

GLOBALIZATION, MIGRATION, AND SOME JOBS WITHOUT END

ELAINE LEVINE*

Abstract

This article analyzes the increasing complementarity between the Mexican and U.S. labor markets and the *de facto* integration taking place. Changes in the U.S. employment structure and the increasing polarization and segmentation of the labor market in that country help explain how millions of Mexican immigrants find jobs north of the border while millions of U.S. men have had their working lives cut short due to industrial restructuring and relocation. Mexican immigrants find jobs mainly in the growing service sector, some branches of light manufacturing, and the waning (from an employment perspective) agricultural sector. Even though these may be undesirable and low paying jobs by U.S. standards, they provide incomes ten or even fifteen times higher than they would earn in Mexico, assuming they had a job. Furthermore, the crisis that began at the end of 2007 has not caused a massive return of migrants to Mexico; it has merely diminished the flow of new immigrants heading into the United States.

Keywords: Mexican immigration, labor market segmentation, immigrant labor niches, socio-economic stratification, economic restructuring.

*Researcher at the Center for Research on North America (CISAN) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

INTRODUCTION

When Jeremy Rifkin published his book *The End of Work* in 1995, some praised it as visionary while others labeled it as absurd. But for more than 4 million men aged 30 to 55 who sought employment in the United States during the first five years of the 21st century, it was like a premonition (Uchitelle and Leonhardt, 2006). Between 2000 and 2005, 3 million jobs in the manufacturing sector disappeared. Between 2005 and 2010, and in the context of the most severe economic recession since the crisis of the 1930s, another 2.6 million manufacturing jobs were eliminated (US Department of Labor, 2011). But, for the millions of Mexican migrants who have gone north in the past three decades, the neighboring country offers employment and income opportunities they cannot find in their places of origin. Globalization and innovations in IT have disrupted and transformed labor markets in many countries, and this has radically changed the structure of employment, both in terms of labor demand and supply. With the proliferation of knowledge-based work, it may well be that the very concept of work is changing.

This paper analyzes the growing complementarity and de facto integration between the Mexican and U.S. labor markets. I start with the changes in the structure of employment in the United States and the increasing polarization and segmentation of the labor market in that country to explain how it is that, while millions of U.S. men have lost their jobs due to industrial restructuring and relocation, millions of Mexican migrants are able to find work, predominantly in the growing service sector, some areas of light manufacturing, and the declining (from a labor standpoint) agricultural sector. Even though these jobs are not very desirable and are very poorly paid according to U.S. standards, they provide an income ten or fifteen times higher than in Mexico, where getting a job is not a given. It should be noted that the crisis that began in 2007 has not led to a mass return of Mexican migrants, but it has eased their recent flow into the United States (Passel and Cohn, 2011). Moreover, the number of undocumented immigrants in that country has decreased, mostly due to an increase in deportations.

THE CHANGING EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

Throughout the postwar period, U.S. economic and population growth has been accompanied by a more or less regular—though slow, in percentage terms—increase in the economically active population (EAP), which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of employed people. Total EAP percentage rose from 59.2% in 1950 to 65.7% in 2010; in absolute terms, the labor force grew by 155% (US Department of Labor, 1984 and 2011). However, significant economic and social changes (e.g., the scientific, technological and information revolutions; corporate transnationalization; the African American civil rights movement and the feminist movement; globalization, industrial restructuring and neoliberal economic policies) have substantially changed employment structure and the EAP's characteristics.

For starters, agricultural employment has declined sharply in both absolute and relative terms. The 9.5 million people engaged in agricultural activities in 1940 constituted 20% of the EAP, but the 2.2 million employed in this sector in 2010 represented only 1.4% of the total. Nonetheless, the United States is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of agricultural products.

Even though Robert Reich (1992: 85-86) argues that the traditional distinction between goods and services is meaningless today, it is worth noting that a growing percentage of the EAP works in the production or provision of services (62.1% in 1955 compared to 86.2% in 2010), and a decreasing proportion (37.9% in 1955 compared to 13.7% in 2010) is engaged in the production of goods (see Table 1; US Department of Labor, 2006 and 2011). In any case, and partly thanks to a growing trade deficit, the range of products available to U.S. consumers is greater than ever.

Employment in manufacturing, which decreased in relative terms, increased numerically until 1979, reaching 19.4 million. Since then, more than 7.7 million jobs have been lost in this sector, which went from employing 30.6% of the EAP in 1955 to 21.6% in 1979 and only 8.9% in 2010. In contrast, construction jobs increased in absolute terms from 2.8 to 7.7 million between 1955 and 2006 and, with some cyclical fluctuations, remained more or less stable as a percentage of the EAP

(around 5%). However, after the crisis, which particularly affected the real estate business, almost 2.1 million construction jobs were lost between 2006 and 2010; this activity currently absorbs only 4.3% of the EAP.

It should be noted that manufacturing contributed 22.5% of the U.S. GDP in 1980, when it comprised 20.1% of non-agricultural EAP, and 11.9% in 2009, when it comprised 9.1% of the EAP (US Census Bureau, 1983 and 2011). After a slight increase between 1993 and 1998, manufacturing jobs plummeted starting in 2000. As mentioned earlier, more than 3 million manufacturing jobs were lost from 2000 to 2005, and nearly 2.6 million more disappeared between 2005 and 2010 (USDOL, 2011). According to Wial and Friedhoff (2006), more than a third of the jobs lost in the first five years of the 21st century were located in seven states of the Great Lakes region, in the northeast. Most of the affected are men without a college education who are unlikely find another job with similar income and benefits, which is the reason why many have chosen to leave the EAP.

