

**ETHNIC NICHES, PATHWAY TO ECONOMIC INCORPORATION OR
EXPLOITATION? LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF LATINA/OS**

A Dissertation

by

MARIA CRISTINA MORALES

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2004

Major Subject: Sociology

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December 2004

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic Niches, Pathway to Economic Incorporation or Exploitation? Labor Market

Experiences of Latina/os. (December 2004)

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This dissertation investigates the ethnic labor market activities of the Latina/os. This study is important since regardless of their historical and increasing presence in the U.S., Latinos continue to find themselves disproportionately at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Saenz, Morales, and Ayala 2004). Furthermore, due to their lack of access, a significant amount of the members of this group are turning to employment in an ethnic niche. While there is no consensus as to what exactly constitutes an ethnic niche, a distinct characteristic is the co-ethnic nature of the work environments. Special focus is placed on how immigration status/nativity, gender, nativity, and skin color influences job search activities and wage differentials in the ethnic niche. While these factors have been found to impact the mainstream labor market, our knowledge of how these factors operate in a work environment with a dominant presence of co-ethnics is ambiguous. Utilizing data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI), results show that Latina/os workers in co-ethnic niches receive fewer economic rewards than their ethnic counterparts in the general labor market. Furthermore, within the Latina/o population dark-skinned individuals are more likely to be employed in ethnic niches while the lighter-skinned are more likely to be employed in the general labor market. When

examining the stratification factors of immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color, in addition to social networks, findings show that these stratification factors operate in a similar fashion in ethnic niches as they do in more mainstream labor markets. Thus these findings question the presumably protective work environment of ethnic niches.

Para mi Mamí Aurorita

Aunque ya no estas en este mundo, siempre vivirás en mi corazón y en mi alma. Viviste tu vida con dignidad, alegría, y mas que nada sin rencor y mucho amor para todos los de tu alrededor. Eres mi inspiración y mi guía.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of the labor market experiences of immigrants— and to some extent native-born minority workers— is the ethnic economy. Research has increasingly examined ethnic economies (niches and enclaves) and their roles in providing employment opportunities for ethnic workers along with their contribution to labor market dynamics (see Morawska 1990; Model 1993; Logan, Alba, and McNulty 1994; Model and Ladipo 1996; Waldinger 1996; Wilson 1999). While there is limited consensus as to how to define ethnic economies (see Sanders and Nee 1987; Portes and Jensen 1987, 1989, 1992; Sanders and Nee 1992; Hum 2000), a key feature is the co-ethnic nature of the workplace (Bonacich and Modell 1980; Light and Bonachich 1988; Reitz 1990; Light and Karageorgis 1994; Waldinger 1996; Hum 2000). Yet, largely due to this co-ethnic environment there has been minimal focus on internal stratification within ethnic economies.

This study investigates access and economic returns in ethnic niche labor markets for Latina/os. This group is important to study because they represent a major segment of contemporary immigrant waves and by default a significant portion of the labor force particularly in ethnic labor markets. To illustrate the large presence of this group in the United States (U.S.), Saenz, Morales, and Ayala (2004) present a demographic profile showing that in the 1960's the U.S. experienced a demographic shift in the composition of immigrants. From 1951 to 1970, the number Latin American (130%) legal

This dissertation follows the style and format of *American Sociological Review*.

immigrants more than doubled and this growth continued in the following decades.

Furthermore, Latin Americans comprised nearly half of all legal immigrants that entered the country in the period from 1991-1998.

Given the large and constant volume of immigration and other structural factors, some (Saenz et al. 2004) have questioned whether today's immigrants will integrate as quickly as did their European predecessors. In the case of Mexican, Caribbean (with the exception of Cubans), and Central American immigrants are at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. Using data from the 2000 Current Population Survey (CPS) Saenz et al. (2004) note that the median earnings for full-time foreign-born Latino male workers is 43 percent lower than that of their Asian immigrant counterparts (\$20,974 versus \$36,911); a similar gap exists among foreign-born Latina and Asian females (\$17,213 versus \$29,662). Yet, it is necessary to note that not all of these groups are newcomers to the U.S. In particular, Mexicans have an extended history in the U.S. extending back to the 1910's when the Mexican Revolution pushed many Mexicans to the U.S. The long history of Mexicans in this country questions assumptions that the low socioeconomic standing of the Mexican-origin population is attributed to their newcomer status.

Throughout its history, the U.S. has depended heavily on immigrants to perform important economic functions. Certainly, American employers welcomed European immigrants long ago as well as Latina/o immigrants more recently (Melendez, Rodriquez, and Figueroa 1991). More specifically, Mexican immigration has been

driven by U.S. labor demands for more than a century (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). While there had been several factors that influence Mexican migration to the U.S., the economic expansion of the U.S. in the early 20th Century and the social instability in Mexico encouraged the first large immigrant wave to the U.S. and provided “cheap” laborers needed for agricultural production (Barrera 1979; Melendez et al. 1991). The labor pull consisted initially of men working in agriculture, then sojourner male workers searching for temporary employment, and more recently greater settlement in the to a shift in the 1960’s associated with the movement of women and entire families over the last decades (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). This demand for Mexican labor has intensified during times of economic expansion and labor shortages, albeit with continued high anti-immigrant sentiments (Mirande 1987). With this paradox in mind, Mirande (1987:21) argues that “Without doubt the economic, political, and legal exploitation of the Chicano has been facilitated by the proximity of the border and the availability of an unlimited pool of labor that can be manipulated and exploited by the American industry and agriculture.” Thus, there is a long history of Mexican laborers needed to sustain the U.S. economy.

Although the origins of Mexicans in the United States reflect territorial expansion, colonization, and surplus labor demands, the Central American presence in the U.S. is associated with a different history. The origin of Central American groups is largely attributed to the political instability in Central America in the 1970’s and 1980’s (Moore and Pachon 1985; Melendez et al. 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). During this period, many Central Americans came to the U.S. fleeing war, political prosecution, and

deteriorating economic conditions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Central Americans have the highest percentage of individuals born outside of the U.S. among Latina/o subgroups (approximately three-fifths) (Saenz 2004). Central Americans are also among the most recent immigrants (Melendez et al. 1991; Saenz 2004) and have settled largely in Los Angeles, New York, Houston, Miami, and San Francisco (Guzman 2001). Although their successful incorporation to the U.S. is also questionable (Melendez et al. 1991; Saenz et al. 2004), they have a unique historical connection through geopolitical expansionism throughout most of Latin America (Melendez et al. 1991). In terms of their socioeconomic standing in the U.S., 2000 CPS data shows that despite having high levels of labor force participation, they have one of the lowest education levels, are concentrated in low-status occupations, and their median earnings are among the lowest (Saenz et al. 2004).

According to Waldinger (1996:317), “the new immigrant phenomenon is largely the story of the ethnic niche.” The continuous use of migrants as sources of low-wage labor in the U.S. has made ethnicity the crucial mechanism sorting groups of people into categorically different workers into identifiable sets of jobs. Simultaneously, within immigrant communities ethnic connections provide informal structure to immigrant economic life. These structures provide explicit and implicit signals of economic information and mechanisms of support that help ethnics enter the labor market and acquire skills, establishing niches. Although the linkages between the need for immigrant labor and the growth of the service industry have been made, Waldinger (1996) documents that the labor opportunities for new immigrants came from ethnic

succession. Succession of the disproportionate decline of the white population created empty spaces for newcomers, though usually in the lower portion of the economic totem pole.

This study will investigate the broader structural forces affecting the internal dynamics of Latina/os employed in a co-ethnic niche. While a considerable amount of research has focused on the disadvantaged position of Latina/os in the general labor market, their experiences in the ethnic labor market, such as the niche, are ambiguous. This is not the case for all Latina/o subgroups. Most of the research on the ethnic economy has focused on self-employment operations of Cuban as well as Asian immigrants (Light and Bonacich 1988; Zhou 1992; Huynh 1996). Thus, research has largely neglected other non-Cuban Latina/o groups, despite their growing population size and over-representation in low-status occupations. While it is questionable whether or not non-Cuban Latina/o s will experience similar outcomes as Cubans involved in ethnic economies (Villar 1994; Alvarez 1990; Gilbertson and Gurak 1993), demographic trends, including the prevalence of ethnic-based networks, suggest that ethnic economies are important for other Latina/os as well (Portes and Guarnizo 1991; Logan, Alba, and McNulty 1994; Mahler 1995). Additionally, Mexicans and Central Americans are appropriate to study intra-group stratification due to skin-color diversity within these groups and nativity/immigration status variations. Therefore, this analysis will primarily focus on Mexicans and Central Americans (Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Nicaraguan) in Los Angeles.

In terms of explaining labor market differentials human capital theory continues to be the most important framework used to understand the labor market experiences of workers (Saenz 2000). This perspective argues that human beings invest in human capital, such as education, skills, and time in the U.S. to receive greater returns from the labor market (Becker 1993). According to the immigrant paradigm it is expected that as immigrants adjust to their new work environment and as they invest in education or human capital, they will eventually achieve parity with the native-born in terms of wages, employment tenure, and mobility (Chiswick 1979). Therefore, according to this immigrant model, labor market differences between Latina/os by nativity status and among other racial and ethnic groups should be explained in terms of human capital differences and time in the U.S. (see Melendez et al. 1991). Despite its wide empirical support (see Saenz 2000), however, this theory does not fully explain nuances emerging from social networks in ethnic economies (see Hum 2000). Since an essential aspect of the development of ethnic niches is the recruitment of co-ethnics, it is important to consider other factors beyond human capital factors.

The segmented labor market perspective has been useful in explaining economic outcomes for employment of ethnic and immigrant minorities. This perspective emphasizes the demand for immigrant labor as an intrinsic part of advanced industrial societies (see Massey and Espinosa 1997). Some have characterized ethnic economies as having features of both primary and secondary labor markets (Wilson and Portes 1980; Wilson and Martin 1982; Portes and Stepick 1985; Portes and Bach 1985; Bailey and

Waldinger 1991; Light and Espiritu 1991), thus illustrating the challenges of conceptualizing ethnic economies into this theoretical perspective (Hum 2000).

Therefore, rather than focusing on either of these two approaches, human capital and segmented labor, increasing attention has focused on how ethnicity mediates labor market processes and outcomes through social networks, occupational and industrial niches, and economic enclaves (Model 1993; Light and Karageorgis 1994; Portes 1995; Waldinger 1996; Hum 2000). Hence, ethnic labor market theoretical perspectives will guide this study. Several terms have been used to describe co-ethnic workplaces. From the broader term of ethnic economy referring to ethnic owned business and co-ethnic employees (see Light, Sabagh, Bozorgmehr, and Der-Martirosian 1993), to ethnic enclave deriving from the segmented labor literature which has the added feature of involving a geographical concentration (see Portes 1981). Still other terms describe the concentration of co-ethnics in the workplace in terms of proportional overrepresentation of an ethnic group in a particular industry or occupation (see Waldinger 1996; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996; Catanzarite 2000).

Following the latter conceptualization, co-ethnic workplace concentration, specifically ethnic niches, will be used in this study. In terms of labor market outcomes, some researchers find that ethnic niches are pathways to economic incorporation (see Wilson and Martin 1982; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Stepick 1985; Portes and Jensen 1989; Zhou 1992; Bailey and Waldinger 1991) while others are less optimistic (Sanders and Nee 1987; Hum 2000). Part of this lack of consensus can be attributed to the neglect of examining stratification factors within the ethnic niche market. This can

be partly due to the co-ethnic nature of ethnic niches and erroneous perceptions of the homogeneous nature of Latina/o populations. Yet, while intra-ethnic factors, such as nativity, gender, and skin color have been documented to influence the general labor market, we have limited knowledge on how they influence access and economic returns in ethnic niches. Given that traditionally race relations in Latin American societies do not have an overt character (Bonilla-Silva 2001), racism can be difficult to understand. This examination of social networks and economic returns in ethnic niches provides the environment to investigate intra-group discrimination, not only its racialized structures but its genderized and nativist structures as well.

The focus of this dissertation analysis is on the access to ethnic niche employment and economic returns for ethnic niche workers. Niche employment for Latina/os is important to investigate given that reliance on ethnic networks are likely to lead them to niche employment as oppose to the general labor markets. Yet, our knowledge on these markets is limited, especially how the disenfranchised segments of this population (immigrants, women, dark-skinned individuals) are included or excluded from ethnic niche labor market structures. Gaining some insights into internal stratification among Latina/os will help to illuminate how to create more equitable work environments for its constituents and to increase the social standing of this growing population. By developing such an understanding it will become increasing possible to circumvent problems that may arise if this group of workers continues to lag behind economically compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, the examination

of the intra-group stratification factors provides us new insights into the nativism, sexism, and colorism.

This study contains five chapters. The first chapter presented here provides an overview of the immigration patterns and socioeconomic standing of Latina/os. Furthermore, attention is brought to how intra-group segmentation in terms of nativity, gender, and skin color have been overlooked in studies of co-ethnic workplaces and how examining these factors can illuminate whether ethnic niches facilitate or hinder labor market outcomes for this group. Chapter II presents the theoretical framework derived from ethnic labor market perspectives. The influence of several stratification factors on labor market outcomes are examined, namely nativity, gender, and skin color, and their influence in ethnic niche markets is explored. Chapter III presents the methodology used to conduct the analysis. In particular, this chapter describes the data, measurement of variables, and qualitative and statistical procedures used to conduct the data analysis. Chapter IV presents the results of each hypothesis addressed. In conclusion, Chapter V presents an overview of the findings, along with policy recommendations, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

When it comes to explaining economic incorporation patterns of immigrants and their native-born counterparts, questions of why workers from certain countries are funneled into particular industrial/occupational opportunities are crucial. Since the origins of the Chicago School, Park and his colleagues became interested in such questions and sought to answer them by researching the collective mobility of racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups. Interest in this subject area peaked once again with Piore's (1979) *Birds of Passage*, in which he describes new immigrants togetherness as a flock of birds whose cohesiveness brings numerous advantages. Since then, a series of terms have been developed to describe the collective economic activities of immigrants, and their native-born counterparts to some extent, all highlighting the co-ethnic concentration of the labor markets that they are channeled into. Following is a theoretical discussion of the development of research associated with economic outcomes in ethnic labor markets and intra-ethnicity segmentation factors that have been neglected in this literature.

In analyses involving internal variation among ethnic groups such as ethnic niches, it is essential to acknowledge that the study of ethnic groups is the study of ethnic boundaries (see Barth 1969). Within ethnic concentrations or ethnic niches, there is frequent and intense interaction among group members which makes workers feel that they belong to a group. Consequently, members then pay attention to the boundaries of

the ethnic niche and the characteristics of those who can and cannot cross those boundaries (Waldinger 1996). However, the question of who is considered to be a legitimate member of that ethnic group arises. There is a significant amount of intra-ethnic diversity among most immigrant or ethnic groups, e.g., differences in occupation, class, age, gender, community or residence, immigration status/nativity, and skin color (see Light et al. 1993).

Light et al. (1993:581) coined the term internal ethnicity to describe “ethnic subgroups within an immigrant group.” According to Light et al. (1993), internal ethnicity develops from several sources: 1) being from an ethnically heterogeneous country of origin or from a less heterogeneous country where migrant selectivity crosses ethnic lines (Bozorgmehr 1992); 2) from larger ethnic groups that developed from an aggregation of initially distinct subgroups (Sarna 1978; Espiritu 1989); and 3) from successive immigration of the same ethnic group. While perceptions of the homogeneous nature of co-ethnic workplaces are associated with the neglect of intra-group conflict, it is important to pay attention to aspects of inclusion and exclusion and how ethnic boundaries or internal ethnicity influence labor market outcomes in ethnic niches. Indeed, it is even argued that internal ethnicity represents a stronger bond than ethnicity because it is more convenient for immigrants to deal with those who share internal ethnicity than merely co-ethnics (Light et al. 1993). For instance, in the case of Iranians, Light et al. (1993) finds occupational and industrial clustering distinguish Iranian subgroups similar to them being from different ethnic groups.

In the ethnic niche literature, while some studies have focused on immigrants and males or females exclusively, limited attention has been brought to co-ethnic workplace differentials in terms of nativity and gender segmentation. Even less attention has focused on the influences of skin color in workplaces shared by co-ethnics. Part of this neglect is due to the perception that skin color only resonates as a factor in associations between the majority white and minority colored groups. This perception negates the understanding that whiteness is perceived as a legitimate center of power, including economic power, in society even within co-ethnics. Furthermore, the investigation of intra-ethnic conflict in terms of nativity, gender, and skin color, reveals new dimensions of stratification.

This chapter will be organized around three sections. The first section discusses the evolution of concepts describing ethnic labor markets. Since there is some overlap in the terms describing co-ethnic workplaces, there has been a corresponding confusion of the applicability of terms. The second section discusses the influence of stratification factors (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) and social networks on the incorporation of workers into ethnic labor markets and formulates the hypotheses related to these associations. The final section discusses the influence of stratification factors and social networks on economic returns in co-ethnic concentrated workplaces and formulates the hypotheses associated with these relationships.

Evolution of Concepts Describing Co-ethnic Concentrated Work Environments

The following section traces the evolution of terms describing co-ethnic concentrated workplaces. Put simply, there is common confusion about the distinctions between such terms as “ethnic economy”, “ethnic enclave”, and “ethnic niches,” concepts that are derived from varying literatures. Although it is arguable how significant the differences between such concepts are, it is important to make distinctions between such concepts given that studies often report the findings of these concepts collectively.

Ethnic Economy

Ethnic economy is the more general of the terms used to describe the concentration of ethnic groups in the labor market (Light et al. 1994; Light and Gold 2000). This concept derives from the middleman minority literature which can be linked to Weber’s concept of “pariah capitalism” describing the specialization of ethnic minorities in market training in precapitalist societies (Light and Gold 2000). Howard Paul Becker (1956) was the first to define middleman minorities to include individuals who trade goods all over the world. Bonacich (1973) conceptualized middleman minority ethnic groups as economic-interest groups in which ethnic solidarity leads to the availability of different types of resources at minimal costs. Solidarity is formed through the maintenance of trust through networks of personal ties. Thus, solidarity enables minorities to generate and distribute resources including, jobs, more quickly and efficiently than possible in the surrounding society. In term of ethnic labor market concentration, specialization, (and sometimes domination), in certain economic activities

are accomplished partly by taking advantage of linkages with other co-ethnic firms (also see Light and Bonacich 1988) and co-ethnic employees who will work at low wages (see Light and Gold 2000).

