



## **Understanding Assimilation within Higher Education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Latino immigrants who often experience discrimination lack assimilation. The purpose of this exploration was to better understand the historical lack of assimilation and the relationship, in particular the access to higher education. In this study, assimilation was measured according to English mastery by Spanish speakers. The research question was focused on what extent the level of education relates to assimilation for Latinos in the US. A correlational design with multiple regression analysis was used in this study to analyze the Latino National Survey of 2006 secondary data (N =8634). Results indicated that education was significant. Further, current trends show an increased opportunity for education in the Latino group. There is also an increased need for higher education beyond 2030 in the US. The implications for social change include research-based information to develop programs for Latinos to adapt into the US population. Lastly, the author's positionality will be discussed.*

**Keywords:** Assimilation, Discrimination, Education, Generational Standing, Income, Latinos, Regression

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## INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

One problem for Hispanics in the US is they have difficulty assimilating into US culture, which also has prevented them from accessing key services. This includes facing discrimination and immigrant backlash in higher education (Alba & Maggio, 2022; Antman et al., 2023; Figlio & Özek, 2020). The purpose of this study was to investigate how education, generational standing, and socioeconomic status influence assimilation among Latinos. The researcher reviewed the extant literature and developed a concise synopsis to establish the relevance of the problem. Major sections of the literature review in this paper included a discussion of background on the topic and the theoretical framework. Other sections were education, generational standing, and socioeconomic indicator, but in particular the variable of education.

Reports and studies indicate that the ethnic change is evident in the US, with Hispanics as the country's largest ethnic-minority group (Mindes et al., 2022; Stavans & Ashkenazi, 2022; Van Hook & Glick, 2020). Based on 2020 census, Hispanic people are the second-largest ethnic group in the US (Statista Research Department, 2024). They further explain that some American states are the fastest-growing population. Hispanics account for 50% of the population growth and 15% of the total population in the US, which ranks about the same to the national average for the state of Maryland as an example, according to the American Community Survey (2020). In 2022, California had the highest Hispanic population in the US, with over 15.73 million people claiming Hispanic heritage (Statista Research Department, 2024). Texas, Florida, New York, and Arizona rounded out the top five states for Hispanic residents in that year (Statista Research Department, 2024).

Hispanics are one of the largest growing minority populations in the US. Again, according to Statista Research Department (2024), the Hispanic population is the second largest and fastest-growing minority ethnic group in the US compared to other ethnic groups. The Hispanic ethnic group consists of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central or South American and other Spanish cultures irrespective of their race, living in the US. Research indicates that the Hispanic ethnic group was the largest minority in the US by 2021 with a total population of 62.65 million people of Hispanic ethnicity living in the US. The Hispanic population has been steadily increasing by 21.6% in the last decade since 2009. By 2009, 49.33 million Hispanic people were living in the US and this population has steadily increased. The Hispanic population has been estimated at 111.22 million Hispanics by the year 2060, which is an important factor in the population of the US. The statistical data later shows

that the Hispanic population has been consistently increasing compared to other races.

Educational attainment has been a challenge among Hispanics in the US. Research indicates that despite making significant strides in workforce and education in the last decade, Hispanics are academically disadvantaged as they are one of the least educated ethnic groups living in the US (Lichter & Johnson, 2020). They further explain that the majority of the Hispanic students start learning with limited social and economic resources as well as ill-equipped schools leading to educational disparities. Compared to other ethnic groups, Hispanics experience limited proficiency in English, low educational attainment, and a lack of essential economic resources (Liou et al., 2023). Such barriers make it challenging for parents to engage their children in early learning activities that are important for their academic success (Boyce et al., 2020). These factors contribute to low educational attainment among Hispanic ethnic groups compared to other ethnic groups such as Whites, Blacks, and Asian Americans.

Compared to other races, educational growth has been the least among the Hispanic population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2023), the growth in high school completion rates for Hispanic origin groups from 2012 to 2022 increased. This consists of an increase in high school completion from 92.5% to 95.2% for the white non-Hispanic population, 85% to 90.1% for the African Americans and Black population, and from 88.9% to 92.3% for Asian Americans. However, the least growth reported by the Bureau was in high school completion rate was found within the Hispanic population which had the least growth in educational attainment from 65% to 75.2% for adults aged 25 years and older. The data above shows that the academic attainment and performance of Hispanic students once they are enrolled in schools is significantly low when compared with other ethnic groups such as Asians, Blacks and Whites. Other researchers such as (Assari et al., 2020) have demonstrated that such disparities in educational attainment could be caused by limited access to economic and social resources by the Hispanic population as well as increased levels of segregation against Hispanics as a disadvantaged community.

The Hispanic population has low academic attainment compared to other minority populations such as African Americans, and Asians. Despite a steady increase in population as earlier discussed, Hispanic ethnic groups continue to face educational attainment challenges which make them the least educated population in the US (Assari et al., 2020). Such alarming low educational attainment despite their high population should be a cause for concern in the US (Lichter & Johnson, 2020; Assari et al., 2020). The

disparity in educational achievement has been a consistent problem among the Hispanic population that should be addressed to meet the educational needs of its growing population in the US. Such a gap in education attainment between the Hispanic population and other ethnic groups prompts further research on the causes of low academic attainment in higher education.

