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**REGIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC AND
SOCIOCULTURAL DIFFERENCES AMONG
U.S. LATINOS: THE EFFECTS OF
HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY
LATINO IMMIGRATION/MIGRATION STREAMS**

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Abstract. *In this paper we explore two potential sources of variation in the life experiences of Latinos in the United States: region of the country in which a group resides and national origin. Although scholars have recognized the theoretical importance of these two variables, few studies have empirically examined the relationship of region of the country and national origin to socioeconomic variables such as occupation, education, and income or to cultural variables such as bilingualism and English language proficiency. Data from the 1990 U.S. Census 5% Public Use Micro Sample show that both the social structural and cultural experiences of Latinos in regions where they are few in number, such as the Great Plains, is significantly different than those of Latinos living in other parts of the country. Findings strongly suggest 1) that inferences drawn from historically Latino regional samples will not be valid for populations living in other areas of the country, and 2) that inferences based on the Latino population at large obscure substantial variation in the experiences of specific national origin Latino subgroups.*

The word Hispanic came into common usage in the early 1970s as an umbrella term used to designate persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central or South American origin or descent (Giménez 1989; Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987; Portes and Truelove 1987; Treviño 1987). Although the word Latino has largely replaced the term Hispanic as a collective

designation, each term points to the importance of a shared linguistic heritage and, at least for some writers, to shared experiences with discrimination as important factors shaping and forging a common group identity across a variety of national-origin groups (Giménez 1989; Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987). Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population; it is estimated that they will replace African Americans as the U.S.'s largest racial/ethnic minority within a decade (Aponte and Siles 1996). Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that adoption of a common Latino identity enhances the political strength of the various national-origin sub-groups as they confront common challenges of bilingualism, restrictive immigration policies, education and discrimination (de la Garza, et al. 1992; Padilla 1985; Welch and Sigelman 1993). Nevertheless, a growing body of literature suggests that the experiences of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central and South Americans in the U.S. have been quite different (de la Garza, et. al. 1992; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Truelove 1987; Rodríguez 1991).

For example, even though Cuban Americans retain much of their language and many of their customs, they have high school graduation rates only slightly below and poverty rates only slightly above European Americans (Bean and Tienda 1987; Portes and Truelove 1987). In contrast, Puerto Ricans have poverty rates and rates of female-headed households substantially higher than those of European Americans and other Hispanic sub-groups, matching and in some cases exceeding those of African Americans (Rodríguez 1991; Portes and Truelove 1987). Furthermore, some evidence suggests that the economic and political experiences of Hispanics are growing more divergent rather than more similar (Arce, Murguía, and Frisbe 1987; de la Garza, et. al 1992; Moore 1989; Rodríguez 1991; Sáenz 1991; Sáenz and Davila 1992; Portes and Truelove 1987).

Using either national data or single and/or combined metropolitan statistical areas (MSA's) data, most research addressing within-group variation in the experiences of Hispanics has adopted the simple strategy of comparing Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans across a variety of socioeconomic and cultural indicators. Typically, differences emerge between Hispanic subgroups on such outcome variables as education, income, political participation and citizenship, and/or language attitudes and usage. These differences are then explained in terms of factors such as recency of immigration, socioeconomic status prior to immigration, and the concentration and/or density of minority populations in place of residence. The effects of these variables on patterns of social mobility and cultural assimilation are, of

course, well documented (Bean and Tienda 1987; Moore and Pachón 1985; Portes and Bach 1985). Virtually unexplored, however, are the variations across Hispanic subgroups that result from differences in their geographic distribution (Sáenz 1991). Mexican Americans are concentrated in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and Cubans in the Southeast (Bean and Tienda 1987; Moore and Pachón 1985; Nelson and Tienda 1985). Thus, some of the socioeconomic and cultural differences between and within these sub-groups are likely to stem not so much from differences in the human capital brought to the United States by immigrants from the various national origin groups, but by regional variation in the structure of opportunities provided to Latinos, both U.S. and foreign born.

Regional effects, of course, are not only important for explaining differences between Hispanic subgroups but for explaining within-group variation as well. By increasing both actual and perceived economic and political competition, the presence of large, highly visible Mexican American populations in the Southwest can, for instance, exacerbate racial tensions and discrimination. As a result, the socioeconomic well being/upward social mobility of Mexican Americans living in the Southwest may be lower than that of populations living in areas of the country where Mexican Americans are a less visible and, therefore, a less threatening presence (King, Lowell, and Bean 1986; Tienda and Lii 1987). At the same time that the size and density of Mexican American populations negatively affects socioeconomic status, these same concentrations may provide Mexican Americans living in Southwestern communities the opportunity to maintain linguistic and other cultural traditions. Cultural continuity can be far more problematic for Hispanics living in communities where they represent a very small proportion of the population (Maldonado 1995; Valdés 1991; Vargas 1993).

In this study, we examine the extent to which the experiences of Hispanics are shaped by the geographic region in which they reside. We focus especially on the experience of Latinos living in the region referred to as the Great Plains for three reasons. First, to our knowledge no studies have paid specific attention to this population. Second, the Great Plains differ from other areas of the country in ways likely to affect the cultural and economic experiences of ethnic minorities. Specifically, the percentage of all minorities is extremely low in this area of the country, making it possible to clearly identify the effects of minority population size and density on cultural maintenance and socioeconomic mobility. Furthermore, the region lacks the large metropolitan areas that provide the backdrop for much of the Latino experience in other areas of the country (Acuña 1988; Portes and Bach 1985;

Rodríguez 1991; Valdés 1991; Vargas 1993). Not only is the region more rural, but local and state economies are less dependent on manufacturing and the types of low paying service sector/domestic jobs that have provided employment opportunities to Latinos in other regions of the country. Finally, the pattern and timing of Latino immigration into the region has been different. Early Latino, and overwhelmingly Mexican, immigration/migration into the Great Plains occurred primarily as a result of expanding employment opportunities after the turn of the century in the sugar beet, meat packing, and railroad industries (Valdés 1990, 1991; Vargas 1993). Because the economy has grown more slowly in the past several decades in the Great Plains than it has in other parts of the country and because the area is more geographically distant from the major migration sources and streams, Hispanic migration into the region, we assume, is older and slower than it has been in the Southwest, Southeast, and along the Eastern seaboard. Recency of immigration, of course, is likely to have substantial effects on both cultural maintenance and socioeconomic well being. We begin with a brief overview of the regional contexts of Latino immigration/migration and then proceed to statistical analyses of the sociodemographic and cultural factors that distinguish Hispanic sub-groups living in various regions of the United States.

