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Citizenship, College Degrees, and Occupational Outcomes: Comparison of Latino Immigrants and U.S. Natives at the Turn of the Century

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Abstract

Using data from the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census from 2000 to 2007, we analyze the occupational distribution of Latino immigrants and their associated prestige ranking by degree status in comparison with U.S.-born Latinos. We find dramatic gaps in the occupational distribution and prestige rankings among Latinos with similar postsecondary attainment levels by citizenship status.

Resumen

Usando datos del Cuestionario de la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense del 2000 al 2007 analizamos la distribución ocupacional de inmigrantes latinos y el rango de prestigio asociado con su nivel académico en comparación a los latinos nacidos en EUA. Encontramos lagunas dramáticas en la distribución ocupacional y el rango de prestigio entre latinos con logros similares en educación superior cuando se considera el estado de ciudadanía.

Keywords

Latinos, immigrants, occupations, prestige, citizenship, postsecondary degrees, labor market, employment

Introduction

The turn of the 21st century, or 2001 more specifically, marked a notable shift in the economic and educational landscape of immigration in the United States. The

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September 11 terrorist attacks left an indelible mark on the nation's political and labor infrastructure, which manifested in a decrease in the number of immigration and international student visas issued, initiated a public shift toward national security concerns, and other related changes (Brown & Bean, 2009; Olivas, 2004; Passel, 2005). Trends in U.S. immigration during the 1990s, which led up to but were not related to the 2001 attacks, carried their own significance for immigrants. The recession and anti-immigrant fervor of the early to mid-1990s made California, the country's primary destination for immigrants, less hospitable, whereas at the same time the economies of many southern states were booming and demanding new sources of labor (Massey & Capoferro, 2005). These shifts affected both undocumented and legal immigrants looking for work in locations that offered higher wages (Borjas & Katz, 2007). In fact, Durand, Massey and Capoferro (2005, pp. 2-3) note that an "unusual constellation of factors" facilitated a movement to nontraditional gateways for migrant workers, through which they found a new demand for labor and the chance to earn higher wages. Indeed, the most notable change of migration from 1990 to 2000 was the move of Mexican migrants, the largest group of foreign-born individuals arriving at the United States, out of California (Card & Lewis, 2007). Moreover, this shift appears to be associated with changes in which industry immigrants work in, suggesting a change of occupation among more recent immigrant cohorts (Card & Lewis, 2007). The immigrant cohorts entering the United States by 2000, therefore, were more likely to work outside California, enter occupations other than agriculture, and experience a somewhat different integration into state economies than previous immigrant cohorts.

Although geographic dispersion, changing regional labor demands, and industry shifts depict the pre-2001 environment for immigrants, the period following 2001 represents a complex set of forces that links education and immigration policy at the state and federal levels, as related to immigrants with higher than average educational attainment. The period from 2001 to 2006, for instance, witnessed the adoption in several states of in-state resident tuition policies that allowed eligible undocumented immigrants to attend college at the same rate as legal residents (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Olivas, 2007). Adoption of these policies could characterize this era as one of increased educational access for immigrant students in particular U.S. states. By 2007, however, Oklahoma became the first state to retract the new policy whereas other states have considered withdrawing or banning this form of benefit altogether (Olivas, 2007). During this period, 2002 to 2007, the number of foreign-born graduate students enrolling for the first time in U.S. postsecondary institutions experienced a significant decline (Brown & Bean, 2009).

The post-2001 political environment is characterized as having made a dramatic shift—from being on the brink of comprehensive immigration reform to putting a pronounced emphasis on limiting immigration activity as a matter of national security (Waslin, 2009). Furthermore, the recession of 2001 created a mixed climate for immigrants—including the low skilled to the highly educated and those living in and arriving at the United States. For immigrants to the United States, then, the period from 2001 to 2007 could be characterized as one of increased concern with national

security, continued regional dispersion, increased educational opportunity, diversifying choice of industry, and recovery from recession. We focus our examination on the period from 2000 to 2007 to document and compare relevant educational and occupational outcomes for immigrants in the Southwest and the Southeast, within a post-2001 immigration policy context.

Previous research notes that the Latino population is much more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to be concentrated in low-skilled occupations (Toussaint-Comeau, 2006).¹ The number of immigrant Latinos in highly skilled occupations is extremely small, with less than 1% working in high-tech science and engineering occupations (Borjas & Katz, 2007). Although significant attention has been paid to the impact of immigration on the wages of Latinos and Latino immigrants relative to other racial and ethnic groups (Raphael & Smolensky, 2008; Reed & Danziger, 2007), little research has been conducted on the occupational outcomes of immigrants that provides a complete picture of the socioeconomic status of these groups (Toussaint-Comeau, 2006). Previous research has documented the fact that human capital is not directly transferable across countries in terms of wage outcomes (Borjas, 1999) and that receiving a postsecondary degree in another country is likely to affect an individual's wages in the United States unfavorably, compared with individuals of a similar racial and ethnic group educated in this country (Zheng & Zie, 2004). For example, Zheng and Zie found that individuals of Asian origin who were educated outside the United States are more likely to experience an earning disadvantage than Asian-origin individuals educated in the U.S. postsecondary system. The magnitude of the earning disadvantage varies by country, with Japanese individuals in fact earning more than U.S. White individuals whereas individuals educated in the Philippines earn less than U.S. White individuals.

How Latino individuals with a postsecondary degree fare in the U.S. labor market based on their citizenship status within the recent immigration context remains under-explored. Therefore, this study focuses on the educational attainment and labor outcomes of the Latino-origin immigrant population across different regions of the United States. We compare the status of immigrants in Texas and California—states with significant historical and current migration activity, which also represent the largest economic forces in the Southwest—with Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia—southeastern states that have experienced the most recent wave of migration. These states also have the most metropolitan economic stability and strength across the Southeast. We focus on degreed Latino immigrants by region because of the dearth of literature on (a) highly educated Latino immigrants and (b) the distribution of degreed immigrants by occupational industry and educational outcome across the United States. For the purposes of this analysis, we define degreed Latinos as individuals who have completed an associate's, bachelor's, or bachelor's degree and/or higher. Finally, we use U.S.-born Latinos as a control group because the wage gap between Mexican-origin immigrants and U.S. natives of Mexican origin is smaller than the gap between Mexican-origin immigrants and the nonimmigrant population (Borjas & Katz, 2007).

