

**Migration and Integration of Latinos
into Rural Midwestern Communities:
The Case of “Mexicans” in
Adrian, Michigan**

*by Rene Perez Rosenbaum, Ph.D.
Michigan State University*

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Abstract

This article on the migration and integration of Latinos into the community of Adrian, Michigan begins with a state-level descriptive analysis of the composition and change in the Latino population over the decade of the 1980's. The observations made are contrasted with the findings of a similar analysis of the Latino population in Adrian. The manuscript proceeds with a brief history of what first drew “Mexican” workers to the Adrian area and how they were welcomed as citizens. The historical overview is followed by a discussion on different indicators of Latino integration as reflected by recent socioeconomic conditions. After a concluding section on Latinos in Adrian the manuscript proceeds to a discussion on the policy implications of the research findings for immigration reform, and for social policy related to the migration and integration of Latinos and other minority groups.

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RELATED READINGS

Rochín, Refugio I. *Immigration and Ethnic Communities: A Focus on Latinos*. Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1996.

The Julian Samora Research Institute is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest. To this end, it has organized a number of publication initiatives to facilitate the timely dissemination of current research and information relevant to Latinos. The Julian Samora Research Institute Research Report Series (RR) publishes monograph length reports of original empirical research on Latinos in the nation conducted by the Institute's faculty affiliates and research associates, and/or projects funded by grants to the Institute.

Introduction

Much has been made of the growth of the Latino population and the so called “browning” of the midwest. The number of Latinos in 10 Midwestern states — Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska — increased from 1.2 million in 1980 to 1.8 million in 1992. Over the same period, the White population in these states declined by 400,000. According to some reports, there has been an increasing number of conflicts between immigrants and natives in midwestern towns and cities, some of which have seen their Hispanic population rise by 200 to 500% since 1990 (Hedges, S., Hawkins, D. 1996). It has been predicted that in the 1990’s the sharpest U.S. debates over immigration and integration will shift from western and southern states to states in the midwest (Hedges & Hawkins, 1996, Martin, P, Taylor, J.E., Fox, M., 1996, July).

In the Wolverine state, the Latino population grew by 24.1% (from 162,440 to 201,596) between 1980 and 1990 to account for 2.2% of the state population. By 1990, Latinos were found in all of Michigan’s 83 counties and in 588 out of 629 cities, towns and villages. They constituted over 10% of the population in places like Saginaw (10.5%), Holland (14.1%), Adrian (13.4%), Buena Vista (10.7%), and Shelby (15.2%), and made up a significant percentage of the population in Fennville (24.4%). The cities with the largest Latino population were Detroit (28,473), Lansing (10,112) Grand Rapids (9,394), Pontiac (5,701) and Flint (4,014). Latinos represented the third largest population group in the state, and their growth rate of 24% was the largest among the three major groups. It compares to a 1.5% decline in the White population in the state over the same 10-year period (MNVREP, 1991).

Latinos born in the United States are sensitive about perceptions that the relatively high Latino population growth rates are largely an alien immigration phenomenon. Despite the

fact that 64% of all Latinos in the U.S. were born here, Latinos are too often perceived as immigrants, without claims in U.S. society (Enchautegui, 1995, p.2). In Michigan, in the 1980’s, the Latino population growth was largely attributed to growth in the number of Latinos born in the state; Latinos born in other states, and the foreign born Latino immigrant population were not as significant contributors. The 1990 Census data indicate that more than half of Michigan’s Latinos were born in the state. This group grew nearly 28% between 1980 and 1990, increasing its share of the state Latino population from 54% to 58%. With over half the population base, and a growth rate that exceeded the Latino state average, state-born Latinos contributed to over 72% of the Latino population growth over the decade. By comparison, Michigan Latinos born in other states, whose population increased by 5.4% over the same period, experienced a decrease in their share of the state’s Latino population, from 28% to 25%. The foreign born Latino population, which grew by 13.9%, also registered a decline in its share of Latinos, from 13.98% to 13.2%. Michigan Latinos born in other states accounted for 7.4% of the growth in Michigan’s Latino population over the decade; foreign born immigrants accounted for 9.5%.

