

## HISPANICITY AS A DIMENSION OF ETHNIC INEQUALITY A REVIEW OF HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES

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(Resumen)

Tras una larga y tortuosa paternalista-colonial, Hispanoamérica y los hispanoamericanos constituyen, de manera vital y pujante, lo que muchos consideran como el legado cultural más importante de España al mundo del Siglo XX. En las últimas décadas este legado se ha extendido, y continúa extendiéndose, a pasos agigantados; tal es la tasa de crecimiento de este segmento de la población estadounidense que se calcula que podría representar, en apenas 50 años, una cuarta parte de la misma. El artículo a continuación tiene por objeto analizar las características socioeconómicas más notables de dicho segmento, cuya composición es sumamente heterogénea y fragmentada en distintas regiones del país. Para España la diáspora hispanoamericana a través de los Estados Unidos significa no sólo el restablecimiento de su hegemonía cultural en Norteamérica, sucumbida ante la presión anglosajona desde hace mucho tiempo, sino también, en términos más pragmáticos, la apertura de innumerables y prósperos mercados, tanto de insumos como de bienes y servicios.

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Hispanics constitute one of the most dynamic segments of the U.S. population. Their presence has grown from 14.6 million persons in 1980 to 22.4 million in 1990 and an estimated 26.8 million persons, approximately 10.2 percent of the total, in 1995 [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994]<sup>1</sup>. If expected fertility, mortality, and international migration trends persist, Hispanics in the United States are expected to reach 31.2 million by the turn of the century, outnumbering Blacks shortly thereafter. Depending on the assumptions behind various models of demographic expansion, they may account for as much as a quarter of the country's population by the year 2050 [Exter, 1987; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].

Although the existence of a significant Hispanic component throughout some regions is by no means a recent phenomenon, the ongoing aggregate demographic explosion of Hispanics can be traced back to the 1960s. Their relative paucity up to a couple of decades ago is underscored by the fact that, not until 1973, did the U.S. Census Bureau feel the need to formulate a definition of "persons of Hispanic origin" based on self-identification of respondents and publish data systematically on their socioeconomic characteristics. As DeFreitas [1991] points out, prior to 1973 the censi, taken every ten years, were the only source of information on this segment of the population. However, the frequently changing criteria

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1. The Current Population Survey is taken annually by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Its universe consists of the civilian, noninstitutional population of the United States and members of the Armed Forces in the United States living off post or with their families on post, but excludes all other members of the Armed Forces.

used for identifying persons of Hispanic origin have reduced the accuracy of longitudinal comparisons.

According to the practices currently in effect, a person is considered to be of Hispanic origin or descent if he/she "identifies his or her ancestry as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish origin or culture regardless of race" [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993, p. 1]. This definition transcends race and focuses on ethnicity. Origin or descent is viewed as the nationality group, lineage, or country in which the person or his/her ancestors, no matter how many past generations, were born. Thus, a person could identify himself/herself as a Hispanic based on his/her country of birth, the country of birth of a parent, or the country of birth of some far removed ancestor.

The study of U.S. Hispanics' socioeconomic characteristics and behavior patterns is important to scholars and policymakers everywhere because of the rapidly growing labor capacity, consumption potential, and purchasing power of this ethnic group. But it also has broader implications. For example, insofar as one-third of all Hispanics of labor force age are foreign-born, an analysis of their characteristics and behavior provides the opportunity to explore the impact of intergenerational mobility on labor market outcomes, as well as the role of ethnicity in determining individual success and adjustments of labor markets to large shifts in the supply of workers [Borjas and Tienda, 1985]. Hispanics' integration experiences also are relevant to research and policymaking regarding whether Hispanics migrate to the United States seeking to become full-fledged members of American society, as did numerous European immigrants who preceded them, or, as has been alleged, they represent a disruptive influence, when they resist joining mainstream America [Fuchs, 1990; Pachon and DeSipio, 1994; Schlesinger, 1991] or even a threat, in terms of displacing and taking jobs away from Blacks and other disadvantaged minorities [Briggs, 1973].

U.S. Hispanics' characteristics and behavior are particularly appealing to scholars and policymakers in Spain because the expansion of this group is tantamount to a reaffirmation of the Spanish cultural legacy and hegemony forsaken in North America many years ago. The chivalrous and gallant might perceive it as a logical step leading to Spain's attainment of its worldwide manifest destiny, perhaps even as a matter of national pride, while the utilitarian would view it as a formidable source of both input and output markets as well as of investment opportunities.

The purpose of this paper is to present a profile of Hispanics in the United States based on population census and Current Population Survey<sup>1</sup> data, plus other sources; compare some of their socioeconomic indicators with those of non-Hispanic segments; and analyze variations in these indicators among the major Hispanic subgroups. Four areas comprise this profile. First, similarities and differences of historical, cultural, and adaptive nature are established among the subgroups. Second, a review of general population characteristics such as growth, concentration, age, marital status, household composition, and number of children takes place. This review is followed by an analysis of economic characteristics which encompass earnings, income distribution, poverty, unemployment, labor force participation, and occupational structure. Finally, there is a discussion of social characteristics including formal schooling, ability to speak English, incidence of foreign born, discrimination, and receipt of Means-tested Assistance.