The study contributes to the literature by comparing the influence of postsecondary degree completion on the occupational outcomes of noncitizen and U.S.-born Latinos. Occupational outcomes are examined according to their representation in U.S. industries and by the prestige rankings of each occupation within these industries (Nakao & Treas, 1994). This study represents one of the first explorations of degreed Latinos according to citizenship status and within different regional landscape at the turn of the 21st century.

The article continues as follows. Section “Regional Landscapes: States of Interest by Region” offers assessments of the states in our case study analysis according to citizenship status, educational attainment and landscape, and industries. Section “Research Design” presents the research design, including data, selected empirical strategy, and limitations of the design. Section “Results” presents our results on occupational sector and prestige rankings according to citizenship status and region. Section “Discussion” concludes the article with the implications of our results and recommendations for further research.

Regional Landscapes: States of Interest by Region

The article focuses on case studies of five states—California, Texas, Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia—that represent two distinct regions of the United States, the Southwest and the Southeast. These five states have both a number of metropolitan and significant rural areas. We examine contextual factors within these states that are critical to labor market status, such as overall population, foreign-born population, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and common occupations.

The states were chosen for the following reasons. First, they have relatively high migration rates. This is apparent in raw numbers in the Southwest and in the sudden increase in the foreign-born Latino population in the Southeast. Second, these states have large metropolitan labor markets that attract significant immigrant labor. Third, the postsecondary educational landscape in these states is well developed. Residents can choose from a number of options, which include public and private four-year institutions and community colleges, the latter being the most likely entry point to postsecondary education for immigrant and nonimmigrant Latino students (Adelman, 2005; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Kurlaender, 2006). Finally, the policy environment for states in the Southwest differs significantly from that in the Southeast. California and Texas have more hospitable educational policy environments for immigrants in terms of postsecondary opportunities, such as in-state resident tuition laws that benefit undocumented high school graduates.

California and Texas: Economic Drivers of the Southwest

California. California, with a population of 36,264,467 at the time of the 2007 American Community Survey (ACS), is home to approximately one out of every eight people living in the United States (ACS, 2007). Between the 2000 Census and 2007, the state’s

Hispanic population increased from approximately 11 million to nearly 13 million—a 3.3% increase and a jump from 32.4% to 35.7% of the total population (ACS, 2007).

During that period, the state's foreign-born population grew by more than 1 million people. In 2000, 8.8 million foreign-born residents lived in California; by 2007, that number had grown to nearly 9.9 million—an increase from 26.2% to 27.2% of the overall population. Although Hispanics represent more than half of California's foreign-born population and a third of the overall population, the state is also home to a substantial population of Asian descent. Between 2000 and 2007, the state's Asian population rose from 3.7 million to 4.4 million—an increase from 10.9% to 12.2% of the state's population. As a share of the overall state population, foreign-born residents increased from 26.1% to 27.2% during this period. Within the foreign-born population, the percentage of naturalized citizens increased from 39.2% to 43% whereas the percentage of noncitizens declined from 60.8% to 57% (ACS, 2007).

Overall educational attainment increased between 2000 and 2007. In 2000, 76.8% of California's population had earned a high school diploma or GED, and 26.6% had at least a bachelor's degree. By 2007, 80% of Californians had at least a high school credential whereas 29.1% had at least a bachelor's degree. Associate's degree holders experienced a more modest gain, from 7.1% in 2000 to 7.6% in 2007.

California's three-tiered approach to postsecondary education has drawn a great deal of interest from state policy makers and education researchers nationwide since the implementation of its Master Plan in the 1960s. The state's broad community college system offers open access to any student with a high school diploma or equivalent credential. The California State University system includes a network of 23 four-year institutions, which provide "high-quality, accessible" higher education to 450,000 students across the state (The California State University, 2008). The top-tier public institutions comprise the University of California (UC) system, led by the state's flagship campus at Berkeley. The 10 UC institutions serve more than 220,000 students (UC, 2006).

This three-tiered approach is intended to provide students of varied academic and career interests with the postsecondary educational opportunities most suitable to their goals. Nearly 19% of Californians ages 16 years and older are employed in the educational, health care, and social services sectors. Professional, scientific, and waste management sectors employ approximately 12%, retail trade just more than 11%, and manufacturing nearly 11% (ACS, 2007). Despite California's diverse economy, the state's unemployment rate has recently risen to 11.5%, well above the national rate of 8.5% as of March 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2009).

Much of California's population resides in major urban areas, Los Angeles County foremost among them. According to the 2007 ACS, Los Angeles is home to nearly 10 million people, making it the second largest U.S. metropolitan area, after New York City. Hispanic individuals comprise nearly half of the population (47.1%) in Los Angeles County. Other metropolitan areas in California ranking among the top 15 most populous areas in the United States include San Diego (2,954,000; 30% Hispanic), San Jose (1,723,000; 25.4% Hispanic), and San Francisco (757,000; 14% Hispanic; ACS, 2007).

Statewide, Asian individuals tend to have the highest average household income, approximately \$71,000 a year. White Californians average \$61,000 a year, whereas Hispanic individuals earn an average of \$45,100. Black Californians tend to earn the least, with an estimated average household income of \$41,800 (ACS, 2007).

Texas. Texas, the second largest state by population, is home to more than 23,385,340 people (ACS, 2007). Between the 2000 Census and 2007, the state's Hispanic population grew from approximately 6,670,000 to 8,300,000—a 3.5% increase and a jump from 32% to 35.5% of the total population (ACS, 2007).

