Poverty Trends Among Hispanic Origin Groups, 1980-2010:
Is their Economic Position Improving or Deteriorating?

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Introduction

Just over forty years ago, Hispanics comprised less than five percent of the total population, according to the 1970 Decennial Census. By the 2010 Decennial Census they represented approximately one-sixth of the U.S. population, registering in excess of 50 million people [**Figure 1**]. The growing share of the population identifying as Hispanic, both the U.S.-born and immigrants [**Figure 2**], demands a deeper understanding of how Hispanics have fared over time on key indicators especially since public debate increasingly focuses on the social position of Hispanics relative to other racial-ethnic groups in the country. A long-term view of social and economic trends can help inform research, debate, and policy geared to addressing challenges and opportunities facing growing Hispanic populations. This is particularly critical in the current policy landscape, where discussions about immigration—and especially the situation of unauthorized immigrants—are at the fore. Understanding the characteristics of both U.S.-born and immigrant Hispanics (both naturalized citizens and non-citizens) can illuminate the potential impact of proposed legislation.

As a group, in 1970, Hispanics generally occupied a middle position between Whites and blacks as measured by poverty rates [**Figure 3**]. However, indicators such as educational attainment suggest Hispanics did not occupy a middle position even then and have since lagged behind blacks and Whites alike [**Figure 4**]. Longstanding academic debates regarding changes in the relative position of Hispanics suggest that their current status is not fully understood. This paper tackles the question of Hispanics' middle position very specifically by considering the poverty experiences of Hispanics over the past forty years. Using Decennial Census and American Community Survey data, we ask: have Hispanic poverty rates deteriorated, relative to those of Whites and blacks? And, just as importantly, what factors explain both changes in Hispanic poverty and the gap between Hispanics and Whites since 1980?

In order to answer these questions, we analyze how well key social and economic indicators—including education, employment, income, and family composition—explain changes in Hispanic poverty. Finally, we break down these trends by looking at heterogeneity within Hispanic populations both by country of origin and nativity.

This paper contributes to the growing literature on social stratification among

Hispanic populations. Extensive research has examined how Hispanics, immigrants, or Hispanic immigrants fare compared to blacks (Bean et. al. 2009; Massey & Eggers, 1991; Tienda & Lii, 1987; Waldinger 1996) as well as whether and how segments of the Hispanic population may be falling behind in mainstream socioeconomic achievements and residential settlement in the US (Alba & Nee, 2003; Bachmeier & Bean, 2011; Card & Raphael, 2013; Iceland, 2009; Logan, 20099; Massey & Pren, 2012a; Portes & Zhou, 1993). This paper expands upon prior research by examining poverty as a leading indicator of how individuals and social groups have fared between 1970 and 2010. The Official Poverty Measure can be calculated across time, which allows for analyses of poverty trends over several decades. In addition to describing change over time, we use multivariate analyses to understand what characteristics of Hispanics may be driving poverty trends. Similar to other social groups, Hispanic populations are remarkably diverse, and we account for key factors associated with poverty. Finally, we discuss our findings in the context of historical immigration policies, policies that have often had unintended consequences on the experiences of Hispanics coming to the United States (Massey & Pren, 2012b).

Literature Review

The relative poverty position of Hispanics, as compared to blacks and whites, has changed over the past four decades. The gap between white and Hispanic poverty has widened over time, while that between Hispanics and blacks has narrowed. Overall, this is a result not of rising Hispanic poverty but of declines in the black poverty rate begging the question: "Why did black, but not Hispanic poverty fall in the latter decades of the 21st century?" Orrenius and Zavodny (2013) explore this so called "poverty puzzle" and find that language, work hours, age and educational differences are the top characteristics driving poverty rate differences. They also suggest differences between U.S.-born and immigrant Hispanics in poverty drive the overall stagnation in Hispanic poverty rates, in large part because of differences in English language skills. Indeed, the longer Hispanic immigrants are in the United States, the lower their poverty rates. While the poverty of U.S.-born Hispanics has declined somewhat since 1970, immigrant poverty has increased.

Research Questions

This paper is primarily concerned with analyzing poverty trends among Hispanic populations. We address a central question: how have poverty rates among Hispanics changed relative to other racial-ethnic groups since 1970? In order to answer this question, we also closely analyze variation within Hispanics, especially by U.S. nativity, citizenship status, and Hispanic origin groups (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other). The analytic approach described below helps answer the central research question by examining: (a) how poverty trends change across four decades for different Hispanic populations, (b) how well other factors related to poverty predict poverty status over time, net of Hispanic ethnicity among various Hispanic populations, and (c) what factors are behind the changing poverty-rate gaps among Hispanics and between Hispanics and both blacks and whites between 1970 and 2010.

Data & Methods

This paper addresses changes in poverty trends among Hispanics between 1970 and 2010. In order to address the research question, we employ nationally representative and comparable data on Hispanics, other racial-ethnic groups, and their characteristics. Census data allow for direct comparison of people who identify as "Hispanic." Using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) from the Minnesota Population Center, we combine data from the Decennial Census (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000) and the American Community Survey (2010) (Ruggles et. al., 2010) to examine decennial trends between 1970 and 2010.[1] We then conduct analyses across racial-ethnic groups and among Hispanics over time. In addition to computing regression models for each Decennial year, we follow Orrenius and Zavodny (2013) and use Binder-Oaxaca decomposition techniques to better understand what factors are driving change, relative to whites and blacks, across time (using 1980, 1990 and 2010 as our reference years – data limitations preclude similar analysis of 1970, as language is not included).

Variables

Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is *poverty* status. This variable refers to whether or not the individual's total family income was above or below the official poverty threshold for their family size and composition in the Census year.[2]

Independent Variables

Race-Ethnicity: We begin with descriptive comparisons and consider differences between Hispanics, blacks, whites and Asians. In some models, we also consider broader categories including American Indian or Alaska native.

Nativity: We include either (a) an indicator of nativity with U.S.-born as reference, or (b) combine race-ethnicity and U.S. nativity.

Country of origin: In addition to poverty trends among all immigrants, this paper also explores immigrant poverty trends by citizenship status (US citizen, non-citizen, naturalized citizen), and in some analyses, whether an individual is of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or other Hispanic orgigin.

English language proficiency: In some models, we add an indicator of proficiency in English with speaking English well or fluently the reference category.

Control Variables Since this paper explores poverty trends, the analyses account for key variables associated with poverty status. In addition to accounting for diversity by Hispanic origin and nativity and citizenship status, we also examine poverty by gender (coded (1) for male, (0) for female); educational attainment (less than high school, high school, some college as reference category, and college graduate and beyond); age (ten

[1] 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org.

[2] See: www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html.

year intervals from 25-34 to include only people who have had a chance to complete schooling through 65-74 to exclude older people with small racial-ethnic subpopulations; the age range 55-64 serves as our reference category); marital status (married, cohabiting, divorced, separated, never married or single, widowed); and the presence of children (coded (1) for presence of any children under five; categorical variable for number of own children under age 18—from 0 to 3 or more; 1 child serves as the reference category).

