

## Assimilation or Transnationalism?

### Evidence from the Latino National Survey 2006

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Delivered at Florida International University, Miami, Florida,  
September 2012

#### **ABSTRACT**

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, social scientists have struggled to develop concepts with which to describe and explain how immigrants become part of American society. The two major concepts have been those of assimilation (cultural and structural) and transnationalism, concepts that were developed as America was profoundly transformed by four major waves of migration. This research proposes to use the data from the Latino National Survey (LNS) 2006 to examine the patterns of assimilation and transnationalism among four major groups of contemporary immigrants in the US – Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South Americans. These four groups represent not only major groups of immigrants but also give evidence of different types of immigrants: labor migrants, professional immigrants, refugees, and entrepreneurial immigrants.

The LNS collected data on a number of variables that allow us to assess both these forms of behavior and orientation. The LNS 2006 has data derived from questions regarding language proficiency in English and Spanish; on citizenship and legal status; on political participation in the US; on labor force participation; as well as on the strength of their “American” identity, their

national identity, and the development of a pan-ethnic Hispanic or Latino identity – all markers of assimilation. The LNS also has data derived from questions regarding return visits and return migration; contact with those left behind; remittances; and the immigrants' involvement in homeland politics – all markers of transnationalism. The four samples of immigrants are large enough (Mexicans 3,879; Puerto Ricans 467; Cubans 341; South Americans 410) that descriptive statistics and significance tests should speak to their different histories and reasons for migration, as well as their various patterns of incorporation in America. We will also regress our variables of interest on various measures of assimilation and transnationalism, to see the difference in the coefficients for the various ethnic/nationality groups when controlling for their contrasting social characteristics.

We aim to describe the extent to which these four groups have become assimilated to American society or are engaged in transnational behavior with respect to their original homelands. In addition, we seek to know to what extent the two – assimilation and transnationalism – are forms of behavior that coexist -- giving evidence of the development of new bilingual and bicultural identities -- or contradict each other -- the one being at the expense of the other.

## **A HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION**

Americans are immigrants -- people whose origins are various but whose destinies made them American. Immigration -- voluntary or involuntary -- is what created all multiracial and multicultural nations. The United States is a prime example. Sometimes the migrants moved freely from the area of origin to the area of destination. Such was the experience of the European immigrants. Sometimes their movement was coerced and resulted from processes not of their own making. This was the experience of enslaved Africans as well as of Mexicans, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans, whose history began with conquest and annexation. Sometimes their movement was semi-coerced and semi-free -- the experience of indentured servants (whether Japanese, Chinese, Irish, or Germans) in the nineteenth century and of refugees, such as Jews at the turn of the twentieth century and Cubans, Cambodians, Guatemalans, Salvadorans in the latter part of the twentieth century.

A recurrent question in studies of immigration is: How do we best describe the process by which immigrants become part of the new society -- as assimilation, adaptation, integration, incorporation, transnationalism, or diasporic citizenship? In a recent article, Pedraza (2006) traced the development of these concepts over the course of time, and showed how social scientists struggled to explain these important social processes as America was profoundly transformed by four major waves of migration. This research proposes to use the data from the Latino National Survey (LNS) 2006 to examine whether four major groups of Latinos in the US -- Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South Americans -- can be described as being assimilated to American society or being engaged in transnational behavior with respect to their original homelands. In addition, we seek to know to what extent the two -- assimilation and transnationalism -- are forms of behavior

that coexist or contradict each other. The LNS collected data on variables that allow us to assess both these forms of behavior and orientation.

American history is the history of its immigration, of nearly unceasing flows of migration that have shaped and reshaped this nation. In the first wave, Northwest Europeans immigrated to the United States up until the mid-nineteenth century; in the second, Southern and Eastern Europeans arrived at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries; in the third, precipitated by two world wars, African Americans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans moved from the South to the North; in the fourth, immigrants mostly from Latin America and Asia arrived from 1965 to the present. Each wave has been characterized by a different racial or ethnic composition and coincided with profound changes in the nature of American society. The immigrants of the first wave came to an essentially colonial, agrarian society; those of the second and third waves came to an urban society where they supplied the cheap labor essential to industrialization and expansion; and those of the fourth wave are coming to an increasingly postindustrial, service-oriented society (Muller and Espenshade 1985). Because immigration is American history, yesterday as well as today, immigration is central to the identity of its people as hyphenated Americans; it is also central to its identity as a nation of immigrants.