During that period, the state's foreign-born population grew from approximately 2.9 million to 3.7 million people, representing an increase from 14% to nearly 16% of the total population. Within the foreign-born population, the percentage of naturalized citizens decreased slightly, from 31.5% to 30.6%, although the actual number increased from 914,000 to 1.1 million. Accordingly, the proportion of noncitizens within the foreign-born population grew from 68.5% to 69.4% between 2000 and 2007. Three out of four people born outside the United States now living in Texas were identified as Hispanic in the 2007 American Community Survey. The state's Black population is significantly smaller than the large Hispanic minority; between 2000 and 2007, the proportion of Texans who are Black remained approximately 11.5% (ACS, 2007).

Overall educational attainment in Texas increased between 2000 and 2007. In 2000, 75.7% of Texans had earned a high school diploma or GED, and 23.2% had at least a bachelor's degree. By 2007, 78.6% of Texans had at least a high school credential whereas 24.7% had at least a bachelor's degree. Associate's degree holders increased during this period by a more modest amount, from 5.2% to 6.2% among people age 25 years and older.

The Texas public higher education system serves more than 1.1 million students. Community and state colleges enroll more than 600,000 students whereas nearly 510,000 attend four-year universities. The state's flagship university, the University of Texas at Austin, is one of the largest institutions of higher learning in the United States, serving approximately 50,000 students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2009). According to the THECB (2008), "The state's rapidly growing Hispanic population accounted for 60% of the higher education enrollment growth from fall 2006-2007, yet still is lagging in reaching participation targets."

The state's 50 public community college districts, 32 public four-year universities, and other technical and occupational institutions aim to prepare students for productive citizenship (THECB, 2008). Nearly 20% of Texans older than 16 are occupied in the educational, health care, and social services sectors. Retail trade employs 11.6% of Texans whereas just more than 10% are employed in professional, scientific, and waste management fields and 10% in manufacturing. Just more than 9% are employed in construction (ACS, 2007). Unlike California, Texas' unemployment rate of 6.7% remained below the national unemployment rate of 8.5% in March 2009 (BLS, 2009).

Texas has several of the country's largest cities that are home to millions though much of the state remains rural. More than 3.8 million people lived in the Houston area in 2007, an increase of more than 400,000 since the 2000 Census. Hispanic individuals

represent 38% of the Houston population, an increase of 5% from 2000. Four other metropolitan areas in Texas rank among the 20 largest in the United States: Dallas (2.2 million; 30% Hispanic), San Antonio (1.4 million; 54.3% Hispanic), Fort Worth (1.4 million; 19.7% Hispanic), and Austin (812,000; 28.2% Hispanic; ACS, 2007).

In general, White households in Texas earn substantially more annually than their Hispanic and Black counterparts. White households earned a median income of \$50,497 in 2007, compared with \$34,306 for Hispanics and \$33,325 for Blacks. The share of Texas families earning less than \$25,000 increased from 24.6% in 2000 to 26.7% in 2007 (ACS, 2007).

Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia: Critical Metropolitan Drivers of a Southeastern Economy

Florida. Florida, the fourth largest state by population, is home to more than 18,014,000 people (ACS, 2007). Between the 2000 Census and 2007, the state's population grew by more than 2 million people. The Hispanic population grew from approximately 2.7 million to 3.6 million, an increase from 16.8% to 20% of the state's overall population. Among those 3.6 million people, more than 1 million are of Cuban descent, concentrated heavily in South Florida (ACS, 2007).

In that period, Florida's foreign-born population increased from approximately 2.7 million to well more than 3.3 million. Foreign-born residents increased from 16.7% to 18.7% of the state's population. Within the foreign-born population, the proportion of naturalized citizens remained essentially constant at 45.2% whereas that of noncitizens remained near 54.8%. According to the 2007 ACS, 7 out of 10 people in Florida's foreign-born population are of Hispanic descent. The state's Black population increased from 2.3 million to 2.7 million; however, as a percentage of total population, Black residents increased by a relatively small 0.7%. As the state's White population has gone into a relative decline, the state's Hispanic population continues to constitute an increasing share of the overall population (ACS, 2007).

Overall educational attainment increased between 2000 and 2007. In 2000, 79.9% of Floridians had earned at least a high school diploma or GED equivalent, and 22.3% had at least a bachelor's degree. By 2007, 84.4% of Floridians had at least a high school credential whereas 25.2% had at least a bachelor's degree. Associate's degree holders increased by a more modest amount, from 7% to 8.4% among people age 25 years and older (ACS, 2007).

The State University System of Florida serves more than 156,000 full-time undergraduate students in 11 four-year institutions. The University of Florida in Gainesville, the public flagship university, enrolls more than 25,500 full-time undergraduates. Across all degree levels in the four-year public institutions, approximately 17% of students are Hispanic. The state's public four-year institutions also have strong articulation agreements with community colleges. More than 15,000 students enrolling in four-year institutions for the fall 2007 semester transferred from a community college (Florida Board of Governors, 2009). Community colleges in Florida serve more than

800,000 students, and the state legislature has enabled many of these colleges to establish bachelor's degree programs (Florida Department of Education, 2009).

Florida's higher education system strives to prepare students for productive citizenship. Educational, health care, and social services industries occupy the largest share of Florida residents, with 18.5% employed in these fields. Retail trade employs 12.8%, whereas professional, scientific, and waste management occupations employ 11.5%. Rounding out the largest occupational sectors are the arts, entertainment, food, and accommodations, collectively, with 10.4%, and construction with 10.3% (ACS, 2007). The state's unemployment rate of 9.7% also exceeded the March 2009 national rate of 8.5% (BLS, 2009).

