

NEXO

The Official Newsletter of The Julian Samora Research Institute
The Midwest's Premier Latino Research Center

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JSRI's mission is to generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest and across the nation.



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JSRI at Michigan State University is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge as it relates to Latinos and Latino communities throughout the Midwest and the nation.

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When Right is Made to Look Wrong



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The late Gil Scott-Heron, a notable social and political poet, musician, and critic (the “bluesologist”) of the 1970s, wrote “it’s a turnaround world where things are all too quickly turned around; it was turned around so that right looked wrong, it was turned around so that up looked down...” In that poem Scott-Heron was addressing the murder of Jose Campos Torres in 1977 by Houston police officers. Jose, a Vietnam veteran, was beaten by several police officers and left in the waters of the Buffalo Bayou; his body was found two days later. Two of the officers were found guilty of negligent homicide. They were given one year of probation and a \$1 fine. Others were later convicted of federal civil rights violations and served nine months in prison. Today, despite

video evidence to the contrary, police officers shoot young Black and Latino men and then claim they were justified because they were threatened by the victims and believed they were in imminent danger. In most such cases, wrong is made to look right. When it comes to Affirmative Action and other civil rights policies, right is made to look wrong.

Consider the argument that Affirmative Action hurts minorities by stigmatizing persons for supposedly obtaining positions based on physical or cultural attributes rather than on merit. This stigma, the argument goes, hurts rather than helps minorities. Therefore, eliminating Affirmative Action is for the benefit of minorities. Two things are wrong with this argument. One, that is not how Affirmative Action is supposed to work. In other words, the most qualified candidate should get the position, and when two candidates are equally qualified, the position should go to the member of the protected class. That is, a person with a characteristic which cannot be targeted for discrimination (i.e., age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, etc.). If properly implemented, the policy leads to the enhancement of diversity in government and government-related firms and other organizations.

Two, the stigma that surrounds Affirmative Action hires is mostly a function of White ideology that presents Affirmative Action as “reverse racism”. This idea serves to legitimate resistance and opposition to Affirmative Action based on victimization; Whites are the victims, the logic goes, of preferences (decisions) that discriminate against them. The sense of injustice that emerges from this view is used to promote and mobilize anti-Affirmative Action sentiments that produce outcomes like the Michigan Civil Rights Amendment, or Proposal 2, which was passed in 2006 and ended Affirmative Action in the State of Michigan. To the public it is presented as “equal opportunity for all,” but it is doubtful that such an outcome is possible given that the racial structures already in place are simply ignored and, *ipso facto*, maintained. One cannot address the problem of racism by pretending to be color blind. Again, wrong is made to look right.

While some individuals among Affirmative Action hires may be hurt or “succumb” to “the stigma,” most are pursuing careers in which they are reaching organizational heights that hitherto had been closed to members of their racial or ethnic minority group. On the other hand, in a context of racial discrimination, being hired into a position on the basis of being White tends to be viewed as a right, and no stigma is attached to that person. It is the *de facto* reality, the assumed reality that goes unquestioned. Wrong is made to look right.

Today there is much ado about the so-called failure of liberal policies of the 1960s; that is, social programs that provided support and sought to improve the well-being of people in poverty. The clients of social service programs, we are told, are worse off today than before passage and implementation of minimum wage and Affirmative Action laws. We have to go back, we are told, to the first half of the 20th century, when apparently inequality between Blacks and Whites was less than today. This is an interesting “supposed fact” given that Whites-Only policies and practices governed everyday life, especially in the South and in the Southwest. Moreover, the 1920s is held as one of the decades of the 20th century in which inequality was very high.

Indeed we must ask, if the first half of the 20th century was so progressive, how do we explain the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement? How do we ignore the brutal poverty of the 1950s among minority groups; for Blacks the rate was 54.9% in 1959. How do we ignore the material conditions and the widespread sense of injustice that really gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement?

The fascinating feature about the argument that liberal policies failed is that while it has the appearance of being historical it is actually ahistorical. It leaps over the policy changes of the last 40 years to some imaginary landscape of equality that prevailed in America during the first 50 years of the 20th century. It is ahistorical in that it completely overlooks the implementation of neoliberal policies over the past four decades. These include the anti-tax policies that defunded government and gave tax cuts to the wealthy and to corporations. These include the deregulation of the economy to promote “economic freedom,” privatization of government functions, including the rise of private prisons which strengthened the school-to-prison pipeline, and the public attack on labor unions and teacher and faculty tenure in an effort to give employers free rein to determine the terms and conditions of employment (in an economy which already has lost most of its manufacturing base through run-away plants). Indeed, it is these and other neoliberal policies which have created the greatest level of inequality in income and wealth in society since the Great Depression.

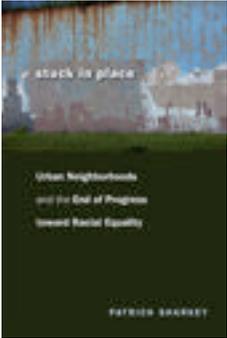
Endemic to contemporary society since the rise of neoliberalism is the widespread use of propaganda and coded terms to sway the hearts and minds of Americans, but especially White Americans, in support of “conservative values”. Note that as Latinos grow in numbers and potential political influence there is greater interest in wooing them in support of “conservative values.” We are told that Latinos are “conservatives,” they just

don't know it yet. Apparently, Latinos are incapable of making sense of the impact of conservative policies on their lives. Besides not knowing they are conservatives, one has to wonder why Latinos are not running to support conservative policies.

Propaganda works as much through omission as it does by declaring reality in a particular way. And in so doing, it makes that “which is” seem right even as it is wrong. There are several things we are not told when wrong is made to look right or when right is made to look wrong. We are not told that prior to Affirmative Action minorities were openly relegated to “dirty jobs” by a racial division of labor system that gave preferential treatment to Whites. We are not told that inequality was high, especially between Whites and racial and ethnic minorities. We are not told that, today, rising class tensions and the demographic shift have prompted efforts to turn back the clock on the Voting Rights Act. We are not told that stock prices for the two largest private prison firms in the country have risen sharply with the influx of undocumented children at our southern border this past summer. We are not told that, in general, charter schools have not produced higher performance outcomes than their public counterparts. And while we are told that Affirmative Action leads to mediocrity and incompetence, we are not told that White racism leads to mediocrity. We are not told that Affirmative Action actually promotes equal opportunity and contributes to a playing field that is flatter and more open than the institutionalized processes that constitute White privilege.

On the other hand, there are many instances where wrong is simply declared to be right. In Colorado, for example, the school board in Jefferson County recently adopted an American history curriculum that removes from courses dissent and social disorder as well as whatever else diminishes a sense of patriotism. The effort is to openly limit the content of history courses and promote the ideas of radical individualism, limited government and deregulation of the economy, and thereby control what children learn. By controlling what children learn, the masses are ultimately controlled, so goes the thinking. The one thing that ideological hegemony cannot control, however, are the material conditions that ultimately shape how people think. When large segments of people in society do not have their basic material needs met, no propagandist in the world can convince them that their lives as they know them are all there is and all that can be. Wrong will be not made to look right, and right will not be made to look wrong. And everyone will know the true purpose of militarized police forces. 

Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality



by Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Reviewed by Jean Kayitsinga

In *Stuck in Place*, Patrick Sharkey does an excellent job, conceptually and empirically, in explaining why racial inequality in America's neighborhood environments has been persistent and why African American families in particular have remained in disadvantaged communities for multiple generations. This is one of those seminal books one must read and have on one's bookshelf. It has relevance for understanding persistent poverty in general. It is well suited for urban sociologists; sociologists focusing on social stratification and inequality, particularly those focusing on social class, racial/ethnicity, and place-based inequality; and community and development scholars.

Using a multigenerational perspective, Sharkey's work complements previous studies on places and inequality by examining the trajectories of individual children and their families in combination with the trajectories of the places they occupied over four decades. He argues that persistence in disadvantaged neighborhoods and the inability of African Americans to advance out of these neighborhoods are mostly attributable to factors beyond individual/family attributes, most notably the combination of structural shifts in urban economies, political disinvestment in urban neighborhoods, and social policies that have served to exacerbate the challenges of economic dislocation faced by poor communities.

Sharkey shows that the persistence of severely unequal neighborhood environments over time has played a significant role in perpetuating racial inequality in economic status, educational attainment, employment and occupational status, and wealth. He indicates that neighborhood disadvantage experienced by children does not fade away as they move into adulthood. Instead, it continues to have an impact on their own children's development, what Sharkey calls a "legacy of disadvantage."

