



# Report

## **Shades of Belonging**

by

**Sonya Tafoya**

**December 2004**

# CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	4
2. Immigration and Citizenship	7
3. Education, Employment and Earnings	8
4. Race and Place	12
5. Age and Race	14
6. Language Usage, Intermarriage and Generational Status	17
7. From Aggregate Statistics to Attitudes	18
8. Conclusions	21
Appendices	22

---

## Executive Summary

When census takers, pollsters or bureaucrats with application forms ask people to identify their race, most have no problem checking a box that corresponds to one of the five, standard, government-defined racial categories. In the 2000 Census, for example, 90 percent of the U.S. population was counted as either white, black, Asian, American Indian or Pacific Islander. Hispanics are the exception. While a little more than half picked one of the standard categories, some 15 million, 42 percent of the Hispanic population marked “some other race.” The Census and much other evidence suggests that Hispanics take distinctive views of race, and because their numbers are large and growing fast, these views are likely to change the way the nation manages the fundamental social divide that has characterized American society for 400 years.

According to federal policy and accepted social science, Hispanics do not constitute a separate race and can in fact be of any race. The 2000 Census asked respondents first to mark off whether they were “Spanish/Hispanic/Latino” and then in a separate question to specify their race. Among those who identified themselves as Hispanics, nearly half (48 percent) were counted as white. Blacks made up two percent. The American Indian, Asian, and Pacific Islander categories each accounted for small fractions. Surprisingly, given the large number of Latinos whose parentage includes combinations of white, African and indigenous ancestries, only six percent described themselves as being of two or more races. The only racial identifier, other than white, that captured a major share of the Latino population (42 percent) was the non-identifier, “some other race” (SOR). That is a sizeable category of people, outnumbering the total U.S. population of Asians and American-Indians combined.

“Some other race” is not exactly a political slogan or rallying cry. Nor is it a term anyone ordinarily would use in conversation or to describe themselves. So, who are the some-other-race Hispanics? And, what are they trying to tell us with their choice of this label?

In order to explore these questions the Pew Hispanic Center examined microdata from the 2000 Census as well as information from surveys and focus groups conducted by the Center. The Census numbers show that Latinos who call themselves white and those who say they are some other race have distinctly different characteristics, and survey data show they have different attitudes and opinions on a variety of subjects. Consistently across a broad range of variables, Hispanics who identified themselves as white have higher levels of education and income and greater degrees of civic enfranchisement than those who pick the some other race category. The findings of this report suggest that Hispanics see race as a measure of belonging, and whiteness as a measure of inclusion, or of perceived inclusion.

Given immigration’s important role in shaping the Hispanic population, nativity—whether a person was born in the United States or abroad—is a key characteristic. More foreign-born Latinos say they are of some other race (46 percent) than native-born (40 percent). Cuban-born immigrants are the exception. More importantly, whiteness is clearly associated with distance from the immigrant experience. Thus, the U.S.-born children of immigrants are more likely to declare themselves white than their foreign-born parents, and the share of whiteness is higher still among the grandchildren of immigrants. In addition, U.S. citizenship is associated with racial identification. Among immigrants from the same country, those who have become U.S. citizens identify themselves as white more often than those who are not U.S. citizens. It seems unlikely that the ability and willingness to become a U.S. citizen are some how linked to skin color. Thus, it may be that developing deeper civic bonds here can help an immigrant feel white.

The full extent to which race is a measure of belonging for Latinos becomes apparent in examining the native born alone. Immigration status and language do not play a direct role in determining economic or social outcomes for Hispanics born in this country, and their conceptions of race are primarily home grown. Among U.S.-born Latinos whiteness is clearly and consistently associated with higher social status, higher levels of civic participation and a stronger sense of acceptance.

- The share of native-born Latinos without a high school diploma is higher for those who say they are some other race (35 percent) than for those who call themselves white (30 percent).
- Unemployment runs two points higher among native-born Hispanic males who declare themselves some other race compared to those who say they are white and poverty rates are four point higher among adults.
- The share of native-born Latino men earning more than \$35,000 a year is a third higher for those who say they are white compared to the some other race group (24.7 percent vs. 18.5 percent).
- Among all Hispanics, those who say they are some other race tend to be younger (median age 24) than those who say they are white (median age 27).
- More of those native-born Hispanics who say they are white (85 percent) are registered voters than those who say they are of some other race (67 percent).
- When asked whether they consider themselves Republicans, Democrats, Independents or something else, more native-born Latinos who say they are white (22 percent) pick Republican compared to those who say they are some other race (13 percent). The same pattern prevailed among the foreign-born.
- When asked to choose between the terms “American” versus “Hispanic or Latino” versus a national origin identifier such as “Mexican,” far more native-born Latinos who say they are white (55 percent) pick “American” compared to those who say they are some other race (36 percent).
- About a quarter of native-born Latinos who say they are white complain that discrimination is a major problem for Latinos in the United States compared to a third of those who say they are some other race.

These findings suggest that Latinos’ choice to identify as white or not does not exclusively reflect permanent markers such as skin color or hair texture but that race is also related to characteristics that can change such as economic status and perceptions of civic enfranchisement. Also, social context and the nature of race relations in a given place also appear to play a role. Hispanics of Mexican origin, who comprise about two-thirds of the total Hispanic population, are almost evenly divided between those who identify as white and those who pick some other race. However, in Texas many more native-born Latinos of Mexican descent say they are white (63 percent) compared to those who live outside of Texas (45 percent). Again, it seems unlikely that skin color is the determining factor. Instead, one can suppose that the unique and complex history of race relations in Texas is a major influence. This is the only state where a large Latino population was caught up both in Southern-style racial segregation and then the civil rights struggle to undo it.

Understanding Latinos’ views of their racial identities involves much more than defining a series of demographic sub-categories. Rather it helps illuminate the ways that race is being lived in the United States today. In the commonplace view, Latinos are an additional “group” that has been added to the American mix of white, black, Asian etc. And, in particular Latinos are categorized as a minority group that is significantly different from the white majority due to factors including a history of discrimination and persistently lower educational outcomes and incomes on average. The temptation is to racialize this population, to make it fit in the traditional American social paradigm which assigns people to race or at least race-like categories. But, the growing Hispanic population may compel a reassessment of the common view of a racial or ethnic group as a readily identifiable category of people who share a common fate and a common identity.

Categorizing Hispanics, particularly a minority group, becomes much more difficult once you realize this population is almost evenly divided between those who identify with the white majority and those that have trouble seeing themselves in any of the standard racial categories. It is not that some are more Hispanic or Latino than the others because they all have taken on that mantle. Nor are they saying that race does not

matter to them. Rather, the message seems to be that Latinos in the United States experience race differently. For them, it is not something that pertains exclusively to skin color, let alone to history and heritage.

For Latinos the concept of race appears to extend beyond biology, ancestral origins or a history of grievance in this country. The differences in characteristics and attitudes between those Hispanics who call themselves white and those who identify as some other race, suggests they experience racial identity as a measure of belonging: Feeling white seems to be a reflection of success and a sense of inclusion. The fact that changeable characteristics such as income help determine racial identification among Latinos, versus permanent markers such as skin color, does not necessarily mean that the color lines in American society are fading. On the contrary, these findings show that color has a broader meaning. The Latino experience demonstrates that whiteness remains an important measure of belonging, stature and acceptance. And, Hispanic views of race also show that half of this ever larger segment of the U.S. population is feeling left out.

1. Introduction

In a now familiar decennial ritual, Americans completed their Census questionnaires in the spring of 2000. Most identified their race by selecting one or more of the five standard race categories—white, black, American Indian, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. But for millions of Americans the standard race categories did not fit (Figure 1). By the millions, these Americans ticked the last available box, identifying themselves as “some other race.” Numbered at 15 million, these some other race Americans constituted a group larger than Asians and American Indians combined. And size was not the only distinguishing characteristic of the SOR population. The vast majority are also of Hispanic origin.<sup>1</sup> Their Hispanic ethnic origin was clear because the Census makes a distinction between the concepts of race and ethnicity and therefore tabulates Hispanic origin separate from race (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1.  
**Reproduction of Questions on Race and Hispanic Origin From Census 2000**

→ NOTE: Please answer BOTH Questions 5 and 6.

5. Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? Mark  the "No" box if not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.

No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino       Yes, Puerto Rican  
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano       Yes, Cuban  
 Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino — Print group.

6. What is this person's race? Mark  one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

White  
 Black, African Am., or Negro  
 American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.

Asian Indian       Japanese       Native Hawaiian  
 Chinese       Korean       Guamanian or Chamorro  
 Filipino       Vietnamese       Samoan  
 Other Asian — Print race.        Other Pacific Islander — Print race.

Some other race — Print race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 questionnaire.

Among the 246 million non-Hispanic Americans, the SOR category was far less attractive. Fewer than half a million non-Hispanics ticked off “some other race” (Table 1). And these half million respondents amounted to less than 1 percent of all non-Hispanics. In contrast, the SOR category drew in 42 percent of

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of federal data collection Hispanics constitute a unique ethnic group. They are the only one identified with a specific question. The Hispanic origin question helps satisfy a 1976 law (Public Law 94-311, June 16, 1976) that requires the collection, analysis and publication of statistics on persons of Spanish culture, origin or descent, regardless of race.

<sup>2</sup> The Census Bureau defines ethnicity or origin as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. Although the race categories used by the census do not conform to any biological, anthropological or genetic criteria, they are used because they conform to those outlined by the Office of Management and Budget and they generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country (Federal Register, October 30, 1997 and [www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/raceqandas.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/raceqandas.html)).

the Hispanic population. In fact, among Hispanics only white Hispanics comprised a larger share of the Hispanic population (48 percent). Even with 31 different standard single and multiple race combinations to choose from, the vast majority of Hispanics in the United States fell into just these two categories. Nearly half identified themselves as white, a racial identity that they shared with the majority (69 percent) of non-Hispanics. And most of the remaining Hispanics, selected SOR, a category only sparsely populated by non-Hispanics.

**Table 1**  
**Population of the United States by Race and Hispanic Origin**  
**2000**

Race	Hispanic		Not Hispanic	
	Number	Percent of Hispanic Population	Number	Percent of non-Hispanic Population
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,305,818</b>		<b>246,116,088</b>	
One Race	33,081,736	93.7	241,513,942	85.8
White	16,907,852	47.9	194,552,774	69.1
Black or African American	710,353	2.0	33,947,837	12.1
American Indian and Alaska Native	407,073	1.2	2,068,883	0.7
Asian	119,829	0.3	10,123,169	3.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	45,326	0.1	353,509	0.1
Some other race	14,891,303	42.2	467,770	0.2
Two or more races	2,224,082	6.3	4,602,146	1.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File for states, Tables PL1, PL2, PL3, and PL4.

This pattern of Hispanic race responses was not the result of an organized political campaign. In fact, estimates of the size and potential political clout of the Hispanic population are tied to the Hispanic origin question, not to the race question. So why do some Hispanics choose white while others choose SOR? Are these two groups of Hispanics one in the same in other respects? Evidence from several sources suggests that SOR Hispanics are different than white Hispanics, and the differences fall into a consistent pattern.

Using data from the 2000 Census this report details those differences, showing that SOR Hispanics are less educated, less likely to be citizens, poorer, less likely to speak English exclusively and are less often intermarried with non-Hispanic whites. Focus groups responses and attitudinal survey data support these findings. The socioeconomic profiles, the attitudes, the language usage and even the reported political behavior of SOR Hispanics consistently place them at a distance from non-Hispanic whites. In comparison, white-Hispanics consistently occupy the intermediate ground between SOR Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites. Even after removing immigrants from the analyses, compared to white U.S. born Hispanics, SOR Hispanics occupy a more marginalized socioeconomic position, more often report having experienced discrimination, and less often report behaviors consistent with strong civic bonds.

***...SOR Hispanics are less educated, less likely to be citizens, poorer, less likely to speak English exclusively and are less often intermarried with non-Hispanic whites.***

These results are significant because they show that for Hispanics racial identity is not immutable, rather it is at least partially a function education, citizenship, civic participation and economic status. Although these results do not necessarily mean that the color lines in American society are fading. With the growth of the Hispanic population, the boundaries are shifting, at least for Latinos, to encompass factors other than skin color. The Latino experience suggests that whiteness remains an important measure of belonging, stature and acceptance. And, a large segment of the Hispanic population, SOR Hispanics, may be feeling left out.

Much of the following data is derived from the 2000 Census, 5 percent sample. These data provide the best estimates of Hispanic population characteristics when the population is subdivided by factors such as nativity, country of origin, and race. Table 2 details the race and national origin of the nation’s Hispanic population.<sup>3</sup> Focus group responses and the 2002 National Survey of Latinos (NSL) are also cited in this report.<sup>4</sup> The NSL is a nationally representative sample of Hispanics in the United States. The characteristics of the population as measured by the 2002 NSL are consistent with the 2000 Census results reported here.

**Table 2**  
**Race by Hispanic Origin Group**  
**2000**

	Race					N weighted
	White	Black	SOR	Other Single Race*	Two or More Races	
Mexican	47.3	0.7	45.5	1.4	5.1	20,867,722
Puerto Rican	47.2	5.9	37.9	1.1	7.9	3,400,527
Cuban	85.0	3.6	7.1	0.4	3.9	1,248,064
Central American	40.4	3.3	47.6	1.2	7.5	1,821,482
South American	59.6	0.9	30.8	0.8	7.9	1,406,493
Spanish	76.4	0.6	11.0	2.2	9.7	115,161
Dominican	22.7	8.9	58.4	1.1	9.0	796,724
Other Hispanic	44.1	2.0	42.2	2.1	9.7	5,548,307

Source: Author's calculations of the 2000 IPUMS.

Note: *Other Single Race* refers to Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders.

In some parts of this report the foreign-born, which comprise about 40 percent of the Hispanic population, are treated separately. We do this because unlike the native-born who are citizens at birth, an immigrant’s conceptions of race may have been formed prior to their arrival in the United States. Also, many behaviors and attitudes related to civic engagement may depend on immigration status. The following section addresses some of these issues. In other sections, where the emphasis is on the native-born, results for the foreign-born are also presented for comparison. In many of these comparisons, the differences between SOR Hispanics and white Hispanics are more exaggerated in the native born than in the foreign born.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the other Hispanic category in table 2 see (Suro, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B. Data Sources



## 2. Immigration and Citizenship

Whether a person was born in the United States or abroad is a key demographic characteristic. Foreign-born Latinos more often say they are “some other race” (46 percent) than the native born (40 percent). Cuban-born immigrants are the exception. And, for reasons including intermarriage, whiteness is associated with distance from the immigrant experience (Edmonston et al, 2002). In the 2002 National Survey of Latinos, the U.S.-born children of immigrants more often identified as white than their foreign-born parents, and the share of whiteness was higher still among the grandchildren of immigrants.

***Foreign-born Latinos more often say they are “some other race” (46 percent) than the native born (40 percent). Cuban-born immigrants are the exception.***

Among the foreign-born, the extent to which white versus SOR identity predominates varies by national origin. For example, at one extreme, 90 percent of naturalized Cubans and 84 percent of non-citizen Cubans identified as white, and at the other extreme only 23 percent of naturalized Dominicans and 21 percent of non-citizen Dominicans identified as white. Yet, with the exception of Central Americans, there is a consistent pattern. A greater share of naturalized immigrants, from 2 to 6 percent more depending on national origin, identify as white when compared to their non-citizen counterparts.