The perception that the growth of the Latino population is an immigrant phenomenon is related to the false notion that many of the immigrants are Latino. In Michigan, Latinos represented an insignificant share of the state’s immigrant population. The 25,114 foreign born Latinos in Michigan accounted for only 7.1% of the foreign born population of 355,393 in the state. Mexico accounted for over 54% of the state’s Latino immigrant population but only for 3.8% of the state’s immigrant population — the same, incidentally, as the proportion of Michiganians that were foreign born. According to the 1990 Census, the countries that contributed to the immigrant population of Michigan more than Mexico were Canada with 15.4%, Germany with 6.8%, Italy and Poland with 5.2% each, and Iraq with 4.0%.

The predominance of the U.S. born Latino population in Michigan reflects a historical connection between this population group and the state's need for labor that dates back to the turn of the century. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were first recruited from regions in south Texas in the early 1900's, to work either in the sugar beet industry or as railroad workers. During World War II, they were also recruited to staff defense factories. Over the years, many of these workers stayed, including agricultural workers who settled in communities which offered year-round employment. This process gave way to the establishment and development of Latino communities, which now exist in urban and rural areas throughout the state. Meanwhile, the recruitment of Latino migrants from Texas and other southern states to work in agriculture has continued. The 45,000 farm workers that currently migrate to the state for agricultural work in the region make up a significant share of the rural population during the summer months and contribute to the vitality of the local economy of many rural communities. Like their predecessors, most migrants (65%) come from south Texas, and each year some of these workers leave the migrant stream to make permanent homes in Michigan.

The growth rate over the decade for Latinos in Michigan ranged from a high of 205.5% in Chippewa County, to a decline of 6.1% in Huron County (MNVREP, 1991). Thus, the browning of the state varied considerably from place to place, despite the fact that the major share of Michigan's growing Latino population was composed of natives. The events that attracted Latinos to particular places, as well as the experiences of Latinos and the ways they were welcomed as citizens in the communities where they settled, also varied from place to place. The social, economic, political, and cultural impacts the growing Latino presence has had on the different Michigan counties, cities, towns, and villages where they have come to reside have also been varied. In these xenophobic times, there is an increasing intolerance of immigrants

and a tendency to think of immigrants as any natives that look brown or talk different. It behooves us to undertake social policy research that may be useful in understanding these differences in the Latino populations. This research could influence central government units looking for policy guidance on immigration, as well as state and local government and industry. In addition, this research could affect public opinion which not only influences decisions making at the central level, but also influences attitudes which have implications for the daily lives of Latinos, immigrant and native alike. To begin this task, the remainder of this manuscript investigates the Latino community in the city of Adrian, estimated at 2,958 residents in 1990 (MNVREP,1991).

Adrian's Latino Population: Composition and Change, 1980-90

Surrounded by countryside noted for its agricultural and recreational resources, the city of Adrian, population 22,097 in 1990, is the county seat and principal city of rural Lenawee County in southeastern Michigan, about 15 miles from the Ohio border. Adrian is also home to the eighth largest Latino population in the state. With over 13% of its population of Latino origin, Adrian also has the third highest concentration of Latinos of any place in the state (MNVREP, 1991). The principal actors in this Latino population are the people of Mexican ancestry. According to the 1990 Census, they represent over 86% of the city's Latino population. Puerto Ricans account for 5%, while other Latinos account for the remaining 7.5%.