In order to reduce the concentration of disadvantage in America's neighborhoods and to halt the reproduction of inequality across generations, Sharkey calls for a "durable" urban policy which would have the capacity to create lasting changes in the lives of families and communities over multiple generations. He suggests that along with the continuing transformation of public housing, new strategies are needed to reduce discrimination in housing markets. According to Sharkey, ending predatory and discriminatory lending practices in the mortgage market should be priorities in a durable urban policy agenda focusing on freedom of residential mobility. In addition, he argues that mobility programs that target families in the most violent, disadvantaged neighborhoods and that provide sustained supports to these families fit into an urban policy agenda. However, he indicates that providing vouchers to large numbers of families or targeting families in all poor neighborhoods is unlikely to generate lasting change in families' lives and is highly likely to have unanticipated consequences for communities and cities. Instead, he proposes direct and sustained investments in poor neighborhoods.

Sharkey argues that macro-economic policies designed to facilitate economic growth and full employment are the most important component of any approach to improve poor communities. He adds that broad-based urban policy agendas that focus on competitiveness and prosperity, such as *laissez-faire* economic

growth, are not sufficient to resolve the problem of concentrated joblessness. He suggests supplementary interventions designed specifically for targeted areas of concentrated disadvantage, including attracting employers to disadvantaged communities; investing in human capital of residents via job training and workforce education programs; and guaranteeing employment to willing workers during economic downturns. More than anything else, residents in disadvantaged communities need secure good jobs and steady incomes.

Sharkey also proposes the integration of metropolitan areas by confronting exclusionary zoning, promoting and expanding plans for transportation, housing, education, and economic development. He argues that this is essential for promoting prosperity across urban areas. He also supports the integration of communities because research has shown that internal organization and social cohesion allow communities to develop the types of social capital and informal social controls that facilitate the attainment of common ends. Inequality in urban areas is a barrier to social interaction and community integration.

Finally, Sharkey indicates that investing in children's environments, particularly young children, is crucial for their development and learning trajectories. A targeted expansion of early childhood education for children living in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods is needed because families in these communities lack the resources to seek out high-quality child care and their communities have the least amount of resources to provide quality environments for children. Disadvantaged communities need key services, facilities, and institutions that support their children and all residents.

Overall, this is a well written book with a compelling analysis and powerful arguments for a much needed "durable" urban policy aimed at reducing inequalities between neighborhoods and racial/ethnic groups. 🌍

Child Poverty Among Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Families in Michigan: Explaining the Latino and Non-Latino Gaps¹

by Jean Kayitsinga

Introduction

In 2007-2011, Michigan had almost 2.4 million children, representing about 24 percent of the total population. These children are ethnically and racially diverse. Close to 70 percent of children are White, 17 percent Black, seven percent Latino, almost three percent Asian, and five percent are from other racial/ethnic groups, including Native American, Other race, and two or more races, respectively. About 11 percent of Michigan children are immigrants; that is, they have a parent who was born outside of the United States. Almost 40 percent of Latino children and 88 percent of Asian children are immigrants. Socioeconomically, slightly more than one in five (20.5 percent) children in Michigan live in poverty.

Children are the future of every society. For that reason, children receive more attention and scrutiny than other population groups. Children are also vulnerable because they depend on parents and other adults for their survival and development. In recent years, there has been a great deal of attention to addressing the needs of children in Michigan. To that end, some programs have invested a great amount of resources toward enhancing children's welfare and development. The growth of the Latino, Asian, and other immigrant populations in Michigan and nationwide has also spurred the need to create immigrant friendly environments aimed at enhancing immigrant children's well-being and development.

Poor families experience greater economic stress than non-poor families and are disproportionately overrepresented among racial/ethnic minorities. In Michigan, for example, about 24 percent of Latino families, 28 percent of Black families, and 21 percent of Native American families live in poverty compared to eight percent of non-Latino White families. Comparatively, Asian families have relatively lower poverty rates – about nine percent. In general, poor families lack adequate resources to meet their children's well-being and developmental needs. Moreover, immigrant families may face additional barriers to access resources for their children's well-being and developmental needs.

Research has shown that poverty has a negative effect on children's outcomes, including physical health (e.g., physical growth problems, low birth weight, child mortality, lead

poisoning, and short-hospital stays); educational achievement (e.g., grade repetition, dropping out of high school, learning disabilities, and low cognitive development); emotional and behavioral problems and depression; and other consequences, such as teenage out-of-wedlock births, child abuse and neglect, and violent crimes.

This study draws on census data from the 2007-2011 American Community Survey (ACS) in Michigan to examine the economic well-being of children in Michigan using different measures of child poverty. The large sample of the data allows us to examine how Michigan children are doing by looking at their demographic, socioeconomic, and other family characteristics. In particular, this study examines variations in child immigrant poverty, both first-generation and second-generation immigrant children, and how they are compared to non-immigrant children. In addition, this study assesses the extent to which the gaps in child poverty rates between immigrant and native children and between racial/ethnic minority and non-minority children in Michigan are reduced and/or persist once known socio-demographic, economic, and residential factors are taken into consideration.

Theoretical Frameworks

Previous research on child poverty has focused on both individual characteristics (e.g., parental education) and on existing social structural forces beyond individuals that affect their daily lives, particularly economic, social, and political systems. In this paper, we focus on three main theoretical explanations from the literature: 1) human capital 2) economic restructuring, and 3) social stratification explanations. The first highlights the influences of human capital of individuals and, in this case, that of parents; the second stresses the influences of the change in economic structure and opportunities, especially the declining earnings and availability of well-paid jobs; and the third focuses on the hierarchical and uneven access to opportunities across social class, race/ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and other social statuses.

Human Capital Theory

The prominent explanation of why individuals live in poverty tends to focus on individual characteristics such as educational

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Ian Haney on 'Dog Whistle Politics' by Pilar Horner



On Monday, April 14, 2014, Ian Haney Lopez, the John H. Boalt Professor of Law at The University of California, Berkeley, made a presentation titled “Dog Whistle Politics: From States’ Rights to Illegal Aliens” based on his

recent book by a similar title. The presentation took place at the Castle Board Room at the MSU College of Law and was attended by students, faculty, and staff. As part of the Transnational Labor Symposium Series, Haney Lopez spoke about the use of veiled racial discourse to evoke fear and outrage in the U.S. voting population in order to manipulate voting outcomes. In reality, he argues, the country is fundamentally torn between two ideologies, one that is based on egalitarian politics and the other on the “rugged individual” who succeeds and fails by his own efforts.

Haney Lopez’s argument is that the Republican Party draws on racial discourse to strengthen its base by making coded racial appeals. He points to examples such as then candidate-for-president Ronald Reagan’s use of the “welfare queen” image. In addition, he argued that post 9/11 politics have enabled a “racial bogeyman” that targets Arab Muslims and promotes hysteria over illegal immigration. By couching difficult social debates in terms of “states’ rights” and “freedom of association” rather than “civil rights” or “equality debates” politicians are able to direct popular discourse to suit their political aspirations and strengthen support for the Republican Party.

Haney Lopez points out that this new political move is not openly about racism or bigotry. Rather, politicians call upon strong racial narratives and work at the electorate’s unconscious level by activating racial and social fears. This allows politicians to drive voter choices by allowing racist decisions to be masked by even the voters themselves. He notes that corruption of big money interests has given voters and policymakers cultural and racial proxies to mask highly charged racial language. In sum, he states this is just a very simple story about a very few (the 1%) who want to maintain a strategic hold over power and wealth. The visit by Haney

Lopez was sponsored by the Julian Samora Research Institute, the Hispanic and Latino Law Society, the Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives Program, and the Labor Education Program. The program was part of MSU’s Project 60/50, which celebrates the anniversaries of the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The event was free and open to the public and the first 50 attendees received a free copy of Haney Lopez’s book *Dog Whistle Politics*. 

JSRI Celebrates 25 years of Scholarship

This Fall, 2014, the Julian Samora Research Institute celebrates 25 years of excellence by hosting an anniversary conference in East Lansing, Michigan. The conference theme is “Latinos 2050: Restoring the Public Good.” Conference participants will come from across the nation. Many of them are scholars from the Midwest who are conducting research on Latinos in the region. The aim of the conference is to get a broader sense of Latino community issues in order to have a better understanding of how to shape the trajectories of Latino communities relative to the great issues of the day. Where do Latinos want to be in 2050 in this country? Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group across the nation, but they are also disconnected from major societal institutions and constantly under attack by xenophobes in society. In the Midwest, Latinos are considered newcomers. When it comes to services Latinos continue to remain invisible. The goal of the conference is to bring scholars together to examine these issues and promote understanding of them relative to the major structural changes occurring in society.

