

## Chapter 1

# Why Study Latinos in Richmond?

When I was a kid there were only five “Reyes” in the [Richmond] phone book (and my family accounted for two of them). My, how the number has grown!

—Thirty-year-old Dominican

The turn of the twenty-first century finds our nation at its most pluralistic stage, with an immigration surge that parallels the large immigrant wave of the early twentieth century. This second wave is far more diverse, cutting across religion, social class, ethnic identity, and country of origin. For the first time in its history, the United States has more Muslims than Presbyterians, more citizens of Mexican than Irish descent (Eck 2001). The new immigration brings ethnic groups to regions of the country that traditionally have had little exposure to diverse cultures, challenging the face of Anglo conformity as never before. Witness the presence of Hmong Vietnamese in St. Paul, Minnesota; Chinese Americans in the Mississippi delta; or Ethiopians in Dallas, Texas.

Our book focuses on the experience of one ethnic group, Latinos, in Richmond, Virginia, a midsize Southern city with no history of Latino settlement. Whereas Latinos are now the largest minority in the country—approximately forty-one million people (Cohn 2005), their presence in the South is a relatively recent phenomenon. In many ways, what is happening in Richmond today is emblematic of a larger trend for Latinos in the United States. During the last decade, they have moved away from traditional places of settlement in the United States to regions of the country with little presence of Latinos (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000; Hernández-León and Zuñiga 2000). In this book, we examine the experiences of the middle-class Latinos who move to such places, and the relationships they have with the working-class Latinos who come after them. In doing so, we illustrate the relationship between geographic mobility, social class, and diverse forms of acculturation, using segmented assimilation theory.

According to the Census Bureau, the South now has the fastest growing Latino population in the United States. Latinos grew 46 percent in the South

between 1990 and 2000, from 7.9 to 11.6 million. Some Southern states have experienced even higher Latino growth rates—more than 100 percent increases in North Carolina and Georgia, for example. The Virginia Latino population increased 56 percent between 1990 and 2000, from approximately 155,000 to 240,000 Latinos (Pressley 2000). Estimates from the American Community Survey for 2008 now set that number at almost double that of 2000—471,000 Latinos, about 6 percent of Virginia's population.

This surge in the Latino population is rapidly changing the face the South. Half of the foreign-born population in the United States today was born in Latin American countries (Schmidley 2001:1), and one-third of that population now fills Southern neighborhoods, schools, factories, and churches (Pressley 2000). Their presence is felt in places as varied as the chicken-processing plants of rural North Carolina to the large urban areas of Richmond, Atlanta, Nashville, and Birmingham. Latinos are the new faces working in fast food places, department stores, local banks, and construction companies. Latino restaurants and *bodegas* are becoming part and parcel of many Southern cities.

Academics are just beginning to pay attention to this demographic shift (see, for instance, Atilas and Bohon 2002; Hernández-León and Zuñiga 2000; Murphy, Blanchard, and Hill 2001; Neal and Bohon 2002; Saenz et al. 2003; Schmid 2002; Smith and Fureseth 2006), but journalists have written extensively about the Latino influx into the region. Unfortunately, without careful empirical evidence to convey the diverse experiences of the Latino community, this often anecdotal coverage almost invariably focuses on the extent to which cities and localities have been strained by the new arrivals. Media highlight particularly the issues faced by working-class Latinos, some unknown number of whom are undocumented immigrants (see, e.g., Bradley 1999; Carter 2003; Klein 1999; Moreno 2000; Pressley 2000; Scott 2004).

Schools are viewed as particularly ill equipped to handle large numbers of Latino children. In Dalton, Georgia, where the population went from 1 to 42 percent Latino in twelve years, schools were hard pressed to find enough Spanish-speaking staff, and lacked sufficient bilingual and English as a Second Language programs (Hernández-León and Zuñiga 2000; Klein 1999). While the long-term effect of these changes across Southern cities is still unknown, the lack of sufficient language resources or Latino mentors will have a profound impact on the educational opportunity of Latino children across the country, who are more likely to drop out of high school and have lower graduation rates (Valez and Saenz 2001).

Media accounts draw attention to the difficulties cities have managing the new arrivals in other areas as well, citing rising public costs. Cities report strains

on police resources due to greater incidences of drunk driving and driving without a license by Latinos, as well as inadequate crime reporting because of language barriers (Chapman 2004). Other problematic arenas include housing, emergency management, and social services; with new arrivals creating a greater need for food stamps, welfare, and unemployment insurance (Clock 2004). Moreover, many immigrants lack proper immunizations and have no health insurance (Poole 2004). A number of factories and plants have experienced INS raids, including arrests of hundreds of immigrant workers with phony documents (Mohl 2000).

Given the negative media coverage, it is not surprising to find long-term residents of Southern municipalities viewing any new arrivals as a threat, despite the fact that the immigrants often fill a demand for low-wage labor not met by existing populations. Relationships between the new immigrants and natives have sometimes become quite strained. A new nativism has emerged in certain areas, supported by English-only movements and increased anti-immigration sentiment. In several cities, for example, there have been stirrings of activities by the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups (Mohl 2000; Pressley 2000). Anti-immigration sentiment continues to grow across the state of Virginia, where denial of social services to illegal immigrants has grown steadily in the last two years. In Richmond, dozens of workers were arrested on immigration violations in 2008 (Bowes 2008).

Lack of understanding, however, contributes to an overstatement of the degree to which Latinos strain local resources. Accounts simultaneously suggest that Latinos are both *overtaxing* social services *and* unable fully to utilize them. In many cases, Latino immigrants do not use resources, even when legally entitled to them. Undocumented immigrant laborers who “work off the books,” of course, do not receive social security benefits (Hogan, Kim, and Perrucci 1997). At the same time, recent Latino immigrants in some jurisdictions have done significantly better than local townspeople, tapping into regional needs for Latino police officers, teachers, and sales people (Hull 2000).

