

## CHAPTER 10

# Latinos in the United States Labor Market

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### INTRODUCTION

Latinos constitute a large and growing share of the United States' labor force. Hence, they are—and will increasingly be—critical to the productivity of the U.S. economy. Yet, Latinos experience a number of significant labor market disadvantages, including high unemployment rates, low wages, overrepresentation in low-level occupations, and limited mobility.

Discussions of Latinos in the labor force are necessarily complicated by the diversity of the Latino population in terms of skill levels, ethnic origin, class background, immigration, and geographic concentrations. For example, the above-noted disadvantages vary for workers of different nativity, skill levels, and ethnic groups: Native-born workers do better than immigrants, those with more education fare better than those with less, and Cubans and South Americans are generally better off than Central Americans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans (and, these factors are interrelated). Although the Latino population is quite heterogeneous, most Latino workers are foreign-born, the preponderance of both natives and immigrants is poorly educated, and the vast majority hails from the less privileged ethnic groups. Thus, the aforementioned problems are widespread. In addition, undocumented workers (who make up a large share of recent immigrants) derive from the most disadvantaged groups and face employment restrictions imposed by the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which further exacerbate their labor market difficulties.

This chapter provides an overview of Latinos' position in the workforce. We profile Latino workers with up-to-date statistics on various aspects of incorporation, giving attention to critical dimensions of diversity among Latinos. Interspersed with the presentation of these data, we

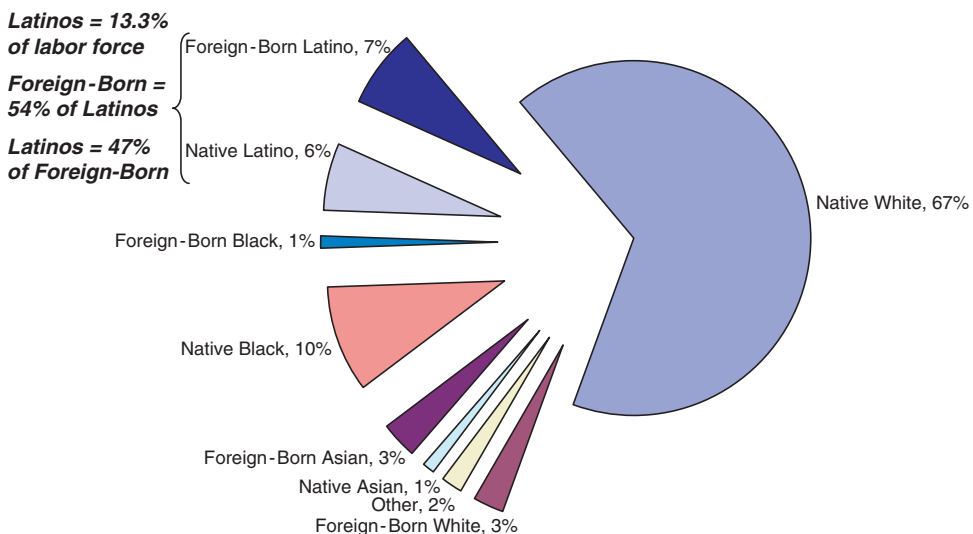
review recent literature on the research areas we identified as dominant in the current scholarship on Latino workers: labor force participation, unemployment, spatial and skills mismatch, occupations, ethnic economies, social networks, and immigrant complementarity versus competition.<sup>1</sup>

Studies of Latino workers have been guided by several theoretical frames that focus on the following: individual deficits in education, language, and labor force experience (human capital); discrimination; and structural factors (including spatial and skills mismatch resulting from industrial restructuring, employment in ethnic enclaves, occupational segregation, and social networks). We cannot adjudicate between these here, but, instead, review research that reflects the dominant, current discussions of Latino incorporation and disadvantage.

### LABOR FORCE SHARE

Latinos constitute a sizable share of the current U.S. workforce, and their numbers are expected to rise disproportionately in coming years. Figure 1 outlines the composition of the 2005 labor force in terms of race/ethnicity and nativity.<sup>2</sup> Latino workers, who number 19.8 million and comprise 13.3% of the workforce, have now passed Blacks as the largest minority racial/ethnic group.<sup>3</sup> Seven percent of all workers were foreign-born Latinos, and 6% were native-born Latinos. Foreign-born Latinos outnumbered their native-born counterparts by a small margin and made up 54% of the Latino workforce.<sup>4</sup> Note also that Latinos comprised almost half (47%) of foreign-born workers.<sup>5</sup>

In the coming years, the Latino presence is expected to expand substantially. According to Census Bureau projections, Latinos will account for almost half (45%) of population growth between 2000 and 2020 (author calculations, Table 1b, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). As the Latino population increases, so too will its share in the labor force. Latinos are projected to contribute disproportionately to workforce growth in upcoming decades (Fullerton & Toosi, 2001; Suro



Source: Table 1, "Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics in 2005," April 14, 2006. U.S. Department of Labor, BLS. a. White, Black, Asian, and Other are Non-Latino in this figure.

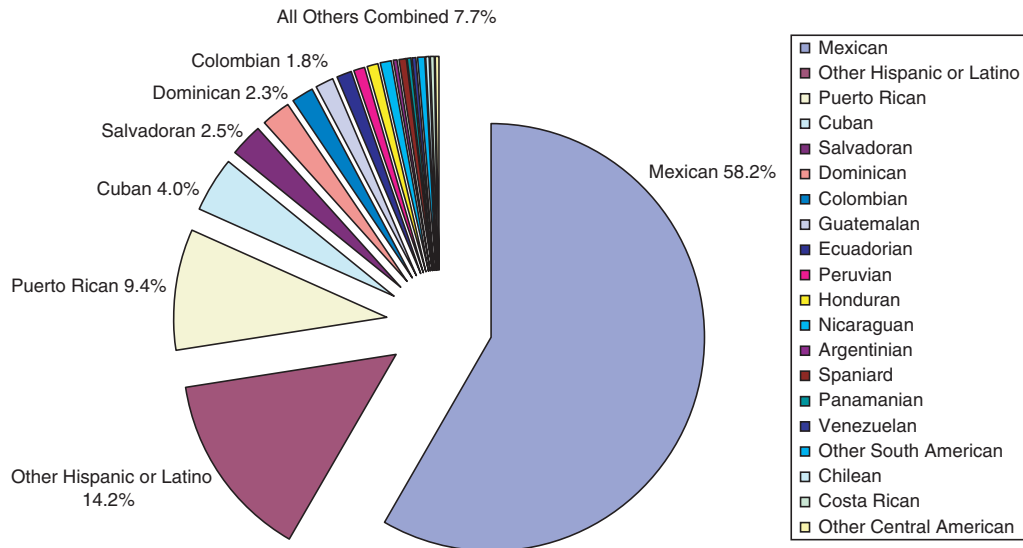
FIGURE 1. Labor Force by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, 2005.