This paper presents descriptive trends to assess the poverty rate of Hispanics relative to other racial-ethnic groups and differences in poverty within the Hispanic population. The trends highlight whether Hispanic poverty (has occupied a "middle position" between White and black poverty historically, and whether or not this has changed over time. We present trends for Hispanics as a group, major Hispanic origin groups, and Hispanic groups by nativity.

Analyses

We begin by presenting differences across racial-ethnic groups. In order to account for changes in key characteristics related to poverty, this paper also uses logistic regressions to predict poverty status among adults over 25 and under 74 years old. Logistic regressions for each time period estimate, for example, how much variation in poverty status over time stems from educational attainment. In our first set of logistic regression models, we examine racial-ethnic differences using U.S. Census and ACS data and then control for nativity. The second multivariate table compares whites, blacks and Hispanics, breaking the broad category of Hispanic into smaller categories indicating Hispanic origin by U.S. nativity to ascertain whether being born outside the U.S. matters differently for different origin groups. Furthermore, we limit our sample to Hispanics in our third multivariate table and consider differences between Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and those of other Hispanic origin and consider differences between U.S.-born citizens, foreign born citizens and non-citizens. Among Hispanics, there is good reason to think these statuses are distinctly meaningful in ways that may not be evident among the full population. These models include an indicator of English language proficiency. Therefore, as this is not available in 1970, models are only presented for 1980, 1990 and 2000. In our final analyses, we present factors that drive aggregate poverty rate changes between 1980-2010 using the Binder-Oaxaca decomposition method.

Preliminary Findings

Descriptive statistics

Since 1970, poverty rates have remained relatively stable among Hispanics even as the number and proportion of Hispanics has grown. In 1970, 26 percent, or 7.9 million lived in poverty. Forty years later, the percent of Hispanics in poverty remained largely the same [**Figure 5**] even as the Hispanic population increased due to immigration and natural increase. The relative stability in the poverty rate occurred as Hispanic populations changed and became increasingly diverse. Though Mexicans remain the largest group of US-born and foreign-born Hispanics, other Hispanic origin groups have grown in number, especially Central Americans. The surge in immigration is

concentrated in the last 20 years. In 2010, most (60 percent) immigrants from Latin America arrived in the US after 1990. Despite the presence of new waves of arrivals, poverty among Hispanics as a group did not increase.

The persistent trend of Hispanic poverty may be due to the age structure of Hispanics. Between 1970 and 2010, Hispanic adult population growth outpaced Hispanic youth growth. Similar to the general population, Hispanic adults have lower poverty rates than youth. Hispanics age 18-64 increased from 50 to 60 percent of all Hispanics between 1970 and 1990 and this distribution has remained the same since. Although the Hispanic youth population grew in absolute terms, the proportion of Hispanic youth among all Hispanics actually declined between 1970 and 2010 [**Figure 6**].

Aggregate trends in poverty among all Hispanics conceal important trends among Hispanic subgroups. First, poverty rates among Hispanic men are typically lower than among Hispanic women, similar to trends among other groups, except among Asians. Second, poverty varies across age groups, currently with the lowest rates among elderly and highest among children, mirroring general trends across the U.S. population. Third, Hispanic poverty varies by U.S. nativity and is more common among Mexicans and Puerto Ricans than Cubans [**Figure 7**], although trends across Hispanic-origin groups have been converging as discussed further below.

Compared to the rest of the population, Hispanics have occupied a middle position between Whites and blacks[3] for decades. In 1970, the poverty rate among blacks (38%) exceeded the White poverty rate (13%) nearly three to one. At the time, the Hispanic poverty rate (26%) represented a midpoint between black and White poverty.[4] Despite the gains represented by a falling poverty rate since 1970, black poverty remains nearly 2.5 times higher than White poverty [**Figure 3**]. In this context, Hispanic poverty would have had to fall to remain a midpoint between black and White poverty. Specifically, if Hispanic poverty had fallen from roughly 25 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 2010, then it would remain a midpoint today. As discussed earlier, Hispanic poverty remained relatively stable during this time, and thus the Hispanic position has become more similar to blacks over time, and thus their relative middle position has deteriorated.

These snapshots provide context for larger demographic trends. In order to determine whether (and how much) Hispanic ethnicity contributes to being in poverty compared to other groups, we conduct multivariate analyses using Census microdata.

Multivariate analyses

Here we show multivariate analyses of poverty by decade. We begin our discussion with differences in poverty by race-ethnicity [**Table 1**] by comparing whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Though race and ethnicity remain important predictors of poverty status, relative to whites, odds ratios predicting poverty have fallen among both blacks and Hispanics between 1980 and 2010. Being Hispanic is associated with higher but falling odds of being in poverty compared to whites after controlling for a variables related to poverty [**Table 1**]. In 1980, Hispanics were 1.77 times as likely as Whites to be

[3] References to whites and blacks refer to non-Hispanic and US-born populations, unless otherwise noted.
[4] Black poverty fell 10 percentage points between 1970 and 2007, before the Great Recession.

poor while by 2010, they were only 1.15 times as likely to be poor.[5] Notably, the odds ratio of being in poverty remains higher among blacks than Hispanics in 2010, as compared to whites, after controlling for relevant factors, but the difference between the odds ratios predicting poverty was less in 2010 than in 1980. In sum, both blacks and Hispanics tend to report higher odds ratios of being in poverty compared to whites after controlling for gender, age, educational attainment, marital and relationship status, and number of children. While the foreign born had slightly lower odds of being poor in 1980, this reversed by 1990 and increased over time. Our control variables show, not surprisingly, that women, older individuals, those less educated, those in families not headed by a married couple, and those with no children, young children, or more than one child are more often poor in 2010. With the exception of age, the direction of effect is consistent over time. However, these trends among Hispanics as a group conceal important differences across Hispanic-origin groups over time.

In our second set of models [**Table 2**], we break down the broad category of Hispanics by heritage and jointly consider race-ethnicity and nativity to determine if nativity matters differently for different groups. Relative to Whites, odd ratios of being in poverty differ within Hispanic-origin groups [**Table 2**]. Since 1980, the odds ratios of being in poverty among Mexicans fell among both US-born and foreign-born Mexicans (though it is worth noting in 1980 foreign born Mexicans had a lower odds ratio but this reversed by 1990). In general, among Puerto Ricans (those born in Puerto Rico) consistently had higher odds of poverty relative to those born in the U.S. (but outside Puerto Rico). Among Cubans, the likelihood of being in poverty fell between 1980 and 2010 relative to Whites for the US-born but increased among Cuban immigrants.[6] Among other Hispanic origins, the odds ratios of being in poverty declined between 1980 and 2010 among the US and foreign born.[7] Moreover, since 1980, blacks and Puerto Ricans have generally occupied the least advantaged position, as measured by odds ratios of being in poverty relative to Whites; a position held by US-born blacks and Mexicans in 1970. However, in 2010, foreign-born Cubans have the highest odds of being poor, followed by followed by Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico then Mexican immigrants. Our controls each indicated expected relationship between demographic characteristics and poverty.

