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NEXO

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The Midwest's Premier Latino Research Center

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Julian Samora Research Institute
University Outreach and Engagement

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NEXO is the official newsletter of the Julian Samora Research Institute (JSRI), University Outreach and Engagement at Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing, Michigan.

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

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Letter from the Director

by Kwesi Brookins, Ph.D.

Kwesi Brookins, Ph.D., is acting director of the Julian Samora Research Institute and vice provost for University Outreach and Engagement.

The mission of JSRI is to generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest and across the nation. This mission is crucial as ever, as Latinos are becoming the predominant minority population in the U.S. As of 2023, Latinos were 19.4% of the U.S. population and are projected to reach 26.9% in 2060. In Michigan, Latinos comprise 6% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates).

The Latino demographic changes contribute to the diversity of the U.S. as a multiethnic society. Despite being socially constructed as one ethnic group, Latinos are not a monolithic social group. They include populations of different ethnic, cultural, and origin backgrounds. In 2023, 58.3% of Latinos in the U.S. were of Mexican origin, 10.9% were Central Americans, 9% Puerto Ricans, 7.9% South Americans, 3.9% Cubans, and 6.4% were other Latinos.

Latino immigration of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and, more recently, other Latinos from Central and South America continues to diversify different communities in the U.S. The influx of Latinos in new destination communities does not occur by chance. They are pulled by employment opportunities in those areas, such as working on fruit and vegetable farms, dairy farms, and meat-processing industries in the rural Midwest and Southeast (Kandel & Parrado, 2005). Others are seeking refuge to escape violent conflicts (e.g., El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) or extreme poverty and hoping to get better employment opportunities in the U.S. to support their families. Economic restructuring nationwide and globally and associated regulatory processes, including employment discrimination, layoffs, and community resistance, are primary factors that push Latino workers to migrate to different regions in the United States, including the rural Midwest, in search of better opportunities. Other factors include lower housing costs and safer communities.

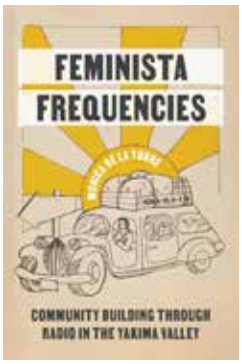
Moreover, Latinos make significant contributions to the U.S. economy. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that over 5 million Latino-owned businesses operate in the U.S., employing more than 3.5 million workers. These businesses contribute over $800 billion per year to the U.S. economy through sales. The number of Latino-owned companies increased by nearly 1 million from 2018 to 2024 (Siles, NEXO, current issue, see page 5). Latino businesses with employees are concentrated in six key sectors: construction; accommodation and food services; professional, scientific, and technical services; administrative and support services; health care and social assistance; and retail trade.

The needs of Latinos are substantial and vary depending on their social positions in U.S. society. Throughout U.S. history, Latinos have occupied lower social status positions. Their livelihoods are linked to political, economic, and social structures. Despite a higher civilian labor force participation rate (67.4%), Latinos are disproportionately concentrated in the secondary labor market, often holding low-wage jobs. They are substantially overrepresented in office and administrative support, construction and extraction, sales, food preparation and serving, building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, agricultural, and housekeeping occupations.

They are most likely to work in the service sector and are least likely to work in jobs that offer employer-provided pensions or health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 Current Population Survey), Annual Social and Economic Supplement). Latinos are more likely to be underemployed and in poverty than non-Latinos (Kayitsinga, NEXO, No. 1, Fall 2024); (Kayitsinga, NEXO, current issue, see page 10). The labor market and social disadvantages among Latinos vary widely. They are partially explained by a lack of skills and low educational attainment on the one hand, and by the labor market opportunity structures in which they reside and work on the other. Undocumented Latino labor migrants experience double disadvantages: 1) they earn poor incomes to support their families here in the U.S. but also in their home countries through remittances; and 2) without legal status, they are vulnerable workers subjected to the most undesirable and low-paying jobs and are at risk of being taken by ICE for deportation.

Latinos experience health risks coupled with significant health care access issues. Despite their low socioeconomic status and health care accessibility challenges, Latinos appear to experience relatively better health compared to non-Latinos, often referred to as the "Hispanic Health Paradox." One risk factor associated with poor health among Latinos has been obesity. Obesity increases the risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancers, and other chronic conditions that cause disability and premature deaths. The prevalence of obesity is significantly higher among Latinos, especially Mexicans, compared to non-Latino groups. Another risk factor associated with Latino health is discrimination. Discrimination in health among Latinos is particularly salient given the increasing hostility surrounding immigration issues, with migrant and border communities particularly vulnerable. Despite health risks and low socioeconomic status, Latinos experience significant health advantages compared to non-Latinos, including lower early mortality, higher life expectancy, lower rates of cardiovascular disease, and lower rates of cancer. For example, the age-adjusted cardiovascular disease prevalence for Latinos is lower than for non-Latino Blacks or whites. The overall cancer prevalence and mortality rates are lower for Latinos than for non-Latinos.

JSRI is dedicated to engaged research and scholarship that generates, disseminates, and applies evidence-based knowledge that responds to the needs and aspirations of Latino communities in the Midwest and nationwide. More importantly, JSRI seeks to engage with communities in ways that build on their tremendous assets and strengths that enrich the broader American tapestry. As we move toward the next phases of JSRI's development, we will continue this mission with a particular focus on engaged research that crosses the boundaries of the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and the emerging technologies that serve communities. To this end, JSRI will activate greater collaborations and partnerships across the tremendous intellectual and scholarly resources of Michigan State University, and, in particular, the tremendous work being done in Chicano and Latino studies, Latin American and Caribbean studies, and the scholars in disciplines across the university. We also look forward to collaborations with scholars outside of MSU. Please contact us to discuss ways we can partner.



Feminista Frequencies: Community Building through Radio in the Yakima Valley

By Monica De La Torre (2022)
Seattle: University of Washington Press

Reviewed by
Richard Cruz Dávila, Ph.D.

In *Feminista Frequencies*, Monica De La Torre offers a historical account of Chicana/o activism in the Pacific Northwest via the emergence of Radio Cadena (KDNA), a community radio station created by and for Chicana/o and Mexicana/o farmworkers in Washington's Yakima Valley. As the title implies, she is particularly interested in the active roles Chicanas played in the creation and operation of the station through what she calls "Chicana radio praxis" (11), a feminist approach to radio that emphasizes community building, programming content not heard on other stations, and "keeping records," or, in other words, archival practices. This approach to radio production, she contends, results in the transmission of "feminista frequencies," which she uses to refer to actual soundwaves but also "as a metaphor for social movement activism. Here, radio frequencies carry discourses of resistance and track migrant movement across the United States . . . and across borders" (12). De La Torre argues further that, beyond simply documenting the history of Radio Cadena, *Feminista Frequencies* itself "mobilizes Chicana radio praxis as a methodology by building relationships with former Chicana and Chicano radio producers, identifying sound in nonauditory artifacts, and creating new archives" (11).

The book is divided into three chapters, the first of which, "The Roots of Radio Cadena: Chicana/o Community Radio Formations in the Pacific Northwest," considers the foundational years of the station within the historical context of passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 and the adoption and use of public broadcasting by the Chicana/o Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Within this context, De La Torre argues that the early years of the station demonstrate a convergence of "migration, social movement activism, and community radio production," as the migrant farmworker and activist backgrounds of the station's founders and broadcasters influenced their work in community radio, particularly their emphasis on efforts to build community (26). Regular readers of NEXO may recognize in this chapter the names of two of Radio Cadena's co-founders, Julio César Guerrero and Dan Roble (Daniel Robleski), organizers who traveled to Washington to replicate the farmworker-produced radio initiative they first implemented in Lansing, Michigan.

The second chapter, "Brotando del Silencio (Emerging from Silence): Chicana Radio Praxis in Community Public Broadcasting," documents the lives and work of women at Radio Cadena to examine how Chicana feminist thought and practice informed the operation of the station and the programming that appeared on its airwaves. De La Torre argues that the work of women at KDNA "altered the cultural soundscape of public broadcasting by creating Chicana-focused radio programs designed to reach farmworker women" that "extended beyond entertainment and into the realm of care" (62). They achieved this through a Chicana radio praxis that included: women in leadership positions and on air; training other women in radio production; producing programs especially for the women in their communities; and insisting on antisexist policies, including banning songs with sexist lyrics from their broadcasts.

In the final chapter, "Radio Rasquache: DIY Community Radio Programming Aesthetics," De La Torre draws connections between the Chicana radio praxis of the women of Radio Cadena and more recent Chicana and Latina community radio and podcast producers. While contemporary producers may not know the stories of previous generations of producers such as those at KDNA, De La Torre argues that "the conditions and structures that call us to produce are similar" and entail similar tactics: "bring information, alternative epistemologies, and entertainment to people who are not included in mainstream media" (27). Here she employs an autoethnographic analysis to her own work with the Los Angeles-based community radio program, Soul Rebel Radio, to suggest linkages between the "rasquache" aesthetics of Radio Cadena and contemporary Chicana/o community-based media.