Later, Bonacich and Modell (1980) were the first to define the concept of *ethnic economy* which referred to the self-employed and their co-ethnic employees. More specifically, the ethnic economy is defined as any ethnic or immigrant group's self-employment participants, including employers, co-ethnic employees, and unpaid family members. Note that this definition makes no claims about the level of ethnicity or cultural ambience within the ethnic economy. Ethnic economy is then any situation in which common ethnicity provides economic advantage, e.g., in relations among owners in the same or complementary business sectors, between owners and workers, or even among workers in the same firm or industry regardless of the owner's ethnicity (see Sanders and Nee 1987). The essential feature is that the ethnic group controls its economy which enhances upward mobility from group members (see Light et al. 1994). It is also necessary to acknowledge that ethnic economies exist partially independent from general labor markets and provide workers an alternative source of employment (Light, Bhachu and Karageorgis 1993; Portes and Manning 1986). Furthermore, ethnic economy, unlike the concept of ethnic enclave, does not address locational clustering, and, unlike the concept of ethnic niche, does not address the density of firms.

Bonacich and Modell's (1980) concept of ethnic economy has been frustrating conceptually for researchers interested in ethnicity as an analytical tool or ethnic niches (Light and Gold 2000). Therefore, some researchers have redefined the term. Among

the first to do so is Reitz (Light and Gold 2000; Razin and Light 1998), who defined the ethnic economy as any firm in which co-ethnics used a foreign language. Subsequently, still others redefined the concept in a way that allowed researchers to operationalize the concept with census data. For example, Zhou and Logan (1989) conceptualized Chinese ethnic economy with census data and identified clusters of industries in which Chinese are over-represented. Such clusters then constituted an ethnic economy. In a much broader definition that included wage earners in general labor markets, Logan, Alba, and McNulty (1994) also utilized census measures to capture Bonacich and Modell's (1980) concept of the ethnic economy. Hence, the over representation of co-ethnic workers and co-ethnic employers in any industry constituted an ethnic-controlled industry and their sum represented an ethnic economy. Due to data limitations, Logan, Alba, and McNulty (1994) had to rely on clustering rather than ownership to compensate for the lack of census data on the ethnicity of business owners and their employees. Although this is a compromise, census data did allow for a quantitative estimation on the number of ethnic economies in major cities.

Ethnic Enclave

A concept resembling ethnic economy is the *ethnic enclave economy*. The origins of the ethnic enclave concept can be traced to the segmented labor market perspective (see Sanders and Nee 1987), which is an extension of dual economy theory (Averitt 1968; Galbraith 1971). The dual labor market theory developed in the late 1960's sought to explain the income and status differences between women and men and between minority and majority workers. According to this perspective the labor market

is segmented in advanced capitalistic societies into at least two labor markets (Gordon 1972; Edwards 1975). Primary labor markets are characterized by stable working conditions, high wages, scarce skill specifications, internal labor markets, and high returns to human capital investments for workers (see Sanders and Nee 1987). On the other hand, secondary labor markets are characterized as having high turnover rates, low wages, low skills, lack of structural opportunities for promotion, and lower returns to human capital (see Sanders and Nee 1987). Since advanced capitalism requires the continual flow of low-wage, relatively unskilled labor to fill undesirable jobs (Burawoy 1976; Sassen-Koob 1978; Piore 1979), this resulted in the disproportionate concentration of racial minorities, women, as well as immigrants into secondary labor markets (see Sanders and Nee 1987; Beck, Horan, and Tolbert 1978; Tolbert, Horan, and Beck 1980; Light and Gold 2000). Therefore, it is argued that the barriers between primary and secondary labor markets lead to the entrapment of immigrant-minority workers into low-wage unstable jobs (Bluestone 1979). Although this perspective has served as a useful guide, particularly in the work of Alejandro Portes and his associates, it has been found that co-ethnic workplaces have characteristics of both segments (Hum 2000). Therefore, primary and secondary sectors of the general labor market coexist within immigrant-owned businesses in which immigrants work as employees of co-ethnics or as entrepreneurs (Bailey and Waldinger 1991).

The influence of the dual labor market and segmented labor market perspectives is clearly seen in the earliest formulation of the ethnic enclave—that of Wilson and Portes (1980) (see Light and Gold 2000). Wilson and Portes (1980) introduced the

concept of “immigrant enclave” to refer to the employment of immigrant workers. In this formulation of ethnic enclave Wilson and Portes did not include the self-employed because only wage/salary workers were of interest to theorists of labor market segmentation. Later, Portes (1981:291) defined the enclave economy as involving “immigrant groups which concentrate in a distinct spatial location and organize a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic market and/or the general population. Their basic characteristic is that a significant proportion of the immigrant workforce are employed in enterprises owned by other immigrants.” In sum, Portes (1981) concept of immigrant enclaves has two characteristics: 1) numerous immigrant-owned business firms that employ numerous co-ethnic workers, and 2) spatial clustering of enterprises. This was the first time that dual labor market theorists included the self-employed in their conceptualization (Light et al. 1994; Light and Gold 2000). Subsequently, Portes and his associates (Portes and Jensen 1992; Portes and Bach 1985), have made some changes in the definition but have basically followed the general conceptualization of immigrant enclaves. While there has been some confusion over the terms of ethnic economy and ethnic enclave, the literatures have been separated and the term ethnic enclave economy has come to stand for economic advantage of location clustering (Light and Gold 2000).

Ethnic Niche

Now that distinctions between ethnic economy and ethnic enclave have been made, the concept of interest in this research— ethnic niche—can be addressed. Other terms describing the concentration of co-ethnics in the workplace have been used. Most of these terms are derived from notions of segregation in the workplace. Generally

segregation is associated with negative economic returns in the labor market (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Given the numeric dominance of one ethnic group, ethnic niches are a form of segregation. However, traditional economic segregation perspectives assume this ethnic division of labor to be transitory and associated with the initial disadvantage status of groups (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996).

Early conceptualizations of ethnic niches come from Lieberman (1980) and Model (1993). When co-ethnics congregate in particular industries or occupations they form a *special niche* (Lieberman 1980) or *ethnic niche* (Model 1993). To explain the ethnic niche formation, queuing theory provides a useful perspective to explain how stereotypes associated with workers can shape labor market outcomes (Model and Ladipo 1996; Waldinger 1996). Queuing theorists argue that workers occupy an imaginary queue with the most desirable workers on top and the least desirable workers at the bottom, thus providing a useful perspective to explain how stereotypes associated with workers can influence labor market outcomes (Model and Ladipo 1996; Waldinger 1996). The first social scientist to characterize the labor market queue is Lester Thurow (1969, 1972, 1975). According to Thurow, blacks experience more unemployment than whites because they are ranked lower in the labor queue. Employers hire workers from as high up the labor queue as possible and workers accept the best jobs available to them. Consequently, the best jobs go to the most preferred workers and the least attractive jobs go to those lower in the queue. In examining labor market racial differentials, Thurow and his successors (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Hodge 1973; Lieberman 1980) have utilized this perspective.

Reskin and Roos (1990) suggest that queues are characterized by three structural properties: the ordering of their elements (jobs, groups of workers), their shape (relative sizes of population subgroups and occupations), and the intensity of rankers' preferences (whether or not elements overlap). In terms of ordering, as described above, there is a dual-queuing process of labor queues that order groups of workers in terms of attractiveness to employers and job queues that rank jobs in terms of attractiveness to workers. With this process the role of queuing in occupational succession, specifically how the upward mobility of groups cedes jobs to groups ranked below them, can be illuminated (Reskin and Roos 1990; Waldinger 1996). However, these shifts also create shortages in low-wage, low-status jobs. When employers are limited in their ability to raise wages or to substitute capital for labor, groups external to the market (e.g., immigrants) gain entry into the bottom of the queue (Waldinger 1996).

Portes (1994) points out that niche formation may result from a preference of migrants to work with others who can understand them better or who are willing to honor their wishes regarding work. Lieberman (1980) points out that in-group preference of a group is required to build and maintain an ethnic niche. Hence, preferences for coworkers, customers, and employers produce the acceptance and exclusion of potential workers. Yet, the question remains, how do employers rank potential employees? Waldinger (1996) argues that this is the portion of the queue theoretical perspective that is the most complex, since it is widely acknowledge that workers want to be in occupations with higher pay, security, and prestige. According to classical economists, employers rank prospective workers in terms of potential productivity and labor costs

(Doeringer and Piore 1971). However, it is necessary to remember that in a race-conscious society, such as the U.S., groups of people are ordered in terms of desirability for preferred jobs with skill-relevancy serving as additional factors. At each level of relevant skills members of the core racial or cultural group are at the top of the ranking followed by members of other groups.

In relation to the shaping properties of the queue, changes in the size of either the groups of workers or jobs, create a mismatch between the number of workers at some level in the labor queue and the number of jobs in the corresponding level of the job queue (Reskin and Roos 1990; Waldinger 1996). For instance, if labor becomes scarce at the top of the labor queue, either because of job growth or the shrinkage in the number of preferred workers, the topmost members move up to fill these new positions. The result is that employers must be less choosy in filling lower ranked jobs. Consequently, the opening of jobs at the bottom of the queue represents opportunities for those in the lower ranks of the job queue. These rankings are subject to change with the erosion of relative pay, prestige, and security which may trigger the abandonment by members of the core cultural group leaving opportunities for those lower in the employment tier (Waldinger 1996). The third element in a labor queue is the intensity of raters preference, with some employers using group membership as a paramount consideration and others using it only to break ties between otherwise equally qualified prospects (Reskin and Roos 1990).

From the ethnic queue perspective, Waldinger (1996) derives a theory that develops from ethnic queue, to immigrant niches, to ethnic niches. In terms of

preferences of the laborers, initially migrants accept the jobs that natives reject. Over time the job rankings between immigrant and native workers diminish as preferences evolve with exposure to prevailing wages and status norms. Therefore, the children of migrants are likely to operate under the same rankings as the natives, creating a new demand for replacement labor beyond that generated by compositional changes alone at the bottom of the queue.

However, the question of how jobs will be allocated among successor groups arises. In the case of immigrants, desirability is based on the worker's race, nativity, and birthplace (Model and Ladipo 1996) with men and women assumed to occupy different queues (Reskin and Roos 1990; Model and Ladipo 1996). Employers give first preference to members of the groups who they esteem the most, moving down the queue as the supply of most favorable workers diminishes (Hodge 1973; Lieberman 1980; Waldinger 1996). Queuing theory is just a way of explaining how discrimination or favoritism can affect particular groups with the key being the number of competing groups (see Model and Ladipo 1996).

Lieberman (1980) argues that some immigrant workers rise to the head of the labor queue regardless of their position in the eyes of the dominant group employers. Ethnic groups are funneled into special places in the labor market that Waldinger refers to as niches that then maintain specialization at varying rates of persistence over time. Therefore, the already established ethnic division of labor disrupts ethnic succession. The structuring role of ethnicity means that compositional shifts create the circumstances for the ethnic order in the labor market to be transformed.

Waldinger (1996) describes the making of the immigrant niche as a two-stage process. The initial stage involves a specialization phase in which placement of actors are affected by skill, language, or predispositions (e.g., immigrants basing their evaluations on employment in their home countries). Hence, immigrants are more likely to be favorably disposed to low-level, low-status jobs (see Piore 1979). The second stage is the occupational cluster that quickly develops after the initial phase. Ethnic ties bound the networks of information and support. Newcomers may tap friends and relatives as an efficient strategy for gaining work in places which offer a comfort zone complete with coworkers from similar backgrounds. Departing from Piore (1979), who depicts immigrant labor markets as unstructured without formal mechanisms, Waldinger (1996) argues there is vast evidence indicating that the ethnic networks of newcomers are activated at an early stage and provide a source of structure. As such, later arrivals are structured into areas of employment where their predecessors gained entry.

When immigrants gain a foothold in certain low-level jobs, ethnic networks funnel a steady stream of newcomers (Waldinger 1996). Once the immigrant niche is in place, if the niche provides rewarding employment or mechanisms to expand the group's economic base, it is likely to persist and to eventually transform from an immigrant niche to an ethnic niche (Waldinger 1996). However, there tends to be industrial variations in terms of different mobility patterns. For instance, Waldinger and his associates define an ethnic niche as an occupation or industry in which the group is over-represented (see Waldinger 1996; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). From this perspective, Waldinger (1996) portrays the employment process of ethnic succession and

competition as a social one with groups establishing presence, on-going networks, and political and social interests. The intragroup social networks are then a central aspect of niche formation. Ethnic niches emerge from the interaction of skills and experiences of members of a given ethnic group, with the opportunity structure, and diversity of an area, which can hinder or facilitate labor market outcomes (see Morawska 1990; Model 1993; Waldinger 1996; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996; Wilson 1999).

Other Terms Describing Ethnic Concentrations

Other terms have also been conceptualized to describe co-ethnic concentrated workplaces. Jiobu (1988) described a combination of industrial clustering and industrial power as “ethnic hegemonization” or a situation in which an ethnic group achieves economic control over an important economic arena that interfaces with the majority. In order for ethnic hegemony to exist, five elements must be present: 1) an internal labor market that exists within the broader market but that is sheltered from adverse effects of the economic cycles (e.g., civil service), 2) certain minorities become middleman minorities who mediate the economic transactions between retailers and producers, 3) ethnic saturation or large disproportion of minority co-ethnics, 4) ethnic economic control, and 5) hegemonization of products or services that are in high demand by the majority. Using Japanese Americans in California as an illustration, Jiobu describes how Japanese Americans hegemonized the agricultural industry—from farm labor, to production, and to distribution.

Another perspective from an occupational segregation point of view is the work of Lisa Catanzarite. Using census data for Los Angeles Catanzarite (2000, 2002)

developed the term *brown-collar occupations* to refer to occupations where Latina/o newcomers are vastly over-represented. Two occupational dynamics illustrate the limited labor market success of recent Latina/o immigrants and their potential impact on native workers: 1) increasing concentrations in occupations with relatively undesirable characteristics and 2) pay degradation for immigrants and natives in occupations with an overrepresentation of Latina/o newcomers or brown-collar occupations (Catanzarite 2002).

In their study of the broader advantages of ethnicity in the economy, Light and Gold (2000) argue that the Bonacich and Model (1980) conceptualization of the ethnic economy is insufficient and they rename what Jiobu (1988) called “ethnic hegemonization,” what Logan, Alba, and McNulty (1994) called the ethnic economy, and what Waldinger (1996) and others (e.g., Lichter 2000; Model 1993; Model and Lapidó 1996; Morawska 1990; Wilson 1999) called the ethnic niche and propose a term called *ethnic-controlled economy*. The basis of the concept is this recognition that it is possible for co-ethnic clusters to exist in a firm or government agency but with ethnic group members not having control of wages, working conditions, and so forth. This concept describes “all situations and sectors in which co-ethnic employees (not owners) exert significant and enduring market power in the general economy, usually because of the numbers, clustering, and organization, but also, when applicable, because of external political or economic power” (Light and Gold 2000:23).

Economic Incorporation and Co-ethnic Concentrated Labor Markets

Now that the evolution of terms describing ethnic concentrated labor markets has been discussed, attention will focus on the incorporation of Latina/os into distinct labor markets such as the general and ethnic labor markets. Some argue that one of the benefits of ethnic concentrated markets for ethnic group members is protection from discrimination (see Portes and Bach 1985; Zhou 1992; Waldinger 1996; Lichter 2000). Such workplaces, it is argued, lessen the stigmatization of coming from certain national or racial backgrounds, in addition to lessening discriminatory treatment due to accents, language difficulties, and customs. As such the process of ethnic niche formation compensates for background deficits and discrimination that ethnic groups encounter in the general labor market. In ethnic niches markets, ethnic networks become a form of social capital that provides the social structures to facilitate job searches and the acquisition of skills needed to move up the economic ladder (see Waldinger 1996).

Sanders and Nee (1987) point out structural perspectives that describe the role of ethnic solidarity perspectives in the socioeconomic attainment of some racial and ethnic groups despite discrimination (e.g., Light 1972; Bonacich 1973; Bonacich and Modell 1980). The focus of these perspectives is on the influence of institutions and social dynamics in the utilization of ethnic resources for economic advancement. Theorists that follow these perspectives share the view that ethnic resources explain why immigrant-minority groups achieve economic success despite societal hostility and initial disadvantages. These ethnic resources are accomplished by developing cultural cohesion provided by normalizing distinctive language and customs that can lead to

stigmatization. If ethnic concentrations do provide protection from discrimination, then this helps to explain the existence of ethnic labor markets, such as ethnic niches, and why ethnic members remain in these markets despite low wages and bad working conditions. For example, in the case of Japanese Americans, Bonacich and Modell (1980) argue that the interaction between ethnic solidarity, small business concentration, and even societal hostility facilitate the mobilization of ethnic resources for economic action.

On the other hand, other researchers question the positive effects of ethnic solidarity. Some argue that ethnic solidarity can be used to maintain and enforce sweatshop conditions including low-wages and restrictions against union organizing (see Sanders and Nee 1987). Also, ethnic solidarity can fuel paternalistic ethnic assistantship in which immigrants that depend on kinship or ethnic group assistance in the initial stage of adaptation to a host society can become caught in a web of obligations that interfere with rational pursuits of economic opportunities (Li 1977). Another negative aspect of ethnic economies is that as long as immigrants lack human capital skills to compete in the general labor market, they will be relegated to the poorest paying jobs (see Sanders and Nee 1987). Furthermore, as long as immigrant/minority workers are restricted to ethnic labor markets, entrepreneurs can profit from the surplus of cheap labor (see Schrover 2001). Also, cultural cohesion is questionable when considering Lichter's (2000) findings that Central Americans report more discrimination inside niche industries than in the general economy than Mexicans, Chinese, and Koreans.

In sum, Latina/os may be funneled into ethnic niches because they are excluded from more profitable general labor markets, their limited human capital levels, and as a way to protect themselves from discrimination in the general labor market. Latina/o laborers may be stigmatized due to their Latin national and racial backgrounds, in addition to distinct language backgrounds and customs. For members of these groups, social networks establish a form of social capital to gain employment and skills. However, there is no agreement about the benefits of these ethnic resources, particularly in light of the characteristics often associated with ethnic labor markets—unsafe working conditions, low-wages, workers being over burdened with obligations, and the entrapment of workers that impedes the acquisition of human capital resources needed to gain greater economic rewards. Following is a discussion of the possible influence of social inequality factors (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) and social networks on the funneling of Latina/os into ethnic niches as oppose to general labor markets.

Immigration/ Nativity Status

As illustrated in the ethnic niche section, niche formation is largely attributed to the funneling of immigrants into low-status low-wage jobs in part by the networks that keep a steady pool of applicants. This section will reinforce why immigrants are particularly likely to be employed in the ethnic niche as oppose to general labor markets. Since the process in which immigrant niches become ethnic niches has already been discussed, attention will be given to other factors that are more likely to lead immigrants to employment in ethnic niches, namely anti-immigrant sentiments, intra-ethnic conflict

due to nativity status, and perceptions of the impact of foreign-born workers on the employment outcomes of the native-born.

