

## Project Proposal

### Guiding Question

*“How does social and economic mobility vary for Hispanics within and between places across the country? What does this imply for lawmakers and organizers seeking Hispanic empowerment and how do these implications differ between places?”*

**Motivation |** Motivation for this report comes from my lived experience in San Diego, my college experience learning about small towns in downstate Illinois, and the several road trips I have undertaken between both places. The inequalities I have seen between Latinos in San Diego’s South Bay and Latinos in northern coastal neighborhoods reveal that Latinos have different experiences even within the same metro. The Latinos I saw laboring in harsh workplace conditions in meatpacking plants in Beardstown and the seasonal farmworkers staying in dilapidated motels serving as temporary housing opened my eyes even further to invisibilized Latinos struggling in rural areas. The socially conservative Latino ranchers in southern Texas differed greatly from the progressive activist Mexican-Americans of Phoenix and Tucson. Not only do our social and political ideologies stretch across the spectrum, but so do our economic and health fortunes. Some wealthy Latinos enjoy gated coastal communities while others bear the brunt of environmental racism, hazardous workplaces, and substandard living arrangements. Latinos are complicating the racial and ethnic hierarchy of the United States. By treating the ethnicity as a monolith, wealthy Latinos are escaping the scrutiny they likely deserve and marginalized Latinos beyond the magnified struggles in the Southwest are going unnoticed.

**Relevance |** The future wellbeing and success of Latinos will shape the country for decades to come. The Urban Institute found that by 2030, fifty-six percent of all new homebuyers will be Latinos. For real estate and housing interests, it is in their best interest for Latinos to be financially positioned to purchase homes and grow the economy. One-quarter of Latinos have no health insurance – a higher rate than African Americans (14%) (Shiro & Reeves, 2020). This is important for future health insurance costs, especially in state and regional governments with higher rates of uninsured. The Pew Research Center found that “Latinos account for more than half of the population growth in 41% of U.S. counties with at least 1,000 Latinos in 2014... about half are in non-metropolitan areas” (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). Latinos may single-handedly be preventing or slowing population growth in much of the country, essentially providing a lifeline to the Rust Belt and the heartland. Differences in housing tenure, health insurance coverage, and population growth vary between places across the country. Effective policies not only need to be well-targeted, but lawmakers need to be aware of where the problem is, and organizers need to know where to engage in capacity-building.

**Consequential Action |** Latinos in many parts of the country are overlooked and invisibilized. This project aims to uncover Latino livelihoods in overlooked places such as the Rust Belt and in

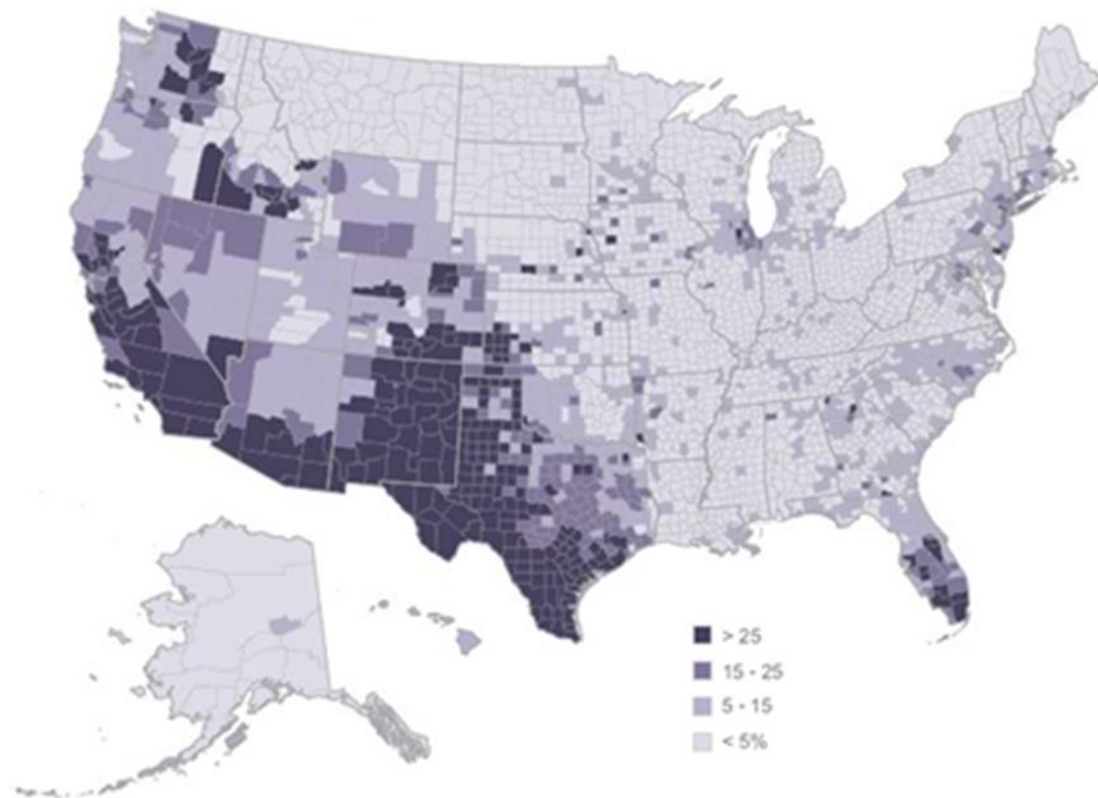
the heartland. It also seeks to expose the inequalities between Latinos within metropolitan areas and prove that the Latino ethnicity is far from a monolithic ethnicity and that more targeted outreach and policies are needed. Effective policies can emerge by investigating homeownership, health insurance, education, and employment patterns. Organizers, lawmakers, and even Latinos in states and cities across the country are unaware of their potential social, political, and economic power. For instance, a former mayor of Wilder, Idaho (a kind old white male) noted several years ago that if Latinos turned out to vote in local elections, they would run the town. Fast forward to today and Wilder has elected its first all-Latino City Council and Latina mayor. Beardstown, Illinois used to be a sundown town. Today, one of its largest festivals is a Cinco de Mayo celebration. When lawmakers, organizers, and Latinos realize their collective strength, things change and the opportunity for empowerment emerges.