& Passell, 2003). Whereas immigration is expected to account for a large fraction of the increase, more important will be the rising numbers of native-born Latinos, particularly second generation (Suro & Passell, 2003).

### ETHNIC MAKEUP OF THE LATINO WORKFORCE

The Latino workforce is heterogeneous with respect to ancestry. Figure 2 details the ethnic origins of Latino workers in 2000.<sup>6</sup> Those who self-identified as Mexican-origin made up the majority (58%), numbering 8.6 million. The next largest group was “other Hispanic,” at 14% (2.1 million); these workers identified as Latino but did not name the country of origin.<sup>7</sup> Puerto Ricans comprised 9% of Latino workers, followed by Cubans (4%), Salvadorans (2.5%), Dominicans (2.3%), and Colombians (1.8%). Other Central and Latin American countries combined account for 7.7% of Latino workers (and none of the remaining countries comprised more than 1.5%).

The different Latino ancestry groups have divergent histories, class backgrounds, skill sets, and modes of incorporation into the U.S. labor force. Those of Mexican origin are a heterogeneous group that includes individuals with long-term roots in the Southwest (predating the annexation of territory following the Mexican–American War), descendants of more recent generations of immigrants, and—the largest group—immigrants themselves. The Mexican-origin workforce was historically overrepresented in agriculture, but it is now a predominantly urban population, still regionally concentrated in the Southwest, but with growing populations in the Midwest, and, more recently, the South. Central Americans are disproportionately foreign-born and constitute the newest immigrant group. Immigrants from Mexico and Central America have low average educational levels, and a large share of recent arrivals is undocumented (Passell, 2005). Although Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, both island- and mainland-born are relatively disadvantaged



Source: Author calculations from 2000 Census Demographic Profile Highlights Fact Sheets, U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder. a. Census figures for "Hispanics/Latinos" include ancestry from Spain and exclude non-Spanish speaking Latin American countries.

FIGURE 2. Ethnic Breakdown of Latino Labor Force<sup>a</sup>, 2000.

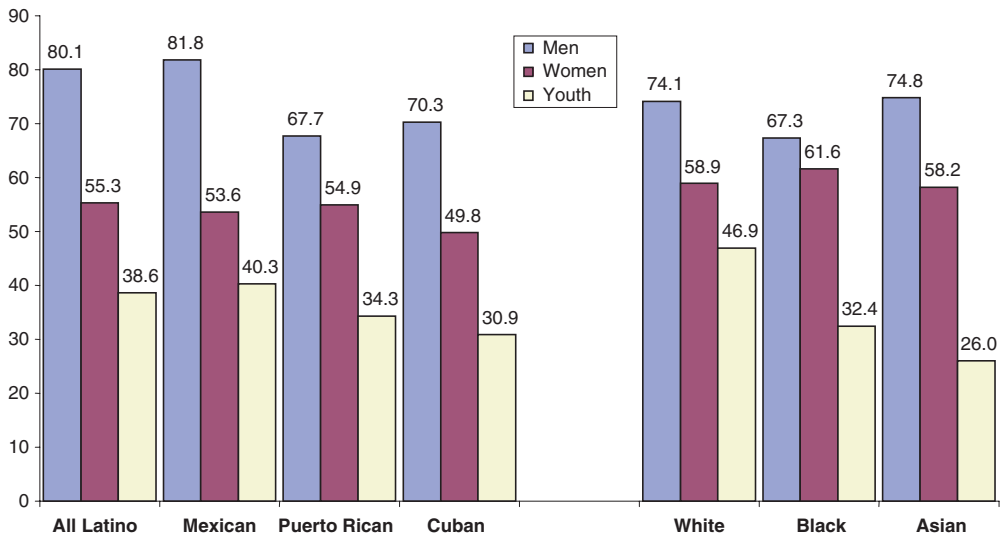
in terms of socioeconomic background and have low average educational attainment. They are concentrated in the urban Northeast and were historically overrepresented in less-skilled manufacturing. The presence of Cubans in the United States traces primarily to the postrevolution migration of middle- and upper-class Cubans to Miami, where they established and continue to maintain a strong ethnic enclave. Whereas more recent immigrants are from less advantaged backgrounds, Cubans remain the most privileged of the large Latino groups.<sup>8</sup>

### LATINO LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND PART-TIME WORK

What share of Latinos is in the workforce and how does Latino labor force participation (LFP) compare with that of other groups? Figure 3 provides 2005 LFP rates by sex and for youth (ages 16–19) for Latinos overall, the three largest Latino ethnic groups, and for Whites, Blacks, and Asians.

Eighty percent of Latino men were in the labor force, and Latino men are more likely to work than any other group. The opposite is true for Latina women, whose LFP rate of 55% is below rates for White, Black, and Asian women. Among Latino groups, Mexican men have considerably higher LFP rates than Puerto Ricans or Cubans (82% vs. 68% and 70%, respectively).

Research on Latino LFP has focused largely on participation and—to a lesser degree—work effort (hours and weeks worked) for *women*. Like the general literature on women's LFP, studies of Latinas have investigated the influences of human capital (sometimes via expected wage), family context (children, marital status, coresident adults, other family income), and local labor market demand for female labor. Research generally suggests that (1) Latina women's relatively low LFP rates are related to low human capital, large families, and high marriage rates and (2) ethnic differences in LFP among Latinas persist even when comparing otherwise similar women



Source: Author calculations from Tables 5 and 6, *Employment and Earnings*, January 2006. U. S. Department of Labor BLS.

a. Whites, Blacks, and Asians include Latinos in this figure.

b. Youth are ages 16-19.