Although the implicit assumptions of many media accounts is that the Latino migrants are unskilled laborers whose families will deplete public education resources and social services, many of the new Latino arrivals to the South are middle-class professionals. Research that sheds light on the economic well-being and social integration of Latino communities is important because it modifies the artificially uniform picture we have now, one that often reduces the diverse experiences of all Latinos to a monolithic group of undocumented workers. In Richmond we find Latino groups that are well off and others who are struggling. This book is an effort to understand the unique intersection of

spatial mobility, Latinos segmented by different assimilation experiences, and Southern traditions. These themes exacerbate divisions in social class leading to a lack of unity and community among Latinos.

Richmond is an ideal locale for exploring these issues. Its Latino population is small, but relatively diverse in terms of country of origin, economic opportunity, and other variables. Latinos have varying trajectories of economic, political, and cultural integration into U.S. society. Groups that have very little in common in terms of culture, nativity, racial makeup, history, self-identity, and economic situation have been consolidated for bureaucratic convenience. For some scholars it is unclear that the category of “Hispanic,” created by the U.S. statisticians, really signifies anything at all. Tienda and Mitchell (2006), for instance, argue that no unique national identity has emerged that embraces the entire community. On the other hand, other writers argue for the meaningfulness of a pan-ethnic identity among Latinos (as well as Asians), who share a similar “racialization” by U.S. society as well as similar transnational settlement patterns (see Suárez-Orozco and Páez 2002). This setting provides an opportunity to see the effects of intermingling ethnic groups and social classes among Latinos. We observe here what happens when such divergent groups are treated as one—does a Latino identity materialize even in one community?

### **Social Class, Assimilation, and the Latino Experience**

For a variety of reasons, there is little research on the experiences of either middle-class Latinos or those who live outside of large urban areas. Studies of post-1965 waves of immigrants focus on poor or working-class, low-skilled Latinos residing in urban or inner city landscapes (Bobo et al. 2000; Logan, Alba, and Zhang 2002; Tienda 1995; Waldinger 2001). Many of them scrutinize leading immigrant centers—Mexicans in Los Angeles, for example, or Cubans in Miami. Since these metropolitan areas have historically served as ports of entry, they have large, permanent Latino communities that aid transition into a new country and continue to attract many new immigrants. In addition, researchers still highlight the economic disparity of Latinos in comparison to whites and even blacks, for example, in terms of high rates of poverty, unemployment, and high school dropouts (Rodríguez 2000:23).

So far, the research on Latinos living in the South has followed a similar preoccupation, except that scholars have predominantly looked at economically disadvantaged Latinos living in *nonurban* areas. Hernández-León and Zuñiga, for example, examine how working-class Mexican immigrants move to “Carpet City,” an industrial region of northwest Georgia, rapidly becoming

more than 40 percent of the local population (2000). Atilés and Bohon show the adjustment difficulties of recent Latino immigrants in Georgia (2002). McDaniel and Casanova describe migrant laborers working in the forests of Alabama (2003). Smith and Furuseth note the rise in the demand for rental housing in the suburbs and the growth in the disproportionately male Latino population settling outside of Charlotte, North Carolina (2004). An entire issue of *Southern Rural Sociology* was devoted to Latinos in the South in 2003 (Saenz et al. 2003).

We find interest in these trends understandable, and naturally would not urge researchers to suspend examining the experiences of working-class and poor Latinos. On the other hand, we feel that the adaptation and assimilation processes of middle-class Latinos, as well as their relationships with working-class Latinos, have gone underexamined. Pedraza, for example, argues for a better understanding of middle-class Latinos and those with economic mobility (1998).

The relationship between assimilation and social class is a tangled one, in part because social class or economic status is often treated as both a *predictor* of assimilation, and as a unit of *measurement* of it. Yet, assimilation research has seldom looked specifically at social class. The variable is always assumed to be relevant, but kept at the margins. Gordon, for example, does not include a measure of socioeconomic assimilation in his seven types of assimilation (Alba and Nee 1997:835). Thus, although socioeconomic assimilation is a very common assumption of the literature—Waldinger, for example, states, “Sociologists now agree that economic progress is the linchpin of assimilation, driving all other shifts in the social structure of ethnicity” (2001:15)—it is often implied in other measures of social assimilation, rather than measured directly (see also Nee and Sanders 2001).

Recently, spatial assimilation theory has demonstrated how assimilation incorporates both geographic mobility and social class: Latinos with educational credentials and employment opportunities are more likely to leave their ethnic communities, moving to areas with fewer Latinos (Rodrigues 1992). The argument approximates similar findings for middle-class African Americans—who migrate from central cities to predominantly white suburbs. Wilson argues in *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978) that as middle-class African Americans moved from black neighborhoods, the African American community was split in two: middle-class blacks could make some economic gains relative to the white population, while the condition for poor blacks deteriorated. As a result, research on non-poor African Americans virtually disappeared for a time (Patillo-McCoy 1999).

Latinos, like other immigrant groups, often settle in large ethnic enclaves—Miami, New York, Los Angeles—where they retain language and culture.<sup>1</sup> Enclaves shelter members of the ethnic group from external discrimination and hostility, and provide them with the needed economic support and means for eventual upward mobility. Because enclaves employ skilled or semi-skilled workers, they create markets for unique products, generate opportunities for the economic advancement of group members, provide access to credit, and support the formation of small enterprises (Cobas 1984; Pessar 1995; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Jensen 1989). In doing so, they undoubtedly enhance the life chances for many in the second generation by allowing them to obtain higher education and enter the primary labor market.

At the same time, critics of ethnic enclaves argue that enclaves provide benefits to a small entrepreneurial group, but can also block the economic mobility of many immigrants laboring in those systems. Concentrated in the low-wage enclave economy, these workers retain their home cultures longer than earlier waves of immigrants, making the transition into the host culture more problematic. Continued limited exposure to English, as can happen in enclaves, keeps these immigrants from learning the language sooner. Enclaves also prevent the successful integration of most immigrants into the primary labor market (Bonacich 1973; Bonacich and Modell 1980; Waldinger 1993).