## **Framework**

There are two theories that explain plausible reasons why assimilation is difficult for Hispanic immigrants in the US. Walzer and Miller (1997) claimed states should have rights to self-determination, arguing that they should be able to control culture. However, some authors like Hidalgo (2014), have used an analogy to explain this phenomenon, stating clubs believe they have a right to exclude non-members from membership. Further, he suggests that excluding non-members from membership would lead to restricting immigration and increasing deportations. Others have argued that the self-determinism theory restricts immigration and are permissible for lawmakers to decide due to the sovereign democratic processes. Regardless of which side one might be on the assimilation argument, the lack of assimilation leads to difficulty in attaining higher education for Hispanics, and access to income based on generational standing as Burroughs (2018) stated. Lastly, self-determinism theory explained that the US enacted policies to protect against immigration. Hamilton (2019) contends that immigrant population growth, targeting ethnic groups like Latinos and Africans were enacted to prevent immigration within the US. Samson (2014) stated that [Latino] immigrants should try to blend in with host countries. This does not negate the harboring of their parent culture. This action alone may lessen immigrant backlash while assimilating. However, staying in the host country can be challenging. The reason that staying in the host country is challenging is when an ethnic group attempts to assimilate into mainstream culture, there is sometimes an environment of prejudice present. An immigrant may assimilate using another way using straight-line assimilation. Straight line assimilation means direct acclimation into the host society. Still, segmented assimilation involved the 19th- and 20th-century European immigrants' smooth transitions into a new US culture after the slaughter of an ethnic group like the American Indians. However, immigrants still may face severe immigrant backlash from the host society.

A second mode of assimilation generated upward mobility is also linked to the co-ethnic community in power. However, there is resistance from the host country for assimilation (Diaz, 2020). For example, most British, Italians, German, English, and French people easily assimilated into the US

through upward mobility and shared power with the host country but gained access to higher education was a hard-to-come by benefit for minorities like Hispanics (Donato et al., 2022). The last categorization of segmented assimilation as producing downward or straight mobility that produces prejudice, discrimination, and makes people poor in the US. The theory of assimilation provides a plausible explanation of the lack of assimilation as a slow-rate phenomenon regarding access to higher education in the US for Latinos.

An explanation of assimilation origination will be discussed further throughout the literature review and assimilation along with higher education relationships will be evaluated for correlation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Problems Latinos face with Assimilation and Education Explained**

The acculturation process, cultural values, and availability of resources influence education and assimilation among the Latino population in the US. The immigration status has resulted in a drift in access to quality education between Latino immigrants and Anglos in the US (Alba & Maggio, 2022). The acculturation process has a significant impact on the Latino population's experiences in the US. Some Latino immigrants choose to stick to their native cultural traditions while some often prefer to adopt the U.S. culture and customs (Diaz, 2020). Differences in acculturation levels impact the connection as Latino individuals navigate differences in cultural expectations and approaches to conflict resolution (Montgomery et al., 2021). Education plays a pivotal role in the recognition and addressing the acculturation and helps in developing resilience and good relations in the community.

Researchers argue that most Latino children experience educational challenges resulting from the pressure of crowding in educational settings (Boch et al., 2021). Maryland has recorded the highest number of Latino immigrant children compared to other states in the U.S. According to Stansbury and Schultz (2023), Maryland is ranked in the third position with 9% of the Hispanic population holding bachelor's degrees and second with 21% holding professional and graduate degrees. Findings from the study established that 4% of Latino immigrants in Maryland have professional and graduate degrees, and 12% have a bachelor's degrees and 84% have completed high school, while 2% do not complete high school (Martínez & Gonzalez, 2021).

With a significant increase in the Latino population has been witnessed over time according to the US Census Report (2016),,, Salins

(2023) has researched and established that Latinos are highly educated and hold higher household incomes in Maryland, for example, compared to their Hispanic populations in other states in the US. Studies indicate that the enrollment population of Latino students in public schools in Maryland stands at 9% percent of the total student enrollments in the state (Donato et al., 2022). The same study established a significant increase of 106.3% of Latino children in the schools in Maryland. Research on Latino children's performance in school has, however, revealed that Latino students tend to perform poorly compared to their Whites and Asian counterparts in mathematics and reading subjects. Education significantly unleashes the potential to achieve job opportunities and increased household income among the population. Achievement of academic success such as college degrees is associated with diverse social, cultural, and economic benefits creating a conducive environment for the Latino population (Bekteshi & Kang, 2020). Lastly, some Latinos go on to attain a higher education at higher rates more so as time progresses.

In the Northeast US, the highest employment opportunities among Latinos have continued to be recorded in Maryland compared to the other states, for example. Latinos encounter a significant challenge of access to resources which limits their ability to access education in the U.S. (Amin, 2020). Access to Relationship Education programs has been inhibited by diverse factors including language barriers and socioeconomic challenges among Latinos (McCann et al., 2022). Efforts to enhance family access to culturally relevant materials and communal support can empower the Latino population to access better educational outcomes.