**Table 3**  
**Percent Distribution of White, Black and SOR Hispanic Householders by National Origin and Citizenship Status 2000**

	Race			N weighted
	White	Black	SOR	
<i>Mexican</i>				
naturalized	47.2	0.3	47.2	909,243
not a citizen	43.8	0.4	50.8	1,895,525
<i>Cuban</i>				
naturalized	89.7	2.4	5.1	273,831
not a citizen	83.5	4.4	8.9	126,804
<i>Central American</i>				
naturalized	36.8	7.0	47.3	159,550
not a citizen	39.9	2.1	50.1	311,858
<i>South American</i>				
naturalized	62.5	0.7	28.1	189,072
not a citizen	58.6	0.9	32.6	206,672
<i>Dominican</i>				
naturalized	22.7	10.1	57.2	100,436
not a citizen	21.2	9.0	59.6	114,680

Source: Author's calculations of the 2000 IPUMS.

Note: Sample limited to foreign-born householders who immigrated prior to 1995.

### 3. Education, Employment and Earnings

For both the native and the foreign born, feelings of inclusion and civic engagement are related to socioeconomic status, which in turn can be related to race. For example, one Cuban American focus group respondent stated it this way,

“When it comes to money, social classes think of themselves as higher or lower. The white always has the highest social prestige and the darker skin always have the lower social prestige, because you have some very dark skinned people who earn a lot of money, and you tell them you’re dark skinned...oh, no, I’m white. One thing has nothing to do with the other.”

The idea expressed by this respondent is consistent with many indicators of socioeconomic status consistently showing that SOR Hispanics have a somewhat weaker economic mooring than white Hispanics here in the United States. Educational attainment is fundamental to these differences. Whereas very few (14.6 percent) of non-Hispanic whites have less than a high school education, a larger share of the Hispanic foreign-born population does not have a complete secondary school education (Table 4). The share without a high school education is higher for SOR Hispanics (65.5 percent) than it is for white Hispanics (55.3 percent). Among the native-born, also a greater share of native-born SOR Hispanics (35 percent) lacks a high school diploma when compared with white Hispanics (29.8 percent), although the difference is narrower.

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of Adults with Less Than a High School Education by**  
**Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity**  
**2000**

	(%)
White, Hispanic Total	43.5
SOR, Hispanic Total	54.1
White, Non-Hispanic Total	14.6
Native-born	
White, Hispanic	29.8
SOR, Hispanic	35.0
Foreign-born	
White, Hispanic	55.3
SOR, Hispanic	65.5

Source: Author’s calculations of the 2000 IPUMS.  
 Note: Restricted to adults 25 years of age or older.

Educational differences between national origin groups do not drive this pattern of lower educational attainment for SOR Hispanics as compared with white Hispanics. Indeed, the pattern prevails for native-born household heads of all national origins (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
**Percentage of Native-born White and SOR Hispanic Householders by Origin and Education 2000**

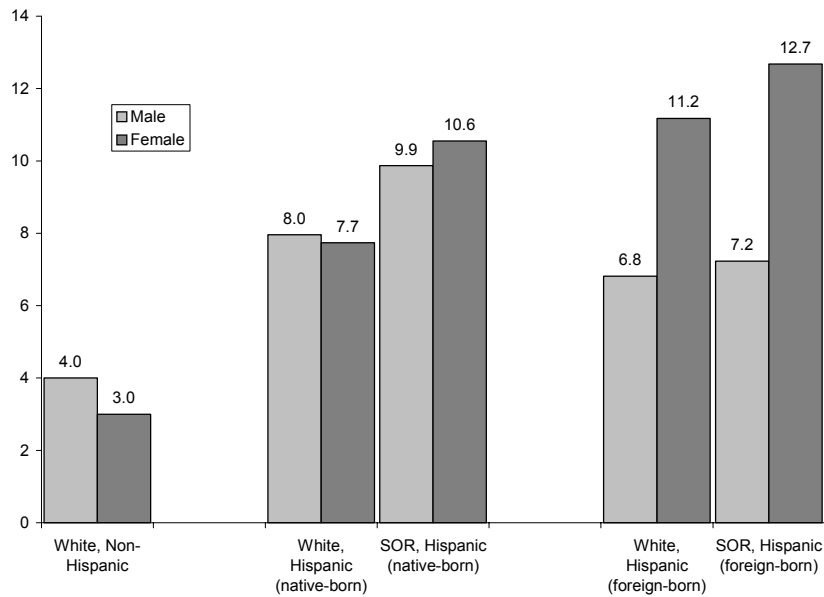
	Mexican		Puerto Rican		Cuban		Central/South American		Dominican	
	White	SOR	White	SOR	White	SOR	White	SOR	White	SOR
Less than High School	56	37	47	42	75	9	48	37	25	52
High School Graduate	54	38	49	39	73	11	49	32	23	45
Some College	56	35	52	35	78	8	54	29	30	48
Bachelors Degree +	66	26	64	23	84	7	68	18	34	42

Source: Author's calculations of the 2000 IPUMS.

Note: Sample restricted to native-born Hispanic male and female householders age 25 or older.

Generally, unemployment rates are higher for all persons lacking a high school diploma. Thus, it is not surprising that both foreign- and native-born SOR Hispanics have higher unemployment rates than white Hispanics (Figure 2). For example, native-born SOR Hispanic men have an unemployment rate of 9.9 percent while the figure for native-born white Hispanic is 8.0.

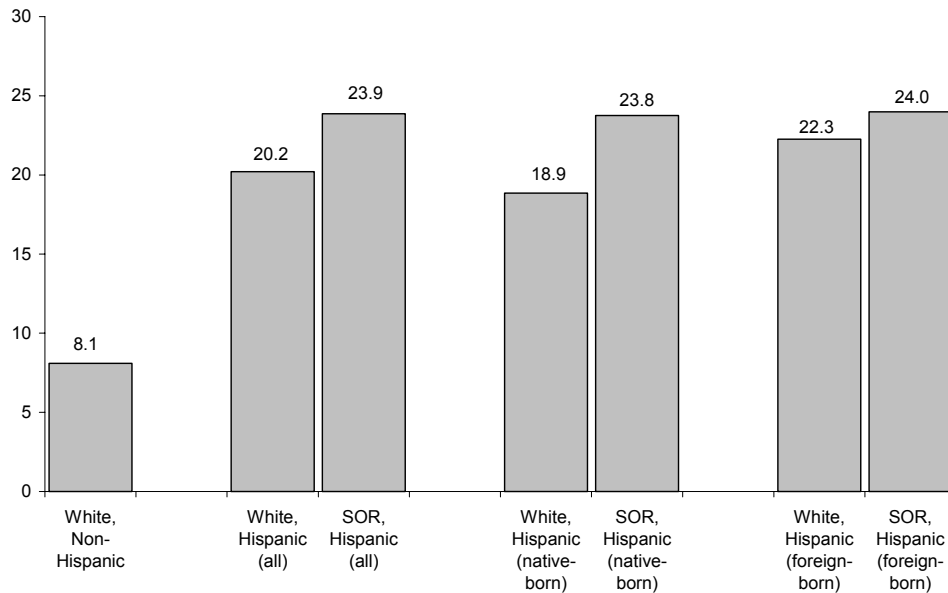
**Figure 2**  
**Unemployment Rates for White Hispanics, SOR Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites by Nativity and Sex 2000**



Source: Author's calculation of the 2000 IPUMS.

The poverty rate for Hispanics as a whole was 22.6 percent in 1999, more than double the rate (8.1 percent) for non-Hispanic Whites. When Hispanics are disaggregated into race groups, those Hispanics who are white, have lower poverty rates than those who identify as SOR and the difference is greater among the native-born than among immigrants (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
**Percentage in Poverty by Race, Hispanic Origin and Nativity**  
**1999**



Source: Author's calculation of the 2000 IPUMS and Census 2000 SF3.

A consistent pattern emerges across Hispanic national origin groups: Hispanic whites have a lower poverty rate than SOR Hispanics although it is still greater than for non-Hispanic whites. The difference in poverty rates for Hispanic whites and SOR Hispanics is particularly striking for Puerto Ricans and Cubans (Table 6).