## 1. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

According to the 1990 Population Census [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992], three-fifths (60.4 percent) of the U.S. Hispanic population are Mexican. Puerto Ricans, the second largest subgroup, constitute 12.2 percent, while Cubans, a small but economically powerful subgroup, account for 4.7 percent. The remaining 22.7 percent are classified as other Hispanics, mostly from Central and South American origin. Data from the 1993 Current Population Survey [Montgomery, 1994] show a similar distribution: 64.3 percent Mexican, 10.6 percent Puerto Rican, 4.7 percent Cuban, and 20.4 percent other Hispanic. These subgroups form a heterogeneous mosaic. They have joined the larger American population in different manners at different times, and have encountered dissimilar experiences in their respective socioeconomic, political, and environmental settings [Melendez, Rodriguez, and Figueroa, 1991].

Originally, Mexican Americans became a minority not by immigrating (as the other Hispanic subgroups) or being forcefully brought to the New World in slavery (as were Blacks), but by conquest. When today's areas of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas were taken away from Mexico in mid nineteenth century, their indigenous inhabitants became *de facto* second-class citizens subservient to Non-Hispanic White settlers [Kerr, 1992]. As time went on and income and wealth inequalities between Mexico and the United States intensified, both legal and illegal massive migration across the border ensued. Surplus labor conditions in Mexico's agricultural economy pushed Mexicans to migrate to areas in the United States capable of generating a greater demand for labor. Most arrivals remained in the Southwest, particularly the border states.

Puerto Ricans who move to the mainland tend to concentrate in New York, New Jersey, and other areas of the Northeast. Their migration also is linked to surplus labor conditions at home, although their demand for jobs is mainly in manufacturing and services. Since they are U.S. citizens by birth, there is no restriction or illegal immigration problems with this subgroup. Puerto Ricans began migrating to the United States shortly after their island was relinquished by Spain at the end of the Spanish-American War, the heaviest flow taking place between 1940 and 1960.

Unlike Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, whose migrations respond primarily to economic factors, the Cuban diaspora, especially in the beginning, was politically motivated. In the 1960s and early 1970s it consisted of professionals, managers, and former government officials who would not or could not adapt to a Marxist regime. With the advent of *Marielitos* and rafters, the latest Cuban migration waves are characterized by their younger, poorer, and less skilled nature [Morales and Bonilla, 1993]. An important feature of this subgroup is that, until recently, Cubans have received massive amounts of government-sponsored human-capital and resettlement assistance in the form of job training and placement, professional recertification, and research and teaching programs. Their concentration in South Florida reflects their hopes of returning eventually to their homeland under a more auspicious political system.

The last category, other Hispanics, is a potpourri of individuals who identify a wide array of countries as their ethnic origin. Many of them relate their birth or ancestry to El Salvador (565,000), the Dominican Republic (520,000), Spain (519,000), Colombia (379,000), Guatemala (269,000), Nicaragua (203,000), Ecuador (191,000), or Peru (175,000). In addition, 1,403,000 persons do not classify themselves under any country of origin but use general reference terms such as "Hispano," "Latino," or "Spanish" [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].

Each of the three major subgroups is the dominant Hispanic force in an area of the United States--Mexican Americans in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the New York and New

Jersey metropolitan areas, and Cubans in South Florida--while being subordinate elsewhere. The vast economic, social, and political differences that exist among these areas accentuate the distinct characteristics of origin of each subgroup and contribute to shape their adaptation and acculturation patterns.

For example, as Moore and Pachon [1985] point out, agriculture and mining were the two fundamental sectors on which economic activity in the Southwest relied in the nineteenth century. A great deal of capital, along with large quantities of cheap and unskilled labor, were necessary to make the system work. Mexicans proved to be an ideal source of labor due to the proximity of their country of origin, and a pattern of workers' enclaves developed. Consequently, both urbanization and economic development in the Southwest have lagged the rest of the United States. Political maturity also has lagged, as organizations have been rather unstructured and statehood was not attained until relatively late. Instances of racial intolerance leading to antagonism and confrontation, such as cattle raids, expulsions and deportations, lynching, riots, and organized banditry, have been common.

Although Puerto Ricans in New York and New Jersey have not experienced the persecution and border conflict endured by Mexican Americans in the Southwest, they have faced much the same prejudice and stereotyping. As a case in point, Lopez [1982, p. 325] describes occasions in which "English and Spanish language newspapers, all owned and controlled by non-Puerto Ricans, invariably sensationalized the crimes of Puerto Ricans and gave Puerto Ricans an image of their people as criminals..." The setting of their lives, predominantly urban, has been conditioned by the growing unemployment which has besieged the Snowbelt.

In South Florida both economic development and ethnic diversity are direct consequences of migration. The first major wave of Cuban immigrants took place in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, and was characterized by predominantly White and well-educated individuals with a remarkable propensity toward entrepreneurship. With subsequent immigration waves Hispanic businesses, mostly owned by Cubans, found substantial demand for their goods and services as well as an abundant and relatively inexpensive source of labor. Most Hispanics in South Florida work for, or with, other Hispanics, a situation which has led to the growth of an enclave economy with a strong grip on construction, real estate, clothing, and restaurants. Both a sustained expansion of tourism and the proliferation of international trade with Latin America and the Caribbean have contributed greatly to the South Florida boom, a boom which has established the Spanish language and Hispanic values and customs as a lifestyle. This environment has attracted numerous Hispanics, especially Colombians, Nicaraguans, and El Salvadorans, who usually experience few difficulties in adapting to situations in which the meaning of their ethnicity is established by Cubans.