Over the last decade, there have been many concerns suggesting that immigrants have a negative impact on different sectors of American society. Immigrants are often perceived as a threat to job security of U.S. workers (see Gutiérrez 1995; Zhou and Nordquist 1994). Furthermore, immigrants are often viewed as a drain on public resources (e.g. health services, social services, welfare system). Moreover, immigrants are often seen as a threat to the English language due to limited English proficiencies. However, a significant amount of empirical evidence has failed to support such fears. For example, Bean and his colleagues (Bean et al. 1997; Bean and Stevens 2003) have shown that the presence of immigrants does not generate significant negative demographic, economic, or social effects. In addition, others have demonstrated that immigrants do not represent a drain on social services (see Blau 1984; Simon 1984; Tienda and Jensen 1986) and that they learn English with the passage of time (Grenier 1984; Stevens 1985; Veltman 1988).

Yet, despite such evidence, the immigrant backlash has gained force (Massey 1995). Indeed, the Huntington (2004) report argues that Hispanic immigrants, particularly Mexicans, are threatening the American way of life by dividing the people, culture, and language in two. He goes on to argue that Hispanics are unpatriotic and instead form their own political and linguistic enclaves.

Part of the explanation for this persistent anti-immigrant backlash is attributed to the racialized status of contemporary immigrant groups. Race and immigration interact

in important ways. For instance, employers and the general public tend to perceive immigrants as “foreigners” and “outsiders” and relegate them to racialized employment opportunities (see Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Indeed, Rosales, Navarro, and Cardoso (2001) argue that legislation targeting immigrants is based on racism disguised as concern for the legal status of the poverty-wage workforce. Therefore, in terms of ethnic concentrated work environments, such as the ethnic niches, they are not only characterized by “foreignness” but a subordinate racialized status as well. In this sense, combined with color-blind ideologies, immigration does not suppress race but highlights it (see Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) argues that legislation has codified this racialized nativism in which propositions and reforms have shifted the focus from attacking immigrants for lowering wages and competing for jobs, to seeking to bar immigrants from access to social entitlements and welfare. Some examples include California’s Proposition 187, which denied public education and publicly funded health care to immigrants, the 1996 welfare reform act, the racialization of language with “English-only” campaigns, and especially the Immigration Reform and Individual Responsibility Act that codified the legal and social disenfranchisement of legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). In sum, these anti-immigrant perceptions are likely to result in the exclusion of immigrants from more profitable general labor markets.

Another factor that can lead immigrants to employment in the ethnic niche is intragroup conflict between the native-born and the foreign-born. In Gutiérrez’s (1995)

historical account titled, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*, he illustrates the sources of conflict across nativity groups within the U.S. Mexican-origin population. The intragroup social, cultural, and political divide existed even before the cession of Mexico's northern provinces and change to American society. Therefore, even though most Mexican Americans retained their Mexican cultural orientations and strong affinities for Mexico, social, cultural, and political cleavages have historically existed. Gutiérrez argues that these perceived differences along with class, regional, and cultural diversity of the Mexican American population of the 19th century Southwest not only profoundly influenced subsequent relations between citizens and "aliens" but helped to shape 20th century Mexican American political and social thought.

Furthermore, Gutiérrez (1995) argues that Mexican American settlement is different from other immigrant groups because Mexican Americans and permanent settlers from Mexico find their adaptations significantly more complicated. The proximity to Mexico means that the Mexican settlers remain in close contact to both sojourners and settlers from Mexico. What complicates matters is that historically the relationship between Mexicans and Mexican culture has fallen into two opposing camps. At one end are Mexican Americans who view Mexican immigrants as a threat. Although they view the historical, cultural, and kinship ties that bind them to Mexicans, they believe Mexican immigrants threatens their way of life by increasing economic competition and contributing to the reinforcement of negative racial and cultural stereotypes held by white Americans. These views are more commonly held by the

small Mexican American middle class and tend to emphasize the social, cultural, and political distinctions that separate Mexican immigrants from American citizens of Mexican descent.¹

At the other end of the spectrum, there are Mexican Americans who see themselves in recent arrivals and express empathy for immigrants from Mexico. Mostly found among Mexican Americans who resemble Mexican immigrants in terms of class and cultural orientation, this point of view stems from the belief that ties of culture, kinship, and friendship are much more important than any differences that divide them. This group recognizes that they are in competition for jobs and scarce resources and that immigrants contribute to the perpetuation of racial animosity between Anglos and Mexicans, but they recognize that Americans discriminate against them whether they are citizens or not. In sum, Gutiérrez (1995:6) asserts that “for nearly a century of more-or-less constant presence of large numbers of Mexican immigrants in Mexican American communities has forced Mexican Americans to come to daily decisions about who they are—politically, socially, and culturally—in comparison to more recent immigrants from Mexico.”

Given this historical antagonism towards the Mexican-origin population in the United States, it is still questionable whether the native-born can escape anti-immigrant sentiments. While there are obvious differences across nativity groups within the

¹ Note that not everyone agrees with this observation. There are members of the middle-class Mexican American community that are strong advocates of Mexican immigrants. In addition, there are many native-born Mexican Americans from the lower classes that express outrage against Mexican immigrants. This makes sense given that potentially it is the lower class Mexican Americans who compete with Mexican immigrants for jobs and other resources. For instance Borjas (1987) findings show no evidence of substitutability between Latina/o immigrant males and whites, Blacks, or Asian males, but more so of an indication of competition between Latina/o immigrant males and their native born counterparts.

Mexican population, there are also important commonalities such as the subjection to racism (Mirande 1987). To begin with, few Americans recognize the distinction between long-term Latina/o residents and more recent Latina/o immigrants. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus in Washington D.C., even argued that if laws— to impose legal penalties on employers of undocumented workers, to institute counterfeit-proof worker-identification systems, and to increase law enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border— are enacted inevitably it would threaten anyone who looked Hispanic in American society (Gutiérrez 1995). Therefore, the native-born Latina/os do not escape the potential of unjust treatment. Indeed, not even legal residency or naturalized citizenship protect their rights as seen with campaigns against illegal immigration which has fueled into attacks against all immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Mexicans and other Latina/os may share common experiences with their immigrant counterparts due to their “foreign” looks, as well as their “foreign” racialized status. Also examining intraethnic conflict between the Mexican-origin community, Ochoa (2000) finds that cultural factors such as language simultaneously result in antagonism and a shared identity while racial and class background lead to intraethnic cooperation and mobilization.

Another indicator that the foreign-born are employed in distinct labor markets come from studies on the effects of immigration on the employment status of the native-born (see Farley 1996; Lichter 2000; Rosefeld and Tienda 1999; Waldinger and Lapp 1992; Wilson and Jaynes 2000). As previously mentioned, although most Americans believe that immigrants have a negative impact on the employment status of the native-

born, findings indicate that the effects of immigration on native workers is minimal (Borjas 1990; Borjas and Freeman 1992; Borjas and Tienda 1987; Butcher and Piehl 1997; Farley 1996; Sorensen and Bean 1994; Reischauer 1989), even those native workers that are competing directly with immigrants such as high school dropouts (Butcher and Piehl 1997).

Hypothesis Related to the Association between Immigration/Nativity Status and Ethnic Niche Employment

Based on insights from the literature on ethnic labor market incorporation, the following hypothesis related to niche employment is drawn (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 1: Immigrants are more likely to be employed in an ethnic niche than native-born individuals.

Gender

In this section the structural disadvantages suffered by Latinas in the gendered and racialized labor markets will be discussed. Despite the dependence on immigrant labor for regional economic growth, gender-specific dimensions of immigrant economic roles continue to be underanalyzed (Su and Martorell 2001). This is important to study given that some industries in the United States are dependent on the global movement of exploitable labor, which in turn gives the U.S. capitalists a competitive advantage (Su and Martorell 2001). Not only international but national and regional migration patterns reflect a labor division of gender with immigrant women responding to a demand for domestic workers, marriage partners, sex and entertainment workers, and sweatshop workers (Su and Martorell 2001). Given the gendered and racialized characteristics of

labor markets, it is probable that Latinas are more likely to be employed in ethnic niches as oppose to the general labor market than their Latino male counterparts. Following is a discussion of how occupation sex segregation/gender segmentation funnel women into distinct labor markets.

Occupational sex segregation has been one of the most durable features of the U.S. labor market (Reskin and Hartmann 1986; Reskin and Roos 1990) alongside occupation segregation by race (see Reskin and Roos 1990). Both women and racial minorities continue to be segregated into low-paid, low-skill occupations/industries (see Reskin and Roos 1990). Therefore, Latinas as women and members of a racialized group face dual challenges in finding equitable employment.

Explaining occupational sex segregation from a queuing perspective, Reskin and Roos (1990) argue that occupations feminize as opportunities for upward mobility decline and native-born white males seek better opportunities elsewhere. Hence, these men relocate to new occupations that offer better labor prospects and females subsequently enter occupations they left behind. Yet entry into these feminizing occupations further marginalizes women into low-paying, low-prestige occupations, resulting in the resegregation of the formerly-male occupations. Given this gender segregation of the workplace in which men are more likely to be in more profitable occupations, it is likely that Latinas may be relegated to the less profitable ethnic niches.

There are certain industries that are dependent on women's labor, particularly that of immigrant women. In terms of immigration, it is argued that aspects of gender segmentation within the sending and receiving labor markets (see Gabaccia 1994;

Sassen-Koob 1984) need to be contextualized into immigration studies of female labor force participation (Pessar 1999). Espiritu (1997) argues that due to the patriarchal and racist notions that immigrant women can afford to work for less and do not mind dead-end jobs, they are more employable than their male counterparts in particular industries, e.g., service, health care, microelectronics, and apparel manufacturing.

In their study of the importance of Latina immigrant labor for the Los Angeles economy, Su and Martorell (2001) argue that Latinas are in search of economic opportunities that are often gender specific. Through economic growth, recession, and economic rebound, a high demand for gender-specific labor has been maintained. Immigrant women provide a flexible, diversified, and relatively inexpensive labor pool for personal service and certain types of manufacturing industries (garment, apparel and electronics). Although acknowledging the limitations of push-pull theories in explaining migration and immigration patterns, Su and Martorell (2001) argue that this perspective is useful in explaining why gender-differentiated migrants come to occupy particular employment niches. Essentially, their argument is that the economic restructuring of southern California created a niche for low-wage female immigrant laborers.

This view is consistent with studies that observe that women are the preferred labor pool of the new export-oriented manufacturing global economy (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Grossman 1979; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Lim 1980; Safa 1981; Sui and Martorell 2001). Therefore, given the occupation sex segregation/gender segmentation of labor markets, in addition to the racialized structures, it is not surprising to have Latinas

excluded from the potentially more profitable general labor markets and relegated to ethnic niches.

Hypothesis Related to the Association between Gender and Ethnic Niche Employment

Based on insights from the literature on ethnic labor market incorporation, the following hypothesis related to niche employment is drawn (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 2: Females are more likely to be employed in an ethnic niche than males.

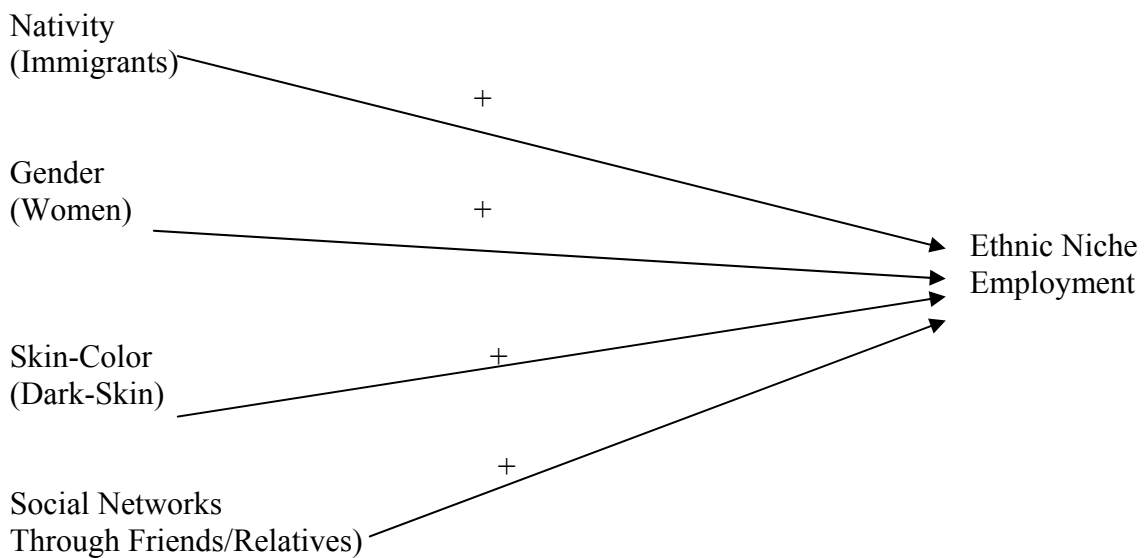


Figure1. Relationship between Stratification Factors on Employment in an Ethnic Niche.

Skin Color

Due to the limited amount of research on the influence of skin color on locating employment, the discussion will focus on the effect of skin color on the social mobility of people of color in general. Particular focus will be placed on theoretical discussions on how skin color segmentation permeates among the Latina/o communities. Once this

is established, it is possible to see how dark-skinned Latina/os may be left out of profitable labor markets thus channeling them into ethnic niches.

Although the United States has shifted from a biracial (black and white) to a multiethnic society (Passel and Edmonston 1994; Bean et al. 1997), skin color discrimination among Latina/os has been neglected, even more so in the ethnic niche literature. Most of the studies on skin color and socioeconomic status have focused on African Americans (e.g., Ranford 1970; Keith and Herring 1991). It has been found that lighter-skinned African Americans are more likely than their darker-skinned peers to have more favorable life chances, including having higher-status occupations (Ranford 1970).

Such patterns have been placed within the colonialism literature, which focuses on the domination of indigenous and African people by Europeans and the creation of racial hierarchies based on skin color (Hunter 2002). Hence, light skin is associated with Europeans and assigned higher status, while dark skin is associated with indigenous and African populations and assigned lower status (Murguía and Telles 1996). These colonial values are not only forced on the colonized but are often internalized by them as well (Almaguer 1994; Barrera 1979; Fanon 1967; Jordon 1968). Even after traditional forms of colonialism have diminished, internal colonialism continues to exist for people of color in the United States (Blauner 1972).

In the case of the Mexican-origin population, indigenous people of Mexico were colonized by Europeans and subjected to racial hierarchies. The Spaniards developed a color-caste system privileging people with light skin and European features in order to

maintain their own racial power (Almaguer 1994; Barrera 1979; Lux and Vigil 1989; Mörner 1967). This colonial influence in Mexico continued with the American takeover of Mexican territory, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

Mirande's (1987) historical analysis illustrates the influence of color caste system and class within the Mexican-origin population in the U.S. Members of the small elite that managed to retain their land after the American takeover were considered "Spanish" or "Castilian" or "white" while rank-and-file Mexican workers were seen as "half-breeds," "Indians," or "mestizo" (individuals defined as racially mixed based on various combinations of Spanish, Indian, and African descent).² During the 20th century, after the Mexican ranch society was displaced, the distinction between the elite and the workers blurred and they simply became "Mexicans." Therefore, this "loss of economic and political power resulted in the 'darkening' of the Mexican" (Mirande 1987:8).

Although skin color is among the factors that impede the socioeconomic progress of people (Portes and Zhou 1992), our knowledge about the mechanisms by which lighter skin color translates to a higher socioeconomic status is not clear, particularly in the case of immigrant economies such as ethnic niches. This is partly due to convoluting the terms of "racism" and "colorism" together. Hunter (2002) makes a distinction between these terms. Racism is based on false conceptions that race is a biological rather than a social construction whose meaning changes over time and place (see Omi and Winant 1994). In contrast, "colorism" is a system that privileges the lighter-skinned over the darker-skinned within a community of color. Yet, these two concepts are

² The definition of mesitzo is taken from Vigil (1998).

interconnected and it is clear that colorism cannot exist without racism since colorism is based on the privileging of whiteness on the basis of phenotype, aesthetics, and culture.

Omi and Winant (1994) advanced the theory of *racial formation* to gain an understanding of the contemporary complexities and dilemmas involving race. Racial formation is a sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created and transformed, linking historically situated projects representing humans and social structure to hegemony (the way in which society is organized). Accordingly, racial formation occurs through the linkages between structure and representation of racial projects, or an interpretation, representation, or explanation of how racial dynamics organize resources along particular racial lines. Winant (1998) use the concept *racial formation* to describe race not only as the subject of struggle and competition at the social structural level, but also at the cultural level where race is represented in a manner that comes to be a meaningful descriptor of a group's identity, social issues, and experience. The assignment of race to a particular social structural location and the organization of the social structure along racial lines involves representation of racial meanings. Under this conceptualization both race and racism are not stagnant but change over time. Given that the ethnic niche involves an environment where co-ethnics predominate, in the case of Latina/os an ethnic group with pronounced skin color variations, light skin may operate as a signifier of whiteness organizing racial meaning and the social structure along color lines.

Another theoretical perspective that is useful in explaining differential labor market outcomes by skin color variation is Feagin (2000) concept of *systematic racism*

used to describe everyday racist practices penetrating social institutions and interactions. Specifically, it describes “the complex array of antiblack practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racist ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power” (Feagin 2000:6). In this sense, even the social relationships between co-ethnics are not isolated from the larger societal influences in which whiteness, and by association lightness, are used to legitimate the social and economic power of whites and by association lighter-skinned. In addition, some Latina/os have been considered “honorary whites” from time to time, contributing to distinctions in the dimensions of foreignness (see Feagin 2000).

Another useful theoretical notion is Bonilla-Silva’s (2001:37) perspective of *racialized social systems* used to refer to “societies in which economic, political, social and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races.” Furthermore, in terms of racial identification, races are identified by phenotype, which is socially rather than biologically based. Taken together, it is highly probable that the higher placement of lighter-skinned Latina/os in the racial hierarchy will translate to better economic outcomes within co-ethnic niches.