Finally, we limited analyses to Hispanics and considered the relative position of sub-groups [**Table 3**]. Relative to Mexicans, the likelihood of being in poverty fluctuates each decade but remains consistently higher. The odds ratios of being in poverty increased among Cubans at each decade relative to the previous decade, and while they were less likely poor in 1980 and 1990, the trend reversed by 2000 and Cubans now have higher poverty than Mexicans. Other Hispanic-origin people were more similar to Mexicans in earlier years, but by 2010 had significantly lower odds of being poor. Among our Hispanic sample, the demographic characteristics had the same direction of

[5] Absent controls, Hispanics fare even worse vis-à-vis whites, and the gap is due to demographic differences. Once we control for gender, age, education, and relevant factors, this effect diminishes.
[6] In Table 2, U.S.-born Puerto Ricans include all Puerto Ricans born in the U.S. and born abroad to US-born parents. A small number of Puerto Ricans are born abroad with no US-born parents, and this small group is excluded from Table 2.
[7] The composition of this group changes over time. Their composition changed as a result of changes in self-identification (Rodríguez, 2000) as well as a rise in the number of Hispanic-origin people from Central America and the Dominican Republic, especially immigrant arrivals since 1990.

effect on poverty rates as they did among all racial-ethnic groups. However, the influence of family structure is less dramatic among the Hispanic sample.

Our final analyses break down the factors driving differences between Hispanics and Whites in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. Because the gap between blacks and Hispanics has diminished, we do not present these decompositions. Since this analysis is limited to Whites and Hispanics, Table 4 presents a regression model predicting poverty among these two groups only [**Table 4**]. The results prove substantively consistent with findings discussed above. **Table 5** shows results of our Binder-Oaxaca decomposition. The method estimates a model to predict poverty status among non-Hispanic Whites. Using the coefficients estimating poverty from that initial regression (Whites only), we estimate how much of the difference in poverty rates can be attributed to differences in average characteristics between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites. The portion not attributed to differences in average characteristics is attributed to differences in the estimated coefficients for Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites (see Orrenius and Zavodny, 2013).

Looking across the four decades analyzed, it is clear that while the poverty gap and the poverty rates of both Hispanics and Whites have remained relatively stable, the proportion of the gap in rates that can be explained by demographic differences increases dramatically over time [**Table 5**]. In 1980, less than 40 percent of the gap was explained, but by 2010, we explain 95 percent of the gap. The key factors explaining the gap are the same in 1980 and 1990: differences in low educational status, English proficiency, and having three or more children. In 2000 and 2010, citizenship status replaces having many children as a main underlying factor. In addition, being single (and never married) also emerges as a relatively more important factor in 2010 than in earlier decades. If we consider all of the underlying differences, we know that in 1980 the poverty rate would have been roughly 4.3 percentage points lower than that of Whites if the populations had the same underlying composition. This number is 6.4 percentage points in 1990, 8.6 in 2000 and 10.6 in 2010.

Revisiting descriptive differences between Hispanics and Whites shed light on the decomposition results [**Table 6**]. While English language proficiency remains largely unchanged among Hispanics, the proportion of people with 12 or more years of schooling increased among both groups—even as Hispanics lag behind Whites. The education trend may explain why Hispanic poverty did not decrease over time. Despite the persistent and growing share of non-citizens among Hispanics age 25 and over (38 percent by 2010), poverty may have increased if Hispanics as a group had not become an increasingly U.S.-born group. Finally, family size dropped slightly among Hispanics and the percent of Hispanics age 25 and older with young children (under six) also fell. Family structure explains only a small portion of the White-Hispanic poverty gap, perhaps because the proportion of two-spouse households (married with a spouse present) fell among Whites as well as Hispanics while the proportion single increased among both.

Limitations

Measuring Hispanic trends in earlier time periods (before 1990) is subject to smaller Hispanic samples. Additionally, the analyses use cross-sectional data. Longitudinal and nationally representative data dating back to 1970, however, do not

exist. Finally, although we explore a range of sub-populations and characteristics, this paper does not distinguish poverty trends across birth cohorts or among immigrants and their children. Despite these limitations, this paper presents a range of trends over a long period of time. The approach helps identify how trends in poverty have evolved and will suggest explanations for such changes.

Preliminary Conclusions

Although the poverty gap has fallen since 1970, Hispanics do still occupy a middle position between Whites and Blacks in terms of poverty. After controlling for demographic differences, we find that both Hispanics and Blacks have poverty risks that are closer to Whites in 2010 than in 1970. However, Hispanic poverty would have had to fall dramatically since 1970 to match declines in Black poverty trends. Our findings suggest that while the relative poverty position of Hispanics vis-à-vis Blacks has deteriorated over the past forty years, this is largely artifact of reductions in Black poverty. We also find that the persistent difference between White and Hispanic poverty is, at least in part, attributable to demographic differences. While Hispanics remain more likely to be poor in 2010, after controlling for a host of individual characteristics, the differences decreases dramatically.

It is also rather remarkable that Hispanic poverty remained fairly stable since 1970 given changes in the Hispanic composition and increases in the number of recent immigrants, as well as a rise in unauthorized immigration. While this suggests Hispanics may not be faring worse, they have not benefitted from the reductions in poverty evident among Blacks and still experience poverty more often than their White counterparts. Hispanic ethnicity has grown less predictive of poverty status net of other factors; and there appears to be a convergence in poverty trends across Hispanic-origin groups.

However, the Hispanic population is diverse and poverty trends vary among Hispanic subgroups. Experiences among Hispanics often vary by demographic factors associated with poverty in the US. Like the general population, Hispanic women and young Hispanics tend to experience poverty more than others (male and adult Hispanics). In addition, US nativity informs the experiences of large segments of the Hispanic population. Poverty among US-born Hispanics differs from foreign-born Hispanics, apart from differences between specific Hispanic-origin groups. The growing diversity among Hispanics is also captured by a growing number of Hispanic immigrants outside traditional sending countries, whose poverty trends tend to differ from other Hispanics.

Understanding trends in Hispanic poverty is important for two related reasons. First, the Hispanic population will continue to grow and already comprises a rapidly rising proportion of the youth population. Understanding how demographic characteristics are predictors of poverty, both among Hispanics and in comparison to other groups, can help determine how similar or different Hispanic poverty is compared to other groups. Second, if we document what we already know about Hispanic poverty, such information can inform efforts to address poverty among Hispanic subgroups. These lessons could be applicable in current policy contexts, especially contentious immigration reform debates. For example, we know Hispanic women and youth tend to be in poverty more than others and that Hispanics (especially Mexicans and Central Americans) are overrepresented among unauthorized immigrants. Lifting legal status restrictions alone is

unlikely to address the challenges facing Hispanics whose odds of being in poverty are especially high. For example, unauthorized Hispanic women with young children may face additional obstacles to climbing out of poverty aside from their immigration status, especially if they are single mothers. However, legal status may enable them to be less hesitant in connecting to government-funded assistance for their children.

