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NEXO

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



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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.

Published by:

Julian Samora Research Institute
University Outreach and Engagement
Michigan State University
219 S. Harrison Road, Room 93
East Lansing, MI 48824

Phone: (517) 432-1317

Fax: (517) 432-2221

Email: jsamorai@msu.edu

Web: jsri.msu.edu

Facebook: facebook.com/JSRIMSU

Twitter: twitter.com/JSRIMSU

Interim Director, Julian Samora Research Institute
Francisco A. Villarruel

Editor
Francisco A. Villarruel

Contributing Writers
*Manuel Chavez
Richard Cruz Dávila
Jean Kayitsinga
Yoshira Donaji Macías Mejía
Rubén O. Martínez
Marcelo E. Siles*

Copy Editor
Patricia Mish

Graphic Designer
Mike Davis

Letter From the Acting Director

by Francisco A. Villarruel, Ph.D.

January 1, 2023. For many across the world, the start of this New Year was a moment of hope. Concerns of COVID, while still a global issue, had substantially declined. The labor market was healthy. The U.S. Congress saw the highest number of federal Latino legislators elected to both House and Senate, as well as an increased number of state and local public officials. There were, also, some troubling concerns. Inflation and interest rates continued to increase. Issues of immigration, hate crime, and public safety continue to be matters of local and national concern.

But the reality of this “new year” and challenges faced was redefined on February 13, 2023, when eight MSU students were shot, three fatally. The campus community and the entire state of Michigan were shocked by this tragic event. The impact on students, staff, faculty, and community members is nothing that can be adequately described. But it is a lesson for us to step back and reflect upon.

The outpouring of support exceeded anything imaginable. Random acts of kindness inundated the campus and surrounding communities (and those students wounded or the families who lost their loved ones) to help begin the healing process. First responders, health care and mental health professionals have also benefited from the support of residents in Michigan as well as throughout the nation.

There are multiple reasons for this reflection as we continue to address the needs of Latino communities in Michigan and the Midwest. First and most important, to thank everyone for their prayers, thoughts, and support offered to the students, staff, faculty, and multiple communities throughout Michigan and the world that have ties/were impacted by this tragedy. While it is hoped that no other community must experience these types of tragic events, it is consoling to know that the nation does offer unequivocal support when needs arise.

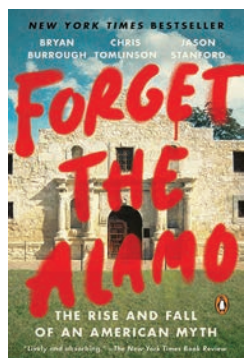
By the same token, it reinforces the work that community agencies, partners, JSRI researchers, and policy professionals have engaged in for decades—strengthening the fabric of our communities and families. The needs of our communities are multifaceted yet interconnected. While we might have priorities based on the agencies or professional identities that we have, no need is more important than other needs—they are interconnected. We need to continue our quest to elevate the concerns and issues that impact the viability of individuals and communities.

Our bilingual and bicultural communities and networks place us at the forefront of addressing the dynamic demographic changes occurring throughout the United States. The limitless options available are constrained only by our challenge of time and creating sustainable interconnected initiatives, with the participation of communities and persons across the lifespan who bring both lived experiences and expertise addressing social and environmental challenges that impact well-being. Collectively, we can bring preeminent intellectual and transformative forces together to improve Latino well-being throughout Michigan and the Midwest.

In the words of our esteemed relative, César Chávez: *Sí, se puede!!!!*



Francisco A. Villarruel, Interim
Director, Julian Samora
Research Institute



Forget the Alamo: The Rise and Fall of an American Myth

by Bryan Burrough, Chris Tomlinson, and Jason Stanford. (2021). Penguin Press

Reviewed by Rubén O. Martinez, Ph.D.

The view that victors get to write history is a common aphorism. Another asserts that elites make and write a nation's history. Both apply to the story of Texas. *Forget the Alamo: The Rise and Fall of an American Myth* is about the battle that occurred at Mission San Antonio de Valero, known as the Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas, in 1836 and its role in the founding of the Republic of Texas and the myths of heroic American Texans that developed and shaped the identities and lives of the people of Texas into the present. The creation of the Texas myth exalted Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William Travis, and Sam Houston as the principal heroes among the many who, it is said, fought for liberty and freedom and died at the Battle of the Alamo. The book consists of an introduction, 21 chapters, an epilogue, and an afterword. It includes endnotes, a bibliography, and an index, all of which are useful to readers. The authors, Burrough, Tomlinson, and Stanford, review the events that led up to the Battle of the Alamo, the traditional myths that arose over time and their hegemonic influence in the subordination of Tejanos (Texas Mexicans), challenges to the myths, and contemporary controversies over the symbolic meaning of the Alamo.

Historically, the Battle of the Alamo occurred in the years following the independence of Mexico from Spain and the political struggles that ensued between supporters of federalism and supporters of a strong central government. When Mexico organized its states, Texas became part of the state of Coahuila Texas. An important issue at the time and central to American immigrants moving into Texas was slavery. In 1827, the legislature in Coahuila Texas banned the admission of slaves and granted freedom to all children born to slaves. In 1829, Mexico banned slavery. American immigrants, most from the American South, however, wanted to produce cotton and believed it was impossible to do so without the institution of slavery. Tensions over slavery led Mexico to prohibit further immigration from the U.S. in 1830. American immigration had begun formally and slowly under Moses Austin in 1820, but demand for cotton and "Texas fever" led to large numbers of illegal American immigrants moving into Coahuila Texas. The eventual military success of the Americans and Tejanos who sided with them led to the establishment of the Republic of Texas in 1836. Although not consistently recognized by Mexico, the republic lasted until 1846, when the U.S. admitted Texas into the union of states.

What occurred at the Battle of the Alamo gave rise to distorted historical accounts by American writers and to public myths about the men who fought and died there. Indeed, beyond historical accounts, the Battle of the Alamo has been the setting for numerous novels and poems published over the hundred years following the battle. Men like Bowie, Travis, and Crockett are portrayed as heroes who died fighting for liberty and freedom against a tyrannical Mexican leader

and government. The authors acknowledge and describe the shady pasts and personal activities of these men who cared more about maintaining slavery than about liberty and freedom, unless it meant the liberty and freedom to maintain the institution of slavery in Texas.

When filmmaking began to take hold early in the 20th century, those that included portrayals of the Battle of the Alamo promoted the myths and negative stereotypes of Mexicans found in earlier printed accounts, novels, and poems. Early challenges to the traditional accounts, including those by Adina de Zavala at the turn of the 20th century, sought historical revision and inclusion of Tejanos who died at the Alamo. Conflicts over the preservation of the buildings and control of the Alamo resulted in the Texan perspective remaining dominant primarily through the work of the Daughters of the Texas Republic. The Alamo not only became a museum that promoted the historical myths, it also became the site of continuous student group visits where they learned the myths and began to see themselves as "winners" and "losers." In schools, teachers taught students, seventh graders in particular, the creation and heroic myths that shaped their Texan identities. Myths that were expressions of white supremacy and Mexican inferiority.

Although there were a small number of lone voices over the decades that either provided missing details about the Battle or corrected interpretations that had become mainstream in Texas and across the nation with the advent of movies and television series, it was not until the decades following the civil rights movement, when Chicanos and Chicanas began entering colleges and universities, that the number of more critical and more accurate historical works began to appear in print and film. During this same period, the market, or markets, for Alamo artifacts and paraphernalia expanded, with collectors willing to pay large sums of money for items. One of those collectors is singer-songwriter Phil Collins, formerly with the well-known group Genesis. According to the authors, Collins apparently believes that in a previous life he was at the Alamo. He has amassed the largest collection of Alamo artifacts and was willing to donate it to the Alamo on the condition that appropriate facilities be provided. The authors discuss how the authenticity of some of the items in Collins' collection have come under scrutiny. Further, his collection is surrounded by contemporary controversies over the accounts of the events at the Battle of the Alamo and the importance of including the plurality of muted voices of the peoples in the region, namely Tejanos, Native Americans, and African Americans.

The authors provide a fascinating and much-needed account of the events and historical meaning of the Battle of the Alamo up through the present. They are proud Texans with considerable experience as professional writers. They provide valuable information on the current controversies over the interpretations and meaning of the Alamo. Their work is especially important at this time given the moral panic that is occurring over what students should and should not be taught in schools. Currently, there is a driving concern that students should not be made to feel uncomfortable by lessons on American racism. Linked to this concern is a surge in the banning of books that targets works on racism, abortion, LGBTQ, and other social issues. Most readers would not be surprised to learn that Texas leads the nation in the number of books banned during the current surge. This book is a must and easy read for readers interested in understanding the ideological dimensions of conquest American style.

Competing and Contesting:

ADDRESSING THE NEW REALITIES OF FRAGMENTATION OF LATINO MEDIA AND MARKETS

By Manuel Chavez, Ph.D.

A conference organized by the Association for Latino Media, Markets and Communication Research (ALMMACR). Manuel Chavez, a professor in the MSU School of Journalism, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, and the current president of ALMMACR, and Miguel Cabañas, an associate professor in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies, will be coordinating the event.

The Association for Latino Media, Marketing and Communication Research is organizing its 8th conference for April 19-20, 2024, at Michigan State University in East Lansing. The conference will be hosted by the College of Communication Arts and Sciences, the School of Journalism, and other academic units of MSU. The Julian Samora Research Institute is one of the MSU institutional sponsors of this important event. The conference follows active and strong online conferences that ALMMACR organized in the two years during the pandemic and seven previous international conferences hosted over the past 15 years. This biennial conference is organized and supported by a group of scholars and institutions that include: Texas Tech University, Florida State University, University of California at Riverside, Texas State University, University of Texas at Arlington, California State University at San Diego, and Florida International University among others. ALMMACR, which is celebrating its 15-year anniversary, is an organization dedicated to emboldening the Latino community through media and communication research and professional initiatives.

Despite the richness and complexity of the Latino media, based on culture, language, and national origin, media scholars consider issues in the context of a wide spectrum of print, electronic, and digital dissemination of content to inform, communicate, and entertain. Similarly, researchers pay attention to the nature of the political economy of media industries and the market dynamics of consumption, advertising, and marketing. Within this wide framework is the study of news production in newspapers, TV and radio broadcasting, and documentaries that inform the public about salient issues impacting the entire country. Media and social science scholars also conduct studies about how government agencies, political actors, and corporations communicate with the Latino community. At stake are topics that range from health, politics and policies, education, housing, poverty, crime, culture, language, music, environment, science, migration, to law—and of course, how Latino communities are included or excluded from critical processes.

As media formats have evolved, the production, representation, and reception have also shifted. First, the presence of Latinos in the ownership and production of media technologies and content is scarce and limited, certainly not in proportion to the large size of Latino communities. Secondly, representation is

also limited and continues, in many cases, to be stereotyped and biased—no matter the medium used. And thirdly, Latino audiences have moved in social media, as most of the population, from Facebook to Twitter to Instagram to TikTok to learn about information and news. On the last point, behind the anonymity in social media there has been a continuing flow of misinformation and disinformation that have impacted how rational, factual, and truthful information has been shared, including issues of health and political participation.

This will be our first face-to-face conference since 2019 and comes after two successful online conferences during the COVID pandemic. The pandemic not only led to significant political and economic transformations that disproportionately impacted the Latino community, but also accelerated communication technology growth to fragment the mediascape of the 2020s. While originally the conference was scheduled for 2023, the tragic violent incident of February 13 on the MSU campus caused the ALMMACR board to postpone the conference to 2024.

The 8th ALMMACR Hispanic/Latino Media, Communication & Marketing International Conference, titled: *Competing and Contesting: Addressing the New Realities of Fragmentation of Latino Media and Markets*, will bring together scholars, industry professionals, community leaders, and students to assess these issues and formulate solutions. In other words, the conference is not only to share academic research findings but to move those to the level of application to enable a prosperous and thriving Latino community.

Four distinctive characteristics of this conference include: participation by professionals working in Latino media organizations or working for large media corporations serving the Latino community; scholarly research contributions from U.S.-based and international researchers; graduate and undergraduate student involvement; and the input from the community leaders. These legacies will be sustained in the 2024 conference with panels and keynote addresses featuring industry professionals, participation by diverse researchers, special panels, workshops, and even career advising sessions for student attendees.

Very importantly, the study of Latino media permeates multiple academic disciplines such as political science, communication, journalism, advertising, marketing, the arts and humanities, sociology, economics, health, law, and education among others. The conference is then interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary and will examine six distinctive but interrelated areas of communication:

1. Communications that investigate the processes of sharing information to Latino communities that impact the communities



AS MEDIA FORMATS HAVE EVOLVED, THE PRODUCTION, REPRESENTATION, AND RECEPTION HAVE ALSO SHIFTED. FIRST, THE PRESENCE OF LATINOS IN THE OWNERSHIP AND PRODUCTION OF MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES AND CONTENT IS SCARCE AND LIMITED, CERTAINLY NOT IN PROPORTION TO THE LARGE SIZE OF LATINO COMMUNITIES.



and its members either directly or indirectly. This relates to specific issues associated with Latino-oriented communication and media, health, strategic, political, and scientific communication. Also, this area studies how risk and crisis are presented to our communities as in the recent pandemic.

2. Advertising, Marketing, and Public Relations: how media companies operationalize costs associated with Latino markets based on location, age, education, gender, and language usage. Representation in media advertising based in print, broadcasting, or digital platforms. Latino branding and marketing decisions and the business and economics of media companies. Latino presence and participation in public relations strategies, in both the public and private sectors.

3. Journalism Studies examining the production and impacts of news across different platforms including print, broadcasting, and digital. The study of news dissemination by Spanish-language and bilingual media, and the study of how those news media articles frame issues such as immigration, education, health, culture, and political representation and participation. Journalism also concentrates on environmental information and news production during crises.

4. Social and political issues that focus on how these important topics are presented (or not) in main media organizations by looking at sources, narratives, and framing. This area examines more closely how other media formats as documentaries and cinema portray issues such as immigration, education, political participation, and representation.

5. Media Studies examining the rapid change of media companies due to technological advances, economics, and regulation, and how those impact content. This area of communication seeks to understand informatics, interaction between users and applications; legacy and emergent media historical patterns; popular culture; and critical/cultural studies.