More recently, Bonilla-Silva and his associates (Bonilla-Silva, Forman, Lewis, and Embrick 2003a; Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2003b) developed the *Latin Americanization* thesis that predicts that the racial hierarchy in the United States will increasingly reflect that of Latin American societies with pigmentocratic segmentation and color-blind ideologies. The basis for this perspective comes from the

acknowledgement that despite being viewed as “racial democracies” where racism does not exist, research has shown that racial minorities in Latin American societies tend to experience more racial inequality than racial minorities in Western societies. Inequality between whites and non-whites in Latin America represents a legacy of slavery and colonialism (Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2003b). Bonilla-Silva and his collaborators (Bonilla-Silva, Forman, Lewis, and Embrick 2003a; Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2003b) predict that the bi-racial white versus non-white system in the United States will evolve to resemble the racial system found in Latin American countries with a tri-system of “whites” on top, followed by an intermediary group of “honorary whites” and a “collective black” group at the bottom. This system will involve a re-ranking of individuals by skin tone and other phenotypic markers. Additionally, it is suggested that within groups, members will be ranked phenotypically. Some examples of those in the “white” category include the traditional whites along with new white immigrants (Russians and Albanians), some multiracials, a few Asian-origin individuals, assimilated light-skinned Latina/os, and others. Examples of “honorary whites” include most light-skinned Latina/os (e.g., segments of the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities), Korean Americans, and others. Some examples of the “collective black” include blacks, darker-skinned Latina/os, Vietnamese, and others. There are several reasons Bonilla-Silva and his collaborators give for these predictions: 1) the changing demographics of the United States constitutes a large minority population, 2) the subtle practices that reproduce racial advantage in the United States are similar to the subtle mechanisms used in Latin American countries, and 3) globalization, particularly the need for capital

accumulation, has led to the incorporation of “dark” foreigners into Western nations that used to be predominately white. This new racial system will be more effective in maintaining “white supremacy” in that whites will still be on the top of the racial structure but they will face less race-based challenges.

Despite the growing research in this area, questions of how skin color operates in racially homogeneous workplaces are still ambiguous, especially as it pertains to Latina/os. In particular, questions regarding the association between skin color and job allocation in particular labor markets.

Hypothesis Related to the Association between Skin Color and Ethnic Niche Employment

Based on insights from the literature on ethnic labor market incorporation, the following hypothesis related to niche employment is drawn (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 3: Darker-skinned individuals are more likely to be employed in an ethnic niche than lighter-skinned individuals.

Social Networks

Knowledge of labor market incorporation and how search patterns differ will help us to further understand labor market differentials for racial and ethnic minorities (Sassen 1995; Falcon and Melendez 2001). A social network account can be utilized to examine labor market incorporation. It highlights the role of personal connections in the labor market, particularly at two levels: 1) they can provide job seekers timely information about employment opportunities not widely known, and 2) referrals through social networks improve the opportunity for gaining employment (Elliott 2001).

To attain employment in the ethnic niche, informal social networks are especially important (see Waldinger 1996). Research has shown that social networks tend to be racially/ethnically homogeneous, thus resulting in a high probability that members from a given racial/ethnic group will gain insider tips regarding employment opportunities through incumbent networks (Braddock and McPartland 1987; Corcoran, Datcher, and Duncan 1980; Elliott 2001; Model 1993; Rees 1966). Furthermore, while social networks are the most common method used to search for employment (Granovetter 1973, 1983, 1995; Montgomery 1992, 1994; Marsden and Hulbert 1988; Falcon 1995; Green, Tigges, and Browne 1995), they are particularly important for Latina/os (Elliott 1999, 2001; Falcon 1995; Falcon and Melendez 2001; Green, Tigges, and Diaz 1999; Mier and Giloth 1985). Therefore, to more fully understand how Latina/os are relegated to ethnic niche employment, attention needs to be given to job search activities.

Others have also noted the importance of racial and ethnic structural networks in co-ethnic workplaces. Marsden (1990) and Falcon and Melendez (2001), for instance, find that racial and ethnic social structures may shape job search behavior leading to varying opportunities for different groups. Therefore, racially/ethnically segregated social networks are associated with racially/ethnically segregated workplaces (see Elliott 2001; Falcon and Melendez 2001; Nee and Sanders 2000).

Similarly, in terms of niche employment, those employed in the niche tend to recruit others within their own networks into available positions (see Elliott 2001; Waldinger 1994; 1995; Nee and Sanders 2000). Through normative considerations niche participants are connected to rules and practices that have insider/outsider

dynamics. Niches are then self-reproducing by excluding those considered outsiders and where insiders are the first to find out about job opportunities (Waldinger 1996). As previously discussed, those considered insiders in ethnic niches, are more likely to be co-ethnics. In this sense, social networks and niches are sources of social capital for immigrant-minority groups who are considered outsiders to the general market and who do not have contacts that can provide access to employment in the general labor market.

Niches and enclaves are built, at least theoretically, on social networks. Lichter (2000) finds that the assistance of co-ethnics in securing employment channels workers into an ethnic niche or enclave. Within ethnic economies, co-ethnics exert considerable influence over hiring and subcontracting, thus directing employment to their co-ethnics (Light and Gold 2000). With employers seeking this ethnic- and immigrant-defined workforce, co-ethnic networks are then an efficient means of locating prospective employees (Light and Gold 2000).

Others question the qualities of social networks. Networks can be used for assistance, for exploitation (Bonacich 1988), or for both (Menjivar 1994). The quality of personal networks in limiting the opportunities of disadvantaged populations in securing employment has been a growing concern (see Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Menjivar 1997a; Greenwell et al. 1997; Falcon 1995; Falcon and Melendez 2001). A large portion of this concern stems from the larger societal context in which networks are embedded. For example, Menjivar (1997b) argues that kinship networks during resettlement provide benefits only when immigration policies, local labor markets, and the organization of reception in communities are favorable. Similarly, the efficiency of informal networks

depends on the position that earlier immigrants held within the labor market and the type of employment recent settlers seek (see Carson 1995; Lary, Inglis, and Wu 1994; Markovic and Manderson 2000). Given the low socioeconomic status of Latina/o immigrants (see Saenz et al. 2004), they may be disadvantaged by relying on personal social networks.

Furthermore, the potential limitations of social networks can also be illustrated by Granovetter's thesis of *strength of weak ties*. As oppose to network models that stress the importance of personal networks, Granovetter's (1973, 1983) *strength of weak ties* thesis stresses the importance of the relationship of the personal experiences of individuals with the larger aspects of the social structure. The thesis is that we are less likely to be socially involved with our acquaintances (weak ties) than with our close friends (strong ties). Acquaintances then comprise a low-density network where many relational lines are absent, while close friends represent a dense network with many possible lines. A weak tie between oneself and an acquaintance becomes a bridge to two density knit clumps of close friends. Therefore, an individual with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distance parts of the social structure. This places the individual in a disadvantaged position in the labor market, where advancement depends on knowledge about appropriate job openings at the right time. In this sense, the personal relationships of individuals are bounded with larger aspects of the social structure.³ This is an important consideration given the generally low socioeconomic

³ Granovetter's thesis has been supported by empirical studies (see Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn 1981).

standing of the Latina/o population and their heavy reliance on personal networks to find employment.

Hypotheses Related to the Association between Social Network and Ethnic Niche

Employment

Based on the insights from the literature on ethnic labor market incorporation, the following hypothesis relates to gaining access to niche employment (Figure 1).

Hypothesis 4: Individuals who secure employment through friends/relatives are more likely to be employed in an ethnic niche than those who did not use such networks.

Economic Returns and Co-ethnic Concentrated Labor Markets

Attention will now turn to the economic outcomes in ethnic niches. Thus far, there are contradicting findings regarding the economic benefits of working in a co-ethnic concentrated work environment. Some suggest that these work environments enable ethnic members to overcome human capital deficits (Wilson and Martin 1982; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Stepick 1985; Portes and Jensen 1989; Zhou 1992; Bailey and Waldinger 1991). For example, the *enclave-economy hypothesis* advanced by Wilson and Portes (1980) is used to describe co-ethnic work environments where earnings returns to human capital are commensurate with the earnings return of immigrants in the primary labor market. Building on ethnic solidarity perspectives and segmented labor market theories, Alejandro Portes and his associates (see Portes, Clark, and Bach 1977; Bach 1980; Portes and Bach 1980; 1985; Portes, Parker, and Cobas 1980; Wilson and Portes 1980; Bach, Bach, and Triplett 1981; Portes 1981; 1982; 1984; Portes, Clark, and Lopez 1982; Wilson and Martin 1982; Portes and Stepick 1985;

Portes and Manning 1986) strongly challenge assimilation and other ecological perspectives, contending that some immigrant-minority groups avoid the harsh incorporation in the secondary labor markets through the establishment of immigrant-enclave communities (Sanders and Nee 1987). Similarly, in ethnic niches, Waldinger (1996) also finds that ethnics receive more equitable compensation getting closer to the economic reward system of whites, even after controlling for background characteristics.

Others are less optimistic regarding the experiences of workers employed in ethnic concentrated markets (Lieberson 1963; Piore 1979; Bonacich and Model 1980; Model 1993; Sanders and Nee 1987; Hum 2000; 2001). For example, in a study of Cuban and Chinese immigrants, Sanders and Nee (1987) find that the enclave-economy hypothesis is only partially supported. They observe that it only applies to entrepreneurs, while the assimilation perspective better explains the earnings of employees (also see Light and Gold 2000).

Research has also shown that the economic returns associated with employment in a niche vary by race/ethnicity. For non-Cuban Latina/os, however, the literature about wage returns in ethnic concentrated markets has been generally inconclusive. Wilson (1999), for example, finds that, unlike African Americans and Asians, Latina/os received more favorable economic returns when employed in a co-ethnic niche. Light and Gold (2000) also find that while ethnic economies generally pay lower wages than the general labor market, there are racial and ethnic variations. For example, the Puerto Rican ethnic economy paid the highest wages and African American economies paid the lowest.

Others disagree about the favorable economic returns for non-Cuban Latina/os in ethnic concentrated markets. Waldinger (1996) observes racial and ethnic variations with some groups (e.g., Jews) occupying niches in better paying industries and other groups (e.g., Dominicans) working in lower paying niches. Utilizing the LASUI (Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality), Hum (2000) also finds that rather than superior payoffs to investment in education, as suggested by Portes and his associates, work effort and labor market experiences shaped the earnings of Latina/o immigrants. This suggests that the labor intensiveness of immigrant work and the significance of accumulating U.S. specific labor market skills and knowledge for all segments of the labor market (ethnic economy, primary, and secondary sectors) translates to higher economic returns for the Latina/o population. Therefore, Hum concludes that for Latina/o immigrants, ethnic economy employment is more menial and lower paying than secondary labor markets, especially for Central American workers.

Hypothesis Related to the Association between Ethnic Niche Employment and Labor Market Earnings

Based on the insights from the literature on ethnic labor market earnings, the following hypothesis is associated with ethnic niche employment and labor market earnings (see Figure 2). Hypothesis 5: Individuals employed in an ethnic niche earn lower wages than their counterparts who work in the general labor market.

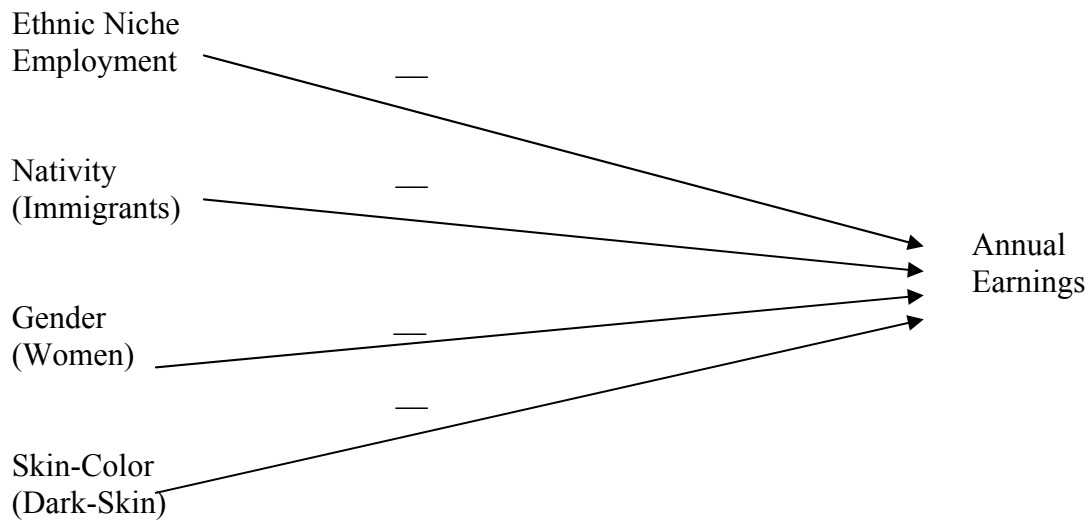


Figure 2. Relationship between Stratification Factors and Labor Market Earnings.

Intraethnic Stratification and Ethnic Niche Outcomes

There are varying outcomes associated with economic returns in ethnic economies, ethnic enclaves, and ethnic niches. Given these varying results it is important to explore intra-group ethnic differentials that lead to differential economic outcomes for members in the same ethnic group. Examining intraethnic stratification factors may be key to distinguishing differential outcomes in ethnic economies. Moreover, such an examination will allow us to determine the extent to which ethnic niches reward workers differently on the basis of their characteristics as is typically the case in the general labor market. Following is a discussion of how social inequality (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) and social networks can lead to differential economic returns in ethnic niches.

Immigration/Nativity Status

According to Valenzuela and Gonzalez (2000), to understand Latino economic inequality, it is important to understand their incorporation or progress in the labor market and the role of nativity. Foreign birth can be a disadvantage because it represents cultural and social differences related to the labor market in the United States as well as the transferability of employment skills. Two competing views explain the earning differentials by nativity status. Orthodox economic theories explain the gravitation of immigrants toward menial, low-paying jobs as a natural consequence of an expanding economy. Therefore, native workers move up to better paying, more prestigious or more autonomous positions (see Portes and Bach 1985). In contrast, the colonized minorities perspective portrays the native-born as difficult to control because they rebel in the land of their birth, thus creating the need for a labor force fit for hard work, and “alien” enough to become dependent on the planter owner (see Portes and Bach 1985). Employers may prefer undocumented individuals to citizens because they can be more easily exploited— they are seen as more docile and more willing to work for low wages (see Farley 1996). Furthermore, newly arrived immigrant workers are initially more willing to take low-paying jobs because they need to send money home and because they use prevailing wages from their home country as their point of reference (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). It is found that time of immigration has a significant impact on Latino earnings, with longer residency in the United States being associated with more favorable wages (Allensworth 1997; Valenzuela 2000). However, Dadoo and Pinon (1994) find that there is no evidence of the costs of nativity or citizenship status among the Mexican-origin population in the U.S. The researchers attribute this to perceptions

of a homogeneous Mexican-origin population. Despite these findings, research focusing on the ethnic niche and nativity status is limited. Moreover, this research has focused primarily on immigrants to the neglect of their native-born counterparts.

An exception is the work of Catanzarite who finds that *brown-collar occupations*, where recent Latina/o immigrants are concentrated, further marginalizes Latino immigrants in Los Angeles. Catanzarite's (1998, 2002, 2003) finds that brown-collar occupations are associated with depressed and declining wages for both immigrant and native workers. Adding a new dimension, Catanzarite and Aguilera (2002) find that Mexican and Central Americans legalized through the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) suffer pay penalties when working in jobsites where co-ethnics predominate, outweighing the effects of human capital. Indeed, working in a predominantly Latino jobsites lowers pay to an equivalent of having seven or eight fewer years of education. Based on these insights from the literature on labor market earnings, it is expected that immigrants earn lower wages than their native-born counterparts not only in the general labor market but in ethnic niches as well.

Gender

Throughout history women have been paid less than men (Reskin and Roos 1990). In addition, while women have made some economic inroads, women of color remain concentrated in poorly paid and low-skilled jobs (Bobo, Oliver, Johnson, and Valenzuela 2000). As the labor market allocates jobs by certain attributes such as gender, color, and class, it reserves low-status, low-paying jobs for women and people of color (Glenn 1988). Therefore, being a woman of color means having a dual

disadvantage— being a women and a member of a minority group. Therefore, it is expected that Latinas will receive lower wages than their male counterparts.

The question is whether these gender wage differentials are also found in co-ethnic concentrated work environments, where some see co-ethnicity as protection from discrimination. Ethnic economies tend to rely on low-wage female workers as an economic survival strategy. Indeed, minority business concentrations are characterized by low-wage, low capitalization, and by high proportions of female employees (Logan, Alba, and McNulty 1994). Having female laborers rather than males, can be economically beneficial because of perceptions that women can be paid less. Phizacklea (1988) argues that successful ethnic economies thrive on the exploitation of female labor in which social structures ease female labor subordination to patriarchal control. Therefore, embedded in the ethnic solidarity that characterizes ethnic concentrated workplaces are notions of women's labor being valuable for the economic survival of the ethnic group.

As previously mentioned, the literature on ethnic niche outcomes is limited with respect to gender issues. Most of the existing research on ethnic concentration and gender concerns the research of Min Zhou and her associates (Zhou and Logan 1989; Zhou and Nordquist 1994) on Chinese enclaves. In a study of New York's Chinese enclave, Zhou and associates argue that although the enclave labor market appears to exploit women, we must remember that Chinese culture gives priority to the family over individual achievement. Therefore, despite their low wages, Chinese women do not feel exploited or hopeless, suggesting that women's positions are embedded in ethnic social

networks, which are part of the structure of social relations and cultural values.

However, we need to take caution in generalizing these findings to women from other racial and ethnic groups. For instance, Yamanaka and McClelland (1994), for example, find that enclaves provide a hospitable environment, but not for all the Asian subgroups in their study. Additionally, while Chinese, Filipino, and Korean immigrant women experienced modest income gains in enclave employment, Indians and Vietnamese did not.

Research on gender dynamics in co-ethnic workplaces is even more limited with respect to Latinas. An exception is Gilbertson (1995) who finds that enclave employment provides Dominican and Colombian women with low wages, minimal benefits, and few opportunities for advancement. However, Morales and Saenz (2002), using data from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), observe that among Mexicans niche employment is economically beneficial for only women in both non-durable manufacturing and personal service industries.

Thus, some have found that immigrant women employment is a continuation of family obligations even seemingly willing to accept low wages and menial jobs because they are concerned about what is best for their families rather than for themselves (see Zhou 1995). Similarly, ethnic solidarity orientations can privileged certain family members (e.g., men) at the expense of others (e.g., women) (see Patterson 1977; Wilson 1996). Thus, given these findings this can also serve as a justification for paying immigrant and immigrant-minority women lower wages than males. Therefore, it is

expected that females have lower earnings than males not only in the general labor market but also in ethnic niches.

Skin Color

Empirical support for the phenotypic discrimination against Mexicans in the labor market first came from Telles and Murguía (1990). Allen, Telles, and Hunter (2000) have also observed that the association between skin color and social class of Mexican Americans is similar to that observed among African Americans—namely that phenotype matters, with lighter-skinned Mexican Americans enjoying higher socioeconomic status than their darker-skin counterparts (also see Arce, Murguía, and Frisbie 1987; Murguía and Telles 1996; Telles and Murguía 1992; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1998).

Adding to the debate on the influence of skin color on Latina/o wage outcomes, there is also some empirical evidence for Bonilla-Silva's *Latin Americanization* thesis. Murguía and Saenz (2002) find empirical support for color stratification among Mexicans along several sociodemographic and political dimensions. For example, in terms of household income those with light skin have the highest income followed by those with medium skin tone and lastly those with dark skin. For research that finds more limited support for the association between skin color and socioeconomic outcomes, see Bohora and Davila (1992), Espino and Franz (2002), and Hunter (2002).