At present, high rates of immigration, coupled with the high birth rates of many minority groups, such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans, are also changing the composition of the United States. At the dawn of the 21st century, Hispanics surpassed African Americans as the largest minority population. Population projections put the proportion of White Americans at less than half of the population (46 percent) by 2050, when the proportion of Hispanics will be around 30 percent (U. S. Census Bureau 2008). At that point, the traditional “minorities” will, together, constitute the majority (Martin and Midgley 2003). Hence, the United States is once again being

transformed. Such profound demographic shifts can be expected to generate conflict and resistance, which will be most keenly felt in the areas where “minorities” are most concentrated: California, the Southwestern states, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New York. Clearly studying the processes by which Latinos have become or are becoming Americans is not only of intellectual interest but also has practical, policy implications.

Since assimilation and transnationalism are both processes that take place over time, this research proposes to concentrate on four major groups of Latinos who have immigrated to the US during the fourth wave of migration. This wave began in 1965, when the amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the national origins quotas of 1924. In so doing, it reopened the door to immigration, though in the case of Cubans their exodus begins in 1960. We will focus on Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South Americans who have immigrated to the US in this recent period. Throughout the research, the length of their US experience will be a control variable, as we will look both at those who have recently immigrated (immigrated from 1995 to 2005), those who have been in the US for a substantial amount of time (immigrated from 1980-1994), and those who have been in the US for a very long time (immigrated from 1960-1979).

In 2002, more than half of the foreign-born residents were born in Latin America – 30 percent from Mexico alone – while 26 percent were born in Asia, 14 percent in Europe, and 8 percent from Africa and other regions (Martin and Midgley 2004). Again, the importance of the Latino population in the US cannot be overstated. Our research will also take into account that there have always been two immigrant Americas – a working-class immigrant America and a middle-class immigrant America (Bodnar 1985). Our present day admissions criteria contribute to the development of both. In recent decades, occupational preference has been given both to very

poor immigrants, such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Jamaicans, who were often contracted to work in the fields, in construction, and in other menial service jobs, as well as to very skilled immigrants, such as Colombians, Argentines, Filipinos, Asian Indians, Koreans, Taiwanese, and Ecuadorians, who were often contracted to work as doctors, accountants, computer technicians, and nurses. Our choice of the four major groups of Latinos to do research on takes these contrasts into account among the four major types of immigrants Portes and Rumbaut (1990) identified: labor migrants; refugees; professional immigrants; and entrepreneurial immigrants.

Many of the new immigrants who come to the United States bring substantial social resources with them of social class, capital, education, institutional know-how (what Alba and Nee (2003) call high human capital immigrants). As a result, these new immigrants can quickly insert themselves at rather high levels in this society – what Ivan Light (1983) referred to as “leapfrog migration.” At the same time, many of the new immigrants are working-class immigrants, a substantial number of whom are undocumented and lack skills (what Alba and Nee (2003) call low human capital immigrants). The prospects for them, who work in the low-wage service sector, grow increasingly dim. These bear the brunt of the economic restructuring of America, of the declining number of good jobs in manufacturing industries, as well as of persistent and growing poverty. Clearly, there are two Americas. In fact, a more accurate image may be that of a third America, as Jorge Ramos (2004) argued. The third America encompasses the undocumented workers – not only Mexican but also Central and South American, Caribbean, Asian, at times even European – who are the most vulnerable and powerless inhabitants of our nation yet do much of the labor others do not want to do.