Despite these and other intra-group differences, Hispanics often are aggregated into a single category which has become the basis of a national minority. DeFreitas [1991] and Moore and Pachon [1985] identify several reasons for this conceptual as well as practical aggregation. First, notwithstanding their historical backgrounds and separate identities, Hispanics share basic commonalities such as living in predominantly urban settings, experiencing poverty or at least relatively low levels of income, and facing prejudice and discrimination. They are increasingly being treated by society as a group with homogeneous traits and similar problems, some of them shared by other minorities, and are beginning to emerge as a potentially powerful and consistent political force.

Second, Hispanics share important linguistic features--among them, widespread use of the Spanish language--and cultural values common to most people of Spanish descent. These cultural values establish a way of living, often determining attitudes regarding religion,

the family, and general outlook toward society. For example, some characteristics frequently associated with the Hispanic family include a patriarchal structure, reliance on close friends and family members beyond the nucleus, *machismo* attitudes, and a preference for many children, all reinforced by the use of Spanish as a means of expressing the distinctiveness of Hispanicity.

Third, increasing acculturation by the various Hispanic subgroups leads them to disperse outside of their traditional areas. While such dispersion tends to increase the nationwide heterogeneity of Hispanic ethnicity, it also increases the homogeneity of Hispanics when compared with other ethnic groups, especially in the eyes of non-Hispanics, who more often than not are unable to detect intra-Hispanic variations. Thus, an understanding of the true nature of Hispanicity as a dimension of ethnic inequality can be gained only by identifying patterns in socioeconomic variables that separate Hispanics, as a single classification, from other ethnic groups, while also focusing on the differences that exist among Hispanic subgroups.

## 2. GENERAL POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Between 1980 and 1990 the Hispanic population of the United States grew at an average annual rate of 4.3 percent, much more rapidly than did Non-Hispanic Whites (0.4 percent) or Non-Hispanic Blacks (1.1 percent); only the "other" category, which includes mostly Asians, grew at a faster rate (6.0 percent) [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992]. Non-Mexicans/Puerto Ricans/Cubans registered the greatest growth rate (5.3 percent), followed by Mexicans (4.4 percent), Puerto Ricans (3.0 percent), and Cubans (2.7 percent) [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].<sup>2</sup>

The recent substantial increase in the Hispanic population can be attributed to three major factors. One is the highest birth rate of all ethnic groups in the United States--27.0 per 1,000 population in 1992 (*vis-a-vis* 13.7 per 1,000 population for Non-Hispanic Whites, 21.6 per 1,000 population for Non-Hispanic Blacks, and 18.3 per 1,000 population for Asians and Pacific Islanders) [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994]. The Hispanic birth rate has increased steadily in the last few years, from 23.2 per 1,000 population in 1980 and 26.0 per 1,000 population in 1990.

The second contributor to the Hispanic population explosion is a relatively high net migration rate--13.2 per 1,000 population in 1992, considerably higher than the net migration rates of 1.3 per 1,000 population of Non-Hispanic Whites and 2.9 per 1,000 population of Non-Hispanic Blacks, although not as high as the 37.5 per 1,000 population rate of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Yet the Hispanic net migration rate has dropped appreciably in recent years, from 30.2 per 1,000 population in 1980 and 16.4 per 1,000 population in 1985.

The rapidly increasing number of Hispanics also responds to enumeration procedural improvements such as clearer questionnaires, better population coverage, and an effective public-relations campaign incorporated into the 1990 Census. Especially effective in this respect were efforts by the Spanish-language media, both public and private organizations, and

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2. While, in the aggregate, these average annual growth rates are similar to the 1970-1980 rates (4.9 percent for Hispanics and 0.9 percent for non-Hispanics), they vary substantially among Hispanic subgroups: 6.8 percent for Mexicans, 3.9 percent for Cubans, 3.5 percent for Puerto Ricans, and 1.8 percent for other Hispanics [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].

community groups in raising awareness of the importance of being counted [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].

Hispanics are geographically concentrated in a few states. California alone contains 34.4 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population, followed by Texas with 19.4 percent, New York with 9.9 percent, and Florida with 7.0 percent [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993]. In terms of relative concentration, however, a different picture emerges. It is estimated that New Mexico has the greatest incidence of Hispanic out of total population (40.9 percent), followed by Texas (28.3 percent) and Arizona (20.9 percent). Other states with a strong relative presence of Hispanics are Colorado (13.8 percent), Florida (13.7 percent), and New York (13.0 percent) [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994].