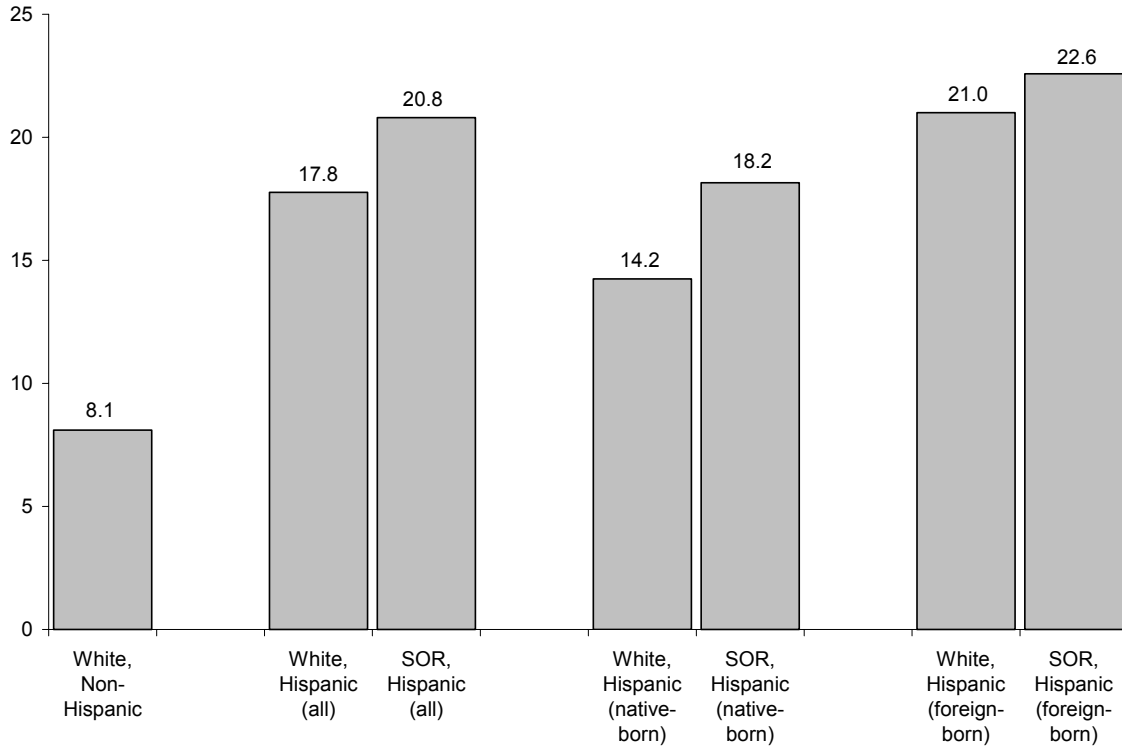
**Table 6**  
**Percentage of Hispanics in**  
**Poverty by Race and Origin**  
**1999**

	White	SOR
Mexican	22.1	23.6
Puerto Rican	20.7	29.8
Cuban	12.9	19.8
Central American	19.4	20.3

Source: Author's calculations of the 2000 IPUMS.

While children in the United States typically have higher poverty rates than adults, excluding children and examining poverty among working age adults still reveals race differences between white and SOR Hispanics (Figure 4). For example, 18 percent of native-born SOR Hispanic adults live in poverty, while fewer, (14 percent) of white Hispanics live in poverty. The importance of limiting the sample to adults is illustrated in a subsequent section on the age profile of white versus SOR Hispanics.

**Figure 4**  
**Adult Poverty Rates by Hispanic Origin, Race and Nativity**  
**1999**

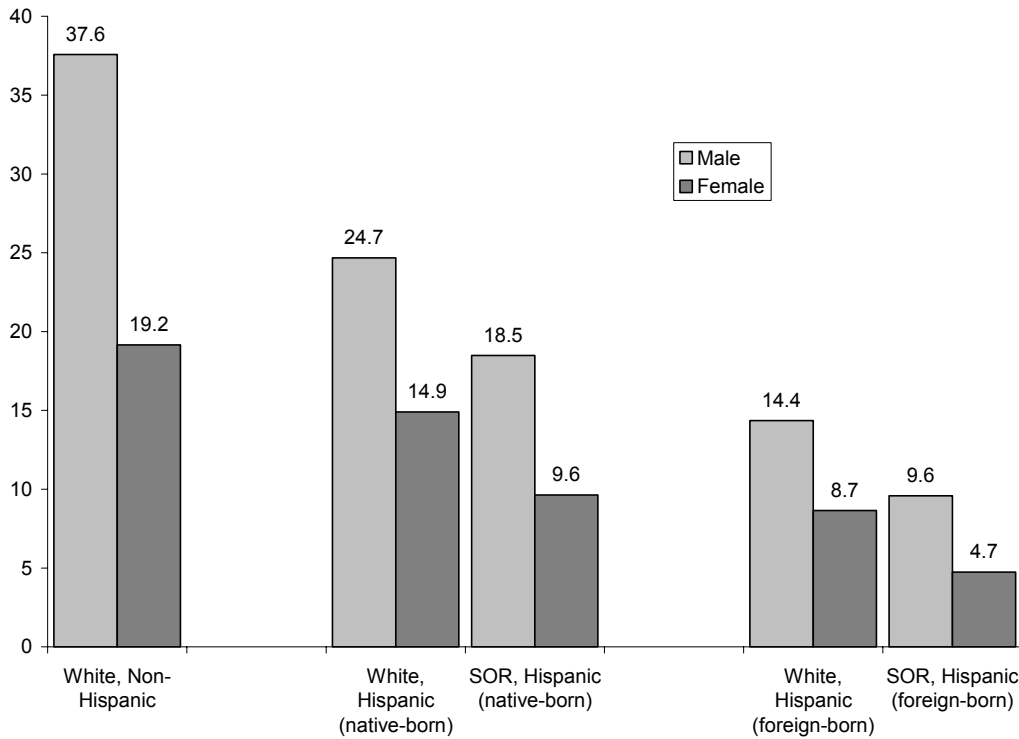


Source: Author’s calculation of the 2000 IPUMS and Census 2000 SF3.  
 Note: Restricted to adults aged 18-64

Earnings data for Hispanics are also consistent with the above findings on education, unemployment and poverty. For example, Figure 5 shows that for both men and women the share of SOR Hispanics earning at least \$35,000 per year is lower than for white Hispanics. Since much of the wage gap between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites is driven by educational differences, it is likely that the lower educational attainment of SOR Hispanics as compared with white Hispanics drives a large share of these earnings differences (Smith, 2001). Focus group respondents expressed a link between these objective socioeconomic differences by race and a sense of inclusion. A third generation respondent from Texas expressed the following:

“If we are saying mainstream is white American culture, how much money do they have? Hispanics with more money maybe fit into mainstream culture better than people that have just come from Mexico.”

**Figure 5**  
**Share of Hispanic Labor Force with Annual Earning from Wages of \$35,000 or more, by Race, Nativity and Sex 1999**



Source: Author's calculation of the 2000 IPUMS.  
 Note: Restricted to civilian workers, who reported working 40 or more weeks per year, and usual working hours of 35 or more per week.