## **ASSIMILATION**

The study of immigrants was closely wedded with the beginnings of social science in America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Portes 1978). Immigrants and their plight were the focus of vivid studies from the early days of "the Chicago school," the first major department of Sociology in the U. S. Their work on immigration, ethnic, and urban studies laid the very foundations of American sociology (e.g., Park and Burgess, 1921; Park, 1928, 1950; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1927). Despite varying emphases, they shared the expectation that the outcome to the process of integrating those who arrived at its shores would be a process of assimilation. Yet from the outset there was an ambiguity in the idea that Park himself (1950 [1913]) underscored. "Assimilation" meant to become alike – but like whom? And in what way? That ambiguity remained until Milton Gordon (1964) distinguished among types of assimilation: cultural vs. structural. But the fundamental characteristic of assimilation theory was already evident: assimilation was expected to be a one-way process that would also be natural and evolutionary, process that as time passed would yield the inevitable outcome of the adaptation of minority ethnic groups to the mainstream culture.

As Gordon defined it, cultural assimilation entailed a process of acculturation on the part of the immigrants, of becoming "alike" in cultural patterns, such as language, behavior, and values; while structural assimilation resulted only when the immigrants had been "taken up and incorporated" and entailed the full integration of the immigrants and their descendants into the major institutions of the society (educational, occupational, political) and into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society that lead to intimate primary relationships, including

intermarriage. This distinction aimed to provide a more exact conceptual tool, a yardstick to measure the extent of the assimilation of immigrants and racial minorities in America.

This perspective was clearly apparent in one of the classics of the Chicago school: W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (1927). Drawing from the work of Thomas, Park also was responsible for articulating the theory of the "marginal man." In 1928, Park stressed that marginal human beings -- those who, as a result of migration, ended up by living simultaneously in two separate worlds -- were not only marginal, never fully belonging to the one or the other, but also enormously creative and intelligent, as experiencing more than one social world had sharpened their vision and sensibilities. Park extended the concept of the marginal man from its origins in the notion of the human being caught between two cultures -- the immigrant, the mixed-blood person (Eurasian, mestizo, or mulatto), the outcast and stranger (the Jew) -- to encompass the experience of American Blacks who shared the same national culture but lived at the margins of society in social, rather than cultural or ethnic, marginality. Thus, it was left to E. Franklin Frazier (1957), student of the Chicago school and Black sociologist in the 1950s, to demarcate the difference between race relations and ethnic relations. He underscored that American Blacks had experienced successive forms of economic subordination (slavery, the plantation society, "Jim Crow") with the outcome of extensive cultural assimilation but, rather than final structural assimilation, complete social and institutional segregation. Sociologists, then, in the early part of the 20th century were concerned with what the experience of immigration had done to the immigrants' lives themselves and with the outcomes to the process of integrating those who arrived at its shores, outcomes that were usually conceptualized as acculturation and assimilation -- becoming like the dominant population, which at the turn of the century clearly meant conformity to Anglo-Saxon ways (Gordon, 1964).

Research on immigrants and the eventual outcomes of the processes of immigration, therefore, was at the very foundations of American sociology. But that emphasis began to wane until, in the 1960s, it all but disappeared. Several different trends promoted its disappearance. First, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1924 cut the massive waves of European immigration to the United States. Second, under the pressures of Anglo-conformity, the children of those European immigrants went on to assimilate in American society at a time when the price of success was often one's ethnicity and identity. Third, as Portes (1978) stressed, the research focus on immigrants and immigration was also lost as a result of the arrival of the racial demands and militancy of the Civil Rights Movement so that the analytical focus shifted to that of racial and ethnic relations. And in the process what is really distinctive about immigrants was lost. What is distinctive about immigrants? At the micro level, that they have experienced another whole life in another country and culture, which they bring with them and decisively continues to influence them; and, at the macro level, that the state in two societies permits the immigrants to exit and enter. As gatekeeper, the state regulates and directs migration through a body of law.

From the theoretical vantage point, immigrants are also distinct in that they bring with them a whole host of social resources (their social class, education, occupation, culture, values) from another society and their outcomes in American society will be partly a function of those initial resources, partly a function of the nature of their migration (whether they are political or economic immigrants, victims of genocide, settlers or sojourners), and partly a function of the social context that greeted them, of the amount of opportunity available to them in their new society (in the particular cities and industries where they became concentrated, in the nature of the discrimination or exclusion they afterwards faced).