The Regional Context of Latino Immigration

Sáenz (1991) has argued that an appropriate understanding of Mexican American immigration/migration patterns requires a reclassification of traditional census categories into regions he defines as the core (i.e., the Southwest), the Midwest periphery, the Northwest periphery, and the frontier regions. Broadening Sáenz' work to take into account the immigration of Puerto Ricans and Cubans, we identify the following seven regions: the Great Plains, the Midwest, the Southwest, the Far Northwest-Mountain, the Northeast, the South, and the Midsouth.

The Great Plains. This region includes Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Oklahoma. Although the total minority population is small in these states, Mexican Americans and/or Native Americans typically constitute the largest ethnic minority subgroups; only in Oklahoma is there a relatively large African American population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

The region's agriculturally-based economy, especially that portion dependent on the sugar beet industry and meat packing plants, has been the predominant force shaping 20th century Mexican-origin immigration/migration into the area. During the 1880s and 1890s, the immense tracts of affordable land, the fertile soil, government-sponsored research, publicly-funded irrigation projects, housing assistance, low-interest loans for supplies, and employment in the sugar factories, all provided incentives for European migration into the region. The Great Plains quickly became the nation's early leader in sugar production, a standing that was soon threatened by Nativist sentiments and increasingly restrictive immigration policies towards Asians and Central, Eastern and Southern Europeans. In the wake of increasing labor shortages and the increased demand for sugar generated by World War I, sugar corporations began to expand their Mexican family labor recruitment strategies (Valdés 1990). Believing that Mexicans were "natural sojourners" with little ambition and no aspirations to acquire property, Mexican labor was perceived as being of little threat to growers, corporations, and to the broader population. Pushed by civil war in Mexico and pulled by the recruiters' promises of stable employment and the belief that racism was less pronounced on the Great Plains than in the Southwest, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants began to settle in the region. Interestingly, a re-creation of this historical pattern of Mexican immigrant/migrant labor recruitment is occurring in the Great Plains region today, due to the re-emergence of the meatpacking industry (Broadway 1990; Cooper 1997; Gouveia 1992; Gouveia and Rousseau 1995; Hedges, Hawkins, and Loeb 1996; Stanley 1990; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995).

The Midwest. Composed of the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Missouri, the Midwest, like the Great Plains, is characterized by a significant amount of agricultural activity. However, the Midwest contains many more major metropolitan areas and therefore has a much larger industrial economic base than does the Great Plains. As was true in the Great Plains region, agricultural employment drew early 20th century Mexican migration into the region. However, many immigrants/migrants also found employment in the higher-paying urban industrial sector. Significant Mexican migrant farm labor remains evident in the region today but there have been significant declines in manufacturing employment with a concomitant shift towards low-wage, service sector employment (Valdés 1991; Vargas 1993).

In contrast to the Great Plains region, there is also a substantial African American population in the Midwest: African Americans are the largest minority sub-group in all but one of the Midwestern states, with Mexican Latinos the next largest group (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

The Southwest. This region, consisting of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, contains the largest Latino and Mexican regional concentration in the United States. There are significant African American populations in Texas and Colorado, Native American populations in Arizona and New Mexico, and Asian populations in California (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992). Before U.S. conquest in the mid-19th century, all or portions of the Southwestern states were part of Mexico's northwestern frontier. Following conquest, Anglo capitalist development in the region depended heavily on low-priced Mexican labor from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border for the production of surplus profit in agricultural, extractive, and manufacturing economic endeavors. The continuing stream of Mexican immigration/migration gives the region its distinct Hispanic cultural flavor (Acuña 1988).

Far Northwest-Mountain. Like the Great Plains, the far Northwest-Mountain Region including the states of Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington has a small minority presence in general, and a very small Latino presence in particular. Asian Americans constitute the largest racial/ethnic minority group in Washington and Hawaii, for instance, and Native Americans constitute the largest group in Alaska. Like the Great Plains region, the Far Northwest-Mountain states are largely rural. However, the economic base of the region more nearly resembles that of the Southwest, with Mexican immigrant/migrant labor being attracted by a wider range of employment opportunities in agriculture, extraction, and manufacturing. Despite their low numbers in the region, Spanish documents and oral histories from early settlers in the area show the Mexican presence and movement into the Far Northwest-Mountain area at least since the mid-18th century (Maldonado 1995).

The Northeast. The second largest U.S. Latino regional concentration is found in the Northeast region of the country and reflects the enormous Puerto Rican urban migration into the area. While Puerto Rican communities have existed in the Northeast since late in the 19th century, the bulk of Puerto Rican migration occurred as a result of the manufacturing employment opportunities engendered by World War II. With the shift from an

industrial to a post-industrial, service-based economy, depressed economic conditions in large northeastern central cities have propelled the movement of Puerto Ricans to other regions of the United States. Some scholars also have noted that fluctuation in the economy of the Northeast and on the island of Puerto Rico has led to a process of "circular migration" (Rivera-Batiz and Santiago 1996; Rodríguez 1991; Sánchez Korrol 1983). In Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont, African Americans and Latinos comprise the bulk of the racial/ethnic minority population. Of special note, Mexicans slightly outnumber Puerto Ricans in Maine and Vermont (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

The Midsouth. Of the three major Latino ethnic groups, Cubans are the most recent large-scale arrivals. Like Puerto Ricans, Cubans had a minimal presence in the U.S. dating from late in the 19th century and up until the 1960s. Cuban political turmoil, in the form of the Castro-led revolution in 1959, launched the first major wave of emigration to the United States. Political refugees and the business elite comprised a significant proportion of this early Cuban immigration. Refugees settled primarily in Miami's small, but previously established Cuban community. The tremendous influx of highly educated and skilled Cubans, aided by the substantial federal, state, and local economic assistance provided to them, led to the rapid development of a highly integrated social, economic, and political Cuban enclave in Miami (Masud-Piloto 1996). The continued exodus from Cuba in all social classes led to the establishment of the Cuban Refugee program, which in turn provided financial, housing, educational, and employment assistance to Cubans resettling away from Miami. In actuality, many Cubans quickly accumulated needed capital that was then used to relocate in Miami and further prosper in the growing Cuban economic enclave (Pérez 1992). Nonetheless, only in Florida do Cubans challenge African Americans as the largest numerical racial/ethnic minority group. Elsewhere in the Midsouth, including Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, African Americans constitute the only sizeable minority group. In contrast to other regions, the population is relatively evenly distributed among national origin groups (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

