

## **Hispanic Immigrant Occupational Mobility: Re-Examining the Role of Cities**

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### **Introduction**

#### *Fewer Immigrants, More Places*

Hispanic immigration, a vital component in the economic development of American cities is entering a period of great uncertainty. Once considered a relatively inexpensive source of low-skilled, low-wage labor, this influx of immigrants has slowed to a trickle. Hispanic migration and Mexican migration in particular, declined sharply after the economic collapse of 2007. For the first time, births accounted for a larger share of Hispanic population growth in the United States than migratory flows. This historic shift requires a re-focusing of attention to patterns of mobility for non-native born Hispanics as border crossings become much more expensive and risky. Understanding mobility as a process of *allocation*, this research seeks to examine the characteristics of metropolitan areas that attracted, retained and afforded the most upwards mobility for non-native born Hispanics in the last decade. By focusing upon metropolitan-level factors of allocation net of individual determinants such as language, education and work experience, a clearer picture of opportunity structures may begin to emerge.

The sharp decline in levels of Hispanic immigration is also occurring contemporaneously with a large-scale de-concentration of Hispanics from what is commonly referred to as “Traditional Destinations” to “New Immigrant Destinations”. Since 1950, Hispanics have accounted for a majority of the overall population growth in the United States, yet the overall composition of these flows in the last two decades has become increasingly diverse. This geographic shift has generally favored locales in the West and Northeast and less so in the South and Midwest. Furthermore, a recent estimate indicates that the Hispanic Immigrant population is more geographically concentrated than the nation’s black population (Fry 2008). Thus, we are entering a period in which Hispanic immigration is beginning to take a completely distinct form from previous eras. This shift requires a re-examination of not only the paths of opportunity for immigrants, but the implications for American society as a whole.

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## **Conceptualizing Occupational Mobility for Immigrants**

Occupational mobility, generally speaking, can be conceptualized as a socioeconomic movement either upwards (increasing occupational prestige) or downwards (decreasing occupational prestige) both inter-generational and intra-generational. Theories of the labor market and the role of human capital typically specify a “wage competition” model or an alternative “vacancy competition model” that may also have implications for migrants (A. Sorensen & Kalleberg 1981). Theories of economic restructuring are also thought to be of importance in determining occupational mobility (Myers and Cranford 1998) for workers.

The initial studies of occupational mobility view a status attainment process as being passed typically from father to son, or as a process of intra-generational mobility, formalized by Blau & Duncan (1967). Traditionally referred to as the socialization perspective, the researchers found that significant portion of the variance in occupational prestige can be explained by the variance in the father’s occupational status. Improvements upon the socialization perspective have included the usage of psychological and motivational variables put forth by Sewell and Portes (1969) to explain the variance in occupational status. Alan Kerchokoff (1976) alternatively conceptualizes mobility as not only a function of an individual’s socialization processes and the resources that matter for occupational attainment, but rather the social institutions that allocate opportunities for mobility. Immigrants have a unique set of variables that are also thought to be vitally important for status attainment. Perhaps the most important of these factors is the time since arrival (Bean and Stevens 2003) and the assimilation into what Gordon (1964) calls “the dominant culture”. Markers of assimilation are often thought to be the adoption of the English language, out-marriage rates and the movement away from the ethnic enclave in which they first migrated. Thus, successful “Anglo-conformity” will translate into greater returns on human capital characteristics over a period of time. Empirical results confirm that the wages of immigrants are sensitive to these factors (Myers & Cranford 1998, Akresh 2008) and generally imply that an initial period of “downgrading and recovery” occurs between the occupational prestige of the first job attained at arrival and subsequent jobs.

## **Why Cities Matter for Occupational Mobility**

Many previous studies have argued that the influx of immigrants into the industrial sectors of large cities has helped to stabilize employment. Immigrants provide a much more flexible labor force than native born residents, and the growth of the immigrant population adds to the demand for consumer goods that can be produced locally (Davis 1987, Sassen 1988, Soja 1989). This framework views migration as a self-sustaining process by which immigrants initially replace labor in the service sector and subsequently create a positive independent impact on the local economy when the level of migration reaches a critical mass.