In *Feminista Frequencies*, De La Torre provides a meaningful and engaging addition to a small but growing body of literature on Chicana/os and Latina/os in the Pacific Northwest, long a destination for Mexicana/o and Tejana/o farmworkers. A notable feature of the book is De La Torre's commitment to community-engaged research, as she highlights throughout the book her working relationship with former station manager Rosa Ramón. Theirs is a relationship demonstrably based in mutual respect and reciprocity that did not end with publication of the book. As De La Torre writes in the epilogue, "Ramón and I continue our collaboration in public talks and conference presentations about our work to digitize and archive Chicana radio" (112).

The book will appeal most obviously to scholars of Chicana/o and Latina/o social movements, especially to those with interests in feminism and gender or in the use of media by social movements. It will also appeal to general readers with similar interests, and her development of concepts such as "feminista frequencies" and "Chicana radio praxis," while nuanced and innovative, are written in such a way that a general readership would still find the book accessible. At only 176 pages (inclusive of front matter, end notes, bibliography, and index), the book could be used in graduate seminars and upper-level undergraduate courses in Chicana/o and Latina/o studies or media and cultural studies. Students in these disciplines may find the book especially useful for De La Torre's clear elucidation and modeling of Chicana radio praxis.

The Important Role of Latinos in the National Economy

By Marcelo Siles, Ph.D.

Latinos are becoming key players in the United States economy through their important contributions to several national industrial sectors such as agriculture, construction, business development, and the creation of jobs, among others. In the last few decades, the steady growth of the Latino population has reached close to a 20% of the U.S population, which means that one in five inhabitants of the country are Latino. Mexicans represented 58.3% of the Latino population in 2023, followed by Puerto Ricans (9%) and Cubans (3.9%). Another important characteristic of this ethnic group is a growing trend toward obtaining the U.S. citizenship through naturalization. In 2010, 28.7% of the Latino population were naturalized citizens, reaching 40% in 2021, an increase of 11.3% in only 11 years. Considering the ratio of naturalized Latinos to noncitizen Latinos, in 2010 it was equal to 40.3%, though in 2021 this ratio was equal to 66.6%, a net increase of 26.3%.

Table 1. Latino Population Growth: 2010–2023

Population by Origin	2010		2015		2021		2023	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Total	**47,727,533**	**100.0**	**54,232,205**	**100.0**	**60,866,969**	**100.0**	**65,140,277**	**100.0**
Mexican	30,731,943	64.4	34,640,287	63.9	36,983,682	60.8	37,991,500	58.3
Puerto Rican	4,455,149	9.3	5,174,554	9.5	5,857,466	9.6	5,840,782	9.0
Cuban	1,690,061	3.5	2,014,010	3.7	2,369,179	3.9	2,568,036	3.9
Other Hispano	10,850,380	22.7	12,403,354	22.9	15,656,642	25.75	18,739,959	28.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010, 2015, 2021, 2023

Education plays an important role in facilitating higher socioeconomic status. Since 1970 the educational attainment of Latinos, both at the high school and college levels, has been steadily increasing, although it remains among the lowest among racial/ethnic groups in the country. In 1970, Asians had the highest rates of high school graduation with 62.2%, while only 32% of Latinos completed high school, a difference of 30.1%. At the college level, Asians also had the highest graduation rates with 20.4%, while Latinos had a low rate equal to 4.5%, a net difference 15.9%.

The educational attainment rates for Latinos experienced considerable growth between 1970 and 2023, with high school graduation rates reaching 73.4%, an increase of 41.3%. At the college level, Latinos reached a 20.8% graduate rate, a net growth of 16.3%. Despite considerable growth in their educational attainment rates, Latinos still have the lowest rates among all racial/ethnic groups (see Table 2). It remains imperative that Latinos keep improving their educational attainment rates, which points to a need to develop a support system to facilitate their participation in the education system.

Table 2. Changes in Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity: 1970 – 2023

Race and Ethnicity	High School Graduate or more			College Graduate or more		
	Percentage	2010-1970	2023-1970	Percentage	2010-1970	2023-1970
White						
1970	54.5			11.3		
2010	87.6	33.1		30.3	19.0	
2023	93.9		39.4	39.4		28.1
Asian						
1970	62.2			20.4		
2010	88.9	26.7		52.4	32.0	
2023	88.4		26.2	57.8		37.4
Hispanic						
1970	32.1			4.5		
2010	62.9	30.8		13.9	9.4	
2023	73.4		41.3	20.8		16.3
Black						
1970	31.4			4.4		
2010	84.2	52.8		19.8	15.4	
2023	88.7		57.3	26.2		21.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 1970, 2010, and 2023.

Latino men had the highest labor participation rates among men of all racial groups from 2003 to 2023, a trend projected to continue through 2033. In contrast, Latino women had the lowest labor participation rates in 2003, but they experienced continued growth during the considered period, 2003–2023, and their rate is projected to reach 59.8% in 2033. That will bring their labor participation rate close to that of Black women, who are projected to have the highest participation rates in 2033 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Labor Force Participation Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 16 years and older: 2003, 2013, 2023, and Projected 2033

Race and Ethnicity	Participation Rate 2003	Participation Rate 2013	Participation Rate 2023	Participation Rate 2033
Total	**66.2**	**63.2**	**62.6**	**61.2**
Men	73.5	69.7	68.1	65.6
Women	59.5	57.2	57.3	56.9
White	66.5	63.5	62.3	60.5
Men	74.2	70.5	68.2	65.4
Women	59.1	56.9	56.5	55.8
Black	64.3	61.2	63.1	62.0
Men	67.3	63.5	65.6	63.2
Women	61.9	59.2	61.0	60.8
All other groups (1*)	66.5	63.9	64.5	64.4
Men	74.5	71.3	70.7	70.0
Women	59.4	57.2	58.7	59.3
Hispanic Origin	68.3	66.0	66.9	66.4
Men	80.1	76.3	75.1	73.0
Women	55.9	55.7	58.7	59.8
Other than Hispanic Origin	66.0	62.7	61.7	59.8
Men	72.5	68.5	66.5	63.7
Women	60.0	57.5	57.0	56.2

1* The "all other groups" category includes (1) those classified as being multiple racial origin and (2) the race categories of (2a) Asian, (2b) American Indian and Alaskan Native or (2c) Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders.

Source: Employment Projections program, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003, 2013, 2023, and Projected 2033.

A report from the New American Economy indicates that Hispanic Americans are filling critical workforce gaps in labor-short industries. Hispanics have a strong commitment to work. Their work ethic makes them an invaluable force in the sectors in which they work, especially those that require substantial physical effort. They are highly involved in several critical U.S. industrial sectors, such as agriculture, construction, and administrative support. During the COVID-19 pandemic many Latinos were essential workers, performing necessary tasks in vital sectors: health, transportation, agriculture, retail, and construction.

Furthermore, the number of workers at Latino-owned businesses (LOBs) has increased by 55% since 2007, compared to 8% job growth among white-owned businesses (*State of Latino Entrepreneurship Report*). This report also states that the number of Latino-owned employer firms has grown by 35% in the last 10 years. More than 12% of all immigrant workers run their own business, and immigrants are 30.6% more likely to operate their own business than the overall U.S. population (*New American Economy Report*).

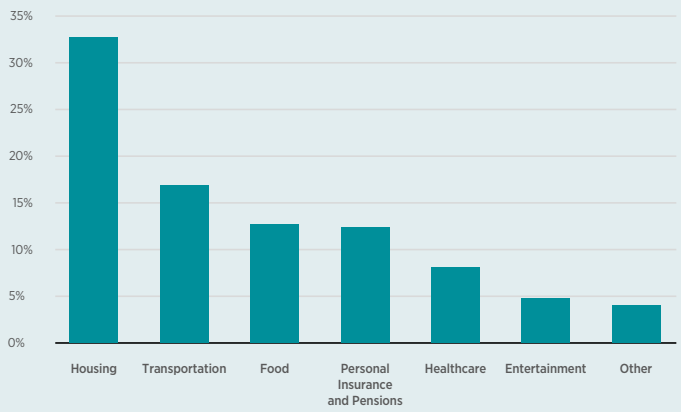
LATINO PURCHASING POWER AND PRIMARY EXPENDITURES

According to data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, close to 50% of Latino households reported owning a house in 2023, while the remaining 50% of households are renters. The percentage of Latinos who own homes has been growing over the past two decades, increasing from 46% in 2000 to 49.1% in 2020.

Housing and childcare are the largest expenditures for Latino households. They accounted for 37% of the budget for Hispanic households in 2020, compared to 15% for food and 18% for transportation. Other expenditures are insurance costs (13%), health care (8%), entertainment (5%), and other expenses that include travel, education, and clothing (4%).