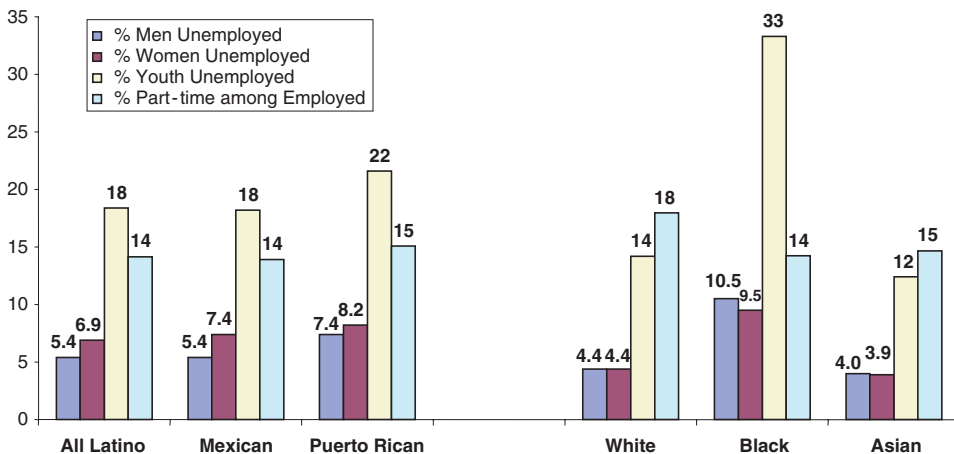
FIGURE 3. Percent in Labor Force by Latino Ethnicity, Race,<sup>a</sup> Sex, and Age,<sup>b</sup> 2005.

(e.g., Kahn & Whittington, 1996). Qualitative research has helped explicate work decisions, highlighting the salience of women’s contributions to the household budget and cultural norms regarding work (e.g., husband’s influence, family work history) (Segura, 1991).

Studies have illuminated influences on work behavior for particular groups of Latinas (e.g., Greenlees & Saenz, 1999, on Mexican immigrant wives) or identified differences relative to Blacks or Whites. For example, Latina women’s LFP is less strongly related to education than is true for Blacks or Whites (Kahn & Whittington, 1996); coresident adults facilitate work effort (hours and weeks) for single mothers among Puerto Ricans and Blacks, but not Whites (Figuroa & Meléndez, 1993); local labor market conditions might have differential effects on Puerto Ricans (Figuroa & Meléndez, 1992) or on Latinas in general (Kahn & Whittington, 1996) than on Blacks or Whites.

How do Latinos fare in terms of unemployment, and what share works part-time? Individuals are classified as unemployed if they were actively seeking work in the 4 weeks prior to the survey. Part-time refers to employment less than 35 hours per week, both voluntary and involuntary. Figure 4 provides unemployment rates overall and for youth, along with part-time rates.

Figure 4 shows Latino unemployment rates lower than those of Blacks and higher than those of Whites and Asians. (Unemployment rates for Latinos overall and for Mexicans are 5% of men and 7% of women; for Puerto Ricans, 7% of men and 8% of women; versus 11% of men and 10% of women for Blacks; and 4% of both men and women for Whites and Asians.<sup>9</sup>) Some research shows that unemployment spells are longer for Latinos and Blacks than for Whites (Hsueh & Tienda, 1996), whereas other work suggests unemployment duration comparable to that of Whites (Thomas-Breitfeld, 2003). (Note that unemployment for Latina women is higher than for Latino men, in contrast to the patterns for other groups.) Youth unemployment rates are far higher but follow the same pattern: 18% for Latinos (22% for Puerto Ricans), in between Blacks (33%) and Whites and Asians (14% and 12%, respectively). Further, data not shown here demonstrate that native Latinos have higher unemployment rates than immigrants (7.2% vs. 5.0%, from Table 1, U.S. Department of Labor BLS, 2006a), and less educated workers have higher unemployment rates than the more educated (Table 7, U.S. Department of Labor BLS, 2006b).



Source: Author calculations from Tables 5 and 6, *Employment and Earnings*, January 2006. U. S. Department of Labor BLS.

a. Youth are ages 16-19.

b. Whites, Blacks, and Asians include Latinos in this figure.

**FIGURE 4. Unemployment by Sex, Youth Unemployment,<sup>a</sup> and Part-Time Employment by Latino Ethnicity and Race,<sup>b</sup> 2005.**

Part-time employment is slightly less common for Latinos than for Whites, but it is comparable to levels for Blacks and Asians. These data are not broken out by gender, but a larger share of the White labor force is female than is true for Latinos (47% of White workers and 39% of Latinos<sup>10</sup>). We can infer that part-time employment is more likely to be voluntary for Whites than for Latinos, both because of the gender composition of the workforce and the lower likelihood of discrimination and resulting underemployment for Whites than for minorities in general. Consistent with this inference, De Anda (2005) demonstrated a higher incidence of involuntary part-time employment for Mexican-origin than White women (De Anda, 2005) and men (De Anda, 1998).

A small set of studies has investigated work instability for both women and men. Even when comparing individuals similar in other respects (e.g., education, age), (1) instability is worse for Latinos and Blacks than for Whites (Hsueh & Tienda, 1996) and (2) employment hardship (defined as joblessness, involuntary part-time work, and working poverty) is worse for Mexican-origin women than for Whites (De Anda, 2005).

Latino unemployment and underemployment, particularly for youth, are likely to become more problematic in the future, given the low education levels of both native and immigrant Latinos (discussed later) and the expected increase in the share of the labor force comprised of U.S.-born Latinos (Suro & Passell, 2003). This is an area that merits further research. Additionally, we will need more research on LFP and underemployment of Latina women, as the secular increase in women's LFP and the decline in men's real wages continue. Moreover, studies of employment for poor Latina heads of household will be critical in the context of the time limits and mandatory work requirements imposed by the 1996 welfare reform.

Latinos' relatively low levels of education and experience contribute to higher unemployment rates. Other factors are hiring discrimination against Latino workers (e.g., Kenney & Wiskoker, 1994) and the negative effect of economic restructuring and the decline in manufacturing employment on Latinos (e.g., Morales, 2000; Toussaint-Comeau, Smith, & Comeau, 2005; Ortiz, 1991). With respect to the impact of economic restructuring, it is possible that labor market mismatches contribute to Latinos' disadvantage, and we now turn to research on this question.