Given the nature of the “new” economy, newly arrived immigrants often work in the lowest quality jobs, usually because of their lesser skills (Waldinger 2001). Migrants also tend to spatially cluster in a few select geographical areas, disproportionately adding to the availability of labor within these lowest deciles of job quality. While this is not a

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negative phenomenon itself, many researchers have studied the effects of such a glut of labor on the wages on the lower-skilled employment trends of African Americans (Bean and Bell-Rose 1999), finding that migrants do tend to depress the earnings opportunities of those native individuals with a high school education or less. Despite these findings, immigrants still earn only sixty to seventy percent of the wages of Anglo-Americans and have substantially lower levels of education. This approach to understanding the relationship between migration and the structure of the economy offers opportunities to understand the aggregate effects of migration on local economies and cities. Furthermore, the structure of the economy has also been linked to macro-level processes (Mouw 2010; Kim and Sakamoto 2008; Wright and Dwyer 2003), highlighting the role that differences between occupations play in generating wage inequality.

The way that immigrants experience this new economic structure varies significantly by the city in which they chose to live. While a great deal of attention has been focused upon the positive aspects of the increasing diversity of immigrant destinations, I posit that such places are devoid of any real opportunities for advancement because of the lack of economic diversity. Immigrants in cities with much more diverse economic structures should provide significantly better opportunities for advancement because of greater returns on human capital investments (i.e. education and work experience). While non-traditional destinations may offer a better initial quality of life and lower levels of segregation, over time immigrants in cities with more dynamic economic structures will advance at a higher rate.

## **Objectives**

What is the occupational structure of Non-Native born Hispanics? How does this vary by metropolitan type?

What types of metropolitan areas attracted, retained and afforded the most upwards occupational mobility for Hispanics in the last decade?

## **Methods & Data**

Data for this project comes from two primary sources, (1) the 2000 decennial census and (2) the five year 2010 American Community survey estimates. Both include weighted estimates of industry, occupation and residence for Native-born and Foreign-born Hispanics. Regardless of employment status, those individuals aged 18 to 64 were included in the preliminary analyses to determine levels of immigrant skills prior to the analysis of diversity and advancement. Non-Native born and native-born Hispanics were included in the analyses, with the latter being used as the primary reference group.

### *Types of Metropolitan Areas*

Following similar logic to a recent analysis of immigrant skills (Hall, Singer et. al 2011), a metropolitan typology was reproduced. This includes six typologies that distinguish between varying levels of continued and historical migration. It includes the largest 100 metropolitan areas in 2000 and 2010. **Former Gateways** are cities that had

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have experienced large-scale migration in a previous historical era. **Major Continuous and Minor Continuous Gateways** are cities that have seen their share of the foreign born population grow over the prior decades. **Post-World War II Gateways** are cities that emerged during the late 1950's and early 1960's. **Emerging, Re-Emerging and Pre-Emerging Gateways** can be referred to as "New Destinations" are represent cities that have not experienced large-scale immigration until recent decades. **Low Immigration Metropolitan Areas** are areas with little to no foreign-born populations. A full list of cities and typologies is available via request.

### *Hispanic Metropolitan Occupational Concentration*

Occupation Location Quotients for Native-Born Hispanics and Foreign-Born Hispanics by Metropolitan Area Type to determine levels of employment diversity. Location Quotients compare the economic structures of the selected city typologies to the overall employment structures for both Native-Born and Foreign-Born Hispanics. In essence, it is a measure of the deviation for each grouping of cities from the expected, reference employment. A value of less than "1" indicates employment is less than expected for a particular occupation, whereas a value of exactly "1" indicates an equal proportion relative to the reference group and a value of greater than "1" indicates employment is greater than expected. While primarily used to distinguish between "Basic" and "Non-Basic" employment, this measure also serves as a functional measure of concentration and diversity for Hispanic employment. In the final analyses, a logistic regression will be used to understand the exact features of cities (population, density) are associated with the largest gains in occupational mobility.

### *Immigrant Advancement*

A Double-Cohort analysis is performed to determine between aging and duration effects for immigrants from 2000 to 2010. The variable that serves as the measure of advancement is Duncan's Socioeconomic Index (SEI), a weighted sum of occupational income and occupational education. In essence, it measures the occupational advancement (or lack thereof) of Hispanic Immigrants. This advancement is differentiated by (1) Birth Cohort and (2) Migration Cohort. The two birth cohorts include individuals aged 25 to 34 in 2000 and 35 to 44 in 2000. Migration cohorts include a measure for pre-1990s immigration and post-1990s immigration. Change is measured as the advancement over a ten year period; thus those aged 25 to 34 in the year 2000 are measured relative to the status of 35 to 44 year olds in the year 2010. Thus we can determine the duration (length of stay) effects as well as the (aging effect). This preliminary analysis does not distinguish between duration & aging effects, but the final paper will include an extended analysis by metropolitan type.