Furthermore, although the Cuban ethnic enclave in Miami is touted as one of the more successful Latino immigrant enclaves, Cubans earn more in areas with the lowest Cuban populations (Davis 2004). In fact, many immigrants living outside ethnic enclaves earn higher incomes than those inside (Mar 1991). On the other hand, Logan, Alba, and Zhang argue that even high-status immigrants sometimes prefer to live in *suburban* immigrant enclaves as an “alternative to assimilation” (2002).

Regardless of which argument prevails, what does emerge from this research is that people are leaving ethnic enclaves more than ever, and the moves are connected to social class: those who are better off economically are more likely to move. Because researchers focus on ethnic enclaves in large cities, we know less about Latinos who migrate to other areas of the nation. From our previous research, we know that Latinos living in cities with a small Latino population have a different profile than those living in similarly sized cities with larger Latino population. Using 1990 census data, we looked at Latinos in one hundred midsized U.S. cities with varying sizes of Latino populations. Latinos in cities where they are less than 2 percent of the population have higher incomes (both absolutely and in ratio to the Anglo community) and higher rates of employment and high school graduation, sometimes better

than those of local non-Latinos. Furthermore, the percentage of Latina-headed households and of Latinos in poverty grows as the size of the Latino population increases (Cavalcanti and Schleef 2000).

Literature on racial inequality suggests that population size does play a role in the integration of minority groups. Studies on African Americans, for instance, provide evidence that the smaller the size of the nonwhite population in a community, the lower the level of racial inequality experienced by the group. The larger the group, the greater the perceived threat for the dominant group (Becker 1971; Burr, Galle, and Fosset 1991; Fosset and Kiecolt 1989; Frisbie and Niedert 1977; Martin and Poston 1976; Taylor 1998; Wilcox and Roof 1978). Small Latino populations might provide Latinos with less visibility, less danger of being perceived as a threat, and possibly with more educational and economic opportunities.

In fact, Yinger includes small population size in a list of twenty variables that facilitate the process of incorporation of ethnic groups (1994). More than a decade ago, Alba and Nee predicted that the rapid growth of immigrant populations in the twentieth century would create new areas of immigrant concentration that would be culturally and ethnically diverse outside the traditional ports of entry. Immigrant segregation in these new centers would also be less extreme (Alba and Nee 1997:858–59). In search of data to address these speculations about spatial mobility, population size, and diverse acculturation experiences, we turned to Richmond, Virginia.

### **Richmond as a Case Study**

As the former capital of the Confederacy, Richmond preserves the most traditional aspects of Southern culture (Dabney 1990; Hoffman 2004). It embodies, in many ways, the values and traditions that made the South such a unique region, one previously characterized by a patrician system based on plantation life. More importantly for our purposes, Richmond is the part of the South that has been least effective in expanding its local elite across racial lines (Randolph 2003; Rouse 1996). Unlike other metropolitan areas in the region, the city has not experienced much economic or social transformation (Silver 1984; Silver and Moeser 1995).<sup>2</sup> Studying Richmond Latinos allows us understand how a Latino community manages in such a traditional Southern setting. It is a place where the diversity among Latinos is framed by other cultural and racial differences specific to the South.

Richmond is still very much defined by the usual Southern racial fault lines (Moeser and Dennis 1982). For example, in 1996, many Richmonders balked at

having a statue of the African American tennis legend Arthur Ashe erected on the city's Monument Avenue, alongside Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and other Confederate heroes. More recently, a statue of Abraham Lincoln and his son Tad commemorating their postwar visit to Richmond sparked controversy (even though the statue was built outside the city proper). Detractors referred to Lincoln as "this country's most notorious war criminal" (Fisher 2003).

Richmond demographics demonstrate an economic disparity most evident along its racial axis. Comparisons between Richmond's African American and white populations are predictable—the ratio of black to white median household income is 0.67. For college education the ratio is 0.55; for professional occupations, 0.68; and in home ownership, 0.78 (if there were no disparities, all ratios would be 1.0). The percentage of unemployed blacks is 2.4 times that of whites, and the percentage of blacks below the poverty level is 2.6 times that of whites (Lewis Mumford Center 2002). On several of these measures, Richmond's African Americans—about 30 percent of its population—are worse off than their counterparts in a number of other midsize Southern cities with large black populations (see Table 1.1).

However, the city's racial dynamics are becoming more complex. Between 1990 and 2000, the city population increased by 130,000; with its Latino population increasing by fourteen thousand. Latinos comprised roughly 11 percent of Richmond's growth (Rose 2002). They may not easily straddle the city's racial divide, but Latinos fare better statistically than Richmond's local black population. For instance, the ratio of Latino to white in median household income is 0.80. For college education, the ratio is 0.77; for professional occupations, 0.81; and for home ownership, 0.80. The percentage of unemployed Latinos is only one and one-half times that of whites, and the percentage of Latinos below poverty level is 1.7 that of whites (Lewis Mumford Center 2002).

Although we focus on Richmond in this book, it is important to note that these factors do not make Richmond unique among Southern cities of its size, particularly those with few Latinos. In addition to Richmond, we selected eight Southern cities ranging in population from 600,000 to 1,200,000, and with Latino populations between 1 and 5 percent (see Table 1.1). On most variables, Richmond Latinos fall within the center of the distribution. For example, the median household income for Richmond Latinos in comparison to whites is .80, as noted above; it ranges from .77 to .93 in these other cities (the overall U.S. ratio of Latino to white income is .72). Richmond Latinos rank near the bottom in the ratios of Latino/white education levels and percentage in professional occupations compared to other cities, but these ratios still remain higher than they do in other areas of the country.