6. Latino representation in the academy and professional fields related to communication and markets looks into issues related to recruitment and retention in higher education, the hiring practices and glass ceilings across industries of Latino talent, and the strategies to gain more space and influence.

This conference aims to offer an assessment of the new conditions, identifying opportunities to bridge gaps for the benefit of Latino media audiences and communities. We hope you join us for this dynamic event amplifying the myriad of perspectives for and from the Latino community! For more information, please contact Prof. Manuel (Manny) Chavez at chavezml@msu.edu or Prof. Miguel Cabañas at mcaban@msu.edu. 📧

Ethnoracial Minority Group Struggles for a Quality Education:

Desegregation and Multicultural Education

By Rubén O. Martínez, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

Next to the family, formal education is the most important socialization institution of our nation's youth. From its beginnings, public education in the United States has been shaped by social stratification processes, especially classism, racism, and sexism, leading to struggles by marginalized populations for the expansion of access to inclusive schools with effective educational programs. The struggle for equality in public education by ethnoracial minorities has occurred in two overlapping long-term phases: 1) desegregation of public education, and 2) inclusion in the curriculum.

Early efforts to desegregate public education began in the early decades of the 20th century. Following

gains that culminated, at least in the legal arena, with the decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education Topeka*, the struggle turned to the quality of education received by students. During the civil rights movement ethnoracial minority groups pressed for inclusion in the curricula of schools, colleges, and universities. In this historical phase, demands led to the development and implementation of multicultural education curricula and ethnic studies programs. In the late 1960s, courses and programs in Black and Chicano Studies began to be offered at colleges and universities. Courses provided content on these populations that had been left out of the curriculum, and programs promoted the production of knowledge that shed light on the many institutional mechanisms and processes that maintained their subordination.



THE STRUGGLE TO DESEGREGATE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Perhaps the earliest successful challenge to racial segregation in the public schools was *Maestas v. George H. Shone* in 1914 in Alamosa, Colorado, where “Mexican” and “American” students were forced to attend separate schools. In the Southwest at the time, “Mexican schools” were commonplace purportedly to promote the Americanization of the students. Prominent at the time was the idea of the “melting pot,” which held that all immigrants could be transformed into “Americans.” It did not recognize that Native Peoples, Africans, and Mexicans were conquered peoples that entered the United States by force.

Alamosa at the time was divided by railroad tracks into the north side and the south side, with most white Americans living on the north side. “Mexican” students were forced to attend the school on the south side of the tracks. The Maestas family lived north of the tracks but Miguel, a 10 year-old, was forced to cross the tracks to attend school, something his father considered dangerous. A lawsuit was filed in 1913, and in 1914, District Court Judge Charles Holbrook ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, Maestas and others, and ordered the school board and the superintendent to allow students to attend the public school that was most convenient to their homes.

Sixteen years later, in 1930, in Lemon Grove, California, the school board decided, with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and the PTA, to build a “special school for Mexicans,” citing overcrowding, sanitary, and moral problems created by Mexican students at the school they had been attending with white students. Without informing Mexican American parents of what was to happen, in January, 1931, their students were not allowed to enter the school building they had attended during the fall semester. Instead, they were told their students were to attend a two-room building, the Americanization school, that looked like a barn and where inferior educational programs were provided. The majority of parents refused to send their students to the “caballeriza,” or barnyard, as it came to be known in the Mexican American community. Instead, the parents organized and formed the Lemon Grove Neighbors Committee and sought community and legal assistance to challenge the school board’s right to build and maintain a separate school for Mexican American children. Although the students did initially attend the separate school, the case was filed against the school board in the Superior Court of San Diego County with Roberto Alvarez, a student, selected to be the representative of the students. The case mobilized both Mexican American and white American communities in southern California, with a bill to legalize the segregation of “Mexican” students introduced in the California State Assembly that ultimately failed. Legal counsel for the plaintiffs held that school segregation violated California law, which allowed the separation and segregation of Japanese, Indian, Chinese, and Mongolian students but did not include Mexican Americans, who were considered “white.” On March 30, 1931, Judge Claude Chambers ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and against the school board, holding that a few students could be separated for special

instruction, but the separation of Mexican students as a class was a blatant act of segregation that violated California law. In his view, the mingling of Mexican American students with white American students facilitated their acquisition of the English language. Judge Chambers ordered the immediate reinstatement of the Mexican American students at the main school.

The 1930s was a period when African Americans also challenged racial segregation in schools and colleges by filing complaints in the courts, but none of the cases were successful. Such was the situation in Texas, where Mexican Americans challenged school segregation in *Del Rio ISD v. Salvatierra*. In 1930 the City of Del Rio passed a bond measure to fund the construction of new school buildings at the Intermediate School District. At the time, Mexican American students attended a segregated elementary school known as the Mexican school. In *Salvatierra* the plaintiffs were successful in obtaining a court injunction preventing the ISD from entering into contracts to construct the buildings, on the grounds that they would be used to continue segregation. On appeal, however, the ISD was successful in having the injunction dissolved. The court in this case held that the plaintiffs had not demonstrated that the board intended to put the proposed buildings to the unlawful use of race segregation. The board had denied that such was its intent.

Following *Salvatierra*, the desegregation of public education moved slowly. It was in the 1940s that school segregation challenges by Mexican Americans were based on violations of the 14th Amendment (1868) to the U.S. Constitution, which provided equal protection and other rights to citizens. The 14th Amendment holds that:

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws (Cornell Law School, (n.d.), para. 1).

In 1947, the case *Mendez v. Westminster* made significant progress in the struggle for desegregation with a ruling by the first federal district court to address desegregation in public education. The plaintiffs filed a complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California which granted injunctive relief. The case involved a class action suit against the Westminster, Garden Grove, and El Modeno school districts, and the Santa Ana City Schools in Orange County, California. The plaintiffs alleged that some 5,000 Mexican American and students of Latin descent were denied the equal protection of laws through systematic class discrimination against the petitioning elementary school children.

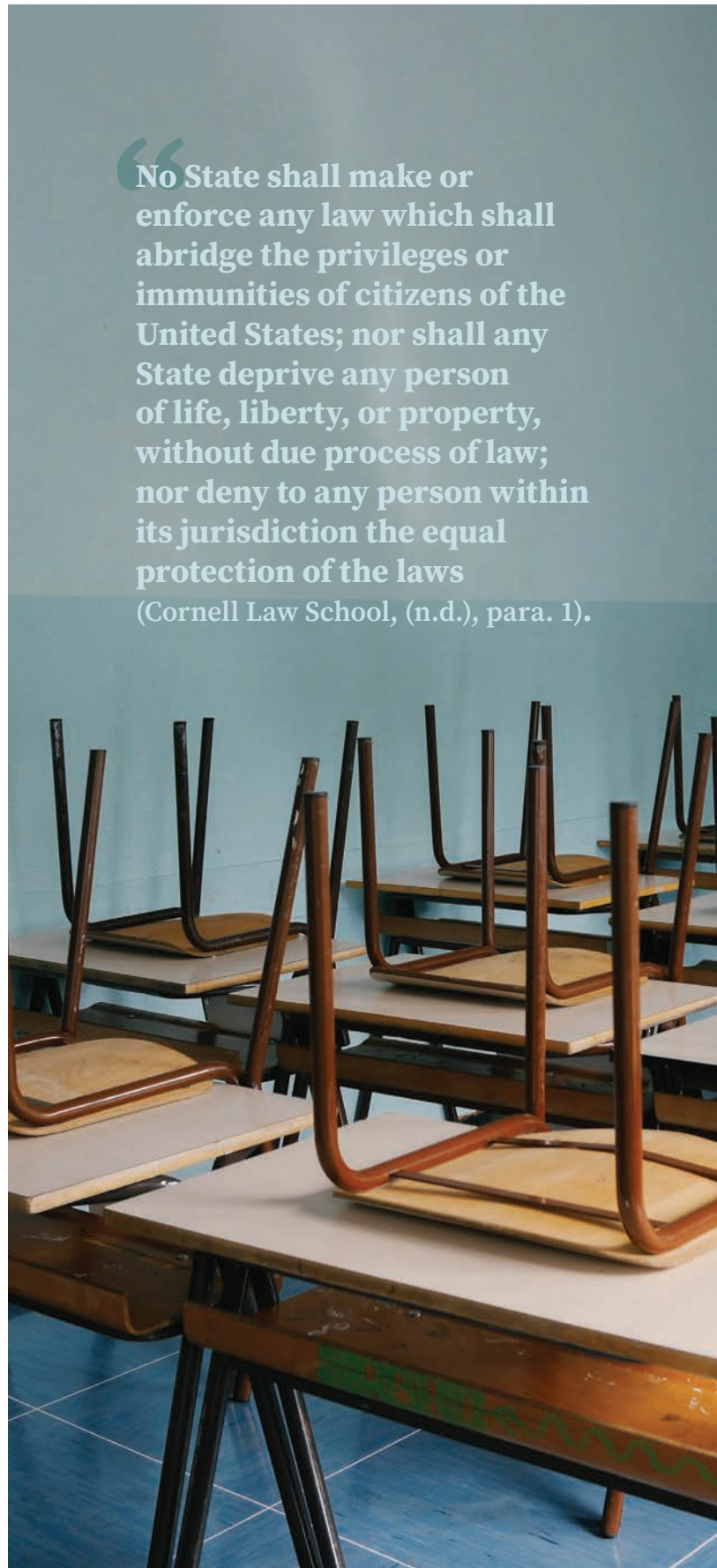
The court held that providing separate schools for these students did not meet the equal protection of the laws of California pertaining to public education. The court also held that Spanish-speaking students were “retarded” in their learning of English due to segregation, which limited exposure to its use. Further, the court held that segregation fostered antagonism in the

children and suggested inferiority where none existed. The school districts appealed the lower court's decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on the grounds that the lower court did not have jurisdiction. The motion was dismissed by the appeals court. As such, *Mendez* was the first case to successfully challenge the constitutionality of public segregation under the 14th Amendment. What is little known about the *Mendez* case is that Robert L. Carter and Thurgood Marshall, both African American attorneys with the NAACP, were among those that represented the plaintiffs and would be involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* case a few years later.

Following the ruling in *Mendez*, Mexican Americans in Texas challenged the arbitrary segregation practices of local school districts by filing against the State Board of Education in U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas, Austin, Texas, on the grounds that it violated the 14th Amendment. The case, *Minerva Delgado, et al., v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County, Texas, et al.*, resulted in Civil Action No. 388 on June 15, 1948. The court accepted a motion by the State Board of Education and its members to drop one of two clauses in the complaint then ruled on the remaining clause. Attorneys for the plaintiffs argued that the school districts had prohibited Mexican American children from attending public school with white children in violation of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. The court restrained and enjoined the state superintendent of instruction from segregating students of Mexican and Latin descent in classes and schools separate from white students. It did allow separate classes on the same campus for Spanish-speaking students in the first grade who, on scientific and standardized tests, could not demonstrate sufficient command of the English language to understand instruction of the subject matter. Since Texas law allowed the segregation of African American students, the custom and practice of racially segregating students continued. As regards Mexican Americans, the de facto segregation of students also continued in the local school districts.

Six years later, in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed the issue of the racial segregation of "Negro" children in public education in *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka*. This case involved both Robert L. Carter and Thurgood Marshall, the attorneys who had prominent roles in pleading the case of the plaintiffs in *Mendez v. Westminster* in 1947. It is commonly believed that the 1954 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court was the first successful case in desegregating public education, and it was at the national level, but the decision was heavily based on the decision in *Mendez*, in which Carter and Marshall had honed their argument. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the court did not address the merits of *Plessey v. Ferguson*, the case in which, in 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed "separate but equal" segregation by race. In 1954, the court held "that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Because court decisions did not always lead immediately to the desegregation of school districts, demands for their implementation gave rise to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which included demands for multicultural education.

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(Cornell Law School, (n.d.), para. 1).



MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Multicultural education focuses on providing equal educational opportunities for all students by transforming public school curricula to reflect the historical experiences and contributions of historically oppressed ethnoracial populations, namely Native Americans, African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, and Asian Americans. James Banks (2016), a leading scholar in the field of multicultural education, identified the following five key components of multicultural education:

“1) content integration, 2) the knowledge construction process, 3) an equity pedagogy, 4) prejudice reduction, and 5) empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 4).

Implementation of these components is a process that takes time, but schools that have only added relevant historical and cultural events on a limited and superficial basis continue within a monocultural framework that adds to rather than transforms the curriculum. Perhaps the lack of progress can be attributed to two major trends in the politics of education: 1) conservative politically motivated criticisms of multicultural education and 2) the use of school performance standards that transformed schooling processes into teaching to the tests.

Conservative politically motivated critics of multicultural education assume that the education process is politically neutral, cast proponents as radical extremists, claim that it lowers academic rigor and expectations, and assert that it leads to divisions rather than a unified American culture. These criticisms stem from ideological and political views rather than from research studies and undergird the current moral panic that attacks and bans inclusion of diverse histories in the curricula of public schools and universities. These panics are part of today’s broader nativist social movement that responds to growing economic inequality by mobilizing the general disenchantment that attends it to scapegoat immigrants, promote white supremacist views, and support an authoritarian regime.

The emphasis on standards and accountability processes in public education stems from the 1983 report titled *A Nation at Risk* that raised concerns about the nation’s mediocre educational performance and its declining preeminence in “commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation” (p. 5). This perspective was part of the broad movement emphasizing free market fundamentalism and the importance of centering a philosophy of entrepreneurialism in the education process. Together the many threads that have constituted the standards and accountability reform movement have generally failed to improve student performance, especially among ethnoracial minority students.

Today, the nation is at political risk due to rising wealth inequality, downward economic mobility experienced by middle-class families, and a long period of wage stagnation among working-class families. In this context, multicultural education becomes all the more important if the aim is to achieve a unified nation, but it cannot be one framed by the

“melting pot” ideology of yesteryear nor the Americanization schools of the days of segregation. It has to be on the basis of respect for cultural pluralism. The University of Washington College of Education states on its website that “An important goal of multicultural education is to help students acquire the knowledge and commitments needed to make reflective decisions and to take personal, social, and civic action to promote democracy and democratic living” (para. 11). To this can be added the results of a host of research studies that demonstrate the positive outcomes of multicultural education.