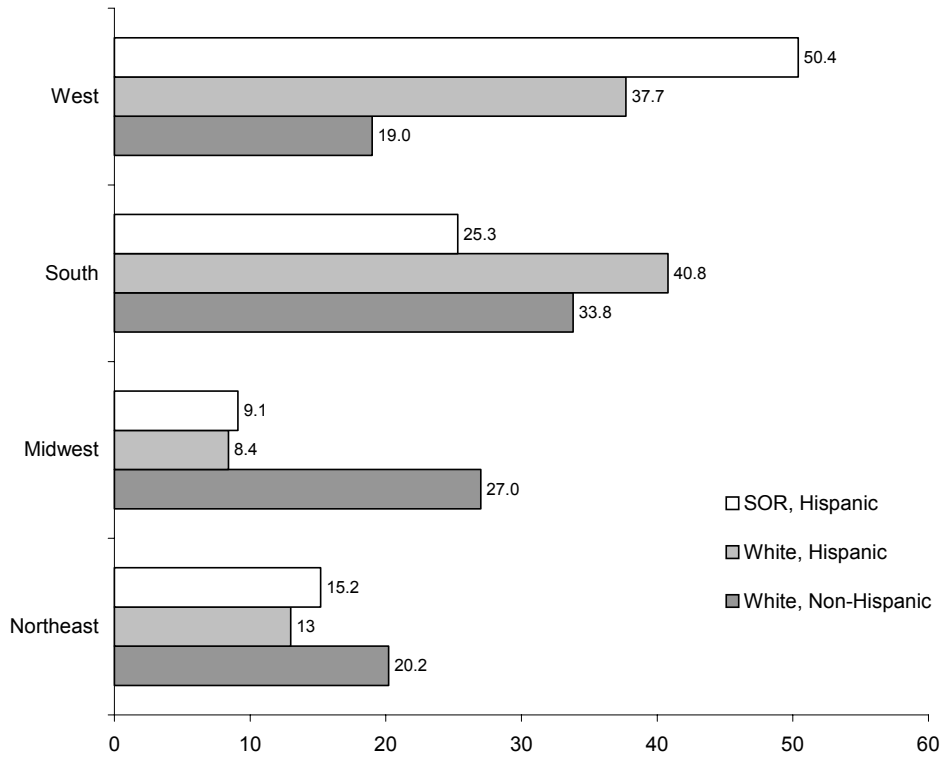
**4. Race and Place**

Settlement patterns, regional historical legacies and current cultural trends also influence Hispanic race responses. Given the preponderance of Mexican origin respondents in the SOR category, the distribution of the SOR Hispanics is highly skewed to the western United States (Figure 6). In fact, California alone accounts for over 5 million of the nation's SOR Hispanics. The spatial concentration of SOR Hispanics in the west is reinforced because, in Texas, the southern state with the largest Hispanic population, many Latinos identify as racially white. In Texas nearly two-thirds (63

***In Texas nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of native-born Latinos of Mexican descent say they are white, compared to less than half (45 percent) of those who live outside of Texas.***

percent) of native-born Latinos of Mexican descent say they are white, compared to less than half (45 percent) of those who live outside of Texas. One can suppose that the unique and complex history of race relations in Texas is a major influence. This is the only state where a large Latino population was caught up both in Southern-style racial segregation and then the civil rights struggle to undo it.

**Figure 6**  
**Regional Distribution of**  
**White Hispanics, SOR Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites**  
**2000**



Source: Author’s calculation of the 2000 IPUMS.

Similarly, among the native-born of Cuban origin in Florida, 91 percent identify as white, while only 5 percent identify as SOR. Among native-born Cubans living outside of Florida, only 66 percent identify as white and 13 percent as SOR. Focus groups also suggested the importance of place in racial identification. In Miami, a majority of respondents took their Hispanic identification for granted and expressed pride in their origins. Yet, in a discussion of whether Hispanics are accepted in the United States, one Cuban origin respondent who agreed that Hispanics were accepted in Miami, New York, and California said:

“If I apply somewhere else, Tennessee, and the application says are you Hispanic or white, I put white because I want to at least have an interview.”

This statement suggests that in this respondents mind, the consequences of identifying as white vary from place to place.

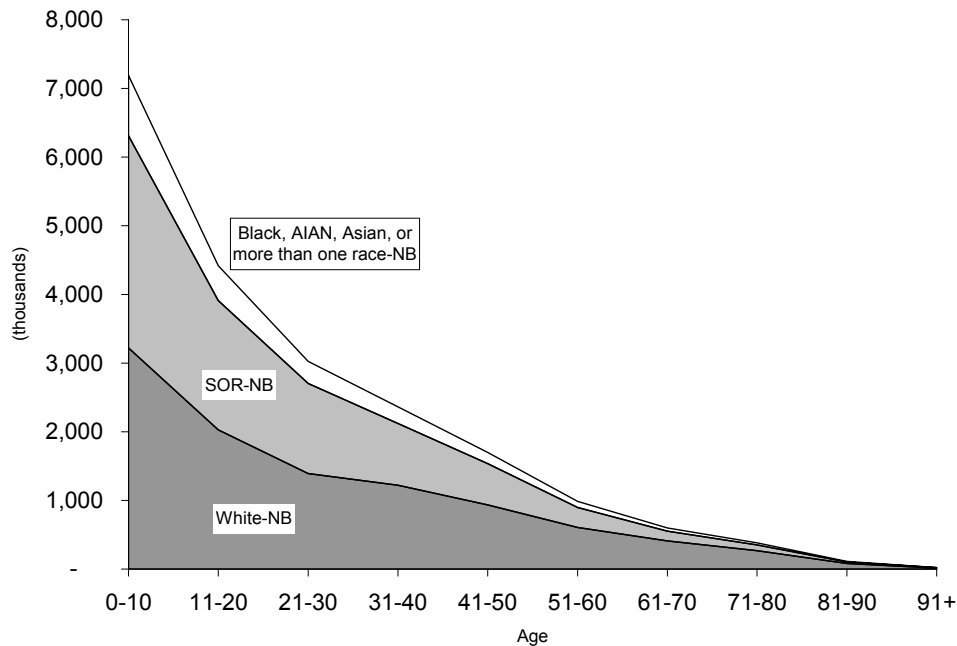
5. Age and Race

For the most part SOR Hispanics are young. While the median age of white Non-Hispanic Americans is 38 years old, for SOR Hispanics it is only 24, and for white Hispanics it is 27. The association between youth and SOR identity holds true for the both the native- and foreign-born populations. The median age for native-born SOR Hispanics is 16 years old and for native-born white Hispanics the median age is 20. And for the foreign-born population the median age for SOR Hispanics is 31 years old, while that of foreign-born white Hispanics is 34 years old.

The major difference between the native- and foreign-born populations is that the bulk of native-born Hispanics (70 percent) are either children or very young adults (Figure 7), while the foreign born are more often either young or middle aged adults (Figure 8). Many of the foreign-born adults in Figure 8 are the parents of the youth shown in Figure 7. Because it is generally one parent who fills out the Census questionnaire, the youth are typically assigned a race by their parents. As these youth mature into adulthood, they may or may not choose to self-identify in the way that their parents currently identify them. These second generation Hispanics are important, because they are replacing immigrants as the major drivers of Hispanic population growth (Suro, 2003).

***While the median age of white Non-Hispanic Americans is 38 years old, for SOR Hispanics it is only 24, and for white Hispanics it is 27.***

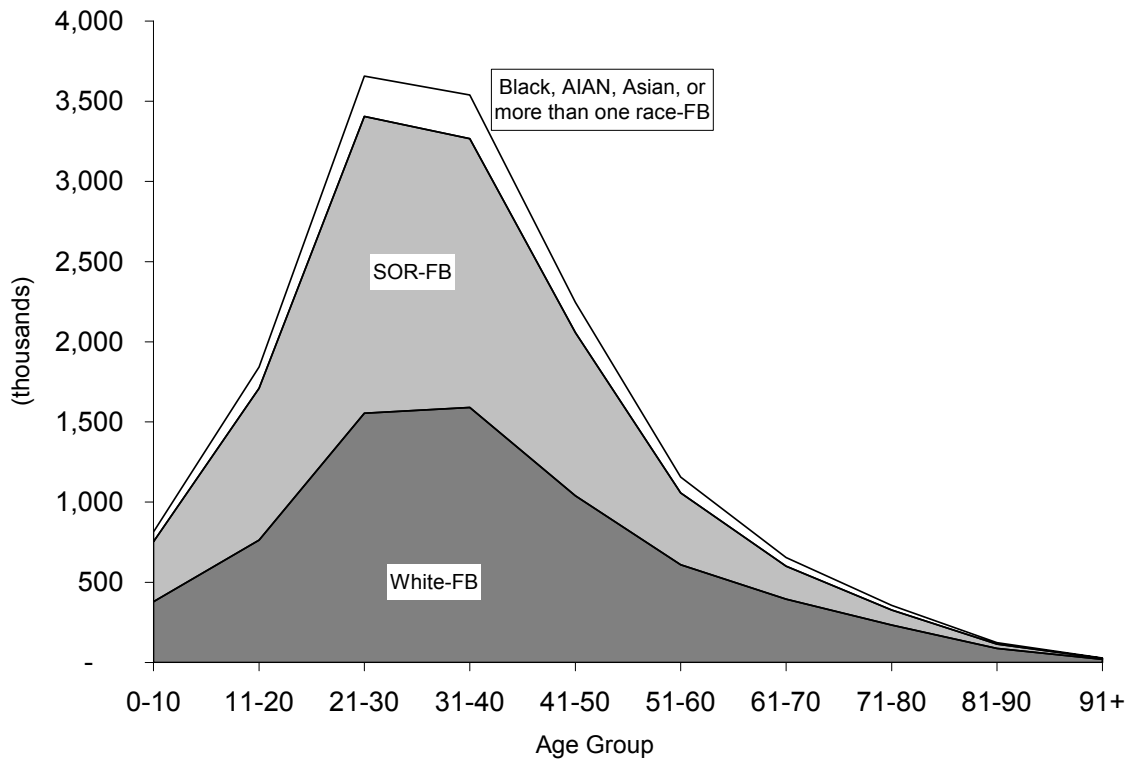
**Figure 7  
Native-born Hispanic Population by Age and Race  
2000**