## SKILLS AND SPATIAL MISMATCH

Are Latino unemployment and underemployment due to skills or spatial mismatch? Skills mismatch is posited when workers' skills do not match those sought by employers. Spatial mismatch occurs when workers are geographically ill-matched to local job opportunities, because of the joint processes of residential segregation and job decentralization. The arguments are essentially that jobs requiring low skills have moved out of inner-city areas where less-skilled minorities concentrate. Limited research has examined the spatial and skills mismatch hypothesis for Latino workers, and existing studies show mixed results. McLafferty and Preston (1996) found no spatial mismatch when examining commuting times of Latina women in New York. Aponte's (1996) analysis of skills and spatial mismatch among Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrant men in Chicago showed mismatch effects for Puerto Ricans but not Mexicans: Mexican men had consistently high levels of employment, even with little education (skills) and access to transportation (spatial). Pastor and Marcelli (2000) found spatial mismatch effects for native and established immigrant Latinos but not for new immigrants. Additionally, Stoll (1998) showed that job decentralization negatively affected young Latino men's rates of unemployment. Analyses of Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Atlanta support the existence of spatial mismatch

for Blacks and Latinos combined, especially high school dropouts (Holzer & Danziger, 2001; also see Stoll, Holzer, & Ihlanfeldt, 2000). Thus, the jury is still out on the degree to which Latinos suffer from spatial or skills mismatch. Further research is needed and should attend to ethnic, nativity, gender, age, and regional differences. As the composition of the Latino labor force shifts toward native Latinos, the mismatch explanations might become more salient.

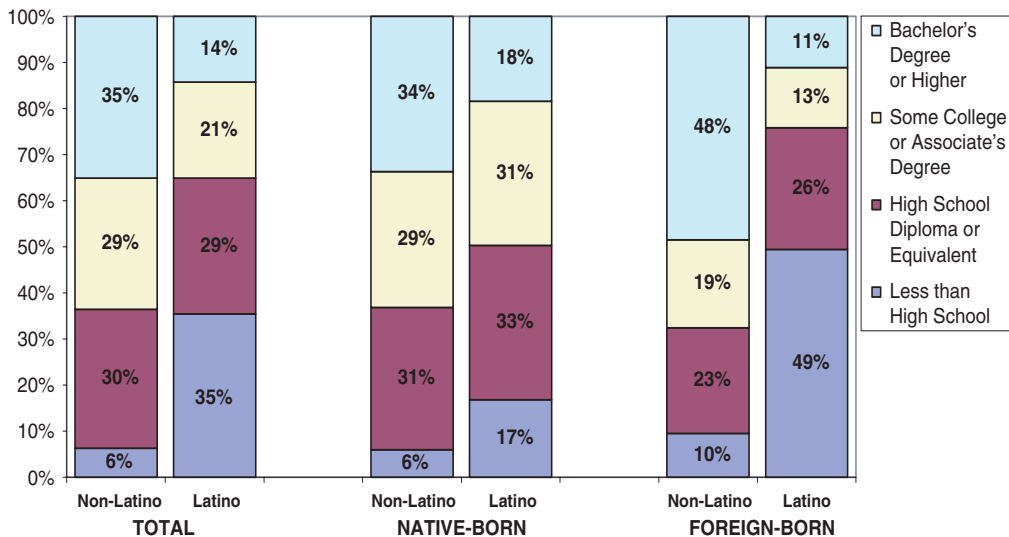
### LATINO EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Latino workers exhibit educational attainment levels substantially lower than those for the labor force as a whole. Figure 5 provides information on the educational composition of the Latino labor force, by nativity, relative to the non-Latino workforce.

The Latino educational distribution is distinctly bottom heavy. For the total workforce (immigrant and native combined), more than one in three Latino workers (35%) had not completed high school in 2005; the comparable figure for non-Latinos was only 6%. At the higher degree end of the educational spectrum (bachelor's and higher), Latinos also show a pronounced deficit: Only 14% of Latino workers held higher degrees (bachelor's or higher) versus 35% of the non-Latino workforce.

The educational disadvantage for native-born Latinos is less pronounced than for immigrants, but it is still striking. Native Latinos are almost three times as likely as non-Latinos to have less than a high school education (17% vs. 6%), and they are far less likely to obtain higher degrees: 18% of Latinos versus 34% of non-Latinos completed a bachelor's degree or above.

Immigrant Latinos show extreme educational disparities: Almost half (49%) of Latino immigrants completed less than 12 years of education and only 11% achieved Bachelor's or higher degrees. This represents a distinct disadvantage relative to native-born Latinos. However,



Source: Author calculations from Tables 1 and 3, "Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics in 2005." April 14, 2006. U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, and Table 7, Employment and Earnings, January 2006. U.S. Department of Labor, BLS.

FIGURE 5. Educational Attainment of Labor Force (Ages 25+), Non-Latino and Latino by Nativity, 2005.

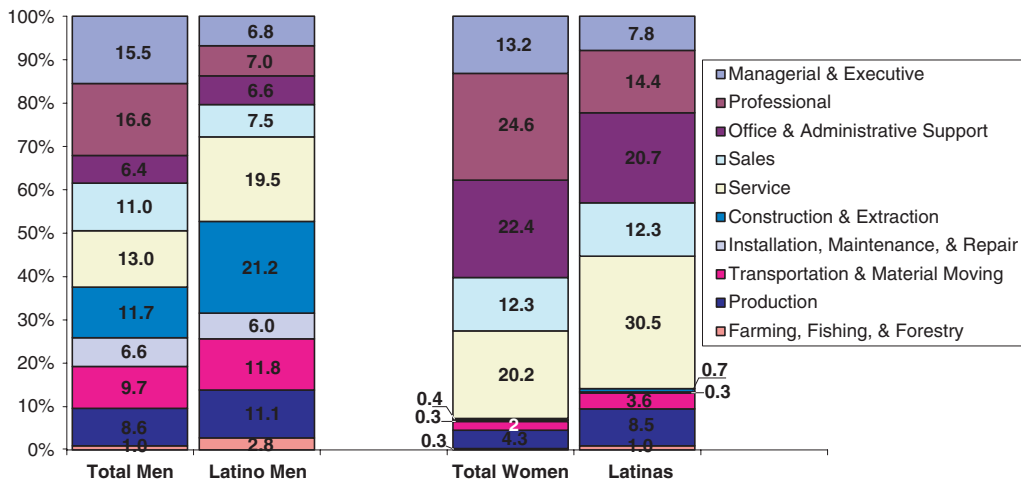
the divergence is even more pronounced when immigrant Latinos are compared with their non-Latino counterparts. The above figures are inverted: 10% had less than high school and almost half (48%) obtained bachelor's or higher degrees. Thus, whereas Latino immigrants are relatively poorly educated, other immigrants are generally well educated, not just relative to Latinos but also to native-born non-Latinos.