According to 2024 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Latino purchasing power reached $3.4 trillion in 2023, with a total income of $2.5 trillion. It is important to note that both measures grew 2.1 to 2.4 times faster than the corresponding measures for non-Latinos. The BLS report also states that Latinos, when they have disposable income, are more likely to support family members living in the United States and abroad. Among Latinos, 44% report using extra money to help a family member. Some 32% of Latinos report sending money to their families abroad; of that number, more than 66% send up to 30% of their income.

Figure 1. Main Expenditure Areas for Latino Consumers



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC).

LATINOS TOTAL ECONOMIC OUTPUT: 2010–2022

The total economic output or gross domestic product (GDP) of Latinos in 2022 was $3.7 trillion, which makes them important contributors to the national economy. More importantly, Latino contributions to the national economy have been steadily increasing, from $1.7 trillion in 2010 to $3.7 trillion in 2022 with a net increase of $2 trillion in only 10 years (see Table 4).

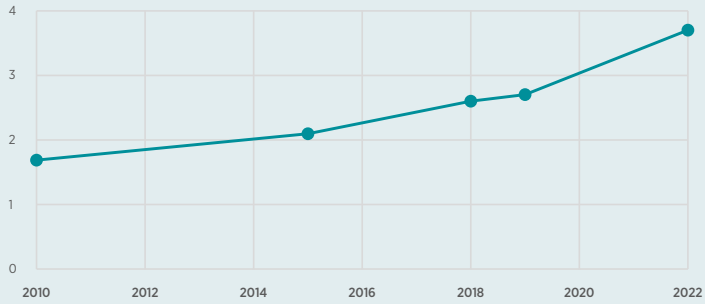
Latinas' contributions to the national economy have seen notable growth. A Bank of America report states that Latinas at the national level contributed $1.3 billion to the GDP in 2022, which is comparable to the total contribution of the state of Florida. The economic growth of Latinas was almost three times higher than that of non-Latinas between 2010 and 2021.

Table 4. Economic Output of Latinos in the U.S. Economy

Year	Economic Output
2010	$1.7 T
2015	$2.1 T
2018	$2.6 T
2019	$2.7 T
2022	$3.7 T

Source: U.S Bureau of the Census, annual ACS figures 2010-2022.

Figure 2. Economic Contributions of Latino Households to the U.S. Economy: 2010-2022[i]



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC).

i The contributions to this paper by Emilia Breuning, graduate student, and Sakari Wilson, an undergraduate student who worked at the Julian Samora Research Institute, are greatly appreciated.

The wealth of Latinos has also been growing; recent publications show a median increase of 47% between 2019 and 2022. As a result, the gap between Latino and non-Latino white households has been narrowing. A report from the Hispanic Wealth Project indicates that Hispanic household wealth has tripled over the past decade. The median Latino household wealth in 2022 was $61,620, which is close to one-fifth of the median White household wealth of $285,010.

A report from the Latino Donor Collaborative in partnership with Wells Fargo Bank indicates that the U.S. Latino economy grew to $3.6 trillion in 2022, up from $3.2 trillion the prior year. Another report by Stanford University states, if Latinos were an independent country, they would have the second fastest-growing economy, and their GDP would rank fifth in the world.

THE IMPACT OF HISPANIC-OWNED BUSINESSES ON THE U.S. ECONOMY

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that there are more than 5 million Latino-owned businesses (LOBs) operating in the country, employing more than 3.5 million workers. LOBs contribute over $800 billion per year to the U.S. economy through sales trade (see Table 5). The number of LOBs grew by close to 1 million new businesses from 2018 to 2024. Latino businesses with employees are concentrated in six important industrial sectors: i) construction, ii) accommodation and food services, iii) professional, scientific, and technical services, iv) administrative and support services, v) health care and social assistance, and vi) retail.

Table 5. Number of Total Hispanic-Owned and Operated Businesses

Year	Number of Businesses	Number of Employees	Total Sales
2024	5.0 million	3.5 million	> $800 billion
2023	5.0 million	3.5 million	> $800 billion
2022	5.0 million	3.6 million	$800 billion
2021	5.1 million	2.9 million	$767 billion
2020	5.0 million	2.9 million	$767 billion
2019	5.1 million	2.9 million	$767 billion
2018	4.22 million	2.97 million	$599 billion

Source: SBA, Stanford Entrepreneurial Center, Bureau for Labor Statistics and USBC, 2018-2024.

A special category of businesses includes those that are family-owned with less than nine employees. The employees are usually family members, since they are “Mom and Pop”-style businesses with their operations mainly managed within the family network. On the other hand, Latino-owned businesses with employees could be of any size and operation at any of the industrial sectors (see Table 6) mentioned above.

Table 6. Number of Hispanic-Owned Businesses with Employees

Year	Number of Businesses	Number of Workers	Total Annual Sales
2024	346,836	2,930,548	$619.8 billion
2023	375,000	3,500,000	$800.0 billion
2022	465,000	3,600,000	$653.5 billion
2021	406,086	2,985,654	$664.1 billion
2020	375,256	2,900,000	$472.3 billion
2019	346,836	2,900,000	$472.3 billion
2018	331,625	3,000,000	$455.6 billion

Source: Brookings Institute Tax Center, USBC, 2018-2024.

TAXES PAID BY LATINO HOUSEHOLDS

A study from the New American Economy states that during the past 10 years, Latino households paid an average of $139 billion in federal taxes and $76 billion in state taxes, a total of $215 billion per year. If these figures remain steady, in the next decade the total amount of taxes paid by Latino households could amount to over $2.2 trillion.

A study by the Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy estimated that undocumented immigrants paid $8,889 per person in 2022, resulting in a total of $59.4 billion paid in taxes to the federal government and $37.3 billion paid to state and local governments, with a total tax paid of $96.7 billion in a year and close to $1 trillion in a decade (see Table 7).

Table 7. Total Taxes paid by Legal Hispanic Residents and Undocumented Hispanic Immigrants in 2022 (in billions)

Hispanic	Federal Taxes	State and Local Taxes	TOTAL
Residents	$139	$76	$215
Undocumented Immigrants	$45*	$28	$73
SUB-TOTAL	$184	$104	$288

*Assuming that 75% of undocumented immigrants are Latino

Source: Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy (Carl Davis, Marco Guzman, and Emma Sifre, 2024)

The total tax paid by Latino residents and Latino undocumented immigrants reached $288 billion. They paid $184 billion in federal taxes and $104 billion in state and local taxes. A deep analysis shows that the tax contributions of undocumented immigrants without work authorization was equal to $73 billion in 2022. If these immigrants would have a work authorization, their total tax contribution would be equal to $136.9 billion, a 41.6% increase.

CONCLUSION

In the past five to six decades, Latinos have become important contributors to the United States economy. Their impact is felt in several areas, such as the labor market, business formation, and job creation, and in the amount of taxes they pay at the federal, state, and local levels. Since 1970, the Latino population has experienced a steady and rapid growth in numbers due mainly to a high birth rate among one of the youngest populations in the country and the influx of immigrants from Latin America in the early 2020s. Today Hispanics comprise 19.5% of the total U.S. population. An increasing number of Latinos participate in the market, contributing to demand for many products and services.

Latinos have realized the importance of higher educational levels as a path to better, well-paying jobs with benefits that can lead to higher socioeconomic status. Since the 1970s, Latino males and females have been achieving higher educational attainment levels both at the high school and college levels, which this study shows are very positive and promising for the Latino community.

Latino males have the highest labor participation rates among all racial groups, while Latinas' participation rates in the labor market keep growing. Both contribute to key industrial sectors such as construction, agriculture, and service, and they are recognized for their hard work and work ethic. Their increasing educational levels and work ethic are contributing in part to the retention of better jobs.

Latinos have created more than 5 million new businesses across the country, creating close to 3.9 million new jobs and generating $800 billion in sales per year. At the national level, Latinos are becoming key players in the consumer market. Their purchasing power in 2023 was equal to $3.4 trillion, while their total income reached $2.54 trillion. These two measures grew between 2.1 to 2.4 times faster than for non-Latinos. Their higher disposable income is allocated mainly to housing, transportation, food, personal insurance/pensions, and health care. Reports from the federal government indicate that their housing ownership rates have been growing in the last decades, from 46% in 2000 to 49.5% in 2023.

Their most important contribution to the national economy is their total economic output or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is estimated that in 2022 Latinos' contribution to the United States GDP was equal to $3.7 trillion, representing a 117.6% increase over the last 12 years.

Finally, another important contribution made by Latinos to the national economy is through the payment of federal, state, and local taxes. During the past 10 years, they have paid an average of $139 billion in federal taxes and $76 billion in state taxes, resulting in a total tax paid equal to $215 billion. It is also important to consider the taxes paid by undocumented immigrants which, according to a study by the Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy, amounted to $45 billion in federal taxes and $28 billion in state and local taxes, for a total of $73 billion. Adding all these tax payments, Latinos in general paid a total of $288 billion in taxes in 2022. Considering these payments remain constant, Latinos are paying close to $3 trillion in a decade.