Gay (2003) notes that multicultural education is a necessary component of a quality education and should be a central part of the curriculum. A comprehensive multicultural education program includes “policy, learning climate, instructional delivery, and evaluation” (p. 31). Comprehensive implementation requires making connections between multicultural education and subject-based curricula, and must go beyond history, literature, art, music, and social studies to include math and science. In the process, students learn to think critically and analytically. Importantly, an accurate and inclusive history of the nation must be taught to students. In this way, education has relevance for all students. Too often, the Eurocentric perspective taught to students leads many to disengage from academic learning. Further, students must be taught about racism and other institutionalized processes that marginalize selected populations if they are to envision and commit to a more equitable and just social order.

In a review of the literature, Sleeter (2011) found that programs that are centered on the viewpoints and experiences of ethnoracial minorities have a positive impact on academic achievement and students’ sense of agency, including white students, who show improvements in racial attitudes. Research shows that students who identify with their ethnic origin have higher levels of self-esteem, a stronger sense of purpose in life, and higher levels of self-confidence (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). It makes sense that students who are offered curricula that have relevance for them would engage with academic learning, perform well academically, and graduate from high school. One of the most consistent findings by Sleeter’s (2011) review of the literature is that ethnic studies courses have a positive impact on reducing students’ biases. Such courses may initially be emotionally challenging for some students, especially white students who have not previously grappled with the issues, but as they take more courses, they experience significant gains in the reduction of intolerance.

In the Tucson Unified School District, (TUSD) students were offered courses through the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program established in 1998 in response to a desegregation court order to improve the academic performance of ethnoracial minority students. The desegregation case dated back to 1974 when Mexican Americans and African Americans filed class action suits. As a result, TUSD was under federal oversight until 2022 for discriminatory school segregation and ordered to design and implement a unified plan. The MAS program yielded significant positive outcomes

for students. However, in 2009, conservative politicians launched a coordinated legislative attack on the program and banned it in 2010, with the school board closing it in 2012.

A study by Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, and Marx (2014) on the effectiveness of the MAS program was conducted at the request of the superintendent. The Cabrera et al. study shows that students who participated in the program were more likely to be low income, English language learners, and less likely to be designated as special education students than non-MAS students. Further, those who participated in the program beyond one course and who had failed the state's standardized tests were more likely to pass the tests upon retaking them and were significantly more likely to graduate from high school than counterparts who did not take MAS courses. Beginning in AY 2013-2014, the TUSD began offering newly developed culturally relevant courses reflecting the history and experiences of Mexican Americans and African Americans, but they are different from those of the program that was eliminated in 2012.

Finally, a recent study of the longer-run effects of a yearlong, pilot ethnic studies course offered to 9th graders in the San Francisco Unified School District concluded that there were significant positive outcomes for students who took the course. Students assigned to the course had a grade point average of 2.0 or lower in the 8th grade. Students were given the option of opting out of the course. The study, based on five cohorts that took the course in AY 2011-12 through 2013-14 in three of five high schools that piloted the course, found that participants in the course significantly increased their attendance throughout high school, their probability of graduating, and the likelihood of matriculating at a college or university. Unlike other studies that had found positive effects in the short run from participating in these courses and programs, this study provides findings on the longer-run effects on students.

CONCLUSION

Today there is a crisis in public education. Despite decades of education reform movements, poor student performance continues to raise serious concerns in the public arena. Worse yet, there is a resurgence of conservative efforts to censor the education of students in public schools and to ban books that teach about racism, the limits of capitalism, and the oppression of persons who differ from heteronormative norms. There is a conservative populist movement that openly attacks the principles of democracy, appeals to emotions over objective facts, organizes misinformation campaigns using social media, promotes violence against those with ideas that differ from those of the movement, as well as white supremacy, misogynistic, and homophobic views. Not only are these dangerous ideas, they have engendered a dangerous period for the nation as a whole. Rather than moving the nation toward greater equality and justice, they promote neofascist ideas that halt social progress and can literally take the country backwards.

It is important that approaches for addressing the low levels of

student performance be firmly grounded in the principles of multicultural education. As the nation becomes more diverse, it is important that unity be achieved through the values of equity, inclusion, and social justice, and the principles of democracy. The unifying moral order called for by conservatives can only be achieved by embracing and respecting cultural pluralism on one level, and promoting the values of equity, inclusion, and justice on another. Multicultural education emphasizes all of these values while closing the achievement gaps in education, reducing biases and stereotypes, and promoting civic engagement in a democratic society. Formal education has the tasks of promoting personal growth among students, increasing their stock of knowledge, and their technical skills. Multicultural education does that while preparing students for an increasingly diverse and global period in human existence. 🌍

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Confronting Anti-Blackness and Anti-Indigeneity in Latina/o Communities

By Richard Cruz Dávila, Ph.D.

On October 9, 2022, a series of leaked audio recordings of a conversation that took place on October 18, 2021, between three Democratic Los Angeles City Council members and the president of the L.A. County Federation of Labor drew national attention because of the vulgar and openly racist nature of the conversation. With a redrawing of council district lines looming, on that day then-City Council President Nury Martinez and Councilmembers Gil Cedillo and Kevin de León met with then-President of the Federation, Ron Herrera, to discuss strategy for consolidating Latina/o political power in the city. As the leaked recordings reveal, over the course of the conversation participants made anti-Semitic, homophobic, and racist remarks, the most frequently reported of which targeted African American and Mexican Indigenous communities.



PHOTO BY RODNAE PRODUCTIONS / PEXELS.COM

Martinez, whose comments in the recording were perhaps the most egregious, initially resigned the presidency of the City Council on October 10, and, after continued pressure, resigned her City Council seat on October 12. Herrera likewise resigned as president of the Federation of Labor on October 10. Neither Cedillo nor de León resigned their council seats despite immense pressure—Cedillo, who lost his bid for reelection in 2022, completed his term in December of 2022, while de León remains a member of City Council. Beyond exposing the fault lines in Los Angeles city politics, though, the recordings also exposed the ugliness of anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in Latina/o communities more broadly. This article thus seeks to explain and confront Latina/o anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity.

While these recordings inevitably sparked outrage, there are several aspects of the public discourse that followed that are worth considering more closely. First is the question of whether Latina/os are even capable of racism. Shortly after the recordings were released, a senior scholar on a Latina/o-focused listserv argued that Latina/os, as historical victims of racism, cannot themselves be racist. This argument rests upon at least two presumptions: 1) that Latina/os are monolithic; and 2) that Latina/os have not and will not achieve a requisite measure of power for prejudices to rise to the level of racism. The first presumption is easily dismissed: Latina/os in the United States are shaped by highly specific regional and national histories, complicated by local class structures and racial stratifications, that shape how they interact with their neighbors. Any attempt to regard these populations as monolithic is thus doomed to fail. The second presumption reveals an attempt on the part of the poster, whether intentionally or not, to disregard some Latina/os' comparative proximity to whiteness, and the weaponization of such against African Americans and darker-skinned Latina/os.

Anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in the U.S. are related at least in part to the racial stratifications of Latin American countries, in which those of “pure” European ancestry typically occupy the highest levels of each country’s racial hierarchy. These hierarchies vary in specifics, but typically those marked as Black or Indigenous occupy the lowest strata. In the U.S., these hierarchies resonate with a system of racial stratification that prizes whiteness first of all and rewards those best able to assimilate to whiteness. Historically, this has included the Irish, Italians, and other Europeans who were initially excluded from, but eventually assimilated into whiteness—though “assimilated” here obscures the extent to which this meant, in effect, adopting dominant views on race and racial exclusion. Latina/os, on the other hand, have historically been marked as racially “other” and have therefore been excluded from the category of whiteness, regardless that Mexicans in particular have been legally defined as white since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Despite this, many Latina/os are

wooed by the promises of whiteness and willing to embrace anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity as the price of admission.

The desire to reap the benefits of whiteness is captured in the recorded conversation between Herrera and the Los Angeles City Council members, even if the participants are critical of white liberals, just as they are of other groups. The participants in the conversation, in their parsing of Los Angeles into pieces defined by the racial or ethnic identity of their residents, embrace a zero-sum mentality in which a victory for one racial or ethnic group is necessarily a loss for other groups. According to this mindset, Latina/os, particularly those represented by the members of the city council on the call, are in direct competition with other groups for a finite pool of resources. This is evident in comments like Herrera’s, when he says, “My goal in life is to get the three of you elected, and you know, I’m just focused on that. I mean, we’re like the little Latino caucus of, you know, our own,” and even more pointedly in Martinez’s comment about Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón, “F- that guy. I’m telling you now, he’s with the Blacks.” It is also evident, contradictorily, in Martinez’s comment that, “It’s the white members on this council that will motherf- you in a heartbeat,” as some Latina/os both aspire to the spoils of whiteness and simultaneously view white people as competition along the way.

“Anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in the U.S. are related at least in part to the racial stratifications of Latin American countries, in which those of ‘pure’ European ancestry typically occupy the highest levels of each country’s racial hierarchy.”

The anti-Black and anti-Indigenous views of those caught on these recordings emerge from this sense of competition, but, importantly, such views are not limited only to the participants in this conversation. They are unfortunately common among Latina/os, particularly those who are less racially marked by phenotypically Indigenous or Black features, and who do not otherwise carry markers of immigration or class status. And while Martinez and Herrera resigned their positions in the wake of the leaked recordings, confronting anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity is a much larger task than insisting on resignations whenever a news story emerges. This task requires recognition that Latina/os and African Americans exist within a system that seeks to sow division in order to sustain itself. To overcome this requires Latina/os to recognize and confront our own prejudices and to collectively work with African Americans, other people of color, and white allies to reject attempts at division. 🌱

First Forced Sterilization, Now Forced Birth: Overturning Roe v. Wade and Negative Impacts on Latinas

By Yoshira Donaji Macías Mejía, Ph.D.

When the overturning of Roe v. Wade occurred, there was much commotion about the right of people (who can bear children) to choose whether they want to continue the pregnancy or to terminate. Inequities in reproductive health care have always existed for women, but these inequities are much greater for Black and Latina women. As several historians have noted, abortion bans since their inception have been used as a means for population control. In the 1800's white American women were obtaining abortions at higher rates, yet soon abortion bans would come into effect, with the main purpose to increase

the white American population but more broadly speaking were a tool to maintain white Americans' political power. You can apply this same example to our current political climate. White Americans know that in the next four decades they will be the numerical minority, with people of color becoming the numerical majority. This instills fear in some political leaders, especially the Republican Party, who want to maintain white Americans' majority status.

Thus, as several



PHOTO BY MALVESTIDA / UNSPLASH.COM

past historians have argued, passing abortion bans forces white women to have children and helps slow down these demographic changes. All under the guise that it is unfathomable to kill an unborn child, giving an unborn child rights, and not thinking about how banning abortion will also increase the population of non-white Americans. Additionally, lawmakers, citizens, and interest groups do not want to acknowledge that abortion bans maintain women of color in a cycle of social disadvantage.

When *Roe v. Wade* was overturned these issues came to mind, but so did nearly seven decades of forced sterilization suffered by Black women and Latinas in the U.S. from 1907 to the 1970s. This was a result of the eugenics movement in the United States that believed in superior genetics, which were linked to racial betterment and upholding white Americans as the superior race, and by limiting the biological reproduction of communities of color. UnidosUS features a piece on forced sterilization of Latinas in the United States and discusses how in the 1930s Puerto Rican women were forcibly sterilized as the only means for contraception without being informed that this procedure was irreversible. This abuse continued in 33 states. One account examines the abuse of Mexican women in Los Angeles at the USC medical center in the 1970s. Spanish-speaking Mexican women, upon giving birth, were given consent forms in English to sign to perform the sterilization. This abuse and continued need to control brown bodies continue today. One recent example is the forced sterilization performed not too long ago in immigration detention centers in Georgia in fall of 2020.


But moving beyond sterilization, with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* more and more Latinas will be negatively impacted by the inability to access an abortion. Some notable examples of how government policy impacts women's bodies in general are linked to two cases where a Black and white woman in Texas and Louisiana needed an abortion due to the fetus having medical complications. Both states have strict anti-abortion legislation, which led these women to seek abortions out of state. They also almost died due to having to wait for medical professionals to decide when it would be the best time to perform the abortion. NPR reported on both stories, in which both women had to wait until their bodies were ill enough to justify the need for an abortion to save the mother's life. In the case of the woman in Texas, she needed the abortion when her medical provider knew the fetus was not going to make it due to a medical concern but could not perform the abortion, due to fear of being sued. Still the woman was asked to wait until she was very ill. The details state she had to wait until she experienced foul discharge. As a result of this long wait, this woman, as reported by NPR, might not be able to bear children in the future due to scarring in her uterus. The obstacles to obtain an abortion for a fetus that was lethally ill were also faced by the woman in Louisiana, who was denied an abortion to protect hospital personnel, once again creating barriers for these women.

These accounts are not just physically damaging to a woman's body, but also damaging to her mental health. Women experiencing this trauma are not just worried about the physical

repercussions but are also experiencing a loss. That loss is losing a child they wanted to welcome into the world. Access to abortion is often clouded by ignorance and viewed as something teen girls do, when this is not the case, and several abortions occur between the ages of 20-35 for a variety of reasons that are not limited to refusing to start a family. As shown above women who are at risk of death need these procedures.

For Latinas, the overturning of *Roe* will be detrimental because as women of color they are already socially, structurally, and institutionally disadvantaged in American society. Illinois Latino Agenda 2.0 and Illinois Unidos are two organizations that argue that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* will have devastating impacts on Latinas because this segment of the population already has trouble accessing health care, which includes reproductive health care, let alone abortions. Other consequences of this include the cost to travel out of state to get an abortion, the cost of an abortion out of state, medical care after the procedure, and other incidental personal costs. Additionally, shortly after these changes occurred there has been an increase in states that are forbidding residents to travel to another state to get an abortion performed. The changes in state laws, as well as the passage of new anti-abortion legislation, are creating even more barriers for Latinas.