The public is invited to join the conference participants for three days of great scholarship, special events (music and poetry), a graduate student paper prize, and keynote presenters, including Michael Olivas speaking on “The Undocumented and the DACA-mented: State and Federal Immigration-related Litigation and Legislation Concerning Higher Education,” and José Angel Gutiérrez speaking on “The Chicano Rearview Mirror: Looking Back Fifty Years to See the Next Fifty” 

JSRI Scholarship Recipients 2014-2015

Adriana Carreon, MSU Senior



Adriana Carreon was born and raised in Sinaloa, Mexico, where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work at the Autonomous University of Sinaloa. After working five years at the Institute of Social Readaptation for Minors (Juvenile) in Culiacan, Sinaloa, she moved to Tijuana, Mexico, where she

married and had a son. In September of 2003, she moved with her family to Lansing, Michigan in pursuit of a better life. After waiting five years for her legal residency and struggling with language barriers, in 2008, she became a student at Lansing Community College (LCC) studying English as a second language and taking the required courses to transfer to a four-year institution. At LCC she earned three Associate Degrees: General Associate, Arts in Spanish, and Foreign Languages. In 2013, she transferred to Michigan State University where she is currently a senior at the School of Social Work. She works on campus in the Office of Supportive Services (OSS) as a Peer Teaching Fellow, and also as an Undergraduate Student Researcher in the College of Social Sciences. In the future, she plans to earn a Master's degree in Social Work and a Ph.D. in education. Her goal is to become an Academic Advisor. 

Dana Chalupa, MSU Doctoral Student



Dana Chalupa was born in Tucson, Arizona and raised in Bowling Green, Ohio. She is currently a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University after attending Bowling Green State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree with

honors in sociology and a minor in Spanish. Her research interests are Latina/o studies, migration, gender, and racial and ethnic identities. In particular, she is interested in how Latino immigrants and their descendants identify racially and ethnically as proxies of integration into racial and ethnic groups in U.S. society, as well as how gender and intersectionality impact these processes. During the summer following her first year at MSU she worked at JSRI. The experience greatly improved her research skills, including quantitative data skills. She is thankful for the support and assistance from JSRI. She is currently working on her dissertation propectus on the experiences of South Americans and their integration and identities in the Midwest. 



<http://www.jsri.msu.edu/events/25years>.

Happy 25th JSRI!

Child Poverty Among Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Families in Michigan

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attainment, skills, and job experiences. The main argument from this perspective is that individuals with lower levels of education, skills, and job experiences are poorly remunerated and, therefore, are likely to live in poverty.

Human capital theory asserts that workers with weak skills (e.g., lack of education or relevant experiences) are less productive at work and are, therefore, poorly remunerated in the labor market and experience more job instability. In contrast, individuals with higher educational attainment and greater job skills and experiences are arguably more productive employees, earn higher wages, experience greater job stability, and are therefore, less likely to live in poverty. This individual-focused explanation of poverty is prominent in policy on poverty circles and is often used to explain why race/ethnic minorities and some immigrant groups live in poverty. From this perspective, child immigrant poverty has been attributed to the “quality” of recent immigrants. It is argued that the quality of recent immigrants has declined since the passage of 1965 Immigration Act which allowed entry from non-European countries. The admission of a large number of immigrants with low educational levels, skills, and limited job experiences into the United States may have contributed to increases in immigrant child poverty. While the human capital explanation of child immigrant poverty is informative, emphasis on individual attributes alone often overlooks the enormous impact of existing social, economic, and political systems on poverty. We expect that human capital measures partially explain the levels of child immigrant and racial/ethnic minority poverty. However, we also expect that gaps in child poverty rates between immigrants and natives and between racial/ethnic minority and non-minority children persist even after taking into consideration human capital factors.

Economic Restructuring

Structural explanations of poverty stress the lack of access to opportunities in local labor markets as the main cause of high poverty levels. Economic restructuring refers to three major interrelated changes that occurred in the U.S. economy, especially since the 1970s: 1) deindustrialization -- the transition in employment from extractive and manufacturing industries to service and information industries; 2) the increase in new technologies, especially in microelectronics and other high-tech industries; and 3) globalization -- the integration of international markets for goods, services,

capital, information, and labor. These economic transformations have created not only new structures of work, but they have also stressed and constrained choices available to workers in different labor markets and have been linked to increases in poverty in both rural and urban areas, a more polarized class structure, and a decline in employment opportunities. Referring to rural communities, some scholars have indicated that many communities lacked stable employment, opportunities for mobility, investment in the community, and diversity in the economy and other social institutions. Such communities, they argued, were increasingly and spatially isolated and particularly vulnerable to adverse effects from structural economic change. The same can be said about urban communities where the disappearance of good manufacturing jobs from cities such as Detroit and Flint in Michigan, followed by the flight of middle-class families from those communities, have created impoverished and isolated places with limited employment opportunities, engendering what has come to be known as the “truly disadvantaged.” The new immigrants, especially Latinos, are moving either into rural communities to work in dairy and non-dairy farms or in structurally neglected cities to pursue their American Dreams. The structure of today’s economy (with expanding opportunities in both high-end and low-end occupations, but not middle occupations) has made it more difficult for today’s new arrivals, many of whom start out with low levels of education to work their way up the job ladder. We expect that child immigrant and racial/ethnic minority poverty will be associated with parents’ employment status, industry of employment, and metropolitan/nonmetropolitan residence when controlling for parents’ educational levels and other individual/family characteristics. We also expect that these variables will significantly reduce the gaps in child poverty between immigrant and native children and between racial/ethnic minority and non-minority children.

Social Stratification

The increase in child immigrant and racial/ethnic minority poverty may be related to changes in racial/ethnic composition, heightened racial/ethnic segregation and discrimination, and the backlash against immigrants in the United States. Immigrant scholars argue that recent immigrants may be less able to incorporate socially and economically than did immigrants from the early half of the twenty first century because of persistent and growing racial discrimination.

The literature on urban poverty highlights deindustrialization

and class segregation in particular as hampering the economic mobility of less skilled Blacks in the labor markets. Some scholars have indicated that segregation, interacting with economic forces, reinforces minority poverty by limiting access to a broad range of metropolitan area employment opportunities. John Iceland, for example, added that some of the processes that have hindered African American economic well-being, such as discrimination, segregation, and human capital differentials, have also affected other minority groups, including Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, though the experiences of each group may differ considerably depending on regional concentration, population size, labor market niche, and the White population's reaction to its presence.

In general, immigrant families are at greater risk of poverty and have lower incomes than native families. Limited language proficiency and unfamiliarity with American customs and the labor market considerably hinder immigrant economic mobility in the short run. But over time and in subsequent generations, labor market barriers become less important. In general, poverty rates are highest among recent immigrants, particularly among recent migrants from Mexico. We expect that child poverty rates will be significantly higher among immigrant children than among native children. We also expect that Latino and Black children will be more likely to live in poverty than White and Asian children. After controlling for parents' employment status, education, and other relevant demographic characteristics, we expect that immigrant-native gaps in child poverty will be substantially reduced while racial/ethnic gaps in child poverty will remain.

METHODS

Data Source

This study draws on data from the 2007-2011 American Community Survey (ACS). The Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) contains a sample of actual responses to the ACS. Each record in the file represents a single person, or in the household-level dataset, a single housing unit. PUMS files covering a five-year period contain records of data from approximately five percent of the United States population. In this study, we focus on children ages 0 – 17 years living with at least one parent or a related householder. Only biological son/daughter, adopted son/daughter, stepson/daughter, brother/sister, grandchild, and other relative under 18 years are included in the analysis. Children living in group quarters, roommates, housemates, and other non-related children to the

householder, husband/wife, or unmarried partner are excluded. We also excluded households in which the average age of parents was under 18 years of age. After selecting children living in households with a parent or a related householder, this study pertains to about 94 percent of the children population in Michigan. About 247,901 children (or 11 percent) live in immigrant families. About two percent of those children are first-generation immigrants whereas nine percent are second-generation immigrants. Descriptive statistics of selected socio-demographic and family background characteristics are displayed in the entire version of this paper to be made available online at www.jsri.msu.edu/publications/occasional-papers-- Appendix A -- Table 1.

Measures

Child poverty -- The dependent variable of interest is child poverty. The child poverty rate is defined as the percentage of children living in families with incomes below the official poverty thresholds. Although the official poverty rate is the most widely used, we also analyze other dimensions of child poverty, including deep child poverty (the percentage of children living in families with incomes less than 50 percent of the official poverty thresholds), near child poverty (the percentage of children living in families with incomes 50 percent greater than the official poverty thresholds), relative child poverty (the percentage of children living in families with incomes less than half of the median family income), and low income (the percentage of children living in families with incomes 200 percent the official poverty thresholds or 100 percent greater than the official poverty thresholds).