Lastly it is important to emphasize that the total amount of taxes paid by undocumented immigrants could experience an increase of 41.6% if the federal government provides work authorization to these immigrants. To conclude, undocumented immigrants paid additional taxes to Social Security ($25.7 billion), Medicare ($6.4 billion), and unemployment insurance ($1.6 billion), but in most cases these immigrants do not have access to the benefits that these programs offer.

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Race/Ethnicity, Residence, and Underemployment

By Jean Kayitsinga, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

According to Jensen and Slack (2003), measurement of the unemployment rate came about in response to the "economic turmoil of the Great Depression" (p. 21). Prior to the Great Depression, able-bodied people were considered lazy if they were unable to find work, but the economic catastrophe forced Americans to change the way they viewed poverty. Consequently, the industrialized nations of the West began to collect unemployment statistics in the 1930s "to gauge the performance of the labor market and the social circumstances of its workers" (p. 21). Despite these new statistics, however, labor market analysts realized that unemployment rates did not provide the entire scope of employment hardships. In addition to unemployment, underemployment is a major component of inadequate employment. The issue of underemployment gained increased traction during the economic recession of the 1980s when scholars began to turn their attention to the worsening economic conditions in rural areas. Poverty rates were high not only in cities (Wilson, 1987), but also in nonmetropolitan areas (Lichter and Costanzo, 1987; Slack & Jensen, 2002).

High rates of poverty for racial/ethnic minorities (especially African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans) in rural areas are exacerbated by the inability to find a job, as well as poor job quality in current employment (Slack and Jensen, 2002). Underemployment has split the system into "good jobs" and "bad jobs." As Jensen and Slack (2003) explain: "[g]ood jobs are stable, full-time, and well-paying, offer advancement opportunities, and tend to be held by those who are highly skilled and/or well educated. Bad jobs tend to be unstable, poorly paying, and often part-time, and they are lacking in benefits and prospects for advancement" (p. 22).

Labor force inadequacy is often explained by lack of skills and education. From the human capital theory, workers with low skills and education are considered less competitive in the labor market and therefore have more job instability when compared with workers who are more skillful, educated, and experienced. The main critique of that perspective is that structural factors such as social, economic, or political systems exacerbate the employment status of workers. For example, racial or ethnic groups such as African Americans and Latinos have a more difficult time obtaining adequate employment or "good jobs" that provide benefits and stable, livable wages when compared with whites. Women also face similar difficulties in finding and obtaining adequate employment, particularly if they are the head of the household and have young children, when compared with their white male counterparts (McCall, 2001).

Beyond individual characteristics of workers, structural hurdles remain that prevent racial/ethnic minorities from obtaining adequate employment. Even after controlling for education and other covariates, Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be underemployed (Slack & Jensen, 2002). The likelihood of underemployment across different minority groups when compared to non-Hispanic whites is not fully accounted for by human-capital, demographic, industry, and occupational factors (De Jong and Madamba, 2001). Interracial/ethnic disparities persist in the labor market even after controlling for human capital factors such as education and age (Zhou, 1993).

Industrial restructuring of the U.S. economy has exacerbated racial/ethnic differences in underemployment. Workers who once found reasonably good employment in manufacturing in the inner cities have been disproportionately affected by the shifting industrial structure of the economy. Manufacturing industries that once employed large numbers of people in metropolitan areas have shifted outside of large cities and to other countries. In part, this was exacerbated by globalization, as multinational enterprises moved their factories to other countries where they can obtain cheaper labor. In place of these manufacturing positions, an influx of service positions came available in the inner cities, the only option that many disadvantaged workers had in terms of employment opportunities as many lacked the necessary education or skills for other jobs (Mouw, 2000). Minorities have also been vulnerable to other structural economic changes, such as the shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries. After the decline of high-paying manufacturing positions in the 1980s, a new economy developed of high-skill service industries that emphasized technological skills. As a result, the new economy aggravated the effects of the deindustrialization period on workers unqualified for these new positions.

Spatial theories of poverty emphasize that opportunities for employment are unevenly distributed across space. Adequate employment opportunities are in shorter supply in rural areas than in urban areas. Jobs in rural areas are more likely to pay lower wages, to be seasonal or unstable, and are less likely to offer unionization or pension benefits (Jensen et al., 1999). Whereas rural economies once relied upon agricultural and natural resources-based industries, economic restructuring introduced a range of new industries that were more susceptible to external economic conditions. Although some rural workers found employment opportunities in these new industries, not all workers benefited since many of these jobs necessitated specific skill sets or educational requirements. Lichter and Costanzo (1987) found a higher prevalence of discouraged workers, unemployment, and underemployment by low hours and low income in nonmetropolitan areas than in metropolitan areas.

While individual factors partially explain underemployment, they are not enough to explain why certain groups of people consistently experience inadequate employment. The U.S. economy is experiencing structural changes that split the workforce into "good" and "bad" jobs. The objectives of this study are threefold: 1) to determine the rate of underemployment in the U.S. and how it differs by race/ethnicity; 2) to determine how the rate of underemployment varies by residence, and 3) to determine whether the rate of underemployment varies by race/ethnicity across residential settings.

DATA AND METHODS

DATA

The data for this analysis are drawn from the 2022-2024 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) survey files of the March supplements of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Current Population Survey is a monthly survey of approximately 54,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census. The CPS includes a sample of noninstitutionalized, civilian respondents and interviews respondents age 15 or older within each household about their employment status. The data includes estimates for the nation, as well as for individual states and geographic areas. The March supplements of the survey gather more detailed information about income and work experiences in the U.S. and include sociodemographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, household relationship, and Hispanic origin for each person in the household enumerated.

KEY VARIABLES

Underemployment

The primary outcome is underemployment. The CPS is well suited to operationalize underemployment using the Labor Utilization Framework (LUF) originally developed by Hauser (1974) and expanded

by Clogg and colleagues (Clogg and Sulivan, 1983; Clogg, Sullivan, and Mutchler, 1986). Drawing on the LUF measure, underemployment is operationalized using five mutually exclusive labor force categories of workers: 1) Sub-unemployment or discouraged workers are those who are not currently working and would like to work but are not actively seeking a job because they believe that none are available. 2) Unemployed workers are those who are not currently working but are actively looking for work or are on layoff. 3) Involuntary part-time workers are those working less than full-time hours (35 hours per week) but who would opt for full-time employment were it available. 4) Low-income workers (or working poor) are those whose labor market earnings in the previous year (adjusted for weeks and hours worked) were less than 125 percent of the individual poverty threshold. 5) Persons in any of these four groups are said to be economically underemployed. Other employed workers who do not fit the above categories (i.e., those who are working full-time at jobs that pay more than near-poverty level wages or those who have voluntarily chosen to work part-time) are defined as adequately employed.

Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity is constructed using CPS items on race and Hispanic ethnicity. First, Latino workers are distinguished from non-Latino workers. Second, non-Latino workers are categorized by race to include non-Hispanic white alone; non-Hispanic Black alone; Asian alone; Native American or in combination with other races; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander or in combination with other races; and other mixed races.

Nonmetropolitan/metropolitan residence

This variable distinguishes individuals living in nonmetropolitan areas from those living in metropolitan areas. For the latter category, the analysis further distinguishes those living in central cities from those living outside central-city metropolitan areas. A small percentage of CPS households are not identified on the residence variable. To protect the respondents' confidentiality, these cases are not included in the descriptive tables but are included in multivariate analysis.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The analysis is comprised of both descriptive and multivariate statistical techniques. The study uses cross-tabulations to describe the prevalence of underemployment by race/ethnicity and by metropolitan/nonmetropolitan residence. In addition, descriptive statistics include two measures of inequality: 1) the ratio between minority and underemployment rates; and 2) the difference between minority and white underemployment rates. The study also uses logistic regression models to estimate the probability that a worker will be underemployed and assess the relative and combined effects of race/ethnicity and residence status, controlling for sociodemographic characteristics. The analytical strategy is to use nested modeling to explain minority disadvantages in the risk of being underemployed, as well as residence-specific differences in the effect of race/ethnicity on underemployment (the results for logistic regression models are available upon request).

RESULTS

WHAT IS THE PREVALENCE OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AND HOW DOES IT VARY ACROSS RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS AND RESIDENCE?

About 20% of civilians in the modified labor force 16 years or older were economically underemployed, including discouraged workers, involuntary part-time workers, unemployed workers, and the working poor. Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans had higher rates of underemployment than their white counterparts. About 23% of Black and 25% of Latino and Native American workers were underemployed compared to 18% of white workers. In contrast, Asian workers had slightly lower rates of underemployment than their white counterparts (Figure 1). Overall, underemployment rates are higher in nonmetropolitan areas than in central-city and noncentral-city metropolitan areas. About 23% of workers in nonmetro areas were underemployed compared to 21% in central-city metro areas and 19% in noncentral-city metro areas (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Prevalence of Underemployment (any type) by Race/Ethnicity, 2022-2024.