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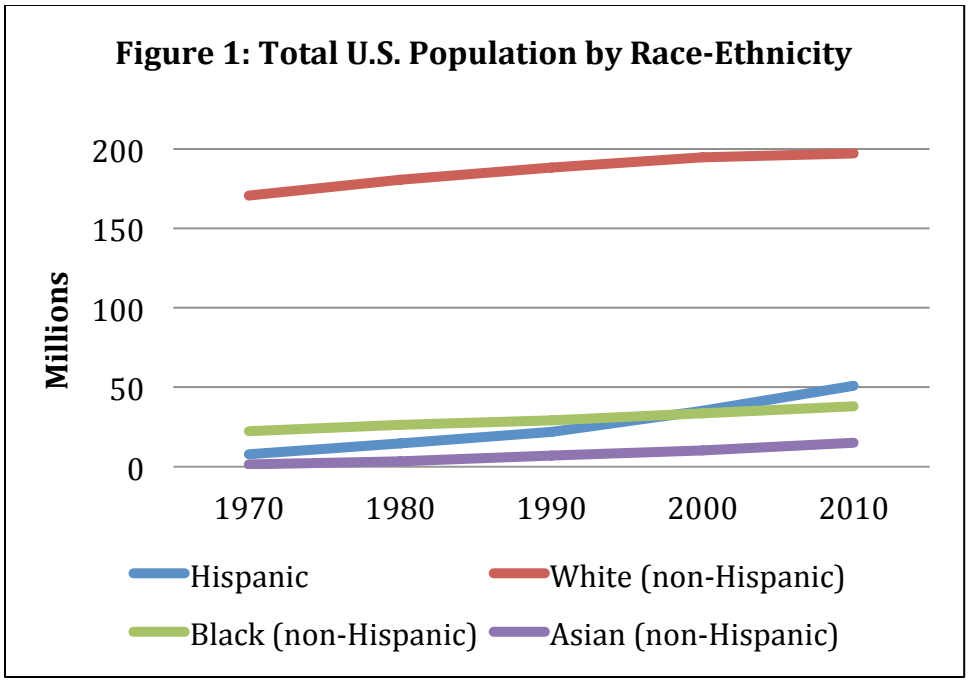
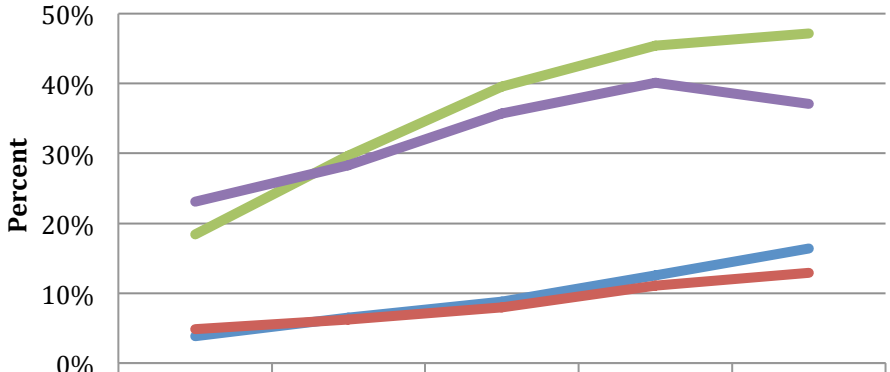


Source: Authors' calculations using Census IPUMS data (Ruggles et. al, 2010). 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org.

Figure 2: Hispanic Population in Perspective

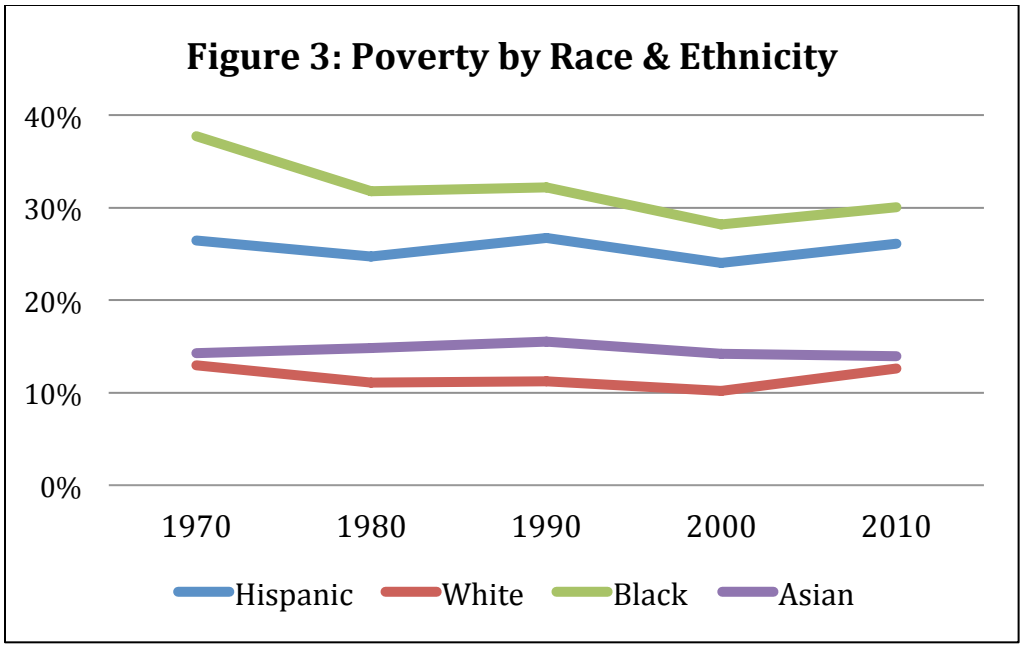
Hispanics and foreign-born as a share of US population



	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Hisp/Total	4%	7%	9%	13%	16%
FB/Total	5%	6%	8%	11%	13%
HispanicFB/FB	18%	30%	40%	45%	47%
HispanicFB/Hispanic	23%	28%	36%	40%	37%

Source: Authors' calculations using Census IPUMS data (Ruggles et. al, 2010). 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org.

Hisp: Hispanic (US-born or foreign-born); FB: Foreign-born (Hispanic or non-Hispanic
Total: Total population (US-born or foreign-born); HispanicFB: Hispanic Foreign-born



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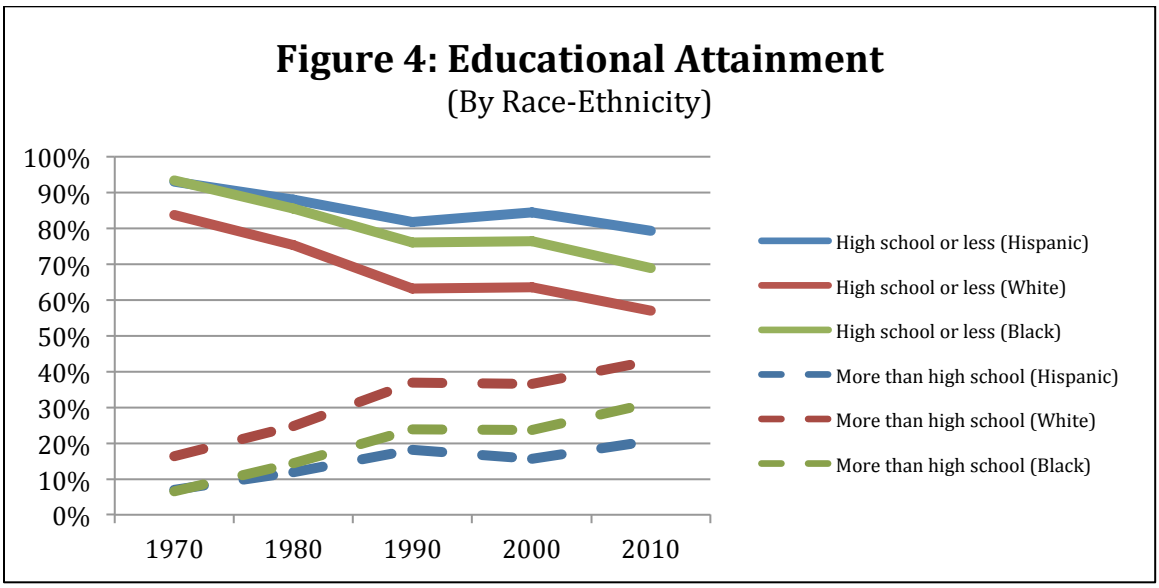