In fact, the level of male participation in the U.S. EAP has declined slowly but consistently over the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, from 86.4% in 1950 to 71.2% in 2010 (USDOL, 1984 and 2011). It now seems that the proportion of men aged from 30 to 55 (considered the best period of the working life) who have stopped looking for jobs in recent years is much higher than in previous decades. Currently, the percentage of those outside the EAP and in this age range is about 13%, compared with 5% in the late 1960s (Uchitelle and Leonhardt, 2006).

In contrast, female participation in the EAP has increased markedly over the postwar period, going from a rate of 33.9% in 1950 to 58.6% in 2010, so that women now constitute 47.2% of the EAP. The fastest growth occurred in the 1970s and 80s. Although, initially, this might have been part of a search for personal fulfillment inspired by the feminist movement, it later became a response to growing insecurity and instability in family income due to industrial restructuring and neoliberal economic policies. Growing female participation is also related to changes in the occupational structure, such as a reduction in industrial jobs that used predominantly male labor force, and increased employment in some professional services and sales sectors with a predominantly female workforce.

The increasing participation of women in the EAP and the employed workforce is one of the factors that contributed to the downward trend in U.S. wages after 1973, and these have yet to recover in real terms. Unfortunately, even when they have equal schooling levels, women receive substantially less than men. In addition, occupational and wage polarization has been one of the main features of the labor market in recent decades. Well paid jobs that require high levels of education are increasing considerably, as are poorly paid jobs that do not require college education. Fairly well-paid jobs that do not require college education, such as those in more established manufacturing industries, are disappearing.

Another factor associated to the decrease in average wages is the growing incorporation of immigrants to the EAP. Andrew Sum and his coauthors argue that the effect of new immigrants on the growth of the U.S. labor force was more pronounced in the late 20th century than in the previous 60 years of available data (Sum et al., 2002). They point that the 8 million new immigrants¹ who joined the EAP between 1990 and 2001 are responsible for 50% of its growth during this period. In fact, the pace of U.S. EAP growth has been waning after the early 1970s, during which time it increased 29.2% due to the entry of people born after the war and the increasing participation of women. During the 1990s, the EAP grew only 11.5% and, without new immigrants, the registered growth would have been a mere 5%. Sum and his colleagues also say that, without the new immigrants as part of the EAP, employment and overall economic growth would have stalled.

The trends observed in recent decades (diversification in the composition of the EAP and growing wage polarization) are likely to continue in coming years. Furthermore, a longer-term transition toward greater service production over goods will continue. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that approximately 14.6 million of the 15.3 million jobs to be created between 2008 and 2018 will belong in the service sector (US DOL, 2009b). The aging population will dramatically increase the demand for health-related services and care for the elderly. The number of women in the EAP will increase slightly more than that

1. Immigrants catalogued as “new” in this article arrived after 1990.

of men, and their participation will grow from 46.5 to 46.9%. But it is the Latinos or Hispanics who will exhibit the fastest growth in the U.S. labor force. Their numerical participation is estimated to increase by 7.6 million, or 33.1% after 2008 (when they comprised 14.3% of the EAP), to reach 17.6% in 2018.

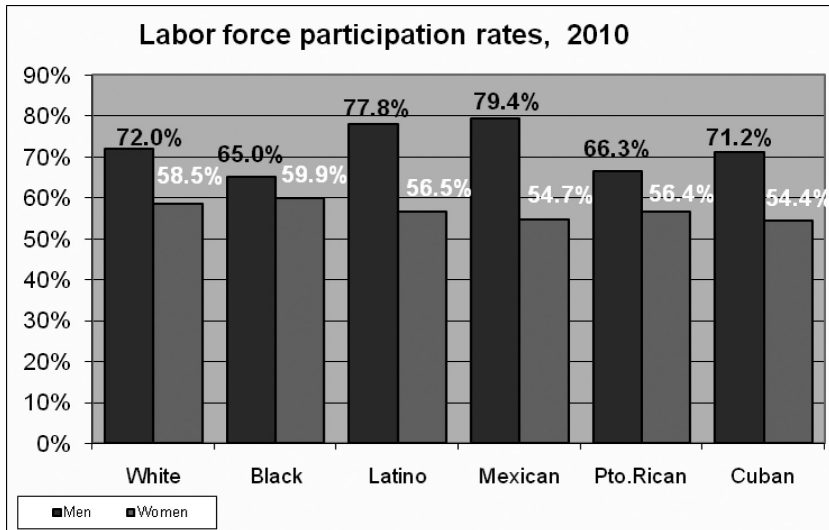
The Labor Department's projections regarding the fastest growing jobs over the next few years show that there are prospects of employment for Latino immigrants with low education levels, but primarily in low-paying areas (US DOL, 2009b). More than half (17) of the 30 jobs projected to have the highest growth rates in the coming years are related to health care or medical research, with a few others linked to IT and finance (see Table 2). Most of these occupations require at least two years of higher education, which is what is needed for an Associate degree. Most Mexican migrants are unlikely to access these jobs. Currently, the concentration of Hispanic workers is significant (that is, nearly equal to or greater than its share of the employed population in 2008, which was 14.3%) in only 4 of these occupations (home health care aides, personal care home aides, dental assistants and medical assistants), which do not require higher education and have low or very low wages.

In contrast, occupations that have the highest numerical growth projections include a greater range of personal services, general services and some trades, which only require on-the-job training and where wages are predominantly low or very low (see Table 3). Half of these jobs now have a significant concentration (close to or greater than 14.3%) of Latino workers. Given the changing demographics of the U.S. population (i.e., a low birth rate and high rates of aging) and the relatively low cost of lowly educated Mexican and other Latino labor, the United States is likely to offer a growing number of jobs for them in years to come, especially once the nascent economic recovery of late 2010 has had an impact on employment. However, to have a clearer idea of what the proliferation of such low-wage, seemingly endless jobs (many of which have been labeled "labor market niches for immigrants") entails we must analyze in more detail the patterns of Latino immigrant integration into the U.S. labor market which, in recent decades, has become increasingly segmented and stratified.

