecing together ethno-nationalities as the building blocks of a pan-ethnic Latin American/Hispanic subject is problematic in several ways. In the process, the diversity of migration experiences and ways of doing politics reflected in country-of-origin-based organizations and settlement agendas can become distorted, suppressed, or forgotten. Moreover, populations with potentially similar migration and settlement experiences, such as Brazilians and people from English-speaking countries of South and Central America, are excluded and others, such as Spaniards, whose migration experiences are quite distant from those of Latin Americans, are included (at least under the term Hispanic). In exalting ethno-nationality as the first building block of a Latin American pan-ethnic subject, other dimensions of identity such as gender, indigenous or Afro-descent, class, and political leaning, to name a just a few, are obscured. These tensions and erasures are not simply conceptual or discursive; rather, they are constituteive of the organizational politics that frame relations between pan-ethnic social-service agencies and different stakeholders, including different levels of government, non-governmental funding agencies, and the varied organizations that make up the Latin American immigrant community.
Organizational challenges are also created as pan-ethnic, multi-service agencies navigate and adjust to changes in the state design of settlement and social-service delivery. The “Canadian model” of settlement-service delivery that flourished in the 1980s was based on delivering services through community organizations funded by several levels of government (Richmond and Shields 2004). In the 1990s, the model developed fault lines with the implementation of New Public Management theory and the associated restructuring of relations between the state and NGOs in relation to social-service delivery. Funding was reduced and restructured away from core funding, toward targeted and time-delimited contracts. This gave agencies less autonomy to define an agenda of settlement needs and priorities that reflected changing conditions on the ground, and altered the time lines for planning and realization of projects. Administrative requirements increased, and competition among agencies began to threaten the existence of smaller organizations, as well as alliances among agencies (Mitchell 2001; Richmond and Shields 2004; Richmond and Shields 2005). In addition, there was pressure to separate advocacy from service delivery, where the former was increasingly considered a special-interest activity not to be encouraged through taxpayer dollars (Richmond and Shields 2005).

For this paper, we examined the history of the two pan-ethnic organizations that are presently active in Toronto: the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples (CSSP) and the Hispanic Development Council (HDC). In the research, we considered how the two organizations navigate between a) governmental desires for channelled and orderly interlocutions with a pan-ethnic Latin American subject able to present a “coherent” agenda of settlement-service needs and b) in-group pressures, particularly from country-of-origin and sectorally-specialized Latin American organizations, to respond to diverse and changing needs, and to sustain an explicitly political agenda. The history of each organization reveals a recurrent tension between political agendas that include advocacy and social change, and pragmatic policy agendas that address settlement needs, as determined by the state and that meet standards for reporting, accountability, management, and the like. The former provide an impetus for programmatic innovation and responsiveness to changing conditions on the ground, the latter lead to institutionalization and bureaucratization. For each case, we examined how such tensions played out in terms of the organization’s decision-making structures, its processes of agenda setting and planning, and in the way new programs and services were identified and incorporated into existing work.

**El Centro para Gente de Habla Hispana (CSSP)**

The Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples (CSSP) was incorporated in 1973, and is the oldest pan-ethnic Latin American service-delivery organization in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Three Spanish women, who had left their home country as political exiles, established the centre with the primary purpose of providing “reception and settlement services to immigrant workers from Spanish-speaking countries, in addition to being a catalyst for the activities of the Hispanic community” (Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples 2006). Focus group participants reported that the Centre began with financing from the Spanish communist party, and that it initially offered child care and services for women when refugees began to arrive from Chile. With the arrival of more political exiles from Latin America during the early and mid-1970s, the agenda expanded, and they
began to offer English classes, and then other services. Government funding dates back to 1974, when the Centre began to receive support from the federal government’s Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) (Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples 2006).

A child of Spanish and, later, Chilean exile politics, the CSSP has always struggled to sustain a dual orientation involving responsive service provision and the establishment of spaces for community organizing and social change. Given the diversity and changing composition of the Latin American population of Toronto, this dual orientation has been a source of innovation as new services and activities have been added in response to changes in the social needs of the population, and shifting settlement and policy priorities. The CSSP’s history suggests ongoing tensions between service provision and activist agendas, as well as the different factors that feed into the negotiated construction of “community” social needs. These factors include: changes in the state settlement agenda and priority issues; the periodic arrival of different migrant populations with distinct needs and ways of doing things; and, an evolving dialogue between the CSSP and both country-of-origin-based and sectoral organizations (for example, political, faith-based, women’s) that apply pressure to shape the agendas and priorities of this multi-service “ethno-specific” organization. Our research revealed four key moments in the relationship between service orientation and activist agendas during which the CSSP’s ability to sustain a flexible, autonomous, and critical agenda has continually declined in light of state directives and funding restrictions.