Between 1980 and 1990, the Latino population in Adrian grew at a much more modest rate in comparison to the growth of the Latino population state wide. Estimates of their growth are near 14%. Over the same period, the growth in the White population declined by nearly 10%. A significant share of the Latino population growth is attributed to residents who

recently migrated to the area. Census data indicate that over a quarter (26.7%) of the Latino population 5 years of age living in Adrian in 1990 resided elsewhere in 1985 (1990 Census of Population Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, Table 182, p. 896). As is the case for the rest of the state, the bulk of the Latino population in Adrian was born in Michigan. However, the city experienced a 12% decline (117 people) in this Michigan born Latino subgroup, causing its share of the Latino population in the city to decline from 55% to 47%. By comparison, the number of Latinos in Adrian born in other states grew by 26% to increase their share of the city's Latino population to 42%. The foreign born population, although modest in size, increased its share of the Latino population from 2.9% to 7.1% (from 75 to 200). Given the overall low growth of the Latino population in the city, this Latino subgroup accounted for 54% of the growth in the Latino population over the decade.

The share of Adrian's population that was foreign born was less than the state share of this population (2.6% compared to 3.8%). The share of the Latino population in Adrian that was foreign born was also less than the state share (7.1% compared to 13.2%). The combined result of the size and composition of Adrian's immigrant population was that a greater share of its foreign born population was of Latino origin, compared to the state's share of 7.1%. Of the 572 immigrants in the city, approximately 1 in 3 were of Latino origin. Mexico accounted for 77% of all Latino immigrants and also ranked first in the city with 27% of all the foreign born immigrants. Canada with 10% of all the foreign born in the city ranked second. Germany, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, and China accounted for 9%, 6%, 4.5%, and 4% of Adrian's foreign born population, respectively.

Like many Latino enclaves in the midwest, the Latino community in Adrian had its origins in the migrant agricultural workers of the 1920's and 30's who were recruited from the Southwest for seasonal harvest work, and the workers of the 1940's recruited to staff defense factories in World

War II (Ferman, L.A., Myers, M.E., and Milstein, D.N., 1983, p.14). What follows is a brief account, from the few sources available, of the history of the arrival and settlement of "Mexicans" in Adrian from 1920 through WWII. It was during that period in history that the bulk of Latinos arrived in the city. Sunnyside, the Mexican-American neighborhood on the east side of the city where the majority of Latinos reside, developed then and became a familiar place to which new arrivals continue to gravitate. The synopsis serves to remind us that the type of Latinization and browning of communities that we observe today is not new. It has been repeated often and in many diverse places in this nation's history.

Adrian's Mexican Pioneers

The arrival of the people of Mexican origin from Texas in the Adrian-Lenawee County area in Michigan is inextricably linked to the sugar beet fields of Blissfield, a community seven miles southeast of Adrian. A sugar refinery owned by the Continental Sugar Company began operations there in 1907, after the farmers of the area pledged 6,000 acres of sugar beets (Peron, 1978, p. 2).

Before 1920, Continental Sugar recruited large numbers of Belgians, Hungarians, Moravians, and Bohemians from nearby cities to work in the beet fields. (Phenicie, 1977, July 16). Local workers could not be relied upon to do backbreaking work, and farmers would not even agree to plant sugar beets unless the refining mill could guarantee there would be an adequate supply of labor (Lindquist, 1989, Sept. 16). Despite efforts on the company's part to make the labor supply more stable, the European immigrant groups got out of beet labor as fast as they could by going into tenant farming, or staying in the city and working in industry. Increasingly, Continental found it necessary to recruit from outside the immediate area of southeastern Michigan and northern Ohio (Peron, p.12,13).

As far as it is known, the first mention of “Mexicans” in Lenawee County was in the Adrian Daily Telegram of April 20, 1920. The article titled “BF (Blissfield) Invaded by Mexican Army: 200 Who Will Work in Beetfields Reach Village” mentioned how Continental Sugar brought men from the Laredo area of south Texas by train to work the sugar beets. These workers were transported up by train at the start of the season, then returned at the end of the season by the same means. The Company paid for the train fare and the cost was deducted from the wages the beet workers earned during the season. They were also given requisition slips by the Company which allowed them to obtain food and necessities at local stores. Later, in the 30’s, when some workers came in their own cars and began bringing their families with them, they were also able to obtain gasoline and have their car repaired if needed.