In the case of Puerto Ricans, Kinsbruner (1996) confirms the existence of racial prejudice based on phenotype and skin color. They recognized degrees of whiteness descending from white to pardo, to moreno, to negro with a social and economic

advantage for being white. Supporting Lewis's (1963) thesis of *shade discrimination* as a form of racial discrimination, as oppose to those who lean towards social and economic explanations of discrimination, Kinsbruner argues that opportunities are more limited for people of color in several realms including the economic one. This has been supported by research studying Puerto Ricans in the island who found that blacks and dark-skinned individuals have suffered more discrimination (Betances 1972; Gordon 1949).

Similarly, consistent with the findings for the Mexican population, Rodriguez (1991) shows that Puerto Ricans who identify as "white" are better off in a number of socioeconomic variables as oppose to those who identify as black or "other Spanish." Additionally, using the Boston Social Survey, Gómez (2000) finds that having darker skin negatively affects the wages of Puerto Rican men but not of their female counterparts.

Therefore, based on the insights from the literature on economic returns, it is expected that darker-skinned individuals earn lower wages than lighter-skinned co-ethnics. Although the influence of skin color in co-ethnic work environments has been neglected, given insights from colonialism literature and other theoretical perspectives (Omi and Winant's (1994) and Winant (1998) *racial formation*, Feagin's (2000) *systemic racism*, Bonilla-Silva's (2001) *racialized social systems* and (2003a, 2003b) *Latin Americanization thesis*), it is expected that whiteness and by association lightness also permeates as a factor influencing wages influencing wages in ethnic niches.

In regards to social networks, given that niche employees tend to recruit others from their own networks (see Elliott 2001; Waldinger 1994, 1995; Nee and Sanders 2000), it is potentially disadvantageous when considering Falcon's and Melendez's (2001) finding that the job search patterns of Latinos not only limit their opportunities on aspects related to racially segregated workplaces and job security, but wages as well.

Furthermore, it is argued that the preferences of owners and managers for co-ethnics does not come from a sense of ethnic solidarity but from the benefits of hiring co-ethnics (Waldinger 1996). Employers who hire co-ethnics gain a reliable workforce with an interest in skill acquisition, greater flexibility, and diminished labor costs (Waldinger 1996). It is widely acknowledged that employers diminish the potential benefits of the employee's social ties to their own advantage (Elliott 2001). Hence, it is expected that Latina/os with greater use of friends/relatives as social networks will work in an ethnic niche have lower wages than other workers in both the general labor market and ethnic niches.

In sum, I hypothesize that the influences of social inequality factors (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) and social networks on wages operate in a similar manner in ethnic niches as they do in the general labor markets. Examining these stratification factors will help to illuminate whether or not ethnic niches are safe havens that protect Latina/os from discrimination found in the general labor market.

Hypothesis 6: There are no differences between the ethnic niche and the general labor market with respect to the relationship between stratification variables and earnings.

CHAPTER III

DATA AND METHODS

The previous chapter discussed the literature and theoretical perspectives related to entrance into the ethnic niche and earnings in this sector of the economy. A series of hypotheses was also mentioned. This chapter provides an overview of the data and methods used to analysis the hypotheses. The first portion of the chapter describes the methodology concerning the quantitative analyses based on the MCSUI dataset. The second portion of the chapter discusses the methodology used to collect personal interview data used to supplement the quantitative analysis.

Quantitative Data

Data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) are used for the analysis of the hypotheses. The analysis is based on a segment of the Latina/o population, namely Mexicans (N= 426) and Central Americans (N= 147). The MCSUI is a survey of employers and households, employing a multistage, stratified, and probability design in four major cities (Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles). These data have several advantages such as allowing for intra-ethnic comparisons (see Green, Tigges, Diaz 1999; Hum 2000; Valenzuela and Gonzalez 2000), improving the conceptualization of ethnic economies (Hum 2000) and the oversampling of minorities (see Green, Tigges, Diaz 1999). In order to minimize race-of-interviewer effects, the race/ethnicity of respondents and interviewers were matched. Due to data limitations for Latina/os in Atlanta and for labor market details in Detroit (see Green, Tigges, and Diaz 1999), as well as small numbers of Latina/os in the Boston sample, the research will

focus on Los Angeles County. The data for Los Angeles were collected between September 1993 and August 1994.

Operationalization of Theoretical Concepts

This section describes the measurement of the variables used in the analysis. The variables are classified into dependent variables (niche employment and earnings), independent variables (social networks, nativity, gender, skin color, and niche employment in the case of earnings), and control variables (human capital and demographic factors). Following is a description of the operationalization of these variables.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this analysis are ethnic niche employment and earnings. Ethnic niche workers are defined as those working primarily with co-ethnics and who have either a co-ethnic supervisor or no supervisor. Latina/o workers are assigned a value of '1' on the dependent variable if they work primarily with co-ethnics and have either a co-ethnic supervisor or no supervisor; all other Latina/o workers are given a value of '0.' This conceptualization is based on the work of Hum (2000:286) who uses the LASUI (Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality) and conceptualizes ethnic economy workers as those with "a co-ethnic supervisor and primarily co-ethnic coworkers in a firm of one hundred or fewer employees, and immigrant self-employed with co-ethnic employees or no salaried employees." Hum (2000) argues that the LASUI data, part of the MCSUI, allows for an improvement on previous conceptualizations of the ethnic niche by providing the race of the workplace supervisor

and the racial composition of coworkers, thus allowing for the focus on co-ethnic employer-employee relations. Furthermore, since many small businesses do not have a supervisor, Hum also included as niche workers those that may have excluded the firm owner from the question of race of the supervisor. Given that many small businesses do not have a supervisor, the respondents who excluded the firm owner from the question of race of the supervisor were included in the definition of niche workers. In regards to the size of the firm, Hum's rationale for limiting the niche worker definition to those working in firms with 100 or few employees is based on the ethnic economy literature suggesting that small immigrant-owned firms that employ co-ethnics constitute a distinct labor market with characteristics of both primary and secondary labor markets (see Wilson and Portes 1980; Wilson and Martin 1982; Portes and Stepick 1985; Portes and Bach 1985; Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Light and Espiritu 1991). Hum's rationale seems to be based more on immigrant-owned ethnic enclaves defined by the geographical clustering of businesses that are more likely to be small family-owned business. However, the concentration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the service and manufacturing industries, many of which tend to include firms with more than 100 workers, cannot be ignored. Therefore, the conceptualization of ethnic niche used in this study does not make any restrictions on firm size.

Additionally, the self-employed are excluded from the definition of niche workers in my analysis. This decision is based on insights from Sanders and Nee (1987) who argue that using a pooled sample of self-employed and workers may not be appropriate for examining ethnic niche outcomes for the groups in question. They

observe that ethnic enclave participation— relative to work in the general labor market— is only beneficial to entrepreneurs. They contend that wage workers in the ethnic enclave do not do as well as their counterparts in the general labor market. Hence, the pooling of the self-employed and wage workers is likely to generate biased results. As such, the self-employed will be excluded from this analysis.⁴

The second dependent variable used to assess labor market outcomes is wages. In particular, worker's hourly wages in 1992 are used to capture labor market earnings. The MCSUI has calculated the hourly wages based on three variables: 1) earnings, 2) whether this amount is hourly, weekly, biweekly, monthly, or annually based, and 3) hours worked in a week.⁵ The analysis will include the natural logarithm of hourly wages to minimize outliers in the distribution. Additionally, the logged form of hourly wages facilitates the interpretation of regression coefficients. The log form of wages can be interpreted as the percent change in the wages in response to a unit change in the independent variables.

⁴ Although ethnic niches have also been conceptualized at the occupational- and industrial-level, this measure is based on ethnic concentration at the job-level. In addition to Hum (2000), others have also used the conceptualization of co-ethnic workplaces at the job-level (see Elliott 2001; Lichter 2000). The validity of using a measure of ethnic concentration at the job-level as opposed to the occupational- or industrial-level is that it is at the job-level where the connection of workers to jobs occurs (Elliott 2001). Also utilizing the MCSUI data, Elliott (2001) argues that the validity of the job-level measure of co-ethnic workplaces is also based on two other factors. First, the question about co-ethnicity of co-workers is based on the respondents' categorical assessment about the size of the group, e.g., simple perceptions of majority rather than actual percentage; therefore, this assessment is relatively accurate. Second, Tomaskovic-Devey (1993) did an assessment of the racial composition measures derived at the occupational-level and those derived from the job-level and concluded that these measures are nearly identical.

⁵ If the respondent reported hourly wages then $fhrwage = fernmain$ (earnings); if respondent reported weekly earnings then $fhrwage = fernmain/fhrswkmn$ (hours worked a week); if respondent reported biweekly then $fhrwage = fernmain/fhrswkmn/2$; if respondent reported monthly earnings then $fhrwage = fernmain/fhrswkmn/4.35$; if respondent reported annual earnings then $fhrwage = fernmain/fhrswkmn/4.35/12$.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variables include nativity, gender, skin color, social networks, and, for earnings, employment in the niche. Immigrant status is measured with a series of dummy variables: foreign-born less than ten years in the U.S. (1= 0 to 9 years in the U.S.; 0= otherwise) and more than ten years in the U.S. (1= 10+ years in the U.S.; 0= otherwise). The reference category for these two dummy variables is native-born individuals. Gender is coded as '1' if female and '0' if male. The respondent's skin color, as reported by a co-ethnic interviewer, is measured with two dummy variables: light-skinned (1 = yes; 0 otherwise) and medium-skinned (1= yes; 0 otherwise). The reference category for these two dummy variables is dark-skinned individuals. The social network variable is based on whether or not an individual talked to friends/relatives in securing his/her current job (1= yes; 0= no). An additional independent variable, employment in an ethnic niche, is included in relation to only one dependent variable, earnings. The measurement of employment in an ethnic niche is the same as that outlined above when this variable is treated as a dependent variable.

Control Variables

A variety of human capital and demographic factors, observed in the literature to be related to labor market outcomes, are also included in the model as control variables. In the analysis determining whether Latina/os gain employment in the ethnic niche or general labor markets the control variables of ethnicity, education, language, and age are included. For the analysis determining wage outcomes, the control variables include ethnicity, education, language, experience, age, disability, marital status, and industry.

Beginning with the human capital factors, perhaps one of the most influential human capital factors associated with labor market outcomes is education. Since analysis is based on a population with low educational levels, education is coded as '1' if the respondent at least has a high school diploma and '0' if the respondent does not have at least a high school diploma. Unfortunately due to a relatively small sample size, more refined educational attainment categories were not possible. English fluency is also acknowledged as a dimension of human capital. Persons with limited English skills are assigned a value of '1' and those with at least fair skills in English are given a value of '0' on the language variable. Experience is measured as the number of years working, and experience squared is the square of work experience. The experience variable is squared to capture the nonlinear relationship between work experience and earnings.

The measurement of demographic factors related to labor market outcomes will be described. Ethnicity is measured as '1' if Mexican-origin and '0' if Central American. Age is measured with a series of dummy variables: 1) 35-44 (1= if the respondent is 35-44; 0=otherwise); 2) 45-54 (1= if the respondent is 45-54; 0= otherwise), and 3) 55 and above (1= if the respondent is 55 or older; 0= otherwise). The age category of 21-34 is the reference category. The operationalizations of the other variables are as follows: marital status (1= if respondent is married; 0=otherwise), disability limitation (1= if respondent has a health or general condition that limits the kind or amount of work he/she can do; 0= otherwise).

In addition to human capital and demographic control variables, the analysis based on earnings includes a control variable for industry. Based on preliminary

analysis of the industries in which where Latina/o niches workers are employed, it became apparent that the manufacturing industry considerably exceeds other industries in their relative presence of Latina/o niche workers. Therefore, individuals who are employed in manufacturing are assigned a value of '1' on the manufacturing variable, while those employed in other industries are assigned a value of '0'.

Statistical Procedures and Plan of Analysis

This section provides an overview of the statistical procedures and the plan of analysis related to the examination of the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2. The first part of the analysis focuses on employment in an ethnic niche (N= 364) while the second part of the analysis focuses on labor market wages (N= 357).

The data in all analyses were weighted with a normalization of the person weight. The person weight variable accounts for non-responses so that the weighted counts of persons by age-sex-race are proportionate to the adult distribution of Los Angeles County based on the 1990 Census. The following formula was used for each respondent in the analysis:

$$\text{Normalized weight} = \text{person weight} * (\text{Sample } N / \text{Weighted } N)$$

This new weight variable assures that the cases in the formula remain at proportionate levels so that the sample N and the weighted N are the same. By normalizing the weights, the sum of the weights over the sample equal the population size N ; the weighted sum of y estimates the population total of Y (SAS 2004).

Most statistical packages assume simple random sampling and violating this assumption causes the underestimation of the standard errors. In order to compensate

for the clustering of the data often the standard error must be adjusted for the design effects. In order to do so, the survey regression analysis was conducted with the SAS procedure (surveyreg) to directly estimate design-based standard errors. The results based on this procedure differed only slightly from those derived from the OLS regression and the significance of relationships did not differ. Note, that a comparative analysis for the logistic regression was not available through SAS software; however, given the high level of significance the variables of interests, survey logistic regression not likely to change the coefficients or level of significance for these results either.

Employment in an Ethnic Niche as Dependent Variable

This portion of the analysis will be conducted through the use of logistic regression. This statistical technique is appropriate for this part of the analysis because the dependent variable is a dichotomous variable. The first four hypotheses (H1-H4) are examined using an additive model containing the variable components of interest that will allow us to assess the strength of the relationship between the four independent variables of interest and employment in an ethnic niche (see Figure 1).

Labor Market Earnings as Dependent Variable

The second part of the analysis will be conducted through the use of ordinary-least-square (OLS) regression. This statistical technique is appropriate given that the dependent variable is a continuous variable. The first four hypotheses related to this part of the analysis (H5-H8) will be examined with an additive model listing the variable components (see Figure 2). The results of this model will allow us to determine the association between the four independent variables of interest and earnings.

Qualitative Exploratory Analysis

Zuberi (2001) advocates that statistical reasoning cannot be separate from the political and social processes that motivate the formation of variables or objects. Consequently social scientists must not ignore discussions about the meaning of race and the implications of those meanings for statistical methods. Therefore, following the quantitative analysis attention will be given to the limitations of quantitative analyses in conceptualizing ethnic niche employment and examining co-ethnic relationships. Subsequently, results based on in-depth interviews conducted in Los Angeles and Boston will be introduced to further elaborate on the conceptualization of ethnic niches.⁶ These data come from a snowball sample of in-depth interviews with labor and immigration activists.

Validity for the utilization of labor and/or immigrant activists as respondents for the qualitative portion of the analysis comes from Gutiérrez (1995). In his study of perceptions of Mexican immigration on native-born-Latina/o s particularly Mexican Americans, Gutiérrez (1995) argues that activists and organizations play a crucial role in formulating, articulating, and acting on pressing issues affecting their communities. Following Gutiérrez (1995), it is recognized that activists are at the forefront of establishing equity in these workplaces and that their expertise can give us insights on what constitutes an ethnic niche and stratification in these workplaces.

⁶ At the onset of the study, a comparative analysis between Los Angeles and Boston, two of the cities in the MCSUI dataset where the labor market factors of interest had been collected, was planned. However, subsequent analysis determined that the number of ethnic niche workers in Boston was too small to have reliable results. Nevertheless, in-depth interviews were conducted in Boston.

The reason for including labor and immigrant rights activists is that the two concepts are intertwined. The labor movement is currently one of the largest social movements, especially in Los Angeles. Members of the labor movement are largely drawn from the lower tiers of the labor market, jobs that immigrants disproportionately occupy. Immigrant and labor issues are so connected that the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees (HERE) in Los Angeles spearheaded the Immigrant Freedom Rides recently with the sponsorship of other unions (e.g., American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, AFLCIO). This social movement attempted to replicate the Civil Rights movement for immigrants. The organizers bussed 1,000 immigrants and about 125,000 union and community organizers from cities throughout the U.S. to converge in Boston to head for a demonstration in Washington, D.C. on October 1-2, 2004, and continued on to a larger demonstration in New York City on October 4th, 2004.

I personally conducted 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews with activist representing different non-profit organizations and unions. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half to two hours. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, with transcriptions averaging about eight single-spaced pages. The respondents have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The transcriptions were coded and organized around selected themes. In Los Angeles I conducted interviews at workplaces, public spaces (e.g., restaurants), and protest sites. Nearly all of the interviews were conducted in English, although two interviews were conducted in Spanish and a few of them were conducted in English and Spanish. With the exception

of two women, I spoke with each respondent separately. Although I had no intension of conducting a systematic qualitative study with a random sample, the respondents came from a variety of settings. For example, they represented different organizations or represented workers of different Latina/o subgroups and occupations. I made contact with these individuals through the internet and referrals from individuals involved in civil rights issues. The participants for this study are employed in several non-profit organizations and labor unions. The establishment of rapport that granted me the interviews varied, but I participated in several protests and demonstrations to show my support for the issues at stake and to show my gratitude for them granting me the interview.

Questions have been organized around several main themes (Appendix). Some questions regard the general labor market such as the experiences Latina/o s face in the job market, how the job market has changed in the last ten years in prospective areas, the differences and similarities faced by Latina/os and Asian workers, and the treatment of workers of various demographic backgrounds. Another set of questions dealt with how to more precisely define the concept of the ethnic niche. For example, issues examined consisted of whether it matters for Latina/o s to have Latina/o co-workers, the similarities and differences among the different Latina/o subgroups, and the race/ethnic background of the supervisor. Another set of questions dealt with the usage of social networks to attain employment and the impact of different stratification factors.

Although the responses are shaped by my status as a researcher, Latina, and a graduate student, along with their particular situations shaping their lives at the time, I

tried to avoid taking people's responses out of context and to sketch the proper setting for understanding the interviewees' perspectives. Even though the MCSUI dataset is the basis for most of the analysis in this research, I wanted to give more of a voice to the constituents represented in this study. One of my major research concerns involves trying to have a deep understanding of what constitutes an ethnic niche. For instance, I am concerned with what factors need to be present to define a workplace as an ethnic niche? Does this vary by region and race and ethnic groups? Finally, given that racism is not uniformly orchestrated (Bonilla-Silva 2001), I also conducted selected interviews in Boston, another MCSUI site, to assess whether there are different factors shaping race/ethnic relations in Los Angeles and Boston.