Education contributed to Latino immigrants' standings, which added to the rationale for my selection of these variables in this study. According to the Statista (2024), only a quarter of Latinos ages 25 to 29 (23%) had earned a bachelor's degree, which is far less than their White, Black, and Asian counterparts. The quality of education immigrant children received ranks high in the state of Maryland though when compared to Hispanics in other states (Donato et al., 2022). According to the most recent US Census (2020), the Latino population has experienced exponential growth. The Department of Legislative Services (2008) identified Latinos as better educated and possessing higher incomes in Maryland, for example, than their Hispanic counterparts in many other states. In 2006, there were an estimated 76,000 Latino students enrolled in public schools in Maryland, according to the same Department. This number accounts for 9% of the total enrollment of students. Over the past 8 years, the Latino group accounted for a 106.3% increase in student enrollment in Maryland. Also, the 2008 Maryland Report Card, an

annual report developed by the Maryland State of Education on the progress of student performance, found Latinos fell behind Whites and Asians, but they were ahead of Blacks, who are behind their peers. The report card highlighted continuing concerns of an increased dropout rate among the Latino group and a below-margin average of the graduation rate within the state like Maryland, for example.

### **Generational Standing and other Socioeconomic Factors**

Generational standing has been a topic of in-depth discussion in the research, with several existing generations of immigrants available for the purposes of investigation. Generational standing refers to the measure of the Latino immigrant in the host country stay in years (Burroughs, 2018). Researchers such as Donato et al. (2022) have delineated between native-born and immigrant groups, explaining if the persons were born in the US, they are considered native born. First-generation immigrants come from another country and settled in the US, while second-generation immigrants are individuals who are born abroad or those with one parent born abroad (Stavans & Ashkenazi, 2022). Second-generation immigrants are likely to assimilate into an underclass and have downward mobility, consistent with the scope of this study. The downward mobility of the second-generation immigrant who is caught between the old, traditional way of life as taught by his or her parents, which is a weakness, and new potential educational opportunities offered by the US, which is a strength (Van Hook & Glick, 2020). This explanation supported the rationale of my selection of Latino immigrants. The second-generation immigrants involved themselves in chancy behavior compared to natives while third-generation immigrants were born in the US.

The assimilation process among Latino generations has been impacted by generational standing and socioeconomic factors in the US over time. Research has established that those individuals born in the US were considered native-born (Lovrich et al., 2021). First-generation immigrants who originated from other countries and opted to settle in the US are often impacted by challenges including cultural differences, language barriers, and difficulty in navigating the U.S. systems (Martínez & Gonzalez, 2021). For assimilation, there is the need to adapt to the American culture, learn English, and settle for job opportunities that match their academic qualifications.

Second-generation Latino immigrants born in the U.S. to immigrant parents encounter diverse assimilation challenges. Latino children born in the US by immigrant parents tend to predominantly speak English and often tend to exhibit higher educational achievement than their biological parents (Van

Hook & Glick, 2020). Despite the advantages, studies have indicated that they often face challenges including cultural heritage, discrimination, and stereotypes from other children, especially Whites (John, 2022). Second-generation immigrants assimilate into an underclass and tend to undergo downward mobility. This research has confirmed that second-generation immigrants undergo a challenging ordeal of balancing their parents' traditional lifestyle with the new opportunities available in the US. Preserving parent's cultural practices and cultural roots has been significant in embracing the possibilities of the new culture in the US (Antman et al., 2023).

Third-generation immigrants have been established to be predominantly born in the US only and their grandparents were first-generation immigrants from different cultures. Third-generation Latino immigrants have been established to speak the U.S. language fluently and enjoy American food (Hermansen et al., 2022). Similar research indicated that Latino's generational status was positively correlated with socioeconomic status like children's healthy diet (Fanfan & Stacciarini, 2020). The perception is that Latino immigrants with higher financial status have healthier eating habits and maintain a close connection to the Mexican diet styles. Change in generations over time has seen many Latinos become fully assimilated into American society while engaging in American cultural practices, speaking English, and engaging in the American Education system for absorption in the labor market with ease (Jang et al., 2022). Challenges including discrimination and socioeconomic inequalities have, however, continued to exist among the Latino populations in the US over time.

Socioeconomic status, including household income and level of education, plays a significant role in influencing the assimilation process among Latinos in the U.S. Higher-income families usually have adequate resources at their disposal for access to better healthcare services and quality education which are essential in the assimilation process among the Latinos in the U.S (Azzolini & Schnell, 2024). These resources provide opportunities for advancement and facilitate integration into different facets of life including the culture of the American State. According to Park et al. (2020), the body mass index for Latino children from first-generation and second-generation and from high household incomes is considered to be high. The study findings indicate that less research has been conducted on the assimilation process within immigrant groups despite the information. Mastering the English language was used to test the immigrants' willingness and desire to assimilate into the American culture according to research (Kosack & Ward, 2020). Also, educational levels are observed.