More specifically, the National Partnership for Women and Families' states 6.5 million Latinas, which roughly equals 42 percent of Latinas between ages 15 and 49, reside in 26 states that have banned abortion. This makes Latinas the largest underrepresented minority group to be impacted by abortion bans and the overturning of *Roe*. Additionally, out of these 6.5 million Latinas, almost half are already mothers, and several have children under the age of three. For these Latina mothers, access to abortion care is not only impactful to themselves but has negative economic impacts on their existing children. Also, Latinos who live in these states face economic insecurity, which creates an even larger burden for Latinas who are low income. For these Latinas who already face economic insecurity when they are denied abortions, they are more likely to delve deeper into poverty. Latinas with disabilities are also negatively impacted and have even more burdens due to discrimination in accessing care as a Latina and disabled woman. Other barriers Latinas face are language barriers, which impact Spanish-speaking Latinas because they are unable to access care and face a lack of cultural competency from health-care providers.

These systemic issues are exacerbated by anti-abortion bans because as we know Latinas are already overrepresented in low-income wage jobs and face the largest wage gap compared to other non-Latina women. Due to the economic disadvantage and where Latinas live, banning abortion creates barriers to reproductive health care, economically continues the cycle of social disadvantage for themselves, their children, and their families, but also denies women the right to decide over their own health-care needs. Thus, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* leads not only to barriers for all women, but especially for women, like Latinas, who are already vulnerable due to institutional racism. 

Educating Underserved and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers on Risk Management and Mitigation

By Marcelo E. Siles, Ph.D. and Rubén O. Martinez, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

The Julian Samora Research Institute (JSRI) and Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS), with funds provided by the North Central Extension Risk Management Education from the University of Nebraska, collaborated in developing a project promoting understanding of risk management and mitigation approaches among small-scale farmers in Michigan. The project described and analyzed production, financial, and human risks, and provided available information to beginning, Latino, limited resources (LR), and socially disadvantaged (SD) specialty crop producers identifying and mitigating risk, crop insurance, and disaster assistance programs. In addition, the two organizations were interested in the role of social capital in facilitating the dissemination of information on farm risk and risk mitigation within small farmers' networks, as well as the role of social capital motives among small-scale farmers when buying an insurance policy for their farming operations.

We expect that the lessons learned from this project will help producers improve their economic sustainability by using their knowledge of risk management and mitigation issues, encouraging behavioral change, and promoting the development of robust relationships with insurance agents, educators, and technical service providers.

Due to pandemic restrictions imposed by government health agencies and university regulations, we obtained the information presented in this paper through online focus groups and personal phone interviews with Latino producers, socially disadvantaged farmers, representatives from government agencies, private insurance providers, and farmers' organizations. In addition, 50 participating farmers completed an instrument on the different types of risks they face, how they deal with them, their sources of information, and their experiences with agencies/companies that provide insurance policies in rural areas.



PHOTO BY LOS MUERTOS CREW / PEXELS.COM

FARMERS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

The Latino farmers who participated in this project have small operations, no more than 60 acres, and mainly cultivate only one crop, in most cases blueberries. Some of them produce vegetables such as tomatoes, tomatillos, different types of hot peppers (chiles), and other specialty herbs oriented for Latino consumption. They produce locally, are naturalists, and are concerned about the environment. In general, their educational attainment is low, not higher than elementary school, and they still use old agricultural practices inherited from their ancestors.

They face several constraints in their agricultural practices:

- A. Lack of a well-defined business plan;
- B. Limited or nonexistent practice of record keeping;
- C. Lack of a well-conceived marketing plan for their products;
- D. Limited access to formal financial markets; and
- E. Lack of proactive plans to deal with catastrophic events.

The lack of knowledge about the different types of insurances available for farmers hinders these farmers when preparing for catastrophic events; this makes most of them hesitant to buy appropriate insurance for their farms. A small group of participating farmers reported having a previous experience with insurance companies. Unfortunately, for some of them, the experience was negative due to the length of time insurance companies took to pay for the damages caused by a catastrophic event and the fact that only a percentage of the value of the damages incurred was covered. This generated a lack of trust on the part of farmers toward insurance providers. Further, given the size of their farms, their locations, and the scope of their operations many small-scale farmers cannot afford to purchase insurance policies that cover catastrophic events.

These farmers face several types of risks to their agricultural operations, some of which we describe in this paper. Because of climate change, their farms must cope with the rise in temperatures, making some crops unsuitable for production in certain areas. Other catastrophic events due to climate change are major floods, droughts, and tornados that cause considerable damages to crops and facilities. Farmers struggle with invasive weeds and pests that damage their crops. Other weather-related incidents that could affect farmers are barn fires, vandalism, fallen trees on equipment, and the presence of wild animals.

Participating farmers have to cope with other types of risky events not directly related to their agricultural practices but which could affect the productivity and sustainability of their operations. Among them are:

- A. *Shortages of farmworkers.* In the last few years, due to anti-immigration policies and the pandemic, fewer farmworkers were available, especially during harvesting time. This forced farmers to leave crops in the field which had a direct negative impact on the farm's revenue and sustainability.

- B. *Lack of appropriate technology and tools.* Participant farmers lack a clear understanding of the types of technology that are most appropriate for their agricultural practices. This tends to limit the efficiency of their operations. Further, the size of their networks does not facilitate understanding of the appropriate technology and tools suitable for their farms.
- C. *Lack of access to credit markets.* This is a major constraint which limits access to funds to purchase needed equipment and tools. As a result, they turn to family and close friends to obtain needed funds for their operations and/or use credit cards, which typically have high interest rates. The more land a small-scale farmer buys or leases, the more money and labor is needed for farm operations.
- D. *Lack of a well-developed marketing plan.* The lack of a marketing plan makes them vulnerable to price changes and makes it difficult to find buyers for their products. In many cases, looking for buyers constitutes a high opportunity cost due to the time spent searching for them instead of allocating that time to other productive activities.
- E. *Lack of a retirement plan.* Many longtime farmers do not have retirement plans. They do not have a clear idea of what they will be doing after retirement, whether they will be moving to another house, what health care costs they will incur, and if they will sell/rent their farm. This lack of preparedness for retirement creates high uncertainty and has a direct impact on the farm's sustainability.
- F. *Lack of a well-developed succession plan on inter-generational farms.* This is common in this size of farms and could impact future operations. It may lead to a rupture of the farm's ownership structure after having been in the family for many generations. It is well-known that inter-generational farming is decreasing across the United States.
- G. *Lack of a handbook with safety protocols.* The lack of these protocols makes it very difficult to cope with risky events as no one knows their role when one occurs, how to collect data on the losses due to the event, how to deal with the insurance company if they have a policy, etc.

The northward shift of the agricultural climate zone due to global climate change opens new possibilities for producing crops that a few years ago were not possible to produce in those areas, but production may also have a negative impact on the environment through the release of carbons.

PERCEPTIONS OF FARMERS

Fifty participating farmers completed an instrument with questions about the main risks facing their operations, how they cope with those risks, their sources of information for farm risk mitigation and risk management programs, and their experiences with insurance providers. In addition, we were interested in learning about the role that social capital motives play when farmers buy an insurance policy. The main



purpose of the instrument was to learn from the farmers their understanding of risks and risk mitigation approaches.

Responses to questions included in the assessment instrument show the following:

Q: Identify the three most important sources of risk on your farm.

The three most important sources of risk on farms are:

- Pest and plant diseases;
- Control of wildlife;
- Failure of machinery, equipment, and tools.

Q: How many times in the past 5 years have you been unable to pay farm bills using farm-generated funds?

Nearly two fifths of respondents were unable to pay one or two times, while nearly one fifth indicated that they did not have any problems paying their bills, and just over one tenth reported that they had not been capable of paying their bills three to four times in the last 5 years.

Q: What are the three most important sources of information about farm operating risks?

Participating farmers indicated that the three most important sources of information about farm operating risks are:

- Extension services;
- Other farmers;
- Family members.

Q: Identify the three most important responses to farm risk.

Participating farmers identified the following as the three most important responses to farm risk:

- Production diversification;
- Buying crop insurance;
- Using a greenhouse to make production more predictable.

Q: Organizations that provided you with information related to farm risk mitigation/management programs.

Farmers indicated that private organizations such as NGOs are their main source of information for these programs. Most of these farmers praised the service that Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) provides by disseminating information about risk mitigation programs.

Q: Do you have any type of farm insurance?

Only two fifths of farmers who participated in this program reported having any type of farm insurance.

Q: Are you aware of available disaster and crop insurance programs offered to farmers?

Only one third of respondents replied affirmatively to this question.

Q: If YES, have you ever participated in one of these programs?

Over half of farmers who were aware of disaster and crop insurance programs participated in one of these programs.

Q: Did you have a good experience with the insurance company when you attempted to file an insurance claim due to a catastrophic event on your family farm?

A large majority of these farmers (86 percent) reported not having a good experience with the insurance provider.

Q: Do you prefer NOT to participate in a disaster and crop insurance program for your farming operations.

Approximately half of these farmers prefer not participate in a disaster and crop insurance program.

Q: What are your most important sources for responding to a serious operational loss?

The following three items were identified as the most important sources for responding to a serious operational loss.

- Personal savings and property;
- Help from friends and family;
- Farm resources.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL MOTIVES

According to the seminal paper “The Relative Importance of Selfishness and Social Capital Motives” (Robison, L.J. et al, 2011), there are five social motives that influence the behavior of persons when buying a good or service. The five social capital motives are: 1) Own Consumption, 2) Self Respect (internal validation), 3) Goodwill (external validation), 4) Sense of Belonging, and 5) Sharing.

Neoclassical economic theory holds that people participate in the market mainly based on self-interest and preferences. The theory states that the “own consumption” motive is far and away (95%) the principal reason why people participate in the market. The social capital motives framework challenges this assumption. Robison et. al. (2011) conducted several empirical studies evaluating the motive people have when buying different types of goods and services (i.e., buying gasoline, getting a haircut, participating in recycling programs, having a colonoscopy, etc.). They demonstrated that self-interest and preferences are not the always the overwhelming principal motive as stated by neoclassical economic theory.

The instrument asked Latino farmers to assign percentages to each of the five motives when planning to buy an insurance policy for their farms. The results show that **own consumption** becomes the most important but accounts for only 73.6% (far below 95%), while **sense of belonging** resulted in the second most important with 13.1%. These results show that Latino farmers’ main motives for buying an insurance policy are to protect them and their farming assets and to become a member of a network of productive and efficient farmers.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATING FARMERS

The following are some of the demographic characteristics of the farmers who completed the assessment instrument.

- A. Fifty-four percent reported not having a high school degree, 17% are high school graduates, and 17% have a bachelor's degree.
- B. Most of them communicate in Spanish at home and with other farmers.
- C. On average, these farmers have 18 acres in production.
- D. Participant farmers reported on average 9.7 years on farming.
- E. On average, they are producing three different agricultural products at their farms.
- F. Only 53% are full-time farmers.
- G. The average distance from their farms to main market is 50 miles.

REQUESTED RISK MITIGATION ACTIONS

Farmers who participated in this project requested the following to assist them in mitigating the risks they face in their farming operations:

1. *Develop and provide a risk mitigation program at no cost.* The project was able to find written information and videos, both in English and Spanish, about risk mitigation programs, which were posted on the MIFFS website. A future program should emphasize development of a training program focused on farm risk mitigation for underserved and disadvantaged farmers.
2. *More information about climate change.* Since climate change is becoming one of the main sources of farm risk and having a huge impact on productivity and sustainability, it becomes imperative to develop a program to gather and distribute information, and to develop training workshops for farmers about the growing crisis. The workshops should also include information on how farmers can mitigate the impact of climate change on agricultural production.
3. *Develop an Integrated Pest Management program (IPM) as a way to reduce risk.* As stated above, pests and weeds are important sources of risk for farming operations and make it important to work jointly with MSU Extension in developing information and training workshops on IPM programs. Experiences working with these farmers show that it becomes necessary for outreach workers to keep promoting the importance of these programs among farmers and inviting them to participate in the workshops.
4. *Information about food safety and risk mitigation.* Farmers expressed concern about food safety regulations and the potential risk for their operations if they do not comply with all the specifications which are continually evolving.
5. *Access to new technology.* Most of these farmers do not have the necessary financial resources to buy appropriate equipment and tools to use in their farms. Their access to credit is very limited to suppliers of seeds, fertilizers, and in some cases equipment. A paradox is that some farmers decide to buy relatively big tractors which they use only for a few weeks a year. A study by Siles et.al., (2021) found that the social capital motives that could explain such purchases is external validation. Some farmers want to show their peers and neighboring farmers their capability to buy large equipment, although its use is limited.
6. *Information about how to operate greenhouses.* Greenhouses are becoming one of the farmers' initial responses to the climate change since they can control temperature, humidity, pests, plant irrigation, and other factors in these facilities and that makes their production more predictable. This is why they are interested in learning how to operate green and hoop houses to reduce the incidence of many of the risky events they currently face when farming in open fields.
7. *Opportunities to purchase risk-reducing investments.* Due to the relatively high costs of appropriate technology (greenhouses) and their financial limitations, farmers are interested in opportunities to learn how to access these production facilities. Currently, the federal government has a program to facilitate the purchase of greenhouses by socially disadvantaged farmers. Farmers with small operations, however, face many constraints when trying to access these programs; among them is their immigration status, their lack of production records, language and education limitations, among others.
8. *Crop diversification.* Most farmers use this production approach as a way to reduce operating risks at their farms. Given the scale of their operations, small disadvantaged farmers also use this risk mitigation approach.
9. *Producers' association for sharing risky outcomes.* This approach is widely used by farmers in developing countries, but it is also appropriate for small farmers and their operations here in the U.S. Under this production method, small farmers create a network with their peers to exchange information about production risks and mitigation approaches, where to obtain the best deal for production inputs, markets that offer the best prices for their products, among others. In addition, they join forces to market their products, transport



their products to markets, and work together in the recovery process when a catastrophic event occurs.

10. *Affordable insurance policies.* Due to the high cost of insurance policies, most disadvantaged farmers cannot afford to buy any type of insurance to cover their farming operations.
11. *Access to credit.* There are many factors that limit access by small disadvantaged farmers to credit programs offered by formal financial markets. Among them are: immigration status, language and education limitations, lack of a credit history, reluctance to work with a bank due to past bad experiences, and not keeping a checking account. The lack of access to credit prevents these farmers from having the required resources to buy a crop insurance policy and other insurances prior to the cropping season.
12. *A well-crafted succession plan.* The lack of a succession plan adds uncertainty regarding the future farm's operations. In many cases, the sudden death of one of the farm's owners could seriously affect the farm's operations up to the point of stopping agricultural operations.
13. *A labor requirement plan to avoid shortages at harvest time.* In the last few years, there have been important shortages of farm labor especially during the harvest season. In many cases, farmers had to leave some of their products in the fields due to lack of farmworkers.