In addition, to strengthen the analysis, I met with labor market researchers who have either served as consultants for the MCSUI data collection and/or are experts on Latina/o labor market patterns. Specifically, I met with Abel Valenzuela at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and Luis Falcon and Barry Bluestone at Northeastern University. Their input provided further insight on the construction of the MCSUI dataset and direction to better understand Latina/o labor markets in the respective areas of focus (Los Angeles and Boston).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The previous chapter described the data and methods used to examine the entrance of Latina/os into ethnic niche employment and their hourly wages in these work settings. Of specific interest is the role of the social inequality factors (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) and social networks in funneling Latina/os into ethnic niches and in the economic reward structure of workers in ethnic niches. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings associated with the analyses.

Niche Employment

Table 1 illustrates the percentage of Latina/o workers in selected categories who are employed in ethnic niches. First, the nativity/length of residence variable indicates that participation in ethnic niches decreases with length of U.S. residence. Specifically, nearly 52 percent of Latina/o immigrants who have been in the U.S. less than ten years are employed as are 44 percent of their foreign-born counterparts who have lived in the U.S. for at least a decade; in contrast only about 29 percent of native-born Latinos are employed in an ethnic niche. Second, there is a positive association between skin color and ethnic niche employment. In particular, three-fifths of dark-skinned Latina/os are employed in ethnic niches, followed by one-fifth of medium-skinned tone Latina/os, and one-third of light-skinned Latina/os. Third, social networks tend to be related to niche employment. Nearly 53 percent of those who utilized friends and

Table 1. Percent of Workers in Selected Categories Employed in Ethnic Niches among Mexican and Central American Workers in Los Angeles, CA, 1994.

Selected Variables	Pct. Niche
Nativity	
Immigrated < 10 yrs.	51.8%
Immigrated 10+ yrs.	44.3%
Native-Born	28.9%
Gender	
Females	40.5%
Males	43.1%
Skin Color	
Dark Skin Tone	60.1%
Medium Skin Tone	41.0%
Light Skin Tone	33.4%
Social Networks	
Friends/Relatives	52.9%
Other (other persons, newspaper, other)	41.0%
Control Variables	
Central American	52.2%
Mexican	39.6%
H.S. Diploma & Above	34.2%
No H.S. Diploma	51.7%
Limited English	51.3%
Good English	35.0%
No Experience	39.0%
Experience < 10 yrs.	46.2%
Experience 10+	45.7%
Age 21-34	43.2%
Age 35-44	39.5%
Age 45-54	41.1%
Age 55+	46.1%
Disabled	24.0%
Non-Disabled	43.2%
Married	41.9%
Other (Separated, Divorced, Widowed, Never Married, Partner, Other)	42.4%
N	573

relatives to locate employment are in ethnic niches, while 41% of those who use other sources are working in this labor market sector. Finally, gender is not significantly related to ethnic niche employment with slightly more than two-fifths of males and females working in ethnic niches. Thus, the bivariate analysis provides preliminary support for three out of the four hypotheses associated with ethnic niche employment.

Several control variables are also related to ethnic niche employment. For instance, Central American (52.2%) workers are more likely than Mexican (39.6%) workers to be employed in ethnic niches. In addition, Latina/os with lower levels of human capital (less than a high school diploma, 51.7%; limited English skills, 51.3%) are more likely to participate in an ethnic niche. Furthermore, Latina/os without a physical disability are more likely than their physically disabled (24.0%) counterparts to be part of an ethnic niche.

However, to more accurately examine the hypotheses associated with ethnic niche employment, it is important to use multivariate analysis. Table 2 presents the results of the logistic regression examining the relationship between the selected variables and entry into niche employment. The odds ratio can be interpreted as the change in the odds of being employed in the ethnic niche given a unit change in a given independent variable. Among the stratifying factors, skin color is the only factor significantly related to ethnic niche employment. As hypothesis 3 predicted, darker-skinned Latina/os have a higher likelihood of being employed in the ethnic niche. In particular, compared to darker complected Latina/os,

Table 2. Logistic Regression Examining the Relationship between Selected Variables and Ethnic Niche Employment among Mexican and Central American Workers in Los Angeles, CA, 1994.

Selected Variables	Maximum Likelihood Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Intercept	0.301	0.551	
Nativity			
Immigrated < 10 yrs.	0.342	0.333	1.407
Immigrated 10+ yrs.	0.367	0.345	1.444
Gender			
Females	0.178	0.245	1.194
Skin Color			
Medium Skin Tone	-0.849***	0.339	0.428
Light Skin Tone	-1.585***	0.408	0.205
Social Networks			
Friends/Relatives	0.511*	0.272	1.667
Control Variables			
Mexican	0.315	0.281	1.370
H.S. Diploma & Above	-0.612**	0.264	0.542
Limited English	-0.081	0.246	0.922
Age 35-44	-0.078	0.317	0.922
Age 45-54	0.133	0.409	1.143
Age 55+	0.114	0.694	1.121
-2 Log Likelihood	495.03		
Model Chi-Square	36.62***		
Degrees of Freedom	12		
N	364		

*p<.10 level; ** p< .05 ; ***p<.01

those with a medium skin tone and light skin tone are 57 percent and 79 percent, respectively, less likely to be working in an ethnic niche. In addition, one other variable of interest (social networks) is significantly related to ethnic niche employment. As hypothesis 4 predicted, Latina/os who use friends/relatives to attain employment are 1.7 times more likely to work in ethnic niches.

The other two key variables of interest (nativity/length of residence in the U.S. and gender) are not significantly related to ethnic niche employment. Nonetheless, the relationships are in the expected direction (hypotheses 1 and 2). Foreign-born persons are about 40 percent more likely and women are about 20 percent more likely to be employed in an ethnic niche compared to their respective counterparts, although the differences were not large enough to achieve statistical significance.

Finally, one control variable was significantly associated with ethnic niche employment. Individuals lacking a high school diploma are 46 percent more likely to be working in an ethnic niche compared to their peers that have at least a high school diploma.

The logistic regression analysis is replicated for the foreign-born Latina/o sample to determine whether the patterns discussed above, based on the pooled sample, are applicable to this group. Unfortunately, due to a small size the analysis could not be conducted for the native-born group. Table 3 presents the results of the relationship between selected variables and entry into niche employment among foreign-born Latina/os. Consistent with the model analyzing the pooled sample of foreign- and native-born Latina/os, skin color is the only stratification factor significantly associated with ethnic niche employment. Specifically, compared to dark-skinned individuals, medium-skinned persons are 50 percent less likely to be in the ethnic niche while light-skinned persons are 73 percent less likely to be in this employment sector. However,

Table 3. Logistic Regression Examining the Relationship between Selected Variables and Ethnic Niche Employment among Foreign-Born Mexican and Central American Workers in Los Angeles, CA , 1994.

Selected Variables	Maximum Likelihood Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
Intercept	0.438	0.533	
Nativity			
Immigrated < 10 yrs.	0.212	0.296	1.237
Gender			
Females	0.111	0.279	1.117
Skin Color			
Medium Skin Tone	-0.698*	0.390	0.498
Light Skin Tone	-1.304***	0.484	0.271
Social Networks			
Friends/Relatives	0.302	0.327	1.353
Control Variables			
Mexican	0.344	0.289	1.410
H.S. Diploma & Above	-0.676**	0.284	0.509
Limited English	-0.105	0.301	0.901
Age 35-44	0.198	0.330	1.218
Age 45-54	1.162**	0.587	3.196
Age 55+	0.283	0.706	1.328
-2 Log Likelihood	361.78		
Model Chi-Square	24.66***		
Degrees of Freedom	11		
N	299		

*p<.10; **p< .05 level; ***p<.01

when restricting the analyses to only the foreign-born, social networks is no longer a significant factor. This is a surprising finding, especially given the heavy reliance of immigrants on social networks (see Elliott 2001) and the role of social networks in creating and sustaining immigrant niches (Waldinger 1996). Furthermore, persons without a high school diploma continue to be significantly more likely to be employed in

the ethnic niche, as was the case with the pooled sample. However, among the foreign-born persons 45 to 54 years of age are also quite likely to be in the ethnic niche.

Background analyses were conducted to examine the interaction between social networks and the three stratification variables. The results showed that the interaction between social networks and immigration/nativity status and social networks and dark-skin tone significantly influence whether Latina/os entered ethnic niches or general labor markets. However, hypothesis tests revealed that the interaction model did not significantly improve on the more parsimonious additive model (see Hamilton 1992).

Economic Returns and Ethnic Niches

Now that the factors that influence the type of labor market that Latina/os are employed in have been discussed, attention will turn to the hourly wage returns in each perspective market (ethnic niche and general labor market). The discussion below begins with the examination of the mean hourly wages in each labor market. Subsequently, the discussion turns to the question of whether being employed in ethnic niches is more economically beneficial for Latina/os. The final segment of this section describes the influence of stratification variables on earnings in the two employment sectors.

The major focus in this part of the analysis concerns the extent to which ethnic niche workers receive lower earnings than non-niche workers, as predicted by hypothesis 5. Table 4 reports the mean hourly wages of selected categories of Latina/os by niche employment. For all categories, Latina/os earn higher wages in the general

Table 4. Mean Hourly Wages for Selected Variables and Categories Used in the Study by Niche Employment among Mexican and Central American Workers in Los Angeles, CA, 1994.

Selected Variables	Niche	Non-Niche
Nativity		
Immigrated < 10 yrs.	\$6.07	\$7.69
Immigrated 10+ yrs.	\$7.58	\$9.77
Native-Born	\$9.23	\$13.11
Gender		
Females	\$6.79	\$8.86
Males	\$7.69	\$11.56
Skin Color		
Dark Skin Tone	\$7.32	\$13.99
Medium Skin Tone	\$7.23	\$10.24
Light Skin Tone	\$8.00	\$9.72
Social Networks		
Friends/Relatives	\$6.21	\$8.52
Other (other persons, newspaper, other)	\$7.71	\$11.17
Control Variables		
Central American	\$6.83	\$8.28
Mexican	\$7.55	\$10.97
H.S. Diploma & Above	\$8.09	\$12.03
No H.S. Diploma	\$6.81	\$7.89
Limited English	\$6.66	\$9.86
Good English	\$8.18	\$10.89
No Experience	\$6.82	\$9.75
Experience < 10 yrs.	\$6.95	\$9.33
Experience 10+ yrs.	\$7.80	\$11.87
Age 21-34	\$6.76	\$9.75
Age 35-44	\$8.80	\$11.19
Age 45-54	\$7.44	\$12.84
Age 55+	\$7.65	\$10.33
Disabled	\$5.34	\$10.43
Non-Disabled	\$7.43	\$10.52
Married	\$7.79	\$11.06
Other (Separated, Divorced, Widowed, Never Married, Partner, Other)	\$6.88	\$9.86
N	242	331

(non-niche) labor market than in ethnic niches. This provides preliminary support for hypothesis 5.

However, to more accurately assess this hypothesis, we need to conduct multivariate analysis. Table 5 presents the results of the OLS regression examining the relationship between the selected variables and the logged hourly wages for the pooled sample and the foreign-born sample. The adjusted R-squared is 32 percent for the pooled-sample model and 28 percent for the foreign-born model. The results provide clear support for hypothesis 5. Specifically, Latina/os employed in the ethnic niche have hourly wages that are 18 percent lower than those of their counterparts working in the general labor market. Moreover, this pattern is replicated among foreign-born workers, with niche workers earning hourly wages that are 15 percent lower than those of their peers employed outside of the ethnic niche. Note that because the focus at this stage is simply on the earnings differences by ethnic niche employment, the relationships involving the other selected variables and the logged hourly wage are not discussed now but in the subsequent section.

Relationship between Selected Variables and Earnings by Niche Employment

This part of the analysis focuses on the association between selected variables and earnings among ethnic niche workers and non-niche workers. The literature shows disagreement on whether ethnic niches protect workers from discrimination in the labor market or whether they serve as a site for exploitation. Hypothesis 6 predicts that there

Table 5. OLS Regression Examining the Relationship between Selected Variables and Logged Hourly Wages among Mexican and Central American Workers in Los Angeles, CA, 1994.

Selected Variables	Native-Born and Foreign Born	Foreign-Born
Intercept	2.234*** (0.106) ^a	2.073*** (0.096)
Niche	-0.177*** (0.044)	-0.152*** (0.048)
Nativity		
Immigrated < 10 yrs.	-0.160*** (0.064)	-0.089* (0.051)
Immigrated 10+ yrs.	-0.086 (0.065)	—
Gender		
Females	-0.184*** (0.046)	-0.214*** (0.049)
Skin Color		
Medium Skin Tone	-0.011 (0.060)	0.055 (0.063)
Light Skin Tone	0.109 (0.073)	0.123 (0.080)
Social Networks		
Friends/Relatives	-0.226*** (0.049)	-0.183*** (0.055)
Control Variables		
Mexican	0.059 (0.053)	0.076 (0.050)
H.S. Diploma & Above	0.158*** (0.049)	0.150*** (0.049)
Limited English	-0.090** (0.045)	-0.061 (0.052)
Experience	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Experience-Square	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Age 35-44	0.122** (0.061)	0.099* (0.060)
Age 45-54	-0.021 (0.077)	-0.059 (0.089)
Age 55+	-0.169 (0.172)	-0.283 (0.169)
Disabled	-0.036 (0.099)	-0.108 (0.100)

Table 5. Continued

Selected Variables	Native-Born and Foreign Born	Foreign-Born
Married	0.049 (0.046)	0.051 (0.048)
Manufacturing	-0.158*** (0.054)	-0.189*** (0.055)
R Square	0.36	0.33
Adj R Square	0.32	0.29
N	354	261

^a Standard error.

* p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01

are no differences between the ethnic niche and the general labor market with respect to the relationship between selected variables and earnings.

Table 4, which was examined earlier, shows the mean hourly wages of selected categories of Latina/os by ethnic niche employment. While workers in the ethnic niche have lower wages than those in the general labor market, there is greater variation across categories within variables among Latina/os working in the general labor market. This reflects the more heterogeneous composition of the Latina/o workforce in the general labor market compared to the ethnic niche. This suggests a smaller degree of inequality within the ethnic niche compared to the general labor market.

Nevertheless, the bivariate analysis results indicate that the selected variables of interests, except for skin color, are related to earnings in a similar fashion across the ethnic niche and the general labor market. Regardless of labor market type, native-born individuals, males, those who did not rely on friends/relatives for job contacts, and, among foreign-born persons, those who have lived in the United States for at least

a decade have higher wages than their respective counterparts. However, the skin color variable deviates from the expected patterns. In the case of the ethnic niche, light-skinned Latina/os (\$8.00) have higher wages than their medium-skinned (\$7.23) and dark-skinned (\$7.32) counterparts. In contrast, in the general labor market, there is a positive association between the skin darkness and wages. This may be attributed to the selective nature of dark-skinned individuals who are able to forego ethnic niche employment.

Table 6 presents the multivariate results examining the relationship between selected variables and logged hourly wages in ethnic niches and the general labor market. The model explains about 33 percent of the variation in logged hourly wages for ethnic niche workers and about 28 percent for non-niche workers.

Among ethnic niche workers, as expected, each of the stratification factors and the social networks variable significantly affects the logged hourly wages. For example, recent immigrants working in the ethnic niche earn lower wages than their native-born counterparts. Specifically, foreign-born individuals that have lived in the U.S. for less than ten years have hourly wages that are 24 percent lower ($b = -0.236$) compared to native-born persons. In addition, women employed in the ethnic niche earn about 20 percent lower wages than men ($b = -0.196$). Furthermore, light-skinned Latina/os employed in the ethnic niche have about 19 percent higher ($b = 0.188$) hourly wages than dark-skinned Latina/o workers. Finally, Latina/os who use friends/relatives to attain employment in the ethnic niche earn about 14 percent lower ($b = -0.143$) wages than those who used other sources to locate ethnic niche employment.

Table 6. OLS Regression Examining the Relationship between Selected Variables and Logged Hourly Wages by Niche Employment among Mexican and Central American Workers in Los Angeles, CA, 1994.

Selected Variables	Niche	Non-Niche
Intercept	2.253*** (0.124) ^a	2.011*** (0.181)
Nativity		
Immigrated < 10 yrs.	-0.236*** (0.079)	-0.137 (0.103)
Immigrated 10+ yrs.	-0.183** (0.085)	-0.017 (0.105)
Gender		
Females	-0.196*** (0.050)	-0.183** (0.086)
Skin Color		
Medium Skin Tone	0.006 (0.056)	-0.029 (0.136)
Light Skin Tone	0.188** (0.081)	0.034 (0.147)
Social Networks		
Friends/Relatives	-0.143** (0.058)	-0.258*** (0.083)
Control Variables		
Mexican	-0.109* (0.060)	0.207** (0.090)
H.S. Diploma & Above	0.010 (0.055)	0.311*** (0.086)
Limited English	-0.179*** (0.049)	-0.013 (0.084)
Experience	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Experience-Square	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Age 35-44	0.034 (0.066)	0.105 (0.115)
Age 45-54	0.065 (0.087)	-0.137 (0.140)
Age 55+	-0.151 (0.224)	-0.224 (0.289)
Disabled	-0.058 (0.123)	-0.093 (0.155)
Married	0.076 (0.054)	0.096 (0.079)

Table 6. Continued

Selected Variables	Niche	Non-Niche
Manufacturing	-0.053 (0.056)	-0.214** (0.106)
R Square	.40	0.33
Adj R Square	.33	0.26
N	176	178

^a Standard error.

* p< 0.10; ** p< .05; *** p<.01

Among ethnic niche workers, a couple of control variables are significantly related to the logged hourly wages. Among the human capital factors, only English proficiency is significantly related to wages in the ethnic niche. Persons with limited English skills have lower wages in comparison to those who have fair English skills. In addition, Mexican-origin workers have earnings that are about 11 percent ($b = -0.109$) lower than Central American workers.

In the analyses for non-niche (general labor market) Latina/o workers, gender is the only stratification factor related to hourly wage returns. Specifically, Latinas have about 18 percent lower ($b = -0.183$) hourly wages than their male counterparts in non-niche employment. Furthermore, those who secured employment through personal social networks receive about 26 percent lower ($b = -0.258$) wages than those who used other sources in their job search.

Several control variables are significantly related to the logged hourly wages of non-niche workers. For example, individuals with a high school diploma earn 31 percent more than their counterparts who lack a high school degree. Moreover, workers employed in manufacturing earn about 21 percent lower ($b = -0.214$) hourly wages than

workers in other industries. Finally, Mexican-origin workers have earnings that are 21 percent higher than those of Central American workers.

Background analyses were conducted to examine the interaction between niche employment and the three stratification variables. None of the interactions were statistically significant. Additionally, the interactive model did not significantly improve on the more parsimonious additive model.

Having identified which variables are significantly related to hourly wages among Latina/o workers, attention will now shift to comparing the magnitude of the effects across labor markets (ethnic niche and general labor markets). Tests of significant differences reveal that there are no significant beta differences between ethnic niches and general labor markets in hourly wages. Within the limitations of these data, based on t-tests between niche and non-niche models, the stratification variables of interest (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) have the same influence for ethnic niche and general labor market workers, supporting hypothesis 6.