MEXICANS AND OTHER LATINOS IN THE U.S. LABOR MARKET

Since the main motivation for migrating to the United States is getting a job that pays in dollars, it is not surprising that Mexicans are the group with the highest participation rate in the country's EAP, which was 67.7% in 2010 (US DOL, 2011). As can be seen in Graph 1, the 82.2% rate for Mexican men is far greater than that of any other group. Although the 54.1% rate for women is slightly less than some other groups, it is much higher than the rate of female participation in Mexico's EAP, which is about 38%.

Graph 1.



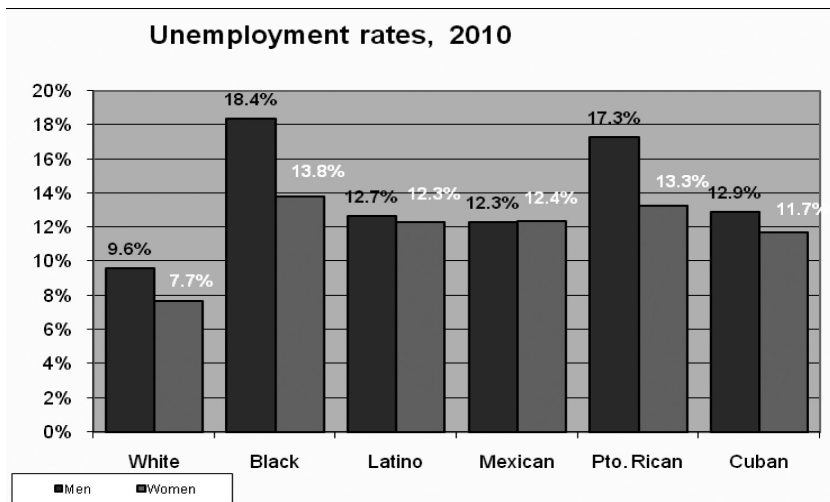
Source: Prepared by the author using data from Employment and Earnings 2011.

It should be noted that, over the last three decades or more, the unemployment rate for Latinos of Mexican descent and Latinos in general has been higher than for whites² and lower than that of blacks.

2. The unemployment rate for non-Hispanic whites is lower than the figure indicated here, which also includes a large number of Hispanics in the white category.

Unemployment rates reflect the ups and downs of overall economic activity, rising and falling in relation to it. Generally speaking, the unemployment rate for Mexicans is lower than that of Puerto Ricans and higher than that of Cubans. Cubans tend to have a slightly lower unemployment rate than that of the total white population (which, as stated, includes the majority of Hispanics). What is striking in 2010 (see Graph 2) is the high unemployment rate among Cuban men, which even exceeds that of Mexican men; there are also extremely high rates for black and Puerto Rican men.

Graph 2.



Source: Prepared by the author using data from Employment and Earnings 2011.

Moreover, it is not surprising that recent immigrants occupy the less desirable and lowly paid jobs in the United States, which still pay much more than they could earn in their countries of origin. Such has been the experience of the vast majority of Mexican migrants given their low educational levels and reduced knowledge of English. These schooling disadvantages (which I discuss below) still exist between the second and

third generation and affect employment opportunities for many Latinos of Mexican origin born in the United States.

Data from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) reflect the evolution of employment opportunities for Mexican migrants in the United States during the last decades of the twentieth century (Durand and Massey, 1982-2011).³ The most notable change was that agriculture was no longer the main activity among migrant workers. Among respondents who made their last trip before 1981, 53.2% found employment in U.S. agricultural activities. But only 24.4% of those who migrated after 1991 worked in this type of job. This change reflects, first of all, a transformation of the U.S. occupational structure and the fact that a growing number of Mexican migrants come from urban areas. In recent times, more and more migrants have found employment in light manufacturing and the food and service industries. According to the MMP, the percentage of those working in light manufacturing and construction rose from 19.4% before 1981 to 25% after 1990. At the same time, employment in the service sector grew from 9.9 to 17.8%, employment in sales and technical or administrative positions increased from 2.5 to 5.3%, and the percentage of skilled workers increased from 9.0 to 18.1%.

Department of Labor data indicate that the current U.S. EAP of Mexican origin, (i.e., immigrants and their offspring born in the United States), are distributed with a certain degree of uniformity among three of the five major occupational categories: 19% work in natural resources, construction and maintenance; 18.2% in production, transportation and transportation of materials, and 19.9% in sales and clerical occupations (US DOL, 2011). Their participation in management, professional and other related occupations (16.1%) is lower than that of any other ethnic or racial group. At the same time, their participation as workers in the service sector is the highest, slightly surpassing African Americans as well as Puerto Ricans and Cubans. Only 3.0% of Mexican workers are

3. The author wishes to thank Marcela Osnaya for her support in processing data from the Mexican Migration Project MMP93. In order to chart changes in occupational patterns we established three groups: 1) those who had last stayed in the United States before 1981; 2) those who were there between 1981 and 1990, and 3) those who have been there after 1990.

employed in agricultural activities, fisheries and forestry (which, since 2004, no longer appear as a separate category); still, this is a much higher percentage than that of any other group (see Table 4).

The percentage of Mexicans engaged in professional and related occupations is of 9.3%. A similar number (9.7%) work in manufacturing and 12% are employed in construction and extraction; there are some well paid jobs for highly skilled and experienced workers in these two areas, but most are low-wage and low grade jobs. A total of 11.4% work in clerical and administrative support. Women predominate in many instances of this category and wages tend to be low. The same happens in the sales area, which absorbs 8.5% of Mexican workers. Finally, 9.6 and 9.8% work preparing and serving food or cleaning and maintaining buildings and grounds, respectively. Wages are very low in these occupations.