Much of Florida remains rural, but millions of Floridians live in major metropolitan areas, generally along the state's extensive coastline. At the southern tip of the state, the Miami-Dade metropolitan area has nearly 2.4 million people, 61.4% of whom are of Hispanic descent. The area's Cuban population of more than 764,000 represents one third of the Miami-Dade Hispanic population. Tampa's metropolitan area is home to more than 1.1 million people, 21.8% of whom are Hispanic. Another million people live in and around Orlando, 23.7% of whom are Hispanic. In the state's northwest corner, more than 840,000 people live in and around Jacksonville; Hispanics constitute a relatively low 5.8% of that area's population (ACS, 2007).

In general, White households in Florida earn more than their Hispanic and Black counterparts. White households earned a median annual income of \$49,224 in 2007, compared with \$41,137 for Hispanics and \$34,011 for Blacks. The share of Florida families earning less than \$25,000 decreased from 22.8 to 17.4% between 2000 and 2007 (ACS, 2007).

North Carolina. North Carolina, the 10th largest state by population, is home to more than 8.8 million people (ACS, 2007). The state's population grew by 10% between the 2000 Census and the 2007 ACS. During that time, the Hispanic population increased from approximately 379,000 to nearly 596,000—an increase from 4.7% to 6.7% of the state's overall population (ACS, 2007).

During the same period, North Carolina's foreign-born population increased from 430,000 to nearly 603,000, growing from 5.3% to 6.8% of the total population. The portion of foreign-born residents of North Carolina who are naturalized citizens increased from 26.2% to 27.6%. Accordingly, the noncitizen share dropped from 73.8% to 72.4%. Hispanics represented 55.8% of the state's foreign-born population in 2000; by 2007, that share had increased to 59%. As in other states, as the percentage of White residents declines, Hispanic individuals represent an increasing share of the population, whereas the percentage of Black residents remains relatively constant. Black individuals represented 22% of North Carolina's population in both 2000 and 2007 (ACS, 2007).

Overall educational attainment increased in North Carolina between 2000 and 2007. In 2000, 78.1% of North Carolinians had earned a high school diploma or GED, and 22.5% had at least a bachelor's degree. By 2007, 82.2% had earned at least a high school diploma whereas 25% held at least a bachelor's degree. Associate's degree

holders also made noticeable gains, rising from 6.8% to 8.1% over this time for people age 25 years and older (ACS, 2007).

The University of North Carolina system serves 157,000 full-time undergraduates through a system of 16 four-year institutions. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the public flagship institution, enrolls approximately 17,400 full-time students. North Carolina State University, the state's largest institution of higher learning by enrollment, enrolls nearly 23,000 full-time students. Although records for student race and ethnicity are missing for more than 8,300 fall 2008 students, only 3% of the 157,000 full-time students in North Carolina were Hispanic (University of North Carolina, 2009).

The North Carolina Community College System serves more than 800,000 students in 58 institutions. This extensive system, which includes 28 multicampuses and 74 off-campus sites, provides for-credit classes "within a 30-minute drive of virtually every North Carolinian" (North Carolina Community College System, 2009). In 2008, the issue of access to community colleges at in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrants became a matter of considerable public debate, as the system sought to preserve the open-door policy although some lawmakers and the state attorney general's office urged them to reconsider. In response, the State Board of Community Colleges commissioned a review of the system's policies on undocumented students seeking to attend public two-year institutions (North Carolina Community College System, 2008). The Board has since voted to allow the admission of undocumented students into the state community college system although without any in-state tuition benefits.

In regard to employment industries, nearly 22% of North Carolinians are employed in the educational, health care, and social services sectors. Manufacturing employs 14.2% of the population, with retail trade (11.5%), construction (9.1%), and professional, scientific, and waste management (8.9%) representing the other leading occupational sectors for the state (ACS, 2007). By March 2009, the state's unemployment rate increased to 10.8%, also well above the national rate of 8.5% (BLS, 2009).

The bulk of North Carolina's metropolitan population resides in three areas within the Piedmont region whereas a less dense, more rural population inhabits the western and eastern portions of the state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). More than 1.6 million people live in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, the state's largest metropolitan area; Hispanics constitute approximately 10% of the area's population. More than 1.5 million people live in the Research Triangle area of Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill; Hispanic individuals also constitute approximately 10% of this area's population. Finally, more than 1.1 million people live in the Triad area of Winston-Salem-Greensboro-High Point. Although Hispanic individuals constitute more than 12% of Winston-Salem's population, they represent only 6.1% and 6.5% of the High Point and Greensboro populations, respectively (ACS, 2007).

In general, White households earn substantially more than their Hispanic and Black counterparts. White households earned an annual median income of \$49,333 in 2007, compared with \$34,711 for Hispanics and \$30,099 for Blacks. The percentage of North Carolina families earning less than \$25,000 a year dropped from 30.7% in 2000 to 28.3% in 2007 (ACS, 2007).

Georgia. Georgia, the ninth largest state by population, is home to more than 9.3 million people (ACS, 2007). The state's rapidly growing population increased by 14% between the 2000 Census and the 2007 ACS. During that time, the state's Hispanic population increased from approximately 435,000 to more than 686,000—an increase from 5.3% to 7.4% of the state's overall population (ACS, 2007).

In the same period, Georgia's foreign-born population increased from approximately 577,000 to more than 841,000. Despite this increase, the percentage represented by the foreign-born population declined from 11.1 to 9; this decline likely resulted from a rapid influx of U.S.-born Americans moving to Georgia. The portion of foreign-born residents who are naturalized citizens increased from 29.3% to 31.6%. Accordingly, the noncitizen share dropped from 70.7% to 68.4%. Hispanic individuals represented 52% of Georgia's foreign-born population in 2000; by 2007, that share had increased to 55%. As in other states, as White population declined as a percentage of Georgia's overall population, Hispanics' share increased. The state's Black population also increased, from 28.7% to 29.6% (ACS, 2007).

Overall educational attainment increased in Georgia between 2000 and 2007. In 2000, 78.6 of Georgians had earned a high school diploma or GED, and 24.3% had at least a bachelor's degree. By 2007, 82.2% had earned at least a high school diploma whereas 26.6% held at least a bachelor's degree. Associate's degree holders also made noticeable gains, rising from 5.2% to 6.4% over this time among people age 25 years and over (ACS, 2007).