Hispanics tend to concentrate in cities, especially in places where a large number of Hispanics already live. According to the 1990 Census [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992], 91.4 percent of U.S. Hispanics live in urban areas; only 73.6 percent of non-Hispanics are urban dwellers. Moreover, over half (52.2 percent) of Hispanics live in central cities, compared with 29.7 percent of non-Hispanics. (Unlike Hispanics, the 1980-1990 shift of non-Hispanics to metropolitan areas has been to areas outside the central cities.) Cubans and Puerto Ricans register the greatest incidence of urban dwelling (97.1 percent and 96.2 percent, respectively), but Puerto Ricans are gathered in central cities (70.6 percent) to a much greater extent than are Cubans (46.9 percent). Other Hispanics (93.0 percent urban, 53.5 percent in central cities) and Mexicans (89.4 percent urban, 48.4 percent in central cities) follow. More than 50 cities register an incidence of at least 20 percent Hispanic population. These cities and their relative percentages are listed in Appendix 1.

The racial composition of Hispanics (51.7 percent White, 3.4 percent Black, and 44.9 percent other, mostly Native Americans or American Indians) is quite different from the composition of non-Hispanics (83.1 percent White, 12.9 percent Black, and 4.0 percent other) [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992]. The age composition also varies with ethnicity, Hispanics showing the youngest median age of all ethnic groups, 25.5 years, compared with 34.9 years for Non-Hispanic Whites, 28.1 years for Non-Hispanic Blacks, and 26.4 years for others. About one out of every three Hispanics (34.7 percent) is younger than 18 years, substantially greater than the incidence of non-Hispanics of all races (24.7 percent); conversely, the incidence of persons 65 years and older is much greater for non-Hispanics (13.3 percent) than for Hispanics (5.2 percent). Major intra-ethnic variations are detected, however, as the age distributions of Mexicans (23.8 years median age, 37.6 percent younger than 18 years, and 4.2 percent 65 years and older) and Puerto Ricans (25.7 years, 35.2 percent, and 4.9 percent, respectively) are much younger than the distribution of Cubans (38.9 years, 17.9 percent, and 16.1 percent, respectively). The age distribution of other Hispanics (27.7 years, 30.1 percent, and 5.6 percent, respectively) is older than the distributions of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, but younger than the distribution of Cubans [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992].

The 22,354,059 Americans of Hispanic origin enumerated in the 1990 Census form 6,001,718 households, which yields an average of 3.53 persons per household, much greater than the 2.57 persons per household recorded for the non-Hispanic population. Mexicans show the largest average household size (3.80 persons), followed by other Hispanics (3.33 persons), Puerto Ricans (3.15 persons), and Cubans (2.78 persons). Hispanic households are more likely to be family households (79.8 percent) than are non-Hispanic households (69.5 percent).

More than two out of three (68.9 percent) Hispanic families are maintained by married couples, which is somewhat less than the incidence of non-Hispanic families (79.4 percent); 22.2 percent are maintained by a female head of family with no husband present, compared with 16.1 percent for non-Hispanic families; and the remaining 8.9 percent are

headed by a man with no wife present, compared with 4.5 percent for non-Hispanic families. (The proportion of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic families maintained by a woman with no husband present has increased since 1970 [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].) As with other indicators, there are substantial variations here among Hispanic subgroups. Cubans report relatively high levels of family stability, with 77.0 percent of families maintained by married couples, 16.8 percent maintained by female heads, and 6.2 percent maintained by male heads, followed by Mexicans (71.9 percent, 18.8 percent, and 9.3 percent, respectively), other Hispanics (66.7 percent, 23.5 percent, and 9.8 percent, respectively), and Puerto Ricans (55.6 percent, 36.8 percent, and 7.6 percent, respectively).

Relatively more Hispanics than non-Hispanics 15 years of age and older report never having been married (34.9 percent and 26.2 percent, respectively), while the opposite is true of persons married at the time of the 1990 Census (49.7 percent of Hispanics, 55.3 percent of non-Hispanics). The incidence of the rest of the population 15 years of age and older--separated, divorced, and widowed persons--is approximately the same for Hispanics (15.4 percent) and non-Hispanics (18.5 percent). Current Population Survey data for 1993 show that Hispanics tend to marry overwhelmingly within their ethnic subgroup, and when they marry outside their specific subgroup, they are more likely to marry a non-Hispanic than a member of any other Hispanic subgroup. Mexicans and Cubans, the two subgroups with relatively higher levels of family stability, marry within their subgroup to a much greater extent than do Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics [Montgomery, 1994].

Hispanic American families are more likely to have children present than are non-Hispanic families. In the 1990 Census, 63.3 percent of Hispanic families report children under 18 years of age living with them, compared to 46.6 percent of non-Hispanic families. The differential, however, is smaller for families reporting children under six years of age living with them (16.3 percent for Hispanics, 11.9 percent for non-Hispanics).

Within the Hispanic ethnic group, only 41.4 percent and 11.1 percent of Cuban families report having children under 18 years and under six years of age, respectively, living with them, a much lower incidence than reported by Mexicans (66.5 percent and 16.7 percent, respectively), Puerto Ricans (63.9 percent and 16.1 percent, respectively), and other Hispanics (60.8 percent and 16.7 percent, respectively). The incidence of Hispanic families reporting children under 18 years old and under six years old living with them is similar for married-couple families (64.7 percent and 17.0 percent, respectively), female householders without a husband (65.7 percent and 13.8 percent, respectively), and, to a lesser extent, male householders without a wife (46.7 percent and 16.7 percent, respectively).