PARTICIPATION OF PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES IN RISK MITIGATION PROGRAMS

As we did with farmers, we conducted focus groups with farm insurance providers to learn about the types of programs they offer, how they contact and communicate with Latino and disadvantaged farmers, and the constraints they face when dealing with these farmers.

One of the first issues most providers emphasized is that only few insurance companies are authorized to sell crop insurance to farmers. Providers must get approval from the United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency to sell crop insurance. A list of these providers by state is available at the USDA Risk Management Agency's website.

Liability insurance is the most common type of insurance that farmers access. This type of insurance can cover the farm property, including the farmer's home and other physical facilities, the machinery, farm equipment, tools employed for farming operations, automobiles, and other equipment used to transport products to market. Physical facilities are covered for fire, floods, and other catastrophic events. Other insurance policies can also cover any injuries that visitors can have while visiting the farm or for people that come to the farm for U-pick programs.

In addition, there are some specialized insurance policies to cover accidents suffered by farmworkers while working in the farm; these are worker compensation insurances. It is

very important for farmers to buy this type of insurance due to the large numbers of workers they employ at certain times of the year, and given the type of risky work they perform.

Other insurances cover livestock as property, but not crops. Some insurance policies protect the entire process from farm to fork. During the focus groups, providers told us that farm leases are covered through the same insurance policies stated above.



PHOTO BY MICHELLE HENDERSON / UNSPLASH.COM

An important type of insurance is life insurance; none of the farmers included in this project has this insurance. A life insurance pays a predetermined sum of money agreed at the time the farmer buys the policy for his/her family after he or she dies in an accident or after he/she dies of natural causes. Many times, this insurance becomes very helpful to the farmer's family in continuing the farming operations.

CONSTRAINTS FACED BY PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES FOR THEIR OPERATIONS WITH FARMERS

Insurance providers currently serving or interested in serving disadvantaged farmers face several constraints in doing so. Among them are:

- A. *The farm size is not suitable for insurance companies.* The average acreage that participant farmers operate is less than 20 acres, which makes it difficult for insurance providers to serve them due to the high administrative costs these operations have and the type of insurances they can afford.
- B. *Disadvantaged farmers need to develop good recordkeeping systems.* The lack of up-to-date farm records becomes a major constraint that insurance providers face when serving disadvantaged farmers. In many cases, the lack of farm records also prevents these farmers from accessing government assistance programs.

- C. *Several family members are involved in the decision-making process.* It is common among disadvantaged farmers to ask the advice of close and extended family members when they need to make a decision that could affect their farming operations. This is also the case when dealing with insurance providers, making the decision process slow and cumbersome.
- D. *How to get a good reputation with farmers.* In general, disadvantaged farmers do not want to work with insurance providers because of bad past experiences and the high cost of insurance policies. Where providers are interested in serving these farmers, they face reluctance on the part of farmers, which makes a policy purchase very difficult. Many providers expressed their interest in developing a good reputation with farmers and are currently thinking of ways to do so.
- E. *Snowball approach as the way to contact farmers.* Insurance providers believe that the best way to contact disadvantaged farmers is through a snowball process. That is, getting referrals from those farmers they know. Since many of these farmers are located mainly in secluded areas, work part-time outside their farms, and are not members of networks of other racial and ethnic groups, it is very difficult for providers to contact them directly. The snowball process is helpful in these instances.
- F. *Insurance providers' limited outreach to Latino, women, African American and veteran farmers.* Insurance providers tend to concentrate their outreach efforts on farmers with large operations since these farmers know the advantages of possessing different types of insurances policies to mitigate risks on their farming operations. In addition, these farmers maintain their farming records up to date and, thereby, their financial capacity to buy insurance policies as well.
- G. *Many farms are moving to the production of cannabis.* Since the legalization of cannabis in Michigan, many farmers are replacing some of their crops with hemp and marijuana. The current performance and high prices of these crops are generating substantial revenues to farmers. The prevailing regulations related to the high cannabidiol (CBD) content of these crops increases the insurance price, making it more difficult to obtain an insurance policy.
- B. Two informational videos were produced, one in English and the other in Spanish, on risk mitigation programs for small farmers.
- C. A webinar titled "Introduction to Social Capital in Spanish" was delivered via Zoom.
- D. Two webinars on the role of social capital on risk mitigation programs were delivered via Zoom.
- E. A video on social capital and risk mitigation programs was produced and made available on the Internet.
- F. A board game was designed to show farmers the difference between risk and uncertainty and to teach them how to make decisions when faced with risk and uncertainty issues.
- G. Posted risk-related publications, articles, and videos on the MIFFS website.

CONCLUSION

This was a very important project focused on promoting awareness and understanding of farm risks and risk mitigation approaches among beginning, small-scale, and socially disadvantaged farmers. We learned about the constraints insurance providers face when attempting to serve disadvantaged farmers, the lack of information these farmers have about the different types of farm insurance policies, their interest in crop insurance, and the relatively small number of private insurance companies that have the approval of the Risk Management Agency. Farmers also have little knowledge about risk mitigation programs available from the federal government.

The inclusion of social capital and its five motives in a risk mitigation program opens the possibility of promoting participation by disadvantaged farmers in these programs once they realize the importance of expanding their networks to enhance their sources of knowledge of risk approaches, learn of emerging market opportunities, and changes in farm regulations. It is critical that they go beyond their current networks.

We plan to include the lessons learned through this project about farm risk and risk mitigation approaches in the two-course sequence *Introduction to Farm Management* that we teach in a bilingual format for farmers. This course is a result of a collaborative effort of the Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan Farming and Food Systems, the National Immigration Farmers Initiative, and Lake Michigan College. 🌱

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

The information collected by this project was processed and analyzed, a summary of the results was made available to farmers, insurance providers, and students through a presentation at the annual MIFFS conference and informational videos in English and Spanish posted on YouTube.

- A. The presentation at the MIFFS conference provided basic information about the project and promoted awareness of risk mitigation approaches to small and disadvantaged farmers.

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The Social Context of Adult Obesity in the United States

By Jean Kayitsinga, Ph.D.

BACKGROUND

Obesity has become a common, serious, and costly health condition in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the prevalence of obesity was 41.9 percent in 2017 – March 2020 (Stierman et al., 2021). U.S. obesity prevalence increased from 30.5 percent to 41.9 percent from 1999 – 2000 to 2017 – March 2020 (Stierman et al., 2021). The high prevalence of obesity constitutes a major public health concern as obesity increases the risk for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, and other chronic conditions that cause disability and premature death. Obesity is also associated with increased costs for health care systems (Ward et al., 2021).

The causes of obesity are complex, multifaceted, and multilevel, ranging from genetic and biological predispositions, individual behaviors such as dietary intake and physical activity/inactivity, family social environments, neighborhood social, physical, and nutritional environments, and to more distal and systemic factors such as food systems and social and economic policies. Social structural factors, especially race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES), remain the main causal factors of obesity (Hargrove, 2018; Liu & Guo, 2015; Mueller et al., 2010; Pudrovska et al., 2014; Schmeer, 2010).

The prevalence of obesity varies by race/ethnicity, gender, and SES, with Latinos, Blacks, women, especially Black women, and those from lower SES background exhibiting higher prevalence rates of obesity than their white, male, and higher SES counterparts (Clarke et al., 2009; Ogden et al., 2014; Wang and Beydoun, 2007; Ailshire and House, 2011; Flegal et al., 2012). The prevalence of obesity varies by income and education, but results are not consistent by gender, and race/ethnicity (Ogden et al., 2010). During 2011-2014, the age-adjusted prevalence

of obesity among adults was lower in the highest income group (31.2%) ($\geq 350\%$ of the Federal Poverty level (FPL)) than in other groups (40.8%) for $>130\%$ to $\leq 350\%$ FPL and 39.0% for $\leq 130\%$ FPL.

The age-adjusted prevalence of obesity among college graduates was lower (27.8%) than among those with some college (40.6%) and those who were high school graduates or less (40.0%) (Ogden et al., 2017).

These patterns are consistent with two complementary theories: the life course theory and the fundamental cause theory. From a life course perspective using a cumulative advantage/disadvantage approach, SES and other disadvantages originating in childhood accumulate over the life course to produce obesity (or other health problems and early mortality). Conversely, SES and other advantages over a person's life course accumulate but do so to avoid obesity. The accumulation of disadvantages over time is the source of increased weight as negative exposures in life experiences build up to increasingly negative outcomes (Cockerham, 2022).

From a fundamental health perspective, one's position in the social structure shapes access to important resources that can be used to avoid health risks or ameliorate the consequences of disease after its onset (Cockerham, 2022). SES position, racism, and sexism are considered fundamental causes of poor health (Phelan and Link, 2015). Individuals from disadvantaged racial-ethnic, gender, and SES backgrounds often have less access to tangible and psychosocial health-promoting resources and are exposed to more health-risk factors (Phelan and Link, 2015; Williams, 2012; Hargrove, 2018) and are, therefore, more likely to have higher rates of obesity than individuals in advantaged positions in terms race/ethnicity, gender, and SES.

Social structures, defined as "enduring patterns of social life that shape an individual's attitudes and beliefs, behaviors and actions, and material and psychological resources" (Williams & Sternthal, 2010: S18), influence life experiences and health over the life course (Schnittker and McLeod, 2005). SES is inversely associated with high quality health care, stress, exposure to social and physical toxins, social support, and health behaviors (Williams and Collins, 1995; Williams & Sternthal, 2010). SES remains one of the strongest determinants of variations in health and partially explains racial-ethnic differences in health (Hayward, Miles, Crimmins, & Yang, 2000; Williams & Collins, 1995; Williams & Sternthal, 2010).

Numerous studies have also shown that racial/ethnic differences in health are large and persist over time (Williams, Mohammed, Leavell, & Collins, 2010; Williams & Sternthal, 2010). Structural systems surrounding race/ethnicity contribute to racial/ethnic differences in health. For example, residential racial segregation is associated with the concentration of poverty, social disorder, social isolation, and creates pathogenic conditions in residential environments (Massey, 2004; Williams & Sternthal, 2010), which in turn influence health. Segregation adversely affects health by reducing access to better quality education and job opportunities; access to nutritious foods and places to exercise

regularly; increasing advertisement for tobacco and alcohol; increasing financial and hardship stress and chronic and acute stressors; reducing social capital such as weakening social relationships and trust among neighbors; and by increasing exposure to environmental toxins, poor quality of housing, and criminal victimization (Williams & Sternthal, 2010), all of which have adverse effects on health for disproportionately racial/ethnic and poor minorities living in residential segregated neighborhoods (Massey, 2004). Race/ethnicity and SES are two related but distinct systems of social ordering that jointly contribute to health risks (Williams & Collins, 1995).

Another social structural dimension associated with health is gender. Gender roles and expectations are assumed to differentially constrain choices for healthy living among men and women. They do that by influencing decisions and policies made at the family, work, and institutional levels, which shape everyday experiences of men and women in ways that may heighten women's exposure to stress relative to men, block socioeconomic opportunities, and leave women with less time for health-promoting activities (Bird and Ricker, 2008; Read and Gorman, 2010; Hargrove, 2018).

Racial-ethnic and gender inequalities in health persist even after accounting for group differences in SES (Read and Gorman, 2010; Williams, 2012). Race/ethnicity and SES combine with gender and other social statuses in complex ways to create patterns of intersectionality in their effects on health (Schultz & Mullings, 2006). Accordingly, the interplay of race/ethnicity, SES, and gender and how it affects health disparities needs to be taken further into consideration in examining their relative and combined effects on health.

One of the mechanisms through which social structural factors of race/ethnicity, gender, and SES influence obesity may be through stress. Stress has been found to impact obesity (Tomiya, 2019). It can impact obesity by affecting behaviors such as inducing overeating and consumption of foods that are high in calories, fat, or sugar, by decreasing physical activity, and shortening sleep (Tomiya, 2019). Individuals in higher status positions tended to have lower stress levels, healthy eating patterns, and lower body weight. Higher stress levels are in turn associated with less healthy dietary behaviors and with higher body weight. These patterns tend to be more pronounced in women than men (Moore and Cunningham, 2012). After adjusting for the effect of SES on obesity, Conklin and colleagues (2013) found that, focusing on financial hardship, having less than enough money for one's needs, always or often not having enough money for food/clothing, and difficulty paying bills were associated with obesity in women and men and that these relationships were slightly higher for women than men.

Numerous previous studies have found that neighborhood environments are key determinants of individual health. Neighborhood environments shape residents' resources and opportunities for better health, but at the same time, they expose them to multiple health risks over the life course (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000). For example, living in a disadvantaged



neighborhood is detrimental to health and is associated with higher prevalence of obesity among both children and adults (Nelson et al., 2006; Morland, Diez Roux and Wing, 2006; Robert and Reither, 2004). Racial/ethnic minorities are further disadvantaged because they tend to cluster in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987, 1996).

Residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods often have less access to supermarkets and other outlets that provide access to an affordable mix of healthy foods and instead have a higher exposure to fast-food restaurants than residents in higher socioeconomic status neighborhoods (Sallis and Glanz, 2006). In addition, disadvantaged neighborhoods usually have fewer physical activity amenities than affluent neighborhoods, including parks, leading to more inactivity among neighborhood residents (Lovasi et al., 2009; Yen and Kaplan, 1999). Black and Macinko (2007) found that neighborhood features that consistently discourage physical activity were associated with increased BMI. Boehmer and colleagues (2007) found that being obese was significantly associated with perceived indicators of no nearby nonresidential destinations, absence of sidewalks quality, physical disorder, and presence of garbage. Perceived and observed indicators of land use and aesthetics were the most robust neighborhood correlates of obesity (Boehmer et al., 2007). We expect that friendly neighborhood environment to walk will partially explain the racial-ethnic-, gender-, and SES-gaps in obesity.

The objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which race-ethnicity, gender, and SES intersect to influence obesity disparities among adults. I address four research questions: 1) To what extent does obesity vary by race/ethnicity, gender, and SES? 2) To what extent does SES explain racial-ethnic and gender disparities in obesity? 3) Do family economic hardship and psychological distress explain the racial-ethnic, gender-, and SES- gaps in obesity?, and 4) To what extent does neighborhood walking environment explain the racial-ethnic-, gender-, and SES-gaps in obesity?

DATA AND METHODS

DATA

Data are from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) in 2020. The 2016 – 2025 NHIS sample design is a multistage probability sample of U.S. households with new households interviewed each year. The survey conducts household interviews throughout the United States and collects information on health status, health-related behaviors, and information on sociodemographic and economic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, SES, and other household characteristics from the U.S. civilian non-institutionalized population. The NHIS interview begins by identifying everyone who usually lives or stays in the household. One adult age 18 years and older and one child age 17 years and younger are randomly selected for interview. Information about the sample child is collected from a parent or adult who is knowledgeable about and responsible for the health care of the sample child.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NHIS data collection in 2020

switched to a telephone-only mode beginning March 2020. Personal visits resumed in September 2020. In addition, from August through December 2020, a subsample of adult respondents who completed the NHIS in 2019 were re-interviewed by telephone and asked to participate again in the survey. The 2020 sample adult file is hence composed of both the reinterview cases and the 2020-sampled cases ($n = 31,568$). This study uses data on 30,071 cases, excluding respondents of other race category (i.e., Native Americans and Alaska natives and other single or multiple races) ($n = 762$ or 2.4%), and respondents with missing values on the dependent variable, i.e., Obesity ($n = 735$ or 2.3%).

MEASURES

Obesity. The dependent variable is obesity, defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater or equal to 30. BMI is a standard index measure in demographic and health research. This index is calculated as weight (kilograms) divided by height squared (in meters). In the public version of data, BMI was included as a categorical variable (e.g., 1 = underweight, 2 = healthy weight, 3 = overweight, and 4 = obese). We recoded BMI category variable into a dummy variable (1 = obese, 0 = otherwise).

Race/ethnicity. Race/ethnicity is constructed from self-reported ethnicity and race categories. First, Latino adults are distinguished from non-Latino adults. Among Latinos, Mexicans are distinguished from Other Latinos. For non-Latinos, race is categorized as non-Latino white (thereafter, referred as white), African American, or Asian.

Gender. Gender is measured by the sex of the adult respondent and is recorded into a dummy variable, where 1 = female and 0 = male (reference).

Socioeconomic status (SES). SES is measured by two variables: educational attainment and family income. Educational attainment is measured by four dummy variables (i.e., less than high school; high school graduate/GED or equivalent; some college; and college graduate = reference). Household income is measured in 1,000s and is transformed using the natural logarithm to reduced skewness.

Explanatory mechanisms. Four explanatory mechanisms suggested are considered to help explain the race/ethnicity, SES, and gender inequalities in obesity: economic hardship, psychological distress, and neighborhood walking environment.

Economic hardship. Economic hardship is measured by the sum of six dummy variables: problems paying medical bills in the past 12 months, unable to pay medical bills, receive food stamps in the past 12 months, receive WIC benefits in the past 12 months, receive free/reduced meals at school, and food insecurity ($\alpha = .61$).

Psychological distress. Psychological distress is measured as a mean of two items: anxiety and depression. Anxiety was measured by asking respondents how often they feel worried, nervous, or anxious. Responses were reversed coded as 1 = never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly, and 5 = daily. Depression was measured by asking respondents how often they felt depressed. Responses were also reversed

coded as 1 = never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly, and 5 = daily. The two items were average to create an index of psychological distress ($\alpha = .74$).

Neighborhood walking environment is measured as a sum of six items. Respondents were asked if where they live had: 1) roads, sidewalks, paths, or trails where they can walk; 2) shops, stores, or markets they can walk to; 3) bus or transit stops they can walk to; 4) places like movies they can walk to; 5) places they can walk to help relax and clear their minds; and that 6) most of the streets have sidewalks. Responses were recoded into dummy variables and then summed to create an index neighborhood walking environment ($\alpha = .74$).

Control variables. All models adjust for health behaviors, including *physical activity* (strength only, aerobic only, both strength and aerobic, no physical activity = reference); *smoking* (current smoker, former smoker, never smoked = reference); *drinking* (current drinker, former drinker, never drink = reference); and *sleeping patterns* (1 = sleep 8 hours or more per day, 0 = otherwise) and sociodemographic variables: *age* (years), *immigrant status and duration in the U.S.* (foreign-born, < 5 years; foreign-born, 5-9 years; foreign-born, 10-14 years; foreign-born, 15 years or more; native-born = reference), *marital status* (widowed, divorced/separated, never married, married/cohabiting = reference), *home ownership* (1 = housing owner, 0 = renter), *region* (Northeast, Midwest, South, West = reference), and *nonmetropolitan residence* (1 = nonmetropolitan, 0 = metropolitan (reference)).

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The research questions were addressed in five stages. First, I use descriptive statistics (mean and percentages) of obesity and selected independent variables by race/ethnicity and gender. Racial/ethnic and gender differences of control variables are not presented here but are available upon request. Second, I

use logistic regression models of adult obesity and estimate the relative and joint influences of race/ethnicity, gender, and SES. Third, I add economic hardship and psychological distress measures to assess if these two processes may help explain the race/ethnicity, gender, and SES influences on obesity. Fourth, I add a measure of the neighborhood walking environment to assess whether it helps explain the race/ethnicity, gender, and SES influences on obesity. Finally, I run separate models by gender to assess whether the influences of race/ethnicity, SES, economic hardship and psychological distress, and neighborhood walking environment on obesity differ for men and women. All models control for health behaviors and sociodemographic covariates. The analyses are weighted to account the complex NHIS sampling design using the survey module within STATA 15.1 software, which considers stratum and sampling unit identifiers. The Taylor series linearization was used for variance estimation.

RESULTS

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics of selected variables by race/ethnicity and gender. Mexican men and African American men report significantly higher prevalence of obesity than white men, while Asian men report significantly lower prevalence of obesity than white men. Among women, Mexican women and African American women report significantly higher prevalence of obesity than white women, while Asian women report significantly lower prevalence of obesity than white women.

In terms of educational attainment, Mexican men, Other Latino men, and African American men have lower levels of education than white men. Asian men have significant levels of education than white men. Among women, Mexican women, Other Latino women, African American women have lower levels of education compared to compared to white women. Asian

Table 1. Weighted Means/Proportions by Race/Ethnicity and Gender (N = 30,071)

Variable	Mexican		Other Latino		African American		Asian		White	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Obesity	41.32 ^a	40.02 ^a	33.28	35.17	30.87 ^{ab}	37.55 ^a	10.24 ^a	9.45 ^a	32.68 ^b	30.87
Education										
Less than high school	34.70 ^a	34.81 ^a	23.66 ^a	19.49 ^a	12.97 ^a	12.53 ^a	7.97	12.34 ^a	7.19	6.45
High school	32.54 ^a	27.64	28.63	29.03	37.87 ^{ab}	29.67	18.19 ^a	19.41 ^a	27.77	27.46
Some college	23.80 ^a	27.41 ^a	28.42	30.53	29.98 ^b	36.03 ^a	21.54 ^a	21.75 ^a	31.56	32.51
College or more	8.95 ^a	10.14 ^a	19.29 ^a	20.95 ^a	19.18 ^a	21.77 ^a	52.30 ^a	46.50 ^a	33.47	33.58
Family income (1000s)	68.57 ^{ab}	59.26 ^a	77.60 ^{ab}	65.29 ^a	67.11 ^{ab}	53.88 ^a	99.74	97.21 ^a	95.27 ^b	87.64
Economic hardship	0.80 ^{ab}	1.15 ^a	0.75 ^{ab}	0.98	0.89 ^{ab}	1.10 ^a	0.36 ^a	0.38 ^a	0.33 ^b	0.49
Psychological distress	1.78 ^{ab}	2.05 ^a	1.82 ^{ab}	2.10 ^a	1.81 ^{ab}	2.04 ^a	1.71 ^{ab}	1.83 ^a	1.99 ^b	2.37
Neighborhood walking environment	4.45 ^a	4.28 ^a	4.66 ^a	4.61 ^a	4.31 ^a	4.19 ^a	4.57 ^b	4.52 ^a	3.67 ^b	3.52

Notes:

^a Difference between racial/ethnic groups (reference = non-Latino white) is significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

^b Difference between men and women within race/ethnicity is significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

women also have significant levels of education compared to white women. Specifically, 9 percent of Mexican men are college graduates, 19 percent of Other Latino men, 19 percent of African American men, and 52 percent of Asian men, as compared to 33 percent for white men, respectively. Among women, 10 percent of Mexican women are college graduates, 21 percent of Other Latino women, 22 percent of African American women, and 47 percent of Asian women, as compared to 34 percent of white men, respectively. Within racial/ethnic groups, African American men are more likely than African American women to graduate from high school. In contrast, African American women are more likely than African American men to have some college education. Among both men and women, Mexicans, Other Latinos, and African Americans have significantly lower family income than their white counterparts. Asian women have significantly higher family income than white women. Within racial/ethnic groups, Mexican men, African American men, and white men have significantly higher family income than Mexican women, African American women, and white women, respectively. African American women have lower family income than any other racial/ethnic and gender groups.

Mexican men, Other Latino men, African American men, and Asian men report significantly more economic hardship than white men. Mexican women and African American women report significantly more economic hardship than white women. Asian women report significantly lower economic hardship than their white women counterparts. Within racial/ethnic groups, Mexican women and African American women report significantly higher economic hardship than Mexican men and African American men, respectively. White women report significantly more economic hardship than white men. Mexican men, Other Latino men, African American men, and Asian men report significantly lower psychological distress than white men. Mexican women, Other Latino women, African American women, and Asian women report significantly lower psychological distress than white women. Within racial/ethnic groups, women report significantly more psychological distress than men. Among both men and women, Mexicans, Other Latinos, African Americans, and Asians report living in significantly better neighborhood walking environments than their white counterparts. White men report living in significantly better neighborhood walking environments than white women.

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

Tables 2 through 4 display the odds of obesity by race/ethnicity, gender, SES, family processes, and perceptions of neighborhood walking environment from the logistic regression models. Table 2 shows the odds of obesity by those social environmental factors for the total sample. Tables 3 and 4 indicate that there are significant race/ethnicity, SES, family processes, and neighborhood walking environment variations by gender. All logistic regression models control for health behaviors (physical activity, smoking, drinking, and sleeping patterns) and sociodemographic (age, immigrant status, marital status, employment status, homeownership, nonmetropolitan area, and region) covariates.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Models of Obesity on Race/Ethnicity, Gender, SES, Economic hardship, Psychological Distress, and Neighborhood Walking Environment (N = 30,071)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Race/ethnicity (0 = non-Latino white)				
Mexican	1.847***	1.651***	1.676***	1.708***
Other Latino	1.388***	1.287***	1.286***	1.343***
African American	1.727***	1.617***	1.613***	1.674***
Asian	.354***	.372***	.383***	.391***
Gender (0 = male)				
Female	.959	.951	.912**	.905***
Education (0 = college graduate)				
Less than high school		1.397***	1.352***	1.321***
High school		1.504***	1.500***	1.471***
Some college		1.496***	1.495***	1.476***
Log of Family income (\$1,000s)		.905***	.952	.955
Economic hardship			1.211***	1.208***
Psychological distress			1.079***	1.080***
Neighborhood walking environment				.941***
Intercept	.884	.949	.650*	.830
Model fit	F (33, 540) = 41.63***	F (37, 536) = 42.54***	F (40, 533) = 43.56***	F (42, 531) = 42.24***

Notes: Two-tailed tests: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05.
All models control for age, immigrant status and duration in the U.S., marital status, employment status, homeownership, length of residence, health behaviors, region, and nonmetropolitan residence.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Models of Obesity on Race/Ethnicity and SES by Gender (N = 30,071)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Men	Women	m#w*	Men	Women	m#w
Race/ethnicity (0 = non-Latino white)						
Mexican	2.078***	1.629***		1.929***	1.428***	†
Other Latino	1.397**	1.377**		1.325*	1.257*	
African American	1.343***	2.032***	†††	1.274**	1.905***	†††
Asian	.392***	0.307***		.418***	.323***	
Education (0 = college graduate)						
Less than high school				1.387**	1.411***	
High school				1.643***	1.395***	
Some college				1.560***	1.442***	
Log of Family income (\$1,000s)				1.009	.824***	†
Intercept	.727*	.949		.531**	1.442	
Model fit	F (32, 541) = 18.16***	F (32, 541) = 23.56***		F (36, 537) = 18.18***	F (36, 537) = 24.35***	

Notes: Two-tailed tests: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05.
All models control for age, immigrant status and duration in the U.S., marital status, employment status, homeownership, length of residence, health behaviors, region, and nonmetropolitan residence.
Two-tailed tests for group differences: ††† p < .001; †† p < .01; † p < .05.
* m#w indicates the tests for group differences between men and women.

Model 1 in Table 2 shows that the odds of obesity are 85 percent (i.e., $[(1.847 - 1) \times 100]$) higher for Mexicans, 39 percent higher for Other Latinos, and 73 percent higher for African Americans than they are for whites, respectively. In contrast, the odds of obesity are 65 percent (i.e., $[(1 - 0.354) \times 100]$) lower for Asians than they are for whites.