First, during the initial years of the CSSP (1970s and early 1980s), service needs and politics were deeply intertwined. The political background of the founding group informed their identification and solidarity with Latin American exiles, and their solidarity was expressed through an approach to service provision that embodied political priorities and agendas. The Centre was organized internally as a collective with a Board of Directors that operated with democratic decision-making and horizontal relations among all staff members. Paid and volunteer staff had direct experience with migration and exile. From the Centre’s inception through the late 1980s, most executive directors, staff, and Board members were well known Latin American community leaders, mostly from Chile, whose partisan ties to the Chilean socialist and communist parties were known within the community. The Centre provided settlement services that were defined based on the pragmatic needs of settlement (for example, daycare and, later, English classes). At the same time, the Centre was known as a space open to community activism, where solidarity outreach and fundraising events were planned and held. CSSP staff members’ multiple “hats” were also evident in their presence in national-origin based political and community organizations and events.

The Centre’s early success in service delivery in the face of a growing demand for services led to a second moment, characterized by the Centre’s growth and institutionalization, the development of multiple and varied partnerships, and diversification of funding sources. The expansion of program areas was made possible by government funds distributed to community-based organizations under the emerging “Canadian model” of immigrant service delivery (Richmond and Shields 2005). This period, during the 1980s and very early 1990s, witnessed the addition of new programs at the CSSP at the same time that similar programs were being created in other organizations and agencies in the city (for example, women’s programs, HIV/AIDS, youth). Some of these programs, like the women’s program, were added in response to the needs of, and claims made by, politicized immigrant and refugee women who had arrived in the 1970s and early
1980s, and who found that after struggling against oppression in their countries, they now needed to confront power asymmetries on several fronts, both at home and in the community (Landolt and Goldring 2007). Youth programs were established in response to internal community concerns as well as external apprehension over gang activity, particularly following the arrival of Central Americans (Carrillos 2000; Carrillos 2003).

After a period of programme diversification and expansion, shifts in provincial politics and federal policy initiated a third moment in the history of the CSSP. The state pushed service provision in the direction of a management model and fund-raising logic that re-shaped internal organizational structures and decision-making, and, thus, altered the CSSP’s relationship to other Latin American organizations and initiatives. The Centre responded to the new policy climate by creating a board of directors and instituting staff professionalization. Reflecting a shift in leadership criteria that went beyond progressive politics to include management and fund-raising capacities, a non-Latin American Executive Director was briefly hired. One of the unforeseen positive consequences of this shift in staffing criteria was that Central Americans, who had historically felt shut out of administrative and leadership positions within the CSSP, were able to gain a foothold in the organization. Community activists however met this restructuring with scepticism, challenged the shift toward a more hierarchical structure, and worried that the Centre would be increasingly accountable to funders rather than to staff and clients.

The push to separate politics and service delivery in a context of shrinking resources was reflected in overlapping organizational dynamics. The CSSP turned to mainstreaming and institutionalizing social services in order to ensure continued funding and redefined its relationship with the immigrant population so that community members become clients of services, rather than partners in a process of ongoing collective action and social change. Service-delivery work that had historically embodied a progressive politics of social change, such as the women’s and HIV/Aids programs, were mainstreamed. Emerging areas of political advocacy, such as anti-racism initiatives, were channeled to participation outside the Centre. The sectorally-based collaboration and dialogues that had developed in an earlier period disappeared and competition ensued. For example, the relationship between the CSSP and Latin American women’s social service delivery and activist networks was hard hit. The work of Latin American women’s organizations and feminist activists employed in different social-service agencies was reduced, and the organizations created by Latin American feminists to salvage their work were ineligible for sustained core funding. While some Latin American feminist activists blamed larger organizations, such as the CSSP, for “eating up” smaller organizations during this period, others saw the effort to mainstream women’s social services by the CSSP as a necessary evil.

---

8 The CSSP did have a Salvadoran Board President in the 1970s, but overall, for close to a decade, the organization was dominated by Chileans.