### **3. ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

According to the Statistical Abstract [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994], the 1993 median weekly earnings of Hispanic full-time wage-and-salary workers (\$335) is 29.9 percent less than the earnings of Whites (\$478) and 9.5 percent less than the earnings of Blacks (\$370).<sup>3</sup> For 1990 the gap is 28.1 percent and 6.7 percent less, respectively (\$307 for Hispanics, \$427 for Whites, and \$329 for Blacks). Thus, during the first three years of this

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3. The White and Black categories in this comparison refer to race. Consequently, they include Hispanics, since the term "Hispanic" refers to an ethnic category.

decade. Hispanics' earnings deteriorated *vis-a-vis* the earnings of non-Hispanics. In fact, the Hispanic annual median household income in constant (1992) dollars actually dropped--from \$24,803 in 1989 to \$23,970 in 1990, \$23,374 in 1991, and \$22,848 in 1992. Although the incomes of all ethnic groups declined during this period because of the recession, the relative position of Hispanics deteriorated, as their median household income in 1989 was 27.9 percent less than the income of Whites, but in 1992 it was 29.4 percent less.

The 1993 median weekly full-time wage-and-salary earnings of Hispanic men exceeds by 12.1 percent the earnings of Hispanic women. (The magnitude of this differential is smaller than the 15.0 percent reported in 1990.) Yet, inter-ethnic comparisons by gender reveal that Hispanic men are relatively worse off than are Hispanic women. While Hispanic women's 1993 earnings are 22.1 percent and 10.0 percent less than the earnings of White and Black women, respectively, the earnings of Hispanic men *vis-a-vis* White and Black men are 33.7 percent and 10.2 percent less, respectively.

The 1993 weekly wage-and-salary earnings of married-couple families (\$566) are 60.3 percent greater than the earnings of families maintained by women with no husband present (\$353) and 31.0 percent greater than the earnings of families maintained by men with no wife present (\$432). When both husband and wife work, the median earnings of married-couple families are \$733 per week, but when only one of them works, weekly earnings drop to \$365 if the earner is the husband or \$262 if the earner is the wife.

Data from the 1993 Current Population Survey [Montgomery, 1994] also indicate that the 1992 Hispanic median annual family income (\$23,912) is substantially less (37.1 percent) than the income of non-Hispanics (\$38,015). By far Cubans are the Hispanic subgroup with the highest level of family income (\$31,015), followed by Mexicans (\$23,714) and Puerto Ricans (\$20,301). Other Hispanics (\$25,342) earn more than Mexicans but less than Cubans.

There are noticeable differences in the income distributions of Hispanic and non-Hispanic families as well as among Hispanic subgroups. More than half (52.0 percent) of the Hispanic families included in the 1993 Current Population Survey [Montgomery, 1994] earn under \$25,000 per year, compared with only 30.7 percent of non-Hispanic families. By the same token, while 16.7 percent of Hispanic families earn \$50,000 or more, non-Hispanic families register twice that incidence (34.8 percent). Cubans exhibit the most favorable distribution of all Hispanic subgroups (41.3 percent under \$25,000, 27.0 percent \$50,000 or more), while Puerto Ricans (59.9 percent and 14.6 percent, respectively) and Mexicans (52.3 percent and 14.9 percent, respectively) show the least favorable. Other Hispanics rank in the middle (49.3 percent under \$25,000, 20.4 percent \$50,000 or more).

The incidence of Hispanic families living below the poverty level declined between 1982 (27.2 percent) and 1989 (23.4 percent), only to increase (26.2 percent) in 1992. This percentage is two and one-half times greater than the incidence reported by non-Hispanic families (10.4 percent). The Hispanic poverty incidence is so widespread that more than one in every six (18.0 percent) persons living in poverty in the United States is of Hispanic origin. The poverty incidence within Hispanic families is greatest for Puerto Ricans (32.5 percent) and lowest for Cubans (15.4 percent). Mexican (26.4 percent) and other Hispanic families (25.2 percent) lie in between.

Hispanic families with children under 18 years of age are more likely to live below the poverty level than are Hispanic families without children. In fact, 39.9 percent of all Hispanic children live below the poverty level, compared with less than half of that incidence (19.5 percent) for non-Hispanic children. Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic families headed by women with no husband present register a very high poverty incidence (48.8 percent and 33.3 percent, respectively).



One of the reasons why Hispanics tend to be poor is their relatively high levels of unemployment. According to the 1993 Current Population Survey [Montgomery, 1994], the Hispanic unemployment rate dropped substantially after the end of the economic recession in 1983 until shortly before the economic recession of 1989, from 16.5 percent to 7.8 percent, but it increased to 11.9 percent in 1993 following the economic downturn. Hispanics experience a much higher unemployment rate than do non-Hispanics--11.9 percent *vis-a-vis* 7.1 percent. Cubans record a significantly lower rate (7.3 percent) than do Mexicans (11.7 percent), other Hispanics (12.4 percent), or Puerto Ricans (14.4 percent).