Within each of the broader categories, Mexicans and other Latinos tend to be concentrated in a few areas: some specific branches of light rather than heavy manufacturing; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; the food industry; cashiers in convenience stores and retail, and specialized masonry, to name a few. Data by industry (see Table 5) reveal that some sectors are increasingly dependent on the Latino workforce (US DOL, 1991, 2008 and 2011). Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of Latino workers in the EAP increased from 7.5 to 14.3%, and from 15.4 to 35.5% in agriculture and forestry support activities. Participation in garden design and maintenance services grew from 25.2 to 41.5%; from 22.6 to 34.8% in clothing production; 18 to 35.6% in building and housing services; 14.6 to 28.5% in dry cleaning and laundry services, and 17.6 to 39.5% in private domestic services. In the processed food industry, the increase from 14.1 to 27.6% was even more pronounced than in some subsectors such as slaughtering and animal processing (from 17 to 38.1%), as well as industrial, non-retail baking (from 13 to 31.8%). All this happened after 2007, when percentages in some of these industries were even higher.

But the most dramatic increases were in the construction and manufacturing of carpets. The construction percentage grew from 8.5% in 1990 to 25.3% in 2007, encompassing almost 3 million Latino workers. Given the strong impact of the crisis in this area, by 2010 the

number of Latinos had dropped to 2.1 million—24.4% of total currently employed in the industry. In the production of carpets and rugs, the Latino workforce increased from 10.1% in 1990 to 29.4% in 2007. This fell substantially to 19.2% in 2008, and then increased dramatically to reach 49% of the total amount of employed workers in 2010. In any case, the number of people employed in this industry is very small—a mere 59,000 in 2010. Dalton, Georgia, labeled as the “carpet capital,” is the most important U.S. center for the industry and Latinos now comprise more than a third of the local population.

The industrial and occupational concentration of Latinos is intertwined with geographic concentration, which is quite pronounced among them. At the beginning of the 21st century, 75% of the Latino population was located in only seven states. However, a group of southeastern states (the Latino population of which is still fairly small) registered spectacular growth rates (from over 200% to almost 400% between 1990 and 2000) in the number of Latino residents, precisely due to Latino employment opportunities. Oftentimes, Mexicans and other Hispanics are actively recruited to fill jobs that local residents choose to pass up, including those in meatpacking, poultry processing, and carpet factories. It would seem that all that is needed to consolidate a market niche of this type is to get an influx of Latino immigrants and jobs almost no one else is willing to take under wages others would refuse. This is also very clear in the case of agricultural jobs in states like California, Texas and Oregon. The demand for workers in these undesirable and lowly paid jobs rose sharply in the late 20th century, and new waves of Mexican and other Latin American immigrants were more than willing to perform them.

Unfortunately, disaggregated occupational statistics only record the percentage of “Hispanics or Latinos” in relation to total employment in each category. They do not distinguish between the different groups that comprise the Hispanic population and, therefore, we cannot analyze the different job profiles in more detail. The available data does indicate the percentage, and therefore the number, of Hispanic workers in each sector in a list of detailed occupational categories published by the U.S. Department of Labor (2010). It is worth noting that, given the preponderance of Mexicans in the set (about two-thirds of Hispanic workers are of Mexican

origin) and the fact that the two other main groups, Cubans and Puerto Ricans, are often set against each other, the data for the total Hispanic population can provide a good approximation of Mexican labor insertion.

Table 6 shows the occupations that employ the highest numbers of Latino workers (over 170,000) nationwide. Most are low-skilled and low wage jobs that do not require higher education. Only five of the occupations on the list have a median salary close to or above the overall median, and the two that are well paid (over the general median) have a relatively low participation of Latino workers (i.e., participation is considered as a percentage of total employment, which is 14.3%; in this instance, participation is lower than that). All those areas with a Latino concentration higher than 14.3% reported median wages below the overall median of \$739 dollars per week in 2009.

Table 7 shows the occupations with the highest concentration of Latino workers as a percentage of total employees in the field. It includes all occupations in which Latino concentration is above 29%, which is twice their share in total employment, which was 14.3% in 2009. This list only partially coincides with the previous one, since many occupations with a high percentage of Latinos employ fewer people, in absolute terms, than those in that list. In all these occupations with a high Latino concentration, the median income is below the overall median (\$739 dollars a week), although three of these 27 occupations do have a median close enough to the general one.

Agricultural workers deserve special mention since, starting in 2004 (with data for 2003), the category of “Farming, fishing and forestry occupations” has been eliminated as a general item to be incorporated as a subcategory of the general heading “Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations.” On the one hand, the number of workers registered in that category declined sharply, from 3.4 million in 2002 to less than one million (926,000) in 2009. “Farm workers” are no longer even listed as an occupation. Applying the percentage indicated for Latinos (40.7%) to total employees in the above category totals 376,882 Latino workers across the various activities. Moreover, data by industry indicate that there were 916,000 people involved in “crop production” in 2009 and 28.5% were Hispanic—that is, around

261,060 of them. These two numbers (261,060 and 376,882) could be taken as indicative of the number of Latinos, mostly Mexicans, engaged more or less permanently in U.S. agricultural activities. It is quite likely that thousands of migrant workers dedicated to the harvesting of a variety of agricultural products, who remain only a few weeks in the same place and the vast majority of whom are likely undocumented, are not properly accounted for in these figures.

On the other hand, it should be noted that almost all occupations listed in Table 7, of the occupations with the highest concentrations of Latino workers, also appear in the list of occupations with high percentages of “unauthorized” workers included in Passel’s study (2006:12) for the Pew Hispanic Center. It is estimated that more than half (56%) of all undocumented immigrants are Mexican and that 80 or 85% of Mexicans who had resided in the United States for less than 10 years in late 2006 found themselves in this situation. Undocumented workers are even more vulnerable than other laborers because of their irregular immigration status. But the employment situation of most low-skilled Latinos is precarious in itself given the recent changes in general working conditions imposed in response to competition and globalization, leading to an increasingly segmented and stratified labor market.

