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THE STRUCTURING OF HISPANIC ETHNICITY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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A DOMINANT MYTH about the social and economic experiences of U.S. immigrants is that most groups confront similar opportunity structures and reception factors in the host society. Without regard for differences in the historical context of the migration, reception factors in the new society, or the migration process itself, ethnic groups are evaluated by how they fare in becoming American. Those who do not succeed socially or economically—the unmeltable ethnics—contribute towards the demise of the American “melting pot” as the dominant metaphor guiding our understanding of ethnic relations. Despite the plethora of alternative interpretations that have surfaced to explain the social significance of ethnicity and the persistence of racial and ethnic stratification in contemporary U.S. society, the melting pot metaphor has yet to be replaced.

One perspective of the persistence of racial and ethnic stratification maintains that ethnic bonds are promulgated as the natural extension of primordial ties. This view nurtures the idea that the disadvantaged, marginal position of certain ethnic and racial groups results from their cultural deficiencies which disappear as individuals assimilate into the dominant culture. At the opposite end of the spectrum, ethnic divisions are seen as mere reflections of class divisions. There exist several variants of the class interpretation of persisting ethnic differentiation, but the unifying theme is their focus on economic and social rather than cultural factors as determinants of ethnic inequality, and their emphasis on structural instead of individual explanatory factors.

The great diversity in the ethnic experience in the United States challenges both of these explanations and most that fall between them. Reducing ethnic stratification to a class phenomenon is reasonable only under the assumption that all members of an ethnic group are in the same class. Similarly, because ethnic identity and solidarity shift across groups and historical eras, it is equally inappropriate to deny the importance of social factors in molding ethnicity over time and place. By challenging widely held assumptions that high socioeconomic standing goes hand in hand with assimilation to the dominant culture, examples

of ethnic groups who combine high levels of economic success with strong expressions of ethnic identity present a trouble spot for theories of race and class (Hirschman, 1982).

The complexities involved in interpreting ethnicity are aptly demonstrated by the case of the U.S. Hispanic population. While their presence in the United States predates the emergence of the American nation, their numerical strength and national visibility resulting from a high birth rate coupled with continuing inflows of new immigrants presents a challenge for students of ethnic stratification. "Hispanic" as a label combines colonized natives and their offspring, foreigner and political refugees under one ethnic umbrella, but the coherence of this label is questionable on theoretical and historical grounds. Unlike the European immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of Hispanics have not become structurally integrated into the broader society. And, in contrast to other white immigrants, use of Spanish has not disappeared among the second or third generations reared in the United States. Today Hispanic enclaves and the Spanish language thrive in diverse regions of the country, although there is evidence of linguistic acculturation among all Spanish-speaking national origin groups who have lived in the United States over a generation.

While common ancestral ties to Spain manifested in language, religion and various traditions suggest an underlying cultural commonality, the diverse incorporation experiences of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans have contributed to significant social and economic differences that have remained intact over time. It is this persistence of socioeconomic differentiation among national origin groups that challenges the conception of "Hispanic" as a coherent ethnic category, and requires further specification of the underlying commonalities and divergences.

In an attempt to clarify the meaning of "Hispanicity" in contemporary U.S. society, this paper explores the roots of Hispanic ethnicity as it has emerged and evolved with the entry and social integration of each of the three major Hispanic national origin groups. It is a task that initially requires separating conceptually the structural elements of ethnicity from its cultural manifestations. In so doing, we emphasize historical comparisons between the Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban origin populations, calling attention to the factors affecting their migration to this country and their incorporation into the labor market. Our ultimate goal is to critically evaluate the coherence of "Hispanicity" as an ethnic category as well as a social and political force in shaping the contemporary pattern of ethnic stratification.

To guide our interpretation of the historical circumstances that have shaped the integration of the Hispanic population into the U.S. society and economy, we first set forth the theoretical framework which outlines the processes underlying the emergence, consolidation and reformulation of Hispanic ethnicity. Following a brief historical vignette of the integration experience of the three major Hispanic origin populations, we summarize the contemporary socioeconomic position of each group through a descriptive analysis of selected social indicators derived from recent census data. These data are intended to illustrate empirically the extensive social and economic diversity among the national origin groups, and to highlight the direction of change among successive cohorts of Hispanic immigrants. We conclude with a reflection about the unifying and divisive elements inherent in the notion of "Hispanicity," and emphasize the distinction between symbolic identity and minority status.

ON THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNICITY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We choose to view ethnicity as a social construct rather than simply as a collection of ascriptive traits. While their importance as rallying points drawing people of similar cultural backgrounds together cannot be denied, the explanatory power of primordial ties for ethnic group solidarity conflicts with what is essentially a social phenomenon. This is demonstrated by the fact that ethnic group boundaries are not only defined by socially produced descent rules, but can be changed by group members themselves. One becomes an ethnic by virtue of leaving the homeland and by subsequent status vis-à-vis the dominant majority in the receiving society. Often it is only after immigration that a common sense of nationality emerges (Bonacich, 1980; Yancey et al., 1976).

Starting with the idea that ethnicity is a variable, William Yancey and his associates (1976) identified several factors that contribute to the emergence of ethnicity among immigrant groups, including: conditions affecting immigration; availability of wage labor; urban ecology; technology and the changing structure of industry. The impact that these structural variables have had on U.S. immigrants can explain their residential and occupational concentration better than the traditional notion of cultural disposition or preference to certain types of work. These two factors—residential and occupational concentration—are especially crucial to the formation of ethnic group solidarity in that they produce common class interests, lifestyles and friendships. When the ethnic experience includes rejection, discrimination and oppression, the elaboration of ethnic ties provides a ready system of support for groups distinguishable by race, national origin or language. As Yancey and his colleagues conclude, “Ethnicity may have relatively little to do with Europe, Asia or Africa, but much more to do with the requirements of survival and the structure of opportunity in this country” (Yancey et al., 1976).