The University System of Georgia serves approximately 283,000 students through a system of 27 four-year and 8 two-year public institutions. The University of Georgia in Athens, which serves as the state's flagship public research university, enrolled more than 34,000 students for the fall 2008 semester. Other public institutions with relatively large enrollments include Georgia State University (28,200), Kennesaw State University (21,500), and the Georgia Institute of Technology, more commonly known as Georgia Tech (19,400). Nearly 10,000 students enrolled in the university system are Hispanic, according to an enrollment report for fall 2008. Across type of institution, Hispanics represent 2.3% of students at the University of Georgia, 3.8% of students at public research institutions, 2% at the two regional universities, 3% at state universities, 4.7% at state colleges, and 3.9% at two-year colleges (Board of Regents, 2008).

The postsecondary education system prepares students to enter the state's workforce. The educational, health care, and social services sectors employ 18.6% of Georgians—the largest share of the workforce. Retail trade and manufacturing employ 11.9% and 11.6%, respectively. Professional, scientific, and waste management fields employ 10.4% of the workforce, and the construction sector employs 8.9%. Similar to the other states examined in this study, with the exception of Texas, Georgia's state unemployment rate of 9.2% in March 2009 exceeded the national average of 8.5% (BLS, 2009).

Although the Atlanta metropolitan area has one of the largest populations in the Southeast, much of the state remains predominantly rural. In 2007, more than 5 million people lived in the metropolitan Atlanta area, up from 4.2 million in 2000—an increase of 19%. Between 2000 and 2007, Hispanics increased as a percentage of the

area's population, from 6% to 9%. Atlanta occupies a dominant position not only as the main urban area in Georgia but as arguably the most important economic urban area in the Southeast. Augusta, the next largest metropolitan area in Georgia, has a population of nearly 530,000, with Savannah (329,000) and Columbus (283,000) rounding out the largest urban areas in the state (ACS, 2007).

Although wages across racial groups in Georgia generally lag behind the national average, White household median income remains highest at \$33,426. Hispanics' annual median income is \$32,573, whereas Black household median income trails at \$25,256. Although the number of families earning less than \$25,000 a year dropped from 21.8% to 18.4% between 2000 and 2007, the portion of families living below the federal poverty line increased from 9.9% to 11.1% (ACS, 2007).

Research Design

Data

Our analysis is based on data from the ACS, which are available to the public from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS) maintained by the Minnesota Population Center. The ACS is a nationwide annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that provides data from 2000 to 2007 for geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or more. The survey uses a series of monthly samples to provide data that are updated annually for the same areas covered in the decennial census, but it is specifically designed to measure how communities across the U.S. are changing over time. The ACS also collects yearly demographic, housing, and economic information from U.S. households. The IPUMS-USA includes sample data from 15 federal decennial censuses dating back to 1850 and from the annual ACSs of 2000 to 2007 at the individual and household levels. These national databases are representative at the state level and together are described as providing some of the richest long-term quantitative data on the U.S. population (ACS, 2008).

We use individual-level data representative by state that was obtained from the IPUMS-USA Web site for the years 2001 to 2007. The sample includes the above-mentioned states of interest—California, Texas, Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia. The group of interest is noncitizen Latinos, individuals of Latin American origin who are not U.S. citizens, which includes legal permanent residents, undocumented immigrants, and refugees. We use U.S.-born Latinos as a control group and non-Latinos as an additional group of comparison.

Analytic Strategy

We present three sets of descriptive analyses that include the calculated mean values of the selected categories of interest. First, we provide a general portrait of the population ages 18 to 40 years by citizenship status and non-Latino status. Second, we explore the distribution of Latinos ages 24 to 40 years, also by citizenship status in the occupational

classification system provided by the IPUMS. The occupations are arranged by groupings in “roughly descending socioeconomic status” (IPUMS, 2009). The categories range from the “managerial and professional specialty occupations” to the “operators, fabricators, and laborers.” The variable used is OCC1990, which represents a more contemporary classification scheme for current occupations. An expanded list of the classification categories is provided in the appendix. Specifically, we examine the distribution of Latinos by citizenship status, degree status (associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, higher than bachelor’s degree), and regional location (Southwest vs. Southeast). This analysis identifies where degreed Latinos are likely to be employed within the occupational strata, by citizenship status. Third, we use PRENT—the Nakao-Treas Prestige Score—an occupational prestige ranking measure also provided by the IPUMS data. This measure uses survey respondents’ rating of occupations from the 1989 General Social Survey, based on the occupational categories described above (OCC1990; Nakao & Treas, 1994). Scores range from 1 to 900. We include this measure as the final step of this study to measure the level of occupational prestige by degree status, according to the industry ranking provided in the second analysis. The question of interest in this third analysis is whether noncitizen and U.S.-born Latinos experience different prestige rankings despite having similar educational completion rates (degrees).

Finally, we note some limitations of the study. First, although novel in approach regarding the interest group of study according to regional status over a recent time frame, this study provides only descriptive mean values of current associations between degree status and occupational outcomes. We do not infer any causal claims in this analysis. Second, although the ACS data provide detailed information on educational completion rates and citizenship status, we are not able to decipher if degrees were completed in the United States or abroad. This limitation has implications for examining a more accurate measure of the transfer of human capital attained in Latin America versus the United States. (Zheng & Zie, 2006).