The South. This region, comprised of Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, is notable for its lack of any specific Latino

ethnic group concentration. Furthermore, no racial/ethnic minority group significantly rivals the African American population in size. For example, Louisiana has the largest local concentration of Latinos at 2.0% of the total population. This figure is dwarfed, however, by the African American population, which constitutes approximately 30% of the total. It is also noteworthy that there is a larger percentage of "other Latinos" than there is of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, or Cubans, attesting to the high Latino diversity in the South region (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

In sum, Hispanics living in each of the seven regions experience a unique historical, cultural, and demographic context. Differing in terms of the recency of immigration/migration, the mix of different national origin groups, and population size and density, both with respect to the larger European American population and other racial/ethnic minority groups, the regions offer different opportunity structures for Latino economic and occupational mobility and for the maintenance of cultural ties. In the statistical analyses below, we explore some of the dimensions along which the Hispanic experience varies regionally.

Method of Statistical Analysis

We use bivariate crosstabulation and analysis of variance to compare Latino national origin subgroups living in various regions of the United States on a variety of sociodemographic, socioeconomic, and sociocultural indicators contained in the 1990 U.S. Census 5% PUMS data files. The 5% PUMS (Public Use Micro Sample) is a stratified random subsample of approximately 15.9% of all U.S. households. Households answering long-form questionnaires provided detailed information on individual household inhabitants, family relationships, and housing-unit characteristics. Data were collected from 12 million persons in 5 million households (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

We conduct two types of comparisons for two sets of variables: socioeconomic/sociodemographic indicators, such as educational attainment, income, occupation, and employment status; and sociocultural indicators, such as bilingualism, English language proficiency, recency of immigration, and racial self-identity. For each set of variables, we conduct both across region and within region national origin subgroup comparisons; within regions, we compare Latino national origin groups to each other, as well as to patterns characteristic of the total population within each region.

The Measures. Ten indicators of Latino sociodemographic and socioeconomic status are included in the analysis. Rural/urban place of residence, employment status, unemployment status, and occupation are all treated as categorical variables. Rural residence is measured as individuals living in non-urbanized areas of less than 2,500 inhabitants. The employment and occupational status of Latinos 16 years of age and older are coded to indicate whether or not they are unemployed, employed, and employed in white collar, blue collar, or service/extractive occupations. Among the continuous variables, age is actual chronological age as of April 1, 1990. Educational attainment census categories for individuals 25 years of age and older were assigned a midpoint or actual value to compute means reflecting the number of years of schooling completed (e.g., 1st-4th grade=2.5 years; High School Diploma or G.E.D.=12; Professional or Ph.D.=20). Total personal income is the summed amount from wage or salary income; net non-farm and/or farm self-employment; and interest, dividend, net rental and/or royalty income for each household individual. Individuals reported as having no personal income were excluded from the analysis. Those individuals reported as having a loss of income were recoded as 0, producing conservatively higher mean levels of personal income.

In addition to these indicators, we also analyze six measures of socio-cultural status. Racial/ethnic self-identification is measured by two variables. Four categories of Latino ethnic self-identification are reported: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other; and racial self-identification is reported as white, black, Asian, Native American, and other. Citizenship and bilingualism are also categorical variables, measuring whether or not Latinos are U.S. born citizens and whether those who are five years of age and older speak a language other than English in the home. In addition, individuals 5 years of age and older who were reported as speaking another language other than English at home were also asked to rate their ability to speak English along a continuum (1=very well, 2=well, 3=not well, and 4=not at all). Recency of immigration is also a continuous variable, with the midpoint or actual value being assigned to the census categories reflecting the year a foreign-born individual entered the country (e.g., 1950 and before=50; Between 1987-1990=88.5).

Note that all proportional and mean estimates are un-weighted and subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Thus, estimates reported here may differ somewhat from estimates derived from the 100% population enumeration. For descriptive purposes, however, the large sample size and its random selection offset these concerns. In addition, tests of significance

statistics are omitted from tables because the extremely large sample sizes insure significant findings for both chi-square associations and mean differences at the $p \leq .001$ level.

Findings

As shown in Table 1, there are significant regional differences in the size and density of the racial and ethnic minority population. For instance, racial minorities (i.e., those not self-identifying as white) constitute 8% or less of the population in the Midwest and Great Plains regions, but nearly 13% of the population in the South, Midsouth, and Southwest. Geographic areas also vary in the proportion of the minority population that is Latino, ranging from 23.5% of the population in the Southwest to 2% or less of the population in the Great Plains, Midwest, and South. Even more tellingly, regions vary dramatically in the ethnic make-up of the Hispanic population, itself. On the Great Plains, in the Midwest, and the Southwest, persons of Mexican descent comprise the vast majority of all Hispanics (78.7%, 73.7%, and 85.1% respectively). In contrast, the Northeast, Midsouth, and South have much smaller Mexican American populations and a much larger proportion belonging to groups other than the "big three" Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban subgroups.

Regional differences in the size of the Latino population as well as regional differences in its national origin composition may have a number of consequences, of course. As previously noted, differences in the size and density of the overall Latino population may be associated with variation in levels (and rates) of structural and cultural assimilation. Moreover, regional differences in the national origin mix of the Latino population may be associated with corresponding variation in the ability of this group to mobilize as a cohesive and effective political group. However, even within a single Hispanic subgroup, differences in local economies, political cultures, and population dynamics may produce significant regional variation in life experiences and life chances. To explore these issues, we turn in Table 2 to an analysis of within and between group variation in sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of regional Hispanic populations; we look first at group differences within regions, and then at regional differences in the experiences/position of a single Latino subgroup.