In sociology, the major challenge to assimilation theory initially came from the proponents of the internal colonialism model, the theoretical effort to delineate in what ways the experiences of the racial minorities (Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans -- some of its oldest immigrants and most indigenous native sons and daughters) differed significantly from the experiences and eventual assimilation of the White European immigrants at the turn of the century. The internal colonialism model underscored that the experience of these groups was different in that they had suffered a process of internal colonization due to their place and role in the system of production, place and role they came to occupy because of their color, their race (Blauner, 1969; Barrera, 1979). Proponents of the internal colonialism model underscored that the European migration had been voluntary, the result of decisions the immigrants themselves had taken, while the migration of the racial minorities had been involuntary, the result of slavery, annexation, conquest – processes that involved substantial violence. Moreover, they stressed, the European immigrants had changed their cultural patterns at will, gradually over the course of generations, while cultural change had been imposed on the racial minorities. Even more, the ghetto had been only a one or two generation phenomena for the European immigrants and their descendants, while for the racial minorities it had become a nearly permanent condition. Last, they stressed, the European immigrants had substantial control of their own communities, through teachers, policemen, small business owners, social workers, while the racial minorities' communities had been manned and controlled by outsiders. Hence, the racial minorities had suffered from a process of colonization, unlike anything experienced by the European immigrants.

An important corrective to the assimilation model, the internal colonialism model itself suffered from stretching the colonial analogy overly far, not recognizing the essential differences between the domestic situation of race relations in the United States and what happened in Africa

and Asia. Thereafter, Joe Feagin (1978) sought to transcend the shortcomings of both the assimilation and internal colonialism models by focusing on the varying ways in which different ethnic groups were incorporated, became a part of the society, by paying attention to the initial and continuing placement and access of various groups within the economic, political, and educational institutions of the society.

Still, as a central concept that guided research, incorporation, like its predecessor, assimilation, assumed a one-way process, failing to take into account that immigrants not only become incorporated into a new society, they also transform it. Immigrants did not just become incorporated into American society, they made and remade America and are fashioning her still.

Despite the challenges the concept of assimilation and acculturation received from other concepts, such as internal colonialism, incorporation, and more recently transnationalism, and diasporic citizenship, Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003) argued in Remaking the American Mainstream that it is still a necessary concept. In their view, assimilation is a grand narrative that served to describe well the experience of the Southern and Eastern European immigrants, as well as the Asian immigrants who arrived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, over the course of several generations, went on to join the mainstream of American life in terms of their levels of educational attainment, patterns of suburbanization, and intermarriage. As Alba and Nee emphasized, the process by which they achieved parity in terms of their life chances was partly historically contingent – dependent on two World Wars, the GI Bill, and the like. It was also racialized – that is, exclusive to those who had become “White” in the process. Banks, other credit lenders, and real estate developers kept Blacks, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans from joining the mainstream of life in suburbia due to their race. Still, even for those formerly excluded groups, there has been progress. Reynolds Farley and Richard Alba, in “The New Second Generation in

the U. S.” (2002) examined the pattern of occupational distribution for older immigrants and for the new second generation in the United States in 1998-2000. They showed that even for those groups dominated by low-wage labor immigrants in the first generation (such as Mexicans, Central Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans), there has been considerable improvement in the average occupational position in the second generation, though not to the point of parity with native-born whites, as is the case for Asians and South Americans, immigrants who arrived with high levels of human capital. Hence, it would seem that for all the challenges to the concepts of assimilation and acculturation over time, the concepts are still useful in exactly the way Gordon intended them to be: as a conceptual yardstick with which to measure the extent to which various groups have joined the American mainstream over the course of time.