Table 1.1. Selected Demographic Data for Mid-Size Southern Cities, 2000  
(Metropolitan Areas with 1–5% Hispanic Population)

	Total Population	% Min.	Median Household Income*	% Below Poverty*	% Unem- ployed*	% Profes- sional*	% College Educated*	% Home- owners*
<i>Black Statistics</i>								
Richmond, VA	996,512	30.0	0.67	2.59	2.4	0.68	0.55	0.78
Baton Rouge, LA	602,894	31.6	0.66	2.15	2.04	0.72	0.67	0.81
Birmingham, AL	921,106	30.0	0.59	2.78	2.80	0.65	0.54	0.77
Greensboro, NC	1,251,509	20.1	0.75	2.07	1.96	0.76	0.76	0.73
Greenville, SC	962,441	17.5	0.80	1.66	1.60	0.80	0.74	0.82
Knoxville, TN	687,249	5.8	0.66	2.28	2.09	0.83	0.75	0.71
Little Rock, AR	583,845	21.9	0.71	2.13	2.03	0.79	0.70	0.81
Memphis, TN	1,135,614	43.2	0.61	2.63	2.48	0.64	0.49	0.79
<i>Latino Statistics</i>								
Nashville, TN	1,231,311	15.6	0.68	2.34	1.93	0.77	0.70	0.73
Richmond, VA	996,512	2.3	0.80	1.66	1.45	0.81	0.77	0.80
Baton Rouge, LA	602,894	1.8	0.89	1.48	1.27	0.99	1.12	0.84
Birmingham, AL	921,106	1.8	0.83	1.56	1.47	0.92	0.94	0.80
Greensboro, NC	1,251,509	5.0	0.80	1.76	1.59	0.79	0.78	0.79
Greenville, SC	962,441	2.6	0.91	1.24	1.17	0.90	0.88	0.87
Knoxville, TN	687,249	1.1	0.93	1.26	1.11	1.01	1.06	0.88
Little Rock, AR	583,845	2.1	0.88	1.34	1.28	0.91	0.88	0.87
Memphis, TN	1,135,614	2.3	0.77	1.65	1.48	0.78	0.72	0.80
Nashville, TN	1,231,311	3.2	0.82	1.47	1.29	0.85	0.84	0.78

\*Ratio of Minority Group to White Values.

Source: Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, 2002.

Thus, the presence of Latinos in Richmond is comparable to other Southern cities with small, relatively well-off, geographically mobile Latino populations; particularly in contrast to more rural areas of the South. Yet, there has not been much media attention to this type of migration. Until recently the Latino community in Richmond remained largely invisible.<sup>3</sup> Census data from 1990 indicate that no census tract in the greater Richmond area was more than 5 percent Latino. During the last decade, however, the Latino community shed its quiet presence, growing from less than 1 percent of the population into a community that has a significant presence in the area. However, no one has mapped Latino growth in Richmond or monitored its impact on the central

Virginia region. The appearance of Latinos in traditional areas of the South represents a new dynamic in terms of race relations—a small patch of brown in a sea of black and white.

### The Richmond Latino Profile

We use census data to provide an initial profile of the Richmond Latino population and demonstrate recent changes in population demographics. The most obvious trend is the growth of Latinos during the last decade (Table 1.2). The Latino population in Virginia grew by 56 percent from 1990 to 2000. In Richmond, by comparison, the Latino population grew by 165 percent during that time period: from 8,788 in 1990 to 23,283 in 2000 (and the actual number may be larger—we were told by the Catholic archdiocese and others who worked closely with Latinos that the 2000 census undercounted the Latino population, especially the undocumented). In 2000, Latinos made up 5 percent of the Virginia population, and just over 2 percent of the population of greater Richmond. By 2008, the census bureau estimated the Latino population in the Richmond area had surpassed forty thousand.

Table 1.2. Latinos in Greater Richmond by City and County  
(Counts and Percentage)

<i>Counties</i>	1990	%	2000	%
Charles City	38	0.6	45	0.6
Chesterfield	2,099	1.0	7,617	2.9
Dinwiddie	197	0.9	237	0.9
Goochland	43	0.3	144	0.9
Hanover	330	0.5	847	1.0
Henrico	2,220	1.0	5,946	2.3
New Kent	91	0.9	176	1.3
Powhatan	37	0.2	184	0.8
Prince George	982	3.5	1,625	4.9
<i>Cities</i>				
Colonial Heights	199	1.0	274	1.6
Hopewell	435	2.0	651	2.9
Petersburg	373	0.9	463	1.4
Richmond	1,744	0.8	5,074	2.6
<i>Total</i>	8,788	1.1	23,283	2.3

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000.

Latino growth touched nearly all of four cities and nine counties in the Richmond metropolitan area. The fastest growth occurred in Richmond city itself, and in Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover counties. The core areas of Richmond doubled in their Latino population, and in some case tripled. But the growth was not limited to central cities; outlying and rural areas of greater Richmond experienced Latino expansion as well.

Richmond Latinos come from a variety of countries that represent most regions of Latin America. In many other urban areas, especially in the South,

Table 1.3. Countries of Origin for Richmond Latinos  
(Counts and Percentages, 1990, 2000)

Countries	1990		2000	
	N	%	N	%
Mexican	2,282	26.8	7,153	30.7
<i>Central American</i>	826	9.4	3,618	15.5
Costa Rican			187	0.8
Guatemalan	48	0.6	973	4.2
Honduran	92	1.1	260	1.1
Nicaraguan	20	2.3	60	0.3
Panamanian	325	3.7	358	1.5
Salvadoran	324	3.7	1,624	6.9
Other	17	0.2	156	0.7
<i>Caribbean</i>	3,020	34.4	5,992	25.7
Cuban	556	6.3	1,010	4.3
Dominican	215	2.5	335	1.4
Puerto Rican	2,249	25.6	4,647	19.9
<i>South American</i>	627	7.1	1,285	5.5
Argentinean			132	0.6
Bolivian			71	0.3
Chilean			41	0.2
Colombian	132	1.5	485	2.1
Ecuadorean	50	0.6	102	0.4
Paraguayan			47	0.2
Peruvian	128	1.5	192	0.8
Uruguayan			16	0.1
Venezuelan			144	0.6
Other	317	3.6	55	0.2
Other Hispanic	2,033	23.1	5,235	22.5
<i>Total</i>	8,788	1.1*	23,283	2.3*

\*As a percentage of overall population

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000.