Yancey applied his notion of emergent ethnicity to European immigrants who settled in the eastern coastal cities. In order to distinguish between this early group of immigrants and later Hispanic waves, one must draw attention to the additional factors of timing of immigration, and modes of entry and integration of specific national origin groups. Like Yancey and his associates, we argue that these are more relevant to the understanding of Hispanic ethnicity than are the vestiges of Latin American or Spanish culture. Time of immigration is crucial because of temporal changes in employment opportunities and changing demand for various skills mixes. Europeans settled in large Eastern and Western cities during a period of industrial expansion. In contrast the Hispanic influx—at least the early Mexican immigration—began as a rural phenomenon (Tienda, 1981). As a predominantly urban population after the 1950s, Hispanics faced an economic system characterized by periods of restricted growth coupled with dramatic changes in the structure of production (Singelmann and Tienda, 1984). Race and racial discrimination must also be considered as a force shaping incorporation experiences even though a racial classification of Hispanics is complicated by the fact that they are brown, black and white. What is clear, however, is that predominantly white Europeans gave birth to the melting pot metaphor while the very different experience of Hispanics continues to destroy it. That most Hispanics have not assimilated and occupy the lower ranks of the stratification hierarchy brings into focus the issue of the convergence of ethnicity and low socio-economic position—an issue that needs to be explored in both theoretical and empirical terms.

Following the predictions of evolutionary theories of social change, Park (1950), an early prominent theorist on ethnic relations, maintained that the importance of ascriptive ties would eventually disappear under modern capitalism as industrial organizations recruited individuals based on universalistic criteria, such as skill and efficiency rather than ethnic origin. Using the same frame of reference—social changes resulting from the expansion of modern industrial capitalism—structural analysts and neo-Marxist theorists have reached diametrically opposed conclusions about the impact of capitalist expansion on race and ethnic relations. Bonacich (1972, 1980) and others (Portes and Bach, 1982) argued that ethnic stratification is the result of a split or segmented labor market that generates ethnic oppression from both capital and labor. By rooting ethnic segregation in labor competition that generates hostility from white workers while maintaining rates of profit for the employer, Bonacich provides a valuable insight into how ethnicity can override class consciousness. She also challenges the basic tenets of assimilationist ideology that faults individuals for their failures resulting from their lack of education, skills, and motivation and the persistence of culturally distinct values.

What both evolutionary and structural perspectives of ethnic inequality have left unexplained, however, is why certain ethnic groups are singled out for segregation in the least desirable low-skill, low-paying jobs, while others are not. A related and perhaps more central question for understanding the persistence of ethnic stratification is why some groups manage to experience mobility from low to high status jobs while others do not. Racism is an important element in this explanation, but it is a mistake to view the situation of European immigrants and racial minorities as polar opposites (Blauner, 1975). At the time of initial entry, European immigrants served many of the same functions that racial and ethnic minority workers currently do, and also were segregated residentially and occupationally by national origin. The key issue is why Europeans experienced social mobility from low status positions to the higher status, better-paying jobs while many blacks and Hispanics are seemingly unable to make this transition. These contrasting outcomes bring into focus a critical distinction between ethnic groups and minority groups. Although minority groups and ethnic groups are not coterminous, some ethnic groups become minorities. For example, Cubans are seldom identified as a minority group, but Mexicans and Puerto Ricans usually are. The reason, we maintain, has to do with their very different modes of incorporation and socioeconomic integration experiences.

Vincent (1974) has elaborated at some length the distinction between minorities and ethnics, and this is helpful for interpreting the Hispanic experience in the United States. A minority, according to Vincent, is a group whose members are subjected to unequal treatment through prejudice and discrimination by a dominant group. Ethnic groups, on the other hand, are a collectivity sharing common cultural norms, values, identities and behaviors, and who both recognize themselves, and are recognized by others as being ethnic. The extent to which ethnicity is a matter of individual choice depends on the group's access (or lack thereof) to the reward system of a dominant society. For the lower socioeconomic strata, choices to elaborate or conceal national origin are considerably more limited, if they exist at all. The convergence of ethnic origin and economic disadvantage requires an investigation of the circumstances that structures ethnicity into a disadvantaged minority position for some, and a symbolic identity for other (Gans, 1979). Such a pursuit might fruitfully uncover the areas of convergence and divergence among Hispanic origin groups,

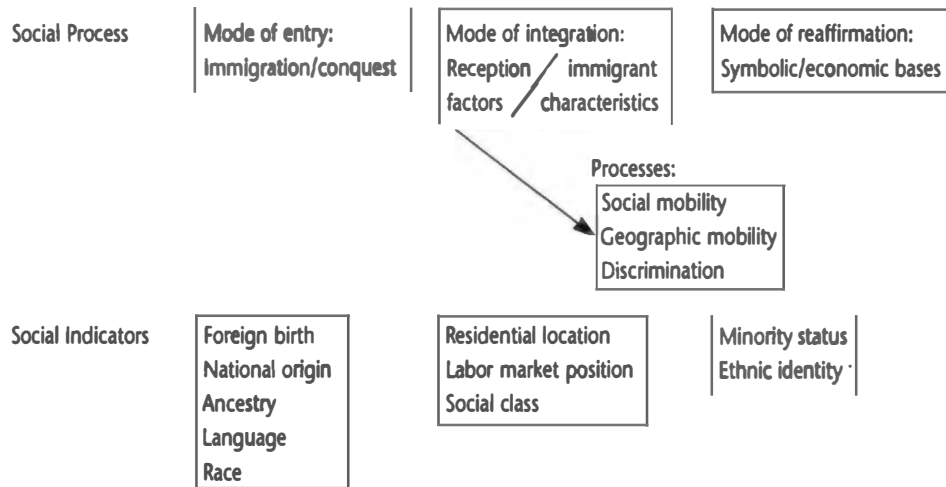
and help clarify the origins of the differential access to resources and social rewards that structure Hispanic ethnicity in different ways for Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans.

THE EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION OF “HISPANICITY”

Figure 1.1 maps the major historical and social processes describing the emergence, transformation and reformulation of ethnicity which we elaborate to interpret the diverse experiences of Hispanics. These processes are by nature interactive and the ways in which the social and historical dimensions intersect are central to understanding the relegation of Hispanics to a minority group status, or their eventual adoption of a more symbolic ethnicity, one less intertwined with economic and social standing.