Shortcomings of the MCSUI Data and Supplementary Qualitative Data

The interest in conducting an exploratory qualitative analysis arose from concerns on how to conceptualize ethnic niches. As stated previously, the conceptualization of ethnic niches used for this study has two components: 1) working primarily with co-ethnics, and 2) having a co-ethnic supervisor. Embedded in both of these components is the question of who is considered a co-ethnic. Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation looks at race not only at the level of the social structure but also the ways in which it comes to be meaningful as a descriptor of group identity and

social issues (Winant 1998). Since this question deals with the social construction of ethnicity, the MCSUI dataset has limited capabilities to answer this question. This section raises some question on how co-ethnicity is defined in Latina/o ethnic niches.

In order to address these questions 10 in-depth interviews with immigrant and labor activists in Los Angeles and Boston were conducted. In the initial planning of this investigation of the four cities in the MCSUI dataset, both the Los Angeles and the Boston regions contained the appropriate variables to address the research questions. However, subsequent analysis did not allow for any quantitative multivariate analysis on Boston due to the small sample numbers of Latina/o ethnic niche workers. Therefore, Boston was dropped from the quantitative analysis. However, for the qualitative portion of the analysis Boston serves as a useful comparison. These data will help to examine the degree to which change in ethnic behavior is a function of situational responses that help address the complexities in forming co-ethnic networks and the subsequent development of ethnic niches.

As in quantitative analysis this section address dynamics of inclusion/exclusion in the ethnic niches, but the focus is more on the processes of how co-ethnicity is determined and the presence in absence or solidarity. One of the questions addressed is whether ethnic niches develop under the larger pan-ethnic group (e.g., Latina/o) or whether niches develop among ethnic subgroups (e.g., Mexican niches, Salvadoran niches, etc.) or even by nativity status (e.g., immigrant niches or native-born niches). Additionally, filling in the gap in the quantitative analysis, the qualitative analysis also

examines why the race/ethnicity of the supervisor is an important factor to consider in the characterization of ethnic niches.

Ethnic Niche Workers

Respondents provided thoughts regarding the pan-ethnic form of Latina/o ethnic niches. For instance, Doris and Maria, undocumented workers who were fired from their previous job for trying to unionize and now work as part-time organizers, offer their thoughts on relations between Mexicans and Salvadorans in the workplace.

Doris: Over here there is a mixture, Salvadoran, Nicaraguan.

Researcher: And do they all work together?

Doris: Right here in Hamburger Tower, Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, Anglo-Saxons, it is all jumbled up, to put it that way.

Maria: It is more Hispanic.

Doris: Yeah, it is more Hispanic.

Although the different Latina/o subgroups have different histories and modes of incorporation into the United States, the first question that arises is whether the different Latina/o sub-groups (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadorian, Nicaraguan) frequently work together to form pan-ethnic niches. The interviews reveal that the answer to this question varies by region. In the case of Los Angeles, for instance, ethnic niches are based primarily of pan-ethnic rather than ethnic-specific groups. Respondents consistently noted that the different Latina/o subgroups work together to form pan-Latina/o niches. For example, Linda, a union organizer of Latina/o descent, said:

...a lot of people,...a lot of men in particular who come here from all those nationalities are, you know, just really basic day to day survival and a lot of them are day laborers and so in that sense it almost unifies them. I mean they are all looking for a job all in one day, ...they are from all nationalities. You know there's even a group, you probably have heard of, ...*Los Jornaleros Del Norte*? ...they met each other at the day labor sites,...they sing songs saying yeah we're *Hondurenos* [Honduran], we're *Nicaraguenses* [Nicaraguan], we're *Mexicanos*

[Mexicans], we're *Salvadoreños* [Salvadoran]....we have all these similar experiences with *la migra* [border patrol], with the *patron* [boss], ...with the bus driver. These are our similar experiences ...and they sing about it.....

Latina/o niches are partly formed because of the common experiences that Latina/os share, particularly with respect to issues that recent immigrants must confront, such as documentation status, searching for employment, and dealing with supervisors in the workplace.

Indeed documentation status is a crucial factor in determining the segmentation of the workplace in terms of common immigration status. In Los Angeles, workers are concentrated and given access or denied access to particular jobs based on their immigration status rather than ethnic status. As such, workplaces are more likely to be immigrant niches (rather than ethnic niches) consisting of immigrants from various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Supporting the importance of immigration status as a factor in typecasting particular workplaces, Ana, an immigrant activist, when asked about the work environments with Latina/os working in co-ethnic concentrated work environments, mentions that it depends on immigration status. Specifically, it depends whether workers are primarily native-born Latina/os, recent arrivals, or immigrants. When asked about the differences between native-born and foreign-born Latina/os in the workplace, Ana said:

...it is not unheard of to find a native-born on a day laborer corner not likely but huh so it's almost like depending on the type of work, immigration status to some extent almost gets to be irrelevant because it is so dominated by undocumented workers that the labor abuse affects everybody even the abuse of native-born or legal immigrants.

Although Ana mentions that immigration status becomes irrelevant, her explanation suggests that immigration status is such a significant factor that the workplace becomes considered more of an undocumented immigrant niche regardless of the actual documentation status of the workers. This is similar to Mirande's (1987) observation that although there are obvious differences between undocumented Mexican immigrants and American citizens of Mexican descent, there are also important commonalities such as the subjection to racism.

Also, illustrating the importance of immigration status in the formation of niches, are immigrant and ethnic niches in Koreatown in Los Angeles. Even though the majority of businesses are Korean, respondents estimated that about 60 percent of the population is actually Latina/o with the workplaces being simultaneous Korean-niches and pan-Latina/o niches based on a division of labor organized according race/ethnicity. While referring to Koreatown, Susie, a woman of Korean descent who is an immigrant labor activists, describes the concentration of Korean and Latina/o immigrants in restaurant and market industries.

Almost all, practically all of the restaurant workers are immigrants and recent immigrants... for a lot of the Latino workers they come in and a lot of Korean businesses are happy to hire them because it is cheap help... With the market industry it's a little bit, it's it's really similar, ... the way that it generally goes is that about half of the workers are Latino males and they work in like the produce, the grocery, box boy, receiving you know things like that....and then the other half of other workers are Korean and they work like as a cashiers, as the office help, usually the fish and meat departments and then you know there is some overlap I guess.

Considered more of an immigrant niche than an ethnic niche, there is a division of labor within the immigrant niche based on ethnic background. Yet, precisely due to the

division of labor, Latina/o workers are more likely to perform similar tasks and to work alongside co-ethnics. Furthermore, Korean immigrants enter these workplaces because of their limited English skills and for protection from the less familiar general society. Latina/os, on the other hand, end up employed in these workplaces because they are considered “cheap” labor.

In Boston, there is also evidence of the existence of multiethnic workplaces where immigration status, rather than ethnicity, is the factor that binds workers together. Jose, a labor and immigrant activist, describes the ethnic division of labor at a hotel.

... I forget how segregated things are so clearly by race, ethnicity, and nationality. For example, all the banquet waiters were almost all exclusively Irish American, the dishwashers were almost all Latinos and in the dishwashers you have Puerto Ricans, Central Americans and some South Americans....there is something that is called the coffee crew... they were almost exclusively Cape Verdian immigrants. Housekeeping, the vast majority of almost all housekeepers were almost all Haitian ... but the management of the house...which was inevitably white, really knew how to divide people along those lines and use them to fight against each other.

Similar to immigrant niches described in Los Angeles, although these workers are mostly immigrants, there is a division of labor by ethnic background, similar to Koreatown. Also, when mentioning the tasks performed by each racial/ethnic group, the different Latina/o subgroups are described as working together as oppose to a workplace concentration along Latina/o subgroups.

Furthermore, as in the Los Angeles case, there is a sort of camaraderie between immigrants that is based on common experiences. This solidarity is similar to the bond found among pan-Latina/o niches described in Los Angeles. Below Jose illustrates this immigrant camaraderie.

Jose: I found that it creates two different reactions, one people are not willing to stand up for their rights for obvious reasons they do not want to risks being exposed... and the other thing that I found also it creates a certain camaraderie between people who are undocumented huh people look out for each other, you know, they tell each other “I know someone who is selling ID over here or whose doing this type of social security, or you can move in with my friend” networks are formed and it’s very informal, I hear about it...but I don’t know exactly what the mechanisms are but that feeling of we’re in this together is out there.

Researcher: And that crosses the national-origin and the race lines?

Jose: That cuts the national-origin, I don’t know about the race lines, though. I don’t see that happening between Haitians and Venezuelans or Dominicans, or never within Latinos.

The camaraderie among the undocumented immigrants cuts through national ties supporting the idea that Latina/o immigrants develop their own networks and immigrant workplaces as oppose to subgroup Latina/o niches. Irma, a Latina working as an economic development activist, points to the different networks for native-born and foreign-born co-ethnics.

...as a immigrant...in this country you can expect to be exploited on some level but the employers are taking advantage so there is a certain type of work that one can get as an immigrant versus an native-born Latina/o...you know with citizenship.

Irma’s observations describe that through their own networks and vulnerability, and to a lesser extend Latina/o background, immigrants develop immigrant workplaces or immigrant niches.

In Boston, however, there is more of a division among the Latina/o subgroups, thus questioning the prevalence of pan-Latina/o niches. When asked if the different Latina/o sub-groups from different nationalities, work together or have their own workplaces, Daniel, an activist in a community council, said:

...it depends on who is in the position of power....I remember talking to somebody who said to me, you know, I am now one of the managers for a

construction and landscaping company and my boss used to be Irish...and he apparently this person moved on someplace else, he said, you know, he only hired Mexicans and Puerto Ricans ... now I only hire my own people. And I say oh why I mean, you know, everybody needs a job? He's like, well I know my own people better than I know other people...and I and I heard kind of the same thing from this woman who was a supervisor at a cleaning company, ...I'm kind of helping out my own people there is a lot of them coming in looking for jobs, I want to give them a hand. But I don't necessarily think it's about uh trying to putting people down or trying to discriminating against other people but I think it's more along the lines of I want to help somebody out, my own people you know.

These are examples of how Latina/os in Boston are more likely to hire their co-nationals which consequently leads to the development of subgroup niches, rather than a pan-Latina/o niche. As Daniel make clear above, the reasons for hiring a co-ethnic are twofold: 1) the employer feels that he/she knows their own people better, and 2) the employers gets a sense that they are helping their people. However, it appears that Daniel uses the phrase “my people” to refer to “co-nationals” rather than “co-ethnics.” Furthermore, Daniel later mentioned that Puerto Ricans have their own networks and their own businesses due to their historical presence in the region of Boston. Although establishment of Puerto Ricans in this region has not been without racial turmoil, they have managed to establish their own business, organizations, and other community developments.

Similarly, Cindy, a Salvadoran immigrant activist, mentioned that Salvadorans have their own workplaces and that their networks differ from those of Mexicans. Cindy argues that each Latina/o subgroup has its own ethnic niches. She attributes this to family networks and biases that employers develop about particular groups. Furthermore, Cindy discussed the increasing diversity of the Latina/o community over

the last ten years, with a heavy Puerto Rican and Dominican presence, but an increasing presence of Salvadorans, and Columbians, and other South Americans. Cindy also pointed out these newer Latina/o groups come with a very strong national identity.

It takes a very long time...to see what connects us and start adopting a Latino identity. So when we come here you know we were born in sovereign soil, we were born in a nation so we come here with a very very strong national identity. So I think it's very very natural to tend to seek those that come from the same place...I do. When I came to this country and I had to fill out those forms for me it was weird in those days they didn't have Latino they had Hispanic and to me oh those are some people from Spain, right? You know I always put other and put Salvadoran because that was my identity. I am from El Salvador, I am Salvadoran. But with many years of living here in the United States, you know, experiencing the discrimination, getting to know other Latinos, you know, finding out what is common between us, not just the language and the common history but also the common experience of what it is like to be somebody that speaks Spanish in the United States and doesn't, you know, look very white, you know, little by little you start adopting a Latino identity but that takes a while.

This could partly explain why there is less of a pan-Latina/o niche work environments in Boston compared to Los Angeles. It appears that since Latina/o subgroups have less of a historical presence here that they have not developed the pan-ethnic Latina/o identity that appears to be partly based on common experiences that Latina/o subgroups share. Having a Latina/o identity then forms solidarity with Latina/o subgroups other than one's own, which can consequently lead to a pan-ethnic networks and work environments.

Furthermore, the camaraderie between Latina/o groups is attributed mostly to the common experiences shared due to immigration status and not necessarily co-ethnic Latina/o membership. In Boston, where there is a large and established Puerto Rican community, not only are Puerto Ricans more likely to have their own niches separate from other Latina/os, there is more antagonism between Puerto Ricans and other

Latina/os subgroups with large immigrant populations. Daniel below illustrates this hostility.

... And the other thing and I find it interesting, it's been this whole... notion that we only get along with people from my own country like we don't get along with Puerto Ricans nor their, there's a certain stereotype about people come from different places in particular I think there's somewhat a strong tension between Puerto Ricans and people from other countries, especially people that are, that have very strong characters you know for instance Columbians. You put a group of Columbians and a group of Puerto Ricans would get together there's going to be tension...when I hear people talk about well, you know, a workplace what's the environment like, you know is it friendly, are the people you work with very welcoming, then they start talking about each other you know.

The tensions among Latina/o subgroups that Daniel mentions particularly biases against Puerto Ricans make it difficult for pan-Latina/o networks and workplaces to develop.

Nevertheless, subsequently, Daniel mentioned that there had been issues in which all Latina/o groups have successfully worked with Puerto Ricans:

... when there's something that we agree with I think that we're fine but when we kind of get to other details or other issues that only pertain for instance to the immigrant population, unionize Latinos, and things that have to do with... what I call the Puerto Rican agenda, we don't necessary. Things that we don't necessary know and we don't understand and I think there needs to be more of that much more mixing much more dialogue.

Similar to Padilla's (1985) work where individuals of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent united for ethnic mobilization efforts under a common Latina/o identity once they found common interests, Daniel articulates that there are common factors that unite Puerto Ricans and other Latina/os. However, as Padilla (1985) argues, for a Latina/o consciousness to function not only is a common cultural symbol, such as language, necessary, but also a specific political interest that binds them all together. As an illustration, Daniel attributes the separation between Puerto Ricans and other Latina/os

to issues of citizenship that do not affect Puerto Ricans. Yet, the animosity against the Puerto Rican community appears to be pretty strong since the respondent even mentioned a sort of “Puerto Rican agenda,” as something he does not understand. Later, Daniel reiterated his stance on Puerto Ricans.

... well Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, a lot of Puerto Ricans, a lot of Dominicans, and, ... other people that have been born here already have the power to vote, but yet you don't...you're not politically engage, you are not serious about issues that impact the entire Latina/o population, when it comes to distribution of resources, when it comes to fighting... to have access to universities for Latinos, or when you are talking about... economic advancement for Latina/o s so on and so forth.

Race of the Supervisor

Another question that arises concerns the role of the race/ethnicity of the supervisor in the development of ethnic niches and employment outcomes of workers in these work settings. Although the qualitative analysis of this study shows that several factors resonate in deciphering the conceptualization of ethnic niches (immigration status, ethnic sub-groups, industry, the race and/or ethnicity of the supervisor, and region), ethnic identity and incorporation among Latina/o subgroups in co-ethnic workplaces, immigrant status, and the race/ethnic background of the supervisor are particularly important. Following is a discussion of the findings from in-depth interviews with labor and immigrant activists that are concerned with the well-being of ethnic niche workers.

As noted earlier, some scholars suggests that co-ethnic workplaces provide protection against discrimination (see Portes and Bach 1985; Zhou 1992; Waldinger 1996; Lichter 2000). The following section shows that this is not necessarily the case.

In analyzing the treatment of workers in the ethnic niche, it is important to examine the intricacies of the race of the supervisor for two reasons. First, the supervisor has more power than the rank-and-file laborers in establishing equity or the absence of equity in the workplace. Second, as mentioned previously, due to erroneous perceptions of the homogeneous character of Latina/o populations, having a Latina/o supervisor might erroneously be perceived as a form of protection from discriminatory labor outcomes.

According to Hum (2000) the race/ethnicity of the supervisor of ethnic niche workers needs to be considered in conceptualizing ethnic niches. Specifically, part of Hum's definition of an ethnic niche worker is having a co-ethnic supervisor. Therefore, immigrant and labor market experts were asked whether the race/ethnicity of the supervisor is an important factor determining ethnic labor market outcomes.

Susie, who specializes in immigrant rights in Koreatown, mentioned earlier that while having a co-ethnic supervisor did *not* protect Korean workers from exploitation, it does play a role, with there still being some degree of favoritism towards co-ethnics. Specifically, Susie explained how Latina/o were more likely to face discrimination than their Korean counterparts in Koreatown.

... a lot of the Latino workers had been working there for years, but then they would bring in a Korean worker and have the Latino worker, you know, train them and then a few months later the Latino worker would see that Korean person promoted above them and becoming like a manager or something or having better salaries and stuff like... So there is definitely, yeah, the racial dynamics between Koreans and Latinos is still there, the tensions is still there, but what we found is that the tensions are there because the employers put them there.

While there is discrimination from co-ethnic supervisors, as mentioned above, in immigrant niches there is favoritism from a co-ethnic supervisor or racial discrimination

towards the out-group, in this case Korean supervisors discriminating against Latina/o workers. In another instance, Doris and Maria, two Latinas, recount their experiences working in a hotel with a Korean manager.

Maria: ... we went to work at a hotel and the hours passed and we wouldn't get a break or nothing. There was a lot of work. We were washing dishes and there was a mound of dishes that wouldn't finish and the hunger caught up with me. It was late....

Doris (interrupts): Yeah we had already worked like four hours.

Maria: ...and I told the guys, to the ones that were there as my co-workers, hey aren't you going to take a break or do they not give breaks here. I told them, because I am very hungry and you said this guy is saying that no, well yes, but not right now because look at how much work we have. There is a lot of work he told me. Well yes, but even though there are dirty dishes everywhere we need to take a break. And he said, no, it's because the manager here doesn't like for us to leave all of this mess, he prefers to give us an hour, hey he gives us the whole hour break at the end.

Doris: Imagine working from six at night up to three o'clock in the morning, without a break, do you think that is just?

Maria: It's a buffet that make parties, and there's trays that they take that are new and nobody touches them. Well we eat from there because we were so hungry....

In this situation the Korean supervisor, whose immigration status is unknown, created an inhumane and hazardous work environment for Latina/o workers. It is important to note that the supervisor, although not a co-ethnic, also belongs to an ethnic group with a significantly large immigrant population.

However, the severity of this exploitive relationship is more pronounced among Latina/o supervisors with their co-ethnic workers. Indeed, Doris discusses the better relationship that Latina/os have with their white supervisors compared to their Latina/o supervisors.