Mexicans make up the majority of Latinos. Although Mexicans comprise the largest group here (almost one-third of Richmond Latinos in 2000), no country of origin overwhelmingly predominates. Puerto Ricans form another large group in Richmond, about 20 percent of the population. In 2000, the Latino population was even more diverse than in 1990, with almost twice as many Central Americans, specifically Guatemalans and Salvadorans, as before. There was also some growth in Latinos from South American countries, several of which were represented in 2000 that were not there at all in 1990.

We use census comparisons to show how Richmond Latinos differed from non-Latinos, as well as from Latino populations elsewhere in the United States. Figure 1.1 compares census data on age cohorts for Latinos and for non-Latinos in 2000. The Richmond Latino population is younger than the rest of Richmond. In general, Richmond residents follow the national trend toward a graying population; 15 percent fall in the sixty-plus cohort (compared to only 4 percent of Latinos). Latinos are much younger—34 percent of Latinos in Richmond are younger than twenty. Forty-four percent are between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine, swelling and potentially replenishing an aging work force. The Latino age distribution changed little from 1990 to 2000, indicating that Richmond continues to attract a group of relatively young Latinos.

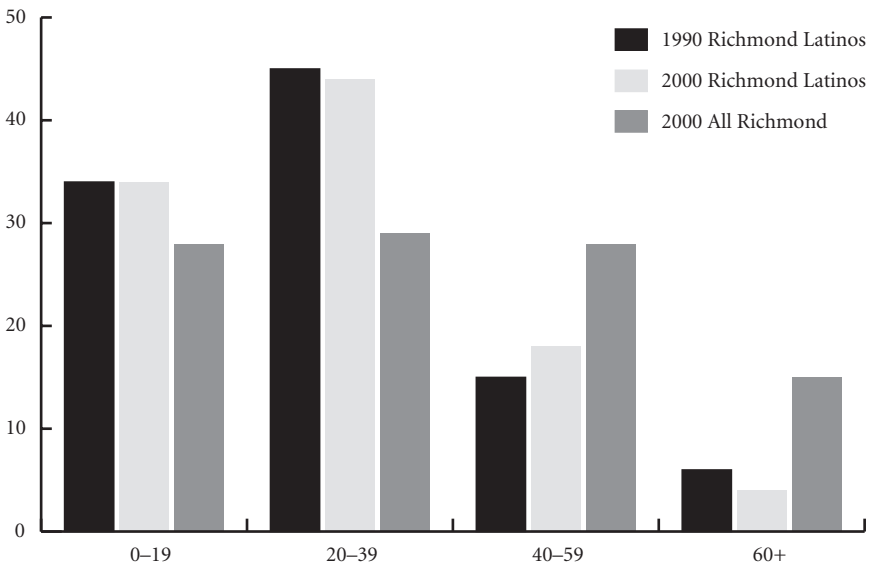


Figure 1.1. Ages of Richmond Latinos and All Richmond Residents (in Percentages)  
 Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000.

Given this youthful makeup, it is not unexpected to find that family composition differs between Latinos and other Richmonders. Richmond Latinos have more married-couple families with children than the local residents (Figure 1.2). Some 45 percent of Latino families have children under eighteen, compared to 40 percent for other locals. Also, there are more Latino-headed single households than in the overall population. Male-headed households comprise 13 percent of Latino families, compared to 6 percent for Richmond overall. Conversely, there are fewer *Latina*-headed single households than female-headed households for the Richmond area.

On a number of socioeconomic variables, Richmond Latinos compare favorably to Latinos in other parts of the country. The educational attainment of Richmond Latinos is striking in contrast to national trends, at rates that are almost comparable to non-Latino in Richmond (Figure 1.3). Richmond Latinos have high school and college graduation rates that are much higher than those of Latinos nationwide. According to the 2000 Census, only 52 percent of Latinos in the United States have at least a high school diploma, and only 11 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Sixty-eight percent of Latinos in Richmond have at least a high school diploma (compared to 82 percent of the city population). Some 20 percent of Latinos in the area have at

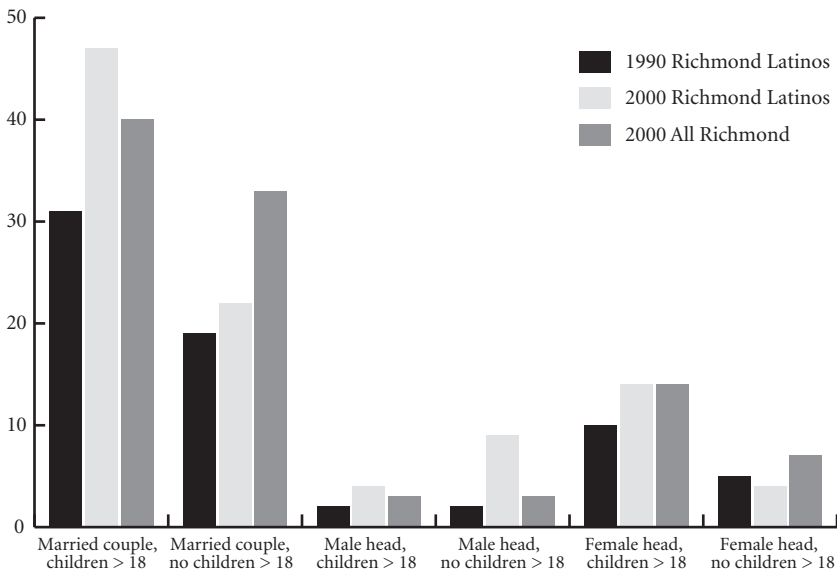


Figure 1.2. Household Type for Richmond Latinos and All Richmond Residents (in Percentages)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000.