The Hispanic population emerged as an ethnic group historically through international migration and conquest. The reasons for their entry to the United States, combined with the historical moment of that entry, determined both the composition of the ethnic population and its ultimate geographical configuration and socioeconomic position. Patterns of inter-ethnic contact, once established, were determined by occupational and residential segregation, and the changing climate of prejudice and xenophobic sentiment. Integration processes also changed in accordance with shifting economic conditions, the passing of generations, and legal prescriptions governing both immigration flows and labor practices.

Figure 1.1. STRUCTURING OF HISPANIC ETHNICITY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.



Once consolidated, ethnic groups can reformulate their position vis-à-vis the dominant society in response to any number of circumstances. Gordon (1964) has provided useful insights as to the diverse forms that any experience may assume, ranging from limited acculturation to structural and identificational assimilation. Which outcomes eventually emerge along this spectrum depends heavily on the preceding experiences of a group.

Hispanics having more “successful” integration experiences are more likely to maintain a symbolic connection to their ethnic heritage, as manifested by the continued observance of holidays, the revival of ethnic foods, the practice of cultural rituals, etc., while in the areas of occupation, education, language and residence they increasingly model Anglos. The elaboration of these ethnic traits acquires a symbolic character which constitutes the

cultural pluralism dimension of the melting pot metaphor. Alternatively, for Hispanics who have not gained access to new opportunities, and for whom isolation within minority occupational and residential enclaves and systematic discrimination have remained the rule, their ethnicity has become coterminous with minority status. For ethnic minorities, the significance of ethnicity extends beyond the symbolic manifestation of cultural heritage. It also is more than a simple reflection of economic relationships. The survival of distinct ethnic cultures, while structurally determined, attests to the reflexive nature of ethnicity as it offers refuge to its adherents against the very system that produces stratification and oppression.

Theoretical constructs such as those abstractly presented thus far need to be translated into social experience with the stories of real people. It is to these that the focus now shifts. In discussing the very different experiences of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the United States, the elements that translated Hispanic origin to a symbolic ethnicity for some and a minority status for others will become apparent.

MEXICANS

The structure of opportunity for Chicanos (encompassing both native- and foreign-born people of Mexican origin) is rooted in the history of the westward expansion, the geographical proximity and poverty of Mexico that facilitate continued immigration, and the historical labor functions of Mexican workers in the U.S. economy. Capitalist penetration of the Southwest dispossessed Chicanos of their land, created a cheap labor force and brought about the eventual destruction or transformation of the indigenous social systems governing the lives of the Mexican residents.

Immigration is the main vehicle by which the Mexican population grew and consolidated its regional and residential segregation in the Southwest; its significance cannot be understated. Most Mexican origin workers were channeled into the rural economy as a mobile, seasonal labor force subject to a colonial labor system whereby Mexican wages were paid for Mexican tasks in areas of agriculture, mining and railroad construction (Barrera, 1979; Alvarez, 1973; Tienda, 1981). Immigrant workers, however, were politically and socially vulnerable in that they could be deported. The history of Mexican immigration in the twentieth century is cyclical with the doors open in times of labor shortage, followed by massive deportations during periods of economic recession (Acuña, 1971; Samora, 1971; Barrera, 1979).

Immigrant vulnerability made them cheap workers and placed them in the position of a reserve labor force, exerting downward pressure on wages and undermining union organizing. The resulting hostility from Anglo workers combined with opposition from small farmers who were unable to compete with large enterprises employing cheap labor isolated Chicanos from class bases of support and further cut them off from potential avenues of integration into the social and economic mainstream. Racism was used by employers to pursue economic interests which resulted in a set of conditions that both structured the lives of Chicanos and gave racial and ethnic prejudice in the Southwest a life of its own. The continued entry of new immigrants maintains and renews this process.

The dimensions of immigration from Mexico to the United States in the twentieth century are so staggering that some have argued that the process has become self-sustaining via kinship ties and ethnic barrios which provide contacts and resources for incoming workers (Barrera, 1979; Tienda, 1980). This helps explain its "irrational" continuation

despite stricter immigration policy and the shrinking job market of the 1970s and 1980s. The relationship between family networks and ongoing migration has several implications for Chicano ethnicity. Reliance of these workers on assistance from their families is a form of subsidy to employers in that their wages do not have to cover all of their maintenance costs (Burowoy, 1976; Tienda, 1980). Secondly, the influx of recent arrivals to the Mexican community reinforces and juxtaposes the values of Mexican culture against the corrosive forces of Anglo hegemony transmitted through the schools, mass media, industrial discipline, etc. (Saragoza, 1983).

Today, although the historical legacy remains, dramatic changes have occurred in the residence patterns and the structure of opportunity open to Chicanos. Mexicans as a group are principally an urban-based population, but one clear vestige of their rural origins is their disproportionate representation in agriculture—not as farmers, but as seasonal and permanent laborers. Unionization and legal sanctions against discriminatory practices have waged war on the colonial labor system while urban residence has provided access to a wider range of employment opportunities. Cultural manifestations of these changes include the trend toward a language shift away from Spanish (Gaarder, 1977; Arce, 1981), the declining isolation of the barrio (Moore, 1970) and indicators pointing to a greater degree of assimilation into Anglo society (Massey, 1981). Mario Barrera (1979) concedes that the segmentation line separating them from the majority culture across all classes has been weakening since World War II. This indicates that class divisions could become more salient than ethnicity as Chicanos become more integrated into the nonsubordinate part of the labor force, but the prospects of this occurring also depend on the process of immigration and the vitality of the economy.

PUERTO RICANS

The colonized position of Puerto Ricans on both the mainland and the island is more glaringly evident than that of Mexicans, but their labor experience is a similar one of ongoing deployment and circulation of both workers and capital across national borders (although fuzzy ones in the case of Puerto Rico). The island's Commonwealth status has obliterated economic boundaries and protective mechanisms that Third World nations are beginning to develop in order to defend local interests. United States hegemony on the island makes it difficult to define that society culturally or ethnically, for that which is Puerto Rican is partly North American as well. A dramatic illustration of this duality is the massive migration that has shifted one-third of the island's population to the U.S. mainland since World War II.