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## **Results**

### *Production, Craft and Repair Concentration in Low-Immigration Areas*

Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate the location quotients for the immigration city typologies. One of the largest increases in Hispanic Non-Native Born occupational concentration between 2000 and 2010 occurred in the Production, Craft and Repair occupations in Low-Immigration metros. These occupations include such things as mechanics, construction trades and precision production operations. While this increase was occurring, the location quotient decreased for the Managerial and Professional specialty occupations within Low-Immigration metros, albeit it remained greater than a value of “1”. This suggests that Non-Native born Hispanics in low-immigration areas have increased their share of employment in this industry relative to the national average.

### *Pre-1990 Immigrants Generally Out-Gained Immigrants during the 1990s*

In a manner consistent with the existing literature on the topic, this analysis confirms that length since arrival has a strong, positive influence on assimilation processes. More notably, immigrants who immigrated during the 1990s advanced half as fast as those who immigrated prior to the 1990s. Furthermore, when gains were segmented by metropolitan type, Post World War 2 Gateways generally indicated the highest level of advancement for those newly arrived immigrants. For those immigrants who are well established, “Low Immigration Metros” generally produced the highest socioeconomic gains whereas “Minor-Continuous” gateways showed the least gain. This also confirms the idea that immigrant replenishment may have a negative influence on mobility, especially so for those immigrants who arrived prior to 1990.

## **Conclusions**

Based upon the preliminary results produced by this analysis, this analysis suggests that cities influence patterns of occupational mobility for Hispanic Immigrants. Cities are comprised of a variety of distinct occupational structures which in turn allocate the necessary opportunities for advancement and mobility. Furthermore, preliminary results suggest a negative influence of continued migration for the mobility of well-established immigrant groups (immigrated pre-1990). Confirming prior analyses of occupational mobility, time since arrival seems to be an extremely important factor for upwards mobility. Continued research will explore these ideas further and model occupational mobility as a function of individual level and metropolitan level features.