The Latino National Survey collected data on a number of variables that will allow us to assess the pattern of assimilation among the four major groups of Latino immigrants: questions on language proficiency in English and Spanish (C2, C3, C4, C5); questions on intermarriage (D7, D8); questions on citizenship and legal status (B10, F1, F4, F5), as well as participation in the military (E20); questions on political participation in the US (I1, I5, I7, I8, I9, J1); questions on religious participation (E17, E18, E19); questions on labor force participation, income, and government assistance (K12, K15, N5, N7, N8); as well as questions on the strength of their “American” identity and pan-ethnic Hispanic or Latino identity (D8, L8, L11), as well as their national identity (L9, L10); questions on their attitudes regarding various government policies, such as US military involvement in Iraq (L20A), the welfare state and various public policy controversies (L20B, L20C, L20D, L20E, L20 F, L20G, L20H, L20I, L20J), as well as immigration itself (L25, L26). All of these questions will help us take into account the extent of the cultural and structural assimilation the four major groups of immigrants have undergone, taking

into account their length of US experience, as well as their age, race, educational attainment, occupations and social class. The four samples of immigrants are large enough (Mexicans 3,879; Puerto Ricans 467; Cubans 341; South Americans 410) that descriptive statistics and significance tests should speak to their different histories and reasons for migration, as well as their various patterns of incorporation in America. We will also regress our variables of interest on various measures of assimilation and transnationalism, to see the difference in the coefficients for the various ethnic/nationality groups when controlling for their contrasting social characteristics.

## **TRANSNATIONALISM**

As a result of the fourth wave of American immigration that we are still living through, sociology refocused its research on immigrants as a social category distinct from racial and ethnic minorities and on immigration as an international process that reshuffles persons and cultures across nations, until we now find ourselves amidst a veritable explosion of immigration research as well as a search for new concepts such as those of transnationalism and diasporic citizenship with which to describe the new realities.

The concept of transnationalism arose when social scientists noticed that under the impact of changes in the nature of modern communications at this century's end, many immigrants fail to shed their old identities and totally assimilate. Instead, they developed new bicultural identities and live their lives and are quite involved in more than one nation, more than one world -- in effect making the home and adopted countries both one lived social world. In his study of Mexican working class immigrants living in Redwood City, California, Roger Rouse found that "while they lived in Redwood City, they were also living deep in western Mexico" (1992:45) and were obliged

to balance two quite different ways of life, which resulted in "cultural bifocality," as he expressed it.

Linda Basch and colleagues (1994:7) formalized the definition of transnationalism now in use: the process by which immigrants "forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." Thus, they underscored, immigrants "take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nations" (Basch et al. 1994:7). Like all social processes, it has economic, political, and social dimensions, both in its causes and consequences. However, soon thereafter the cry arose that transnationalism is not new, though much of the literature sounds as if it is (Foner 1997; Moya 2004; Waldinger 2004). Comparing immigrants at the turn of the century with contemporary immigrants to New York -- the quintessential immigrant city -- Foner (1997) showed that many transnational patterns actually have a long history. At the turn of the last century, many immigrants were involved in what is now called transnationalism. For example, Italian and Russian immigrants also kept ties of sentiment and family alive with those back home by living in what today are called "transnational households" with members scattered across households; by sending remittances back home; and by making political contributions for particular causes, such as the Irish support for the nationalist cause back home. Moreover, with the exception of Russian Jews who fled from political and religious persecution, the return rates for many immigrant groups, like the Italians, were extremely high, around one-third, even higher than today's.

While these critiques are valid, I argued that, nonetheless, at the turn of this 21<sup>st</sup> century, much is distinctive about our current transnationalism (Pedraza 2006). In today's global economy, changes in the technologies of transportation and communication (jet air travel, faxes, electronic