Immigrant status -- The main independent variable is child immigrant status. Immigrant or foreign-born individuals are those born outside the United States and its territories. Individuals born in Puerto Rico and other territories of the United States or born abroad to U.S. citizen parents are considered native-born. Children of immigrant families have at least one foreign-born parent. Children of native families live with either two parents who are native-born or a single parent who is a native-born. Among children in immigrant families, first generation immigrant children are those who were born outside the United States and its territories and who have at least one foreign-born parent. Second generation immigrant children are those who were born in the United States and its territories and at least one of the parents was born outside of the United States and its territories. The reference group is native-born children who live with their native-born parents or parent, often referred to as third or later generation.

Child Poverty Among Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Families in Michigan

Parental origin -- is defined by grouping countries based on the geography of all immigrants. Countries are grouped into nine origin country groups: 1) Mexico; 2) Canada & Bermuda; 3) Central America; 4) Caribbean; 5) South America; 6) Europe; 7) Asia; 8) Africa; and 9) Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, and other countries).

Race/ethnicity -- The racial/ethnic groups are mutually exclusive and include the following: Hispanic or Latino (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Hispanic/Latino, which includes Dominican, Central American, South American, and other Hispanic/Latino not elsewhere classified), non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Filipino, and other Asians including those in Pacific Islanders), Native American (American Indian or Alaska natives), and other racial/ethnic groups, including some other races and two or more racial groups.

Control Variables -- The following family and child characteristics that were significantly related to child poverty in previous studies were controlled in the analysis: family/household structure and composition, parental education, parental employment, industry of employment, parental age, child's age, sex, language, and nonmetro/metro residence.

Family/household structure -- In this study, family is defined to include the householder and all individuals living with the householder and related to him/her by birth, marriage, adoption, as well as the unmarried partner of the householder. This definition of the family is more inclusive than the U.S. census definition where the family only includes the householder and those related to him/her by birth, marriage or adoption. Family structure is indicated by the following dummy variables: Cohabiting with biological and non-biological parent/partner; single-father family (no spouse/partner present); single ever-married mother family (no spouse/partner present); and single never-married mother family. Married-couple family (where both biological parents are present in the household) is the reference category. The following household composition variables were also included in the analysis: the number of related children in the household; the presence of grandparents; and the presence of other adult relatives (e.g., brother/sister, parent-in law, son/daughter-in law or other relatives).

Parental education -- Parental education is measured by parents'/partners' highest educational attainment and is categorized into three dummy variables: less than high school, high school, some college, and college or more education. The reference category is college education or more.

Parental employment -- Parental employment is measured by the employment status of father and that of mother. Parental employment is defined as a dummy variable indicating whether or not at least one parent in the household works full-time full-year round

(i.e., worked at least 35 hours per week for 50 weeks a year).

Industry of employment -- Using industry codes from the ACS data, we used the following dummy variables to measure industry of employment: 1) Agricultural industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting); 2) construction and non-durable manufacturing; 3) distributive services (wholesale trade and transportation, warehousing, and utilities); 4) high-wage services (Information, Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (FIRE), professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services, and education services, health care and social assistance; 5) consumer low-wage services (retail trade, arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services, and other services); and 6) Unemployed and not working (i.e., with no work experience in the last 5 years or earlier or never worked). High-wage industries, which include mining, durable manufacturing, public administration, and active duty military, is the reference category.

Language -- We also included two dummy variables for language: limited English proficiency and linguistic isolation. Limited English proficiency is dummy variable indicating whether respondents speak a language other than English at home and that they speak English well, not well, or not at all. The reference category is English proficiency, i.e., those who speak English at home or who speak another language at home but also speak English very well. Linguistic isolated households are those in which no person age 14 years and older is English proficient. All members of such a household are considered linguistically isolated, even though these households may include English proficient children under age 14.

Parental age, child's age and sex -- We also included the average parental age in case of two parents or two cohabiting couples and the reference age in case of single parent-headed households. Child age is categorized into two dummy variables: under six years and 6 – 11 years. The reference category is 12 – 17 years. We use a dummy variable for male with female as the reference category.

Metropolitan/Non-metropolitan Residence -- Metropolitan and nonmetropolitan status of reside were defined using the 2003 USDA-Beale codes. Beale codes are defined at the county level, which means that PUMA within the same county were assigned the same code. In cases where many small counties were grouped into one PUMA (U.S. Census confidentiality), we assigned to that PUMA, the lowest Beale code. We included two dummy indicators for residence: other metro (county in metro area of 250,000 to one million population and county in metro with fewer than 250,000 population); and nonmetro counties (codes 4 or greater in the Beale codes). The reference category for the metro/nonmetro residence is large metro (county in metro area with a population of one million or more).

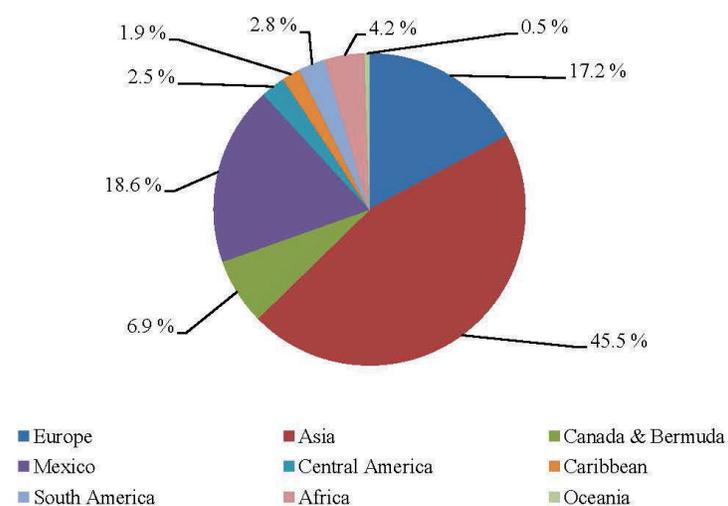
Analytic Methods

The analysis is organized in three steps: First, descriptive statistics showing how child poverty indicators vary by immigrant status, region of parents' origin, and race/ethnicity. Second, a series of logistic regression models to determine how immigrant status and race/ethnicity are associated with child poverty indicators, adjusting for the influences of family and child characteristics, including family structure, parental education, parental employment, and child's age, sex, and language measures. Finally, charts of predicted probabilities of child poverty by immigrant status and race/ethnicity are displayed.

Results

Children in immigrant families in Michigan are predominantly from Asia (46 percent), Mexico (19 percent) and Europe (17 percent). About 7 percent of immigrant children are from Canada; four percent from Africa; almost three percent from Central America, and three percent from South America; and about two percent from the Caribbean, respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of Children of Immigrants by Region of Parents' Origin



How do children in immigrant families compare to native children in terms of child poverty? Table 1 displays poverty rates for children in Michigan by immigrant status. The results in Table 1 show that nine percent of children in Michigan are in deep poverty (i.e., their family income is less than 50 percent of the official poverty thresholds); one-fifth of children in Michigan are in poverty (i.e., their family incomes are below the official poverty thresholds); and 31 percent of children are poor or near poor (i.e., their family incomes are 50 percent greater than the official poverty thresholds). Another way to look at the poverty level of children is to use a measure of relative child poverty as indicated by the percentage of children living in families with incomes less than half of the median family income. About 28 percent of children in Michigan were relatively poor. About 41 percent of children in Michigan were low income (twice the poverty official threshold (Table 1). Regardless of which indicator is used the results in Table 1 show that first-generation immigrant children in Michigan are significantly more likely than second- and third-generation children to be in poverty. Using the official poverty definition, about 30 percent of first-generation immigrant children were in poverty as compared to 23 percent for second-generation children, and 20 percent for third or later generation children, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1. Child Poverty Rates in Michigan by Immigrant Status (Weighted percent)

	Deep official poverty	Official poverty	1.5 x official poverty	Relative poverty	2x official poverty
Total	9.4	20.5	31.2	28.4	41.4
Imm. status					
1st Gen.	15.4	30.0	43.3	36.0	54.2
2nd Gen.	8.5	23.3	35.6	28.5	46.0
3rd Gen.	9.4	20.0	30.4	28.2	40.7

New Webinar Season Announced for 2014-2015

The Latinos and Immigrants in Midwestern Communities interstate initiative (NCERA-216) announces the lineup for its webinar series for the 2014-2015 academic year. These webinars focus on issues related to research, practice, and/or policies that affect Latinos in the Midwest and across the United States. Scholars share their latest research results, openly discuss with participants the implications of their work and discuss directions for future research and practice. Webinars are free and open to the public, and participants will have an opportunity to ask questions directly to scholars via online chat. As an interstate initiative, NCERA-216 links scholars, practitioners, students and others with important research agendas to advance the well-being of Latinos and immigrants in the Midwest and the United States. Webinar information is posted at <http://www.jsri.msu.edu/> with details on links and access.