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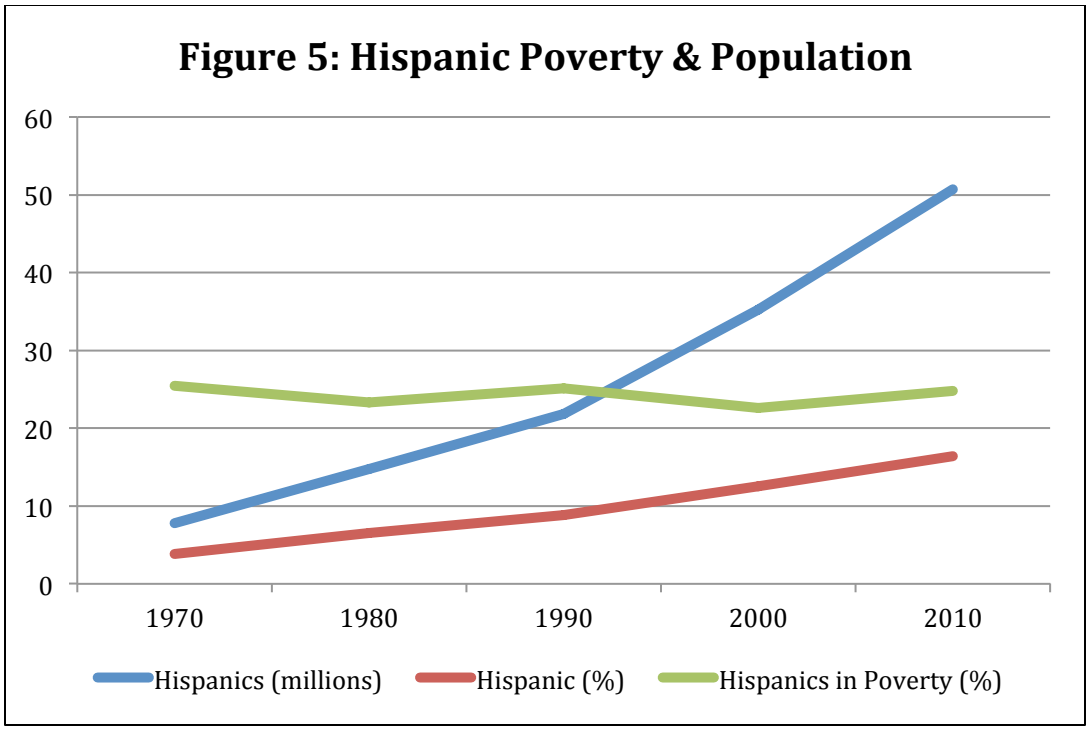

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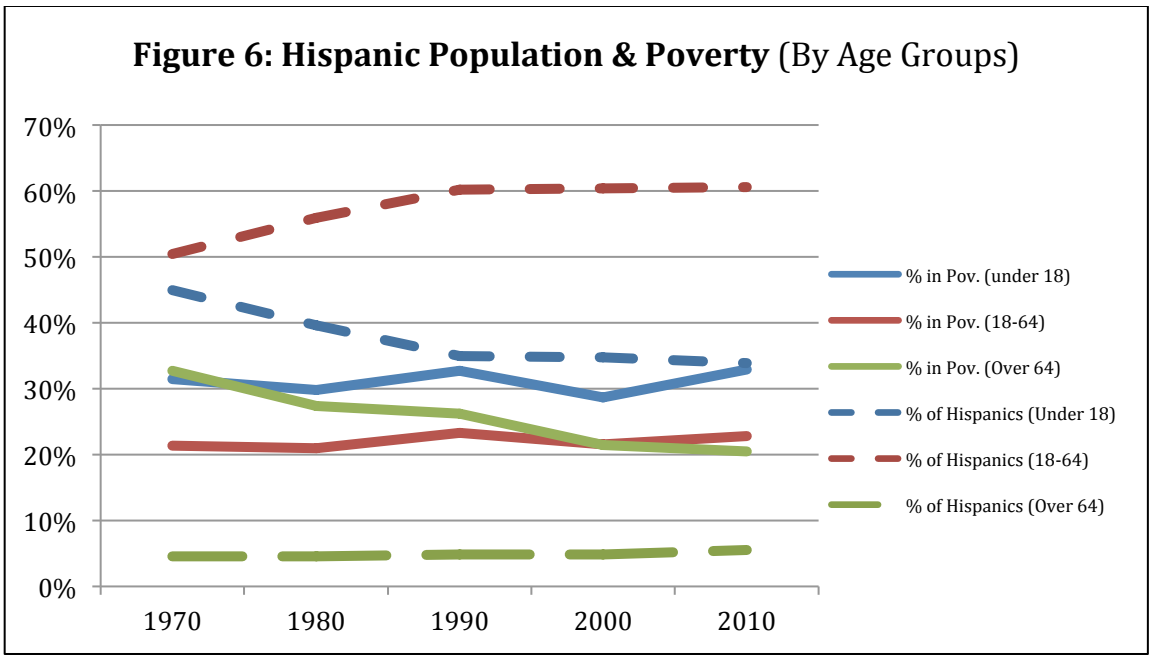