The U.S. census of 2011 indicates a 10% poverty rate and 4.7% unemployment rate in Maryland compared to the national grid (Villarreal & Tamborini, 2023). While Hispanics were identified to have lower income than Caucasian and Asian populations though their level of income was slightly higher than that of the African American populations, findings from previous research have indicated that each Latino household has been approximated to have a net worth of approximately \$58,093 (Hermansen et al., 2022). The majority of the Latino family earnings were received through employment and fewer immigrants received assistance from the government contrary to the stereotype and prejudice of Latino populations draining public resources. Hispanics have been identified to work mostly in the service and construction industries as noted by Antman et al. (2023).

Latinos are limited in getting employed in professional and managerial job positions. Latino families prefer to allocate funds to family expenses over investing in education which reflects the importance that Latinos attach to family values (Martínez & Gonzalez, 2021). Research revealed that the level of parents' education and their level of income shape purchasing power and decisions within Latino immigrant families (Boch et al., 2021). Latino neighborhoods often significantly influence the assimilation process. Access to resources to well-established and funded job opportunities, healthcare facilities, and schools can enhance the assimilation process among the Latino community (Donato et al., 2022). Residing in communities and neighborhoods that provide adequate resources and opportunities contributes to the navigation of difficulties that can limit the assimilation process in the US.

The Hispanics have faced various challenges assimilating into the US, especially in their first generation of immigrants into the US. Research indicates that the Hispanic population in the US has found it challenging assimilating into the American culture due to language barriers that hinder their access to significant services such as health and education (Alba & Maggio, 2022). However, such language challenges are only experienced by the first generation of Hispanic immigrants who face language barriers in conveying their message in English making it difficult to access essential services such as education, employment opportunities and healthcare services Cano et al., (2021). However, the subsequent Hispanic generations born by parents, who have lived in the US, find it easy to assimilate into the US because of their proficiency in English. This gives them access to all services including employment opportunities, health and education (Antman et al., 2020). The understanding of the English language makes second-generation Hispanic populations easy to blend with American culture. Yet, they are likely

to lose their cultural heritage while living in the US the farther the generation from the original culture.

Unlike the second and subsequent Hispanic generations in the US, the first cohort of Hispanics immigrating into the US finds it difficult to integrate into American society. Again, this is caused by limited access to essential resources and services including education and employment opportunities (Antman et al., 2023). Some researchers such as Duncan et al. (2020) established that the second and subsequent Hispanic generations in the US experienced increased mobility in terms of access to employment opportunities with decent wages and skill levels, thus leading to a high level of socioeconomic status for those with an instinct for economic growth. On the other hand, subsequent Hispanic generations faced systemic bias and racial discrimination have been a hindrance to their social, and economic progress, despite experiencing growth in socioeconomic status (Peri & Rutledge, 2022). Thus, the Hispanic population faced assimilation challenges in their first immigration into the US but improved and had seamless integration during the subsequent generations.

Empirical research indicates that increased disparities in healthcare access among the Hispanic population could be a significant challenge in the integration and assimilation of Hispanic communities into the US (Diaz, 2020). The systemic bias and racial segregation reported of Hispanics have been rampant in the US against people of Hispanic origin regardless of whether they are first-generation immigrants or have lived in the US for decades. Such racial segregation and systemic bias hinder the assimilation progress of the Hispanic population in the US (Ju et al., 2022; Diaz, 2020). Research articles discussed thus far provide great insight that regardless of the Hispanic generation, systemic bias and racial segregation pose challenges to the assimilation process including limited access to healthcare and other essential services.

In the case of the Hispanic community, different generations may face diverse barriers to assimilation as the first-generation experience language barriers and access to low-wage and low-skilled labor opportunities (Figlio & Özek, 2020). Such challenges make it difficult to afford the cost of healthcare and other services for first-generation Hispanic immigrants in the US (Figlio & Özek, 2020; Boch et al., 2021). Conversely, the second generation of the Hispanic population in the US consisting of Hispanics born in the US, experienced increased access to job opportunities and upward mobility of socioeconomic status (Alba & Maggio, 2022; Antman et al., 2023; Figlio & Özek, 2020; Boch et al., 2021). The findings across the articles offer

important insight into how different generations of Hispanic populations experience assimilation challenges into the US.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

For the Burroughs (2018) study, five variables of education, generational standing and income, assimilation and language proficiency were surveyed. However, I particularly focused on the educational aspect of the study involving level of education and English mastery and its association with assimilation as the dependent variable. I measured the variable of assimilation by quantifying how well and many Hispanics have learned the English language, with the dependent variable found in the LNS (2006). The LNS (2006) tested various variables like education, generational standing, income and tested whether assimilation in the Hispanic immigrant group was plausible. Assimilation measured the rate at which a Latino adapted to the US ways, such as learning English. The assimilation measuring rate was a common notion believed by the Hispanic immigrants in the US.