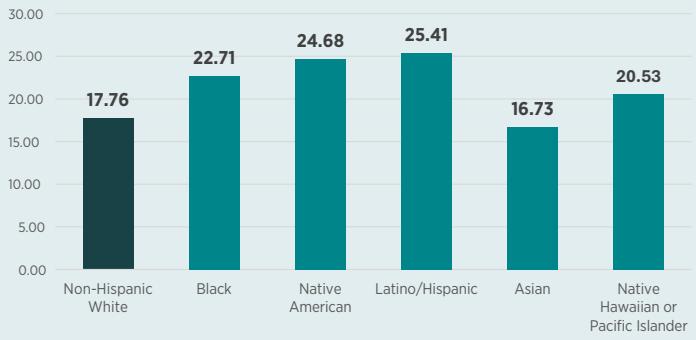
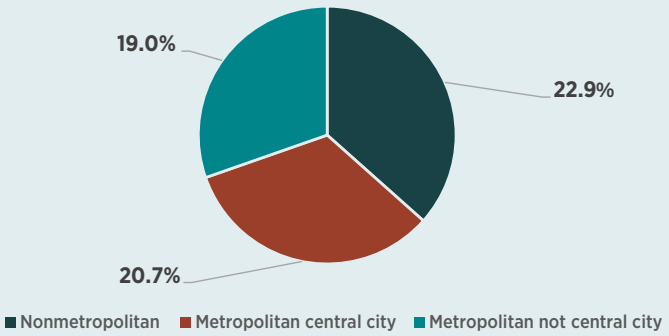
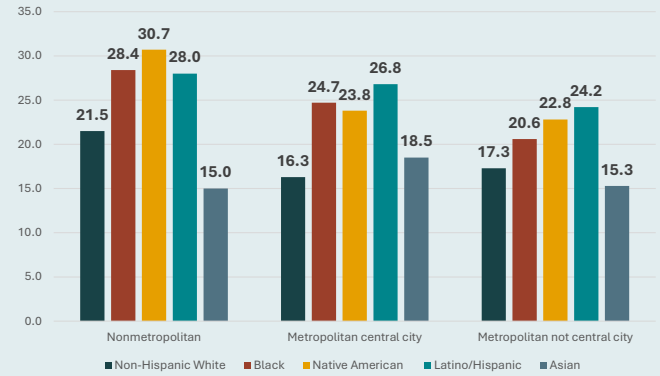


Figure 2. Prevalence of underemployment (any type) by Nonmetropolitan/Metropolitan Residence, 2022-2024.



Nonmetro racial/ethnic minorities experienced higher rates of underemployment than those in central-city and not central-city metro areas. The underemployment rate for Latinos in nonmetro was 28.0% compared to 26.8% in central-city metro, and 24.2% in not central-city metro areas. For Blacks, the underemployment rate was 28.4% in nonmetro, 24.7% in central-city metro, and 20.6% in not central-city metro areas. For Native Americans, the underemployment rate was 30.7% in nonmetro areas compared to 23.8% in central-city metro, and 22.8% in not central-city metro areas (Figure 3).

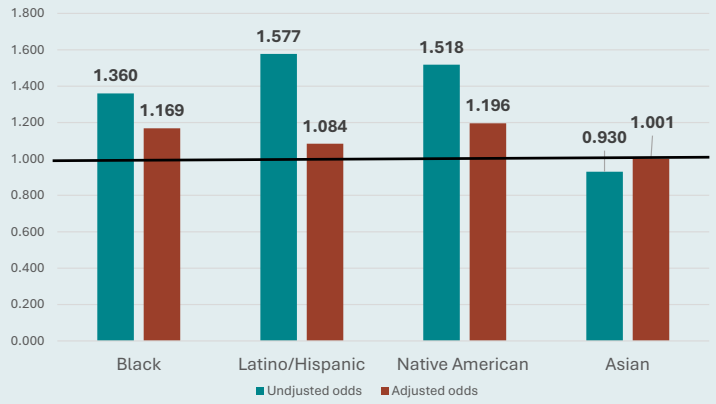
Figure 3. Prevalence of underemployment (any type) by Nonmetropolitan/Metropolitan Residence by Race/Ethnicity, 2022-2024.



HOW DO THE LEVELS OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT DIFFER BETWEEN RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY AND WHITE WORKERS?

Without adjusting for sociodemographic differences, Latinos, Native Americans, and Blacks are significantly more likely than whites to be underemployed. Latinos are 58%, Native Americans 52%, and Blacks 36% more likely than whites to be underemployed. Asians are 7% less likely than whites to be underemployed (Figure 4). After adjusting for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics including gender, age, marital status, education, industry of employment, region, and nonmetro/metro residence, the odds of underemployment are significantly reduced. Latinos, Blacks, and Native Americans remain significantly more likely to be underemployed than whites. Specifically, Latinos are 8%, Blacks 17%, and Native Americans 20% more likely to be underemployed than whites, respectively (Figure 4), net of effects of sociodemographic variables. Education, especially having a college education or more, followed by working in high-wage services and durable manufacturing, significantly and more than other variables reduces the odds of underemployment and explains racial/ethnic inequality in underemployment (results are available upon request).

Figure 4. Adjusted and Unadjusted Odds Ratios of Underemployment by Race/Ethnicity, 2022 – 2024[a].

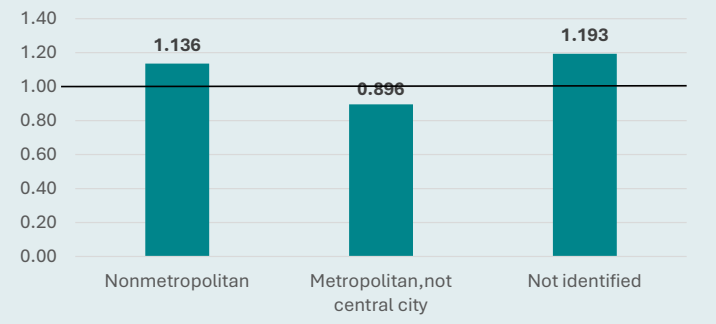


a. Adjusted for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics including gender, age, marital status, education, industry of employment, and region of residence.

HOW DO THE LEVELS OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT DIFFER BETWEEN NONMETROPOLITAN AND METROPOLITAN RESIDENCE?

Underemployment rates are significantly higher in nonmetropolitan than in central-city metropolitan areas. In contrast, underemployment rates are significantly lower in noncentral-city metropolitan areas than in central-city metropolitan areas. Workers in nonmetropolitan areas are 14% more likely to be underemployed than those in central-city metropolitan areas. Workers in nonidentified areas are 19% more likely than those in central-city metropolitan areas to be underemployed. Those in noncentral-city metropolitan areas are about 10% less likely to be underemployed than those in central-city metropolitan areas (Figure 5).

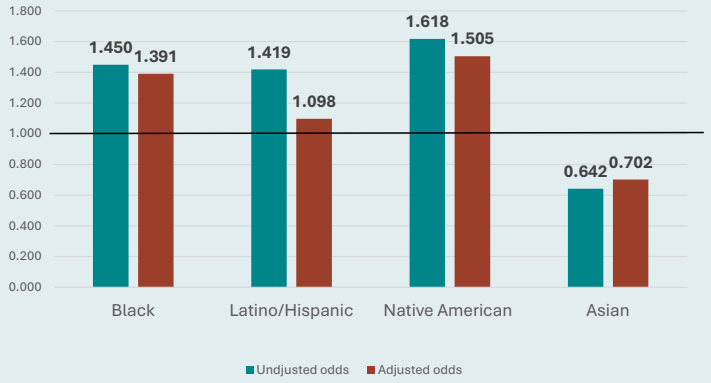
Figure 5. Odds Ratios of Underemployment by Nonmetropolitan/Metropolitan Residence, 2022 – 2024.



TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY INEQUALITY IN UNDEREMPLOYMENT VARY BY NONMETROPOLITAN/METROPOLITAN RESIDENCE?

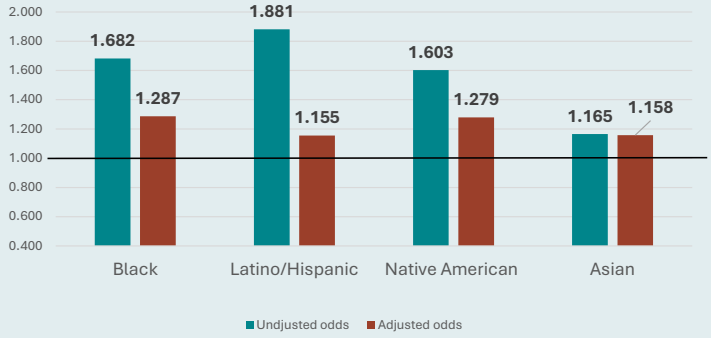
The underemployment rate in nonmetropolitan areas varies by race/ethnicity. Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans in nonmetropolitan areas are more likely than whites to be underemployed. In contrast Asians are less likely than whites to be underemployed. Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans in nonmetropolitan areas are 45%, 42%, and 62% significantly more likely than their white counterparts to be underemployed, respectively. Asians in nonmetropolitan areas are 36% significantly less likely than whites to be underemployed (Figure 7). The nonmetropolitan racial/ethnic differences in underemployment decreased or are fully accounted for by adjusting for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics. In nonmetro areas, the underemployment rate for Blacks is 39% higher and 51% higher for Native Americans, compared to whites, even after adjusting for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics. The adjusted underemployment rates for Latinos and Asians in nonmetropolitan areas were not significantly different from those of whites (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Unadjusted and Adjusted Odds Ratios of Underemployment by Race/Ethnicity in Nonmetropolitan Area, 2022 – 2024[a].



a. Adjusted for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics including gender, age, marital status, education, industry of employment, and region of residence.