The first Mexican child to be registered in a Blissfield school was a 9-year-old boy who entered the first grade in September 1924 and left after six weeks. Gradually, Mexican laborers began to stay all year round. The 1930 U.S. Census recorded 52 Mexicans living in Lenawee County, all in Blissfield (Peron, p.17). The majority came from Cotulla, New Braunfels, and San Antonio. They were urban people who had very little experience with field work. The parents in 95% of the families were aliens; the children, first generation Americans. They were poor, lacked education, and had little understanding of the English language (Cardenas, 1958, p. 347).

There were two main reasons why Mexicans began to stay in Blissfield after the beet season was over. The first one was they often did not have enough money to return to Texas or Mexico. Wages started to decline in the 1920’s and went from about \$34 an acre in 1920, to \$14.40 an acre in 1935. So, during the 1920’s and early 30’s, wages made by Mexican laborers declined steadily in comparison with the wages made by Europeans earlier in the century. Things

got to the point where after the Company discounted the amount owed to local businesses, often very little money was left to return home. In addition to not having the income to make the return trip to the Southwest, the sugar company encouraged the beet workers to stay on during the winter by not charging rent for the shacks in which they lived (Peron, p. 16-18).

In the 1930’s the sugar beet industry flourished despite initial turmoil and corporate restructuring and consolidation (Valdes, 1991, p.33-4). The importation of migrant workers from Texas was continued by the Blissfield sugar company, which was now called the Great Lakes Sugar Company. A key factor that favored the sugar beet industry during the Depression was that the labor necessary to support higher beet acreage became readily available. European immigrant city workers who had left the beet fields in the 1910’s and 1920’s to work in the factories came back to the fields at the beginning of the 1930’s in hopes of finding work. The European immigrant workers, however, having become acquainted with trade-unionism, successfully organized the AFL affiliated Agricultural Workers Union in 1935, Local 19994 of Blissfield (Jamieson, 1945, p. 383). However, the union could not mobilize sufficient strength to carry on effective collective bargaining after the 1935 harvest season. Repeated but unsuccessful attempts at unionization of Blissfield workers were made through 1938. The minimum wage imposed by the federal government which came into effect in 1937 with the Sugar Act contributed to the union’s weakness (Peron, p. 27). The Great Lakes Sugar Company was also accused of trying to sign up growers independently of the Blissfield Growers Association, with whom the Agricultural Workers Union had already signed a contract (Jamieson, p. 384). However, the main reason for the failure of the union was the systematic importation of Mexicans from Texas. The Great Lakes Sugar Company who had traditionally assumed the responsibility of recruiting beet labor, established the Great Lakes

Growers' Employment Committee after the strike of 1935 to assist beet growers in the employment of field workers and to avoid being implicated in the hiring of labor (Valdes, 1991, p.45). After the strike, Mexican-Americans recruited from Texas became the main source of labor.

By 1940, some 200 to 400 Mexican-Americans were avoiding the necessity of making that long trip from Texas by living year-round in a settlement two miles from the village of Blissfield (Phenicie, 1977, July 16). The colony in which they lived had been occupied by Hungarians at one time, and carried the name "Honky Town." Water was obtained from one solitary hand pump which was situated in the middle of the colony. The living conditions were so bad that it prompted Forrest G. Brown, a representative of the State Department of Labor and Industry, to characterize the Mexican settlement as "filthy, the worst in the state." He declared that Blissfield was "the dumping point for Mexicans who are being brought in by truckloads from Texas" (Rojo, 1980, p. 51). Another observer commented that transportation by school buses was never made available to the school children in this settlement. They had to walk to school in the rain and snow. (Cardenas, p. 347).