9 As an example of the latter situation, the use of images of Latin American looking youth in a poster produced by the Toronto Police Association led to a strong political, activist, and anti-racist response which was channelled into the formation of the Latin American Coalition Against Racism (LACAR). One of the founding members was on staff at the CSSP. This person was active in LACAR, and LACAR was listed as a community affiliate of the Centre, but the Coalition operated independently of the CSSP.
This period of restructuring and de-politicization culminated and came to a head in the form of a labour dispute. At the end of 2003 and early 2004, there was a nine-week strike at the Centre. The days of the “collective” governance structure were clearly over, and the Centre struggled to remain afloat. The labour dispute led to internal reorganization and the implementation of a collective agreement. The 2003/04 Annual Report included a letter from the then-President of the Board outlining three challenges: 1) working in the context of budget and funding cuts, with 2) a growing population with different needs from those that the community had when the Centre first opened, and 3) the additional challenge of addressing the post-strike internal reorganization and staff morale (Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples 2004).

Not long before the strike, in keeping with the effort to stay in touch with the city’s communities, the Centre moved away from the downtown area to the northwest of the city, where the Spanish-speaking population was becoming increasingly concentrated. This move, and the new internal organization, reflected an emerging fourth moment in the Centre’s history which was characterized by a realignment of the Centre’s agenda that involved some re-politicizing, in a way that not only retained elements of continuity, but also took the contemporary situation into account in several ways. First, instead of drawing on “older” ways of doing politics associated with exile, partisan ties, and political agendas, doing political work now has come to include attention to internal labour relations. At the same time, maintaining coalitions with a range of Latin American and other organizations remained important. Second, the varied class, educational, and political affinities of newcomer Latin Americans has involved shifts in what it means to engage with the community and provide services that are considered to be “needed.” Regarding the question of community engagement, there has been a deliberate effort to re-join service delivery and activism, as reflected in a recent Annual Report which identified the Centre’s main priorities as improving the quality of services and programs and becoming “more active in the daily affairs of our community” (Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples 2007). The Centre also has made an effort to re-open its doors to community activity.

The objective of maintaining (or regaining) relevance is evident in the Centre’s retention of its flagship initiatives in the areas of women’s programs, youth, HIV/AIDS, and legal aid. It is also clear in the creation of new programs, like the Volunteers program, which gives the Centre additional staff hours, and offers “Canadian experience” to immigrant job seekers, particularly professionals facing the challenges of credential recognition. The area where a critical political agenda is most evident is in the Centre’s work with people with precarious legal status. This work is conducted by a long-standing staff-member, who is active in community initiatives outside the CSSP and is highly committed to keeping the legal-aid work relevant to new constituencies.

To summarize, the history of the CSSP has been marked by a tension between a service-delivery model based on social activism as opposed to more pragmatic (and less political) concerns. The tension was productive during the early years of institutional growth and program expansion, but became problematic when funding for social services was cut starting in the mid-1990s. More recently, efforts to reintegrate the two agendas are producing “safe” program areas, as well as critical and innovative work. Our discussion has highlighted the importance of state funding opportunities and constraints in shaping the general contours of the organization’s trajectory. It has also emphasized the role of the changing composition and diversified needs of the Latin American
communities in opening new programming areas. Staff response to new constituencies, combined
with responses to state ethnicizing practices, funding opportunities and constraints; and agenda
setting and program development by ethno-national and sectoral organizations all produced a
complex context in which the CSSP has engaged both in mainstreaming innovative program areas
and retaining a critical edge in some program areas. Throughout this process, the Centre has
retained close ties to the community, particularly among the constantly renewing cohorts of
newcomers. Although there have been tensions associated with the mainstreaming process, the
Centre remains a key institutional actor within the community and in the broader social service
delivery sector.

Hispanic Development Council (HDC)

The Hispanic Development Council was established in 1978 by “community workers and
activists” working on issues of immigrant and refugee settlement (Hispanic Development Council
2005). The HDC is a community development, policy analysis, and lobby organization whose
mission is to “continue to strengthen the healthy and sustainable development of the community
with the focus on social, economic, and environmental equity” (Hispanic Development Council
2005). It is organized, like many similar NGOs, with a long-standing Executive Director, a small
permanent staff, revolving interns, and a Board of Directors. The community development, policy
analysis, and research objectives are pursued by seeking out funding and projects that support and
promote the organization’s mandate, with the Council framed as a research, analysis, and lobbying
arm of the Hispanic community. Although not primarily a service delivery organization, the HDC
offers some programming of its own, notably for youth (Carrillos 2003; Poteet 2002).