### **Participants**

The data was taken from the LNS (2006) survey which was secondary data polled throughout the US in Spanish and English by phone taken from the University of Michigan. In a sample of  $N = 8,634$  individuals, there were 4,738 (54.9%) women and 3,896 (45.19%) men. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 97 years ( $M = 40.52$ ,  $SD = 15.47$ ). To accomplish this, the original study put them into a multiple regression math equation which were assimilation, generational standing, education and income. However, for the purpose of this study, I only focused on identifying how the independent variable of education within the Latino immigrant group in the US related to the Hispanic immigrant group dependent variable of assimilation. The other independent variables of generational standing, and income were mentioned and inserted in the original research but were not the primary focus of this research paper. Data was analyzed using SPSS software. The countries of origin are listed in Table 1.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which education influence Latino's group assimilation in the American society. Basically, to what extent do education influence Latino's group assimilation in the American society?

**Table 1**  
*Country of Origin*

Ancestry	<i>N</i>	%
Venezuela	5,704	66.10
Puerto Rico	822	9.50
Cuba	420	4.90
El Salvador	407	4.70
Dominican Republic	335	3.90
Guatemala	149	1.70
Colombia	139	1.60
Spain	105	1.20
Ecuador	103	1.20
Honduras	87	1.00
Peru	65	0.80
Nicaragua	51	0.60
Bolivia	36	0.40
(DO NOT READ)		
US	35	0.40
Costa Rica	32	0.40
Don't Know	30	0.30
Argentina	28	0.30
México	27	0.30
Refused	18	0.20
Chile	17	0.20
Panamá	14	0.20
Uruguay	7	0.10
Paraguay	3	0.00
Total	8,634	100.00

## METHODS AND RESULTS

### Methodology

Quantitative correlational research methodology was used in this study. Quantitative methods are used in instances when researchers seek to collect and analyze quantifiable data from participants (Mohajan, 2020). In this study, a quantitative research methodology was appropriate because the aim was to collect and analyze data on the historical lack of assimilation of Latino immigrants in the US, particularly in relation to English mastery and its impact on access to higher education. To establish the predictive

relationship between study variables, a correlational research design was used. Secondary data set was from the Latino National Survey (LNS) was used.

The following main research question and hypotheses were tested using both multiple and logistic regression: Research Question: To what extent do each of the three predictors (generational standing, education, and income) individually relate to assimilation in the Latino Immigrant group in the US?

**H<sub>0b</sub>:** First-generation, less educated, and poor Latinos will not assimilate into the US society.

**H<sub>a</sub>:** First-generation, less educated, and poor Latinos have a harder time assimilating into the US society.

For the set of hypotheses, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0b</sub>) was also rejected because the findings of this study yielded a significant positive relationship between educational level and fluency in English. Fluency in English indicated a sensitivity to the duration of the individual’s stay in the US (Table 2). The highest level of education is listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Highest Level of Education Completed*

	N	100%
High school graduate	2,110	24.4
Eighth grade/below	1,714	19.9
Some college	1,646	19.1
Some high school	1,256	14.5
4-year college degree	818	9.5
Graduate degree	582	6.7
GED	286	3.3
None	222	2.6
Total	8,634	100.0

Note: The most common highest level of education completed for the participants was those who had graduated from high school (24.4%). This was followed by eighth grade or below (19.9%), some college (19.1%), four-year college degree (9.5%), a graduate of professional degree (6.7%), GED (3.3%), and no formal education (2.6%).

This can be seen in the fact that when grandparents were born outside the US, there was no significant correlation in English speaking skills. However, positive significant correlations were yielded when parents were born in the US (immigrant born) and when the individual was born in the US (native born). The second hypotheses suggested that there would be a

correlation between the level of education of Latinos, together with income level, and their likeliness to assimilate into the US society as measured by their reported proficiency in English (Table 3). While controlling for age and nationality, increased levels of education resulted in increased levels of mastery of English; therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis for the hypotheses. Table 3 presents the fluency of English for Hispanic immigrants in America.

**Table 3**  
*Fluency of English*

	N	100%
Just a little	2,735	27.51
Not at all	1,041	12.06
Pretty well	860	9.96
Very well	694	8.04
Missing	3,672	42.53
Total	8,634	100.0

Note: The most common response was that the participant knew “just a little English” (27.51%). This was followed by the responses of “not at all” (12.06%), “pretty well” (9.96%), and “very well” (8.04%), while 42.53% of the participants gave no responses (Table 4). Results Due do the ordered categorical responses of the dependent variable “English proficiency” and also to allow for control of covariates, it was decided to perform both hierarchical multiple and hierarchical logistic regression in order to compare the results. The responses for the dependent variable ranged from 1 to 4 with 1 = “not at all”, 2 = “Just a little: 3 = “Pretty well”; and 4 = “Very well.” A dichotomous variable was created for logistic regression in which a response less than 2 indicated no mastery of English (coded as 0) and a value greater than or equal to 2 indicated mastery of English (coded as 1). Table 4 indicates the odds Ratios for the Logistic Regression Model.