Please mark your calendars with the following dates:

October 14, 2014, 12pm CST, 1pm EST

Understanding Cross-Cultural Communications to Improve Relationships, Dr. Debra Bolton

December 5, 2014, 12-1pm CST, 1pm EST

Latinas, Tabaco, y Cancer: Building Solidarity for a Healthier Community, Dr. Athena Ramos

February 19, 2015, 12pm CST, 1pm EST

Development and creation of a healthy-eating health promotion comic book for migrant farmworker families, Dr. Jill Kilanowski

March 11, 2015, 12pm CST, 1pm EST

Leadership Development Program for Spanish Speaking Audiences, Dr. Carmen DeRusha

Past webinars can be found at: <http://www.jsri.msu.edu/ncera-216/ncera-webinars> All Webinars are sponsored by Latinos and Immigrants in Midwestern Communities (NCERA-216), North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD), the Cambio Center at the University of Missouri, and the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University. 

New JSRI Staff Members



Olga Lami-Schimizzi received a Bachelor's Degree in Translation from the Universidad del Salvador, Buenos Aires, Argentina and a Master's Degree in Education Technology and Instructional Design from MSU. Among other things, she assists with the layout and editing of the NEXO

newsletter and other JSRI publications including website and the translations of unit development materials.



Jocelyn Janicek joined JSRI in August 2014. She is originally from Corunna, MI and currently resides with her family in Laingsburg, MI. After graduating from Corunna High School in 2011, Jocelyn has been attending Lansing Community College and plans to transfer to MSU next fall to study Accounting.

New JSRI Staff Members



Temia Gaines is an office assistant at JSRI. She is a freshman majoring in human biology. Temia was born in Columbus, Ohio and raised in Flint, Michigan. Her career goal is to promote health awareness and to become an orthodontist. She enjoys exploring campus and meeting new people.



Anel Guel is a current Peace Corps Master's student in the Department of Community Sustainability. She recently returned from her two-year service as a Peace Corps volunteer in Carhuaz, a small town in Peru. Her interests are international development, particularly community-based natural resource management, and the use and application of GIS (Geographic Information Systems).



Britani Brown is a senior at Michigan State University in the College of Communication Arts & Science majoring in Media Information and Technology. Britani is an active member on campus with several organizations. Her interests are

technology, web design, photography and project management.



Originally from the city of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, Joanna Acosta is a sophomore majoring in animal science with a concentration in pre-veterinary medicine and a minor in environmental studies. Her goal is to become a veterinarian and an

educator. She serves as a research assistant on JSRI's mastitis prevention project.



Valeria Rios is a Master's student studying speech language pathology at Michigan State University. Originally from Mission, Texas, she came to Michigan through the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP). After she graduates she hopes to be able

to work with bilingual populations with disorders or impairments such as stuttering, cleft palate, autism, among others.



Malissa Wallace is a sophomore majoring in Special Education. She plans to travel out of the country to learn how education is delivered and interpreted throughout the world. Her studies focus on teaching kids who have mental and learning disabilities without making them feel less than normal.

Latino Civic Engagement in Michigan

by Daniel Vélez-Ortiz

Civic engagement includes a broad array of activities that have some public purpose or benefit to individuals, families, communities, and society. These activities can range from individual interactions to neighborhood organizing to collective action aimed at transforming society. It is through civic engagement that members of society seek to impact opportunities and services related to health, education, employment, and other outcomes that are crucial to effective participation in society. Immigrant civic integration can be classified as both a formal and an informal process (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). Formal integration can be defined in terms of legal status and political rights that connect the individual to the state hierarchical structures (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). In contrast, informal integration can be defined in terms of belonging and “cultural citizenship” where participation is measured through daily exchanges that connect individuals across a community on a level plane (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008; Stephen, 2007). Studies on civic participation have found that civic integration can promote health and satisfaction with life but it can also bring isolation and antagonism toward civic institutions. Other studies show that Latinos increasingly hold key political positions across the nation, and the number of voters in General Election 2012 dramatically altered the public discourse on immigration reform in the U.S. Congress.

For Latinos, civic engagement is an increasingly important topic due to the demographic shifts underway in the United States. Recent US Census projections show that the population of foreign-born in the United States (currently about 12 percent) is projected to approach 20 percent by 2050. Of the foreign-born, approximately 53% are from Latin American countries. Upon immigration, many Latino immigrants experience isolation and discrimination here in the United States, which may influence their expectations about civic participation. Structures of society are such that immigrants or foreign-born Latinos are not integrating despite the demographic changes that are underway.

Latino migration to the United States has been occurring for over one hundred years. During that time, patterns of migration have shifted to various geographical locations in the United States. Beginning with southwest border-states and continuing inland and eastward. More recently, waves of immigration are dispersed across “new destination” states

that do not have a long history of Latino immigration, such as in the Southeast and Midwest. Michigan is one of the Midwestern states with a rapidly increasing Latino population. In Michigan, the Latino population represents 4.7 percent of the total population. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population increased by 33.8 percent, even as the total population in Michigan decreased.

Given the demographic shift underway in the United States, and which will continue into the future, it is important that Latino immigrants become active participants not only in the economy but in the civic and political spheres of the democracy of which they are now part. In the Midwest, Latinos present a profile of scarce political resources. A study using data from the National Latino Survey showed that about 65% of Latino immigrants are not interested in or are unsure about politics and public affairs. As the process of incorporation is intergenerational, lack of political incorporation can have long-term, negative political and economic consequences. In short, the political and economic incorporation of Latinos presents a major challenge to the future of the state and the nation.

Civic and political engagement patterns in Michigan

This study analyzed data from the US Census Bureau Current Population Survey, November supplement 2011 for adults in the State of Michigan. The data collected several indicators of civic engagement, such as, family interaction, neighborhood involvement, community organizations, political participation, and service. Following is a profile of Latino civic engagement indicators across all the previously mentioned areas and using three other major racial groups as points for comparison. The indicators are divided thematically in the general areas of family, neighborhoods, political involvement and communication, community and organizations, and service. Each of these thematic areas are discussed in terms of the survey results but also evaluated in terms of some major implications and strategies relevant to strengths and areas for improvement within the Latino community in Michigan.

Engagement with Family and Friends

Recent literature on civic engagement has focused on Latino civic engagement at the family level (Wilkin, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2009). The emphasis on family is based on the

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Child Poverty Among Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Families in Michigan

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How do Latino children in immigrant families differ from other immigrant and non-immigrant families in terms of poverty? Table 2 displays child poverty rates by immigrant status and race/ethnicity. The results in Table 3 show that child poverty rates differ by immigrant status and race ethnicity. About 33 percent of Latino children lived in poverty, as compared to 20 percent of non-Latino children. Among non-Latino children, Black children had the highest poverty rate (44 percent), whereas Asian and White children had the lowest poverty rates (14 percent). About 38 percent of first-generation Latino immigrant children lived in poverty, as compared to 28 percent of non-Latino first-generation immigrants. Among first-generation immigrants, Asian children had the lowest poverty rate. Among second-generation immigrant children, Latinos had higher poverty rates than non-Latino immigrant children. About 37 percent of second-generation Latino immigrant children lived in poverty. In comparison, 19 percent of second-generation non-Latino immigrants lived in poverty. Among third-generation or later immigrants, Black children had the highest poverty rates (45 percent), followed by Latino children (30 percent). Third-generation or later Asian children had the lowest child poverty rate (7 percent) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Child Poverty Rates in Michigan by Immigrant Status and Race/Ethnicity (Weighted percent)

	Total	First Generation	Second Generation	Third Generation or later
Total	20.5	30.0	23.3	20.0
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>				
Hispanic/Latino	32.6	37.8	36.9	29.7
Non-Hispanic	19.6	28.1	18.7	19.5
White	13.9	35.7	21.8	13.1
Black	44.2	37.1	24.5	44.7
Asian	13.8	17.4	13.9	6.9
Other	27.7	18.3	10.6	30.3

Table 3 displays the results of child poverty rates in immigrant families by region of parents' origin.