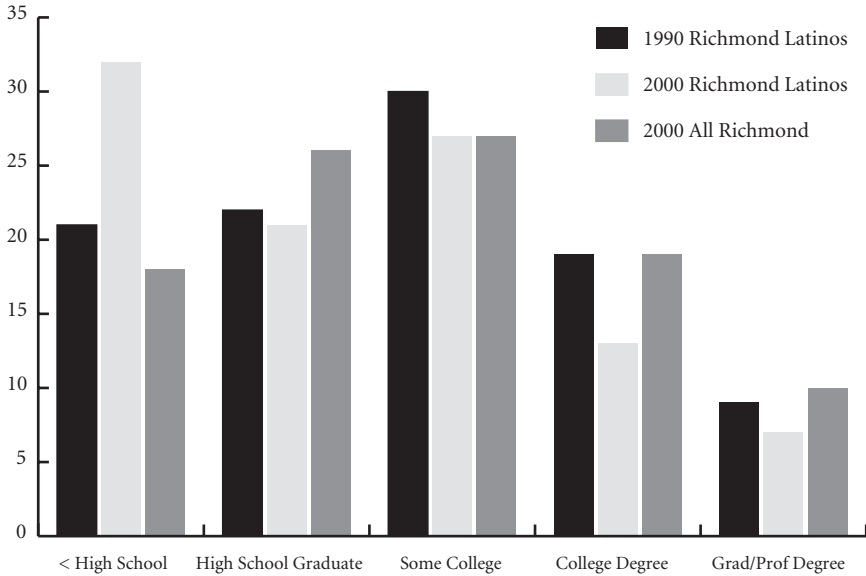


Figure 1.3. Education for Richmond Latinos and All Richmond Residents over 25 (in Percentages)

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000

least a college degree (compared to 29 percent of the city population). Rates of education were higher in 1990 than 2000, however, suggesting a trend of lower educational attainment among more recent arrivals.

Richmond Latinos also experience the benefit of levels of income more similar to those of all residents of the region, than of Latinos elsewhere in the United States. Approximately 16 percent of Latinos in Richmond lived below the poverty level in 1999, less than the rate for Latinos nationwide, which is almost 23 percent (Census 2000). Moreover, from 1990 to 2000, the wealth of the Latino population in Richmond increased, while its poor decreased. Despite their levels of educational attainment, however, Latinos in Richmond do lag behind other Richmonders in terms of income. Some 38 percent of Latinos had household incomes above \$50,000 in 1999, compared to 46 percent of all Richmond residents (nationally, 30 percent of Latinos had incomes over \$50,000). Nine percent of Latinos have incomes of \$100,000 and above, compared to 13 percent of the overall population of Richmond.

Richmond Latinos, both men and women, have rates of employment comparable to others in Richmond. Latino men actually fare a little better than all male residents in terms of percentage in the labor force, although this disparity decreased from 1990 to 2000. Also, Latinos in Richmond share unemployment

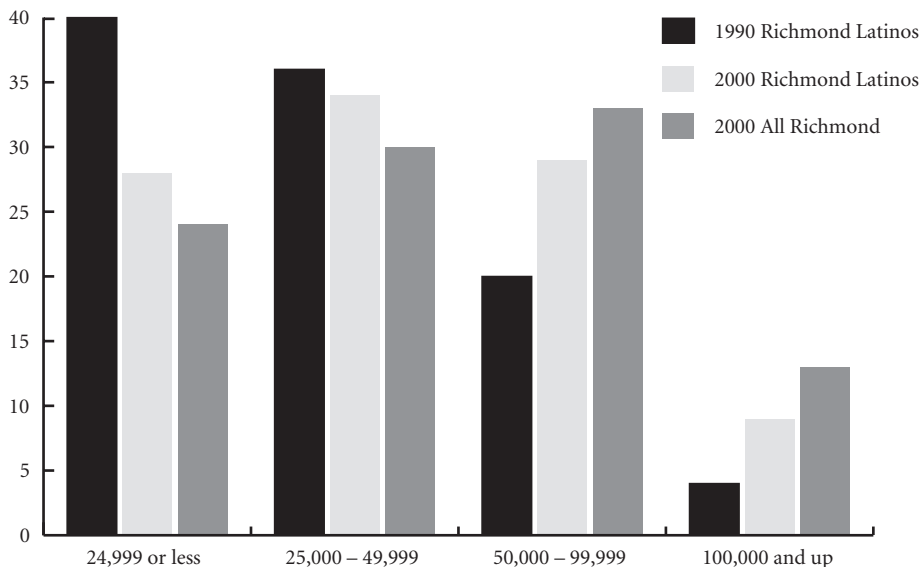


Figure 1.4. Household Income for Richmond Latinos and All Richmond Residents (in Percentages)

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000.

rates similar to the general population of Richmond, rates that are considerably lower than the national averages (approximately 9 percent nationwide for Latinos, compared to 4 percent for Richmond Latinos). Women are less likely to be employed than men (73 percent versus 58 percent) but *are* employed at the same levels as all other women in Richmond.

The percentage of Richmond Latino homeowners is much lower than that of overall Richmond inhabitants (respectively 40 to 68 percent), and that percentage fell between 1990 and 2000. This is a puzzling aspect of our profile, given their high rates of education, employment, and income. Richmond Latinos are even less likely to own their own homes than Latinos in other areas of the United States. According to the 2000 Census, 46 percent of all U.S. Latinos are homeowners, compared to just 40 percent of Richmond Latinos, although this factor may be an indicator of the recent arrival of Latinos in the city. The amount of renting among Latinos in Richmond is considerably lower than in some other areas of the South, where rental rates reach as high as 80 percent of the population. In some of the new settlement areas, Latinos who are recent arrivals are more likely to be single male workers, possibly temporary, who are renters (Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005; Smith and Furuseth 2004).