These intense demographic and economic changes are largely the result of a decision to transform and develop Puerto Rico's plantation economy through a program of rapid industrialization. The apparent success of the infamous Operation Bootstrap (in operation from 1948 to 1965) hinged on several key factors including unrestricted migration between the mainland and the island. Even with the help of the burgeoning Commonwealth bureaucracy (employing three out of ten workers by 1976), the new industrial order could not absorb the available workers, whose numbers rose steadily, owing to population growth and a severe decline in the plantation sector. The resulting movement of young urban dwellers toward blue-collar jobs in the northeastern cities of the United States gained momentum in the 1950s; migration flows from Puerto Rico to New York rose from an annual average of 18,700 in the 1940s to 41,200 between 1950 and 1960 (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, 1979).

One would expect that the easy access of Puerto Ricans to the United States would, in comparison to other immigrants, carry over to their transition to mainland resident. In fact, the opposite occurred. Puerto Ricans were relegated to the lowest levels of the socioeconomic ladder, and often fared much worse economically than blacks who migrated to the North. Two features distinguish their mainland experience and strongly influence their class and ethnic identity. The first is a disproportionate representation in the secondary labor market. Three labor categories—clerical and sales, unskilled and semiskilled blue-collar workers and service workers—account for 70 percent of employed Puerto Rican men and 82 percent of employed women (Tienda, 1984). In addition, they are employed in industries with seasonal fluctuations and the declining manufacturing sector of the city. The suburbanization of industry, coupled with inadequate mass transit, has further restricted opportunities for those tied to their central city neighborhoods, a situation which seems to have worsened during the 1970s, as the flight of industry from the Frostbelt to the lower-wage Sunbelt progressed. Their marginal position in the labor market is reflected in other indicators of social well-being: of the three Hispanic groups considered, they have the lowest labor force participation rates, the highest unemployment levels, the highest incidence of poverty, and the lowest levels of education (Tienda, 1984).

The second feature in the ethnic structuring process for Puerto Ricans is the pattern of circular migration that emerged during the 1960s. In 1969-70 alone, 129,000 persons returned to Puerto Rico (Commission on Civil Rights, 1976); by 1972, 14 percent of the island's population consisted of return migrants (Lopez, 1974). The circular migration means that island population and mainland community are two parts of one whole, a situation which distinguishes Puerto Ricans from all former immigrants. It means that elements of both cultures thrive in both places, which requires a dual functional ability: children must be able to switch school systems, and must cope with competing value systems. It has resulted, as Frank Bonilla states, in "an unprecedented job of psychological and cultural reconstitution and construction that must rest on a very special political and economic infrastructure" (Bonilla, 1974:444).

The image of a single monolithic Puerto Rican community spanning the two locations is not entirely accurate, however. Members of the second generation raised in New York City have been dubbed "Nuyoricans," indicating their simultaneous separateness from Puerto Rico and their connection to it. Being caught between two value systems, especially with respect to race and ethnicity, is not only a feature of life on the mainland but also, given the U.S. hegemony over the island, plays an important role there as well, producing ideological divisions that transcend those of class hierarchy.

Thus Puerto Rican ethnicity can be interpreted as structurally determined by their colonial status, a pattern of migration that places Puerto Ricans between two worlds, and extreme occupational segregation, all of which contribute to their marginality vis-à-vis the rest of society. Their reaction is found in the maintenance of strong ethnic communities, low intermarriage rates (Fitzpatrick and Gurak, 1979) and the rejection of a quick transfer of cultural identity. Although in part a response to and protection against oppression, the persistence of ethnic distinctiveness, despite massive pressure towards homogeneous consumer culture, can also be interpreted as a form of protest. The settings for most Puerto Ricans—the schools, the streets, the military, the prisons and the sweatshops—are radicalizing contexts. That Puerto Rican ethnicity is reaffirmed here is "a sign of remarkable survival in the face of radical ambiguity" (Bonilla, 1974).

CUBANS

Three factors clearly distinguish the incorporation experience of Cubans from that of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. They are primarily political refugees rather than economic migrants. Their reception in this country was not the tacit acceptance by employers hungry for cheap labor, but rather a public welcome by the Federal government eager to harbor the heroic victims of a communist dictatorship. And finally, among the exiles, those from professional, white-collar urban and more highly educated sectors were greatly over-represented, at least during the early phase of the exodus (Bach, 1980).

Until the Cuban refugees arrived, no other refugee group in this hemisphere had been so advantaged in terms of socioeconomic background and host country reception. In that sense the Cubans' "success" would not be surprising were it not for the serious obstacles they did face initially. Not the least of these were their widespread downward occupational mobility vis-à-vis the positions held in Cuba. Also, many believed that their stay in the United States would be temporary. A comparison of early occupational positions in the United States with the last occupations in Cuba showed that in Miami the percentage of unskilled laborers had doubled. Cubans who had been employed as professionals, managers and technicians dropped from 48 percent in Cuba to 13 percent in the United States (Casal and Hernandez, 1975).

In many ways, during the sixties Cubans found themselves in a situation similar to that of many other immigrants: residentially segregated; concentrated in blue-collar "ethnic" jobs; lacking English language skills; and tied to their ethnic communities. However, Cubans were never restricted to a position of second-class workers in an ethnically split labor market, nor was their success preceded by the assimilationist patterns of earlier European immigrants. In addition to the warm welcome and massive aid received under the auspices of the Cuban Refugee Program, two factors help explain their very different integration experience: these are class background and the emergence of an ethnic enclave economy in Miami.

Unlike Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, Cubans did not enter the United States as colonized or subordinate workers. They were fleeing the real and perceived persecution and harassment of a new regime. The same individualism that led upper- and middle-class Cubans to reject Castro provided both a cultural link to the socioeconomic orientation of the United States and the basis for effective competition. Therefore, the initial loss of occupational position was often compensated for by strong individualism and an orientation toward the future. Rogg and Cooney (1980) found that middle-class Cubans aggressively sought to learn English and new skills necessary for the socioeconomic rewards that would eventually signal their real integration. Furthermore, while occupational position in Cuba was unrelated to the first job acquired in this country, it was found to be a principal variable affecting subsequent upward mobility, along with education and age upon arrival. Clearly then, the current advantaged position of Cubans relative to other Hispanics is partly the result of the differential attitudes and resources derived from their class background.