The overall Hispanic male unemployment rate (12.4 percent) is slightly higher than the female rate (11.1 percent), although broad variations by gender are detected among subgroups. The Puerto Rican male rate (17.2 percent) is much higher than the female rate (11.0 percent), while neither Mexicans (12.1 percent male, 11.1 percent female) nor Cubans (7.6 percent male, 7.3 percent female) show appreciable inter-gender differences. For Hispanics of Central and South American origin the unemployment rate of women (14.4 percent) exceeds the unemployment rate of men (12.4 percent).

Inter-ethnic differences in unemployment exist despite identical rates of labor force participation (65.5 percent) for Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Within Hispanics, however, major differences appear among subgroups, as Puerto Ricans (56.1 percent) and Cubans (57.5 percent) register lower rates than do Mexicans (66.6 percent) and other Hispanics (68.8 percent). Overall, differences in labor force participation rates by gender do exist. The Hispanic male rate (79.2 percent) is greater than the non-Hispanic male rate (74.2 percent), while the Hispanic female rate (51.9 percent) is lower than the rate of non-Hispanic women (57.6 percent). The rather wide inter-gender participation-rate gap is common to all Hispanic subgroups.

Another reason for the high Hispanic poverty incidence is the unfavorable occupational structure of this ethnic group's employed labor force. Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanics to be employed in low-paying, less stable occupations such as operators, fabricators, and laborers (22.9 percent *vis-a-vis* 13.5 percent) or in farming, forestry, and fishing (6.0 percent *vis-a-vis* 2.3 percent). Only 13.1 percent report their occupation as managerial or professional specialties, compared to 28.8 percent for non-Hispanics. Cubans have the most favorable occupational structure of all subgroups, as 19.5 percent of the employed labor force are managers or professionals, followed closely by other Hispanics (17.2 percent). Mexicans and Puerto Ricans show the lowest incidence of managerial or professional specialties--10.6 percent for Mexicans and 16.9 percent for Puerto Ricans.

Despite their relatively lower earnings, women exhibit a more favorable occupational structure than do men. Regardless of ethnicity, the female incidence of managers and professionals (15.4 percent for Hispanics, 29.8 percent for non-Hispanics) is greater than the male incidence (11.6 percent for Hispanics, 27.9 percent for non-Hispanics). The presence of women in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (40.9 percent for Hispanics, 42.9 percent for non-Hispanics) also exceeds the presence of men (15.4 percent for Hispanics, 21.5 percent for non-Hispanics). At the other end, the presence of men in lower-paying occupations such as farming, forestry, and fishing (8.9 percent for Hispanics, 3.7 percent for non-Hispanics) is greater than the presence of women (1.8 percent for Hispanics, 0.8 percent for non-Hispanics), and relatively more men (28.4 percent for Hispanics, 19.0 percent for non-Hispanics) than women (14.8 percent for Hispanics, 7.2 percent for non-Hispanics) are found in the operators, fabricators, and laborers category.

#### 4. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Perhaps the universal, most common concomitant of poverty and low levels of income is insufficient formal schooling [Carvajal, 1979; Carvajal and Geithman, 1976; Carvajal, Morris, and Davenport, 1993]. Hispanics in the United States are no exception. The 1991 median, annual earnings of Hispanic male, year-round, full-time workers, 25-64 years old, increase with formal schooling--from \$14,690 for workers who never completed ninth grade to \$17,090 for workers with some high school education but without a diploma, \$21,633 for high school graduates, \$27,293 for workers with some college instruction but without a degree, \$30,096 for workers with an associate (two-year) college degree, \$32,857 for workers with a baccalaureate degree, and \$37,832 for workers with a master's degree. At each educational level, Hispanic women earn less than do Hispanic men [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993], and when the family householder is not a high school graduate, the overall 1992 Hispanic poverty incidence goes up from 26.2 percent to 37.0 percent--from 26.4 percent to 36.2 percent for Mexicans, from 32.5 percent to 48.2 percent for Puerto Ricans, from 15.4 percent to 24.2 percent for Cubans, and from 25.2 percent to 36.8 percent for other Hispanics [Montgomery, 1994].

Although the proportion of U.S. Hispanics 25 years and older with less than fifth-grade schooling has declined recently, from 15.6 percent in 1983 to 11.8 percent in 1993, it remains well above the 1993 proportion of non-Hispanics (1.3 percent) with less than fifth-grade education [Montgomery, 1994]. During the same period, the proportion of Hispanics at least 25 years old who have earned a high school diploma has increased sharply, from 45.7 percent to 53.1 percent, while the incidence of college graduates has grown mildly, from 8.0 percent to 9.0 percent. Hispanics living in New Mexico, Colorado, and Florida register the highest levels of schooling, while the lowest levels are reported by Hispanics living in Texas, Illinois, and California [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993].

Of all Hispanic subgroups, Mexicans exhibit the lowest level of educational attainment, with 15.4 percent of Mexican Americans in the 1993 Current Population Survey showing less than fifth-grade completion, 46.2 percent with a high school diploma, and 5.9 percent with a college degree [Montgomery, 1994]. Puerto Ricans have the second lowest level of schooling--8.2 percent having completed less than fifth grade, 59.8 percent high school graduates, and 8.0 percent college graduates. At the other end, Cubans (5.3 percent, 62.1 percent, and 16.5 percent, respectively) and other Hispanics (6.0 percent, 65.1 percent, and 15.2 percent, respectively) exhibit much higher levels of schooling.