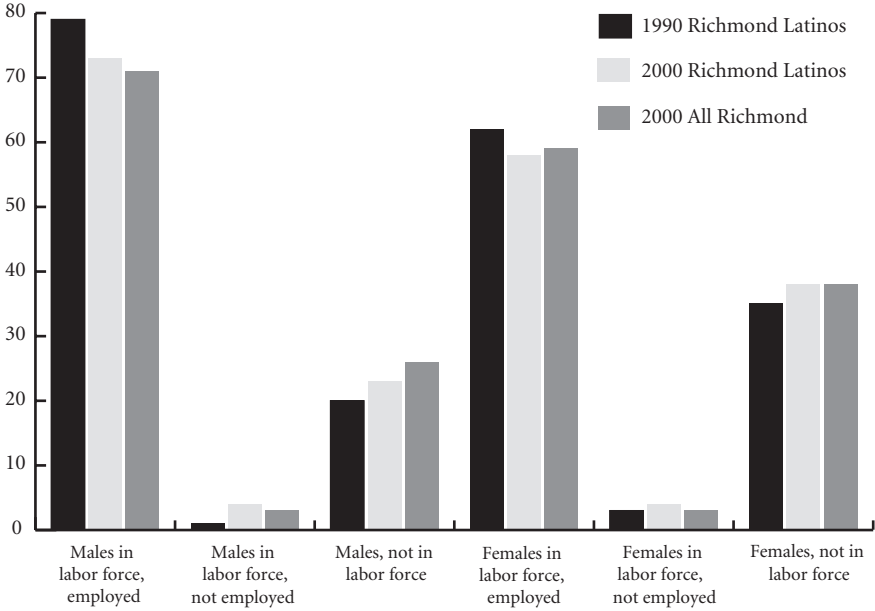


Figure 1.5. Employment Status for Richmond Latinos and All Richmond Residents (in Percentages)

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000

The data reviewed so far portrays a distinctive Latino community in Virginia’s capital. Richmond Latinos represent a small but ethnically diverse community that is growing at a steady pace, though Richmond is not experiencing the “hyper growth” of some areas of the South (Suro and Singer 2002). There is no long-term community of Latinos in Richmond, no ethnically identified neighborhoods. Latinos are younger than the overall population, with more married families with young children. They are also well educated and fully employed, but with a lower median income than Richmonders in general. However, they enjoy higher rates of income, education, and employment than Latinos throughout the United States. Given such a profile, it is clear that the Richmond Latino community is unlike many Latino communities in traditional Latino enclaves.

**Explaining Assimilation in Areas with Low Latino Population**

The aggregate data we examined in previous research are causally indistinct in terms of the relationship between internal migration and the observed



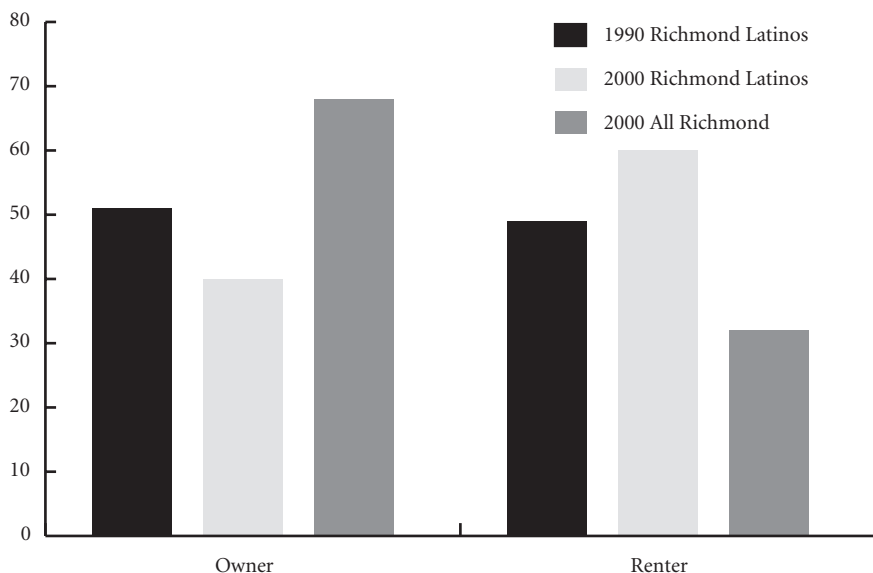


Figure 1.6. Homeownership Status for Richmond Latinos and All Richmond Residents (in Percentages)

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000.

economic and educational achievement. Several questions remain to be answered in this book. Are Latinos with educational credentials and employment opportunities leaving ethnic communities behind to move to areas like Richmond? How do middle-class Latinos—broadly conceived here by us as those respondents with white-collar occupations—fare after they move? When small pockets of Latinos migrate to areas with little or no Latino settlement, do they experience less discrimination, thus facilitating economic integration? The price of such success then would be potential isolation and cultural invisibility (see, e.g., Aranda 2006 on the dislocation and emotional experiences of middle-class Puerto Ricans). What types of relationships do they have with the working-class Latinos who move into the area?

For many current scholars of ethnicity and migration, the traditional concepts of assimilation no longer fit very well the post-1965 wave. Instead, it is understood that there are multiple possibilities for ethnic incorporation. For a small patch of brown coming to rest in black and white central Virginia, assimilation could follow one of several “segmented” pathways described in assimilation literature. The first could be adopting the values of the dominant white middle class in an effort to fit into the culture and values

of its new environment. The second would be to acculturate into Richmond's urban underclass, with a culture of resistance that responds to the dominant group's exclusion of the minority group. The third is a "selective acculturation" pathway, whereby the immigrant community can preserve its culture and values of origin (differentiating itself from local minorities) while becoming economically integrated into the U.S. system (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001; Waters 1999).