The emergence of the Cuban enclave economy (also class related) is the other key factor in understanding the Cuban experience in the United States. Close to one-third of all businesses in Miami are Cuban-owned, while 75 percent of the workforce in construction is Cuban (Bach, 1980), and 40 percent of the industry is Cuban-owned. Twenty percent of the banks are controlled by Cubans (Wilson and Portes, 1980) who account for sixteen out of sixty-two bank presidents and 250 vice presidents. Other ethnic strongholds in the enclave economy include textiles, food, cigars and trade with Latin America.

In Miami, one can proceed from birth to death Cuban style (Bach, 1980). For the refugee with fewer marketable skills, the enclave not only provides a home, but also can shelter workers from the harsh realities of the open competitive market. Its success depends on low wages paid to Cuban workers, ethnic preference in hiring *and* the reciprocal obligation to help fellow ethnic members in their own financial ventures. The other crucial components are, of course, sufficient operating capital and entrepreneurial skills to initiate a successful enterprise, as well as an economic climate conducive to the flourishing of small-scale, private enterprises. The early Cuban exodus, with its upper-class bias and access to financial credit, was able to provide both elements. Later arrivals, however, became the working class for the "golden exiles" of the 1960s. As Bach concludes, "Thus there has been a total transplantation of the pre-revolutionary Cuban social structure to Miami, with all the implications of unequal wealth, power and prestige" (Bach, 1980:45).

REAFFIRMATION OF "HISPANICITY": ECONOMIC AND SYMBOLIC BASES

Our previous discussion not only emphasized the importance of economic factors in structuring the meaning of Hispanic origin as a coherent ethnic label, but also called attention to the distinction between symbolic ethnicity and minority status. In accordance with the predictions of evolutionary perspectives of ethnic integration, the cultural content of "Hispanicity" acquires a largely symbolic character as the different national origin groups move up the social hierarchy. While the continuing migration streams from Mexico and Puerto Rico will undoubtedly reinforce the cultural manifestations of the Hispanic presence in the United States for some time to come, the historical background of their integration experiences suggests that the ethnic fate of Cubans will differ notably from that of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. This will occur not only because Cuban immigration is constrained by legal and political barriers, but also because their class background and differing reception factors provided them more favorable opportunities compared to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. In contrast to Cubans, the substantially different incorporation experiences of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans resulted in the consolidation of their ethnicity with a disadvantaged economic position.

A recent snapshot of the three major Hispanic origin groups sharply illustrates the extent of socioeconomic diversity among the groups according to national origin and birthplace. Cubans have higher levels of formal schooling than either Mexicans or Puerto Ricans, but the differentials between the native- and foreign-born are themselves quite sharp. For Cubans, the educational differential according to nativity is just over one year, but for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans the difference is roughly three years.

A disaggregation of the educational composition of the foreign-born shows the more recent Cuban and Mexican immigrants to be of lower educational origins than their counterparts who arrived during the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, for all cohort comparisons, Cuban immigrants exhibit notably higher educational levels than Mexican immigrants. The sharpest contrast occurred during the 1960-64 period, denoted the "golden exile" of Cuban emigration (Portes, 1969). During the seventies, the educational differentials between Mexican and Cuban immigrants have converged, stabilizing at about three years.

How these differences in educational attainment are economically significant is illustrated by the income and employment data. Despite the higher rates of labor force participation by Mexican origin men, particularly the foreign-born, average Mexican household

Table 1 1 SELECTED SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HISPANIC CIVILIAN POPULATION AGE 16 AND OVER BY NATIONAL ORIGIN AND IMMIGRATION COHORT, 1980.

Selected Characteristics	Foreign-Born ^a		Be re 1950	LATION AGE 16 AND ER				
	Natives	Born ^a		1950-59	1960-64	1965-69	1970-74	1975-80
Education ^b	0.0	6.9	6.0	8.0	7.5	7.2	6.8	6.6
Male LFPR ^c	77.6	82.3	46.8	84.9	85.5	86.8	88.9	86.2
Female LFPR ^c	51.6	43.2	22.1	46.8	49.0	48.7	48.0	42.6
Male unemployment rate	8.6	8.7	9.5	8.8	8.5	8.8	7.0	7.3
Female unemployment rate	8.7	2.6	8.9	0.1	3.2	2.8	3.6	13.7
Mean household income ('000)	19.0	6.8	5.0	19.7	8.2	7.6	6.7	15.5
Mean household size	4.2	4.6	3.3	4.5	4.9	5.0	5.1	4.8
% female headed household	3.2	9.2	2.2	9.7	9.7	9.6	8.3	8.1
% below poverty	7.8	24.0	21.2	7.0	20.7	21.6	23.1	31.3
% black	2.5	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3
% speak English well	92.6	45.4	60.4	63.3	60.6	52.5	41.9	25.3
(N)	(177,149)	(93,422)	(11,438)	(11,253)	(9,916)	(12,856)	(21,724)	(26,235)

Mexicans

Table 1.1. Continued
 SELECTED SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HISPANIC CIVILIAN POPULATION AGE 16 AND OVER
 BY NATIONAL ORIGIN AND IMMIGRATION COHORT, 1980.

Selected Characteristics	Immigration cohort							
	Natives	Foreign-Born ^a	Before 1950	1950-59	1960-64	1965-69	1970-74	1975-80
Education ^b	12.0	9.1	Puerto Ricans					
Male LFPR ^c	64.6	72.7						
Female LFPR ^c	46.9	36.6						
Male unemployment rate	13.9	9.9						
Female unemployment rate	12.6	12.7						
Mean household income ('000)	16.6	14.2						
Mean household size	3.8	3.8						
% female headed household	24.3	23.4						
% below poverty	25.5	31.2						
% black	4.9	2.7						
% speak English well	96.1	69.5						
(N)	(19,878)	(43,677)						

Table 1.1. Continued

Selected Characteristics	<u>Immigration cohort</u>							
	Natives	Foreign-Born ^a	Before 1950	1950-59	1960-64	1965-69	1970-74	1975-80
	<i>Cubans</i>							
Education ^b	12.2	10.9	10.5	11.3	12.4	10.2	9.5	9.8
Male LFPR ^c	67.4	79.3	57.4	87.0	85.9	77.5	76.0	62.9
Female LFPR ^c	55.7	55.1	37.3	57.4	59.6	55.0	55.3	36.5
Male unemployment rate	7.8	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.4	4.5	4.5	13.8
Female unemployment rate	5.9	7.1	3.3	6.0	4.8	7.8	8.0	21.2
Mean household income ('000)	21.8	21.6	19.6	22.5	25.3	20.6	19.7	14.3
Mean household size	3.4	3.5	2.8	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.8
% female headed household	14.1	9.7	10.1	8.2	8.4	11.2	9.8	9.6
% below poverty	11.4	12.4	12.4	8.6	8.6	12.1	13.8	37.0
% black	10.6	1.9	4.5	3.1	1.0	1.5	2.3	2.9
% speak English well	94.3	58.0	79.0	1.6	72.4	52.2	43.5	29.3
(N)	(3,503)	(29,888)	(938)	(2,875)	(8,975)	(9,768)	(5,699)	(1,639)

Source: 1980 Census of Population, 5% PUMS, Sample A.

a Puerto Ricans born on the island are considered native-born citizens, therefore the immigration cohort data are unavailable for them.