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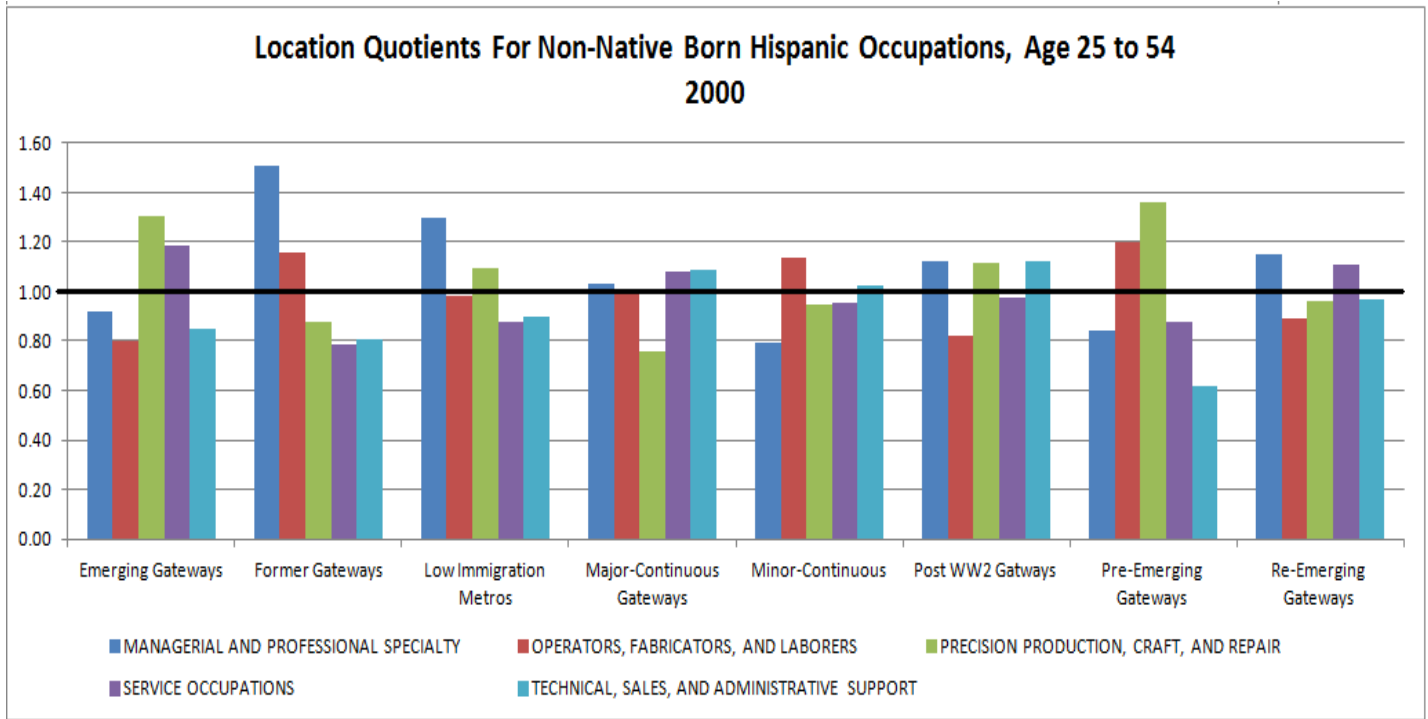
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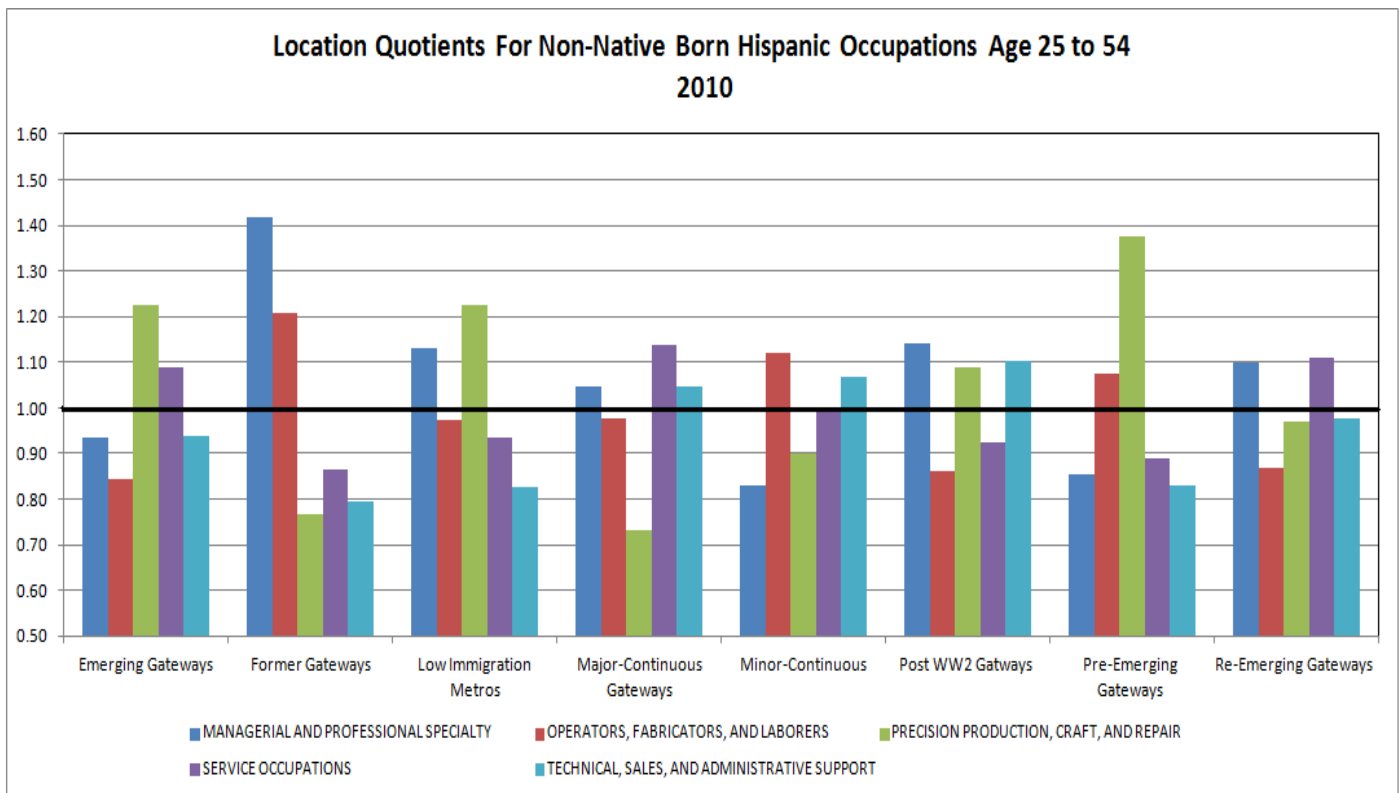
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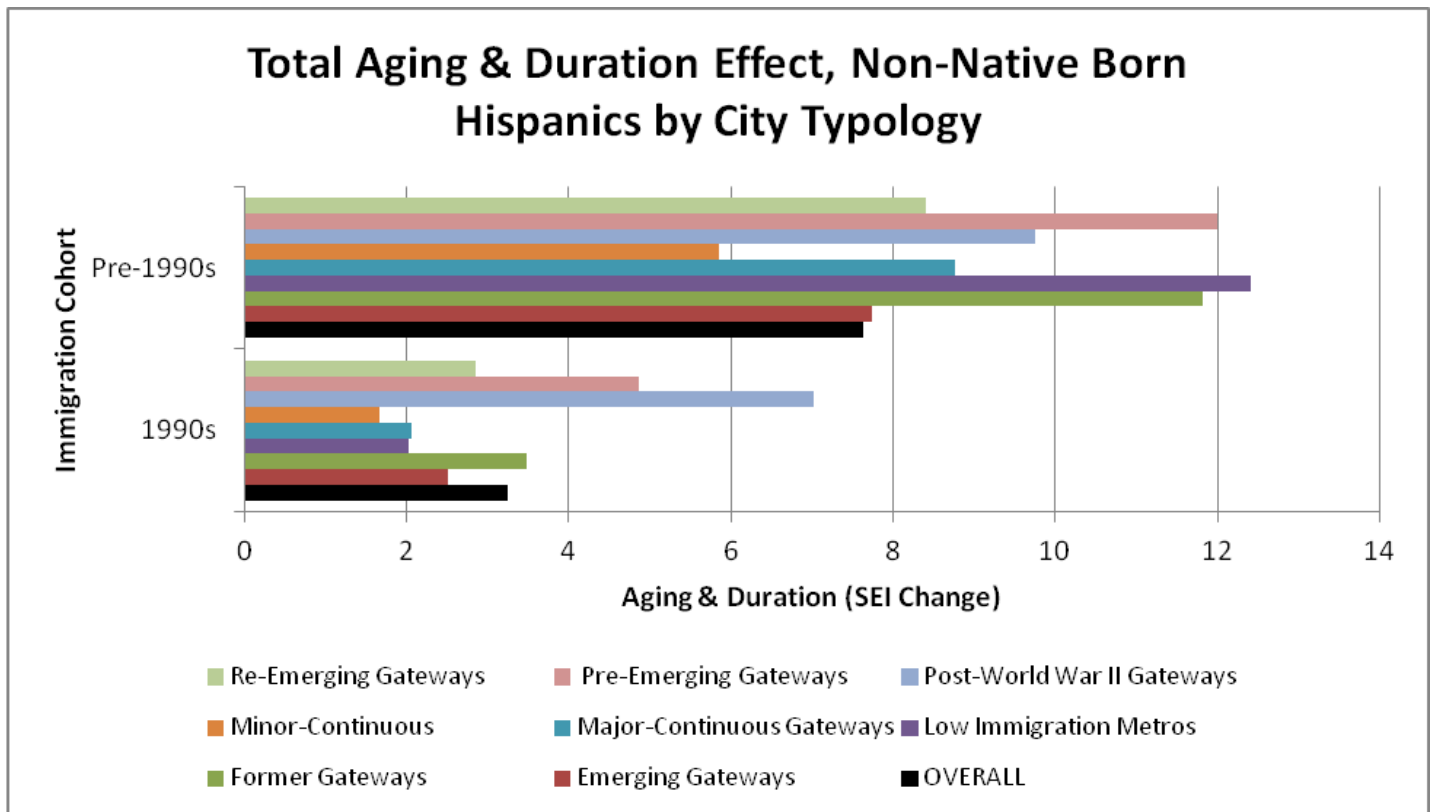
**Figure 1. Location Quotients 2000 by City Type**



**Figure 2. Location Quotients 2010**

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**Figure 3. Aging & Duration Effect by City Typology**

Duncan's Socioeconomic Index (DSI)	Avg. SEI	Avg. SEI
OVERALL		
	1990s	Pre-1990s
25 to 34, 2000 (A1)	21.01	24.88
35 to 44, 2010 (A2)	23.05	29.44
35 to 44 in 2000(B1)	21.75	24.68
45 to 54 in 2010 (B2)	22.95	27.74
<i>Immigration Cohort Change</i>	<b>+3.24</b>	<b>+7.63</b>

**Table 1. Duration & Aging Effect for Select Migration and Birth Cohorts**

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