Source: Author's calculation of the 2000 IPUMS



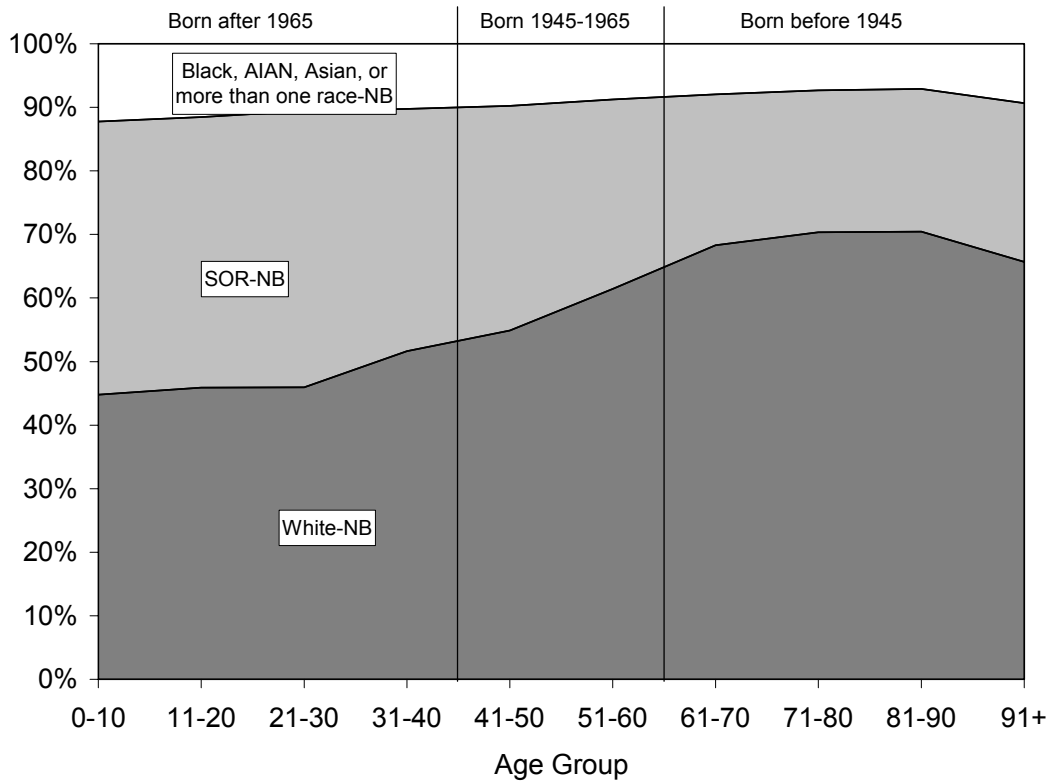
**Figure 8**  
**Foreign-born Hispanic Population by Age and Race**  
**2000**



Source: Author's calculation of the 2000 IPUMS.

Leaving aside the youngest group of native-born Hispanics, about 30 percent of native-born Hispanics are older than 20 years of age. Rather than being identified by their parents, this group is less likely to have recent immigrant parents and more likely to live independently. Thus, their Census race responses are more likely to reflect their self-identification.

**Figure 9**  
**Share of Native-born Hispanic Population Identified as**  
**White or SOR by Age Group**  
**2000**



Source: Author’s calculation of the 2000 IPUMS.

Older native-born Hispanics—those born prior to 1945—most often identified as white (60 percent) in 2000 (Figure 9). In contrast, those born during the post-war baby boom showed a lower level of white racial identity, and a greater preference for SOR identity. Thus, even excluding the numerous young native-born children of immigrants, a transition in racial identity appears to have been underway. This transition coincides with civil rights era and the growth of the Latino immigrant population. An analysis of age cohorts from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census suggests that for Hispanic baby-boomers—those born before the beginning of large flows of Asian and Latin American immigrants into the United States—race responses do not change over time. In other words it does not appear that young Hispanic baby-boomers switch their racial identity as they get older. Rather, their race responses seem to be stable characteristics related to the era in which they were born. Within this cohort, responses for white Hispanics are very stable, and to the extent that SOR Hispanics have changed, the shift appears to be from SOR to a non-white or multiple race option in 2000.

***Older native-born Hispanics – those born prior to 1945 – most often identified as white (60 percent) in 2000 (Figure 9).***

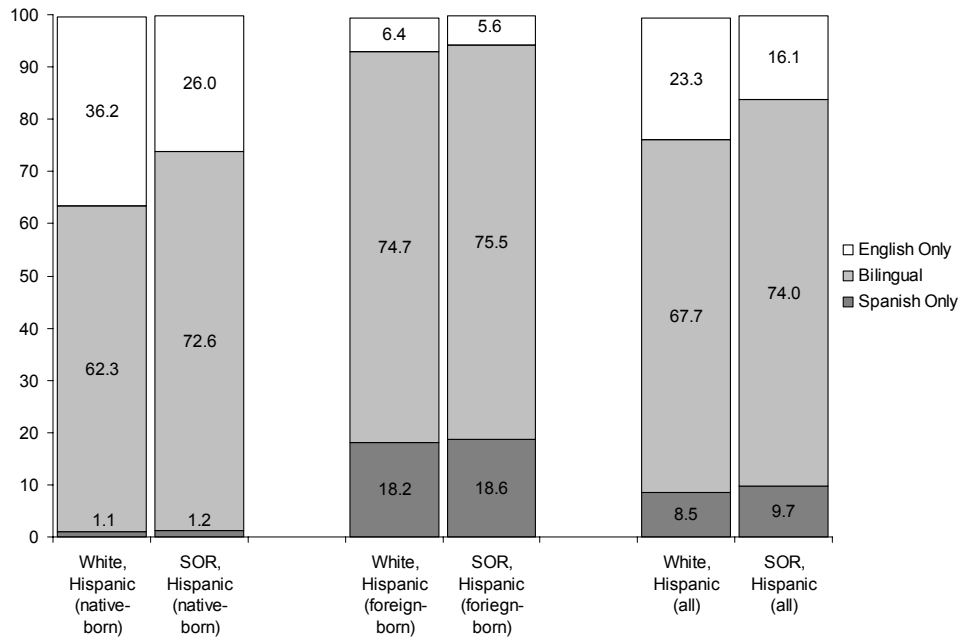
Despite the differences between Hispanic native-born baby boomers and their elders, the increase in the share of Hispanics who identify as SOR would not have been as great without the large inflows of immigrants who identified themselves and their children as SOR.

6. Language Usage, Intermarriage and Generational Status

As shown in Figure 10, language usage diverges between SOR Hispanics and white Hispanics. Among the native-born, 73 percent of SOR Hispanics were bilingual compared to 62 percent of white Hispanics.