For purposes of these comparisons, Puerto Ricans born on the U.S. mainland are classified as native-born and all others are foreign-born.

Refers to all individuals 25 years and over. Other characteristics are for all civilians 16 years and over.

c Labor force participation rate.

income lags far behind that of Cuban households. While there was a negligible household income differential between units headed by native and immigrant Cubans, 1980 household income disparities between native and foreign Mexican and Puerto Rican adults were substantial. Puerto Ricans had the lowest household income levels, averaging between \$16,600 and \$14,200, respectively, for the U.S. mainland- and island-born heads. The highest rates of poverty, female headship and unemployment also correspond to Puerto Ricans, with the island-born population faring notably worse than the mainland-born population. In a socioeconomic profile Cubans emerge as the most advantaged, Puerto Ricans most disadvantaged, with Mexicans falling in between.

The only indicator of acculturation available in the 1980 Census is a measure of English proficiency. Although not a particularly precise measure of acculturation, when evaluated against indicators of socioeconomic status, this variable is nonetheless quite revealing. Puerto Ricans combine the highest levels of English proficiency with the lowest levels of socioeconomic achievement. Cuban immigrants, in contrast, are the least linguistically proficient, yet they are more successful in the labor market than either of the two "older" immigrant groups. A comparison of the changes in English proficiency between Mexican and Cuban immigrant cohorts suggests that the Cuban linguistic assimilation process may be more rapid, but it also may be tied to the educational background of the groups entering at different periods, as well as to their locational and associational patterns after their arrival to the United States.

That the mode of entry and integration of the Hispanic population has been of major consequence for the contemporary social and economic standing of the three major national origin groups is undeniable. As the data in Table 1.2 show, the advantaged class population of Cubans vis-à-vis Mexicans and Puerto Ricans has remained intact to the present time. The foreign-born Cuban population has consolidated its white-collar position while the foreign-born Mexican and Puerto Ricans continue to dominate in blue-collar jobs. Note that while recent Cuban immigrants—those who arrived during the 1970s—were largely blue-collar workers, members of this cohort were almost three times more likely to hold white-collar jobs in 1980 than Mexican immigrants who arrived at the same time. Thus, the significance of the differing class composition of Cuban compared to Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants is that it is reproduced among the native-born generations. Although the data in Table 1.2 show that the disproportionate representation of native-born Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in blue-collar occupations had diminished relative to the foreign born generations, this may be more a reflection of the changing structure of industry than of a major improvement in their relative standing in the occupational structure (see Snipp and Tienda, 1982, 1984).

The higher representation of Cubans in managerial and professional jobs coincides also with their participation in an enclave economy consisting of Cuban owned and operated enterprises. As indicated in the historical discussion and affirmed by the data in Table 1.3, the emergence of the enclave is a direct consequence of the class composition of the early Cuban exiles. Two features of the data in Table 1.3 are noteworthy. First, the proportion of self-employed workers is substantially higher among the foreign-born Cubans as compared to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans who, for reasons elaborated above, were unable to reinforce their residential concentration in ethnic *barrios* with a viable economic base. The differential self-employment rate between native- and foreign-born Cubans arises largely because of the disproportionately higher share of self-employed workers among those who arrived

Table 1.2. DISTRIBUTION OF THE HISPANIC CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY WHITE AND BLUE COLLAR OCCUPATIONS, NATIONAL ORIGIN AND IMMIGRATION COHORT, 1980.

Immigration Cohort	Mexicans		Puerto Ricans ^a		Cubans	
	Blue collar	White collar	Blue collar	White collar	Blue collar	White collar
Native-born	70.9	29.1	63.4	36.6	55.2	44.8
Foreign-born	87.4	12.6	79.4	20.6	62.7	37.3
before 1950	88.7	11.3			39.6	60.4
1950-59	78.8	21.2			39.6	60.4
1960-64	81.3	18.7			48.2	51.8
1965-69	85.7	14.3			67.6	32.4
1970-74	89.8	10.2			72.5	27.5
1975-80	91.8	8.2			78.0	22.0
Total	76.6	23.4	74.6	25.4	61.9	38.1
(N)	(207,259)	(63,312)	(46,785)	(15,970)	(20,676)	(12,715)

Source: 1980 Census Population, 5% PUM5, Sample A.

^a Puerto Ricans born on the island are considered native-born citizens, therefore the immigration cohort data are unavailable for them. For purposes of these comparisons, Puerto Ricans born on the U.S. mainland are classified as native-born and all others are foreign-born.

prior to 1965. Subsequent cohorts continued to be more highly represented among the self-employed in 1980 than Mexicans who arrived during comparable periods, but the differentials were subsequently reduced.

A second noteworthy feature is that the prevalence of self-employed among the native-born was quite similar among Cubans and Mexicans, but not Puerto Ricans. This finding calls into question the long-term viability of the Cuban enclave sector, and supports claims about the deteriorating economic status of Puerto Ricans. It is conceivable that the relative under-representation of native-born Cubans among the self-employed simply reflects the lack of sufficient time to witness the inter-generational transfer of Cuban owned and operated enterprises from the immigrant generation to the second generation. However, it is also possible that the native-born generation may achieve its structural integration through employment in the private and public sector, especially if the existence of the enclave sector serves as a stepping-stone for more lucrative employment opportunities. It is too early to predict the fate of the Cuban economic enclave, but its viability may also hinge on the extent of cultural assimilation among the native-born, and its visibility as an ethnic enterprise may depend on the extent to which Cubans chose to elaborate the symbolic bases of their Hispanic ancestry.