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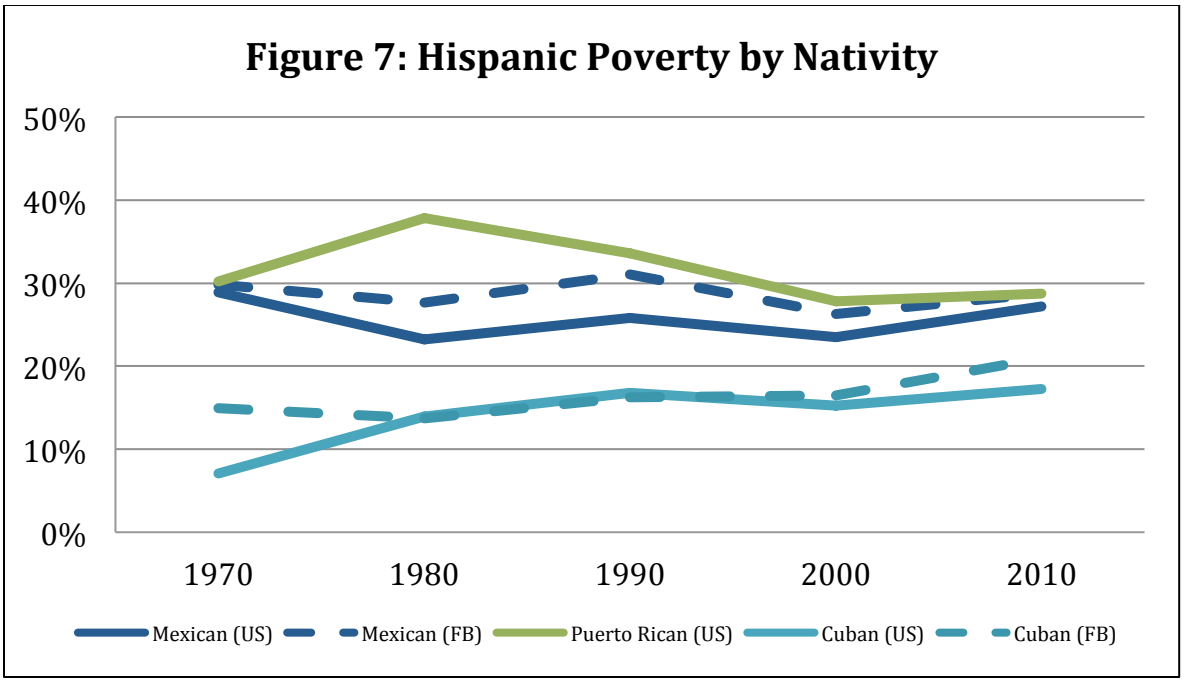

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Reflects people categorized as Hispanic by U.S. nativity. Puerto Ricans born outside US excluded.

Table 1: Odds Ratios Predicting Poverty Status (Age 25+)

VARIABLES	(2) 1980	(3) 1990	(4) 2000	(5) 2010
Race-ethnicity				
Hispanic, any race(s)	1.774***	1.752***	1.518***	1.147***
	(0.011)	(0.023)	(0.008)	(0.013)
Non-Hispanic				
White (*reference*)				
Black	2.432***	2.312***	2.023***	1.663***
	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.008)	(0.015)
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.348***	2.634***	2.321***	1.965***
	(0.035)	(0.078)	(0.029)	(0.058)
Chinese, Japanese, Other Asian or P.I.	1.528***	1.679***	1.535***	1.177***
	(0.019)	(0.039)	(0.013)	(0.020)
English language proficiency				
Speaks English well or fluent (*reference)*				
Does not speak English well	1.688***	1.502***	1.489***	1.619***
	(0.014)	(0.027)	(0.010)	(0.023)
U.S. nativity				
U.S.-born, including territories (*reference)*				
Foreign-born	0.954***	1.021	1.140***	1.118***
	(0.006)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.013)
Gender				
Male (*reference)*				
Female	1.345***	1.401***	1.380***	1.363***
	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.009)
Age Group				
25-34	0.993	1.047***	0.914***	1.042***
	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.012)
35-44	0.879***	0.936***	0.867***	0.958***
	(0.005)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.011)
45-54	0.823***	0.855***	0.854***	0.953***
	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.004)	(0.010)
55-64 (*reference)*				
65-74	1.084***	0.934***	0.755***	0.734***
	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.009)
75+	1.290***	1.114***	0.773***	0.714***
	(0.008)	(0.016)	(0.005)	(0.010)
Educ				
Less than High School	2.920***	3.721***	3.675***	3.128***
	(0.015)	(0.038)	(0.018)	(0.033)
High School, 12 years	1.288***	1.576***	1.678***	1.549***
	(0.007)	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.013)
Some College, 1-3 years (*reference*)				
Colleg, 4+ years	0.698***	0.555***	0.594***	0.505***
	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Family				
Married, spouse present (*reference*)				
Married, spouse absent	4.503***	4.255***	3.795***	3.483***
	(0.050)	(0.094)	(0.033)	(0.066)
Separated	5.719***	6.084***	5.483***	5.485***
	(0.037)	(0.094)	(0.037)	(0.085)
Divorced	4.321***	4.802***	4.543***	4.604***
	(0.021)	(0.049)	(0.019)	(0.041)
Widowed	3.567***	3.777***	3.674***	3.362***
	(0.017)	(0.044)	(0.020)	(0.044)
Never married, single	3.541***	4.255***	4.421***	4.658***
	(0.018)	(0.047)	(0.020)	(0.045)
Number of Children Under 18				
None	1.681***	1.462***	1.509***	1.346***
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.013)
One (*reference*)				
Two	1.596***	1.623***	1.518***	1.525***
	(0.009)	(0.020)	(0.009)	(0.019)
Three or more	2.857***	3.094***	2.880***	3.025***
	(0.016)	(0.041)	(0.017)	(0.040)
Presence of a child under age 6	2.012***	1.918***	1.799***	1.900***
	(0.011)	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.023)
Metro				
Suburbs (*reference*)				
Rural	2.224***	2.446***	2.047***	1.772***
	(0.009)	(0.023)	(0.009)	(0.017)
Urban (metro, central city)	1.372***	1.495***	1.601***	1.480***
	(0.006)	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.014)
Other metro	1.417***	1.484***	1.350***	1.349***
	(0.007)	(0.014)	(0.005)	(0.011)
Non identifiable	1.912***	1.604***	1.763***	1.511***
	(0.010)	(0.033)	(0.010)	(0.020)
Constant	0.009***	0.009***	0.010***	0.016***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	6,499,123	1,568,263	8,783,395	2,030,816

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Excludes individuals in group quarters.
Poverty status coded 0 if at or above 100% of federal poverty line.
Multiple race options not available until 2000 Census.

Source: Analyses samples limited to individuals age 25 years and older. 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (1% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org

Table 2: Odds Ratios Predicting Poverty Status (Age 25+)