The defense plants in Adrian started hiring Mexicans who lived in Blissfield early on in the second World War. The government war contracts resulted in labor shortages and in an increased demand for labor. Magnesium Fabricators, built by Bohn Corporation and opened in 1938, is believed to be the first company in Adrian to hire Mexicans in 1940 (Lindquist, 1989, Sept. 23). At the same time Magnesium Fabricators was prospering and in need of thousands of workers, the sugar beet industry was in decline. Because of low profitability, the number of acres of sugar beets planted in the county fell from about 7,000 in the mid 1930's to only 500 by 1944. Many of the Mexican people who had worked in the beet fields looked for employment in the factory (Phenicie 1977, July 16).

This change in employment pattern began to shift the residences of Lenawee's Mexican people. During the next two years most of those who got jobs in the factory moved from Blissfield to Adrian. The Mexicans that moved to Adrian settled next to each other, resulting in the formation of another "colonia" that became known as Sunnyside. It was situated in an unincorporated area, adjacent to the city, next to the railroad tracks, and within walking distance of two manufacturing plants. According to Cardenas (1958), the settlement was determined by low land values, cheap rent, undesirable conditions, closeness to employment, and prejudice. Mexicans, for example, were not sold property within the city. Barbers refused to cut their hair, and there are stories of one bar that never refused to serve them, but the price of each successive drink was higher than the previous one. At the work site, where they were hired as a group, they were given the hardest, lowest paid, and most unskilled jobs in the plant (Cardenas, 1958, p. 348,9).

From 1942 until the end of the war, Magnesium Fabricators' Bohn Plant 13, and later Bohn Plant 24, systematically hired Mexicans. In June 1943 the company sent its personnel director to Texas on the same mission that the sugar company recruiter had gone on 23 years earlier (Phenicie, 1977, July; Lindquist, 1989, September). The company attracted large numbers from the southern towns of Texas. While sugar beets provided the original impetus for Mexican-Americans to come to Lenawee County, it was WWII and the defense plants of Adrian that were responsible for the major influx of Latinos into Adrian and the surrounding areas (Lindquist, 1989, September).

During the war years there was one big problem in the introduction of newcomers to the Adrian community. The town was jam-packed and there was a total lack of housing, and materials and labor were in short supply. Moreover, the War Department in Washington said that no people could be lured to work in a

new town unless employers could assure housing. To deal with the situation, the management of Magnesium Fabricators leased three building at the Lenawee County Fairgrounds north of the plant. According to the Adrian newspaper, these Fairground accommodations were not the best:

“Imagine a 12-by-16 foot room as the living quarters for a family of five, take away window and door screens, and plan on doing the family laundry in a pair of tubs used by 20 other families... In the kitchen at the rear of the dining hall, all food is kept in the open. Each family had a cupboard for its utensils and food but none of the cupboards is covered effectively. There is a refrigerator of sorts, but it is not working so that milk that is purchased in the morning is sour at night and other foods spoil fast” (Lindquist, 1989, September 23).

The solution to these makeshift facility accommodations at the Lenawee County Fairgrounds was the construction of Deerfield Park, a 300-apartment housing project built by the federal government for “war workers” (Lindquist, 1989, Sept. 23). However, there was some reluctance to rent houses to Mexicans in the project, which was located within the city limits. Witnesses recall that the only places where large numbers of Mexicans were to be found living were at the fairgrounds, and at a government trailer camp. Later, three housing subdivisions — Sunnyside, the Adrian Improvement Area, and the Drexel Park — were developed outside the city limits, along the Madison Township border and near the factory gates. Little by little, Mexicans began to settle in Sunnyside, where they developed a sense of place and began to set up Mexican shops that sold tortillas, tacos, and other Mexican items. When the war ended in 1945, many Mexicans went back to Texas, but a great number stayed in Adrian and surrounding areas, despite a period of unemployment after the war that lasted for over six months (Rojo, 1980, p. 38).

From the beginning, Mexicans were isolated by others more than by their own choice. According to Rojo (1980), there was overt and covert discrimination. Attempts to assimilate them, much less integrate them into the society, were never made (Rojo, 1980, p. 54). Thus, many of the Mexican people settled in Sunnyside and nearby neighborhoods out of necessity. Today, the majority of Mexicans continue to live in this neighborhood. Located downwind of the factories, Sunnyside was susceptible to a chemical in these plants later discovered to be toxic. This substance was found all over Sunnyside, and in many of the children living there. In 1980, the neighborhood was the site of a massive decontamination effort (Rojo, 1980, p. 225).