Not only has the advantaged class position of Cubans vis-à-vis Mexicans and Puerto Ricans remained intact to the present time, but as a consequence of their greater socioeconomic success and middle-class orientations, the Cuban population may have experienced more extensive cultural assimilation than either Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, despite the fact that they have resided in the United States for a shorter period of time. Census data are not particularly suited to addressing questions about cultural reaffirmation and ethnic identity, but the data presented in Tables 1.4 and 1.5, albeit more suggestive than conclusive, provide some insights.

Consistent with the evolutionary perspective of ethnic assimilation, the pattern of Spanish language maintenance among Hispanics is lower among the native-born generations than among the foreign-born. What is striking, however, is that the retention of Spanish among U.S.-born Cubans—who, unlike Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, are essentially a second generation—is considerably lower than among Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. That the use of Spanish in the home should be lower among Puerto Ricans who were born on the island compared to foreign-born Mexicans is not surprising, because English is taught regularly in the island schools. However, the more rapid linguistic assimilation among Cubans is striking for it suggests that the socio-economic success of this group is creating class orientations that outweigh ethnic ones. Apparently the native-born generation is choosing *not* to elaborate the symbolic bases of its Hispanic ancestry.

Because of the predominance of immigrants among the Cuban population, it is not surprising that there is little variation in the extent of Spanish language use among those employed in various occupational categories. Nevertheless, Cubans employed as professionals and semi-professionals are less likely to use Spanish in the home than those employed in lower white-collar or blue-collar jobs. Although Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have lower rates of Spanish language retention overall than do Cubans, the aggregate statistic largely captures the higher prevalence of native-born individuals in the population. However, despite the higher rates of Spanish language retention among native-born Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, the corrosive forces of the Anglo environment are manifested in the lower levels of Spanish retention among the more successful members of the community—those whose incomes are well above the poverty levels, and who hold white-collar jobs.

Table 1.3. CLASS OF WORKER DISTRIBUTION OF THE HISPANIC CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY NATIONAL ORIGIN AND IMMIGRATION COHORT.

	Mexicans						Puerto Ricans ^a						Cubans					
	Wage private sector	Wage public sector	Self-employed	Unpaid workers	Wage private sector	Wage public sector	Self-employed	Unpaid workers	Wage private sector	Wage public sector	Self-employed	Unpaid workers	Wage private sector	Wage public sector	Self-employed	Unpaid workers		
Native born	59.3	14.5	3.1	23.1	54.1	13.6	1.4	30.9	60.7	11.5	4.1	23.8						
Foreign-born	65.2	5.2	2.7	26.8	50.3	10.4	2.0	37.2	61.6	7.1	6.8	24.5						
1975-80	70.1	3.0	1.4	25.4					46.3	6.1	3.4	44.3						
1970-74	73.4	3.8	2.0	20.8					62.0	5.2	5.3	27.5						
1965-69	70.2	5.6	2.9	21.3					63.2	6.0	5.4	25.4						
1960-64	67.2	7.6	3.3	21.8					64.1	9.4	8.6	17.9						
1950-59	62.2	9.3	4.5	24.0					62.0	8.2	10.1	19.6						
Before 1950	34.1	6.5	4.4	55.0					42.6	7.0	8.4	41.9						
(N)	(166,003) (30,566) (8,050) (65,952) (32,305) (7,147) (1,160) (22,143) (20,527) (2,523) (2,173) (8,160)																	

Source: 1980 Census of Population, 5% PUMS, Sample A.

a Puerto Ricans born on the island are considered native-born citizens, therefore the immigration cohort data are unavailable for them. For purposes of these comparisons, Puerto Ricans born on the U.S. mainland are classified as native-born and all others are foreign-born.

Another indicator of the coherence of "Hispanicity" among the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban origin populations is found in the extent to which they identify consistently as members of an ancestry group. For the tabulations reported in Table 1.5 we computed the proportion of individuals whose response to the ancestry question matched their response to the full-enumeration Spanish origin item. In other words, of the individuals who self-identified themselves as being of Spanish origin (specified by nationality), the figures reported indicate the proportions who also reported that their ancestry was either Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban. Although this measure is crude, it serves to illustrate the diversity in the extent of uniform ethnic identification among the groups.

Overall, the data indicate greater ethnic consistency among the two most disadvantaged groups, the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, while the Cubans exhibit greater diversity in the extent to which they identify as ethnics. For Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, the use of Spanish in the home is the major factor differentiating those who are consistent in reporting their Hispanic ancestry, although poverty status and immigration status also contributes to the diversity in their Hispanic identity. Cubans present a different picture. Not only are the native-born notably less likely than their foreign-born counterparts to report an ancestry consistent with their self-reported Spanish origin, but they are also substantially less likely than individuals of either Mexican or Puerto Rican origin to identify consistently as Cubans. In part, this may reflect the homogenizing assimilation processes that often accompany rapid socioeconomic success, but it is noteworthy that this pattern has not been replicated by the native-born Mexicans or Puerto Ricans.

In the case of Hispanics, the overriding explanation for the pronounced differences in the cultural manifestations of ethnicity can only be class-based, or in Vincent's (1974) terms, grounded in the coincidence of ethnic origin with minority status. And, while the option of elaborating the symbolic bases of Cuban origin are certainly more open to the Cuban population by virtue of its relatively more advantaged position vis-à-vis Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, members of the native-born generation apparently are not choosing to elaborate their Hispanic ethnicity along cultural lines or nationality. Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, persist in their greater adherence to the cultural and nationality expressions of their ethnicity. In their experience, however, it is not only symbolism that maintains the cultural expressions intact, but also their disadvantaged minority position and the continued revitalization of ethnic symbols through the process of labor migration.

CONCLUSION

Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans each hold a distinct place within the range of experiences shaping their economic and cultural integration into American society. The Puerto Rican case provides the strongest support for the link between intense ethnic identity and lower class positioning. That Cubans have not remained segregated in a secondary labor market, have been the most successful of the three groups, and are demonstrating tendencies towards integration with Anglos lends positive support from the other direction. Their distinct status at entry and class resources are the most significant factors distinguishing Cuban refugees from Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants. That the Mexican-American experience is more ambiguous and diverse can be explained by their numerical size and their longer history in the United States.