In the economy as a whole, less-educated workers face declining prospects relative to the better educated (e.g., Blackburn, Bloom, & Freeman, 1990; Juhn, Murphy, & Brooks, 1993). Related to these declines are secular decreases in (better paid) manufacturing occupations and increases in (lower paid) service employment.<sup>11</sup> These shifts are particularly important for Latinos, who generally fall at the low end of the educational distribution. The following section provides detail on occupational prospects for Latino workers.

### LATINOS' OCCUPATIONS, SEGREGATION, AND MOBILITY

Given their relatively low average educational attainment, it is not surprising that Latinos are concentrated in occupations where educational requirements are also low. Figure 6 bears this out, showing the share of Latinos versus the total workforce, by sex, in each of 10 major occupation groups (MOGs). The MOG categories are not ordered by skill, but they do divide white and blue-collar occupations, as well as the pink collar (female-dominated) MOG of office and administrative support (clerical). These divisions roughly correspond to formal schooling requirements. However, the bars are not stacked in terms of earnings. For example, pay is sometimes higher in construction than in clerical, sales, and some professional occupations.

Very small shares of Latinos are in managerial and executive occupations (6.8% of Latinos, 7.8% of Latina women) relative to the total workforce (15.5% of men, 13.2% of women). Similarly, professional occupations employ a relatively small share of Latino men (7.0% vs. 16.6% of total male workforce) and women (14.4% vs. 24.6% of total female workforce). Note that women in professional occupations are heavily concentrated in a limited set of female-dominated



Source: Table 10, Employment and Earnings, January 2006. U.S. Department of Labor, BLS

FIGURE 6. Major Occupation Group by Sex, Total Labor Force and Latinos, 2005.



“semiprofessions” in education, health care, and social services; women, in general, and Latinas, in particular, are underrepresented in the better paying and more prestigious professional occupations (Table 11, U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, 2006a).

At the other extreme of the distribution, much larger shares of Latino men and women are service workers than is true overall (19.5% of Latino men vs. 13.0% of all men; 30.5% of Latinas vs. 20.2% of all women). Similarly, although production (manufacturing) employs a small share of all workers (8.6% of men, 4.3% of women), this MOG accounts for a relatively larger share of Latinos (11.1% men, 8.5% women). Given their concentrations in service and manufacturing, Latinos have been especially vulnerable to structural economic changes in recent years (e.g., Toussaint-Comeau et al., 2005).

The MOG data also reflect substantial gender segregation. The most common MOG for Latino men is construction/extraction (21.2% of Latino men; 11.7% of men overall). Latinas, by contrast, are most commonly in service (30.5%, as noted earlier), and—like other women—are well represented in clerical (20.7% vs. 22.4% of all women).

We now turn to the distribution of workers in *detailed* occupational categories. (The Census breaks out about 500 detailed categories; e.g., lawyers, elementary school teachers, cashiers, drywallers). Latinos have become hypersegregated in particular occupations. Table 1 lists occupations with pronounced overrepresentations of Latinos.

Latinos represented 13.1% of the total employed labor force in 2005, yet comprised more than 20% of workers in each of the occupations in Table 1. In several construction, manufacturing, and service occupations, Latinos constituted a vastly disproportionate share of workers. For example, Latinos were 54% of cement masons, 47% of drywallers, 42% of hand packagers, 35% of maids, 29% of cooks, and 21% of electrical/electronics assemblers. Further, in geographic areas where Latinos concentrate, the composition of local occupations is even more skewed than these national data suggest.

Latinos are highly segregated from other ethnic groups, and—for women and men—segregation is more pronounced for Central Americans, Mexicans, and Dominicans than for Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and South Americans (Cotter, Hermsen, & Vanneman, 2004). Segregation has been rising for Latinos overall and Latino immigrants nationally (Kochhar, 2005), Mexican immigrants (Ortiz, 1996), and newcomer Latinos in Los Angeles’ *brown-collar* occupations (fields with an overrepresentation of immigrant Latinos) (Catanzarite, 2000). Segregation apparently contributes to Latinos’ wage disadvantage above and beyond the impact of English proficiency and schooling (Catanzarite, 2000; Catanzarite & Aguilera, 2002). Longitudinal analyses demonstrate both that newcomer Latinos are hired into already low-paid occupations (i.e., they find employment in less desirable occupations) and, importantly, wages *erode* over time—for both immigrants and natives—in precisely the occupations where newcomer Latinos concentrate (i.e., the occupations worsen after new immigrants enter) (Catanzarite, 2002). Pay dynamics underscore the vulnerability of brown-collar occupations. Segregation and its attendant wage pressures constitute important structural barriers to Latino advancement.

Although most research on immigrant assimilation focuses on earnings, several recent studies attend to the question of occupational mobility. Myers and Cranford (1998) find limited opportunities for immigrant Latinas to move out of low-level occupations, and better possibilities for native Latinas. Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark’s research on undocumented Latinas (2000) and Latino men (1996, 2000) demonstrates considerable occupational movement, but it is characterized not by mobility into better occupations but by occupational “churning” in and out of a small set of migrant-heavy occupations; their research on men legalized under IRCA indicates that legalization does significantly improve access to better occupations