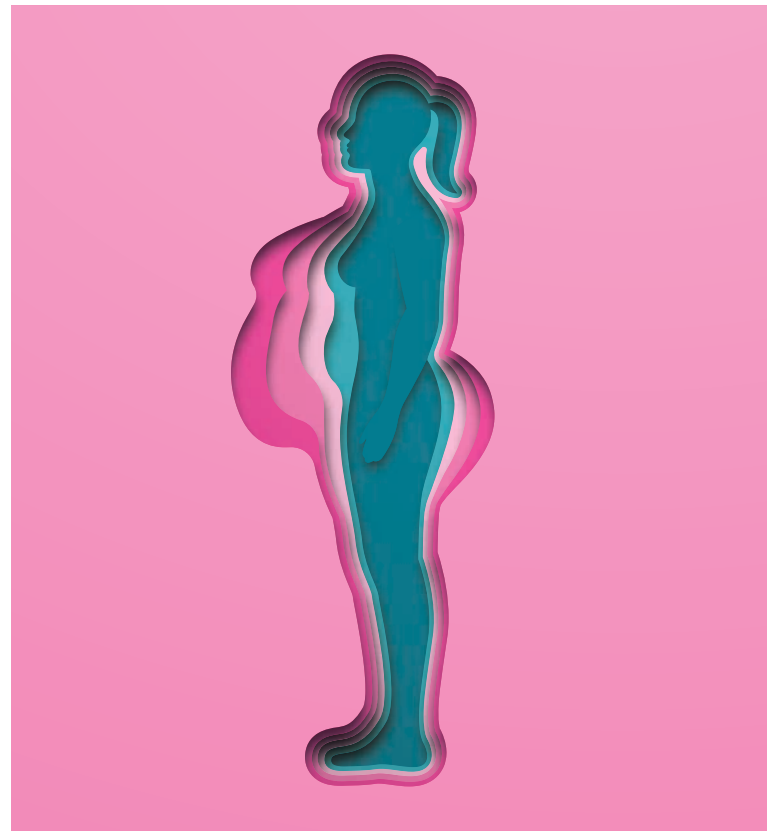
Model 2 of Table 2 adds SES measures, including educational attainment and family income. Estimated effects of SES on obesity are in the expected direction. Specifically, the odds of obesity are 40 percent higher for adults with less than a high school diploma, 50 percent higher for those with a high school diploma, and 50 percent higher for those with some college education than those of college graduate adults, respectively. The odds of obesity decrease by 9 percent for each additional increase in the logarithm of family income. Once SES measures are added to the regression equation in Model 2, the relationship between race/ethnicity and obesity (from Model 1) is reduced by approximately 10 percent $(1.847 - 1.657)/1.847$ for Mexicans, 7 percent for other Latinos, and 6 percent for African Americans, but increased for Asians by 6 percent, respectively. These results suggest that SES partially explains the racial/ethnic gaps in obesity and does not confer the same health benefits across racial-ethnic groups.

Model 3 adds family economic hardship and psychological distress. The results in Model 3 show that the odds of obesity are 21 percent higher for each unit increase in economic hardship and 8 percent higher for each unit increase in psychological distress. Once these family processes are added to the regression equation in model 3, the relationship between family income and obesity increases by 5 percent and is rendered not significant.

Model 4 adds the perception of the walking environment. The results in Model 4 show that the odds of obesity are 6 percent lower for each unit increase in the perception of a friendly walking environment. Notice that racial/ethnic, gender, and SES gaps in obesity persisted and remained substantial even after taking into consideration family processes, the perceptions of a friendly walking and safety environments, health behaviors, and sociodemographic covariates in the regression equation in Model 4. Mexicans, Other Latinos, and African American have 1.7, 1.3, and 1.7 times higher adjusted odds of obesity than their white counterparts, respectively. Asians have 0.4 times lower adjusted odds of obesity than their white counterparts. Females have 0.91 times lower adjusted odds of obesity than their male counterparts. In terms of SES, only education remained significantly related to obesity after all controls. Family income was no longer significantly related to obesity. Adults with less than a high school education, a high school diploma, and some college have 1.3, 1.5, and 1.5 times higher adjusted odds of obesity than adults with a college degree or higher, respectively.

Tables 3 and 4 present the estimated odds of obesity differences by race/ethnicity, SES, and gender. Table 3 shows the estimated odds of obesity by race/ethnicity (Model 1) and by SES (Model 2) separately for men and women. Results from Model 1 of Table 3 show that the odds of obesity for Mexican men are 2.1 times higher than those of white men. Comparatively, the odds of

obesity for Mexican women are 1.6 times higher than those of white women. The odds of obesity are 1.4 times higher for Other Latino men and Other Latino women than those of their white men and women counterparts. The odds of obesity for African American men are 1.3 times higher than those of white men. In contrast, the odds of obesity for African American women are twice those of white women. The odds of obesity for African American men are significantly lower when compared to those of African American women. The two-tailed test (shown in Model 1 of Table 3) shows the gender difference in obesity between African American men and women is statistically significant. Results in Model 1 of Table 3 also show that the odds of obesity for Asian men are 0.4 times lower than those of white men. Comparatively, the odds of obesity for Asian women are 0.3 times lower than those of white women.



In Model 2 of Table 3, SES measures are added as covariates. This results in little change in terms of the racial/ethnic gaps in obesity – the odds of obesity for Mexican, Other Latino, and African American men and women are significantly higher than those of white men and women whereas the odds of obesity for Asian men and women are significantly lower than those of white men and women. Adding SES to the logistic regression equation in Model 2 reduces slightly more the odds of obesity among women than among men and increases slightly more the odds of obesity for Asian men than Asian women. Model 2 of Table 3 also show that there are significant differences in obesity between African American men and African American women and between



Table 4. Logistic Regression Models of Obesity on Race-Ethnicity, SES, Family Processes, Economic hardship, Psychological Distress, and Neighborhood Walking Environment by Gender (N = 30,071)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Men	Women	m#w ^a	Men	Women	m#w
Race/ethnicity (0 = non-Latino white)						
Mexican	1.933***	1.479***		1.995***	1.488***	
Other Latino	1.325**	1.272*		1.397**	1.314*	
African American	1.255**	1.964***	†††	1.321**	2.010***	†††
Asian	.421***	.340***		.434***	.345***	
Education (0 = college graduate)						
Less than high school	1.361**	1.337**		1.311*	1.319**	
High school	1.638***	1.384***		1.597***	1.363***	
Some college	1.563***	1.427***		1.542***	1.411***	
Log of Family income (\$1,000s)	1.040	.879***	†††	1.042	.883***	††
Economic hardship	1.131*	1.264***		1.334*	1.256***	
Psychological distress	1.141	1.125***	†	1.043	1.124***	†
Neighborhood walking environment				.923***	.959**	
Intercept	.508*	.680		.727	.775	
Model fit	F (39, 534) = 17.42***	F (39, 534) = 24.34***		F (41, 532) = 17.41***	F (41, 532) = 24.15***	

Notes: Two-tailed tests: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05.
All models control for age, immigrant status and duration in the U.S., marital status, employment status, homeownership, length of residence, health behaviors, region, and nonmetropolitan residence.
Two-tailed tests for group differences: ††† p < .001; †† p < .01; † p < .05.
^a m#w indicates the tests for group differences between men and women.

Mexican men and Mexican women. The effect of family income on obesity is significant for women but not for men. The results in both Model 1 and Model 2 support the “fundamental causes of health” perspective, which posits that one’s position in the social structure shapes access to important resources that can be used to avoid health risks or ameliorate the consequences of disease after its onset. Mexicans, other Latinos, and African Americans, especially African American women, and those in lower SES are significantly more likely to have higher odds of obesity than their white, male, and higher SES counterparts.

In Model 1 of Table 4, family economic hardship and psychological distress are added as covariates. Do the effects of these family processes on obesity vary by gender? The results show that the odds of obesity are significantly higher for each unit increase in economic hardship and psychological distress for both men and women. The two-tailed t-test (shown in Model 3 of Table 4) shows a significant gender difference in the effect of psychological distress on obesity. The results in Model 1 of Table 4 also show a significant gender difference in the effect of family income on obesity.

In Model 2 of Table 4, the perception of neighborhood walking environments is added as a covariate. The results reveal that only

the perception of neighborhood walking environment is significant for both men and women. The odds of obesity are 8 percent lower for men and 4 percent lower for women for each unit increase in the perception of a neighborhood walking environment. Adding all covariates in the final models altered the racial-ethnic, gender, and SES gaps in obesity, but those gaps remain.

The results in Model 2 of Table 4 show that the adjusted odds of obesity remain significantly higher for those with less than high school education, high school graduate, and those with some college education than those of college graduate men and women. The effect of family income on obesity was only significant among women but not among men. The effect of economic hardship on obesity remains positive for both men and women whereas the effect of psychologic distress on obesity remains significant only for women. Neighborhood walking environment remains negatively associated with obesity for both men and women.

Using the results in Model 2 of Table 4, Figure 1 displays the adjusted predicted probability of obesity by race/ethnicity and gender. The adjusted predicted probability of obesity remains significantly higher for Mexican men and women, Other Latino men and women, African American men, and African American women than those of white men and women. The adjusted predicted probability of obesity remains lower for Asian men and Asian women than those of white men and women respectively. African American women have the highest predicted probability of obesity than any other racial-ethnic/gender groups (Figure 1).

Figures 2 and 3 display the adjusted predicted probability of obesity by race/ethnicity, gender, and SES, using only family income. The adjusted predicted probability of obesity by family and race/ethnicity among men is displayed in Figure 2 whereas the adjusted predicted probability of obesity by family and race/ethnicity among women is displayed in Figure 3. Figure 2 reveals that the adjusted probability of obesity among men is higher for Mexican men, African American men, and Other Latino men than white men. The adjusted probability of obesity is highest among Mexican men and lowest among Asian men. The racial-ethnic gaps in adjusted probability of obesity increase as family income increases (Figure 2). Figure 3 reveals that the adjusted probability of obesity among women is higher for African American women, followed by Mexican women, Other Latino women, and white women. The adjusted probability of obesity is highest among African American women and lowest among Asian women. In contrast to men, the racial-ethnic gaps in adjusted probability of obesity decrease as family income increases (Figure 3).

DISCUSSION

This study addresses racial/ethnic, gender, and SES disparities in adult obesity in the United States. First, this study examines the relative and combined influences of these social structural dimensions of race/ethnicity, gender, and SES on adult obesity. In addition, this study examines three mechanisms through which social structural factors of race/ethnicity, gender, and

SES influence obesity: economic hardship and psychological distress at the family level and living in friendly neighborhood walking environment. First, findings from logistic regression models suggest that Mexicans, Other Latinos, and African Americans have, as expected, higher odds of obesity as compared to whites, whereas the odds of obesity for Asians are significantly lower than those of whites. These racial-ethnic disparities in obesity remain significant even after adjusting for age, immigrant status, marital status, homeownership, health behaviors (i.e., physical activity, smoking, drinking, and hours of sleep), nonmetropolitan residence, and region.

Findings suggest that SES partially explains the racial-ethnic gaps in obesity, but those gaps persist. Adults with lower levels of education (less than high school, high school graduate, or some college) exhibit higher odds of obesity than adults with higher levels of education (i.e., those with a college degree or higher). As expected also, the odds of obesity decrease as family income increases. Findings also suggest that SES does not confer the same benefits across racial-ethnic groups. This is also consistent with previous work that showed that there are diminishing returns to health of socioeconomic mobility among racial-ethnic groups (Brown et al., 2016; Walsemann et al., 2012).

Findings suggest that economic hardship and psychological distress are associated with increased odds of obesity and partially explain the racial-ethnic, gender, and SES gaps in obesity. They reduce the gender gap in obesity between men and women, suggesting that economic hardship and psychological distress partially explain the effect of family income on obesity. In terms of race/ethnicity, these family processes minimally reduce the racial-ethnic gaps in obesity.

Findings also show that the odds of obesity are negatively associated with the perception of neighborhood walking environment, i.e., places where they can walk and places where most of the streets have sidewalks. Results indicate that racial/ethnic-, gender-, and SES-gaps in obesity persisted and remained substantial even after taking into consideration economic hardship, psychological stress, the perception of a friendly neighborhood walking environment, controlling for health behaviors and sociodemographic covariates. Specifically, Mexicans, Other Latinos, and African Americans have higher odds of obesity than whites whereas Asians have lower odds of obesity than whites. Females have lower odds than males. Adults with lower levels of education (i.e., those with less than high school education, high school graduates, and those with some college education) have higher odds of obesity than college graduates. The odds of obesity decrease as family income increases. These results suggest that individuals in a lower social position in a social structure, whether based on race/ethnicity, gender, or SES, experience higher rates of obesity.

The important contribution of this study is the analysis of the intersection of race-ethnicity, gender, and SES and their combined influences on adult obesity. Results show that racial-ethnic inequalities in obesity vary by gender such that the Mexican-white gap in obesity is greater among men than women; Other Latino-

Figure 1. Adjusted Predicted Probability of Obesity by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

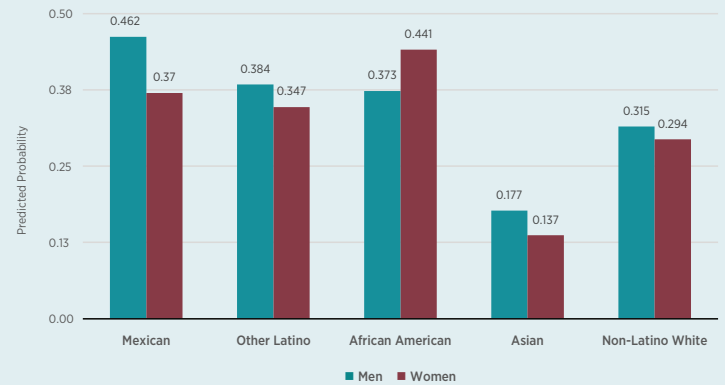
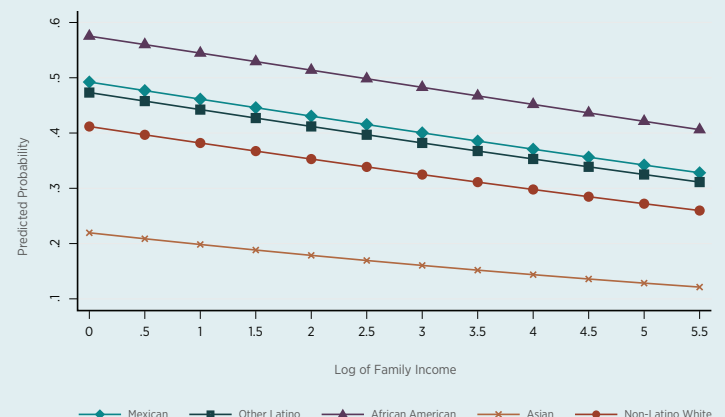