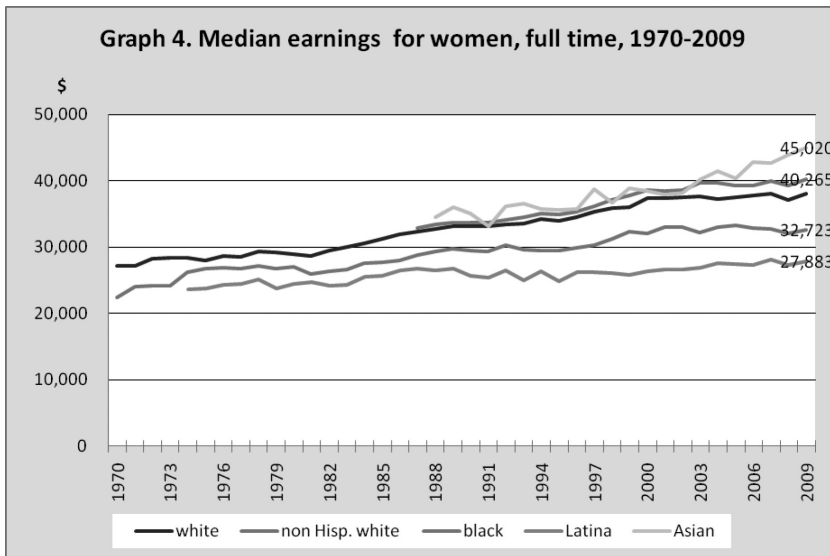
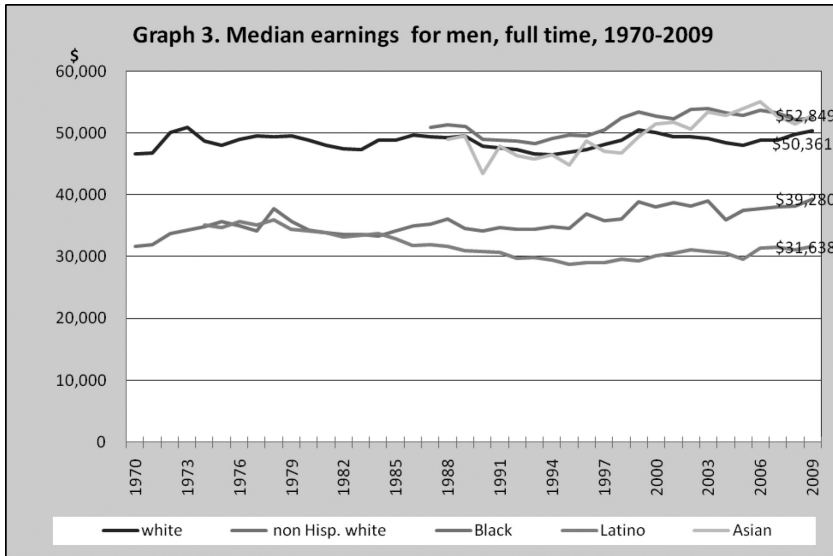
INCOME LEVELS AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF LATINO IMMIGRANTS

For the past three decades, new business practices and strategies associated with industrial restructuring have led to instability and job insecurity for most workers, undermining their bargaining power. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, families of professionals and skilled workers that responded to the vicissitudes of the 1970s and 80s with the growing incorporation of women into the EAP faced new market demands and increased working hours. They became more dependent on consumer goods and personal services provided by less skilled workers whose wages have declined sharply in relative terms and when compared to the rest of the population, even in spite of the growing demand for their services until 2007.

The new “immigrant employment niches,” which offer wages and working conditions unacceptable to most U.S. laborers grew along the seemingly endless supply of newcomers willing to work for what, for them, is usually 10 to 15 or more times the amount they would earn in their countries of origin. Still, most are relegated to the lower strata of the U.S. socioeconomic spectrum: “Although Latino workers constitute a significant and growing share of the country’s workers, working Latinos have had persistently high rates of poverty and unemployment, as well as low incomes” (Thomas-Breitfeld, 2003: 1).

The deterioration, in relative terms, of wages in almost all occupations with high Latino concentrations is worth noting (see Table 8). The decline is particularly noticeable in the case of certain construction trades (brick, block and stone masonry; drywall and ceiling installment; cement work and terrazzo and concrete finishing) where, in 1990, the weekly median income was still equal to or greater than the overall median; by 2009 it was already well below the general weekly median (US DOL, 1991 and 2010). It should be noted that this decline was already very evident before the crisis that began in late 2007. Over the past twenty years, Latino workers have experienced a general wage decline when compared to other U.S. groups.

Since the early 1980s in the case of women, and from the early 1990s to date for men, the median income of Latino workers has been lower than that of any other U.S. group. In the case of men it is slightly lower than the median for African Americans, and the gap between these two groups and non-Hispanic whites is significant. For men with full-time jobs over the year, the Latino median has been lower than that of African Americans since the mid-1980s. The gap between the two is widening, just like that between Hispanics and white non-Hispanics, which, in turn, is much higher (see Graph 3).



Source: Compiled by the author with data from the Current Population Survey, Historical Income Tables.