As shown in column 1 of Table 2, Puerto Ricans and Cubans are an overwhelmingly urban population, even in regions like the Great Plains where the population is proportionately more rural. The percentage of Puerto

TABLE 1
U.S. RACE AND LATINO ETHNICITY BY REGION

<u>U.S. Race</u>	<u>Great Plains</u>	<u>Midwest</u>	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>FNWest/Mt.</u>	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>Midsouth</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Total</u>
White	91.9	92.8	77.4	84.7	86.5	77.5	78.2	83.2
Black	2.8	5.2	7.2	2.2	8.1	19.8	20.7	10.7
Asian/ P Isle	0.7	0.7	3.6	7.8	2.3	1.3	0.5	2.2
Native Am.	3.7	0.5	1.7	3.0	0.3	0.4	0.4	1.0
Other	0.9	0.7	10.1	2.3	2.8	0.9	0.2	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	666,817	1,320,228	1,784,310	671,077	2,579,622	2,199,998	1,075,552	10,297,604
<u>Latino</u>	<u>Great Plains</u>	<u>Midwest</u>	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>FNWest/Mt.</u>	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>Midsouth</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Total</u>
Non-Latino	98.0	98.4	76.5	95.0	94.0	95.4	99.1	92.7
Latino	2.0	1.6	23.5	5.0	6.0	4.6	0.9	7.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	666,817	1,320,228	1,784,310	671,077	2,579,622	2,199,998	1,075,552	10,297,604
<u>Latino</u>	<u>Great Plains</u>	<u>Midwest</u>	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>FNWest/Mt.</u>	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>Midsouth</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Total</u>
Mexican	78.7	73.7	85.1	68.0	5.1	14.4	37.6	57.2
Puerto Rican	3.5	8.6	1.2	6.4	48.9	15.6	10.2	13.6
Cuban	0.9	1.7	0.5	1.5	5.4	34.5	6.2	6.3
Other	16.9	16.0	13.2	24.1	40.6	35.4	46.0	22.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	13,184	21,284	418,617	33,762	155,913	101,871	9,359	753,990

TABLE 2
LATINO SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC/SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS
BY REGION

1	2	3	4	5
Region	% Urban	Mean Age	Mean School	% Employed
Great Plains	46.4 (666,817)	36.1 (666,817)	12.5 (425,791)	59.6 (458,089)
Mexican	67.9 (10,378)	23.9 (10,378)	10.0 (4,467)	62.8 (5,265)
Puerto Rican	80.9 (467)	23.1 (467)	13.4 (204)	55.7 (263)
Cuban	73.5 (113)	33.3 (113)	12.6 (76)	51.1 (77)
Other	65.3 (2,226)	26.8 (2,226)	12.2 (1,094)	56.7 (1,211)
Midwest	50.9 (1,320,228)	35.2 (1,320,228)	12.3 (836,123)	58.9 (777,656)
Mexican	74.0 (15,690)	24.4 (15,690)	10.2 (6,896)	64.1 (8,233)
Puerto Rican	81.2 (1,839)	24.3 (1,839)	11.7 (834)	62.8 (1,003)
Cuban	83.6 (359)	34.2 (359)	12.6 (231)	55.1 (249)
Other	71.1 (3,396)	28.1 (3,396)	12.7 (1,705)	58.9 (2,004)
Southwest	77.4 (1,784,310)	33.5 (1,784,310)	12.5 (1,101,879)	59.8 (1,334,667)
Mexican	83.4 (356,238)	26.5 (356,238)	9.3 (171,130)	57.6 (184,304)
Puerto Rican	93.1 (5,114)	26.9 (5,114)	12.5 (2,675)	57.8 (2,930)
Cuban	95.0 (2,140)	34.1 (2,140)	12.6 (1,394)	62.4 (1,449)
Other	80.0 (55,125)	29.6 (55,125)	11.0 (30,370)	58.6 (32,168)
FNWest/Mt.	68.7 (671,077)	33.8 (671,077)	13.0 (416,052)	60.7 (453,442)
Mexican	66.6 (22,966)	22.8 (22,966)	9.5 (9,603)	64.8 (13,830)
Puerto Rican	86.5 (2,145)	25.0 (2,145)	11.9 (989)	55.4 (1,157)
Cuban	92.5 (521)	32.5 (521)	11.6 (320)	65.9 (339)
Other	80.0 (8,130)	27.6 (8,130)	12.2 (4,205)	64.8 (4,755)

TABLE 2 (Continued)
LATINO SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC/SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS
BY REGION

6	7	8	9	10
% Unemployed	% White Collar	% Srvc/Extract	% Blue Collar	Mean Income
3.4 (502,460)	47.9 (502,460)	24.6 (392,736)	27.0 (392,736)	\$16,584 (392,736)
6.5 (6,111)	28.1 (6,111)	30.2 (5,107)	40.7 (5,107)	12,822 (5,107)
6.2 (289)	55.8 (289)	16.7 (258)	19.4 (258)	14,491 (258)
10.0 (31)	51.4 (31)	20.3 (74)	27.0 (74)	15,195 (74)
5.6 (1,454)	43.2 (1,454)	29.0 (1,167)	26.8 (1,167)	14,123 (1,167)
4.0 (1,000,808)	48.2 (1,000,808)	19.7 (777,656)	31.8 (777,656)	\$18,287 (907,640)
7.9 (9,654)	30.4 (9,654)	23.9 (8,106)	45.0 (8,106)	15,005 (8,106)
6.7 (1,171)	40.9 (1,171)	21.9 (994)	36.1 (994)	16,003 (994)
7.8 (283)	50.2 (283)	20.4 (225)	28.0 (225)	20,557 (225)
4.9 (2,365)	24.3 (2,365)	25.6 (1,936)	12.1 (1,936)	17,406 (1,936)
4.3 (1,334,667)	56.4 (1,046,245)	18.1 (1,046,245)	24.8 (1,046,245)	\$20,555 (1,163,235)
7.0 (232,636)	35.6 (232,636)	26.5 (177,727)	37.2 (177,727)	13,129 (177,727)
5.7 (3,441)	54.2 (3,441)	17.9 (2,816)	25.2 (2,816)	18,526 (2,816)
3.8 (1,643)	60.8 (1,643)	16.0 (1,326)	22.5 (1,326)	22,673 (1,326)
6.4 (39,051)	43.4 (39,051)	25.8 (30,558)	30.2 (30,558)	14,952 (30,558)
3.9 (497,964)	53.1 (497,964)	20.8 (400,771)	25.5 (400,771)	\$19,656 (400,771)
7.7 (13,830)	26.8 (12,059)	40.7 (12,059)	31.6 (12,059)	12,879 (11,297)
6.2 (1,309)	42.1 (1,309)	26.3 (1,090)	28.7 (1,090)	15,384 (1,090)
3.9 (381)	35.6 (381)	41.0 (320)	22.2 (320)	16,114 (320)
5.8 (5,426)	45.1 (5,426)	28.1 (4,630)	25.9 (4,630)	16,789 (4,630)