The indicators pointing to increasing assimilation of Chicanos must be weighed against the isolation, extreme poverty and lack of control over life as it exists in the *barrios*. In con-

Table 1.4. PERCENTAGE OF THE HISPANIC CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE WHO REPORTED SPEAKING SPANISH AT HOME IN 1980 BY SELECTED SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND NATIONAL ORIGIN.

Characteristic	Mexicans	Puerto Ricans ^a	Cubans
<i>Immigration cohort</i>			
Native-born	72.6	73.0	61.5
Foreign-born	96.8	94.8	96.8
1975-80	98.1		96.7
1970-74	98.0		98.4
1965-69	97.6		98.1
1960-64	96.2		96.4
1950-59	95.0		94.2
Before 1950	93.2		84.4
<i>Occupation</i>			
Professional	74.8	81.4	88.2
Semiprofessional	71.8	82.3	89.6
Farmer	81.3	83.8	81.5
Manager	75.9	81.8	91.0
Clerical	73.4	85.5	93.1
Sales	72.2	79.3	91.5
Craft	80.9	86.3	93.7
Operative	84.7	91.5	95.8
Service worker	79.7	85.3	91.8
Laborer	82.0	86.0	92.6
Farm laborer	93.8	87.2	94.6
<i>Poverty status</i>			
Non-poor	78.5	85.0	93.0
Near poor	86.4	91.5	94.1
Poor	84.9	92.6	92.6
Overall percentage	80.9	88.2	93.1
<u>(N)</u>	<u>(270,571)</u>	<u>(62,755)</u>	<u>(33,391)</u>

Source: 1980 Census of Population, 5% PUMS, Sample A.

a Puerto Ricans born on the island are considered native-born citizens, therefore the immigration cohort data are unavailable for them. For purposes of these comparisons, Puerto Ricans born on the U.S. mainland are classified as native-born and all others are foreign-born.

trast to Barrera's claim to class integration, can the small rising Chicano middle class play the role of native elite within a formerly colonized group? (Almaguer, 1974). How is one to interpret the ongoing ethnic contact as it exists between classes (as Chicano businesses, for example, rely on Chicano clientele) or as it is affected by immigration? For Chicanos it is difficult to envision a future when ethnic distinctions within social class divisions will fade away. The cloudiness of what Barrera has labeled "the current period of confusion and redefinition" is maintained by the continuing influx of new immigrants during a period of economic instability as well as imprecise data to evaluate truly longitudinal comparisons of successive immigrant cohorts and generational transitions.

For Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, isolation in ethnic communities and other manifestations of ethnicity are structurally produced by their concentrations in minority labor markets and by the continued influx of immigrants who help to renew cultural traditions and subsequently elaborate them as a basis for social solidarity. In turn ethnically based solidarity serves as a protection and source of resistance against oppression. For Cubans, the cohesiveness of their ethnic community has been a key factor facilitating initial adjustment and success. Whether that success will ensure the survival of the ethnically enclosed community or lead to its decline remains to be seen. Initial evidence based on the most recent census suggests a decline as the first generation of native-born Cubans demonstrate an unusual ability to assimilate.

Our conceptual framework implies that ethnicity is structured by the relationship of a given national origin group to the system of production. Immigration history, reception factors in the United States and race shape this relationship over time. The elaboration of ethnicity as historically emergent further points to the intersecting nature of class and ethnicity as demonstrated by the diverse outcomes of the three Hispanic national origin groups. The labor market experience of Hispanics has been chosen as a key factor in the structuring of ethnicity because it strongly influences subsequent exposure to and interactions with other races, social classes and cultural forces.

On balance, the market experience of Hispanics has been chosen as a key factor in the structuring of ethnicity because it strongly influences subsequent exposure to and interactions with other races, social classes and cultural forces. Yet obviously, ethnicity is not simply a function of occupational and economic rewards. Ethnic identity as manifested by language, religion, race and national origin is only one part of a much broader, multidimensional social identity (Arce, 1981). For this reason, the process of integration cannot be unidirectional, proceeding from an unassimilated beginning to an assimilated end, from marginality to middle class. The complexities of the interaction between social and ethnic identities are beyond the scope of this paper which only provides a starting point for further exploration—an exploration urgently needed if a clearer conception of Hispanic ethnicity is to emerge from the distortions of the past.

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Table 1.5. PROPORTION OF HISPANIC CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE WHO REPORTED CONSISTENT ANCESTRY AND ORIGIN RESPONSES IN 1980 BY SELECTED SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND NATIONAL ORIGIN.

Selected Characteristics	Mexicans		Puerto Ricans ^a		Cubans	
	Native	Foreign	Native	Foreign	Native	Foreign
<i>Occupation</i>						
Professional	.87	.90	.81	.88	.70	.91
Semiprofessional	.88	.89	.78	.90	.76	.91
Farmer	.77	.91	.44	.86	.40	.86
Manager	.87	.91	.84	.88	.69	.90
Clerical	.88	.91	.84	.89	.74	.92
Sales	.86	.92	.78	.85	.74	.90
Craft	.87	.94	.80	.89	.68	.91
Operative	.86	.94	.81	.88	.69	.92
Service worker	.84	.93	.78	.87	.70	.90
Laborer	.86	.94	.80	.87	.78	.90
Farm laborer	.85	.93	.69	.88	.36	.76
<i>Spanish spoken^b</i>						
No	.68	.68	.63	.70	.51	.69
Yes	.92	.94	.88	.89	.85	.91
<i>Poverty Status</i>						
Near poor	.81	.93	.80	.88	.73	.91
Poor	.85	.94	.83	.89	.72	.91
Overall proportion	.81	.93	.81	.88	.60	.90
(N)	(177,149)	(93,422)	(19,070)	(43,677)	(3,503)	(29,880)

Source: 1980 Census Population, 5% PUMS, Sample A.

a Puerto Ricans born on the island are considered native-born citizens, therefore the immigration cohort data are unavailable for them. For purposes of these comparisons, Puerto Ricans born on the U.S. mainland are classified as native-born and all others are foreign-born.

b Spanish spoken at home.

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