On average, younger Hispanics (25-34 years old) are better educated than are older Hispanics (35 years and older). They register a substantially lower incidence of under fifth-grade schooling (5.4 percent *versus* 15.3 percent) and a greater incidence of high school graduates (60.4 percent *versus* 49.1 percent). Yet, younger Hispanics are not more likely to hold a college degree than are older Hispanics.

Educational attainment may be hindered by the inability to speak English well. In addition to the obvious shortcomings associated with less educational attainment, individuals with a weak command of the English language are likely to bear labor-market costs due to limited communications skills that limit their potential income growth, such as problems in job searching or failure to realize on-the-job productivity gains. According to the 1990 Census [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992], nearly 32 million persons five years of age and older in the United States speak at home a language other than English. Spanish is by far the most common foreign language, spoken by over 17 million persons, or 54.5 percent of those who speak a

foreign language in the home. Among Spanish speakers, about 8.3 million do not speak English well at all.

Many persons who speak at home a language other than English are foreign born. Approximately 37 percent of all foreign-born persons enumerated in the 1990 Census have migrated from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. Nearly three-fifths (58.7 percent) of foreign-born Hispanics are from Mexico. Cubans constitute the second most numerous single subgroup, with 10.1 percent. Other important immigrant concentrations are from El Salvador (6.4 percent), the Dominican Republic (4.8 percent), Colombia (4.0 percent), and Guatemala (3.1 percent).

Finally, an analysis of Hispanics in the United States would not be adequate if prejudice and discrimination were omitted. Prejudice refers to attitudes of aversion and hostility toward members of a group simply because they are presumed to share some objectionable quality ascribed to the group [Devine, 1989]. Thus, prejudice is a state of mind—a feeling, opinion, or disposition. In a society in which people may be classified by the color of their skin, their cultural values, their accent, or any other such characteristic, and in which a dominant group emerges at the expense of other, minority groups, discrimination occurs when minority group members, in this case Hispanics, find structural barriers in the lawful pursuit of their welfare which lead them into economic and social deprivation.

Discrimination may be overtly expressed or institutionally practiced. Overt discrimination involves a sense of superiority by dominant group members with respect to Hispanics, a feeling that Hispanics are, by their very nature, different and alien, and the belief that dominant group members have a proprietary claim to privilege, basis of merit, skills, or talent which Hispanics do not possess. According to Pachon and DeSipio [1994], most persons within each Hispanic subgroup, except Cubans, perceive that U.S. society discriminates against Hispanics.

When discrimination becomes institutionalized, overt discrimination and the prejudice associated with it become less important causes of structural barriers because inadequate education, lower expected returns on human capital investments, and segregated labor market institutions that deny equal access to jobs, training, or information substantially reduce the probability that Hispanics aspire to, prepare for, or seek to enter status occupations. The empirical evidence in this respect is overwhelming. In a recent study comparing the treatment of Chicago and San Diego Hispanic and Anglo seekers of low-skill, entry-level jobs, Cross *et al.* [1990] found that, after controlling for education, work experience, and other relevant variables, discrimination against Hispanics accounts for a significant portion of the disparate hiring practices encountered by male applicants. In another study, Melendez [1991] concluded that discrimination explains a large portion of the wage gap between non-Hispanic and Hispanic New Yorkers. And in still another study, a team of researchers from M R D Consulting [1993] determined that Hispanic-owned firms are victims of discrimination when they attempt to do business with Metropolitan Dade County, Florida. Thus, it seems that Hispanic/non-Hispanic income and poverty differentials are not dictated solely by historical factors or current market forces, but also are influenced by overt and/or institutional discrimination.

Hispanic households are more likely than non-Hispanic households to receive Means-tested Assistance. (Means-tested Assistance includes cash benefits received from Aid to Families with Dependent Children, General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, and means-tested veterans compensation of pensions; it also includes Medicaid benefits, food stamps, subsidies from free or reduced-price school lunches, and rent subsidies.) Half (48.5 percent) of all persons living in Hispanic households receive some type of Means-tested

Assistance, compared with one-fifth (20.6 percent) of persons living in non-Hispanic households [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993]. The most common programs are Medicaid benefits (30.0 percent of Hispanics, 13.3 percent of non-Hispanics), food stamps (19.8 percent of Hispanics, 9.3 percent of non-Hispanics), and cash assistance (18.7 percent of Hispanics, 10.1 percent of non-Hispanics).

## ***5. THE FUTURE OF U.S. HISPANICS***

The behavior, development, and impact of U.S. Hispanics throughout the first half of the twenty-first century will be influenced by an array of complex and often misunderstood variables, trends, and events, some of which have been unfolding for some time and continue to unfold, and others which may arise suddenly or unexpectedly. While no glimpse into the future can possibly anticipate all contingencies, any credible, future scenario of Hispanic life is likely to be conditioned by several projected characteristics which may be safely assumed to conform to reality.

The first projection is that this ethnic group will continue to expand rapidly, not only because of immigration, but also from very high birth rates. According to the middle-series population projections by the Bureau of the Census, the number of Hispanics in the United States is expected to increase to 39.3 million by 2010, 59.2 million by 2030, and 80.7 million by 2050 [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993]. These numbers suggest the emergence of a growing political force with a huge potential.