TABLE 2 (Continued)
LATINO SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC/SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS
BY REGION

1	2	3	4	5
Region	% Urban	Mean Age	Mean School	% Employed
Northeast	70.2 (2,579,622)	36.2 (2,579,622)	12.7 (1,698,764)	60.5 (2,023,020)
Mexican	86.3 (7,967)	24.9 (7,967)	11.1 (3,677)	66.4 (5,610)
Puerto Rican	97.0 (76,174)	26.7 (76,174)	10.3 (37,389)	49.3 (50,330)
Cuban	96.1 (8,452)	38.9 (8,452)	11.4 (6,066)	61.4 (7,026)
Other	96.3 (63,320)	29.0 (63,320)	10.8 (35,906)	61.3 (46,268)
Midsouth	65.8 (2,199,998)	36.0 (2,199,998)	12.4 (1,438,637)	59.4 (1,721,033)
Mexican	72.0 (14,709)	23.7 (14,709)	9.6 (6,475)	66.2 (9,695)
Puerto Rican	91.7 (15,942)	28.5 (15,942)	12.0 (8,474)	59.5 (11,131)
Cuban	98.1 (35,139)	41.2 (35,139)	10.9 (25,895)	59.6 (29,607)
Other	93.5 (36,081)	30.0 (36,081)	11.8 (20,906)	64.7 (26,938)
South	51.1 (1,075,552)	35.0 (1,075,552)	11.7 (673,381)	54.8 (816,944)
Mexican	60.8 (3,517)	25.7 (3,517)	11.2 (1,644)	56.7 (2,258)
Puerto Rican	79.9 (952)	25.8 (952)	12.9 (465)	49.1 (634)
Cuban	89.3 (581)	36.2 (581)	12.4 (402)	54.1 (473)
Other	74.9 (4,309)	31.5 (4,309)	12.0 (2,483)	52.6 (3,181)
All Regions	64.4 (10,297,604)	35.3 (10,297,604)	12.6 (6,590,634)	59.5 (7,896,896)
Mexican	81.3 (431,465)	26.0 (431,465)	9.4 (203,892)	58.8 (279,794)
Puerto Rican	95.2 (102,633)	26.9 (102,633)	10.8 (51,030)	51.8 (68,305)
Cuban	97.3 (47,305)	40.2 (47,305)	11.1 (34,384)	60.0 (39,444)
Other	88.3 (172,587)	29.3 (172,587)	11.2 (96,670)	61.0 (124,683)
Non-Latino	62.7 (9,543,614)	35.9 (9,543,614)	12.6 (6,204,658)	59.6 (7,384,611)
Latino	85.8 (753,990)	27.8 (753,990)	10.2 (385,976)	58.5 (512,285)

TABLE 2 (Continued)
LATINO SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC/SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS
BY REGION

6	7	8	9	10
% Unemployed	% White Collar	% Srvc/Extract	% Blue Collar	Mean Income
4.0 (2,023,020)	58.1 (1,565,210)	15.8 (1,565,210)	25.6 (1,565,210)	\$22,252 (1,817,460)
5.9 (5,610)	38.1 (4,707)	29.8 (4,707)	30.9 (4,707)	16,192 (4,580)
7.8 (50,330)	45.2 (35,072)	20.8 (35,072)	33.0 (35,072)	14,399 (40,883)
5.4 (7,026)	54.4 (5,535)	14.7 (5,535)	30.3 (5,535)	21,341 (6,153)
7.7 (46,268)	38.1 (36,852)	22.8 (36,852)	38.4 (36,852)	16,377 (37,020)
3.4 (1,721,033)	55.0 (1,326,885)	16.6 (1,326,885)	27.6 (1,326,885)	\$19,738 (1,546,897)
4.9 (9,695)	30.2 (8,559)	35.1 (8,559)	32.4 (8,559)	13,750 (8,289)
5.4 (11,131)	51.2 (9,032)	20.4 (9,032)	26.5 (9,032)	15,829 (9,543)
4.1 (29,067)	53.8 (22,025)	14.7 (22,025)	31.0 (22,025)	16,992 (25,587)
5.3 (26,938)	46.2 (21,851)	25.4 (21,851)	27.5 (21,851)	16,709 (21,592)
4.5 (816,944)	48.0 (595,638)	17.9 (595,638)	33.4 (595,638)	\$16,201 (707,924)
5.1 (2,258)	40.4 (1,801)	22.4 (1,801)	35.4 (1,801)	14,387 (1,876)
3.8 (634)	53.3 (522)	15.5 (522)	23.8 (522)	15,575 (535)
3.2 (473)	54.9 (386)	14.0 (386)	29.8 (386)	19,888 (392)
5.7 (3,181)	50.6 (2,376)	20.7 (2,376)	27.0 (2,376)	15,817 (2,538)
3.9 (7,896,896)	53.9 (6,105,141)	18.0 (6,105,141)	27.5 (6,105,141)	\$19,769 (7,054,687)
6.9 (279,794)	34.6 (218,066)	27.7 (218,066)	36.9 (218,066)	13,273 (224,474)
7.2 (68,305)	46.8 (49,784)	20.5 (49,784)	31.2 (49,784)	14,917 (56,314)
4.3 (39,444)	54.0 (29,891)	15.1 (29,891)	30.4 (29,891)	18,060 (34,246)
6.6 (124,683)	42.4 (99,370)	24.5 (99,370)	32.3 (99,370)	15,994 (101,288)
3.7 (7,384,611)	54.9 (5,708,030)	17.4 (5,708,030)	27.1 (5,708,030)	\$20,096 (6,638,365)
6.7 (512,285)	39.6 (397,111)	25.0 (397,111)	34.5 (397,111)	14,551 (416,322)

Ricans living in urban areas ranges, for instance, from a high of 97% in the Northeast to a low of 79.9% in the South. Mexican Americans, on the other hand, tend to be more rural than other subgroups. Mexican Americans living in the Northeast are, of course, substantially more likely to live in urban areas than those living on the Great Plains or in the South—86.3% compared to 67.9 or 60.8%. However, Mexican Americans in these regions are considerably less likely to live in urban areas than are Cuban Americans or other Latino groups. Note, however, that in these regions and elsewhere, Mexican Americans still are more likely to live in urban areas than would be expected on the basis of overall regional averages.