The HDC has developed a record of involvement in research and analysis pertaining to the
Latin American community, but the way specific projects are designed and embarked upon appears
to be ad-hoc. A review of projects listed on the Council’s website shows that the HDC has been
obtaining funding for research, and certain programs and projects, such as the “Young Professionals
International” internship program and a social ecology project. It has also developed partnerships
with other pan-ethnic immigrant organizations, as seen in the Council’s participation in the
Alternative Planning Group (APG), a coalition of Chinese, South Asian, African, and Latin
American pan-ethnic agencies whose goals include “inter-ethnic community development” and
reorienting municipal social planning so as to take into account ethnic diversity (Alternative

The HDC has positioned itself as the interlocutor of choice for government ministries and
foundations interested in partnering or networking with a Hispanic community-based NGO. The
HDC’s research and dissemination capacities, and its claims to legitimacy within the Latin American
community, have made it an attractive interlocutor for out-group stakeholders. This can be seen in
the HDC’s participation in the APG, and in the fact that government officials view the HDC as the
community organization to conduct research on the Latin American population.\textsuperscript{10} It is also evident in the numerous “needs assessment” reports conducted under the auspices of the HDC over the years (Garay 2000; Millones and Miloslavich 1999; Miloslavich 1999a; Miloslavich 1999b; Rosenberg 1983; Sale 1995; Santinoli 1991). More recently, the HDC was commissioned to conduct research on the Colombian diaspora for a conference organized by the United Nations’ Peace University,\textsuperscript{11} and a staff member was invited to join a Latin American immigrant advocacy delegation to a meeting in Mexico.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to situating itself as the pre-eminent Latin American, or Hispanic, community organization vis-à-vis external institutions, the HDC frames itself as having extensive horizontal community ties. The Council’s website lists 66 member organizations, including area hospitals, multi-service non-ethno-specific agencies, and a few “Latin American” organizations. This information serves to bolster the image of the HDC as representing its affiliates. The limited number of Latin American organizations on the list could raise questions about implicit claims and de-facto practices of community representation and representativeness. These and other concerns have been raised within various sectors of the Latin American community.

The HDC’s institutional capacity and appeal to external interlocutors does not always translate into positive reviews from community workers and activists. Interviews, and our focus group with umbrella organization activists, raised questions about the HDC’s legitimacy, representativeness, and capacity for collaboration. Several issues underlie people’s doubts concerning the HDC. First, focus group participants who had been active in women’s organizations and political groups of various sorts expressed the view that the HDC (and large multi-service organizations in general) were no longer using service delivery as a means of community organizing, but were caught up in the fund-raising trap where funding sources direct strategic planning and set agendas. Second, these participants noted the absence of mechanisms to ensure in-group dialogue, accountability, or representation in decision-making structures. Focus group participants and other interviewees felt that, although the HDC was treated as a representative of the community, there were, in fact, no mechanisms in place to provide even minimal representation of the community’s heterogeneous and changing views.

A third reason for mistrust had to do with the way the HDC relates to other Latin American organizations and networking initiatives. Although the Council has succeeded in positioning itself as an authoritative interlocutor vis-à-vis outside institutions, its relationships with other Latin American organizations and agencies have been inconsistent and, sometimes, tense. One example

\textsuperscript{10} Personal communication between one author and a staff member at IDRC, the International Development and Research Centre (2005).

\textsuperscript{11} Expert forum on Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora. UPeace: Toronto. October 19-20, 2006. \url{http://www.upeacecanada.org/resources.html}

\textsuperscript{12} HDC participated in the First Latin American Community Migrant Summit. Morelia, Mexico, May 2007. \url{www.migrantsummit.org}. The Canadian delegation was supported by a grant from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation to FOCAL.
involved the politics behind the closing of the Latin American Community Centre (LACC), a multi-service organization that closed in early 1997 under a cloud of accusations of financial mismanagement. While some informed community members noted that such mismanagement may have taken place, they suspected that the then-leadership of a competing organization helped build the case against the now-defunct organization, and that the HDC helped to seal the LACC’s fate. We point to this case not to establish the facts or truth in the matter, but to underscore that the closure process was extremely acrimonious. Some unpublished documents have captured exchanges between supporters of the Centre and funding sources, such as the United Way, and between the Centre’s supporters and its detractors. These documents indicate that the HDC was consulted in the process by funders, but either did not support the Centre or possibly worked against it. The importance of maintaining credibility with external funders would be critical for the HDC, particularly during that temporal context, when funding scarcity and competition among organizations was increasingly evident. The fundamental point though, is that this controversy reveals underlying tensions within a Latin American “community” sector shaping itself to respond to the state’s ethnicizing policies, and community sector politics that pulled in competing directions.