Figure 7. Unadjusted and Adjusted Odds Ratios of Underemployment by Race/Ethnicity in Central-City Metropolitan Areas, 2022 – 2024[a].

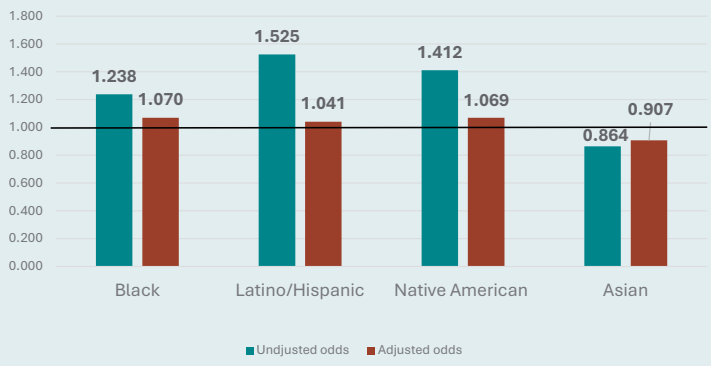


a. Adjusted for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics including gender, age, marital status, education, industry of employment, and region of residence.

"The results show that racial/ethnic inequalities in adequate employment remain. Blacks, Native Americans, and Latinos are disadvantaged in terms of being adequately employed when compared to whites. There is clearly a need for programs/policies designed to encourage and expand existing quality employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians in central-city metropolitan areas are more likely than whites to be underemployed. Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians in central-city metropolitan areas are 68%, 88%, 60%, and 17% significantly more likely than their white counterparts to be underemployed, respectively (Figure 8). The underemployment rates for Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in central-city metropolitan areas are reduced but remain significantly higher than that of whites, about 29%, 16%, and 17%, respectively, after adjusting for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics. The adjusted underemployment rates for Native Americans in central-city metropolitan areas were not significantly different from those of whites (Figure 7).

Figure 8. Unadjusted and Adjusted Odds Ratios of Underemployment by Race/Ethnicity in Noncentral-City Metropolitan Areas, 2022 – 2024[a].



a. Adjusted for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics including gender, age, marital status, education, industry of employment, and region of residence.

In noncentral-city metropolitan areas, Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans were more likely than whites to be underemployed. In contrast Asians were less likely than whites to be underemployed. Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans in noncentral-city metropolitan areas were 24%, 52%, and 41% significantly more likely than their white counterparts to be underemployed, respectively. Asians in nonmetropolitan areas were 14% significantly less likely than whites to be underemployed. After adjusting for the effects of sociodemographic characteristics, Blacks and Asians were barely significantly more or less likely than whites ($p < .10$) to be underemployed in noncentral-city metropolitan areas, whereas Latinos and Native Americans were not significantly more or less likely than their white counterparts to be underemployed (Figure 8).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, economic hardship is conceptualized, using the Labor Utilization Framework, as underemployment. Using the 2022-2024 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) survey files of the March supplements of the Current Population Survey (CPS), it is estimated that one fifth of the civilian modified labor force 16 years and older were economically underemployed. That includes discouraged, unemployed, involuntary part-time, and working

poor workers. The results show that Blacks, Native Americans, and Latinos experience higher underemployment rates whereas Asians experience lower underemployment rates than their white counterparts. The rate of underemployment for Blacks, Native Americans, and Latinos is lower, but remains significantly higher than those of whites even after adjusting for sociodemographic characteristics and residence, suggesting that race/ethnicity remains a substantial barrier to holding adequate employment.

The results also show that, overall, underemployment rates are significantly higher in nonmetro areas than in central-city and noncentral-city metro areas. The racial/ethnic differences in underemployment vary by metro/nonmetro residence. In nonmetro areas, Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders were significantly more likely to be underemployed than their white counterparts, whereas Asians were less likely than whites to be underemployed. In central-city metro areas, Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders were significantly more likely to be underemployed than their white counterparts. Asians in central-city metro areas were also more likely to be underemployed than their white counterparts. In noncentral-city metro areas, Blacks, Native Americans, and Latinos were more likely than whites to be underemployed. In contrast, Asians and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders were less likely than whites to be underemployed.

After adjusting for key sociodemographic characteristics in each area, the underemployment rate for Blacks was significantly higher than that of whites in nonmetro and central-city metro areas, but barely significantly higher that of whites in noncentral-city metro areas. The underemployment rate for Latinos was only significantly higher than that of whites in central-city metro areas after adjustment. The underemployment rate for Native Americans was significantly higher than that of whites only in nonmetro areas, after adjustment. The underemployment rate for Asians was significantly higher than that of whites in central-city metro areas, but barely significantly lower than that of whites in noncentral-city metro areas after adjustment. These results suggest that both race/ethnicity and the spatial location of employment do matter and remain barriers to holding adequate employment.

These results suggest important considerations for public employment policy. While it is important to create more employment opportunities, marginal employment (discouraged, unemployed, part-time for economic reasons, and low-income workers) remains a serious barrier for many people in satisfying their basic needs. It is crucial to provide adequate employment opportunities—full-time, quality jobs that offer better earning potential.

The results show that racial/ethnic inequalities in adequate employment remain. Blacks, Native Americans, and Latinos are disadvantaged in terms of being adequately employed when compared to whites. There is clearly a need for programs/policies designed to encourage and expand existing quality employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups. The results also highlight spatial economic inequalities associated with lack of better employment opportunities in nonmetro as well as in central-city metro areas. The economic disadvantages of nonmetro and central-city areas require designing economic policies and development programs that focus on increasing adequate employment opportunities in those places. This will require not only creating more jobs, but also quality jobs. There remains a need for initiatives that target areas of persistent rural poverty and disadvantaged central-city areas, which also tend to have a concentration of racial/ethnic minority populations.

Finally, these results illustrate the need for policymakers to continue to advocate and address the problem of marginal employment. There is a need to design programs that reduce racial/ethnic inequalities in adequate employment. In this global and competitive world, society cannot afford the underutilization of its labor force. There is also a need to design programs that reduce uneven development of certain places. Forgotten rural areas and central-city metro areas with high concentrations of poverty can benefit from new and better employment opportunities that offer residents decent and improved living conditions.

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Local Musician Rudy Peña Inducted into the Tejano R.O.O.T.S. Hall of Fame

By Richard Cruz Dávila, Ph.D.

Rudy Peña

In November of 2024, musician/promoter/producer Rudy Peña was inducted into the Tejano R.O.O.T.S. (Recognizing Our Own Tejano Stars) Hall of Fame in Alice, Texas, in the trumpet category. Peña is only the second inductee in the Hall of Fame's 25-year history to have resided in Michigan for the majority of his working life, following vocalist and bajo sexto player Martin H. Solis, Jr., inducted in 2017. Peña's induction, like Solis' before him, is testimony to the lasting influence of Texas-Mexican musical styles in Michigan and the Midwest, brought here by Tejana/o farm and factory workers who migrated to the region in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families. This legacy is further cemented by the induction of a number of others with roots in the Midwest, including Solis' cousin Willy Huron (Class of 2019). Accompanying Peña in the Class of 2024 were Cruz Guerrero of the Chicago-founded La Sombra and his sister, Christina Guerrero; bajo sexto player Rodolfo "Fito" Valle of Defiance, Ohio; and guitarist Miguel Hernandez, who got his start in Tejano music in Peña's group, Patricia y Cariño Musical.

EARLY LIFE

Peña was born in Mercedes, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, in 1956. Though he would spend most of his performing career playing the style of music now known as Tejano—but variously referred to in its earlier days as Tex-Mex, música chicana, or la onda chicana—Peña's earliest musical memories are mostly of the more traditional conjunto style, notable for its combination of accordion and bajo sexto. Because of his grandmother's love for conjunto, he recalls hearing records by artists like Conjunto Bernal and local legend Ruben Vela. He was also exposed to conjunto through his grandfather, a drummer who had previously toured the West and Midwest with larger orchestras, but later in life played conjunto with friends in the local cantina and cinema. At around age 6, left in his grandfather's care while his parents and grandmother were at work, Peña would accompany him to gigs, sitting at his feet while the conjunto played between double features at the cinema or under the supervision of the barmaid at the cantina. He remarks, "I don't remember even hearing Tex-Mex, as they called it, until I came up [to Michigan], when everybody was the horns, the horns. . . Back then, it was all conjunto."