Place of residence/community size matters for two reasons. First, rural and urban communities have different economic and educational environments. Urban/rural and regional differences in economic growth rates, unemployment, and occupational mix are likely to have profound effects on the earning potential and opportunity for upward social mobility of the Hispanic populations residing within them. Second, one of the defining characteristics of a rural community is low population size and density. All else being equal, these demographic factors would make the maintenance of Spanish as a native tongue and the maintenance of other cultural traditions more problematic. Data presented in columns 3 through 10 of Table 2 address the first issue, the economic and other social structural consequences of place of residence; data in Table 3 address the latter set of cultural correlates.

Within regions and with the exception of Puerto Ricans, employment rates for Latinos are quite similar and generally match and often exceed those of the region at large. Mexican Americans, for instance, have employment rates that exceed those of other Latino subgroups and the region as a whole in 5 of the 7 regions; Cuban American employment rates exceed those of Mexican Americans and the region as a whole in the remaining two, the Southwest and the Northwest/Mountain states. Interestingly, employment rates tend to be lowest—both relative to employment patterns for the group in other regions and relative to the overall pattern for the region—in those areas where subgroup population density is highest. In the Southwest, for instance, where Mexican Americans constitute nearly 20% of the total population, the percent employed is only 57.6%, a figure slightly below the regional average and considerably below Mexican American employment rates in regions with less predominant populations, the Great Plains, for instance, with 62.8% employed, or the Northeast with 66.4%, or the Midsouth with 66.2%. Note that Mexican American employment is slightly lower in the South than in the Southwest, 56.7% compared to 57.6%. However, in

contrast to the Southwest, Mexican American employment in the South still exceeds the overall regional average of 54.8%. Similarly, the employment rate for Puerto Ricans is low in the Northeast, the region where their population concentration is highest, 49.3% matched only by the proportion in the South.

Employment patterns for Cuban Americans vary more across regions than is true for the other Latino subgroups. Employment for Cuban Americans tends to be least likely both in regions where their numbers are high and in regions with a very small Cuban American presence. In the Midsouth, for instance, where Cuban Americans constitute almost 35% of the total Latino population, their employment rate of 59.6% is comparable to that of Puerto Ricans (59.5%) and the region as a whole (59.4%), but significantly lower than that for Mexican Americans (66.2%) or "other Hispanic" (64.7%). However, Cuban American employment is lower still (51.1%) in the Great Plains, a region where they constitute an extremely small proportion of the population.

Given that Hispanic employment rates, with the exception of Puerto Ricans, often exceed those of the larger population, it is ironic to note that with very few exceptions so too do their unemployment rates (see column 5 of Table 2). Nationally, unemployment rates for Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos are at least 75% higher than the rates for the population at large. Even among Cuban Americans, unemployment exceeds that of the larger population, sometimes substantially so. On the Great Plains and in the Midwest, Cuban American unemployment rates are nearly 200% or more those of the region at large. Thus, even though Latinos are about as likely to be working as other Americans, they would be even more likely to be employed if those actively looking for work were able to secure it. The overall similarity of unemployment patterns should not obscure the fact that there is significant regional and subgroup variation. For instance, Mexican American unemployment is nearly twice as high in the Midwest as it is in the Midsouth. Cuban American unemployment rates in the Southwest and the Mountain States are less than 50% of those of Mexican Americans. Puerto Ricans, who in most instances have unemployment rates slightly below Mexican Americans, have substantially higher unemployment in the Northeast.

Regional differences in employment and unemployment are, of course, in part a function of the industrial and occupational mix of local economies. However, subgroup differences within regions also reflect educational differences. Both types of differences—occupational and educational—have

consequences for average earnings. Data presented in columns 6 through 8 give clear evidence of regional variation in occupational mix. Two trends appear to be particularly significant with respect to the effects of these differences on the experiences of the Latino population. First, Mexican Americans in every instance are less likely to be employed in white collar positions than would be expected based on regional averages. Furthermore, with the exception of "other Hispanics" living in the Midwest and Puerto Ricans living in the Southwest, Mexican Americans are also less likely than members of other Latino subgroups to hold these types of occupations. Second, and somewhat correspondingly, Mexican Americans are considerably more likely to be employed in service/extractive jobs than either other Hispanic groups or than the residents of the region at large. In part, this difference probably results from the fact that Mexican Americans are the most rural of the Latino subgroups. In part, it probably also stems from regional and subgroup differences in educational attainment. It most certainly is reflective of the historical types of opportunity afforded to Mexicans.

Note that with only one exception—Puerto Ricans living in the Northeast—Mexican Americans are the most poorly educated and most poorly paid subgroup. Interestingly, this is true even in those regions of the country where the flow of immigrants from Mexico has been smaller, where the vast majority of Mexican Americans are U.S. born, and where English language proficiency is high. The economic consequences of education and occupational differences are unmistakable. As shown in column 9, nationally Mexican Americans have the lowest median personal income of any Latino subgroup. In part, low wages for Mexican Americans reflect their concentration in regions of the country with relatively low wage scales. However, within regions they are also the most poorly paid, both relative to the region as a whole and to other Latino subgroups. Within regions, pay differentials are likely to reflect both overt discrimination and the legacy of low educational attainment. These variables, in turn, are likely to be influenced by sociocultural factors, such as racial identification, recency of immigration, and English language proficiency. Attention is turned to these factors in Table 3.