Since the location of housing determined which school district would be accountable for the children’s education, the housing problem had implications for where the children went to school and the type of education they received. In the early 1940’s many children of the Mexican-Americans went to the Madison Township school, though a number went to Adrian public schools. According to some estimates, Latinos made up 6% of the students in the Adrian schools and 33% of the students in the Madison schools. As a result of the increased student population, which had almost doubled, many makeshift accommodations were implemented. An apple storage bin was rented and converted into classrooms, while a Quonset hut was erected next to the Drexel Park School to provide for the overcrowding. Some class rooms were also rented at the Adrian Airport. The town hall was also converted into a school room (Codina, 1983, p.5,6).

In Adrian, the superintendent of the school district at the time, Dr. George Little, tried to address the school’s housing problems caused by the increased population. In 1943, and again in 1944 and 1945, he made the case for a building fund to start making preparations for the financing of the needed buildings. But, his proposal was voted down by the public. In 1947, the Madison School District unsuccessfully petitioned the Adrian Schools to merge in order

to combine school services due to the large influx of Mexican-American children of the factory workers. The annexation issue was a frequent topic through 1953, but for one reason or another, annexation proposals were never approved by the Adrian Board of Education (Codina, 1983, p.7).

Many concerned persons, including school personnel and members of both the White and Mexican-American community became involved in resolving the stressful situations that frequently arose. Despite these efforts, students who went to these schools experienced many painful situations. Many felt this was due to the negative views of their ethnicity by some school personnel. Mexican-American parents interviewed recall that when their children were first sent to school, they were not welcomed. They mentioned that some White parents wanted Latino and Black children separated from their kids. They recall their children telling them that teachers did not allow the Blacks, Mexicans, and Whites to play together. Mexicans who experienced going to school recalled the general atmosphere of school during those early days and how they felt:

“You didn’t belong in school, they were doing you a favor by educating you and you better know that... We lived in humility all the time we were there, we would come in there with our heads bowed down and that’s the way it was at that time... Sometimes I’d even hate being Mexican, I’d wish I was White... My little mind was all messed up by the gringos... to this day I can still remember it...” (Codina, p.6, 10-11).

The Mexican-American population in Adrian grew over time, in spite of the discrimination and segregation exhibited. Cardenas estimated in 1958 that Adrian and vicinity had about 320 Latino families and numbered 1,200 people. The Latino population grew to 1,949 in 1970, to

2,596 in 1980, and to 2,958 in 1990. This increase in the city’s Latino population over the 1970-1990 was significant when it is considered that it represented 59% of the city’s overall growth in population over the 20-year period.

Latino Integration

The question remains, how are Latinos in Adrian doing today? If integration is defined as “adjustment, integration, and advancement over time” (Martin, P. et al., 1996, April), what can be said about the way this ethnic population has been integrated into the larger Adrian community? Tables 1-9 below provide self explanatory comparisons of Latinos to the larger Adrian community in a number of socioeconomic areas. Tables 1-3 show that major differences continue to exist between Latinos and other Adrian residents in educational attainment, citizenship, and in ability to speak English. In addition, past patterns of residential segregation still linger; in 1990 over half (55%) of the Latino population in Adrian was concentrated in one census tract (Table 4).