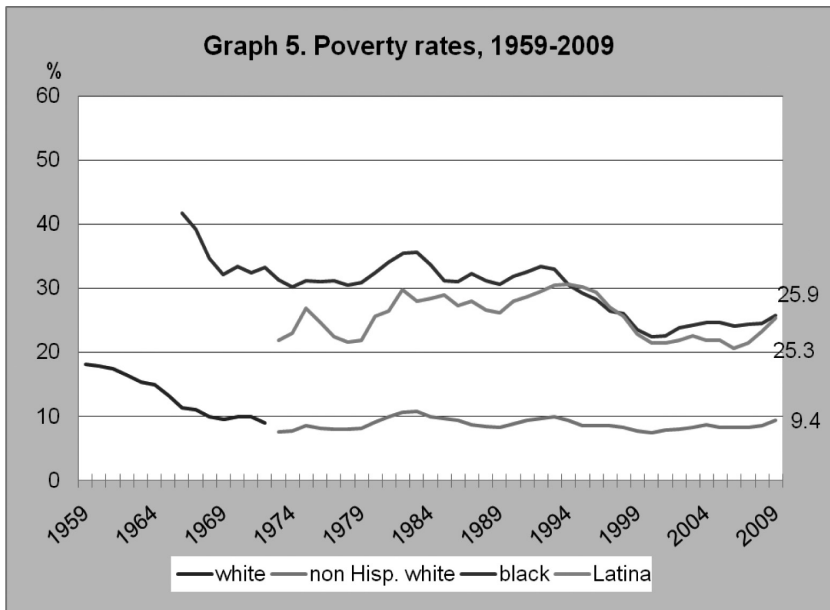
The median income for Hispanic women is markedly lower than that of African American women, who are currently fairly close to non-Hispanic whites. In the case of women who have full time jobs over the year (see Graph 4), the median for Latinas has consistently been the lowest since data collection started, and the gap tends to grow (US Census Bureau, 2010a). It should be noted that the trends for full-time workers, both men and women, tend to have certain differences in regards to the behavior of the median income. In addition, among Latino workers, Mexican males and females and some Central Americans, respectively, tend to have the lowest median incomes.⁴

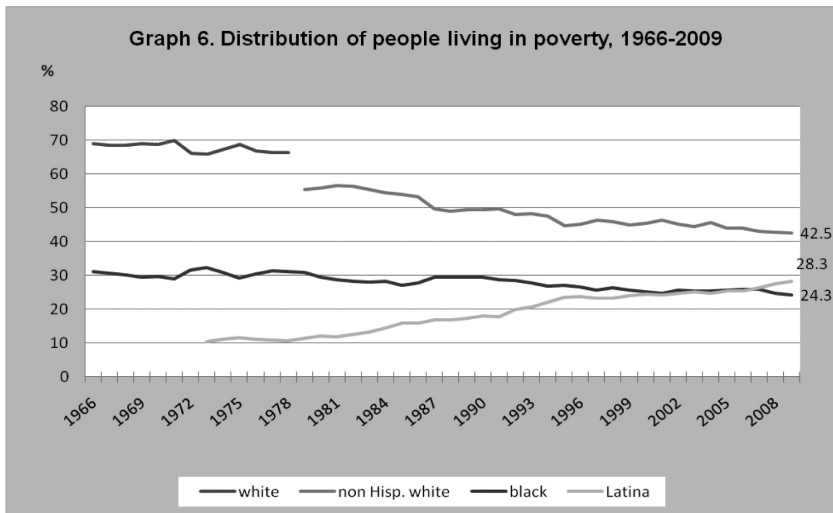
Moreover, although Latino median household and family incomes are a little higher than those of blacks, the gap in relation to the median household and family income of non-Hispanic whites tends to widen slightly. The differences are not due to higher wages for Latinos, as we have seen that both Latino men and women tend to earn less than African Americans, but the fact that there are a greater number of workers per family or household. At the same time, there is usually a greater number of dependents. Hispanic households often include extended family members such as uncles, cousins, nephews etc., and even people who are not family members but probably come from the same hometown. The net effect is that this higher income is divided among a larger number of people and, therefore and since 1985, the per capita income for Hispanics has been lower than that of African Americans. In 2009, the gap was of \$2,648 per year (\$15,063 and \$17,711 dollars, respectively), and the per capita income of non-Hispanic whites was over twice as high (\$30,941) than that of Latinos (US Census Bureau, 2010a).

It is very remarkable that, at the national level and despite the setbacks suffered during recessions, the poverty rate for blacks declined over the last forty years of the 20th century (from 55.1% in 1959 to a minimum of 22.5% in 2000). Since then it has rebounded slightly, reaching 25.9% in 2009. The case has been different for Latinos (see Graph 5). Between 1972 and 1994, the Latino poverty rate increased (from 22.8% in 1972

4. For a more detailed analysis of the wage and occupational structure of Latinos in the United States, see Levine (2001, chap. 3; 2010, pp. 149-187).

to 30.7% in 1994), but has declined significantly since then. It reached its lowest level, 20.5%, in 2006 and rose to 25.3% in 2009. This indicator was higher for Latinos than for African Americans for four consecutive years, from 1994 to 1997. Because of the higher overall growth of the Latino population, while poverty among African Americans shows a downward trend (from 31.1% of the total in 1966 to 24.3% in 2009; see Graph 6) it has risen sharply for Latinos, from 10.3% in 1972 to 28.3% in 2009 (US Census Bureau, 2010b). In other words, Latinos, who constitute about 16% of the U.S. population, comprise about 30% of the population with an income below the poverty line. If current trends continue, the Hispanic population in the United States will not only be the largest ethnic or racial minority (as ascertained by the 2000 census), but also the most impoverished. Furthermore, the proportion of newly arrived migrants living near or below the poverty line is considerably higher.