A few years later, in 1967, Peña's father traveled to Pontiac, Michigan, because word had spread in Mercedes that the GM plants were hiring. Like many in the community he landed a job in an auto plant—Pontiac Motors in his case—and six months later brought his wife and children up to Michigan. Peña recalls feeling like the whole town had moved up with him: "When the get-togethers would happen, or dances, all the bailes, I'd see the same people, literally. Of course there [were] other people that were here already I didn't know, but the majority was just all Mercedes, as far as I could tell. And it just still felt like home."

Since going to gigs with his grandfather back in Mercedes, Peña dreamt of becoming a drummer in a band. While the school band offered an opportunity to learn music, drums were not an option at the fifth-grade level, so he first took up the trumpet. He also tried his hand at several other instruments and practiced drums at home, but ultimately, when he had the opportunity to audition for a working band, his desire just to be in the group outweighed his wish to be a drummer. His uncle Henry Peña was already a drummer for a local group called Rosendo Garcia y Los Blue Notes. So when he told Rudy they needed a trumpeter, Rudy had his father buy him a cornet and fully dedicated himself to the instrument. In 1972, at 15 years old, he auditioned for the Blue Notes and set off on the musical career that would eventually land him in the Tejano R.O.O.T.S Hall of Fame.

Rudy Peña (third from left) joined Los Blue Notes at age 15. Standing to his left in this 1972 photo are his uncle Henry Peña (drums), his uncle Eli Sauceda (saxophone), and Rosendo Garcia (in white shirt).

Rudy Peña (third from left) is pictured with the band LatinFlame along with his future wife, vocalist Patricia Salazar, in this 1981 photo.

TAKING THE STAGE

Over the next eight years, Peña played in a series of different groups, most of which included family members who had also settled in Michigan. He played in the Blue Notes with his uncle Henry from 1972 to 1975, recording two 45-rpm records for local Tex-Mex labels, one on Pretty Good Fine Records, founded by Detroit radio deejay Julian Suarez, and one on Del Rey Records, operated by José Angel and Juanita Gutierrez. The Gutierrezes, who owned a record store in Detroit's Delray neighborhood (later relocated to River Rouge, Michigan), also hosted their own radio program, as well as a television program on which the Blue Notes performed. Peña left the Blue Notes in 1975 and formed a new group called the LatinLites with his uncle Eli Sauceda and friend Jaime Garza, which lasted until 1976.

After the LatinLites, Peña joined his uncle Joe Vela (the younger brother of Ruben Vela) in Nueva Vida. When the group hired a new vocalist, they changed their name to Ambicion Band and recorded a 45 on their own label. Then when several members left to start their own band under the same name, Peña's group renamed themselves to Original Ambicion Band and recorded another 45 on their own label. Notably, Original Ambicion Band won a battle of the bands in Saginaw and later tied for first place with another band at a second competition. The first prize was meant to include both a trophy and a recording contract with the Texas-based Hacienda Records, but because of the tie, the prize was split in two, with one group receiving the trophy and the other the recording contract. Representatives of each group decided in consultation with the organizers that Original Ambicion Band would take the trophy, and the other group would take the recording contract. Asked if he would have preferred the recording contract, Peña says, "No, I'd rather have the trophy. I'd rather say . . . we're first place with a trophy. . . . See, recording contract sounds very glamorous. But when you pull that curtain back, it's not. It's a lot of headaches." After Original Ambicion Band broke up in early 1978, Peña briefly joined friends in a group called Los Mickey's. He then joined back up with his uncle Joe Vela in the group Sangre Nueva de Joe Ybarra in 1979 before briefly resurrecting the LatinLites with his uncle Eli Sauceda in 1980.

TAKING THE LEAD

From 1980, after the end of the LatinLites, until 2005, when he stepped away from performing, Peña assumed the role of band leader. After he left Sangre Nueva but before Sauceda suggested reviving the LatinLites, Peña had already decided to start a new band with his future father- and brothers-in-law. Sauceda joined up with the new group who agreed to perform as the LatinLites, but this arrangement was short-lived. When Sauceda left toward the end of 1980, the rest of the group voted Peña as band leader and renamed themselves LatinFlame de Rudy Peña. In 1982, Peña married Patricia Salazar, who had also joined the group as a vocalist. In 1984, after Peña's father-in-law retired from the band and George Guerrero took over as lead vocalist, the group renamed themselves Cariño Musical de Rudy Peña. The group achieved a high level of recognition locally, winning Best Band at the Midwest Hispanic Music Awards, held for several years in the late 1980s in Cascade Township, Michigan, a suburb of Grand Rapids. They also recorded an album for the Texas-based label Mas International Records, though only two songs from the planned album were ever released, both original songs written by Peña.

After Guerrero left the group, Peña's wife took over as lead vocalist and the name of the group changed for the final time to Patricia y Cariño Musical. This iteration of the group won numerous honors at Midwest-based Tejano music awards ceremonies. From 1990 to 1995, Patricia consistently

won Female Vocalist of the Year at the Tri-State Latin Music Awards, held at the Club International in Detroit—a venue which hosted many of the big Tejano and Norteño touring bands—while the group won Band of the Year in 1991. In addition to their popularity in the Midwest, where the group regularly toured, they also toured the East Coast and Texas and even performed in Windsor, Canada, and Monterrey and Tampico, Mexico. On one tour of Texas, the group appeared on the Rogelio Botello Show, filmed in Harlingen, Texas, the Rio Grande Valley's answer to the perhaps more widely known Johnny Canales Show, filmed in Corpus Christi, Texas.

This final iteration of the group recorded an album for Valencia Records, a label founded by Tejano guitarist Ricky Smith after he relocated to Michigan from Texas in the 1980s. In fact, Smith became a frequent collaborator for Peña. Cariño Musical and La Movida, Smith's group, often toured together in the Midwest and beyond—La Movida appeared with Cariño Musical on the Rogelio Botello Show on their joint tour of Texas, with Peña filling in on bass for La Movida during the taping. Peña and Smith also cofounded an artists' collective called Músicos Unidos to seek radio play and pay equity for artists in the collective. Out of a sense of frustration that they could not get their music played on other local Tejano radio programs, Peña and Smith started their own program, which aired on WNZK-AM Monday through Friday nights. Smith hosted Mondays and Wednesdays and Peña Tuesdays and Thursdays; they invited guest deejays for Friday nights so they could travel with their bands Friday through Sunday. Further, through Músicos Unidos, they collaborated with a group created in local correctional facilities called HASTA (Hispanic Americans Striving Towards Advancement) to bring live Tejano music to those in incarceration.

Patricia y Cariño Musical

Patricia y Cariño Musical on the *Rogelio Botello Show*

TAKING ON A NEW ROLE

Patricia y Cariño Musical disbanded in 2005 when chronic illness required Patricia to retire from performing and Peña became her 24-hour caregiver until her untimely passing in April of 2011. Peña's career as a performing musician also came to an end at this time, but in the fall of 2011, he returned to the music industry in a new role. In October of 2011, he founded Peña Productions (later renamed Rudy Peña Productions) to promote Midwest Tejano artists and dances in Michigan. He also launched his own record label, Rudy Records, to record, produce, and promote the music of the artists he represents. He currently represents Karizma Band (Holland, Michigan), Celestina y Los Sanchez (Battle Creek, Michigan), Los Hermanos Alvarez (Croswell, Michigan), Cresencio (Detroit), Beto and Dos Guyz (Detroit), and Jessica Gonzalez (Fostoria, Ohio). He also runs two YouTube channels: Rudy Peña Productions, where he showcases the artists he represents, but which is also a rich archive of the many groups he performed with over the years; and Timeless Tejano Classic Conjunto, an archival project built from his own record collection. Additionally, he cofounded Tejano Entertainment Group with Paul Alvarez (son of Juan Alvarez, lead singer and bass player in Los Hermanos Alvarez), also to promote dances throughout the Midwest.

CONCLUSION

As the preceding paragraphs demonstrate, Peña's induction into the Tejano R.O.O.T.S Hall of Fame is well deserved, given his multifaceted, five-decade career in the Tejano industry. His induction in the trumpet category is fitting, as it was his primary instrument throughout his performing career, though he did also at times incorporate flugelhorn and trombone. At the same time, it does not fully account for the totality of Peña's career, which has also included such as roles as radio deejay, songwriter, record producer, and concert promoter. Nor does it acknowledge his more informal role as a mentor to younger musicians. Dating back to his performing career, Peña acted as mentor to members of his own band, some of whom he encouraged to pursue a career in Texas when the opportunity arose, even though it created vacancies in his band. Most recently, he serves not only as producer and promoter for the artists on his roster, but also as mentor to the younger artists. His induction in the trumpet category also does not account for his commitment to keeping Tejano music alive in Michigan and the Midwest, where economic shifts and changing patterns of migration have diminished audiences for the music. Through all of these efforts, Peña has carved out a legacy for himself that will be felt for years to come.