In this factory there are Latino supervisors, the supervisors, but the owners of the factory are Anglos, do you know what I mean? The treatment from Anglos towards Latinos is very beautiful, but the Latino-to-Latino treatment is something

totally different, because we just happened to work right now in that and it is such a different that you tell yourself, wow, I even congratulated the owner of the factory because he doesn't pressure you. He knows what he is doing and if you are working better than everyone else he congratulates you, something a Latino does not do. He [Latino supervisor] doesn't come to praise you. What he does is to see how he could look good.

When asked why she thought that was the case, she said the managers want to impress the owners and they are thinking about themselves and not the workers. Doris then said, "That is why they say, that we, the Latinos, instead of helping each other out, we pull each other down," contrary to Korean workers who help each other out.

Lorena, a Latina activist for the working poor, also described how Latina/o supervisors maltreat their co-ethnic Latina/o workers. She believes that because Latina/o supervisors are likely to know which workers are undocumented, they tend to be harsher on those workers and to exploit them. Lorena additionally suggests that class differences between co-ethnic supervisors and workers create tensions.

Similarly in Boston, Jose describes how Latina/o supervisors are less likely to look out for their co-ethnic workers.

What I find interesting in the Brazilian, in the Central American communities, that if somebody gets promoted to become a supervisor...they're the person that is less less apt to look out for the interest of the co-workers and more apt to huh kiss ass to the boss. And once they become supervisors they become really abusive. It seems that this little taste of status, all of the internalized racism, internalized neocolonialism, comes out and they take it out on the workers. There's been, a lot of the unions...and I used to work ACIU with the janitors local, a lot of the sexual harassment come from these mid-level supervisors that were...once workers, and they take it out on the women, they easily prey on women, you know.

Similarly, when asked if the race and ethnicity of the supervisor makes a difference,

Cindy replied:

Yeah I do. Well I don't know if...again it's that clear cut, but enough experience here with [this organization] and the work here, we've discovered that the supervisors that both...discriminate and abuse the workers are themselves people of color, he he. But you know for me I understand it, you know it is kind of that dynamic of the middle person, you know like what happened in our countries when we were colonized, right? That that as certain class emerges,...that it's either mestizo or or whatever, and they're kind of like like the *colchon* [mattress] that they're the...layer between the power that be and the people they suppress. Do you see what I am trying to say? So there is this this middle layer...that kind of forgets where they come from because they have been giving a chance here and there and so because they have internalize a lot of the rhetoric, a lot of the images that get communicated about us, you know they become the people who most abuse who most exploited, etc., etc. When employers would tend to be more careful because they know they are discrimination laws, right? But it would be harder for a worker to claim discrimination when it is another of their kind.

Both Jose and Cindy mentioned the colonized experience of Latina/o populations with the experiences working for a co-ethnic supervisor. Thus, having a co-ethnic supervisor not only creates more exploitative working relationships for Latina/os but it makes it harder for the workers to make discrimination claims against a co-ethnic supervisor.

The exploratory qualitative analysis showed another dimension of intra-ethnic stratification—the crucial role of citizenship. Given the difficulty in quantifying the social construction of ethnicity, this exploratory analysis is particularly useful. In Los Angeles, due to common experiences and the historical presence of Latina/o groups, pan-ethnic Latina/o networks and pan-ethnic niches are more common than the development of Latina/o subgroup niches (e.g., Mexican niche, Salvadoran niche, etc.).

In Boston, although there are immigrant niches with workers from multiethnic backgrounds and Latina/o subgroups working together, there is greater separation between Latina/os subgroups. This consequently leads to the development of separate Latina/o subgroup niches (e.g. Puerto Rican niche) as oppose to the pan-ethnic niche

formation. This pattern is partly due to citizenship status being divisive between Latina/os subgroups who possess U.S. citizenship status and those who do not have such status. Indeed, there are tensions between Puerto Ricans who have U.S. citizenship and other Latina/o groups with large immigrant populations. In Los Angeles undocumented status united the Latina/o workers, while in Boston the U.S. citizenship of Puerto Ricans and the lack of citizenship status among other Latina/o immigrants created tension between these groups. Therefore, citizenship status is a divisive factor between Latina/o groups. This tension in turn can influence the formation of pan-ethnic niches. This along with a lack of a pan-Latina/o identity contributes to the development of Latina/o subgroup niches.

This exploratory analysis also showed that the race of the supervisor in ethnic niches is an important factor contributing to the presence or absence of ethnic niches. While Korean supervisors are exploitative towards their co-ethnics, there is still some favoritism towards their co-ethnics as Latina/os are less likely to be promoted. Yet, respondents emphasized that co-ethnic/racial supervisors are the most exploitive toward their own co-ethnic/racial workers, e.g., lack of concerns for the workers, putting tremendous pressures on the workers, and even sexual harassment. It may be that Latina/o supervisors exploit their co-ethnic workers as a way to distance themselves from rank-and-file workers. While respondents attributed this to various causes (e.g., class differences, variations in immigration status, internalized racism and colonization), it is also reported that having a co-ethnic supervisor makes it more difficult for workers to make discrimination claims.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the labor market incorporation and economic returns of Latina/os, in particular Mexican and Central American workers in Los Angeles. Although numerous studies have examined labor market outcomes of Latina/os, only a limited number have focused on co-ethnic workplace concentrations of non-Cuban Latina/os. Even less attention has focused on intra-ethnic inequality, with most studies of social inequality focusing on minority-majority relations. Because workers are primarily from the same ethnic group, ethnic niches represent an ideal environment to examine intra-ethnic inequality. Furthermore, the analysis of labor market incorporation and economic returns in ethnic niches allows us to examine behavioral outcomes rather than merely exclusionary attitudes. Data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, specifically data based on Los Angeles County, were utilized to conduct this study.

When examining the characteristics of ethnic niche workers, the findings reported in the previous chapter showed that skin color and social networks are significantly associated with determining whether Latina/o workers entered ethnic niches or the general labor market. Personal social networks, or *strong ties* as referred to by Granovetter (1973, 1983), place a central role in supplying ethnic niches with co-ethnic workers. This gives us some insights into Granovetter's (1973, 1983) *strength of weak ties* thesis stating that we are less likely to be involved with our acquaintances (weak ties) that become a bridge to distant parts of the social structure. In this case, the

reliance of Latina/os on personal social networks to locate employment lead to job contacts that relegates them into ethnic niches.

In reference to skin color, the colonialism perspective gives us insights on how skin color influences the type of labor markets that Latina/os access. As alluded to by the colonialism literature, light skin is associated with entry into more profitable labor markets. Thus, the color caste system privileging the lighter-skinned in Latina/o societies is also associated with the assignment of the darker-skinned into Latina/o ethnic niches. Thus, in addition to social networks, skin color stratifies workers into those working in more profitable general labor markets and those who are channeled into ethnic niches.

The question then arose as to whether these relationships based on the pooled sample (foreign- and native-born) are also applicable to the foreign-born. The results demonstrate that among the foreign-born skin color remains a factor related to whether workers gain entrance into general labor markets or ethnic niches. However, social networks no longer predicted the type of labor market that foreign-born Latina/os enter.

When examining labor market outcomes, hourly wages in ethnic niches are lower across all categories of variables examined. From the queue perspective, ethnic niches can then be categorized as jobs lower in the job queue as characterized by their low wages. Furthermore, there is less economic inequality among ethnic niche workers than among workers in the general labor market. However, this is attributed to the low wage variability in ethnic niches and the more heterogeneous nature of workers outside ethnic niches.

The analysis also examined whether ethnic niches are a pathway to economic incorporation or exploitation. Opposing the portrait of protective co-ethnic workplaces, the multivariate results show that there are wage penalties associated with working in ethnic niches. This pattern is consistent for the pooled and the foreign-born samples. Therefore, the results contribute to the theoretical debates questioning the positive effects of ethnic solidarity in terms of wages, particularly in the case of non-Cuban Latina/os.

The analysis also examined the influence on wages of social inequality indicators (immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color) that have been noted to influence economic returns in general labor markets. The results indicate that these factors influence earnings in the ethnic niches as well. Despite the arguments that ethnic solidarity forms a protective shield from the harsher mainstream labor markets, co-ethnicity does not protect its workers from economic inequality. Time of immigration/nativity status still impacts Latina/o wages in ethnic niches, with immigration penalties being especially pronounced among recent immigrants. In terms of the gender wage gap, Latinas are also not protected from economic discrimination when working with co-ethnics; as such, they simultaneously struggle against racism and sexism. Darker-skinned Latina/os are also penalized through lower wages when working in ethnic niches.

The qualitative exploratory data demonstrated the importance of the conceptualization of ethnicity in co-ethnic workplaces. This is particularly essential if the goal is to examine intra-ethnic stratification. Results showed that in the

conceptualization of ethnic niches, there are locational variations. In Los Angeles there is more of a pan-Latina/o niche, while in Boston ethnic niches are developed along the lines of Latina/o subgroups. This distinction can be attributed to three factors—the historical presence of racial/ethnic groups; the relationships among various race/ethnic groups in each particular city; and the citizenship divide between citizens and immigrants at both the individual and the group level. Furthermore, in both areas, having a co-ethnic supervisor is associated with less equitable work environments. However, these are only preliminary findings due to the small sample size. Hence, caution needs to be taken when generalizing these findings.

Nevertheless, as advocated by Ngin and Torres (2001), the historical use of the term “race” needs to be recognized in order to reassess how narrow conceptualizations can inhibit a valid understanding of diversity. Preliminary qualitative findings showed that the historical presence of various Latina/o subgroups in Los Angeles lead to the development of pan-ethnicity at several levels, such as group identity, social networks, and, consequently, ethnic niches. This observation supports Light et al.’s (1993) finding that for populations with a long history of minority status diasporas, ethnicity transcends national-origin.⁷ In this case, Latina/o ethnicity transcends national identity such as Mexican, Salvadoran, and other Latin American nationalities.

In summary, a major finding is that Latina/o ethnic niche workers receive lower wages than Latina/os in the general labor market. Opposing the findings of Portes and

⁷ It is important to recognize as Light et al. (1993) that national-origin is not always synonymous with ethnicity. Therefore, having a common national identity does not necessarily define a common ethnicity. In terms of immigrant minorities, upon arrival they first define themselves in terms of region and only later do they acquire an ethnic identity based on national-origin.

his associates (Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Stepick 1985; Portes and Jensen 1989; Zhou 1992) and those of others (Wilson and Martin 1982; Bailey and Waldinger 1991) who argue that co-ethnic concentrated work environments enable ethnic members to overcome human capital deficits, Latina/os employed in ethnic niches receive lower payoffs, all else equal. This finding supports the work of Hum (2000) and Catanzarite (1998, 2002, 2003). As such, the results indicate that Latina/o ethnic niches do not protect workers from wage exploitation.

A second major finding regards the influence of skin color in labor market incorporation of Latina/os. Skin color allocates Latina/os to differential labor markets with lighter-skinned workers being more likely to be employed in general labor markets, which are not only more racially/ethnically integrated but also more profitable. Therefore, this analysis helps to increase our knowledge of how light skin translates into higher socioeconomic status.

A third major finding concerns the effects of stratification factors on wage outcomes in co-ethnic workplaces. The same factors that influence economic inequality in general labor markets, particularly immigration/nativity status, gender, and skin color, have similar influences in co-ethnic work environments. Therefore, Latina/os who are immigrants, females, or dark-skinned suffer wage penalties when working in ethnic niches. Thus, co-ethnic solidarity that is presumed to protect Latina/os from discrimination in the mainstream labor markets still has exploitative influences when working with co-ethnics.

Particularly, telling is the effect of skin color in explaining labor market differentials for Latina/os. At the onset of the study we find that skin color segmentation funnels Latina/os into particularly labor markets, with the darker-skinned being more likely to be employed in the less profitable ethnic niches. When examining economic returns, darker-skinned Latina/os also receive less favorable wages than their lighter-skinned counterparts employed in ethnic niches. Thus, there is support for Lewis's (1963) *shade discrimination* as a form of racial discrimination with there being limited economic opportunities for darker-skinned Latina/os.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the cross sectionality of the data. First, cross-sectional studies cannot discern temporal dynamics such as whether minority concentrations lead to wage erosion or whether subordinate groups are simply hired disproportionately into already badly paid fields (Catanzarite 2003). Second, questions about the upward mobility of Latina/os in ethnic niches remain unanswered. Bailey and Waldinger (1991) argue that ethnically concentrated workplaces are training systems in which the newly arrived can gain work experience, develop skills, and become knowledgeable about local labor markets. With the accrue of this experience, the foreign-born then increase their competitiveness in the general labor market. Most of the work in this area depicts ethnic economies as training grounds for entrepreneurs. Researchers have found that the ethnic economy is a sort of school for entrepreneurs (Light et al. 1994), with many wage workers later becoming entrepreneurs (Portes and

Bach 1985; Cobas, Aickin, and Jardine 1993). Longitudinal data are needed to assess the extent to which such claims apply to non-Cuban Latina/os.

Similarly, another problematic issue is the inability to measure the stability of ethnic niches. Specifically, what is the movement of workers in and out of ethnic niches? Bonacich and Modell (1980) argue that acculturation is retarded and that a mobility trap exists in these markets. Others disagree and argue that even if the relative wages in the general labor market are higher than in the ethnic economy, it does not necessarily lead to a mobility trap (Light et al. 1994). Again, longitudinal data are necessary to examine the flow of workers in and out of ethnic niches.

Another problem is not having information on the profits of ethnic niches. Light and Gold (2000) question whether claims of exploitation can be made if ethnic economies gain fewer profits. Light and Gold (2000) argue that Karl Marx would agree that without knowing the owners profit we cannot infer exploitation. In such cases once differential rates of profits are adjusted, ethnic economy workers may actually be paid at the same rate as workers in the general labor market. This suggests that in order for low wages to be seen as exploitative, the profits of the owners of ethnic economies need to be taken into consideration.

Policy Implications

In this section policy recommendations are made to improve the economic standing of Latina/os. The broader societal impact of this study is foremost to establish equity in labor markets, both the general and the ethnic economies, for the Latina/o population. Due to the barriers in the general economy, Latina/os turn to their co-ethnic

markets as an alternative. While there is nothing damaging about working with co-ethnics, per say, what is crucial is for such labor markets to achieve economic prosperity. Although referring to race at the individual-level, Zuberi (2001) argues that policy-oriented research must recognize that measuring the effects of causes is done in the context of related, often more structural, causes. For example, race and gender are not the causes of inequality, with the truer cause of inequality involving structural and historical elements that influence the racial and gender dynamics. Similarly, when examining race and ethnicity at the group-level, like ethnic niches, even though ethnic niches are reliable predictors of the low economic standing of Latina/os, they should not be understood as the cause of this inequity. Rather policies must recognize that the findings showing the relationship between lower wage returns and social inequality within ethnic niches are really associations between responses to Latina/os in the structural social context of economic markets.

Another more general policy suggestion regards colorblind ideologies. It is necessary to recognize the various ways in which racism is played out, in this case through intra-group skin color variations or colorism, and even nativism and sexism. By not recognizing the various dynamics of racism, policies resist racial politics and hence engage in colorblind policies. As advocated by Winant (1998), without a clearer understanding of what racism has become, any significant effort aimed at challenging it will encounter barriers. These colorblind ideologies combined with pigmentocratic segmentation are representative of Bonilla-Silva and his associates' (2003a, 2003b)

Latin Americanization thesis, which predicts that the racial hierarchies of the United States will increasingly reflect that of Latin American societies.

It is also necessary not to make presumptions that co-ethnicity protects workers from discrimination. As reported in this study, it is harder to make workplace discrimination claims when the person overseeing the workers, supervisors or owners, are co-ethnics. Following Feagin's concept of *systematic racism*, the relationships between co-ethnics are not isolated from the larger societal influences in which whiteness, and by association lightness, are used to legitimate economic power.

Future Research

In the future, I plan on carrying out more in-depth analysis of having a co-ethnic supervisor. Exploratory qualitative results suggested that having a co-ethnic supervisor leads to more inequality in ethnic niches. While this was found consistently in the interview data, the underlying reasons remain a mystery. There are several possibilities as to why this relationship exists. An interesting insight is pointed out by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) who argues that the application of racial markers is significantly more complicated than previously thought. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) observes that a Latina domestic worker maintains that Latina/os are the worst employers while simultaneously claiming that a Mexican American had been among her best employers. This discrepancy illustrates how the domestic worker uses the Latina/o racial marker to label an employer as bad and abusive, while she withholds the label from the employer who had helped her and who she favored. Hence, racial labels are used as informal sanctions against particular groups but not used when

recalling a positive experience, signaling the negative connotation that these racial labels have taken. Another possibility is that having a co-ethnic supervisor may be perceived as more exploitive if the worker is expecting favoritism. Furthermore, there are also Marxist notions about the relationships between co-ethnic supervisors and their co-ethnic workers. Bonacich (1993), for instance, argues that even though a small portion of the working class moves up to the class of entrepreneur, such a mobility is used as a weapon by the ruling class in capitalists societies to control labor, to foster loyalty to capitalism, and to provide legal protection for labor exploitation. Similarly, Mirande (1987:23) describes a mechanism of indirect control, *co-optation*, as a process of control by “elevating to positions of power token representatives of the oppressed group who do not really represent the interest of that group.” Thus, further analysis on the social and economic differentials by the race and ethnicity of the supervisor will help to reveal the complexities involved in Latina/o economic outcomes and essentially intra-group stratification.

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APPENDIX
INTERVIEW GUIDE

What are some of the experiences that Latina/os face in the job market?

Do you think it is more beneficial, disadvantageous, or unimportant for Latinos to work primarily with other Latinos? Why?

What are the differences and similarities between the work experiences of the different Latino sub-groups (Mexicans, Salvadorans, Puerto Ricans)?

In workplaces with mostly Latino workers, do the workers come from the various Latino backgrounds or are they from the same country of origin?

How do the labor market experiences of Latinos differ from those of Asians?

What are some of the strategies that Latina/os use to find employment? How do they differ from the strategies that Asians use?

Are there any differences in how Latino immigrants and the native-born look for employment? How about Latino men and Latinas?

Are there any differences among the Latino-subgroups in how they search for employment?

How important are social networks/connections to find employment for Latinos? How about Asians?

Do you think Latino men and women have access to the same networks?

Do immigrants and native-born Latinos have access to the same networks? How about the dark and lighter skinned Latinos?

Does the race/ethnicity of the supervisor make a difference?

In workplaces where the majority of workers are Latinos, are Latino men and women treated the same? Explain.

How about immigrants and native-born? What about between dark and light-skinned Latinos?

What do you consider equality in the workplace?

What kind of changes have you seen in the Los Angeles/Boston labor market in the last 10 years?

Is there anything else you think is important to know about Latina/o laborers that you would like to add?

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