After controlling for age and nationality, the full model was found to be statistically significant,  $\chi^2(23) = 1279.59, p < .001$ . The odds of people born in the US relating to assimilation in the Latino group are 0.089 times the odds of those not born in the US. These results are depicted in Table 4. Education was found to be statistically significant in that people with no education relating to assimilation in the Latino group were 0.066 times the odds of those with education resulted in greater likelihood of being fluent in English. Specifically, those with a no formal education were 15.15 times as likely to not master English, compared to someone with a graduate degree. Those with only an 8th education were 7.58 times as likely not to master English; with

some HS education, 3.71 times as likely not to master English; and with only a high school education, 1.13 times as likely to not master English. Other levels were not significant. Table 5 is the Coefficient Table for Multiple Regression Model

**Table 4**  
*Odd Ratios (ExpB) for Logistic Regression Model*

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>95% C.I. for Odds</i>	
AGE	.003	.003	.362	1.003	.996	1.010
Mexican (ref)			.000			
Hispanic	-.078	.235	.740	.925	.583	1.467
Central American	-.192	.193	.318	.825	.565	1.204
Cuban	-.367	.266	.168	.693	.411	1.167
D Dominican	-.070	.262	.790	.932	.558	1.559
Puerto Rican	1.279	.253	.000	3.593	2.187	5.903
Salvadoran	-.230	.256	.368	.794	.481	1.311
Parents Born in US (1)	-.104	.112	.352	.901	.724	1.122
Grandparents Born Outside I US (1)	.131	.132	.322	1.140	.880	1.478
Born in US ((1)	-2.421	.193	.000	.089	.061	.130
Graduate (ref)			.000			
NO education	-2.723	.454	.000	.066	.027	.160
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	-2.024	.217	.000	.132	.086	.202
Some H.S.	1.312	.218	.000	.269	.176	.413
GED	-.126	.268	.639	.882	.521	1.491
H.S. grad	-.845	.204	.000	.430	.288	.641
Some college	.092	.211	.663	1.096	.725	1.658
4-Year college	-.005	.239	.983	.995	.623	1.589
> \$65K (ref) >			.000			
< \$15K <	-2.259	.199	.000	.104	.071	.154
\$15k - \$24,999	-1.750	.189	.000	.174	.120	.252
\$25k - \$34,999	-1.150	.190	.000	.317	.218	.460
\$35k - \$44,999	-.681	.201	.001	.506	.341	.751
\$45k - \$54,999	-.287	.227	.206	.751	.481	1.171
\$55k - \$64,999	-.034	.274	.901	.967	.566	1.652
Constant	3.699	.384	.000	40.396		

Being born in the US was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). The estimated difference between those, the estimated difference between those born in the US and those not born in the US is .932 in English proficiency with those born in the US scoring that much higher. Grandparents born outside US was not statistically significant ( $p = .119$ ,  $b = -.051$ ).

**Table 5**  
*Coefficient Table for Multiple Regression Model*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient		Sig.	
			B	Beta		t
1	(Constant)	2.374	.039		61.603	.000
	Respondent Age	-.006	.001	-.098	-6.417	.000
	Central American	.090	.062	.021	1.459	.145
	Cuban	.356	.061	.088	5.844	.000
	Dominican	.215	.060	.051	3.570	.000
	Hispanic	.441	.052	.122	8.448	.000
	Puerto Rican	.808	.056	.213	14.366	.000
	Salvadoran	.010	.055	.003	.182	.856
	(Constant)	2.282	.063		36.231	.000
Respondent Age	-.002	.001	-.041	-2.940	.003	
Central American	.131	.054	.030	2.417	.016	
Cuban	.195	.054	.048	3.614	.000	
Dominican	.167	.053	.040	3.155	.002	
Hispanic	.192	.047	.053	4.083	.000	
Puerto Rican	.629	.050	.166	12.672	.000	
Salvadoran	.069	.048	.018	1.440	.150	
Were parents born in the US?	.100	.029	.042	3.395	.001	
Were grandparents born outside the US?	-.051	.033	-.019	-1.560	.119	
2	Were you born in the US?	.932	.046	.256	20.339	.000
	Four-year college degree	.371	.062	.094	5.971	.000
	8th grade or less	-.386	.046	-.191	-8.384	.000
	GED	.182	.071	.038	2.549	.011
	HS Graduate	-.012	.047	-.005	-.249	.804
	Some College	.344	.051	.126	6.687	.000
	Some HS	-.126	.050	-.051	-2.530	.011
	< \$15K	-.231	.034	-.101	-6.849	.000
	15K - 24999	-.074	.033	-.034	-2.263	.024
	25K - 34999	.089	.037	.035	2.422	.015
	35K - 44999	.287	.045	.087	6.419	.000
45k - 54999	.405	.057	.093	7.133	.000	
55k - 64999	.564	.075	.096	7.530	.000	

Education was statistically significant. An increase in education generally resulted in an increase in English language fluency. Specifically, people with only an 8th grade education resulted in a decrease in English



language fluency on average by .386 ( $p < .001$ ) compared with people with a graduate degree, some high school education resulted in a decrease of .126 ( $p = .011$ ). This corresponded to an increase in English language fluency with a GED ( $b = .182, p = .001$ ); Those with a four - year degree had a .371 increase ( $p = .001$ ); and this with some college had an increase in English language fluency of .344 ( $p < .001$ ) (Table 5).