Evaluating Latino Farmers Adoption of New Technologies

By Marcelo Siles, Ph.D., and Jean Kayitsinga, Ph.D.

The Julian Samora Research Institute (JSRI) is currently working on the Latino Farmers Adoption of New Technology (LAFAT) project, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Marcelo Siles, Ph.D., and Jean Kayitsinga, Ph.D., are the principal investigators (PIs) of this project, which aims to evaluate the impact of five social capital motives on the adoption of new technology by small farmers. The motives evaluated include: i) selfishness or preferences, ii) external validation, iii) internal validation, iv) sense of belonging, and v) community service on the adoption of new technology by small farmers.

This project is a collaboration between JSRI, Lake Michigan College (LMC) – South Haven campus, and the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM). The project has three components: education, research, and outreach. For the education component, we already have offered two workshops on social capital and recordkeeping to Latino farmers in Spanish. A third workshop is scheduled in June 2025 on financial statements.

For the research component, we developed a survey instrument in English and Spanish and collected data from 50 Latino farmers in Southwest Michigan. In addition, the University of Tennessee at Martin collected online data from more than 200 small farmers including whites, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans. Data from Tennessee will complement data collected in Michigan to assess the relationship between social capital and the adoption of new technology by small farmers. Preliminary results support the hypothesis that social capital motives play an important role in the adoption of new technology by small farmers. In addition to in-person and online surveys, we conducted two focus groups with Latino farmers about the impact of COVID-19 on their farming operations. A summary of these focus groups has been completed. Future research will expand this project by continuing to assess the influence of social capital motives in the adoption of new technologies, but the focus will be on large farms.

Leaders from MSU and Lake Michigan College were joined by civic and business leaders and Latino farmers at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 15, 2024.

The third component of this important project is outreach. Latino farmers with farming operations in Southwest Michigan are mainly blueberry producers. These farmers are currently experiencing the following production and marketing problems: i) climate change, ii) low market demand and prices that do not cover production costs; iii) domestic and international competition from production centers in Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile; and iv) soil quality that is not appropriate for agricultural production. On top of these issues, some farmers bought agricultural machinery and tools that are too expensive and are not appropriate for their agricultural production.

Due to the cited problems, Latino farmers are experiencing financial stress on their farming operations. Some farmers planned to stop producing blueberries, while others exited agriculture and sold their farms. The LAFAT project is offering alternative solutions to Latino and small farmers by building a hoop house that shows how to produce diverse fruits and vegetables in a temperature-controlled environment and with a well-designed irrigation system. We divided the 30 x 96 ft hoop house, which includes all these technical developments, into small plots. On each plot we planted several species of flowers, fruits (watermelons, strawberries, and cantaloupes), and vegetables (cucumbers, tomatoes, tomatillos, radishes, eggplants, jalapeño peppers, cilantro, parsley, among others).

Tristan Claridge, president of the Intenational Social Capital Association, visited the LAFAT project in South Haven, Michigan, on April 25, 2025.

The project also introduced appropriate technology to Latino and small farmers such as a well-designed irrigation system that allows the flow of water for 20 minutes every 4 hours. The hoop house also includes an automated electrical system to power an automatic ventilation system. In terms of tools to use, we bought a rototiller

The LAFAT project is a collaborative effort involving MSU, Lake Michigan College, civic and business leaders, and local farmers.

Two advisors to Senator Elissa Slotkin, accompanied by South Haven Mayor Annie Brown, visited the LAFAT project site in May 2025.

appropriate to work within the hoop house. The rototiller can perform work similar to that of a big tractor, but its cost is much lower.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on Friday, November 15, 2024.

The event was attended by local authorities, including the city of South Haven's mayor, the president of the local chamber of commerce, representatives of neighboring industries to Lake Michigan College, representatives of the local library, local broadcast and print media, Latino farmers, and the Michigan State University team. The MSU team, headed by Kwesi Brookins, Ph.D., vice provost for outreach and engagement, included PIs Siles and Kayitsinga, project consultants Lindon Robison, Ph.D., and Rubén Martinez, Ph.D., and support staff member Alison Vincent. The Michigan Department of Economic Development was represented by Hector Arroyo. Representatives of national and domestic banks were also present. All participants were excited to see the hoop house already in place and were looking forward to seeing it in operation.

Once the hoop house was put in place, a group of Latino farmers, among them Sigifredo Morales, Guadalupe Alcatraz, and Heriberto Gamiño, under the supervision of Pedro Bautista, the project's field operations manager, volunteered to prepare the soil using the rototiller, install the irrigation system, build the plots, and set up the plots to separate the planting of the different crops. These farmers became invested in the project, performing daily tasks at no cost. Two other farmers, Isabel Davis and Rufino Vargas, volunteered to germinate the seeds at their farms. As a result of this process, we expect to identify two to three products with the highest productivity and good marketing results to recommend to Latino farmers.

The South Haven community has also become very interested in this project. The local library and its foundation are willing to disseminate information about the LAFAT project and raise funds, the school district wants to organize field trips to the hoop house to show students how the different products are growing, and finally local clubs of gardeners want to adopt one or two plots of the hoop house for their operations.

This project is the first of its kind in the world in evaluating the relationship between social capital motives and the adoption of appropriate technology by small farmers. On April 24, 2025, Tristan Claridge, president of the International Social Capital Association (ISCA), visited. He was impressed by the project's scope and became interested in disseminating information about the project among ISCA's constituents located in more than 60 countries around the world.

Finally, on May 22, 2025, LMC hosted two advisors to U.S. Senator Elissa Slotkin. They were informed about the LAFAT project and visited the hoop house and LMC facilities. Both were impressed with the scope of the project and the fact that it is becoming a community project with the participation of many community organizations.

¿Qué está pasando en el instituto?

SEND-OFFS

SAKARI WILCOX

Sakari Wilcox graduated from MSU with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy, with an additional major in psychology and minor in Spanish. She planned to work on applications for international fellowship opportunities and graduate programs, as well as seeking out internship opportunities and practicing writing, art, and language learning. Ultimately, she aims to pursue a career in counseling, teaching, or social work. She has enjoyed her time here at JSRI and will miss the team!

EMILIA BREUNING

Emilia Breuning worked as a graduate student research assistant at JSRI. She graduated from MSU with a Master of Science in marketing research and analytics and will be working as a market research intern this summer in the automotive industry.

CAILYN BROOKENS

Cailyn Brookens graduated from MSU with a bachelor's degree in human resources and labor relations. She is incredibly thankful to have been employed by JSRI for the past two years—it has been a place of both purpose and growth. She hopes to pursue graduate studies in the Master of Human Resources and Labor Relations program at MSU. She's excited about the opportunity to further her skills in HR, study abroad once more, and serve in a graduate assistantship while earning her degree. If that path shifts, she would begin her professional career back home in Chicago. Either way, she is proud of the journey so far and eager for the next chapter!

NEW FACES

MOHINI JASTHI

Mohini Jasthi is a graduate student in data science at Michigan State University with a strong foundation in machine learning, data mining, and big data analytics. She is passionate about using data-driven insights to solve real-world problems and has experience in Python, SQL, and various machine learning frameworks. Beyond academics, she is deeply committed to social causes and actively volunteers for events that drive positive change. She has been involved in community engagement and mentorship, assisting with educational programs. During her undergraduate studies, she served as the secretary of the Optica Student Chapter, fostering collaboration and leadership among peers. "I believe in using technology for positive impact," she said. "My goal is to bridge the gap between complex data and meaningful solutions that help people."

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Each gift enhances JSRI's capacity to promote research on Latino communities in Michigan, the Midwest and across the nation and to disseminate and contribute to the application of the findings.

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- The **JSRI Enrichment Fund**, which supports research projects, student research assistantships,and public forums on critical Latino issues;
- The **Julian Samora Endowed Scholarship Fund**, which supports two awards annually to undergraduate and graduate students with research and teaching interests on Latino issues;
- The **P. Lea Martinez Endowed Scholarship Fund**, which supports students studying health issues among Latinos;
- The **JSRI Scholarship Fund**, which supports students with short-term financial needs;
- Or any combination thereof.

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT LEVELS

- Platino Circle ~ $5,000 or more (payable over two years)
- Padrinos/Madrinas Circle ~ $2,500 to $4,999 (payable over two years)
- Amigo/Amiga Circle ~ $1,000 to $2,499
- Aficionado/Aficionada ~ $100 to $999

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- Platino Circle ~ $10,000
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- Amigos/Amigas Circle ~ $5,000
- Aficionados/Aficionadas Circle ~ $2,500

If you need additional information on giving to JSRI, including planned giving, please contact:

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