Among Hispanics, racial self-identification may be important for several reasons. First, there is ample theoretical and empirical evidence to suggest that discrimination is more pronounced the more a group or group member differs in appearance from the white Anglo Saxon norm. Given origin differences in Hispanic immigration/migration from the Caribbean basin, where a large black Latino population exists (cf. Maingot 1992),

regional differences in racial identity and discrimination may be anticipated. Second, racial self identification as white, as opposed to black or "other," may be an indirect indicator of either pressures to assimilate or actual assimilation. In the South, for instance, with its history of overt racial antagonisms, there may be strong pressures to identify with the white majority. In regions where Latino populations are smaller and less visible, the political significance of racial/ethnic identity may be less well-defined and therefore less clearly articulated in individual self-identity. Finally, racial self-identity may be correlated with other forms of cultural and structural assimilation.

Data in Table 3 provide evidence of both regional and subgroup differences in racial identity. Irrespective of region (except for "other Hispanics" living in the Northeast), Cuban Americans and "other Hispanics" are markedly more likely to self-identify as white than either Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans. With the exception of the Midsouth and South, where all of the subgroups are significantly more likely to self-identify as white, approximately half of all Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans identify racially as something other than white. If racial self-identity is influenced by level of discrimination or the converse—opportunity for upward social mobility—subgroup differences in this regard may be related to earlier findings on subgroup differences in education and earnings. Subgroup differences may also be related to recency of the immigration experience and the continuance of cultural traditions, especially native tongue maintenance. Theoretically, it might be expected that more culturally distinct groups would be more likely to maintain a racial/ethnic identity other than "white."

In contrast to what one might expect, however, data in columns 2, 3, and 4 of Table 3 indicate that Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, the groups most likely to self identify as non-white, are also more likely to have been born in the U.S., less likely than Cuban Americans to be bilingual, and in most regions be more English language proficient than either of the two other groups. There are, of course, clear regional differences in the maintenance of the Spanish language. The highest proportions of Latinos who are bilingual are found in the Mexican Southwest (77.8%), the Puerto Rican Northeast (84.5%), and the Cuban Midsouth (84.2%). The lowest proportions of bilingual Latinos are found the on Great Plains (50.0%), in the Midwest (55.1%), Far Northwest-Mountain (56.1%), and the South (47.9%) regions. These regions are characterized both by relatively high proportions of Latinos in rural areas and, with the exception of Chicago in the Midwest, a virtually non-existent major Latino urban enclave.

TABLE 3
LATINO SOCIOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS BY REGION

Region	% White	% Bilingual	% US Born	Mean English	Mean Immigration
Great Plains	91.9 (666,817)	4.9 (617,868)	98.4 (666,817)	1.5 (30,324)	71.6 (14,383)
Mexican	46.5 (10,378)	51.5 (8,984)	81.5 (10,378)	1.7 (4,623)	77.6 (2,050)
Puerto Rican	51.4 (467)	52.0 (408)	99.1 (467)	1.4 (212)	74.2 (149)
Cuban	73.5 (113)	56.7 (104)	49.6 (113)	1.7 (59)	69.0 (59)
Other	59.3 (2,226)	42.4 (1,954)	77.7 (2,226)	1.4 (829)	77.0 (612)
Midwest	92.8 (1,320,228)	4.5 (1,222,839)	98.3 (1,320,228)	1.5 (55,601)	69.3 (29,527)
Mexican	51.1 (15,690)	56.3 (13,703)	79.7 (15,690)	1.7 (7,713)	75.3 (3,382)
Puerto Rican	50.5 (1,839)	65.2 (1,628)	99.3 (1,839)	1.4 (1,062)	69.7 (700)
Cuban	63.2 (359)	63.2 (340)	50.4 (359)	1.7 (215)	69.0 (186)
Other	67.0 (3,396)	43.1 (3,031)	72.2 (3,396)	1.5 (1,306)	76.2 (1,156)
Southwest	77.4 (1,784,310)	24.7 (1,639,618)	89.5 (1,784,310)	1.7 (404,882)	74.9 (208,583)
Mexican	55.1 (356,238)	79.5 (315,745)	73.5 (356,238)	1.8 (251,092)	75.8 (99,564)
Puerto Rican	54.5 (5,114)	63.2 (4,530)	97.6 (5,114)	1.4 (2,864)	71.0 (2,006)
Cuban	68.9 (2,140)	76.4 (1,964)	42.9 (2,140)	1.7 (1,500)	68.5 (1,260)
Other	56.5 (55,125)	68.5 (49,947)	71.7 (55,125)	1.7 (34,232)	78.0 (16,528)
FNWest/Mt.	84.7 (671,077)	10.1 (616,800)	94.0 (671,077)	1.6 (62,095)	72.7 (49,028)
Mexican	43.0 (22,966)	63.6 (19,644)	68.5 (22,966)	1.9 (12,490)	79.6 (7,560)
Puerto Rican	39.9 (2,145)	30.5 (1,867)	99.4 (2,145)	1.4 (569)	71.9 (359)
Cuban	63.7 (521)	70.1 (478)	47.4 (521)	1.9 (335)	71.5 (281)
Other	53.4 (8,130)	41.3 (7,239)	76.0 (8,130)	1.6 (2,989)	76.5 (2,282)