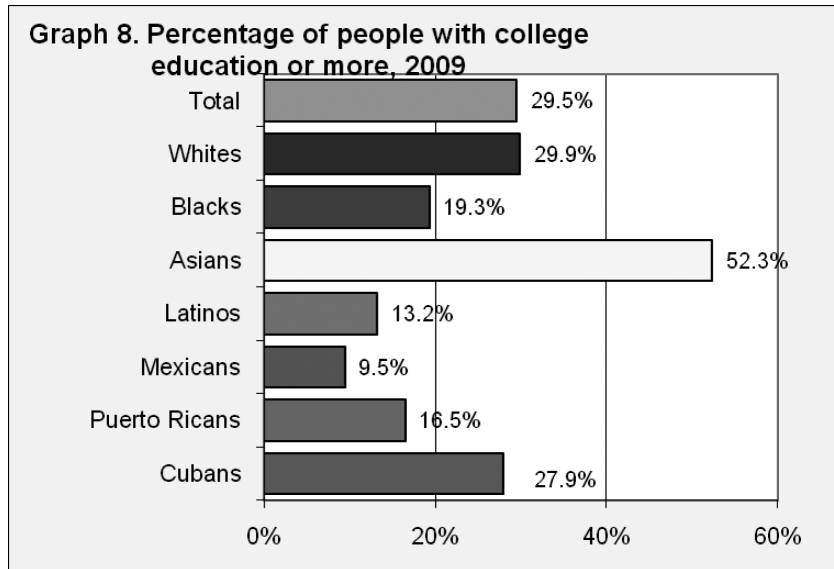
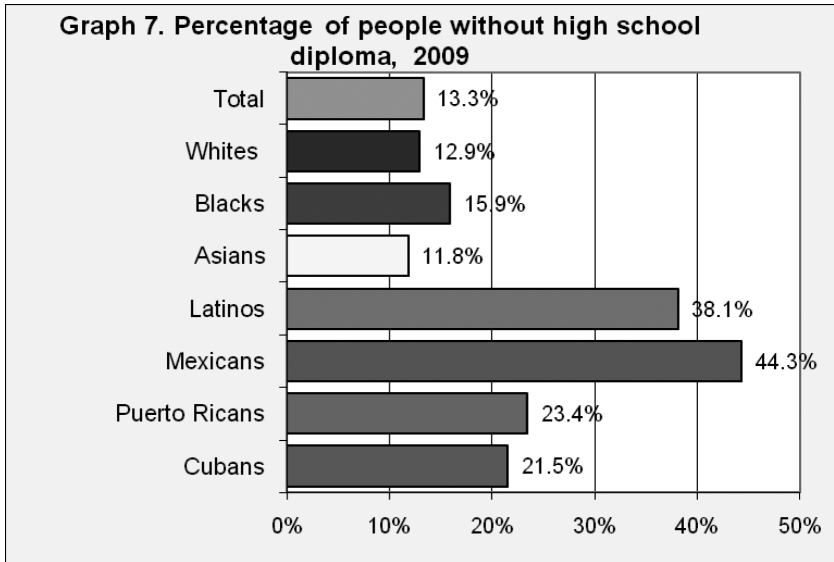




Source: Compiled by the author with data from the Current Population Survey, Historical Poverty Tables.

These differences in income and socioeconomic status can be explained, in part, by differences in schooling, especially since recent decades have shown a correlation between schooling levels and income in the United States. In spite of the growing link between education and earnings and dwindling economic prospects for those without college education—or for those who did not even finish high school—the problem of school dropouts persists, especially among the Hispanic population. This is why access to higher education is doubly difficult for most young Latinos,⁵ a fact that limits their employment options and, consequently, their prospects of intergenerational socioeconomic mobility. As can be seen in Graphs 7 and 8, Latinos of Mexican origin lag behind in terms of schooling.

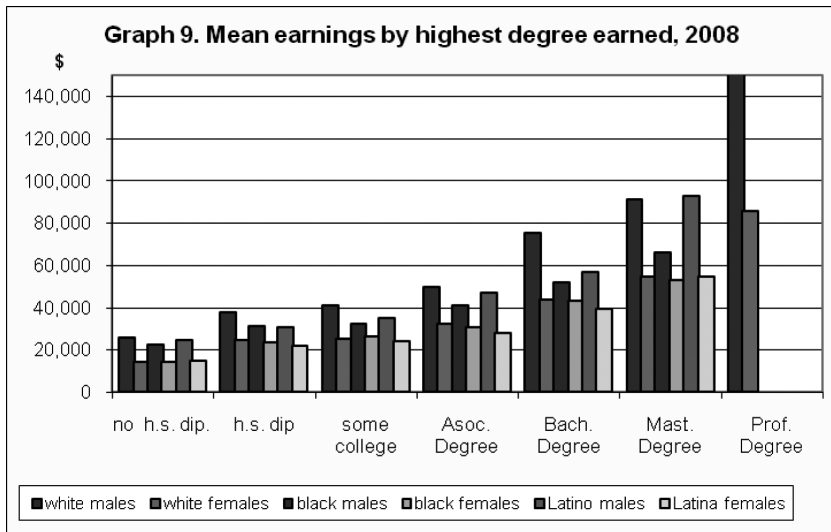
5. For a fuller explanation of the problems facing many Latino children and youths in U.S. public schools, see Levine (2001, chap. 4, 2006).



Source: Compiled by the author with data from the Statistical Abstract of the US 2011.

The high percentage of Mexicans who have not completed high school or its Mexican equivalent (*preparatoria*) is partially explained by the fact that education in Mexico is only compulsory until middle school. There are large numbers of villages and ranches that have nothing beyond grade school and also lack preschools. Many families believe that, by the time they have finished middle school, their children have reached the end of school life and are ready to work. This is when youths from places with high immigration rates usually take their first trip to the United States in search of employment. This helps explain why Mexicans in the United States have such low levels of schooling.

While the educational profiles of men and women currently show great similarities within each racial or ethnic group, clear differences in income remain (see Graph 9). The difference in average earnings between white men and everyone else is growing, except in the case of Latino skilled men, who are few in proportion and actual numbers. For each schooling level, African American males and Latina females tend to lag behind their counterparts in the other groups.