A second example of tensions can be found in the relationship between the HDC and Latin American women’s organizing initiatives. The example shows that the Council played an important role in facilitating a process that led to institutionalizing programming in the area of women and domestic violence, but failed to sustain a working relationship with key organizations. In the late 1970s, the HDC sponsored a forum on the topic of domestic violence and the Latin American community that brought together around 600 people. The HDC hired a founding member of the Latin American Women’s Collective, the first Latin American feminist organization in Toronto, to coordinate the forum (Landolt and Goldring 2007; San Martin 1998). The event was a success in that it drew attention to the issue within the community, provided a catalyst for network development between Latin American and other women and women’s organizations working in the area, and led to the formation of LACEV, the Latin American Coalition to end Violence among women and children. LACEV went on to become a significant pan-ethnic sectoral (women’s) organization in Toronto, which subsequently became MUJER, an organization that remains active (Landolt and Goldring 2007; MUJER 2005). However, the initial relationship between the HDC and Latin American feminists has not been sustained: neither LACEV nor MUJER retained links with the HDC. This account illustrates the HDC’s ability to obtain funds to generate services in a programming area with clear community “demand,” but suggests that the pursuit of funding has been ad-hoc and opportunistic, rather than being based on a firm agenda or long-term planning and commitment to work a given area.

Furthermore, HDC collaboration with autonomous Latin American groups has been limited and ad-hoc. The extent to which this can be attributed to funding opportunities and constraints is not clear. Several focus group participants put the blame squarely on funding, arguing that when funding was more plentiful, there was more collaboration, but competition increased with the cuts. However, there are differences between the way the HDC and CSSP handle agenda setting that go beyond differences in their mandates and agendas. The HDC is very focussed on maintaining interlocutions with external actors, and innovation comes from interesting funding opportunities and collaborative projects to which the HDC has been invited (for example, the Alternative Planning Group). In the CSSP, new areas come out of staff work with clients and community members,
although there has been a tendency to mainstream many of these areas. For example, women’s programs have been mainstreamed to some extent, but legal counselling around workplace rights and safety contributed to expanding work on precarious status.

To summarize, the CSSP and HDC are both important players in Toronto’s Latin American pan-ethnic organizational landscape. Both organizations arose out of collective organizing aimed at meeting the needs of Latin American immigrants at a time when political exiles were arriving in large numbers. The CSSP adopted a social-service-delivery agenda from the start, although it was initially closely connected with a social-change orientation, while the HDC took on a different role as the lobbying and research arm of the community. In addition to the different foci and activities, the two organizations differ considerably in their relationship to the community and outside institutional actors, as well as their internal organization and agenda-setting processes. The CSSP is more closely tied and responsive to the ongoing needs of the community, while the HDC has, perhaps necessarily, had to distance itself as it sought out funding from external sources.

Canada’s multiculturalism programs and related ethnicization, and the associated model of settlement-service delivery, have contributed to the assignment of specific roles to each of these ethno-specific organizations. The CSSP became an intelligible interlocutor, ally, and funding recipient as an ethno-specific, multi-service provider vis-à-vis external funders, but also with other community organizations and individuals. This pushed the organization toward accommodating requirements set out by funders, and treating community members as clients, although compliance also allowed it to remain connected to the community through programs aimed at the altering needs of a changing constituency. In contrast, the HDC became an intelligible interlocutor primarily to external actors interested in having a “community organization” as a partner or collaborator for research and policy analysis. This has reinforced the Council’s more or less implicit claims to represent “the community,” all the while emphasizing its heterogeneity.

CONCLUSION

Latin American community organizing in Toronto is rich and complex. Ethno-national organizations have been a significant arena of autonomous organizing that has also generated diverse pathways of community building and settlement. Pan-ethnic, specific-issue organizations (for example, women’s, sports, and the like) have deep connections to ethno-national organizations, but offer participants an overlapping arena of participation. These forms of grass-roots organizing are linked to pan-ethnic multi-service and umbrella organizations that are more closely tied into ethnicizing policies and programs. The institutional landscape of Latin American community organizing thus operates at multiple levels of institutionalization, interlocutions, and complexity.