Major differences also exist between the labor market experience of Latinos and that of Adrian’s White non-Latino work force. As Table 5 shows, Latinos bore a much higher share of the unemployment relative to their share of the work force. The unemployment rate for Latino males was two times higher than for Adrian’s White non-Latino males; for Latino women, the unemployment rate was five times higher than for Adrian’s White non-Latino female work force. Of the Latinos employed, nearly half were employed outside the city, as compared to less than a third of White workers (Table 6). Occupation mobility among Latinos over the last 20 years did occur. However, progress has been relatively low, as evident from Table 7. While we see that the proportion of Latino workers in managerial and professional occupations increased over time, we also see that despite this increase, the share of Latinos in these occupations in 1990 was only about half that of Adrian’s work force employed in

Table 1. Educational Attainment, Persons 25 Years and Over, Total and Latino Population, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Item	Population	
	Adrian	Latino
% less than 9th grade	11.7	29.1
% less 9th to 12th grade, no diploma	17.1	22.9
% high school graduate	32.5	24.6
% with some college, no degree	17.4	19.9
% with associate degree	5.3	1.9
% with bachelor's degree	9.4	.8
% with graduate or professional degree	6.5	.8

Source: Computed by author from Tables 57 & 59, C90TF3A, 1990 U.S. Census.

these occupations in 1970! Latinos also continue to be underrepresented in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations. In 1990, over 26% of the Adrian workers were employed in these occupations compared to only 13% of Latinos. On the other hand, Latinos tended to be concentrated in the less skilled, lower paying occupations. In 1990, nearly a quarter of all Latinos employed were in service occupations and over a third were employed as operators, fabricators, and laborers. Although the share of Latinos in the latter category of occupations had declined from 61% to 38%, the 38% is still higher than the share of Adrian's work force that was employed in these occupations in 1970! The labor market experience of Latinos in Adrian is one reason for their relatively lower median income and higher poverty rates depicted in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 2. Citizenship, Total and Mexican Origin Population, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Item	Population	
	Adrian	Mexican Origin
Percent that is native born	97.4	93.4
Percent of foreign born, not a citizen	51.2	63.4

Source: Computed by author from Tables 167 & 192, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p. 597, 1090.

Table 3. Population 5 Years and Older that Does Not Speak English Very Well, by Age, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Item	Latinos
% of total that does not speak English "very well"	62.4
% of total age 5 to 17 years	90.0
% of total age 18 to 64 years	58.5
% of total age 65 and over	54.7

Source: Computed by author from Tables 169 & 192, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p. 635, 1090.

Table 4. Latino Population by Census Tract, Adrian Michigan: 1990

Item	Latinos
% of Population in Tract 606 (pt.)	0.0
% of Population in Tract 613 (pt.)	55.4
% of Population in Tract 614 (pt.)	6.9
% of Population in Tract 615 (pt.)	5.9
% of Population in Tract 616 (pt.)	22.2

Source: Computed from 1990 U.S. Census Data, C90STFA

Table 5. Gender and Unemployment Status, White Non-Latino and Latino Origin Population 16 years and Over, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Item	White	
	Non-Latino	Latino
MALES 16 YEARS AND OVER		
Percent of Male Labor Force	80.8	12.8
Percent in Labor Force	70.1	81.0
Percent employed	91.9	84.0
Percent unemployed	8.1	16.1
Percent of unemployed	72.8	22.2
FEMALES 16 YEARS AND OVER		
Percent of Female Labor Force	88.5	11.0
Percent in Labor Force	53.3	59.2
Percent employed	95.0	73.6
Percent unemployed	5.0	26.4
Percent of unemployed	57.3	39.0

Source: Computed by author from Tables 173 & 183, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p. 711, 922.

Table 6. Worked in Place of Residence, White Non-Latino and Latino Employees, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Item	White Non-Latino	Latino
Workers 16 years and over	9045	954
% Worked in place of residence	67.0	54.0

Source: Computed by the author from Table 182, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p. 896.