Income was found to be statistically significant with increasing income resulting in a general increase in English language fluency. Specifically, those who had an income of less than \$15K resulted in a decrease in English language fluency by .231 ( $p < .001$ ). \$15K - \$24,999 resulted in a decrease by .074 ( $p = .024$ ). This trend continued, when income increased, the resultant change in English fluency improved. Table 5 depicts this information.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Limitations of the Study

The researcher used survey data from the LSN (2006). Notably the age of the data, albeit representative of a large percentage of Hispanics, is a limitation of this study. More recent data would constitute a more accurate picture of the assimilation of Hispanics as it currently stands. However, the results of the study confirmed previous and recent studies in the literature indicating that the trends are similar despite the age of the data (Alba & Maggio, 2022; Antman et al., 2023; Figlio & Özek, 2020). Another limitation is that LNS (2006) data collection was done telephonically via a computer assisted telephone interviewing process. There is a possibility that telephone interviews do not yield as much data as face-to-face interviews and it was not possible to verify the participant's ethnic identity. It is therefore possible that some of the respondents might not have been Hispanic. These factors are a threat to the external validity of the study. Furthermore, although given the opportunity to choose the language in which the interview was conducted, telephone interviews are tiring, and no guarantees can be provided that the participant understood the questions 100%. Moreover, without visual clues the interviewers could not tell whether the participants were open and honest. Hopefully, by giving assurances of protecting the participants' anonymity and confidentiality, the answers were honest and objective. A threat to the internal validity of the study is the possibility of someone not completing due to severe illness or death as this would result in skewing the results. To combat this possibility, a large sample was chosen to compensate for dropouts. Another threat to internal validity comes from the statistical analysis. Regression has the possibility of producing different outliers since extreme sources tend to change with time and move more towards the mean (Creswell, 2015). This

possibility was mitigated by not selecting extreme sources. Further, the results of this study can be generalized due to the sample size, and location across the US. The results of this study can, however, not be generalized to other immigrant population groups since the data were restricted to Hispanics only.

### **INTERPERTATION OF FINDINGS**

Against the backdrop of immigration-segmented assimilation, which was one of the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, I explored the relationships between assimilation, measured by fluency in English, level of education, generational standing, and socioeconomic indicators like annual income but mainly focused on education for the purpose of this study. Different views are incorporated in the immigration segmented assimilation theory, and some researchers have focused on spatial integration (Antman et al., 2023), whereas others took a broader view including several demographic aspects such as religion, age, and gender amongst others (Alba & Maggio, 2022). The theory originated from the perception that an ethnic group would oust another by means of assimilation and ... [not allow access to higher education] (Walzer & Miller, 1997).

The researcher presumed in this study that the level of assimilation of a Latino immigrant is related to their proficiency and fluency in English, which was in accordance with Allard et al. (2014) research. Although his research studied Latino immigrant education in English language comprehension in elementary schools and high schools, it has further implications to higher educational goals within the immigrant group to higher education also. The researcher furthermore assumed that the participants' self-reported knowledge and fluency in English on the LNS (2006) was an accurate estimation of their English skills. The researcher made the choice to focus on educational level as a variable in exploring the assimilation of Latinos. Accordingly, the researcher used the data depicting educational level, generational standing, and socioeconomic indicators like annual income in correlation with the data on English skills as provided by the participants. The findings of this study indicated that third generation Latinos were more assimilated into US culture as measured by their fluency in English and also their educational level and annual income. According to as supported by Boch et al. (2021), third-generation immigrant are native born as opposed to the second generation, which is referred to as immigrant born.

The findings of this study confirmed that there was a correlation between a person's immigrant status and economic and educational standing (Alba & Maggio, 2022; Antman et al., 2023; Figlio & Özek, 2020). In this study, the results showed that the further the Latino was removed generationally, the higher their educational level, economic position, and

fluency in English. Pertaining to the educational level of the Latinos, there was a higher level of education compared to the LNS (2006) data where there were lower educational values. Accordingly, 12% of immigrants have bachelor's degrees and 3% have advanced degrees, whereas the LNS figures indicated that 9.5% immigrants held bachelor's degrees and 6.7% held advanced or professional degrees. An even more positive trend was reported that 84% of Latinos completed high school compared to the 24.4% of the LNS (2006) figures. The LNS (2006) data indicated that 14.5% Latinos obtained some high school, meaning that they had dropped out of high school, whereas almost ten years later only 2% did not complete high school in another study. These numbers prove that Latino immigrants in the US have improved educationally over the decade. Assuming that these figures mostly reflect the educational attainment of the younger generation of Latinos who were native born (third generation), the findings of this study compliments with the suggestions of several studies that immigration status is linked with better educational achievements (Alba & Maggio, 2022). The overall increase in educational attainment of Latinos can be interpreted as indicative of their assimilation into US culture. An increase in educational level was correlated with an increase in English skills, and therefore, assimilation and the ability to attain a higher education.