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**Figure 1**

**The Distribution of the Nation's Hispanic Population, 2011**

*Hispanic population share by county*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau county population datasets

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Figure 1: Share of Hispanic population by county. Note the counties with a high share of Hispanics scattered beyond the southwest. Source: Pew Research Center.

## Background and Context

**Geographic Scale** | This analysis will be national in scale and aims to compare U.S. Regions and metropolitan statistical areas. The aim is to accurately distinguish and understand both major metros such as Los Angeles and tiny heavily Hispanic towns such as Dawson, Nebraska and Crawford, Iowa and to identify similarities, differences, and inequalities within metros and between regions. Scales will range between Census tracts, Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) and counties, metropolitan statistical areas, states, and U.S. Regions.

**Target population** | The overlooked Latinos settling beyond the Southwest are my target population. The study aims to shed light on wealthy Latinos benefiting from a nation that assumes the ethnicity to be homogenous and to promote the voices of Latinos being overlooked by simplistic national narratives of our struggle. This study is for the invisibilized Latino poultry plant workers that died from a liquid nitrogen leak in Gainesville, Georgia as much as it is for the Latino essential workers dying from COVID-19 in Los Angeles. This report is also for local, state, and federal lawmakers and organizers looking to understand how to legislate, mobilize, and allocate resources most effectively.

**What we know** | Inequalities and disparities in the Latino community are not what we think. Studies show that the smallest homeownership gaps for Latinos are in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and southern California. In fact, in El Paso and Nuevo Laredo (both in southern Texas) Hispanic homeownership is slightly higher than their White counterparts. The widest homeownership gaps, by far, are in the northeastern states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Delaware, and Connecticut. Latinos in general do, indeed, perform below national averages in indicators of health and wealth. National narratives of Latino inequalities emphasize well-known metropolitan areas such as Miami and Los Angeles, but what do we know about the 43% of Hartford, Connecticut's population that identifies as Hispanic?

**What we do not know** | Studies have not uncovered the complexity of the Latino ethnicity at a more granular level. The approach to socioeconomic and racial justice is a patchwork in the United States and it has made progress in some areas more than others. A more comprehensive, yet detailed approach to advancing Latino health and wealth is needed to build social, political, and economic capital in all 50 states and the areas within them.

## Approach Strategy:

**Data Sources** | This analysis will rely primarily on the Census Bureau and Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMA) and will look at Census, American Community Survey (ACS), and Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) data.

**Methods** | Nine different typologies will be calculated through Census tracts and PUMAs based on Hispanic population share, number, and growth rate. The typologies include high (over 25% of the population), medium (between 5 and 25%), and low (below 5% of the population) share of Hispanic population; large (over 100,000), medium (between 10,000 and 999,999), and small (less than 10,000) numbers of Hispanics; and fast, slow, and negative growth rates based on the national Hispanic population growth rate between 2010-2020.

The report will then analyze primary indicators of Latino well-being, especially in the areas of health and wealth and measure any deviations from the general average. Specific areas of interest will include nativity status, educational attainment, income and unemployment rate, health insurance coverage, and homeownership.

**Precedent |** The typology builds from a 2002 Brookings Institution Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy and the Pew Hispanic Center report titled “Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations” which distinguished between established Latino metros, Latino destinations, fast-growing Latino hubs, and small Latino places (Suro & Singer, 2002). The authors “classified the metropolitan areas into four categories according to whether their Hispanic base population exceeded or lagged the 8-percent national average in 1980 and whether their Latino population growth exceeded or lagged the 145-percent average growth between 1980 and 2000.” The Brookings-Pew report did not include rural places in its study and overlooked Latinos migrating to tiny towns.