The results show that immigrant children whose parents are from Central America and Mexico are more likely to be in deep poverty, poverty, and near poverty than those from other regions. They are also more likely to be relatively poor and low income (twice the official poverty threshold) (Table 3).

Table 3. Child Poverty Rates in Immigrant

	Deep official poverty	Official poverty	1.5 x official poverty	Relative poverty	2 x official poverty
Region of Parents' Origin					
Mexico	14.0	39.3	63.3	49.4	78.0
Canada & Bermuda	1.5	4.5	10.8	7.3	15.7
Central America	19.4	41.8	57.8	48.9	65.2
Caribbean	5.0	16.8	31.5	27.5	46.2
South America	0.6	9.6	14.5	12.8	22.3
Europe	4.4	13.3	21.1	16.5	31.5
Asia	10.6	24.2	33.8	28.4	43.1
Africa	10.3	27.2	44.1	33.5	58.8
Oceania	12.2	12.2	19.6	14.4	20.8

The next question is whether child poverty gaps between immigrant and non-immigrant children of different racial and ethnic groups remain after controlling for the influences of family and child characteristics. To answer this question, we run a series of nested logistic regression models of child poverty on immigrant status and race/ethnicity including immigrant status and race/ethnicity and controlling for child and family characteristics (available online at www.jsri.msu.edu/publications/occasional-papers -- Appendix B -- Table 5).

Child Poverty Among Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Families in Michigan

We next present predicted probabilities of child poverty by immigrant status and race/ethnicity, controlling for child's age and sex (Figure 2). The results in figure 2 show that after adjusting for child's age and sex², first-generation Latino immigrant children, followed by first-generation Black immigrant children have higher predicted probabilities than first-generation White immigrant children and first-generation Asian immigrant children. Among second-generation immigrant children, Latinos had also higher predicted probabilities of child's poverty than other racial/ethnic groups. Among third-generation or later immigrant children (i.e., native-born children to native-born parents), Black children had the highest predicted probability of being poor, followed by Latino children. Asian and White children had significantly lower predicted probability of being poor when compared to Latino or Black children. These results show significant gaps in child poverty rates between immigrant-born and native-born children and between racial/ethnic groups in Michigan. Do these gaps in child poverty persist after controlling for child/family characteristics?

Figure 2. Predicted Probabilities of Child Poverty by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status, Controlling for Child Age and Sex: 2007-2011

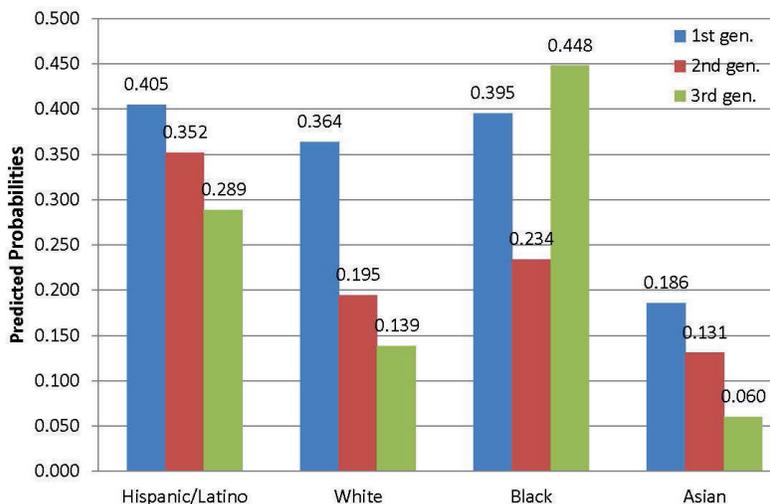
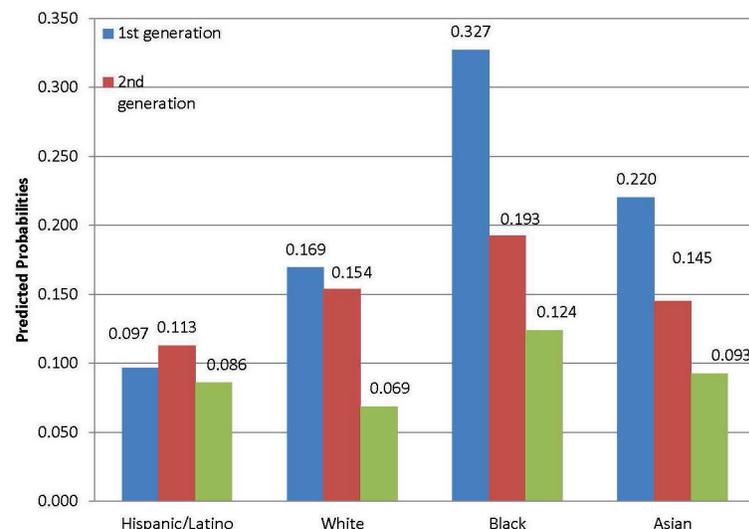


Figure 3 displays predicted probabilities of child poverty by immigrant status and race/ethnicity, controlling for child's age and sex, family structure, parental age, parental education, language English proficiency and isolation, parental employment and industry of employment, and non-metro/ metro residential location. The results in Figure 3 show that

among first-generation immigrant children, Latino immigrant children had the lowest predicted probability of being poor while Black immigrant children had the highest, controlling for socio-demographic, family structure, employment and industry, and residence variables. The predicted probabilities of being poor for White and Asian first-generation immigrant children were between those of Latino and Black first-generation immigrant children. Among second-generation immigrant children, Black, followed by White and Asian children had higher predicted probabilities of being poor than Latino children. Among third-generation immigrant children, Black children also had the highest predicted probabilities of being poor, almost twice that of White children. Latino and Asian third generation children had predicted probabilities of living in poverty of about one and a half that of White children (Figure 3). These results show that although the gaps in child poverty between immigrant and natives and between children of different racial/ethnic groups are significantly attenuated once we control for child/family socio-demographic, employment and industry of employment, and metro/nonmetro residence, these gaps persist.

Figure 3. Predicted Probabilities of Child Poverty by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status, Controlling for Child Age and Sex, Family Structure, Parental Education, Parental Employment, and Language: 2007-2011



One objective of this study was to examine variations in child poverty rates in Michigan among immigrant and racial minority children. Another objective was to assess the extent to which the gaps in child poverty rates between immigrant

and native children and between racial/ethnic minority and non-minority children in Michigan are reduced and/or persist once we account for known socio-demographic, economic, and residential confounders. The following main findings emerged from the analysis. First, slightly more than one in five children in Michigan live in poverty (20.5 percent) and significant gaps in child poverty rates exist between immigrant-born and native-born children and between racial/ethnic groups.

Second, although the racial/ethnic gaps in child poverty persist, the probability of child poverty among Latino children, especially first-generation Latino immigrant children, is significantly reduced after controlling for socio-demographic, parental education, employment and industry of employment, and residence predictors. Using changes in predicted probabilities of child poverty before and after these factors are controlled for, the predicted probability of child poverty decreased from 0.29 to 0.09 (or 70 percent) for third-generation Latino children; 0.41 to 0.10 (or 76 percent) for first-generation Latino immigrant children; and from 0.35 to 0.11 (or 68 percent) for second-generation Latino immigrant children, respectively.

The probability of child poverty for third generation Black immigrant children is also significantly reduced, but the probability of poverty for first- and second-generation Black immigrant children remains the highest and the least reduced once socio-demographic, parental education, parental employment, industry of employment and residence factors are controlled. The predicted probability of child poverty decreased from 0.45 to 0.12 (or 72 percent) for third-generation Latino children; 0.40 to 0.33 (or 17 percent) for first-generation Black immigrant children; and from 0.23 to 0.19 (or 18 percent) for second-generation Black immigrant children, respectively.

The probability of child poverty for White children, especially first-generation and third-generation immigrant children is also significantly reduced. The predicted probability of child poverty decreased from 0.14 to 0.07 (or 50 percent) for third-generation White children; 0.36 to 0.17 (or 53 percent) for first-generation White immigrant children; and from 0.20 to 0.15 (or 21 percent) for second-generation White immigrant children, respectively. In contrast, predicted probabilities of child poverty for Asian children, especially third-generation children significantly increased. The predicted probability of child poverty increased from 0.06 to 0.09 (or 54 percent) for third-generation Asian children; 0.19 to 0.22 (or 19 percent) for first-generation Asian immigrant children; and from 0.13 to 0.15 (or 11 percent) for

second-generation Asian immigrant children, respectively.