While second generation adults (native-born of foreign-born parents) cannot be distinguished from the third and higher generations (native-born of native-born parents) in the 2000 Census, data from the National Survey of Latinos (NSL) indicate that white Hispanics are more often found in the third generation than SOR Hispanics. Among native-born white and SOR Latinos in the NSL, 45 percent of white Hispanics belonged to the second generation, while 55 percent belonged to third or higher generations. In contrast, 55 percent of SOR Hispanics belonged to the second generation, while 45 percent belonged to third or higher generations.

**Figure 10**  
**Language Usage for White Hispanics, SOR Hispanics and**  
**Non-Hispanic Whites by Nativity**  
**2000**



Source: Author's calculation of the 2000 IPUMS.  
 Note: Restricted to the population 5 years of age or older.

Another rough indicator of generational status is the probability of intermarriage. Estimates of intermarriage rates are 8 percent for foreign-born Hispanics, 32 percent for the second generation, and 57 percent for the third and higher generations (Edmonston, Lee, and Passel, 2002). Again, Census results on intermarriage for SOR Hispanics and white Hispanics are consistent with the idea that among the native-born, SOR Hispanics are more likely to be of the second rather than the third generation compared to white Hispanics.

For both foreign-born and native-born Hispanic male householders, the racial and ethnic identity of their spouse is most likely to be identical to their own (Table 7). This trend is more pronounced among foreign-born men. For example 88 percent of white Hispanic males are married to white Hispanic females.<sup>5</sup> In terms of out-marriage, Hispanic males who identify as white have non-Hispanic wives more often than SOR Hispanic men.

***For both foreign-born and native-born Hispanic male householders, the racial and ethnic identity of their spouse is most likely to be identical to their own.***

**Table 7  
Race and Ethnic Distribution of Wives by  
Husband's Nativity, Race and Ethnicity  
2000**

<i>Race and Ethnicity of Wife</i>	Race and Ethnicity of Husband			
	Native-born		Foreign-born	
	Hispanic White	Hispanic SOR	Hispanic White	Hispanic SOR
Hispanic White	66%	2%	88%	3%
Hispanic SOR	2%	73%	2%	90%
Non-Hispanic White	28%	19%	7%	4%

Source: Author's calculations of the 2000 IPUMS.  
Note: Sample is limited to married, Hispanic male householders.

### 7. From Aggregate Statistics to Attitudes

The 2002 National Survey of Latinos provides both general demographic data on the Latino population as well as attitudinal information on such issues as identity, discrimination, incorporation into the mainstream of society, and experience with the health care and financial systems. While the 2002 NSL sampled only adults and focused on the attitudes and experiences of Hispanics in the United States, in terms of age, household size, household income, and educational attainment, the picture that emerged from the 2002 NSL coincided with Census 2000 results, showing that SOR Hispanics were younger and occupied a more tenuous socio-economic position than did white Hispanics. The following section details the dimensions on which, these somewhat distinct groups, SOR Hispanics and white Hispanics differed in the survey data.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The fact that the majority of couples have the same racial and ethnic identity is probably overstated since only one member of the couple generally completes the census form.

<sup>6</sup> The race question used in the 2002 NSL followed the Hispanic origin question and was asked as follows. "What race do you consider yourself to be? White, Black or African American, Asian or some other race?" If the respondent offered "Hispanic or Latino" in response to the question they were coded as some other race for the purposes of this analysis.

### *On Identifying as American*

To the extent that identity conveys a sense of belonging, results from the 2002 NSL show that SOR Hispanics seem to experience a greater duality in their identity than their white Hispanic counterparts. When asked which descriptors they used *first* to describe themselves—country of origin, Hispanic/Latino, or American—foreign-born SOR Hispanics did not differ from white Hispanics<sup>7</sup>. Over two-thirds of both groups reported that they identified *first* with their country of origin. On the other hand, when the same question was asked of native-born Hispanics, among white Hispanics over half (55 percent) reported that they identified *first* as an American. For SOR Hispanics a significantly smaller share (36 percent) responded that they identified *first* as an American.

After the native-born are broken down into their second generation versus third and higher generation components, the same pattern prevails. White Hispanics in the second generations are more likely (48 percent) to identify *first* as American, while among SOR Hispanics only 29 percent identify *first* as American. Even though over half (51 percent) of SOR Hispanics in the third and higher generation identify as American first, significantly more white Hispanics of the third and higher generation (68 percent) identify first as American.

Focus groups reveal that to many Latinos, the term American is viewed less in the context of an overall identity and more in specific reference to citizenship or birthplace. For example, both second generation Mexicans in Los Angeles and Puerto Ricans in New York reported that they referred to themselves as unhyphenated Americans when they were crossing the border or when they were outside of the United States, but within the United States they saw themselves as Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans.

### *Hispanic Views of the United States*

When asked to compare their countries of origin with the United States, Hispanics agreed generally that the United States offered more opportunities to get ahead, that treatment of the poor was better in the United States, and that family ties were stronger in their countries of origin. These generalizations held true for the native-born and the foreign-born, as well as for SOR and white Hispanics. Questions related to morality elicited more variable responses.

For example, with regard to the future of their children, the only question that yielded differences between white and SOR Hispanics was one that asked “are you confident that your children will have the same moral values as you?” Overall, nearly 30 percent of SOR Hispanics were very confident that their children would share their moral values, while only 22 percent of white Hispanic expressed the same level of confidence. When nativity was introduced as a factor, there was no difference between foreign-born SOR Hispanics and foreign-born white Hispanics rather differences between native-born SOR Hispanics and native-born white Hispanics drove the overall difference. Native-born SOR Hispanic adults in this instance expressed more confidence in their moral sway over their children.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Questions relating to country of origin were modified to accommodate foreign- and native-born respondents. Immigrants were asked their own country of origin. Children of immigrants were asked about their parents' country of origin. Third generation respondents were asked about their grandparents' country of origin.

<sup>8</sup> Sample size does not permit native born distinctions between second generation and third and higher generation.

### *Views on the Government of the United States and Political Participation*

When asked how much of the time they trust the government in Washington to do what is right, SOR Hispanics did not differ significantly from white Hispanics, this was true both when the sample was limited to the foreign-born or to the native-born. Generally about 29 percent of Hispanics answered “most of the time”, while about 47 percent answered “some of the time.” While SOR and white Hispanics expressed similar levels of trust, when asked if based on their experience, political leaders are interested in the problems of particular concern to Hispanics living here, the responses diverged by race. Foreign-born white Hispanics were more likely (46 percent) than foreign-born SOR Hispanics (39 percent) to answer yes, that political leaders were concerned. Among the native-born SOR Hispanics (59 percent) were more likely to say no, that political leaders were not concerned than were white Hispanics (51 percent).

The 2002 NSL also provides data on why white Hispanics might feel more politically enfranchised than SOR Hispanics. For example, among the native-born, only 67 percent of SOR Hispanics reported that they were registered voters, while a significantly larger share of white Hispanics (85 percent) reported that they were registered voters. Here again, even when divided into second versus third and higher generations, race was significant. In the second generation 66 percent of SOR Hispanics versus 90 percent of white Hispanics reported that they were registered voters. And in the third and higher group among SOR Hispanics 65 percent reported that they were registered to vote, while among white Hispanics a significantly greater share (83 percent) answered that they were registered voters. Similarly, differences on reported voting behavior were also significant and displayed the same qualitative pattern.

For the foreign-born, the share of citizens among SOR Hispanics (30 percent) and white Hispanics (34 percent) was not significantly different. However, relative to SOR Hispanics more white Hispanics reported that they were registered to vote (89 percent) and had ever voted (81 percent) in a U.S. election. Among SOR Hispanics 79 percent reported that they were registered voters and 66 percent reported that they had ever voted.

When asked whether they considered themselves Republicans, Democrats, Independents or something else, a greater share of white Hispanics identified themselves as Republicans and this held for both native- and foreign-born respondents.<sup>9</sup> Among native-born SOR Hispanics only 13 percent reported that they were Republican, while among native-born white Hispanics 22 percent reported that they were Republican. About 12 percent of foreign-born SOR Hispanics and 21 percent of white Hispanics reported that they were Republican.