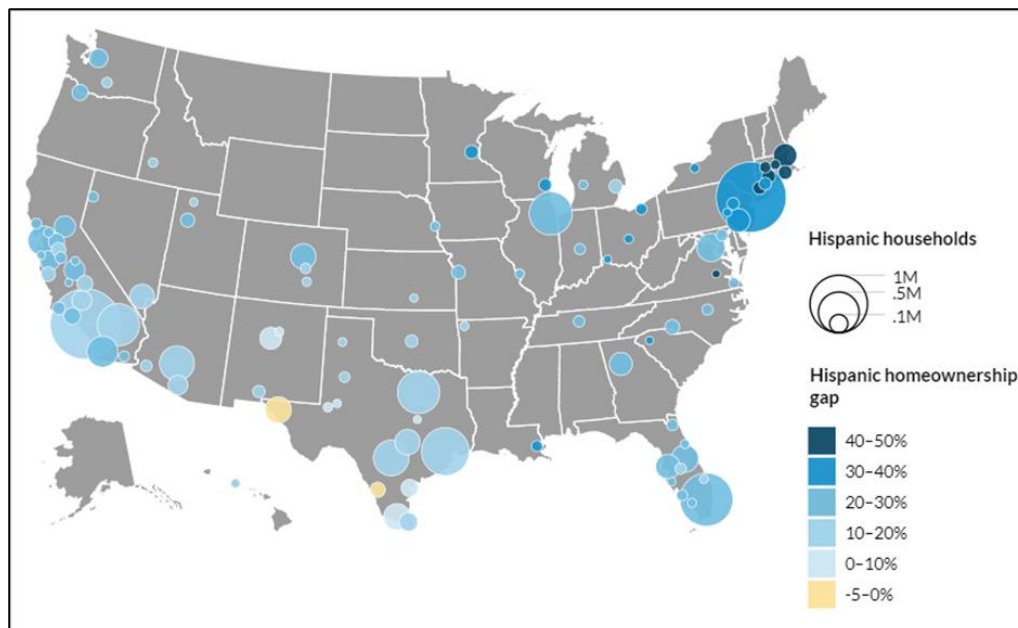


Figure 2: Size and gap of Hispanic homeownership by metro. Source: Urban Institute.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research released a report on homeownership rate differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites (Masnick, 2006). The report found much smaller gaps in homeownership rates in the South and the West and larger gaps in the Northeast. The Urban Institute also released a similar study that better visualized homeownership gaps (Strochak, Young, & McCargo, 2019). This analysis will build on HUDs analysis by comparing indicators (nativity status, educational attainment, income and unemployment rate, health insurance coverage, and homeownership) at the tract level to average figures in a PUMA or county to determine empirical (not normative) gaps. Most studies compare these figures to that of their White counterparts and this report would proceed differently to determine inequality.

### Target Audience:

**What is at stake?** | Hispanics are by far the largest minority in the country, yet we do not understand the ethnicity because we treat it as a monolith. The 2020 election, for example, revealed how different Latinos voted. Tejanos in Texas and Cubanos in Miami increasingly favored former President Trump, but Mexicanos in Arizona and Puerto Ricans in Orlando had contrasting perspectives. Understanding the largest ethnicity in the country is vital to conduct more effective outreach campaigns to improve inequalities in education, health care, homeownership, employment, and more.

**What is my contribution?** | The Hispanic ethnicity is complex and requires unearthing. Most studies look at the Hispanic ethnicity as a monolith and compare it to other racial and ethnic counterparts. This study will break down the Hispanic ethnicity based on various indicators and develop a typology of circumstances and strategies for lawmakers, organizers, and Latinos themselves to pursue. Regions across the country with a varying share, number, and growth rate of Latinos will require different strategies based on existing circumstances and levels of inequality. This report may demonstrate comparable circumstances in several regions that may merit parallel strategies.

**Utility for advocacy, deliberation, and decision-making** | This study will make organizing the Hispanic community more holistic by revealing where the potential for growth in socioeconomic and political currency is most ripe. Undervalued Latinx activist and business communities in the forgotten corners of southern Idaho, southwest Kansas, central Washington, and others will better understand the strengths, weaknesses, and disparities within their community, realize their potential for growth, and develop plans to achieve greater equality. Further studies are needed to determine how certain federal, state, and local laws would impact Latinos in places that do not currently consider them in policymaking deliberation. But this study should evoke further questions about what life is like to be Latino anywhere in America and how best to improve that quality of life.

### Limitations

**Assistance** | The class would greatly benefit from learning how to use IPUMS in R if it is not already planned. Some students may already be vaguely familiar with IPUMS but may still benefit from refreshed memories. This would be of particular need and interest for students looking at sub-local data.

**Study limitations** | This study has limitations of geographic scale and scope of understanding. It is difficult to get a full understanding of Latino livelihoods between urban and rural places due to the limited options of geographic boundaries. Comparing urban and rural areas at a comparative scale is difficult to achieve. This study will serve only as the beginning of understanding the complexities of the Hispanic ethnicity because there are so many indicators to study and understand. This study begins the conversation by investigating the most prevalent issues of nativity status, homeownership, health insurance coverage, educational attainment, and employment.

# References

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