Source: Prepared by the author using data from the Statistical Abstract of the US 2011.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The U.S. labor market has undergone radical changes in recent decades as a result of the country's responses to globalization and increasing international competition. Generally speaking, jobs across almost every level have become more unstable and, in many cases, downright precarious. To lower labor costs, many companies have compressed wages and technological innovation makes it possible to eliminate thousands of jobs. But while traditional manufacturing jobs disappear, new ones arise in the service industry. The patterns of labor supply and demand have changed markedly. Although many of the new jobs created in the United States are despised by those who have been displaced from fairly well paid manufacturing jobs, until 2007 there was a steady and growing influx of Mexican immigrants willing to accept almost any job that would pay in dollars.

The crisis that began in late 2007 poses new and changing conditions that cannot be properly analyzed until the recession's duration, depth and impact have been fully assessed. For the time being, the pace of international migration, including that of Mexicans to the United States, has slowed down. It is expected that the eventual recovery of the world's major economies will reactivate migration flows, although perhaps with some still unpredictable modifications in their pattern. The United States' demographic profile is characterized by a rapidly aging population; the country also has an increasing demand, in times of economic expansion, for various types of services and other activities, such as construction, that can only be met in situ. It is reasonable to assume that economic recovery will be accompanied, at least to some extent, by a renewed demand for immigrant labor at both ends of the job spectrum. Therefore, it is also reasonable to assume that the influx of Mexicans into the United States will resume and their incorporation into the labor market will be more or less similar to that described in this paper.

Regarding the question raised by Rifkin on the end of work, it seems quite clear that many traditional forms of labor are disappearing. At the same time, new forms are emerging, many of them derived from the information revolution and the expansion and liberalization of

market relations. The market currently permeates every aspect of our lives. In a later book, *The Age of Access*, Rifkin (2001) answers his own question regarding the end of the work and states that, while there will be new employment opportunities, these will be in the areas of trade and services. Meanwhile, more and more aspects of life have become commercialized experiences, meaning that millions of people will be employed to supply and market the wishes and needs of others. We are experiencing an increasing mercantilization of more and more aspects of human life. All kinds of activities are becoming commercial transactions that will eventually replace traditional social relations, and we are already witnessing the social upheavals that accompany this transformation. We are not talking about the end of work, but of a radical change in labor and human relations.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX:

Add Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, or place them in the text at the closest reference point.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DURAND, Jorge and Douglas S. Massey (1982-2011), *The Mexican Migration Project*. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/>
- LEVINE, Elaine (2001), *Los nuevos pobres de Estados Unidos: los hispanos*. Mexico, D. F.: Miguel Ángel Porrúa and IIEc, and CISAN, UNAM.
- _____(2006), "Hijos de migrantes mexicanos en las escuelas de Estados Unidos," in *Sociológica*, No.60, January-April 2006.
- _____(2010), "Los hispanos/latinos en Estados Unidos," in *Migración México-Estados Unidos: textos introductorios*, José Luis Sánchez Gavi and Adriana Sletza Ortega Ramírez (coords.), Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla and Lunarena Editorial, Puebla, pp. 149-187.
- PASSEL, Jeffrey S. (2005), *Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics*. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, June 14.
- _____(2006), *The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.* Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, March 7.

- PASSEL, Jeffrey S. and D'Vera Cohn (2010), *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010*. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1.
- REICH, Robert (1992), *The Work of Nations*, New York, Vintage Books.
- RIFKIN, Jeremy (1996), *The End of Work*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- _____(2001), *La Era del acceso*, New York, Penguin Putnam Inc.
- SUM, Andrew, Neeta Fogg, Paul Harrington, et al. (2002), "Immigrant Workers and the Great American Job Machine: The Contributions of New Foreign Immigration to National and Regional Labor Force Growth in the 1990s," work prepared for the National Business Roundtable, Washington, D.C., August.
- THOMAS-BREITFELD, Sean (2003), "The Latino Workforce," Statistical Brief No. 3. Washington, D.C.: National Council of La Raza.
- UCHITELLE, Louis and David Leonhardt (2006), "Men Not Working, and Not Wanting Just any Job," in *The New York Times*, July 31, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/31/business/31men.html>
- US Census Bureau. (1983), *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1984*, Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office.
- _____(2001a), *USA Statistics in Brief-1990 and 2000 Census Race and Hispanic Data Internet*, <http://www.census.gov/statab/www/part1a.html>, consulted March 25, 2001.
- _____(2001b), *The Hispanic Population*, Census 2000 Brief. C2KB/01-3, May.
- _____(2010a), *March Current Population Survey, Historical Income Tables* <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/families/index.html>, http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/household/H05_2009.xls <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/people/index.html>, consulted February 2011.
- _____(2010b), *March Current Population Survey, Historical Poverty Tables*, Table 2, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/historical/hstpov2.xls>, consulted February 2011.
- _____(2011), *The 2011 Statistical Abstract*. <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>, consulted February 2011.
- US Department of Labor (1984), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 31, No.

- 1, Washington, D.C., USGPO, January 1984.
- _____(1991), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 38, No.1, Washington, D.C., USGPO, January 1991.
- _____(2004), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 51, No.1, Washington, D.C., USGPO, January 2004.
- _____(2005), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 52, No.1, Washington, D.C., USGPO, January 2005.
- _____(2006), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 53, No.1, Washington, D.C., USGPO, January 2006.
- _____(2009a), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 56, No.1, Washington, D.C., Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ee/empearn200901.pdf>
- _____(2009b), “Economic News Release, Employment projections 2008-2010 Summary,” Washington, D.C., Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.nr0.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t06.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t07.htm>, consulted February 2011.
- _____(2010), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 57, No.1, Washington, D.C., Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ee/empearn201001.pdf>
- _____(2011), *Employment and Earnings*, Vol. 58, No.1, Washington, D.C., Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ee/empearn201101.pdf>
- WIAL, Howard and Alec Friedhoff (2006), “Bearing the Brunt: Manufacturing Job Loss in the Great Lakes Region, 1995-2005,” Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution.