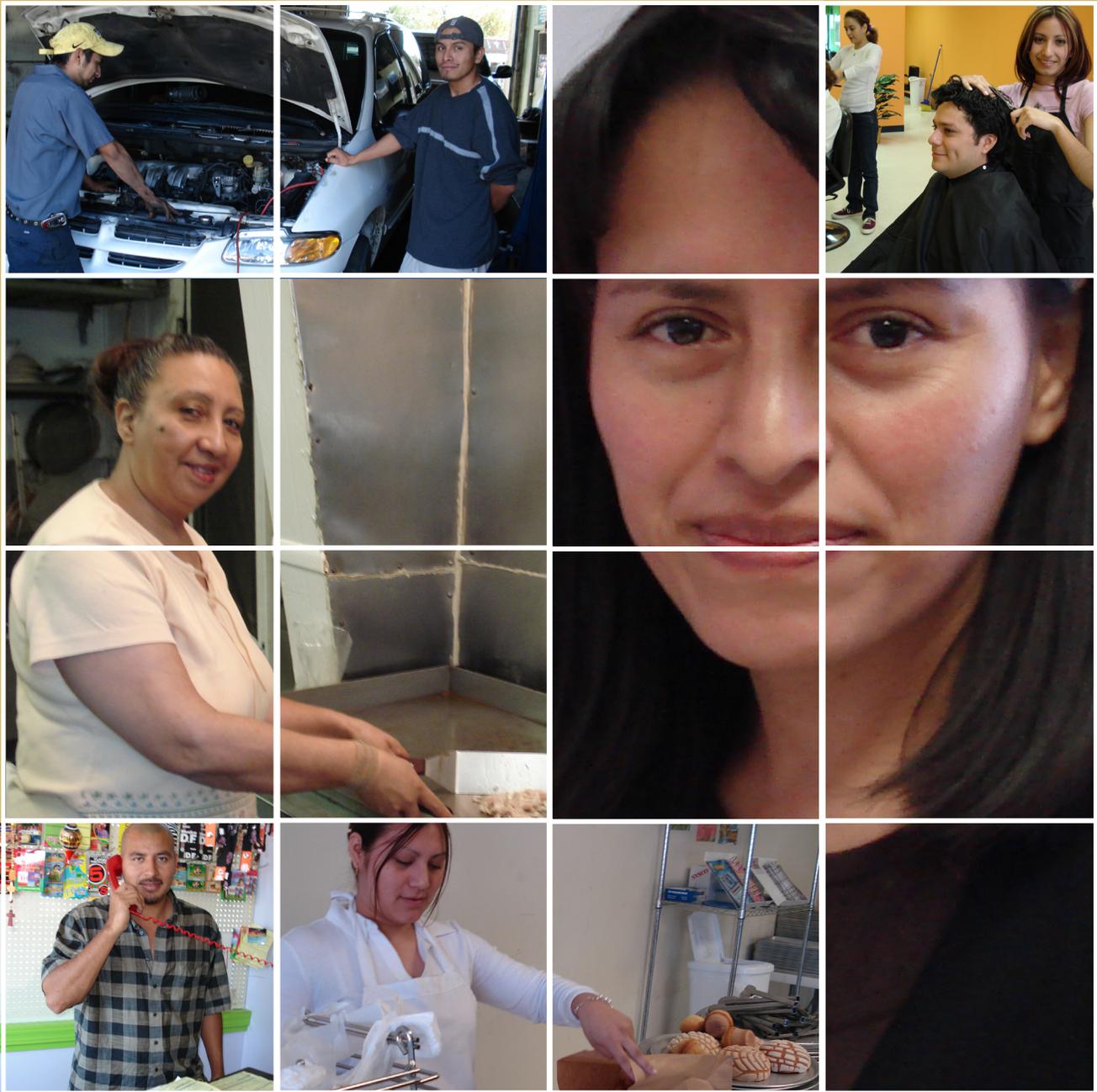




MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA: A PROFILE



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Cover photos: Craig Stinson

 ABOUT THE STUDY

Recognizing the significance of the growing Latino presence in South Carolina, a research team led by Dr. Elaine Lacy conducted interviews with Mexican immigrants, the largest component in the Latino population, in the Upstate, Midlands and Low Country of South Carolina between 2003 and 2005. The growing Latino population also led to the creation in 2004 of a research group at the University of South Carolina, the Consortium for Latino Immigration Studies, to examine various aspects of this growing population. The Consortium, housed in the Arnold School of Public Health at USC, helped facilitate this study.

The major aims of the study were to provide a baseline profile of Mexican immigrants in South Carolina, and to establish a record of their migration patterns, reasons for moving to South Carolina, length of time in the state, demographic features, economic, social and cultural behaviors, and future plans. We also wished to hear, in their own words, more about the immigrants' experiences and major concerns. Another goal of the study is to provide information about this population that can help shape public policy.

Most of the respondents in the study were selected using the snowball method of sampling. We located some subjects by going door to door in mobile home parks, others through churches, in tiendas, English language classes, or through other subjects' social networks. Many subjects were interviewed in *consulados móviles*, "mobile consulates" held at least four times annually in South Carolina by the Consulado General de México representing the Carolinas (based in Raleigh, NC). On these occasions, Mexican nationals come to the designated location to obtain various types of documentation including copies of birth certificates, passports, or most commonly, to secure a *matrícula consular*, a photo ID card that will enable them to open bank accounts, among other uses. We interviewed subjects in consulados móviles in Greenville, Columbia, Lexington, Hilton Head, and Charleston, SC over the course of two years. Respondents' counties of residence include Aiken, Anderson, Beaufort, Charleston, Dorchester, Greenville, Jasper, Kershaw, Lexington, Newberry, Pickens, Richland, Saluda, and Spartanburg.

The research team interviewed 200 subjects age 18 and over. The method of obtaining information was through face-to-face, in-depth interviews conducted in Spanish. Subjects were asked a series of 69 open-ended questions, and each interview was tape recorded and transcribed by Spanish speakers. The questions asked are noted in Appendix I. After discarding some interviews because of unclear or damaged tape recordings, missing questions and answers, or other, similar reasons, 181 interviews remained. These provide the basis of this report.

CONTEXTUALIZING MEXICAN IMMIGRATION

History of Mexican Immigration to the U.S.

Since the late 19th century a number of push and pull factors have shaped Mexican migration between the United States and Mexico. Mexican migrants made their way into the U.S. in relatively small numbers until the early 20th century, when almost one million Mexican refugees crossed the border to escape the destruction of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. During World War I and throughout the 1920s, largely in response to an official agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments, Mexican workers continued to cross the border to fill jobs predominantly in the southwestern U.S., mostly in agriculture, railroad construction, and mining. Over time, many of these workers began taking jobs in urban areas including Chicago and New York. By the 1940s, the Mexican worker recruitment program was reinstated as large numbers of U.S. workers joined the armed forces. This revised “Bracero Program” (1942-1964) resulted in the arrival of 4.6 million Mexican workers to help U.S. growers and other employers fill jobs mainly in the western U.S. These programs contributed to what some scholars have called the “revolving door” of Mexican migration to the U.S. to satisfy labor demands and to help meet the economic needs of impoverished Mexicans, especially in rural western Mexico (Lacy, 1988; Canales, 2003).

These flows of Mexican refugees and workers into the U.S. in the 20th century remained unrestricted until 1965, when the Immigration and Nationality Act set limits on the number of immigrants that could legally enter the country from Mexico and

other Latin American nations (setting a 120,000 cap for the western hemisphere). Mexican immigration in the 1970s and 1980s was largely temporary and of short duration. (Bustamante, 1997, Gástelum, 1991) Since the late 1980s, however, Mexican migration to the U.S. has increased dramatically, thanks to economic push factors in Mexico, labor needs in the U.S., and provisions of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). A recent report on Mexican migration to the U.S. termed the flow “one of the largest mass movements of workers and families in the modern age” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004:1) The 2000 Census revealed that the U.S. foreign-born population increased by 11.3 million in the 1990s, and Mexican immigrants accounted for 43 percent of that growth (Census 2000).

A major factor in this movement is the spread of global capitalism, which has increased the flow of goods, money and people across international borders worldwide (Tehrani, 2004). Additional critical factors driving Mexican emigration is their economic crisis of the 1980s, devaluation of the peso in 1994, and neo-liberal economic policies that since the 1980s have adversely affected Mexico’s economy, leading to high rates of unemployment. After adjusting for inflation, Mexico’s per capita GDP since the 1980s has grown at only 0.7 percent, which is less than a third of that of the U.S. (De la Garza and Szekely, 1997; Durand et al., 1999, 2001; Alba, 2002, Escobar Latapí and Martin, 2006; Portes, 2006). States in southern Mexico have been especially hard hit in recent decades. The Mexican government’s Marginalization Index, which

reports on Mexican communities' education and income levels as well as basic goods and services such as housing, potable water, indoor plumbing, and electricity, indicates that the index of marginalization in the southern Mexican states increased since the 1990s. Recently, municipalities (similar to counties in the U.S. states) with high to very high levels of marginalization include 94 out of 111 municipalities in Chiapas, 59 out of 75 in Guerrero, 431 of 570 in Oaxaca, 141 of 217 in Puebla, and 130 of 207 in Veracruz (Consejo Nacional de la Población, 2002).

Finally, while many Mexican migrants, both authorized and unauthorized, have historically returned to Mexico either periodically or permanently, the percentage of those coming and going has decreased since the 1980s. This is the result of a shift out of seasonal agricultural work into more permanent employment in the U.S., the amnesty and family reunification aspects of IRCA, which “anchored families in the U.S.” (Escobar Latapí and Martin, 2006; Durand et al., 1999), and increased border enforcement, which makes return trips to Mexico more risky and expensive.

New Immigrant Destinations

An important difference in post-1980s Mexican immigration and that of earlier periods is that recent immigrants are becoming more dispersed, moving into areas of the U.S. outside the traditional Mexican immigrant gateways of Texas, California, Chicago, and New York. Since the early 1990s, six states in the U.S. Southeast (Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) have experienced an increase in Latino immigration in general that exceeds that of the national increase: between 1990 and 2005 (last available Census data), the Latino population in these states increased by an average of 447 percent while increasing by 85 percent for the U.S. as a whole (See Table 1). The Census Bureau reports that 73 percent of Latinos in these six states were of Mexican origin (compared to 63 percent for the nation as a whole).

Table 1. Hispanic Population For Six Southern States, 1990-2005

STATE	1990	2000	2005	CHANGE 1990-2005
Arkansas	19,876	86,866	126,932	539%
Alabama	24,629	75,830	99,040	302%
Georgia	108,922	435,277	625,028	474%
North Carolina	76,726	378,963	533,087	595%
South Carolina	30,551	95,076	135,041	342%
Tennessee	32,741	123,838	172,704	428%

Source: Census 1990, 2000, American Community Survey data 2005

Table 2. Hispanic Population as Percentage of Total Population, 1990-2005

STATE	% Hispanic 1990	% Hispanic 2000	% Hispanic 2005
Arkansas	0.09	3	5
Alabama	0.06	2	2
Georgia	2	5	7
North Carolina	1	5	6
South Carolina	0.09	2	3
Tennessee	0.07	2	3

Source: Census 1990, 2000, American Community Survey data 2005

Why the Southeast?

Latino immigrants entered the Southeast in large numbers in the 1990s for a variety of reasons, the most salient being economic factors. The South’s dynamic economy, newly diversified, proved extremely robust in the 1990s, providing jobs at a rate that exceeded that of the nation as a whole. Further, in the face of increasing global economic competition, some southeastern companies made the strategic decision to compete by remaining in the region and hiring low-cost immigrant workers (Schunk and Woodward, 2000; Kochhar, 2005; Murphy et al., 2001).

Some Mexican immigrants to the Southeast arrive from traditional Latino settlement areas in the U.S. (such as California, Texas, New York and Chicago), “pushed” by competition over jobs and housing, and by increasing anti-immigrant sentiment. Further, IRCA played a role as well: the act legalized 2.3 million previously unauthorized Mexican migrants living in the U.S. and allowed them to send for immediate family members, and as traditional migrant receiving areas became overcrowded, newly legalized Mexican immigrants felt the freedom to relocate to new areas of the country (Durand, 2000; Johnson-Webb, 2002; Kochhar et al., 2005; Hernández-León and Zúñiga, 2002; Murphy et al., 2001;

Odem and Lacy, 2005; Schmidt, 2003). Many of the newly legal immigrants and their family members relocated to the Southeast, drawn by jobs such as those provided by Olympic facilities construction for the 1996 games in Atlanta, the region’s construction boom in general, and by poultry processing and agricultural jobs (Mohl, 2005).

The Southeast’s booming economy also resulted in the permanent settlement of former Mexican agricultural migrant workers in the region. Since the 1980s, migrant agricultural workers, many of them of Mexican origin, have traveled through the Southeast as part of east coast migrant worker streams, and with increasing job opportunities many of these former migrants “settled out” to take year-round jobs in the region (Odem and Lacy, 2005).