Photo by Stephane Bidouze - Shutterstock.com

Third, these results provide insights into why gaps in child poverty remain between immigrant and native children and between children of different racial/ethnic groups in Michigan. These results are consistent with the human capital explanations. Parental education and other human capital predictors explain a substantial portion of variations in child poverty and the gaps in child poverty between immigrant and native children. In particular, parental education is negatively associated with child poverty, once other factors have been controlled. These results also are consistent with economic restructuring explanations, with employment of parents, industry of employment, and metro/nonmetro residence predicting child poverty and in the expected directions, and accounting for much of variations in child poverty between immigrant and native children and between children of different racial/ethnic groups. These results are also consistent with social stratification explanations. Child poverty rates significantly differ by immigrant status and race/ethnicity. Although gaps in child poverty are significantly attenuated for immigrant and non-immigrant children of different racial/ethnic groups, such gaps persist.

Overall, the results in this study have significant policy implications. The gaps in child poverty between immigrant and native children and between racial/ethnic groups are likely to remain and potentially widen as long as the characteristics of their families differ significantly with respect to education, household structure and composition, and employment. One potential way

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Latino Civic Engagement in Michigan

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premise that the practice of civic engagement often starts with the nuclear family and surrounding networks. Because Latinos tend to be family-centered and network oriented, word of mouth can be a powerful agent to ignite and promote ideas and actions related to various societal issues that are part of everyday life. According to the Communication Infrastructure Theory – CIT (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001), there is a system of communication that consists of (1) a storytelling network and (2) a communication action context. The storytelling network consists of persons who interact with each other to stimulate discussion on issues that affect and concern the residents of a neighborhood. Further, the context for action is the set of physical or psychological elements that make it possible for members of a neighborhood to engage each other to form a storytelling network.

Results from this study, shown in Table 1, indicate that Latinos in Michigan fare quite well in face-to-face interactions with their nuclear family. When asked about how often they have dinner with members of the household, Latinos (76%) had the highest rate in eating dinner together “basically every day,” compared to White, Black, and Asian comparison groups. On the other hand, when asked about the frequency of communication via email or internet, Latinos in Michigan fared the lowest (25.2%) in “basically every day” communication via electronic means. Further, Latinos in Michigan rated highest (6.6%) in having no communication via email or internet. This may be a feature of the digital divide that still characterizes the larger society.

These results point to a profile of the Latino population in Michigan that seems to be centered on face-to-face interactions and with little use of electronic means of communication with family and friends. Given the explosion on social media platforms and increases in access to the internet, it is still surprising to see that Latinos lag behind other groups. Especially since many social movements and activist awareness campaigns utilize social media to promote and activate groups to

take action on various issues of interest to communities, including Latinos.

Table 1. Communication Modes with Family and Friends by Race/Ethnicity

Communicate with Friends and Family by Email or Internet						
	Not at all	Less than once a month	Once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Basically every day
Race and ethnicity						
White	1.1%	1.7%	2.5%	14.9%	40.9%	38.9%
Black	2.0%	.8%	3.1%	9.6%	30.6%	53.8%
Latino	6.6%	1.6%	4.3%	28.5%	33.7%	25.2%
Asian	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	18.2%	42.4%	32.0%

Eat Dinner with Members of Your Household						
	Not at all	Less than once a month	Once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Basically every day
Race and ethnicity						
White	1.7%	1.8%	.9%	4.3%	19.7%	71.7%
Black	4.8%	2.5%	1.2%	8.1%	10.9%	72.4%
Latino	2.1%	4.1%	2.4%	6.1%	9.2%	76.0%
Asian	8.8%	3.7%	4.2%	5.9%	7.1%	70.3%

It is important to note that these results are only for adults, perhaps children are more connected through digital media. Using the CIT as a framework, these results are indicative of a community with potential for a strong storytelling network that shares almost daily interaction, but that may have limitations in communicating needs and organizing for action beyond their immediate context. This pattern also may reflect a community that is somewhat closed and difficult to access for outreach.

Engagement of Political Views and Community Issues with Family and Friends

This indicator goes beyond spending time together and keeping communication. It is about making known one’s political views and inclinations or opinions about community issues. This category shows contrasting results from the previous section about engagement with family and friends. Results shown in Table 2 show that Latinos in Michigan have the highest percentage (51.5%) of all racial groups to “not discuss politics with family and friends.” Here we notice civic disengagement about political topics even with family and friends. Following the same pattern, Latinos reported the highest percentage (87.8%) of not expressing opinions about political or community issues over the internet. Asians were in a very close second place (87.7%) in this category

Table 2. Frequency of Political Discussions by Race/Ethnicity

Discuss Politics with Family and Friends						
	Basically every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Not at all
Race and ethnicity						
White	9.5%	18.7%	22.1%	9.7%	17.7%	22.2%
Black	10.2%	11.6%	21.7%	13.1%	11.7%	31.6%
Latino	4.0%	13.9%	5.6%	4.4%	20.5%	51.5%
Asian	1.6%	6.7%	20.3%	7.9%	21.4%	42.2%
Express Opinions About Political or Community Issues on the Internet						
	Basically every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Not at all
Race and ethnicity						
White	1.2%	4.9%	4.7%	4.4%	12.5%	72.2%
Black	.5%	3.0%	2.2%	3.1%	6.3%	84.9%
Latino	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	8.3%	87.8%
Asian	0.0%	3.9%	2.1%	4.9%	1.5%	87.7%

Within the CIT framework, these results show that although Latinos value personal interactions with family and friends, those interactions may not be focused on political or community issues. Again, the storytelling network for Latino

adults in Michigan can have much potential to become a connection between residents and the communities in which they live.

However, there may be lack of motivation or interest that is keeping discussion of community issues or politics in these households. Outreach in this area may require intervention to increase literacy on civic engagement topics and benefits.

Engagement within Neighborhoods

Trust has moved to the foreground of many Latino families in the face of a political climate that is increasingly portraying Latinos as a threat to security and a social problem, especially when it refers to immigration. For Latinos, this political climate can result in isolation and reduction of cohesion within neighborhoods, especially when many Latinos have documentation issues themselves or are closely tied to someone who does. Isolation may become an obstacle to civic engagement and full participation. Further, isolation can result in Latinos becoming basically an invisible population that is not considered or consulted by political leaders on many important policies affecting their families and neighborhoods.

At the neighborhood level, Latinos in Michigan responded highest (7.2%) of all racial/ethnic groups in engaging with neighbors in doing favors (Table 3). However, there was still a large percentage of responses (44.8%) from Latinos that do not engage in exchanging favors in their neighborhoods. A similar pattern appears when examining responses to the frequency of having conversations with neighbors. Latinos in Michigan rated the highest (13.8%) among all the other racial groups for having almost daily communication with their neighbors. Yet, they were also among the highest (44.8%) on not exchanging favors with their neighbors when compared to other groups. Lastly, when asked about trusting other people in their neighborhood, Latinos were among the highest to report trust in some of the people (48.4%) and most of the people (47.3%) in their neighborhood when compared to other major racial/ethnic groups.

Latino Civic Engagement in Michigan

It is interesting to note that none of the Latinos in Michigan reported trusting all of the people in their neighborhoods, while Whites responded highest (24.4%) to this same category. This could be an indication of a population that is segregated. Further, this could be a reflection of the isolation and fear that many Latino families might experience in Michigan due to the anti-immigrant political climate.

Table 3. Trust and Frequency of Relations with Neighbors by Race/Ethnicity

You and Your Neighbors Do Favors for Each Other						
	Not at all	Less than once a month	Once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Basically every day
Race and ethnicity						
White	30.1%	26.9%	13.8%	17.2%	9.2%	2.8%
Black	49.4%	18.5%	6.7%	11.3%	10.4%	3.7%
Latino	44.8%	24.5%	10.7%	8.3%	4.5%	7.2%
Asian	28.7%	30.8%	15.6%	14.5%	8.3%	2.0%

Talk with Any of Your Neighbors						
	Not at all	Less than once a month	Once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Basically every day
Race and ethnicity						
White	12.1%	13.1%	11.5%	24.6%	26.4%	12.2%
Black	20.2%	13.7%	8.7%	17.6%	28.2%	11.5%
Latino	28.8%	9.3%	7.2%	9.9%	31.0%	13.8%
Asian	20.1%	17.6%	8.4%	18.3%	28.0%	7.6%

Trust People in Neighborhood				
	All the people	Most of the people	Some of the people	None of the people
Race and ethnicity				
White	24.4%	44.8%	25.9%	4.9%
Black	2.8%	22.2%	49.9%	25.1%
Latino	0.0%	47.3%	48.4%	4.3%
Asian	15.8%	33.8%	42.4%	8.0%

When considering the CIT framework, these results contribute to the context in which the storytelling occurs. It is readily seen that there might be some difficulty for Latinos to communicate and organize effectively to address issues affecting their families and neighborhoods. Beyond the constraints of time and motivation, Latinos in Michigan may be living in neighborhoods where they are isolated or perhaps discouraged from civic engagement within their neighborhoods. In terms of outreach, these results indicate that it would be extremely important to build relationships that support trust with Latinos communities in Michigan.