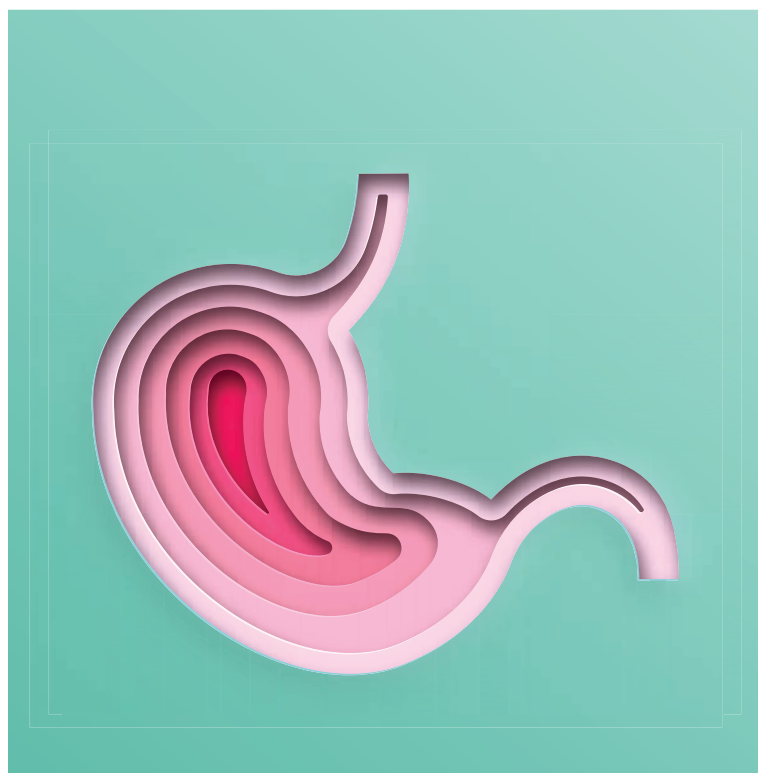
Figure 2. Adjusted Predicted Probability of Obesity by Family Income and Race/Ethnicity among Men



Figure 3. Adjusted Predicted Probability of Obesity by Family Income and Race/Ethnicity among Women



white gap is slightly higher among men than women; African American-white gap is higher among women than men; and Asian-white gap in obesity is higher among men than women. African American women have the highest odds of obesity than any other racial-ethnic/gender groups. Moreover, results indicate that SES differentially influences obesity among men and women. These findings suggest differential effects of SES on obesity across racial-ethnic and gender groups. This study also considers the intersection of SES, race/ethnicity, and gender, which are three different but interrelated systems that individually or jointly affect obesity, especially those in lower social position such as minorities (e.g., Mexican, Other Latino, and African American) and women. These social structural positions affect life experiences and health, and in this case obesity.



This study also considers stress, including financial/economic hardship and psychological distress, and how it influences obesity. Stress imposes strain on relationships and may adversely affect health and obesity. Racial-ethnic minorities, especially those in lower class and women, are disproportionately socially disadvantaged in terms of opportunities/constraints and resources, and stress, which may in turn influence obesity. African Americans, particularly women, experience the highest poverty, lack of resources, and more stressful conditions. Racial/ethnic segregation and discrimination disproportionately expose minorities, especially African Americans, to poverty and more stress (Williams and Sternthal, 2010). Living in friendly neighborhood walking environment, i.e., places where people can walk and most streets have sidewalks, is negatively associated with obesity.

This study is not without limitations. First, while the analysis controls for health behaviors, including physical activity, smoking, drinking, and sleep, nutritional patterns were missing in the data. Second, this study is cross-sectional and uses only one year of data. Future research will use a life course perspective to assess the relative and joint effect of SES, gender, and race/ethnicity on obesity using multiple years of data collected by NHIS. Third, questions related to neighborhood walking environment were asked, but other neighborhood social structural, nutritional and physical environments are lacking. Future research will consider access to de-identified data that will permit merging other neighborhood social structural, nutritional, and physical environments. Finally, another limitation relates to issues of causality and selection. Future research will consider longitudinal and multilevel data that will analyze the effects of social structures and processes, at the family and neighborhood levels, on obesity over time.

CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms social structural and disadvantaged positions of racial/ethnic, gender, and SES and their relative and joint influences on obesity. Findings show that individuals in disadvantaged social structural positions such as minorities (e.g., Mexican, Other Latino, and African American, women, particularly African American women, and those with lower SES) have higher rates of obesity than those in advantageous social structural positions. Racial/ethnic, gender, and SES inequalities in obesity persist and remain substantial even after taking into consideration stress, the perception of neighborhood walking environment, health behaviors, and sociodemographic covariates. Thus, racial-ethnic minorities, women, and those in lower SES are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of opportunities/constraints and resources, stress levels, and neighborhood environments, which may in turn influence obesity. 🌱

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Midterm 2022 and The Role of Latino Voters

By Yoshira Donaji Macías Mejía, Ph.D.

Often the media ignores or briefly discusses the role of Latino voters in U.S. elections. This is concerning since the Latino population has grown substantially over the last few years. Even in those instances when the media discusses Latino voters, they do so in ways that are problematic

or generalist, such as describing Latinos as if they were a monolith. We know from research that Latinos are not a monolith and vary due to national origin, gender, generational status, Spanish versus English speakers, reside in various states and counties, and have differing socioeconomic status. When examining Latino voting patterns, all these differences



must be taken into consideration. These differences can help explain why the highly awaited red wave did not materialize in the 2022 midterm elections as many believed it would.

The 2022 Midterm Voter Election Poll conducted by the African American Research Collaborative (AARC) is led by several reputable scholars and political scientists. These scholars are well versed in political science methodologies and have years of experience conducting research on underrepresented minority groups in American politics. Dr. Gabriel R. Sanchez, a David M. Rubenstein Fellow at the Brookings Institute, uses this data to describe the role of Latinos in the 2022 midterm elections. Data from this poll suggests that when examining Latinos as a panethnic group, the majority remained faithful to the Democratic Party. When voting for Democratic House candidates, 64 percent of Latinos supported a Democrat when compared to 33 percent who supported a Republican candidate, and 3 percent of Latino voters stated they voted for a candidate from another party. This shows that Democrats maintained support from Latinos during the 2022 election.

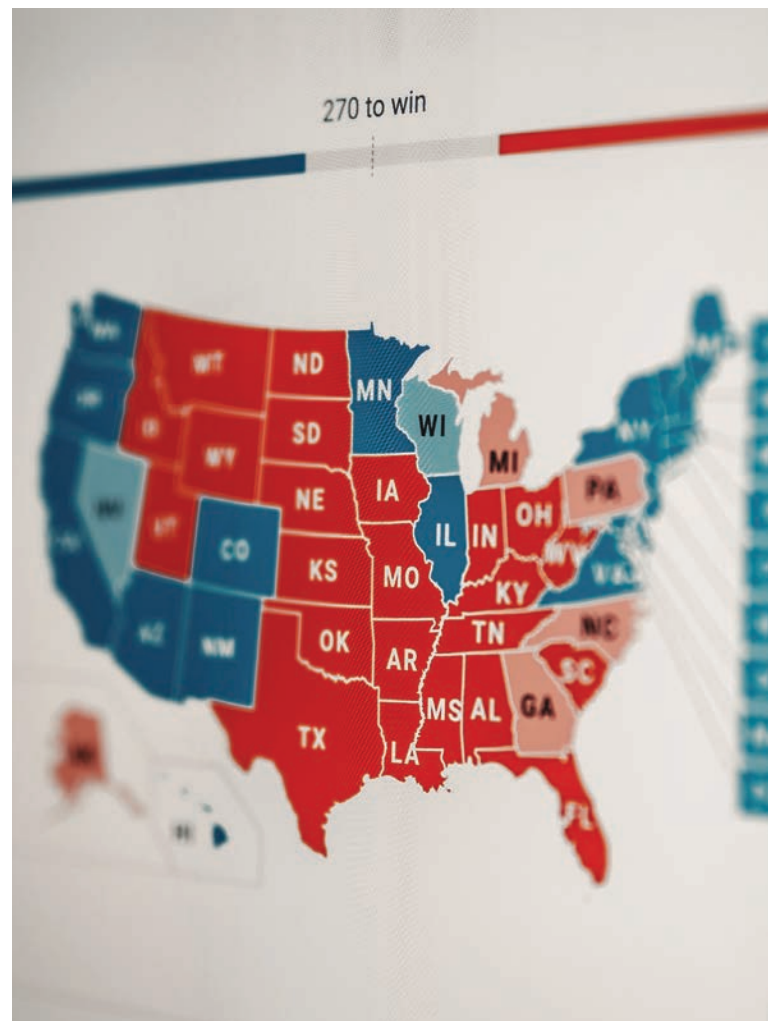
As previously mentioned, examining Latinos' voting patterns needs to be done by examining this group through different demographic characteristics. One way to do this is by looking at Latino differences by sex. Data from the 2022 midterm elections suggests that 68 percent of Latinas casted their ballots in support of Democratic House candidates when compared to 58 percent of Latino males. Additional information from this poll suggests that Latinas were twice as likely to say the issue driving their voting decisions were women's reproductive health and abortion when compared to Latino males. Abortion was a major issue that helped stop the predicted red wave in Congress and turned out Latina voters to the polls.

To further analyze Latino voters, the Midterm Voter Election Poll provides demographic data by partisanship, age, and religion. As it pertains to abortion, this data suggests that for Latinos who find religion is very important to their daily lives, 20 percent found abortion to be one of the top three issues that needed to be addressed by Congress and the president, when compared to 25 percent of Latinos who state religion is only somewhat important, and 31 percent of Latinos who said religion was not important to their daily lives. This shows to what extent religion played a role when it came to views of abortion as a top issue. Religion also impacted partisan vote choice, with 37 percent of Latinos who state religion is important to their daily lives supporting a Republican House candidate, when compared to 33 percent of Latinos who only state religion is only somewhat important, and to 24 percent of Latinos who say that religion is not important.

While abortion was a top issue for Latinos, another issue that swayed Latinos was the economy, such as rising costs from inflation and gas prices. With rising costs of food, gasoline, incidentals, etc. this pushed Latinos to vote for candidates that

would best curb the rising costs. It is necessary to note that the economy has consistently been a top issue for Latino voters across several data sources, such as the Pew Research Center, NPR, and the Midterm Voter Election Poll referenced above. Per data from the Midterm Voter Election Poll by age categories, 39 percent of Latinos ages 18 to 29 stated inflation was their number one major issue, when compared to 46 percent of Latinos ages 30 to 39, 53 percent of Latinos ages 40 to 49, and 55 percent of Latinos 60 years and older. This data suggests that for Latino voters by age, inflation was a major issue for those 40 and over. When examining gas prices, the results were fairly the same for all age groups, with 25 percent of Latinos between ages 18 to 59 stating gas prices as their second most important issue that needed to be addressed when compared to 22 percent of Latinos ages 60 and older who stated rising gas prices as their second most important issue.

When examining Latinos by national origin, the data suggests differences between which groups voted for Republicans versus Democrats. When examining support for Republicans, 31 percent of those of Mexican origin supported a Republican candidate, when compared to 28 percent of Puerto Ricans, 46 percent



“Overall, we see from the data that Latinos have shown us the internal variation that exists among the Latino community and that Latinos are not a monolithic group.”



of Cubans, 39 percent from Central American origin, and 47 percent from South America. Overall, this shows that Cubans and Latinos with roots in South America were most likely to support a Republican candidate. When examining Democrats, 66 percent of Mexicans supported a Democratic candidate, compared to 70 percent of Puerto Ricans, 51 percent of Cubans, 57 percent of Central Americans, and 48 percent of those with roots in South America. This shows that those of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin were more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate in the 2022 midterms. Even though Latinos from Cuban, Central American, and South American origin supported Democrats at lower percentages, these groups showed slightly more support for Democratic candidates over Republican candidates. This suggests that there might be shifts in partisanship among national origin groups that have been traditionally considered a Republican voting bloc. These changes also might be caused by the political context of the 2022 midterm elections given discussion of the insurrection investigations taking place and responses to the coronavirus pandemic by the Republican Party.

Moreover, it is also important to assess Latino voters' candidate preferences based on where they reside. Some important states to consider are battleground states in which Latinos are becoming a large voting bloc. Those states are Michigan, Colorado, and Pennsylvania. As stated by Dr. Sanchez, 74 percent of Latinos in Michigan, 73 percent of Latinos in Pennsylvania, and 71 percent of Latinos in Colorado voted for Democrats and were an essential voting bloc in supporting both Democratic gubernatorial and Senate candidates. Additionally, when examining House races, we notice a similar trend among Latinos. In Arizona, 64 percent of Latinos voted for a Democratic candidate versus 36 percent who voted for a Republican, which was another state that was well discussed in the media. The only outlier in the data was Florida, with 54 percent of Latinos voting for Republicans when compared to 44 percent of Latinos who voted for Democrats. This can be attributed to the national origin that is most prevalent in Florida, which are Cuban Americans.

Overall, we see from the data that Latinos have shown us the internal variation that exists among the Latino community and that Latinos are not a monolithic group. The data presented here suggest Latinos vary by sex, age, national origin group, and place of residence. Latinos did lean Democrat, but this should not be taken for granted and viewed as a common occurrence, as this can change at any time. We also learned that contrary to popular belief, while immigration is a central issue for the Latino community, the economy (inflation and rising costs) did take center stage as one of the most pressing issues impacting the Latino community. Also, important to note is the role abortion played among the Latino electorate. Thus, we can see that in this 2022 midterm election current economic issues drove Latino voters to the polls. 🗳️



¿Qué está pasando en el instituto?

SEND-OFFS



Zereth Bustamante Luevano, student research assistant, graduated with a master's degree in human resources and labor relations. In 2020, Zereth obtained her bachelor's in business administration at Eastern Michigan University with a major in human resources management. She is a sister of Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Incorporated and serves as the academic advisor for her home chapter at Eastern Michigan University. After graduating, she and her fiancé are moving to the Bay Area. Zereth hopes to work in the field of human resources and potentially specialize in either diversity, equity and inclusion or talent & development.



Alexa Delon, student clerical assistant, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in global studies in the arts and humanities with minors in Korean and anthropology. Alexa hopes to eventually work towards obtaining her master's degree in anthropology in the future but will start off working a full-time job post-graduation to take a break from academia. Alexa really appreciated her time helping at the office and will utilize her skills that she gained from working at JSRI in her future endeavors. Alexa worked at JSRI from August 2019 to December 2022.

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- The **P. Lea Martinez Endowed Scholarship Fund**, which supports students studying health issues among Latinos;
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