Yet, Hispanics do not seem to participate much politically, as other groups do. They do not run for political office, vote, or register to vote as often as other ethnic groups. Foreign-born Hispanics pursue naturalization less often than foreign-born non-Hispanics. With the exception of Cubans, who exhibit very high rates of naturalization, probably due to their inability to obtain proper representation and protection from their country of origin, foreign-born Hispanics do not seem to be very interested in becoming U.S. citizens. If Hispanics are to gain control over their own destiny, they must be able to influence political processes and outcomes, as important issues such as bilingual education and welfare benefits for immigrants arise in the next few years.

The second projection regarding the future of Hispanics is that their projected growth is likely to occur within the context of a major shift in the overall ethnic composition of the United States. This shift is largely the result of the immigration legislation of 1965, which for the first time allowed into the U.S. large numbers of non-European immigrants—not only Latin Americans, but also Chinese, Asiatic Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and others whose cultures and goals have little in common with the traditional American mainstream. In fact, insofar as the new immigrants may be reluctant to abandon readily many traits of their original cultures, the American mainstream is likely to mutate to a much greater extent than ever before, and the past dominant/majority culture or ethnic group will actually become a minority, although probably far from disadvantaged.

The third projection is that Hispanicity will remain as a dimension of ethnic inequality because of the persistent influx into the country of poor, unskilled workers and continuously high birth rates. The relatively few gains in educational attainment, occupational structure, or income that may occur in selected areas as certain subgroups and/or individuals gain affluence in their special niches are likely to be eclipsed by prevailing poverty unless widespread and aggressive human capital investment programs oriented toward Hispanics are instituted nationwide.

The importance of acquiring more and better education and skills to improve Hispanics' employment situation is evident. Educational institutions, especially those located in urban areas, may have to change their curricula in order to be more accessible and relevant to Hispanics and other minorities. Yet the Federal Government does not operate schools; state and local authorities do. Thus, while the Federal Government has the power to change appropriations for schooling and encourage changes in the public school systems that serve low-income students, the real policy decisions rest with states and municipalities.

The fourth projection focuses on perceptions and reactions by the rest of society. Hispanics' young population composition, high unemployment rates, and low levels of income will be a growing source of pressure on the health, educational, welfare, and criminal justice systems. Therefore, the future of Hispanics will be increasingly viewed by non-Hispanics as a collective problem, a challenge likely to brew further prejudice, discrimination, and, ultimately, polarization of society.

Finally, as Hispanics evolve more into a national minority, rather than a fragmented set of regional subgroups, each confined to a part of the country, their presence will become more noticeable in cities which have had no awareness of a Hispanic minority. With more Hispanics resettling throughout the United States and not necessarily conforming to traditional patterns of subgroup concentration, the composition of the Hispanic nuclei will become more heterogeneous. Cultural traits from any one particular country of origin are likely to be replaced by other, eclectic cultural traits developed by--and within--the larger, heterogeneous ethnic group, reflecting the group's reality and responding to its necessities. This may spark the formation of a true Hispanic culture, increasingly integrated by common concerns, autochthonous artistic expressions, a pervasive media, and civic and political affiliations, whose members identify themselves less as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, etc. and more as U.S. Hispanics.

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## Appendix 1

U.S. cities of 100,000 or more inhabitants and at least 20 percent Hispanic population.

City and State	Incidence of Hispanic Population (percent)	City and State	Incidence of Hispanic Population (percent)
Laredo, Texas	93.9	San Jose, California	26.6
Brownsville, Texas	90.1	Bridgeport, Connecticut	26.5
Hialeah, Florida	87.6	Newark, New Jersey	26.1
El Monte, California	72.5	Riverside, California	26.0
El Paso, Texas	69.0	Stockton, California	25.0
Santa Ana, California	65.2	New York, New York	24.4
Miami, Florida	62.5	Jersey City, New Jersey	24.2
San Antonio, Texas	55.6	Hayward, California	23.9
Oxnard, California	54.4	Long Beach, California	23.6
Pomona, California	51.3	Garden Grove, California	23.5
Salinas, California	50.6	Escondido, California	23.4
Corpus Christi, Texas	50.4	Aurora, Illinois	23.0
Ontario, California	41.7	Austin, Texas	23.0
Paterson, New Jersey	41.0	Denver, Colorado	23.0
Los Angeles, California	39.9	Moreno Valley, California	22.9
Elizabeth, New Jersey	39.1	Orange, California	22.8
Inglewood, California	38.5	Oceanside, California	22.6
Chula Vista, California	37.3	Lubbock, Texas	22.5
San Bernardino, California	34.6	Fullerton, California	21.3
Albuquerque, New Mexico	34.5	Glendale, California	21.0
Hartford, Connecticut	31.6	Dallas, Texas	20.9
Anaheim, California	31.4	San Diego, California	20.7
Fresno, California	29.9	Bakersfield, California	20.5
Tucson, Arizona	29.3	Garden Prairie, California	20.5
Pasadena, Texas	28.8	Phoenix, Arizona	20.0
Houston, Texas	27.6	Rancho Cucamonga, California	20.0
Pasadena, California	27.3		

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1994* (Washington, D.C.: 1994).