State policy, particularly under conditions of scarce resources, often can favour working with small numbers of “representative” pan-ethnic organizations. However, establishing pan-ethnic organizations based on the presumption of a common language and cultural heritage can serve to obscure internal diversity. For example, it can impose Canadian-style pan-ethnicity as the most relevant dimension of identity and social location, and, in so doing, can completely ignore other
meaningful elements of social experience, such as migration histories, partisan commitments, gendered lives, class and social capital, and racialized conditions. Ethnicized governance in a neoliberal fiscal context also has been found to flatten political differences, allows for benign policy dialogues (for example, about speedy family reunification and credential recognition), and suppress political action (such as, the enforcement of labour standards for all workers, regardless of migratory status). These two patterns are evident in the organizational dynamics of both country-of-origin-based and pan-ethnic Latin American organizations in Toronto.

Toronto’s Latin American community has helped build various types of multi-national, social-service organizations and networking structures. Institutions such as the Centre for Spanish Speaking People (CSSP) and the Hispanic Development Council (HDC) contend with a politically and socially diverse immigrant population and the imperative of presenting a coherent “Spanish Speaking” or “Hispanic” institutional face to external stakeholders and funders. The CSSP has implemented mainstreaming processes, while also remaining responsive to emerging needs and agendas from the shifting grass-roots. The HDC has focussed on interlocutions with external actors, but its legitimacy among Latin American community activists and organizations has been questioned.

Given the constraints set out by state-imposed ethnicizing politics, each of the organizational forms generated by Latin Americans helps to define the terrain of immigrant politics and community building. Ethno-national country-of-origin groups, issue-specific pan-ethnic organizations, and pan-ethnic-multi-service and umbrella agencies each engage in community building and politics. However, the room for political manoeuvring for each of them is limited, in various ways. Funding constraints and the service-delivery model privilege pan-ethnic-multi-service and lobby/umbrella organizations, but also constrain their actions. Although there is no room for ethno-national or country-of-origin-based organizations in the field of interlocutions constructed by the state, these organizations continue to contribute to the broader institutional landscape, and their actions are connected, often indirectly, to the agendas set by pan-ethnic Latin American service-delivery and umbrella institutions. Likewise, issue-specific organizations that have a critical dimension to their activities (for example, feminist women’s organizations) may find their agendas mainstreamed into larger multi-service organizations, yet they remain important contributors in the agenda-setting process. Our analysis of Latin American community organizing and ethnic politics in the context of Canadian multicultural ethnicizing policies, thus, has served to highlight a contradiction in these policies. Ethnicization narrows and channels the forms of acceptable diversity, de-politicizing and decreasing opportunities for broader, polyvalent dialogues. Rather than providing meaningful channels for multiple diversities, multicultural ethnicizing and racializing policies constrain the terrain (Das Gupta 1999).
REFERENCES


Glick Schiller, Nina; Caglar, Ayse; and Guldbrandsen, Thaddeus G. 2006. “Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Locality, Globality, and Born-again Incorporation.” American Ethnologist 33 (22), 612.


CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre

CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre is one of five Canadian Metropolis centres dedicated to ensuring that scientific expertise contributes to the improvement of migration and diversity policy.

CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre is a collaboration of Ryerson University, York University, and the University of Toronto, as well as the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the United Way of Greater Toronto, and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto.

CERIS wishes to acknowledge receipt of financial grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the data provided by Statistics Canada.

CERIS appreciates the support of the Departments and Agencies participating in the Metropolis Project:
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Public Safety Canada
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Justice Canada
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
- Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CEDQ)
- Federal Economic Development Initiative for North Ontario (FedNor)
- The Rural and Cooperatives Secretariats of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Statistics Canada

For more information about CERIS contact:
CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre
246 Bloor Street West, 7th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V4
Telephone: (416) 946-3110 Facsimile: (416) 971-3094
The Metropolis Project

Launched in 1996, the Metropolis Project strives to improve policies for managing migration and diversity by focusing scholarly attention on critical issues. All project initiatives involve policymakers, researchers, and members of non-governmental organizations.

Metropolis Project goals are to:

- Enhance academic research capacity;
- Focus academic research on critical policy issues and policy options;
- Develop ways to facilitate the use of research in decision-making.

The Canadian and international components of the Metropolis Project encourage and facilitate communication between interested stakeholders at the annual national and international conferences and at topical workshops, seminars, and roundtables organized by project members.

For more information about the Metropolis Project
visit the Metropolis web sites at:
http://canada.metropolis.net
http://international.metropolis.net