VARIABLES	(2) 1980	(3) 1990	(4) 2000	(5) 2010
Hispanic ethnicity				
White, U.S.-born (*reference*)				
Black, U.S.-born	2.443***	2.337***	2.086***	1.712***
	(0.010)	(0.022)	(0.009)	(0.016)
Mexican, U.S.-born	1.725***	1.732***	1.474***	1.097***
	(0.015)	(0.032)	(0.012)	(0.018)
Mexican, foreign-born	1.620***	1.774***	1.698***	1.340***
	(0.021)	(0.040)	(0.014)	(0.023)
Puerto Rican, U.S.-born (not P.R.)	2.248***	1.890***	1.844***	1.398***
	(0.071)	(0.096)	(0.034)	(0.048)
Puerto Rican, born in Puerto Rico	2.766***	2.355***	2.417***	1.932***
	(0.040)	(0.082)	(0.034)	(0.064)
Cuban, U.S.-born	1.537***	1.513**	1.332***	1.242**
	(0.129)	(0.231)	(0.071)	(0.102)
Cuban, foreign-born	1.567***	1.641***	2.003***	1.945***
	(0.035)	(0.071)	(0.036)	(0.078)
Other Hispanic origin, U.S.-born	1.629***	1.739***	1.642***	1.175***
	(0.027)	(0.068)	(0.020)	(0.038)
Other Hispanic origin, foreign-born	1.611***	1.671***	1.665***	1.054*
	(0.026)	(0.048)	(0.016)	(0.023)
English language proficiency				
Speaks English well or fluent (*reference)*				
Does not speak English well	1.595***	1.440***	1.377***	1.477***
	(0.018)	(0.031)	(0.011)	(0.026)
Gender				
Male (*reference)*				
Female	1.363***	1.436***	1.420***	1.401***
	(0.004)	(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.010)
Age Group				
25-34	0.971***	1.010	0.890***	1.024
	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.013)
35-44	0.860***	0.915***	0.851***	0.955***
	(0.005)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.011)
45-54	0.815***	0.841***	0.851***	0.949***
	(0.005)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.010)
55-64 (*reference)*				
65-74	1.092***	0.919***	0.729***	0.696***
	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.009)
75+	1.321***	1.115***	0.749***	0.670***
	(0.008)	(0.017)	(0.005)	(0.010)
Educ				
Less than High School	3.027***	3.898***	3.896***	3.315***
	(0.016)	(0.041)	(0.020)	(0.037)
High School, 12 years	1.301***	1.599***	1.701***	1.570***
	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.014)
Some College, 1-3 years (*reference*)				
Colleg, 4+ years	0.667***	0.493***	0.533***	0.462***
	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Family				
Married, spouse present (*reference*)				
Married, spouse absent	4.565***	4.496***	3.997***	3.697***
	(0.055)	(0.108)	(0.038)	(0.079)
Separated	5.798***	6.303***	5.693***	5.703***
	(0.039)	(0.102)	(0.041)	(0.093)
Divorced	4.412***	4.973***	4.717***	4.803***
	(0.022)	(0.052)	(0.021)	(0.046)
Widowed	3.613***	3.877***	3.835***	3.501***
	(0.018)	(0.047)	(0.022)	(0.048)
Never married, single	3.614***	4.454***	4.647***	4.916***
	(0.019)	(0.052)	(0.022)	(0.051)
Number of Children Under 18				
None	1.640***	1.441***	1.489***	1.315***
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.013)
One (*reference*)				
Two	1.603***	1.650***	1.532***	1.519***
	(0.010)	(0.022)	(0.009)	(0.020)
Three or more	2.866***	3.171***	2.945***	3.058***
	(0.017)	(0.044)	(0.019)	(0.043)
Presence of a child under age 6	2.001***	1.921***	1.802***	1.904***
	(0.011)	(0.024)	(0.010)	(0.025)
Metro				
Suburbs (*reference*)				
Rural	2.231***	2.444***	2.063***	1.785***
	(0.010)	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.018)
Urban (metro, central city)	1.343***	1.476***	1.558***	1.469***
	(0.006)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.016)
Other metro	1.412***	1.479***	1.354***	1.354***
	(0.007)	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.012)
Non identifiable	1.925***	1.610***	1.779***	1.515***
	(0.010)	(0.034)	(0.011)	(0.020)
Constant	0.009***	0.008***	0.009***	0.015***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	6,035,015	1,452,986	8,025,836	1,822,402

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Excludes individuals in group quarters.
Poverty status coded 0 if at or above 100% of federal poverty line.
Multiple race options not available until 2000 Census.

Source: Analyses samples limited to individuals age 25 years and older. 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (1% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org

Table 3: Odds Ratios Predicting Poverty Status (Age 25+)

VARIABLES	(2) 1980	(3) 1990	(4) 2000	(5) 2010
Hispanic ethnicity				
Mexican (*reference*)				
Puerto Rican	1.556***	1.332***	1.477***	1.472***
	(0.023)	(0.042)	(0.018)	(0.038)
Cuban	0.936**	0.899*	1.128***	1.345***
	(0.021)	(0.039)	(0.019)	(0.048)
Other	0.981	0.956	1.014	0.871***
	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.008)	(0.016)
English language proficiency				
Speaks English well or fluent (*reference)*				
Does not speak English well	1.709***	1.566***	1.437***	1.467***
	(0.021)	(0.037)	(0.012)	(0.027)
U.S. nativity & citizenship				
U.S.-born, including territories (*reference)*				
Naturalized citizen	0.897***	0.954	0.897***	0.835***
	(0.015)	(0.030)	(0.010)	(0.019)
Noncitizen	0.953***	1.083**	1.279***	1.403***
	(0.014)	(0.029)	(0.013)	(0.030)
Gender				
Male (*reference)*				
Female	1.283***	1.371***	1.396***	1.528***
	(0.013)	(0.027)	(0.010)	(0.023)
Age Group				
25-34	0.974	1.117**	1.019	0.973
	(0.018)	(0.041)	(0.014)	(0.027)
35-44	0.878***	1.039	0.988	0.962
	(0.017)	(0.038)	(0.013)	(0.026)
45-54	0.802***	0.926	0.889***	0.874***
	(0.016)	(0.037)	(0.013)	(0.024)
55-64 (*reference)*				
65-74	1.307***	1.059	1.011	1.072*
	(0.030)	(0.050)	(0.018)	(0.037)
75+	1.355***	1.270***	1.019	1.041
	(0.040)	(0.071)	(0.021)	(0.041)
Educ				
Less than High School	2.616***	3.112***	2.923***	2.344***
	(0.052)	(0.100)	(0.038)	(0.057)
High School, 12 years	1.284***	1.605***	1.719***	1.516***
	(0.027)	(0.053)	(0.022)	(0.034)
Some College, 1-3 years (*reference*)				
Colleg, 4+ years	0.840***	0.626***	0.773***	0.592***
	(0.026)	(0.035)	(0.015)	(0.020)
Family				
Married, spouse present (*reference*)				
Married, spouse absent	3.021***	2.620***	2.308***	1.968***
	(0.083)	(0.119)	(0.035)	(0.068)
Separated	5.032***	4.223***	3.401***	3.279***
	(0.097)	(0.167)	(0.048)	(0.103)
Divorced	3.532***	3.134***	2.956***	2.775***
	(0.060)	(0.099)	(0.034)	(0.066)
Widowed	2.857***	2.718***	2.680***	2.226***
	(0.060)	(0.118)	(0.044)	(0.080)
Never married, single	3.220***	3.094***	2.851***	2.932***
	(0.056)	(0.094)	(0.030)	(0.060)
Number of Children Under 18				
None	1.423***	1.318***	1.397***	1.318***
	(0.023)	(0.040)	(0.015)	(0.030)
One (*reference*)				
Two	1.497***	1.547***	1.410***	1.555***
	(0.027)	(0.051)	(0.017)	(0.039)
Three or more	2.850***	2.758***	2.433***	2.856***
	(0.048)	(0.089)	(0.029)	(0.072)
Presence of a child under age 6	1.884***	1.761***	1.787***	1.976***
	(0.027)	(0.049)	(0.018)	(0.043)
Metro				
Suburbs (*reference*)				
Rural	1.976***	2.688***	1.856***	1.667***
	(0.036)	(0.089)	(0.025)	(0.048)
Urban (metro, central city)	1.334***	1.559***	1.605***	1.454***
	(0.017)	(0.037)	(0.015)	(0.028)
Other metro	1.473***	1.709***	1.374***	1.302***
	(0.024)	(0.047)	(0.012)	(0.023)
Non identifiable	1.845***	1.646***	1.493***	1.307***
	(0.038)	(0.176)	(0.031)	(0.058)
Constant	0.020***	0.019***	0.019***	0.026***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Observations	330,047	103,878	846,831	224,172

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Excludes individuals in group quarters.
Poverty status coded 0 if at or above 100% of federal poverty line.
Multiple race options not available until 2000 Census.