Results

Summary Demographic Characteristics by Latino Citizenship

We begin by comparing the summary statistics of Latinos by citizenship status with non-Latinos ages 16 to 40 years by regional location—Southwest versus Southeast—as shown in Table 1A and B. The data present a series of significant contrasts among Latinos within and across regional contexts. First, it is important to note the large difference in the size of the Latino population across regions, the Southwest being home to approximately four times as many Latinos as the Southeast in this particular sample. In the Southwest sample (Table 1A), U.S.-born Latinos are much more likely to be younger, female, and single, and not have any of their own children living in their household. A similar pattern exists for these demographic characteristics in the Southeast (Table 1B), although the gaps between citizen and noncitizen Latinos are not as large. For example, the gap between the number of noncitizen and U.S.-born Latinos

Table 1. Summary Statistics by Region and Ethnicity, Ages 16 to 40 years, 2007

	Non-Latino	Latinos	
		Noncitizen	U.S.-Born
A. Southwest			
Age (years)	28.20	29.50	25.71
Female	0.50	0.46	0.50
Single	0.53	0.40	0.63
Have at least one child in household	0.34	0.51	0.32
Percentage noncitizen	0.09		
Percentage of households classified as linguistically isolated	0.03	0.49	0.04
Total income	31,894	15,632	18,958
Unemployed	0.05	0.05	0.07
Not a high school graduate	0.16	0.57	0.30
BA or higher	0.31	0.05	0.10
Observations	117,637	26,683	39,696
B. Southeast			
Age (years)	28.13	28.87	26.44
Female	0.51	0.42	0.51
Single	0.52	0.43	0.57
Have at least one child in household	0.36	0.41	0.33
Percentage noncitizen	0.05		
Percentage of householdsHH classified as linguistically isolated	0.01	0.53	0.06
Total income	26,252	17,230	22,820
Unemployed	0.06	0.06	0.07
Not a high school graduate	0.19	0.46	0.25
BA or higher	0.25	0.11	0.17
Observations	93,462	8,210	7,575

Source: Authors' calculations, American Community Survey, U.S. Census, 2007.

NOTE: Values in boldface are discussed in specific detail in the text.

who are single is 23 percentage points in the Southwest, versus 14 percentage points in the Southeast. Another important characteristic worth noting is the percentage of households classified as linguistically isolated.² Approximately half of all noncitizen Latinos in both regional samples indicate that they live in a household that is classified as linguistically isolated. Of the U.S.-born Latinos, only 4% of respondents in the Southwest and 6% in the Southeast report this characteristic, a dramatic difference from their noncitizen Latino counterparts.

Of particular interest to this analysis are the total income and level of educational attainment reported by Latinos in these two regional samples, as these two factors are likely related to occupational outcomes (Toussaint-Comeau, 2006). Table 1B shows higher total income levels for Latinos in the Southeast sample for both noncitizen and U.S.-born respondents than for Latinos in the Southwest sample. Moreover, the wage difference between Latinos according to citizenship status is larger in the Southeast (\$5,500 vs. \$3,326) than the Southwest. That is, the descriptive sample statistics indicate that U.S.-born Latinos have a considerably greater wage advantage over their

noncitizen counterparts in the Southeast than their counterparts in the Southwest. In regard to educational attainment, a higher percentage of noncitizen Latinos in the Southwest report not having a high school diploma (57%) than noncitizen Latinos in the Southeast (46%). A similar relationship applies to U.S.-born Latinos (30% in the Southwest, compared with 25% in the Southeast). The rate of those having a bachelor's degree or higher is also distinctly different among the regional samples. Seventeen percent of U.S.-born Latinos in the Southeast report having a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 10% of this group in the Southwest. For noncitizen Latinos, the rate is more than twice as high in the Southeast as in the Southwest (11% vs. 5%).

The statistical portrait above shows a number of unexpected patterns related to educational attainment and income. To further understand regional differences by context, we offer a review of occupational distribution by educational attainment categories, by degree status in particular.

Occupational Distribution of Latinos by Citizenship and Degree Status

Analysis of the occupational distribution for degreed Latinos according to citizenship status and across time and region point to citizenship as a key indicator of difference in "choice" of profession reported. In fact, a few distinct trends were found between respondents who answered in 2001 and those who responded in 2007. During this period, noncitizen Latinos in the Southeast who had an associate's degree represented a sizeable decrease in the percentage of individuals working in the technical sales category (9%) and an increase in the percentage working in construction. For noncitizen Latinos with bachelor's degrees, a similar downward pattern occurred, with a decrease (5%) in the percentage of this group working in the top category of managerial, professional, and specialty occupations and an increase in service-sector occupations. During this period, U.S.-born Latinos in the Southeast displayed an upward pattern, with an increase of 6% in the managerial, professional, and specialty occupational sector among individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 2A and B provides a more detailed portrait of the occupational distribution of Latinos by degree status in 2007. We pay particular attention to the occupational sectors likely to require a postsecondary degree, the managerial, professional, and specialty (managerial) sector and the technical, sales, and administrative support (technical) sector. Dramatic gaps exist between the percentage of Latinos in the managerial sector and the technical sector among Latinos with the same level of self-reported educational attainment—in this case, completion of a postsecondary degree—but with differing citizenship status. That is, a 30 percentage point gap exists between noncitizen Latinos and U.S.-born citizen Latinos who have a bachelor's degree (29% versus 59%) or a bachelor's degree or higher (35% versus 64%) who work in the managerial sector in the Southwest (Table 2A). A similar gap exists in the Southeast among these two groups, although the difference in distribution in this top sector (bachelor's, bachelor's degree or higher) ranges from 21% to 24%. Among Latinos with an associate's degree, there is less of a difference in the distribution by occupational sector in the Southwest than the Southeast by citizenship status. Figure 1A and B provides a visual distribution of Latinos by citizenship across these occupational sectors.