**TABLE 1. Occupations with Overrepresentations<sup>a</sup> of Latinos, 2005**

| Occupation   | % Latino        |
|--|-----------------|
| Cement masons, concrete finishers, and terrazzo workers                        | 54              |
| Drywall installers, ceiling tile installers, and tapers                        | 47              |
| Roofers  | 42              |
| Butchers and other meat, poultry, and fish processing workers                  | 42              |
| Packers and packagers, hand  | 42 <sup>b</sup> |
| Construction laborers  | 41              |
| Graders and sorters, agricultural products                                     | 41 <sup>b</sup> |
| Carpet, floor, and tile installers and finishers                               | 40              |
| Helpers, construction trades   | 39              |
| Helpers—production workers   | 38              |
| Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders                            | 38 <sup>c</sup> |
| Grounds maintenance workers  | 37              |
| Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials                              | 36 <sup>b</sup> |
| Dishwashers  | 35              |
| Maids and housekeeping cleaners  | 35 <sup>b</sup> |
| Painters, construction and maintenance   | 35              |
| Brickmasons, blockmasons, and stonemasons                                      | 34              |
| Sewing machine operators   | 34 <sup>b</sup> |
| Cleaners of vehicles and equipment   | 34              |
| Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers                     | 30 <sup>c</sup> |
| Laundry and dry-cleaning workers   | 29 <sup>b</sup> |
| Cooks  | 29 <sup>c</sup> |
| Cutting workers  | 29              |
| Pest control workers   | 28              |
| Janitors and building cleaners   | 27 <sup>c</sup> |
| Upholsterers   | 27              |
| Miscellaneous media and communication workers                                  | 27 <sup>c</sup> |
| Parking lot attendants   | 26              |
| Painting workers   | 26              |
| Bakers   | 25 <sup>c</sup> |
| Food preparation workers   | 24 <sup>b</sup> |
| Carpenters   | 24              |
| Tailors, dressmakers, and sewers   | 24 <sup>b</sup> |
| Crushing, grinding, polishing, mixing, and blending workers                    | 24              |
| Industrial truck and tractor operators   | 24              |
| Baggage porters, bellhops, and concierges                                      | 22              |
| Food batchmakers   | 22 <sup>c</sup> |
| Electrical, electronics, and electromechanical assemblers                      | 21 <sup>b</sup> |
| Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks  | 21 <sup>c</sup> |
| Molders and molding machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic | 20              |
| First-line supervisors/managers of housekeeping and janitorial workers         | 20 <sup>c</sup> |
| Welding, soldering, and brazing workers  | 20              |
| Total Employed, 16 years and over  | 13.1            |

<sup>a</sup>Overrepresentation is defined as 1.5 times the labor force share.

<sup>b</sup>Occupation is heavily female (over 60%).

<sup>c</sup>Occupation is gender integrated (30–60% female).

Source: Table 11, U.S. Department of Labor BLS (2006a).

(2000). Findings have been mixed on the degree to which English proficiency, education, and labor force experience promote access to better occupations (Kochhar, 2005; Kossoudji & Cobb-Clark, 1996, 2000, 2002).

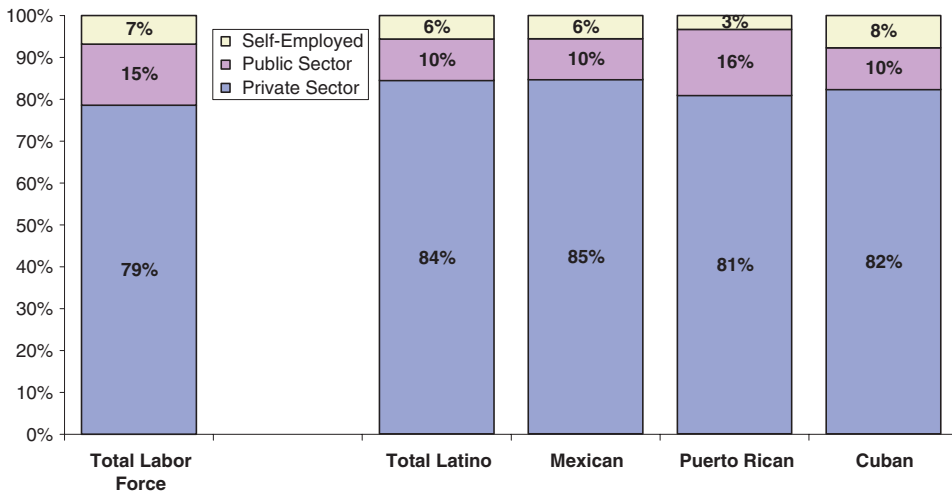
A number of studies have investigated immigrant Latinos' experiences in particular low-skill occupations. Two prime examples are day laborers and domestic servants.<sup>12</sup> Valenzuela (e.g., Valenzuela, Kawachi, & Marr, 2002; Valenzuela, 2003) has developed a body of work on day laborers who seek temporary work at street-side hiring sites. Immigrant Latino men are the primary labor force for this burgeoning employment form in U.S. cities. Work is generally heavy manual labor in construction and landscaping. Valenzuela's work documents the extent of day labor, the hiring process, working conditions, and problems for workers. Domestic service has become a stronghold of immigrant Latinas in the current period. Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2001) and Romero's (2002) studies explore employment relations and working conditions, providing nuanced understandings of the operation of class, race/ethnicity, and gender in private household cleaning and childcare jobs.

Clearly, occupations are critical to wage attainment and worker mobility. Further research on occupational locations, segregation, and mobility opportunities for both native and immigrant Latinos will aid in understanding the relative importance of structural versus individual factors that contribute to Latino disadvantage.

### LATINOS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR, AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

How do Latinos fare in terms of public and private sector employment and self-employment? Figure 7 provides data for the total workforce, all Latinos, and the three largest Latino groups.

Latinos are more prevalent in the private sector than is true for the workforce as a whole (84% vs. 79% of workers), with Mexicans most likely to be in the private sector, followed by



Source: Author Calculations from Tables 13 and 15, *Employment and Earnings January 2006*, U.S. Department of Labor BLS.  
 a. Nonagricultural Paid Labor Force

FIGURE 7. Private, Public, and Self-Employment,<sup>a</sup> Total Labor Force, Latinos, and Largest Latino Groups, 2005.

Cubans, then Puerto Ricans. On the flip side, self-employment is less common for Latinos as a whole (6%) than for the overall workforce (7%), with the important exception of Cubans, whose self-employment rate is relatively high, at 8%. The broad figures provided here indicate that ethnic economies and entrepreneurship are likely to be more important sources of employment for Cubans than for other Latinos (see Valdez's chapter in this volume). We discuss the issue of ethnic economies in the next section.

Public sector employment is currently less common for Latinos (10%) than for the total labor force (15%). However, Puerto Ricans constitute an important exception, with 16% in government employment. Published data on native-born Latinos separated from immigrants are not available, and there is little scholarship on public sector employment for Latinos (but see McClain, 1993; Sisneros, 1993). However, we suspect that the government is a significant employer for native Latinos and will increase in importance as the Latino population grows and attains higher levels of education. The public sector has been an important source of opportunity and mobility for Black workers in the past half-century, particularly for better educated Blacks, who have encountered less discrimination in the public than private sector (Carrington, McCue, & Pierce, 1996; Hout, 1984; Long, 1975; Pomer, 1986).<sup>13</sup> Public sector employment for Latinos warrants further research.