Source: Analyses samples limited to individuals age 25 years and older. 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (1% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org

Table 4: Odds Ratios Predicting Poverty Status (Age 25+)

VARIABLES	(2) 1980	(3) 1990	(4) 2000	(5) 2010
Hispanic ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic (*reference*)				
Hispanic	1.740***	1.690***	1.447***	1.106***
	(0.011)	(0.024)	(0.008)	(0.013)
English language proficiency				
Speaks English well or fluent (*reference)*				
Does not speak English well	1.552***	1.418***	1.395***	1.461***
	(0.015)	(0.029)	(0.011)	(0.025)
U.S. nativity & citizenship				
U.S.-born, including territories (*reference)*				
Naturalized citizen	0.845***	0.899***	1.033***	1.025
	(0.007)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.017)
Noncitizen	1.107***	1.192***	1.384***	1.367***
	(0.011)	(0.024)	(0.011)	(0.023)
Gender				
Male (*reference)*				
Female	1.320***	1.383***	1.404***	1.400***
	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.010)
Age Group				
25-34	1.003	1.016	0.887***	1.016
	(0.006)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.013)
35-44	0.893***	0.926***	0.837***	0.950***
	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.012)
45-54	0.829***	0.852***	0.832***	0.928***
	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.011)
55-64 (*reference)*				
65-74	1.052***	0.901***	0.725***	0.723***
	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.010)
75+	1.288***	1.099***	0.755***	0.702***
	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.005)	(0.011)
Educ				
Less than High School	2.941***	3.767***	3.573***	3.078***
	(0.017)	(0.043)	(0.020)	(0.037)
High School, 12 years	1.264***	1.527***	1.594***	1.505***
	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.014)
Some College, 1-3 years (*reference*)				
Colleg, 4+ years	0.704***	0.537***	0.568***	0.498***
	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Family				
Married, spouse present (*reference*)				
Married, spouse absent	4.937***	4.412***	3.858***	3.610***
	(0.064)	(0.116)	(0.041)	(0.082)
Separated	6.754***	7.016***	6.071***	5.875***
	(0.056)	(0.133)	(0.050)	(0.107)
Divorced	4.630***	5.162***	4.899***	4.920***
	(0.025)	(0.057)	(0.023)	(0.049)
Widowed	3.609***	3.832***	3.725***	3.375***
	(0.019)	(0.050)	(0.023)	(0.049)
Never married, single	3.386***	4.153***	4.449***	4.701***
	(0.020)	(0.055)	(0.024)	(0.053)
Number of Children Under 18				
None	1.761***	1.517***	1.513***	1.327***
	(0.009)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.015)
One (*reference*)				
Two	1.645***	1.710***	1.545***	1.522***
	(0.011)	(0.025)	(0.010)	(0.022)
Three or more	2.890***	3.244***	2.897***	2.999***
	(0.020)	(0.050)	(0.020)	(0.045)
Presence of a child under age 6	2.060***	1.916***	1.825***	1.907***
	(0.013)	(0.026)	(0.011)	(0.026)
Metro				
Suburbs (*reference*)				
Rural	2.237***	2.433***	2.014***	1.727***
	(0.010)	(0.025)	(0.010)	(0.018)
Urban (metro, central city)	1.399***	1.473***	1.579***	1.435***
	(0.007)	(0.018)	(0.009)	(0.017)
Other metro	1.409***	1.440***	1.318***	1.330***
	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.006)	(0.012)
Non identifiable	1.896***	1.591***	1.716***	1.474***
	(0.010)	(0.036)	(0.011)	(0.021)
Constant	0.009***	0.009***	0.010***	0.016***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	5,732,817	1,381,162	7,563,901	1,732,933

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Excludes individuals in group quarters.
Poverty status coded 0 if at or above 100% of federal poverty line.
Multiple race options not available until 2000 Census.

Source: Analyses samples limited to individuals age 25 years and older. 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (1% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org

Table 5: Decomposition of White-Hispanic Poverty Gap (1980-2010)
(Constrained Model Limited to Key Factors Only)

Constrained Model

Key Factors	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**
Below High School	54%	57%	46%	44%
English language	17%	13%	27%	30%
Noncitizen	15%	17%	17%	11%
Single	3%	5%	5%	9%
Three children under 18	6%	7%	4%	5%
Any children under 6	5%	2%	1%	1%

Summary of Decomposition Results

	1980	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**
Hispanic Poverty Rate	18%	20%	18%	19%
White Poverty Rate	7%	7%	6%	8%
Poverty Gap	11%	13%	12%	11%
Explained Portion of Gap	39%	50%	72%	95%

Source: Binder-Oaxaca decomposition results using "oaxaca9" stata command. Authors' calculations using Census IPUMS data (Ruggles et. al, 2010). 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (1% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics, Whites & Hispanics, 1980-2010 (Limited to People Age 25 & Older)*

	White (non-Hispanic)	Hispanic
Percent in poverty		
1980	7.4%	18.3%
1990	7.3%	20.0%
2000	6.4%	18.2%
2010	8.3%	19.5%
Percent with 12 years or more years of formal education		
1980	70%	44%
1990	82%	56%
2000	88%	59%
2010	92%	65%
Percent does not speak English or speaks English not well		
1980	1%	27%
1990	1%	27%
2000	1%	30%
2010	1%	30%
Percent single (marital status)		
1980	9%	12%
1990	11%	17%
2000	12%	19%
2010	15%	25%
Percent married with spouse present (marital status)		
1980	71%	66%
1990	67%	58%
2000	64%	56%
2010	59%	50%
Percent with young children (under age 6)		
1980	12%	23%
1990	13%	20%
2000	11%	20%
2010	9%	16%
Mean family size		
1980	2.9	3.7
1990	2.7	3.7
2000	2.6	3.7
2010	2.5	3.5
Percent U.S-born (including territories & born abroad of U.S.-born parents)		
1980	6%	41%
1990	5%	50%
2000	5%	57%
2010	5%	58%
Percent noncitizens		
1980	1%	27%
1990	2%	34%
2000	2%	37%
2010	2%	38%

Source: Authors' calculations using Census IPUMS data (Ruggles et. al, 2010). 1970 Decennial Census (1% state fm1 sample); 1980 Decennial Census (5% state sample); 1990 Decennial Census (1% sample); 2000 Decennial Census (5% sample); 2010 ACS (1.0% sample). Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org.

* Sample limited to observations with no missing data across correlates of poverty.