Table 2. Occupational Distribution of Latinos by Degree Status in 2007

	AA Degree		BA Degree		BA Degree or Higher	
	Noncitizen	U.S.-Born	Noncitizen	U.S.-Born	Noncitizen	U.S.-Born
A. Southwest—California and Texas, 2007						
Managerial, professional and specialty	0.1773	0.2956	0.2963	0.5910	0.3558	0.6403
Technical, sales, and administrative support	0.2624	0.3805	0.1909	0.2645	0.1887	0.2289
Service	0.1844	0.1192	0.1522	0.0701	0.1325	0.0644
Farming, forestry, and fishing	0.0165	0.0060	0.0164	0.0048	0.0139	0.0036
Precision production, craft, and repair	0.0426	0.0337	0.0129	0.0066	0.0113	0.0063
Construction	0.0591	0.0458	0.0913	0.0158	0.0727	0.0132
Operators, fabricators and laborers	0.1206	0.0602	0.1077	0.0139	0.0935	0.0121
Military	0.0000	0.0102	0.0012	0.0073	0.0009	0.0066
Experienced unemployed/not classified	0.0047	0.0030	0.0012	0.0004	0.0043	0.0006
Unknown	0.1324	0.0439	0.1288	0.0249	0.1255	0.0234
Observations	423	1,661	854	2,726	1,155	3,631
B. Southeast—Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, 2007						
Managerial, professional and specialty	0.1853	0.2542	0.2983	0.5105	0.3662	0.6096
Technical, Sales, and administrative support	0.2308	0.4396	0.2414	0.3255	0.2354	0.2529
Service	0.1888	0.1313	0.1310	0.0630	0.1165	0.0532
Farming, forestry, and fishing	0.0280	0.0063	0.0241	0.0079	0.0202	0.0053
Precision production, craft, and repair	0.0245	0.0271	0.0190	0.0131	0.0190	0.0089
Construction	0.0944	0.0500	0.0776	0.0144	0.0618	0.0106
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	0.1224	0.0250	0.0948	0.0184	0.0797	0.0160
Military	0.0000	0.0250	0.0000	0.0184	0.0000	0.0142
Experienced unemployed/not classified	0.0000	0.0042	0.0052	0.0026	0.0059	0.0018
Unknown	0.1259	0.0333	0.1069	0.0262	0.0939	0.0275
Observations	286	480	580	762	841	1,127

Source: Authors' calculations, American Community Survey, U.S. Census, 2007.

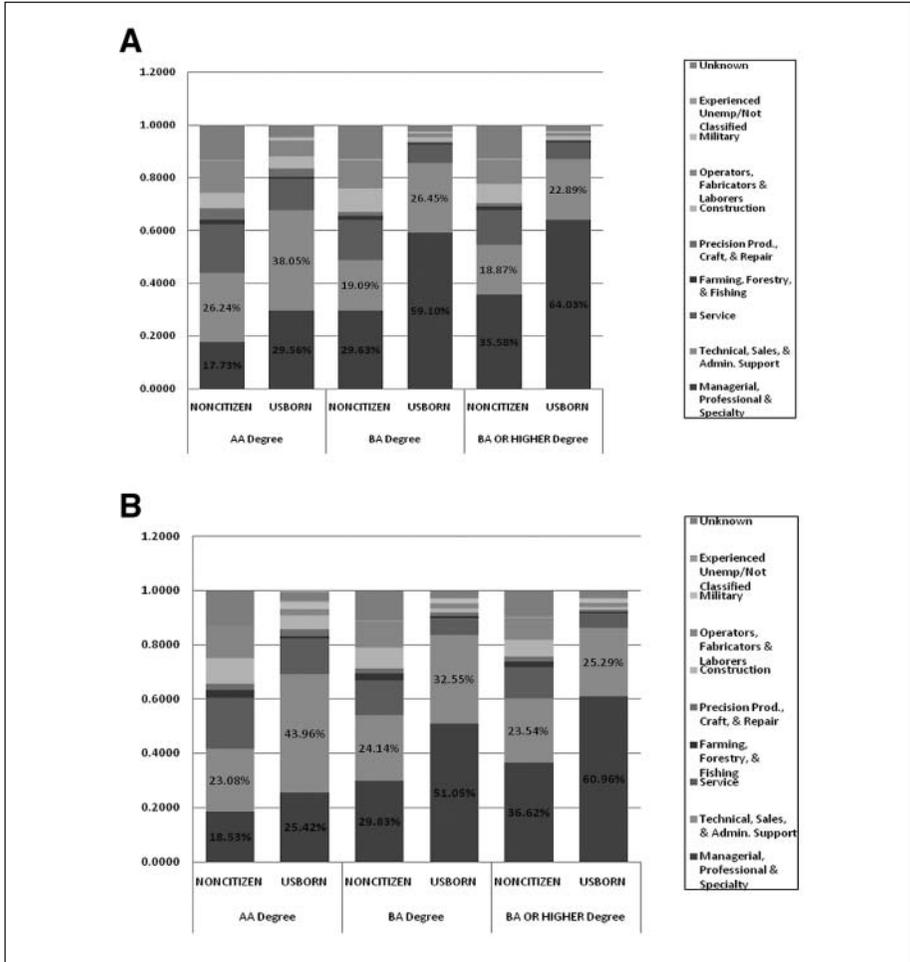


Figure I. (A) Distribution of occupational industries for Latinos by citizenship status in the Southwest (California and Texas), 2007. (B) Distribution of occupational industries for Latinos by citizenship status in the Southeast (Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia), 2007
 Source: Authors' calculations, American Community Survey, U.S. Census, 2007.

Occupational Prestige Rankings of Degreed Latinos by Citizenship Status

The socioeconomic profile of the Latino immigrant in the United States has been largely informed by research on wages, employment status, legal developments, and educational attainment across generations (Amuedo-Dorante, Bansak, & Raphael, 2007; Borjas & Katz, 2007; Card, 2001; Card & Lewis, 2007). The social status of occupations, in particular by race and ethnicity, has received less attention, with the exception of a few recent studies (Toussaint-Comeau, 2006) noted above. Our third

Table 3. Occupational Prestige Ranking by Citizenship, Ethnicity, and Degree Status, 2001 and 2007