### **THE ETHNIC ECONOMY: BENEFICIAL FOR WORKERS?**

The ethnic economy refers to immigrant-owned businesses that employ coethnic workers, and ethnic enclaves are geographic areas with concentrations of such firms. Wilson and Portes (1980) argued that enclave employment is superior to the secondary labor market, where immigrants are otherwise likely to be confined, and that ethnic enclaves are comparable to the primary labor market in terms of career ladders and earnings returns to human capital. The ethnic economy purportedly facilitates immigrants' mobility, as entrepreneurs mentor employees, providing training and skills that can later be applied to workers' own entrepreneurial ventures (Bailey & Waldinger, 1991; Portes & Jensen, 1989).

Evidence has been mixed on the effect of the ethnic economy for immigrant workers. Research on Cubans in Miami supports the argument (Portes & Jensen, 1989). Bohon's (2000) research suggests that destination cities that already have a strong Latino enclave environment provide more successful labor market outcomes to Latino immigrants, particularly Cubans, Colombians, and other South Americans. However, this did not hold true in Los Angeles, which is home to the nation's largest Latino population.

A number of studies show no benefit of employment in the ethnic economy. Sanders and Nee (1987) demonstrated no pay advantage for Cuban and Chinese employees in the ethnic economy. Hum's (2000) analysis of Mexicans and Central Americans in Los Angeles employed in the ethnic economy suggested that workers were apt to experience labor market conditions similar to those of the secondary labor market (i.e., menial, poor paying jobs with limited fringe benefits and opportunities for skill acquisition).<sup>14</sup>

Research on Dominicans and Colombians in New York shows no advantage of the ethnic economy over the secondary sector for women (Gilbertson, 1995) or men (Gilbertson & Gurak, 1993). Based on analyses of multiple metropolitan areas and ethnic groups, Logan, Alba, and McNulty (1994) concluded that—with the exception of the Cuban economy in Miami, which is large and highly diversified—most minority entrepreneurship is concentrated in low-wage, poorly capitalized sectors.

The divergent findings by ethnicity raise doubts as to whether ethnic economies generally provide benefits to workers in terms of pay, working conditions, or entrepreneurship avenues, or if they constitute another exploitative ghetto for particular groups of immigrant workers. Future research should attend to differences by country of origin, time of arrival, gender, and local labor market conditions to further understanding of the impact of ethnic economies on immigrant labor market outcomes.

### **SOCIAL NETWORKS: EMBEDDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OR ENTRENCHED EXPLOITATION?**

Social scientists have long been interested in the effects of social networks on labor market experiences, beginning with Granovetter's (1973) pioneering work on the strength of weak ties. Research demonstrates that individuals who utilize network ties to secure employment reap benefits such as increased wages, longer job tenure (Simon & Warner, 1992), and mobility (Podolny & Baron, 1997).

Studies of Latinos (which overwhelmingly focus on immigrants) demonstrate that networks influence a number of outcomes. Social networks shorten the job search for Mexican immigrants (Aguilera & Massey, 2003) and increase Latino LFP (Aguilera, 2002); self-employment (Sanders & Nee, 1996), wages for Salvadoran immigrants (Greenwell, Valdez, & DaVanzo, 1997), Puerto Rican women (Aguilera, 2005), and Mexican immigrants (Aguilera & Massey, 2003); and job tenure for Mexican immigrants (Aguilera, 2003). Most of these outcomes appear positive.

Portes (1998) drew attention to negative aspects of social networks: ties that bind certain people together simultaneously exclude others. Social networks also constrain individual freedoms through conformity demands and can inhibit business efficiency (Portes & Landolt, 1996). Based on her study of Mexican and Central American janitors in Los Angeles, Cranford (2005) argued that network ties were exploitative for workers and facilitated employers' control during job restructuring.

This work suggests that use of networks by immigrant Latinos and their employers might exacerbate the isolation of these workers in job ghettos. Falcón and Meléndez (2001) showed that Latinos are more likely than any other racial/ethnic group to utilize social networks to find employment and are more likely than other groups to use strong ties (family and close friends; i.e., individuals who are socially similar). This might be a disadvantage because greater diversity of network members provides more unique job information (Granovetter, 1995). Latino networks could be providing redundant job information that serves to confine workers to less desirable jobs and thereby reproduces economic disadvantage (Portes & Landolt, 1996).

Further research should attend to potentially deleterious consequences of networks (e.g., the extent to which social networks might reinforce occupational segregation or provide greater benefits to employers than to workers). Other fruitful avenues include differences in outcomes when workers activate weak versus strong ties; and network usage and its consequences for *native* Latinos.

### **IMMIGRANT EFFECTS ON OTHER WORKERS?**

This chapter would be incomplete without a discussion of the potential impact of Latino immigrants on other workers. The question of whether newcomers compete with or complement other workers is complex, politically charged, and continues to lack a definitive answer. Most

studies examine aggregate differences in wages or unemployment between metropolitan areas with and without high immigration levels and provide mixed and limited evidence (e.g., Johnson, 1998; Kposowa, 1995; Reimers, 1998; Smith & Edmonston, 1997). In national analyses, Borjas (2003, 2004) found negative effects of immigration on wages for less-skilled workers.

One argument hones in on jobs and occupations and suggests that less-skilled immigrants (including Latinos) take the most undesirable jobs at the bottom rungs of the occupational ladder—jobs that native workers generally do not want (Catanzarite, 2000, Piore, 1979). To the degree that some native workers do want these jobs, immigrants might displace them. Competition can be indirect: Few native workers might apply for these positions, in part because employers signal their hiring intentions. Employer interviews reveal extensive use of referral hiring (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003) and strong preferences for immigrant Latinos in low-level jobs (Moss & Tilly, 2001; Waldinger & Lichter, 2003).

Research suggests that other workers' wages are suppressed when they do find employment in occupations where immigrants concentrate (Catanzarite, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2006; Howell & Mueller, 2000). Catanzarite's research shows that wages deteriorate over time for both immigrants and natives in brown-collar occupations (2002); pay penalties are substantial for incumbents, especially earlier-immigrant Latinos, followed by native Blacks and native Latinos (2003, 2006).<sup>15</sup> Latino workers are least segregated from new immigrant coethnics; thus, they are more likely to experience within-occupation wage effects than are other workers.

At the same time, immigrants might push some workers up the occupational hierarchy into better jobs (Piore, 1979; Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). Benefits are likely to accrue to better educated workers who can take advantage of new opportunities (e.g., in the public sector).