mail, the internet, videos) have changed the qualitative experience of immigration. These modern communications (Or are they post-modern?) have enabled immigrants to maintain more frequent and closer contact with their home country and to participate regularly -- both actually and vicariously -- in the life they once left behind. Based on substantial participant observation, in various immigrant communities, as well as observing the changes over time in my own transnational relationship to my country of origin, I argued that while immigrants in the past also led transnational lives, there is a qualitative difference in the transnational experiences immigrants live today. Because the new technologies allow immediate communication, immigrants can experience the world they left behind as if they were still there. For example, today Costa Ricans can easily and rapidly travel between “home” and “host” societies, rather than spending many months at sea, the voyage that it took Italians to return to Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; likewise, cable television has brought Greece, with its colorful festivals and Olympics, right into the living room of Greek immigrants. Moreover, while in the past communication was not reliable and was painfully slow, today it is nearly certain and fast. For example, the “overseas Chinese” that lived scattered throughout the South East Asian nations in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century often paid a “letter writer” to write the letter they could not, so as to send their messages back to their families in China. However, the letter often did not reach those in the rural areas, or it took a month or two to reach them, so that the news had grown old, while today a fax sent to a temple or a benevolent association will penetrate deep in China, and arrive immediately. Even Cuban-Americans, whose travel is so restricted by the perennial conflicts between the U. S. and Cuban governments, now communicate regularly with relatives and friends back in the island through electronic mail, since a friend that works for a state corporation that has access to e-mail can invariably be found; and while Irish immigrants in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century heard that a new baby had been baptized

in Ireland long after the event, today Mexican immigrants can quickly see the baptism that took place back in their village on video. Rather than being substantially cut off from the past, today's immigrants live – existentially speaking – both in the past and the present at once. A strong emotional thread now ties the two realities, as never before.

The Latino National Survey collected data on a number of variables that will allow us to assess the pattern of transnationalism among the four major groups of Latino immigrants: questions on return visits and migration (M1, M2, M3, M5, M7, M8); questions on economic assets back in their homeland and sending remittances (M6, M9, M10); questions on political participation in their homeland (M11, M12, M13, M14, M15, M16, M17, M19); similar questions for Cubans (N4B, N4C, N4D). All of these questions will help us take into account the extent of the transnational behavior the four major groups of immigrants have undergone, taking into account their length of US experience, as well as their age, race, educational attainment, occupations and social class.

Immigrants today are back there not just in their memories and imaginations, but vicariously, in that very moment; they are able to participate – economically, politically, socially, emotionally – in a regular, constant way, often creating two “homes” that rest on the pillar of an identity (or identities) that incorporate two or more nations, social worlds, at the same time. This is true even when, as Waldinger (2004) pointed out, dual loyalties can be conflicting. My point is not to emphasize a past/present divergence, as Waldinger put it, but to emphasize that we do now live in a brave new world that is both vastly more impersonal and personal at once. We know the ways in which our new world is more impersonal – e.g., telephone menus now answer most of our questions automatically, without our hearing a human voice; clothing is bought and sold online via the computer without our ever touching the cloth in our hands for its feel. But our new world is

also far more personal across very great distances than it once was, as the new technology allows us immediate intellectual and emotional communication with those we love that remained behind. Those sustained affective, emotional linkages also constitute a form of transnationalism, as Elizabeth Aranda and Elena Sabogal (2004) have argued. They give evidence of the social networks across various nations that immigrants are embedded in, even though they do not entail sustained cross-border exchanges, as Portes et al. (1999) insisted upon. For many immigrants in their new “home,” this communication with their families and friends back in their old “home” represent the foundation of their emotional and economic well-being. As Waldinger (2004) concluded, “History involves change, which is why any particular historical constellation is distinct from other like developments encountered before.” Thus, we do want to know how and why “now” differs from “then.” However, as both David Hollinger (1995) and Jose Moya (2004) stressed, the major differences are not necessarily between “then” and “now,” but between groups who show remarkable variation in the development of diasporic identities and political and social involvement.

Like all social forms, transnationalism can have both positive and negative impacts – economically, politically, and socially. It has been argued that transnationalism is salutary for the mental health of immigrants. It has also been argued that it is salutary for the economic health of the underdeveloped nations they came from. For example, in many Latin American countries today immigrant remittances represent millions, even billions of dollars a year – the second or third largest source of foreign exchange, quite critical to the survival of those societies (Lora 2003). And this is true not only with respect to Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela, but also Cuba. Despite the insistence of a very vocal part of the Cuban American exile community, whose political task is to insist that no dollars be sent back to Cuba because that props

up Fidel Castro's regime, another sizable part of the Cuban American exile community insists on putting their families back in Cuba first – and quietly sends dollars back to their family left behind, who need it. This is a moral task in which women are centrally involved (cf. Pedraza 1991).