We will argue that the major factor that determines the quality of experiences among these paths of adaptation within the Latino community is social class. Richmond Latinos are a segmented community—an initial elite group of business and professional individuals followed by other white-collar workers and an even more recent population of less-well-off immigrants. These social divisions affect everything else about life in Richmond. To the extent that Latinos are becoming visible in the area, it is through the participation of the Latino elite in city life, through its ability to create organizations that represent its interests. The success of the elite groups, along with the overall invisibility of the less-well-off group, means that the impact of Latino presence in Richmond is not yet that of a united Latino community with a set of common goals. Thus, social policies developed by different localities may not adequately address the needs of the entire Latino population.

### **Researching the Richmond Latino Population**

We collected data on Richmond Latinos in several ways. Our initial forays into the Latino community occurred after we had compiled information about Richmond Latinos using 1990 census data, beginning in 1999. We were invited to present the census data to community groups and at meetings of two fledgling Latino organizations, the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the American Hispanics of Richmond Association (AHORA). We also attended events such as business mixers, political fundraisers, and a local Latino job fair. Eventually, we made contact with Latino individuals from a number of political, religious, nonprofit, and business organizations.

Each time we presented our information, we made more contacts in the community. In each case, we took ethnographic notes on the events and people involved. This period of initial contact yielded a considerable amount of information about the Latino community, especially a sense of what it was like to move among the more institutionally integrated segment of Richmond's Latino population. These experiences informed the creation of our questionnaire, and provided us with names for our qualitative sampling frame. When

word got around that we were distributing a survey, this in turn made us more in demand to speak to community groups. We discuss aspects of this initial ethnographic research throughout the book, although the bulk of our research consists of a cross-sectional survey of more than three hundred local Latinos.

In an attempt to reach a representative sample of the Latino community, we designed a probability sample for the greater Richmond Latino population. For a sampling frame, we purchased a listed household sample of names, addresses, and phone records for 1,100 individuals, adults eighteen years and older with Hispanic surnames.<sup>4</sup>

There were numerous advantages to such a sample. It gave us a large pool of names, rather than filtering through thousands of non-Latinos to find enough Latinos to create a reasonably sized sample. The cost of the screening required to reach a sufficient number of Latino households would have been prohibitive. Creating a sample this way allowed us to reach Latino households in predominantly non-Latino neighborhoods, which was especially useful in a low-Latino-density city. Using a sample compiled from additional data sources meant that we reached a larger number of unlisted households as well.

Sampling frames based on surnames, however, involve some significant compromises in coverage. By using a surname sample, we missed those Latinos without Hispanic-sounding last names of both genders, but especially Latinas who married Anglos and legally changed their names. Moreover, because we relied on a sampling frame based on telephone accounts, motor vehicle records, and the like, males outnumbered females two to one in the sampling frame, since they are more likely to have such accounts drawn in their names. We thus contacted and interviewed a larger number of male respondents (32 percent of those interviewed were women), because Latinas were actually less likely to refuse an interview. However, disproportionate samples of male respondents are not uncommon in studies of Latino populations. All in all, we feel that our technique provided a useful random probability sample for the subset of the Richmond Latino population with Hispanic surnames. In the end, it proved to be an adequate compromise between coverage and efficiency.

An initial screening weeded out individuals in the sampling frame who did not have Latino ancestry. As our schedulers contacted potential respondents, they asked about Latino background. We identified as *Latino* persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Latin American culture or origin. If the respondent was hesitant to use a Latino or Hispanic label, we asked whether any of the respondent's parents or grandparents were Hispanic or Latino. If the respondent had at least one grandparent from South or Central America, she or he was included. In casting this broader net, we were able to reach

respondents who might not commonly define themselves as Hispanic/Latino, even though the views of such respondents are very relevant to understanding Latino acculturation. That allowed us to compare the experiences of highly assimilated Latinos with others.

In the fall of 2000, we conducted a pretest using a subsample of one hundred individuals from the representative sampling frame. Twenty-two respondents were interviewed. Their input allowed us to identify the items requiring further refinement or deletion, but this data is not part of our analysis. We also corrected problems with our Spanish translation. We began administering the final version of the questionnaire in January 2001 and conducted interviews through the spring of 2002.

Ultimately, we interviewed 174 individuals from our sampling frame of one thousand (not including the pretest sample). The purchased list had many names that were rendered ineligible (see Table 1.4). A considerable number of phone numbers were inoperative. We tracked down as many of these individuals as we could using phone directories and mail forwarding services, but in the end almost one-third of the sample was lost in this fashion. Second, many of those on the list with “Hispanic” surnames were not, in fact, Latino. Approximately 16 percent of these were non-Latino women who were married to Latinos. Twenty-six percent of these individuals were of Italian origin, 14 percent were Filipino, and 10 percent were of European Spanish origin.

Our response rate of the usable names was 50 percent. Of those who gave a reason for their refusal, 56 percent said that they were “too busy” or had “no time” to be interviewed. Twenty-two percent said they were not interested. Two percent were hang-ups. Only 2 percent refused because they did not feel Latino despite Latin American origins (our sample *does* incorporate a number of individuals who did not really see themselves as Latino, but agreed because of their ancestry to be included anyway). We note that a number of our refusals initially seemed interested or even agreed to an interview, though we were unable to schedule these interviews. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell how often people untruthfully used the “not Hispanic” statement as an escape from

Table 1.4. Latinos in Richmond Survey Response Rates

Sample	Usable Names	Not Latino	Unable to Arrange*	Eligible for Interview		Response Rate
				Agreed	Refused	
994+	662	201	114	174	173	50%

+ The original sample without the pretest sample, minus six duplicate names.

\* Never responded to phone calls or other contact, or agreed but was never interviewed.