Engagement with Political Activities

Political activity is often placed at the center of civic engagement. This measure of engagement has the most available data and immediate interest to public officials. Within the Latino population, there can be many challenges to becoming involved in public decision-making. Building from the previous results presented in this study, it is quite apparent that these challenges are present within Latinos in Michigan given the issues of trust and lack of engagement at the neighborhood level.

This study examined three different indicators of engagement with political activities. The first one asked Latinos to report whether they have bought or boycotted a product or a service for political reasons. This question reflects a level of engagement that is more personal and nested within family and circles of friends because the networks that are activated tend to be connected at a personal level by consumers of a product or service. This category is one where one has most control and is least risk-taking. Latinos in Michigan reported in the second highest rate (13.9%) of having been involved in buying or boycotting a product or service for political motivations.

The next indicator of engagement in political activities asked about contacting a public official at any level of government in the last 12 months. Results show that no Latinos in Michigan reported contacting a public official by visit or otherwise to express an opinion. None of the other racial groups had all responses in the “no” category. Asians

followed closely with 98% of responses in the same category. As could be predicted, Whites had the highest percentage of responses (14.6%) in the “yes” category. The last indicator in this category is the frequency of voting in local elections. At the national level, Latinos tend to have a low voter turnout. Results from this study point out that the same pattern holds in local elections for Latinos in Michigan. Responses showed the second highest percentage (63.3%) for those who never vote. Asians had the highest percentage (69.2%) in the same category. However, Latinos were the group with lowest percentage (9.7%) that reported voting always.

Table 4. Types of Political Actions by Race/Ethnicity

Bought or Boycott Product or Service		
	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	9.5%	18.7%
Black	10.2%	11.6%
Latino	4.0%	13.9%
Asian	1.6%	6.7%

Vote in Local Elections				
	Always vote	Sometimes vote	Rarely vote	Never vote
Race and ethnicity				
White	30.4%	32.9%	13.0%	23.8%
Black	39.1%	27.3%	11.8%	21.8%
Latino	9.7%	21.6%	5.4%	63.3%
Asian	13.2%	12.0%	5.7%	69.2%

Contact or Visit Public Official		
	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	85.4%	14.6%
Black	93.4%	6.6%
Latino	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	98.0%	2.0%

These results indicate that Latinos are only marginally engaged in political activity. Perhaps due to the issue of trust in combination with citizenship issues, Latinos are lagging behind on this indicator. Intervening with outreach activities

in this area of civic engagement can be challenging, but can involve greater inclusion on public meetings and establishing a clear path of communication with public officials through trusted representatives at various levels of local government.

Engagement in Community Organizations

Community engagement is at the cusp of civic engagement and integration. Skerry (2003) proposed a community-centered approach to civic integration that emphasizes a distinction between civic integration and naturalization because naturalization presents an overly narrow view of civic integration. For instance, naturalization does not account for second and third generation civic involvement. The study presents an initiative involving 14 Catholic parishes in predominantly Latino neighborhoods of southwest Chicago. This organization began with renovation of housing but soon partnered with social service agencies to address the needs of the community. Through the formation of neighborhood clubs, community residents addressed issues such as financial planning, credit management, saving for college, etc. The author concludes that such a model creates vested interest among the immigrants who will want to become more active in civic and political arenas.

The last indicator for this study examines the level of engagement in civic organizations by Latino adults in Michigan. This indicator is composed of questions about participation within the past 12 months in organizations across various facets of the community. These include sports or recreation, service or civic, school or neighborhood, church or religious institution, and having an official role or seat on community groups. For sports or recreation, results show that the vast majority (94.2%) of Latinos are not engaged. Comparatively, Latinos are the second highest percentage of all other major racial groups. Black adults reported the highest percentage (97.3%). In the category of school and neighborhood or community association, Latinos rated highest (92.2%) of all groups for not having participated in this kind of organization. As for participation in church or religious organization (beyond attendance to regular religious services), Latinos rated better in participation than any of the other categories with 13% participation rate.

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Table 5. Participation in Organizations by Race/Ethnicity

Sports or Recreation Organization		
	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	89.2%	10.8%
Black	97.3%	2.7%
Latino	94.2%	5.8%
Asian	91.8%	8.2%
Church or Religious Institution – Not including attending services		
	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	81.0%	19.0%
Black	92.0%	8.0%
Latino	87.0%	13.0%
Asian	80.0%	20.0%
School, Neighborhood or Community Association		
	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	86.5%	13.5%
Black	88.6%	11.4%
Latino	92.2%	7.8%
Asian	74.8%	25.2%

“The results further confirm a disengaged profile for Latino adults in Michigan. ... The reasons for this lack of engagement might be linked to trust and/or systemic exclusion.”

Table 5. Continued

	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	92.3%	7.7%
Black	99.1%	.9%
Latino	95.7%	4.3%
Asian	92.4%	7.6%
Officer or Service Position on Any Committees or Organization		
	No	Yes
Race and ethnicity		
White	87.9%	12.1%
Black	93.9%	6.1%
Latino	97.9%	2.1%
Asian	90.8%	9.2%

Compared to the other major racial groups, Latinos reported the second lowest participation rate. Examining participation in civic or service organizations, again, Latinos have the second lowest rate (4.3%) of participation, after Blacks (.9%). Lastly, the survey asked about formal participation as an officer or serve as member of a committee or a community organization. Latinos were the most disengaged group with 97.9% not involved.

These results further confirm a disengaged profile for Latino adults in Michigan. Once again, it is apparent that Latinos have the highest participation in church or religious organizations, which tend to be more trusted institutions and, for many, they are part of their usual activities. It is surprising that Latino adults are not more engaged in sports activities; however, there may be a time factor that prevents active engagement or lack of facilities to engage in sports they would be interested in practicing. The more formalized the participation, as in the case of schools and service in community organizations, the greater disengagement on the part of Latinos. The reasons for this lack of engagement

might be linked to trust and/or systemic exclusion. To improve this area of civic engagement for Latinos, outreach similar in approach to the one outlined by Skerry (2003) is needed.

Conclusion

Civic engagement for Latino adults in Michigan can be full of challenges and obstacles. This study revealed that this is certainly the case for Latino adults in Michigan. These obstacles can include structural factors such as, isolation, lack of trust, time and work constraints, low technology use, and low participation in community organizations. Social and psychological factors may include fear of government, literacy, language, cultural values, prejudice and discrimination. Given ongoing negative events, such as immigration raids and anti-immigration protests, it is comprehensible that there is likely distrust of government on the part of Latino adults in Michigan.

To actively participate in a democracy, a person or group needs to have motivation, capacity, and means. Motivation is already intrinsic when framed as issues that matter to livelihood and community. With motivation, one can open the door to capacity via outreach initiatives that are focused on seeking practical solutions that are culturally adapted to the Latino strengths and constraints. The means to achieve active civic engagement for Latinos is in constructing a culturally grounded definition of networks, as well as, strengthening, connecting, and expanding these networks, so that there can be more discussion and thought into finding solutions to the issues facing our communities. 

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Child Poverty Among Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Families in Michigan

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to reduce such gaps would be to design policy and programs aimed at improving the education, skills, and on job-training of immigrant parents. This is crucial for the economic well-being of most families because the economy has been restructured from an extractive and manufacturing economy to information and service economy that requires better education and skills. However, even such a policy would not be enough as long as there remain social, economic, and political structural barriers that prevent upward mobility among disadvantaged population groups. Reducing place inequality in terms of economic opportunities in certain areas of the state; creating better job opportunities with steady and living wages; and reducing social inequalities between different population groups ought to be considered priorities for a growing diverse population. Without such structural and systemic policy changes, existing gaps in child in child poverty between immigrant and native

children and between racial/ethnic groups will continue to restrict progress and upward mobility of many future generations. 

¹ A longer version of this article includes references and all tables and is available online at www.jsri.msu.edu/publications/occasional-papers.

²The average proportions of male children and the average proportion of children in each age category were used in the computation of predicted probabilities. Predicted probabilities were computed using coefficients in the logistic regression model that included immigrant status, race/ethnicity, child's age groups and sex and by using the formula: $[\exp(\beta)/(1+\exp(\beta))]$.

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