TABLE 3 (continued)
LATINO SOCIOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Region	% White	% Bilingual	% US Born	Mean English	Mean Immigration
Northeast	86.5 (2,579,622)	14.9 (2,398,451)	91.0 (2,579,622)	1.6 (357,044)	71.1 (287,237)
Mexican	57.8 (7,967)	65.7 (6,988)	55.6 (7,967)	2.1 (4,592)	80.9 (3,861)
Puerto Rican	41.7 (76,174)	84.8 (67,739)	98.9 (76,174)	1.7 (57,412)	69.5 (35,274)
Cuban	73.4 (8,452)	85.4 (7,944)	33.5 (8,452)	1.9 (6,788)	68.6 (5,788)
Other	48.6 (63,320)	86.3 (57,375)	34.6 (63,320)	2.0 (49,518)	78.0 (43,872)
Midsouth	77.5 (2,199,998)	8.8 (2,045,130)	94.1 (2,199,998)	1.7 (180,602)	72.9 (159,416)
Mexican	57.7 (14,709)	70.9 (12,820)	63.4 (14,709)	2.0 (9,093)	80.4 (5,779)
Puerto Rican	69.5 (15,942)	80.0 (14,638)	98.7 (15,942)	1.5 (11,494)	72.9 (8,496)
Cuban	90.8 (35,139)	93.4 (33,336)	24.7 (35,139)	2.1 (31,127)	70.1 (26,844)
Other	70.2 (36,081)	81.9 (33,113)	33.8 (36,081)	2.0 (27,115)	79.3 (25,136)
South	78.2 (1,075,552)	4.1 (998,230)	98.9 (1,075,552)	1.5 (40,947)	72.5 (17,385)
Mexican	63.1 (3,517)	40.1 (3,101)	83.5 (3,517)	1.6 (1,243)	76.0 (651)
Puerto Rican	59.6 (952)	58.3 (844)	99.0 (952)	1.4 (492)	72.8 (428)
Cuban	80.7 (581)	71.1 (544)	43.2 (581)	1.7 (387)	68.8 (343)
Other	70.6 (4,309)	48.7 (3,948)	66.2 (4,309)	1.6 (1,922)	75.4 (1,632)
All Regions	83.2 (10,297,604)	11.9 (9,538,936)	93.8 (10,297,604)	1.7 (1,131,495)	72.6 (765,559)
Mexican	54.3 (431,465)	76.3 (380,985)	73.0 (431,465)	1.8 (290,846)	76.5 (122,847)
Puerto Rican	47.0 (102,633)	81.1 (91,654)	98.8 (102,633)	1.6 (74,105)	70.2 (47,412)
Cuban	86.1 (47,305)	90.4 (44,710)	27.8 (47,305)	2.1 (40,411)	69.9 (34,761)
Other	56.9 (172,587)	75.3 (156,607)	50.3 (172,587)	1.9 (117,911)	78.3 (91,218)
Non-Latino	85.4 (9,543,614)	6.9 (8,865,250)	95.8 (9,543,614)	1.5 (608,222)	70.9 (469,321)
Latino	55.9 (753,990)	77.7 (673,686)	68.5 (753,990)	1.8 (523,273)	75.2 (296,238)

These are also the regions with generally low levels of immigration/migration. Only 18.8% of Latinos living on the Great Plains are foreign born, for instance. The comparable figures for the Midwest and South are 20.3% and 25.4%, respectively. Among foreign-born Latinos, however, there is an interesting pattern: it is in the Great Plains and in the Far Northwest-Mountain regions, where the Latino population is small and overwhelmingly U.S. born, that the most recent immigration has occurred, with the average year of arrival in the U.S. for foreign-born Latinos being 1977 and 1978. It is only in the Southwest, a region characterized by a large Hispanic presence and a great deal of immigration/migration, that the average year of arrival of 1976 approximates that of the other two more sparsely populated regions. In sum, rural environments and relatively small migration streams into the Great Plains, Midwest, and South are likely to be among the factors that help to explain the relatively high levels of linguistic assimilation in these regions.

Research Implications

Results show that with respect to virtually every variable we examine there are clear regional socioeconomic and cultural differences among U.S. Latinos. Because in many cases the group for whom differences are most pronounced is Latinos living in the Great Plains region, an area noted for its rural environment and agriculturally dependent economy, future research must pay more attention to the socioeconomic and cultural experiences of this group. At the most general level, regional differences suggest that scholars pay much more careful attention to the ways in which the absence of large concentrations of co-ethnics influence the socioeconomic and cultural opportunities of racial/ethnic minorities. Doing so will clearly require powerful multivariate statistical analyses. But what can we learn and what questions might be derived from the simple descriptive information presented here?

First, Great Plains Latinos appear more culturally assimilated, as evidenced by their high proportion of U.S. born citizens, and in their low proportion of individuals who speak another language other than English at home. Furthermore, English proficiency of bilingual Latinos in the Great Plains is better, on average, than Latinos in all other regions, with the exception of Latinos in the South. Low population size and density, then, does appear to challenge the ability to maintain traditional cultural elements. Interestingly, this high level of cultural assimilation does not translate into

higher levels of structural assimilation. Despite having employment rates as high or higher than others in the region, Mexican Americans living in the Great Plains have lower educational attainment and lower earnings. Although this finding may be a reflection of the lower mean age of Great Plains Latinos, the pattern may also reflect the legacy of continuing educational and occupational discrimination. Latino migration into the Great Plains may be yet another factor negatively affecting mean income levels in the region. That the Great Plains region has a higher proportion of males, a younger mean age, and higher Latina fertility are dependable signs of migratory movement. Immigration/migration is more often experienced by young adults seeking favorable social, economic, and/or political conditions to successfully establish themselves. It is clear that, on average, foreign born Latinos in the Great Plains have arrived in the U.S. relatively more recently in comparison to foreign born Latinos in other regions of the country. Thus, the depressed earnings of Latinos on the Great Plains may result from higher proportions of Latinos with relatively little education starting at the bottom of the occupational ladder, often in the meat-packing industry. One important but unresolved question is the extent to which immigration/migration into the region reflects the movement of foreign- versus U.S.-born Latinos. Also unclear, is the amount of undocumented Latino immigration into the region. Multivariate analyses linking age, migration, education, employment and occupational status, and linguistic proficiency will clearly be necessary to fully assess the magnitude of economic discrimination against Great Plains Latinos. However, qualitative analyses will also be necessary to untangle the sometimes subtle ways in which individuals are steered into and out of less advantageous educational and occupational "choices."

Research approaches involving the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods will provide more complete knowledge about the rapidly growing Latino population. Our results suggest that the Latino experience must be studied with an explicit recognition of its national origin and regional diversity. Among the questions and issues Great Plains scholars will wish to consider are the role of historically established Latino social networks in attracting Latino immigration/migration to ethnically isolated areas of the country. More specifically, researchers will want to ask if there are economic and/or political incentives which, when combined with social incentives, make rural areas an attractive alternative to urban areas for Latino immigrants/migrants? Are there quantitative and qualitative differences in the perception and experience of racism for the differing Latino ethnic groups, and if so, why? How will the current rise in nativist sentiments

affect Latino political issues? Will foreign Latino immigration be restricted by changed immigration policies and, if so, what will the effect of new policies be on the future U.S. Latino population? Answers to these questions will increase our understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural future of Latinos in the U.S., and also help to provide a fuller understanding of the demographic and social environment of the Great Plains.

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