Further, it is important to recognize that, in the aggregate, immigration creates new jobs (Smith & Edmonston, 1997). Thus, immigrants are not competing with natives for a fixed set of opportunities. The consequences of immigration are nuanced. Immigrants are likely to act as complements in some occupations and as substitutes in others (e.g., Rosenfeld & Tienda, 1999). They appear to benefit the owners of capital but to disadvantage less-skilled workers (Borjas, 1999). Certainly, the vulnerable status of less-skilled immigrants, particularly the undocumented, contributes to their exploitability and exacerbates consequences for other workers. This suggests that increased worker protections are likely to benefit both immigrants and natives at the low end of the labor market.<sup>16</sup>

Much of the research in this area focuses on the impact of immigration on less-skilled workers, minorities, and, particularly, African Americans (e.g., Hamermesh & Bean, 1998; Shulman, 2004), many studies do not differentiate Latino immigrants from other immigrants, and most studies are concerned with consequences for native workers. We need further research on the extent to which newcomer Latinos provide benefits or constrain opportunities for other Latinos, including earlier cohorts of immigrants.

## CONCLUSION

In general, the disadvantaged labor market position of Latinos—both natives and immigrants—is the combined result of human capital deficits (e.g., low education, work experience), employer discrimination, and structural disadvantages (e.g., occupational segregation, spatial and skills mismatch, economic restructuring, and the accompanying expansion of dead-end, low-paid service jobs). We will continue to need studies that disentangle the relative influences of these factors. Because of the ongoing changes in Latino demographics, longitudinal research must give careful attention to the relative impacts of supply-side and demand-side influences. In general,

we will need research on the relative importance of education and English proficiency, immigration status, employer discrimination, local labor market structure, occupational dynamics, and social networks in determining labor market outcomes. Findings will be crucial to formulating a policy agenda that effectively addresses barriers for Latino workers.

Latinos make up a disproportionate share of the working poor, and research on these workers will be critical in the coming years. The welfare and immigration reforms of the late 1990s will put more pressure on Latinos' wages in several ways. On the one hand, wages will be more important to Latino economic well-being with the cutbacks in public assistance programs in general and for immigrants in particular. On the other hand, the increase in LFP of former welfare recipients is likely to adversely influence other workers at the low-wage end of the labor market (Bartik, 2000; Burtless, 2000). Further, the new emphasis in poverty policy on expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), although beneficial to the working poor who file taxes, will not give any relief to those who do not, including the substantial population of undocumented immigrants among Latinos. More broadly beneficial to Latinos would be raising the federal minimum wage and indexing it to inflation. New initiatives that provide relief in the areas of health insurance and retirement benefits will also be crucial, as Latinos have the lowest rates of these employer-provided benefits (Herz, Meisenheimer, & Weinstein, 2000; National Council of La Raza, 2002, per Thomas-Breitfeld, 2003).

Finally, we note that the existing labor market literature focuses disproportionately on Latino immigrants, and research on native Latinos has generally taken a back seat. Future research should give greater attention to a variety of labor market processes and outcomes for native-born Latinos. This will be progressively more important as native-born workers increase their labor force share in the coming years.

## NOTES

1. We do not take up the issues of wage inequality, unions, or entrepreneurship, as these are the subjects of separate chapters in this volume.
2. All charts and tables are for the civilian labor force, ages 16 and up in 2005, unless otherwise noted.
3. In 2000, Latinos constituted 10.9% of the labor force and Blacks were 11.8% (author calculations from Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment. U.S. Department of Labor BLS, 2002).
4. Whereas immigrants outnumber natives among male Latino workers, the opposite is true for Latina women. This is related to immigrant Latino men's higher LFP rates than native Latino men and the reverse for Latina women: (85% vs. 75% of immigrant vs. native Latino men, and 53% vs. 61% for immigrant vs. native Latinas in 2000, from Mosisa, 2002, Table 3). The fact that immigrant Latinas are less likely to work than native Latinas is largely due to higher fertility and marriage rates and lower educational attainment for immigrant than native women (Mosisa, 2002, Table 3).
5. Asians made up 22% of foreign-born workers. Most Asian workers were foreign-born (77%).
6. The Census includes individuals of Spanish ancestry with Hispanics and omits Latin Americans from non-Spanish-speaking countries. We follow the Census definition for consistency with other published tables. Note that Spaniards accounted for less than 1% of the total Latino/Hispanic labor force in 2000. We use the term "Latino" to refer to Latinos and Hispanics.
7. We expect that this "other Hispanic group" is comprised disproportionately of the native-born (because this group would be less likely to identify country or countries of ancestry and includes those who identify as residents of Aztlán) and Mexican-origin (because this group accounts for the lion's share of Latinos).
8. This discussion draws on Meléndez, Rodríguez, & Figueroa (1991), Bean & Tienda (1987), and Browne and Askew (2006), which provide further detail on differences between groups.
9. Cubans are omitted because the base of 16- to 19-years-old is smaller than the BLS cutoff for published data. Unemployment rates for Cuban men and women are 3.1% and 3.7%, respectively, and the share of part-time workers is 9%. Thus, Cubans fare better than other Latinos and Whites on these measures.

10. Author calculations, Tables 12 and 13, U.S. Department of Labor BLS 2006a.
11. With respect to manufacturing occupations, note that Latinos, particularly Mexican and Central American immigrants, constitute a preferred labor force for low-level, poorly paid nondurable goods manufacturing (e.g., Bonacich, 1993; Ortiz, 2001).
12. Also, see research on janitors (Zlolniski, 2006; Waldinger, Erickson, Milkman, Mitchell, Valenzuela, et al., 1996), street vendors (Zlolniski, 2006), and entry-level occupations in select industries (Waldinger, 1996; Waldinger & Lichter, 2003).
13. Public sector employment continues to be substantial for Blacks: in 2005, one in five Black workers (19.6%) was in this sector (author calculations, Table 12, U.S. Department of Labor BLS, 2006b).
14. Note that this study used supervisor's (not owner's) race/ethnicity; hence, the findings might say more about predominantly Latino workplaces (i.e., segregation) than about ethnic enclaves.
15. That earlier immigrants are most affected within occupations is consistent with other studies of immigration effects more generally (Altonji & Card, 1992; Grossman, 1982; Smith & Edmonston, 1997).
16. In this vein, Catanzarite (2004) shows smaller brown-collar wage penalties in heavily unionized occupations.

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