	Non-Latinos		Noncitizen Latinos		U.S.-Born Latino	
	2001	2007	2001	2007	2001	2007
A. Southwest (California and Texas)						
AA degree	441.5 <i>176.111</i>	438.86 <i>179.43</i>	335.26 <i>167.735</i>	343.87 <i>178.185</i>	437.11 <i>166.628</i>	439.393 <i>161.9612</i>
BA degree	508.65 <i>172.632</i>	500.21 <i>177.17</i>	391.78 <i>196.995</i>	371.56 <i>198.193</i>	526.99 <i>147.192</i>	518.618 <i>152.1613</i>
BA or higher	531.03 <i>176.438</i>	528.23 <i>182.11</i>	406.74 <i>213.268</i>	397.98 <i>214.061</i>	539.33 <i>154.148</i>	535.282 <i>154.6645</i>
B. Southeast (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina)						
AA degree	449.03 <i>166.851</i>	446.46 <i>169.52</i>	370.84 <i>180.595</i>	358.21 <i>184.898</i>	422.32 <i>170.835</i>	436.475 <i>164.6154</i>
BA degree	502.57 <i>169.275</i>	498.45 <i>171.97</i>	423.69 <i>197.773</i>	393.32 <i>193.486</i>	479.2 <i>176.567</i>	494.395 <i>164.6991</i>
BA or higher	523.87 <i>175.098</i>	524.61 <i>175.94</i>	441.87 <i>200.864</i>	422.24 <i>201.234</i>	502.28 <i>185.731</i>	524.951 <i>171.7571</i>

Source: Authors' calculations, Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples, American Community Survey, 2001, 2007.

NOTE: Standard errors in italics.

analysis explores the prestige ratings of the occupational categories reported by respondents in our sample, according to citizenship status. We compare the prestige rankings of Latinos with those of non-Latinos, and over time (2001-2007), to assess whether changes in ratings appear to be for one group of respondents or are general trends affecting all individuals in the multiple region samples. We compare these ratings according to educational attainment (degree status) to ensure comparability in the educational characteristics. For example, we only compare the prestige ratings of individuals with a bachelor's degree with each other and not with others with different levels of educational attainment.

Table 3A presents the average prestige ratings of individuals by postsecondary degree in the Southwest. The general trend for almost all sectors and individuals in the sample indicates that the average prestige rating of an individual's occupation decreased from 2001 to 2007. The only exception is for Latinos, both noncitizen and U.S. born, who have an associate's degree. According to these data, two other key trends persist in the Southwest. First, the gap in prestige ranking among Latinos with the same level of educational attainment (bachelor's degree) but differing citizenship status is notably large. Noncitizen Latinos' ranking of their occupational prestige is 371 out of 900, whereas U.S.-born Latinos' prestige ranking is 518. Second, U.S.-born Latinos also

appear to have a prestige ranking advantage over non-Latinos in all the postsecondary degree categories presented, with the largest advantage among those with a bachelor's degree. The data suggest that the payoff for a bachelor's degree in terms of occupational status is considerably higher for U.S.-born Latinos than for noncitizen Latinos.

Table 3B presents similar results regarding the average occupational prestige ranking for the sample of southeastern states. Similar to trends exhibited in the Southwest, the data indicate a general drop between 2000 and 2007 in the average prestige ranking among all groups, except for U.S.-born Latinos. Of the groups examined, U.S.-born Latinos were the only group to experience an increase in average prestige ranking. However, some differences remain in regard to respondents in the Southwest. Although U.S.-born Latinos and noncitizen Latinos with equal educational attainment still exhibit differences in prestige ranking of at least 100 percentage points (393 vs. 494 for those with a bachelor's degree and 422 vs. 524 for those with a bachelor's degree or higher), the gap between Latinos by citizenship status is smaller in the Southeast than the Southwest (approximately 100 points vs. 142 points).

Discussion

Latinos of all citizenship status have some of the lowest college completion rates in the United States (Kurlaender & Flores, 2005). Yet this exploratory analysis of degreed Latinos in the United States has yielded a number of findings on which to build future research that examines the role citizenship plays in the occupational outcomes of this distinct group of individuals. For U.S.-born Latinos who have a bachelor's degree, the return on this investment, at least in the form of prestige of occupational sector and rating, appears to be quite positive. The return on a BA degree for those Latinos born in the United States, however, may differ by state context and availability of labor market opportunities, an issue worth further exploration. One question to address is whether highly educated U.S.-born Latinos have higher occupational prestige in areas where they make up a considerably smaller demographic than other race and ethnic groups or in areas where they have less competition from immigrant groups of other origins. Another area of inquiry is whether and to what extent the level of "disadvantage" of foreign-born human capital accumulation, degrees, and work experience gained in Latin America versus the United States matters for the educational attainment odds of the children of immigrants born in the United States. Finally, unresolved in relation to highly skilled and/or highly educated Latino immigrants is the question of whether recent cohorts are indeed more skilled than those who entered the United States in the 1980s and 1990s (Borjas & Katz, 2007) or whether the shift in wage returns relative to occupational outcomes is influenced primarily by dispersion into state labor markets not historically part of the Latino immigrant story (Card & Lewis, 2007).

Demographics affect policy making and the cultures in which policy making takes place. The presence of a more diverse population likely creates a different policy environment. California, the largest state by population and one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the country, has often been a policy innovator. California's policies may influence those of other states, just as the approach in Texas to

undocumented students likely affected policy makers around the Southwest in recent years. Now, as Hispanics represent an increasing share of population in the Southeast, Texas- and California-style policies are likely to inform policy and law in both anticipated and unanticipated ways in the Southeast. A continued examination of the role of citizenship in the labor market across state contexts, with particular attention given to race and ethnicity, remains worth pursuing, although not without keeping an eye on the state policies and legal environments that shape the socioeconomic futures of the communities involved.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Appendix

Occupational Category

Managerial and professional specialty occupations	Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations	Military occupations
Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations	Precision production, craft, and repair occupations	Experienced unemployed/not classified by occupation
Service occupations	Operators, fabricators, and laborers	

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples—USA, 2009.

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Notes

1. We use the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* interchangeably.
2. A person lives in a household that is linguistically isolated if no person in the household age 14 years or older speaks English “exclusively or very well.”

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