Socioeconomic factors as measured by annual income had not been studied in the field in relation to the assimilation of Latinos prior to the initial observation conducted by Burroughs (2018) and this study. Antman et al. (2023) analyzed the diet and body mass index of Latinos in relation to their annual income and found that second generation Latinos of a lower income followed a more traditional diet and were better nourished compared to their counterparts with a higher socioeconomic status which led to better educational outcomes. This could reflect more assimilation within the US dietary culture, which for the purposes of this study was a possible indication of more assimilation linked with a higher annual income.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are a few recommendations that emerged from conducting another study. The researcher used a quantitative correlational study to explore this study. There are, however, some limitations related to quantitative correlational study given that the focus is to offer a predictive relationship between study variables quantitatively. Consequently, the focus on collecting and analyzing quantitative data in this study limited the ability to offer in-depth descriptions or explanations for the reported data from participants. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers use alternative methods such as the qualitative approach to offer in-depth

descriptions of the link between study variables. By adopting qualitative methods, the researchers are able to use interviews to solicit in-depth descriptions and data from participants, which is key to the understanding of the study phenomenon.

One of the limitations of this type of study was the sample size used. A small sample size negatively affects the generalizability of the findings. In this study, a homogenous sample of Hispanic immigrants in Maryland. Generalizing such findings to other immigrants' groups across the US could be challenging. Therefore, future studies could be undertaken with a similar national sample but focusing on contemporary data with a heterogeneous sample of participants from other ethnic communities.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

Implications for positive social change may emerge from the findings of this study. In terms of theoretical frameworks, it is evident that scholars and politicians may harbor the fear of one ethnic group ousting another. With the dramatic rise in the Hispanic population (US Census Bureau, 2020), this sentiment might increase in political circles leading to more actions against undocumented immigrants among others in higher education. The findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding and appreciation for the plight of Latino immigrants, leading to more empathetic treatment of undocumented immigrants and their children.

Moreover, educationalists might use the findings to renew efforts in teaching Latino scholars better English skills to increase their academic performance and employability which could ultimately positively impact on their assimilation and ease into American culture. This study highlights the interrelationship between English proficiency, education, employment and assimilation of immigrants such as Latinos. The importance of increased efforts to assist all immigrants to learn English not only to assist everyday communication but more importantly to facilitate assimilation of Latinos. While these findings cannot be generalized to other immigrants improved and more sympathetic treatment of immigrants could result from understanding the assimilation process and difficulties these groups experience. There is still evidence of discrimination against different ethnic groups in terms of access to goods and services. The findings of this study may serve to create more understanding amongst service delivery groups and result in improved access to services for Latinos. The researcher drew upon the potential societal contributions of this study, including the advancement of knowledge in the discipline of public policy and administration. Lawmakers may recognize why the Latino immigrant group has problems assimilating into the US culture and how they might make this transition easier through implementing

federal and state laws and programs. Perhaps assimilation in the US culture allows gains for acceptance for the Hispanic hegemony. Also, it would produce access to more goods and services and decrease discrimination in society.

### **Beyond 2030**

Many variables need to be noted that indicate the changing forecast of the future for Hispanic immigrants in higher education particularly in southwest US. For example, the (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2020) statistics show that most mothers start to have their children after the age of 30 in the US. This is because young adults wait until their careers are established or after they are finished college. The CDC (2020) reported that fertility rates for Latinos are growing expediently. This puts an increased demand on two-year and four-year colleges for resources and enrollment in the future.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research was aimed at exploring the assimilation of Latino immigrants to better understand why assimilation remains problematic for Latino immigrants in higher education. In addressing the lack of assimilation Latinos will be better equipped to avoid backlash and exclusionary practices. The unit of measuring assimilation was fluency in English which proved to be pivotal in the level of assimilation. The results showed a positive correlation between English skills, higher education and assimilation but not employment or annual income and assimilation. In addition, the more assimilated the generation, the better English proficiency. Also, it was found in my study that the higher education was, the higher the annual income was made. The centrality of English skills in assimilation leads to the realization that more effort should go into teaching immigrant families English. Findings of the research may lead to certain social implications, including better understanding Latino immigrant groups, passing equitable laws, and treating undocumented workers with more empathy and understanding.

### **Author's Positionality**

The author's background was shaped by her study of a Master's degree in International Studies at Morgan State University with a Latin American emphasis, her study abroad at the Universidad of Guadalajara in Mexico while seeking her Master's degree, and her dissertation research at Walden University in Public Policy and Administration. Further, there is no conflicts of interest presented for this study. The author is of Black-American descent without any Latino ancestry but is very compassionate of the Latino immigrant minority group though she is not a direct immigrant herself. She

feels that attaining a higher education for Latino immigrants is key to upward mobility in the US, and her research supports this thesis.

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