Table 7. Occupations of Employed Persons, Total and Latino Population, Adrian, Michigan: 1970, 1980, 1990

Item	Labor Force					
	Latino			Adrian		
	1970	1980	1990	1970	1980	1990
% in Managerial & Professional Specialty	2.3	7.1	10.7	20.9	25.2	23.9
% in Technical, Sales, & Administrative Support	9.0	7.9	12.9	24.1	26.8	26.6
% in Service	23.3	24.6	23.4	16.0	18.1	19.1
% in Farming, Forestry, & Fishing	—	—	8.9	.1	6.9	1.6
% in Precision Production, Craft, & Repair	5.2	14.0	6.1	11.3	8.3	8.8
% Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers	61.4	46.5	38.1	27.5	21.2	20.0

Source: Computed by author from Tables 105 & 115, 1970 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p.477,509; Tables 159 & 164, 1980 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p.456,511; Tables 174 & 185, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Michigan, p.730,774.

Table 8. Median Income of White Non-Latino, and Latino Households, Families, Male and Female Full-time workers 15 years and over, and Per Capita Income, Adrian Michigan: 1989

Item	POPULATION	
	White Non-Latino	Latino
Households	24884	23125
Families	30286	19942
Males 15 years and over, full-time workers	29294	21322
Females 15 years and over, full-time workers	16918	14461
Per capita income	11903	6803

Source: Table 186, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Table 9. Income in 1989 Below Poverty Level for White Non-Latino Families, Unrelated Individuals, Persons, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Item	POPULATION	
	White Non-Latino	Latino
Families below poverty	618	190
% below poverty	15.0	30.5
Unrelated individuals below poverty	755	119
% below poverty	25.8	51.1
Persons below poverty	2765	926
% below poverty	17.6	33.8

Source: Table 186, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Adrian, Michigan: 1990

Conclusion

In 1911 the Dillingham Commission concluded that “it was evident that in the case of the Mexican, he was less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer” (Garcia, 1979, pp. 47,8). From the information available, such a conclusion appears valid in the case of the Mexican-American pioneers who arrived and settled in the Adrian area in the 1930’s and 1940’s. The more recent Census data clearly show that the type of integration that has occurred in Adrian has not eliminated the major socioeconomic differences between Latinos and other city residents. Although progress has been made, social indicators show that the Latino population in Adrian remains at the bottom of the social economic strata.

Further study of the Adrian community needs to take place before we understand what are the factors behind the lack of integration and economic advancement of Latinos in Adrian. However, a number of hypotheses can be generated from our research at this time. For one, young, better educated Latinos from Adrian might be going elsewhere in search of jobs or other opportunities. This hypothesis is supported by the decline in the number of Michigan-born Latinos in the city between 1980 and 1990. This out-migration might be explained by past patterns of discrimination and the Adrian economy, which has not grown much since the 1960’s. Another consideration is that, despite the local economy’s stagnant growth, the Adrian community continues to attract Latinos. As noted earlier, slightly over a quarter of the Latino population in Adrian resided elsewhere in 1985. Their attraction to the Adrian community may be explained by the relatively large Latino population in the area that serves to draw other Latinos through the existing Latino social networks. Alternatively, it could be argued that native Latinos simply have not made the right choices. If Latinos were only less prone to early marriage, large families, dropping out of school, and grouping themselves into colonias, which may have a locational disadvantage, they would

do much better. Although these factors might very well help explain the relatively slow advancement of Adrian's Latino population over time, it is important to recognize that the decisions Latinos from Adrian have made are not necessarily independent of the long history of discrimination that has been bestowed on them.

Policy Implications

Three implications stem from this research on the migration and integration of Latinos into the Adrian community. One is that immigration reform has to take into consideration the fact that the majority of Latinos today are natives. Given the xenophobic sentiment that prevails today, immigration policies have to be coupled with policies that protect the rights of the native Latino population. The experience of Latinos in Adrian also tells us that the ways new immigrants are welcomed into communities have long term implications for these migrants and the communities where they settle. Ghettos can be avoided if policies are adopted that give attention to how communities deal with Latinos and others of color when they first arrive. Finally, the national economic expansion in the United States today seems to be leaving Latino people and neighborhoods behind. While we need to consider policies that make it possible to bring people to jobs, we also need to consider policies that bring jobs to people. In other words, we need to examine place policies and initiatives that focus on economic development in communities where Latinos and other minorities reside.

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