Not only does migration result in remittances, but remittances also result in migration. In her study of the cumulative causation of migration from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Puerto Rico to the U. S., Elizabeth Fussell (2004) found that in all communities in these countries, except Puerto Rico, larger amounts of remittances sent to households in a given year were associated with higher migration prevalence ratios the following year, especially in places with older migration streams, such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic. As Fussell underlined, immigrants who send back remittances demonstrate the rewards to migration, thus enticing more members of the sending community to go to the United States. Puerto Rico was an exception because, as U. S. citizens, Puerto Ricans migrate freely to and fro. So much so that Jorge Duany (2000) has investigated how a “nation on the move” constructs its identity in Puerto Rico (where 61 percent of Puerto Ricans live) and the diaspora (where fully 39 percent of Puerto Ricans now live). While language (Spanish) and culture (Latin America) used to be the cultural markers of the Puerto Rican identity, such a large diaspora, many of whom do not speak Spanish and are rather American, challenges the very markers of that identity.

Moreover, while overall the impact of immigrant remittances is positive for buoying the sinking economies back home, it can also create certain imbalances. Sarah Blue's (2004) survey of Cuban families in Havana who received remittances from their relatives abroad showed that the remittances were linking the family that both the Cuban government and the exile community had torn asunder, and that they certainly provided some measure of material comfort for those left behind, improving their lives; however, they also served to exacerbate racial inequality. Since the

first two waves of the Cuban exodus (from 1959 to 1974) were predominantly White (cf. Pedraza 2007), Black and Mulatto Cubans in the island have fewer immigrant networks abroad they can relay on to send remittances to improve their household consumption or to sponsor their emigration.

Transnationalism has class as well as racial dimensions. Harriett Romo's (2004) study of the transnational lives of the Mexican elite in San Antonio, Texas, described the major influence they had on the cultural and artistic life in the city of San Antonio itself, as well as the role of "broker" they played between the Mexican community, on the one hand, and the Anglo elite, on the other, on behalf of the Mexican community. As David Hollinger underscored, the new immigration, like the old, "displays a variety of degrees of engagement with the United States and with prior homelands, and it yields some strong assimilationist impulses along vivid expressions of diasporic consciousness" (1995:153).

Governments will try to restrict the flows of communication involved in transnationalism, as past President George W. Bush in 2004 drastically curtailed the involvement of Cuban-Americans with their family and friends in the island by restricting their travel and the amount of remittances sent back. But immigrants still find ways to get around the government's restrictions. Try as governments try to stop the immigrants transnationalism, however, they will not be able to do so because transnationalism is a fact of the modern (or post-modern) world in which we live, it is a result of the spread of the new forms of communication and the new identities (bilingual and bicultural) that, I argued (Pedraza 2006) immigrants increasingly develop.

One of the aims of our research will be to establish to what extent assimilation coexists with transnationalism among our four groups of immigrants, or whether high levels of assimilation imply low levels or transnationalism (and vice versa). With the Latino National Survey data we

will be able to assess these patterns, as well as to assess whether participation in transnational practices and the exercise of a diasporic citizenship has consequences for the extent to which immigrants can engage in ethnic politics in American life. Like any other social form, transnationalism has both positive and negative consequences. The positive consequence is that transnationalism gives us a new emotional health – a present that is tied to one’s past. But the negative consequence may well be that this comes at the price of domestic political engagement, of creating institutions and lobbies that can improve the immigrant’s lives as immigrants, workers, ethnics. At a time like now when America is not only “a nation of immigrants” – whose history was written by immigrants -- but is also an immigrant nation – one whose present relies on immigration, the questions this research poses and the LNS will allow us to answer are key questions.

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