When asked whether they considered themselves Republicans, Democrats, Independents or something else, a greater share of white Hispanics identified themselves as Republicans and this held for both native- and foreign-born respondents.<sup>9</sup> Among native-born SOR Hispanics only 13 percent reported that they were Republican, while among native-born white Hispanics 22 percent reported that they were Republican. About 12 percent of foreign-born SOR Hispanics and 21 percent of white Hispanics reported that they were Republican.

### *Views on Discrimination toward Hispanics*

With regard to their views about discrimination, nativity seems to supercede race for the foreign-born. About half of both white and SOR Hispanic immigrants view discrimination as a major problem, in schools, in the work place, and view discrimination as a barrier to success in the United States. On the other hand, within the native-born Hispanic population views of discrimination diverge between white Hispanics and SOR Hispanics. For example, more native-born SOR Hispanics (30 percent) report that discrimination against Hispanics is a major problem in schools. Only 22 percent of native-born white Hispanics report the same about schools. Likewise, 35 percent of native-born SOR Hispanics report that discrimination is a major problem in the workplace, whereas only 22 percent of white Hispanics report discrimination as a major workplace problem. Similarly, one-quarter of native-born white Hispanics reported that discrimination was a

<sup>9</sup> Asked of the citizen and non-citizen foreign-born.

major problem preventing Hispanics from succeeding in America, while over one-third of native-born SOR Hispanics felt that discrimination was an obstacle to success in America.

When asked how often particular incidents of discriminatory treatment had befallen them, native-born white Hispanics were significantly more likely to answer *never*. For example, 68 percent of native-born white Hispanics reported that they had *never* been treated with less respect than other people, 73 percent that they had *never* received poorer service than other people at stores or restaurants, and 77 percent had *never* been called names or insulted because of their ethnic or racial background. In response to the same list of incidents, native-born SOR Hispanics were less likely to have answered *never*. In the same order presented above, 51 percent, 56 percent and 66 percent of SOR Hispanics answered *never*. Dividing the native-born into second and third and higher generations did not eliminate the significant effect of race on the answers reported for these questions. Among the native-born, the second generation reported experiencing more discrimination than the third and higher generation.

## 8. Conclusions

The profile of SOR Hispanic detailed above describes a population composed of both native-born and immigrant members. While, Census data indicate that the gulf between SOR and white Hispanics is certainly not as wide as that between non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics, results consistently show that SOR Hispanics have a weaker economic mooring relative to white Hispanics. Although no specific difference may be overwhelming, the striking consistency in the pattern of differences is impressive. Furthermore, the NSL suggests that these aggregate differences translate into important differences with regard to partisan loyalties, political participation and perceptions about discrimination in America.

While some of these differences are surely driven by the relative proportion of American newcomers in each Hispanic race group. The NSL indicates that even among third generation Hispanics, those whose concepts of race were most likely to have been shaped exclusively in the United States, race differences are apparent. And, these differences appear to play a role in shaping attitudes and opinions. While the data presented indicate that SOR Hispanics have lower socioeconomic status, and that they are less politically engaged and more often feel discriminated against, what cannot be discerned is whether SOR Hispanics choose that identity because they possess these characteristics or if these characteristic lead Hispanics to the adopt the SOR label by Hispanics.

---

## Appendices

### Appendix A. Consistency of Race Responses and Race Allocation

Distinguishing the differences between the largest Hispanic groups, white Hispanics, and SOR Hispanics, is an imprecise exercise. Even among Hispanics who checked white in Census 2000, fewer than half (49 percent) also reported that they were white in a follow-up questionnaire (Bentley et al, 2000). Many white Hispanics (45 percent) offered a response of SOR in the follow-up study. Among SOR Hispanics identified in the 2000 Census more (67 percent) offered the same SOR response in the follow-up study.

Another source of imprecision is non-response. About one in every seven Hispanics is allocated to a race category because they skip the race question. When compared to white Hispanics, more SOR Hispanics skip the race question. In general, fewer white Hispanics skip the race question, but more offer an inconsistent response upon follow-up. On the other hand, among SOR Hispanics more skip the race question, but fewer change their response upon follow-up.

In spite of this imprecision, there appears to be small, but persistent differences between white Hispanics and SOR Hispanics. Due to the large sample size of the 5 percent PUMS dataset, t-tests for significance were nearly universally significant at the 5 percent level. The differences are significant when all census respondents are used in the analysis, and also when the data are limited to only those for whom race was not allocated. Furthermore, the differences can be identified using data from different sources and the generalization that SOR Hispanics occupy a somewhat less favorable socioeconomic status than white Hispanics holds true.

### Appendix B. Data Sources

- A. The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series was used in the analysis of Census 2000 data from the 5 percent sample (Ruggles and Sobek, 2003).
- B. The Pew Hispanic Center/Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2002 National Survey of Latinos was conducted by telephone between April 4 and June 11, 2002 among a nationally representative sample of 4,213 adults, 18 years and older, who were selected at random. The sample included 2929 Hispanics. International Communications Research of Media, PA conducted the fieldwork in either Spanish or English, based on the respondent's preference.
- C. Pew Hispanic Center/National Academy of Science Focus Groups 2004. International Communications Research (ICR) conducted these focus groups in February and March of 2004. The purpose of the groups was to explore the opinions and experiences of first, second and third generation Hispanics in the United States. The focus groups were held in Miami, New York, Houston, Raleigh and Los Angeles in order to maximize the number of national origin groups participating and to encompass a broad geographical range. Participants were male and female Hispanics 18-25 years of age. ICR conducted first generation groups in Spanish and second and third generation groups primarily in English. About 10 respondents participated in each 90 minute focus group session. The general focus of all groups was Hispanic identity. Specific topics ranged from labels and terminology, components of identity, language, cultural and racial identity, inter-personal relations, and societal relations.



---

## References

- Bentley, M., T. Mattingly, C. Hough, and C. Bennett. “*Census Quality Survey to Evaluate Responses to the Census 2000 Question on Race: An Introduction to the Data*,” United States Census Bureau, April 3, 2003 Census 2000 Evaluation B.3.
- Edmonston, B., S.M. Lee, and J.S. Passel. “Recent Trends in Intermarriage and Immigration and Their Effects on the Future Racial Composition of the U.S. Population,” in Perlmann and M.C. Waters, eds., *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, NY, 2002.
- Ruggles, Steven and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, 2003.
- Smith, James P. “Race and Ethnicity in the Labor Market: Trends over the Short and Long Term,” in N. Smelser, W. J. Wilson, and F. Mitchell, eds., *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences* Volume II. National Research Council, Washington D.C., 2001.
- “Standards for Maintaining, Collecting and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity,” Appendix A, *Federal Register*, October 30, 1997.
- Suro, Roberto, 2002. “Counting the ‘Other Hispanics’: How Many Colombians, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Guatemalans and Salvadorans Are There in the United States?” Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C., May 9, 2002.
- Suro, Roberto, 2003. “The Rise of the Second Generation: Changing Patterns in Hispanic Population Growth,” Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C., October, 2003.

## **About the Author**

**Sonya Tafoya**  
**Research Associate**  
**Pew Hispanic Center**

Prior to joining the Pew Hispanic Center, Sonya Tafoya was a Research Associate at the Public Policy Institute of California. While at PPIC she studied racial and ethnic birth trends, immigration, and multiracial identity. She was a regular contributor to a quarterly publication of PPIC featuring demographic information and analysis for academics, policymakers, and the media. Her work has also appeared in academic journals and edited volumes.

The author thanks Angela F. Luben for assistance with the tables. Roberto Suro edited early drafts of the report and provided overall guidance and feedback throughout the project.



---

a PewResearchCenter project

1919 M Street, NW, Suite 460  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: 202.452.1702  
Fax: 202.785.8282  
[www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org) [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org) [www.pewtrusts.com](http://www.pewtrusts.com)

The Pew Hispanic Center is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts of Philadelphia. It is a project of the Pew Research Center. Founded in 2001, the Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization. Its mission is to improve understanding of the diverse Hispanic population in the United States and to chronicle Latinos' growing impact on the nation.

The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pew Research Center or the Pew Charitable Trusts.