As Mexican migrants moved into the region from other states or settled out of migrant streams to take jobs and enjoy the relative tranquility and lower cost of living the Southeast offers, word spread through social networks to communities in Mexico where jobs are scarce or wages are low. Trans-border networks of job recruiters and labor brokers also help create ties between Mexican and U.S. southeastern communities. As

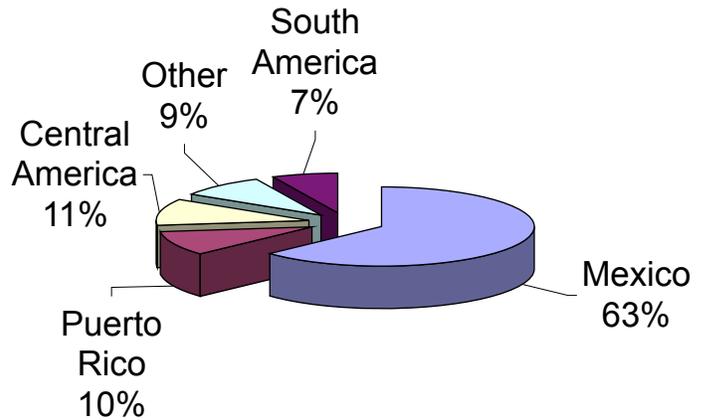
one group of migration scholars put it, “Residents of these Mexican [sending] communities often have better information about the availability of certain types of U.S. jobs than do local U.S. residents.” (Escobar Latapí et al., 1997).

Mexican Immigration to South Carolina

While the Latino population in South Carolina has not grown as rapidly or reached the same levels as those in North Carolina and Georgia, South Carolina has remained among the U.S. states with continued rapid increases in this population cohort. The Census Bureau estimates that the Mexican-born in South Carolina increased by over 600 percent between 1990 and 2005 (from roughly 11,000 to 85,000). According to the 2005 American Community Survey, Mexican-born individuals comprise 63 percent of South Carolina’s Hispanic/Latino population. (See Figure 1.)

It should be noted that for a variety of reasons the Hispanic population is undercounted by census enumerators. The most common factors associated with undercount of Hispanics in the census include complex household makeup or cultural differences in defining households, individual/family mobility, legal (authorized vs. unauthorized) status, fear or distrust of government, and language barriers (Davis, 1992; Edmonston, 2002; Romero, 1992). Given the larger percentage of those of Mexican origin within the Hispanic/Latino cohort in the U.S., their household characteristics, and the fact that their numbers include a high percentage of unauthorized persons, we should assume that the Mexican immigrant population is far larger than the Census reports.

Figure 1: Country of Origin, Hispanic Population in South Carolina 2005



 **MIGRATION PATTERNS**

Migration and Social Capital

Most respondents in this study originated in states in southern and southeastern Mexico. Over one-half (54 percent) arrived from the states of Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Puebla. These states represent new “sending” states in Mexico, states whose rates of out-migration have increased dramatically in the last decade as result of deteriorating economic conditions (Alba, 2002; Pickard, 2006; Latapí and Martin, 2006). Other states in the Southeastern U.S. are witnessing similar migration patterns: the majority of Mexican migrants to North Carolina, for example, arrive from southern Mexico rather than from the traditional sending states in central and western Mexico (Kasarda and Johnson, 2006).

Another significant finding is that the majority (65 percent) of Mexican immigrants in the study came to South Carolina directly from Mexico. Another 14 percent spent a year or less in another

U.S. state before relocating to South Carolina, some of them having lived in another state only a few weeks or months.²

This pattern differs from that in North Carolina and Georgia, at least for those arrivals who came in the 1990s. In those states, the majority of Mexican immigrants arrived from other U.S. states in the 1990s (Kasarda and Johnson, 2005; Johnson 2002; Zúñiga, 2005).

These new migratory patterns have implications for Mexican immigrants. Potential emigrants in traditional sending states in central and western Mexico can expect to gain information and support (referred to as social capital) from family, friends and neighbors who have migrated to the U.S. (Massey and Aysa, 2005; Lozano Ascencio, 2002). Social capital plays an important role in migrants' decisions to migrate and in deciding where to relocate. It also greatly reduces the risks and costs associated with transnational migration.

Further, social capital acquired once in the U.S. affects immigrants' rate of integration into new communities. Migrants coming from new sending areas and/or arriving without having spent time in other U.S. states have accumulated less social capital (Leach, 2005; Hernández-León and Zuñiga, 2002; Dunn Aragonés Shivers, 2005; Lozano Ascencio, 2002).

In addition, unlike migrants who settle in Texas, California, Chicago, and other traditional immigrant gateways, Mexican immigrants do not find in South Carolina a multi-generational ethnic population in place that can provide social networks (from which one derives social capital). Accumulation of social capital in new settlement

Figure 2: South Carolina Hispanic Population Growth by County, 1990-2005

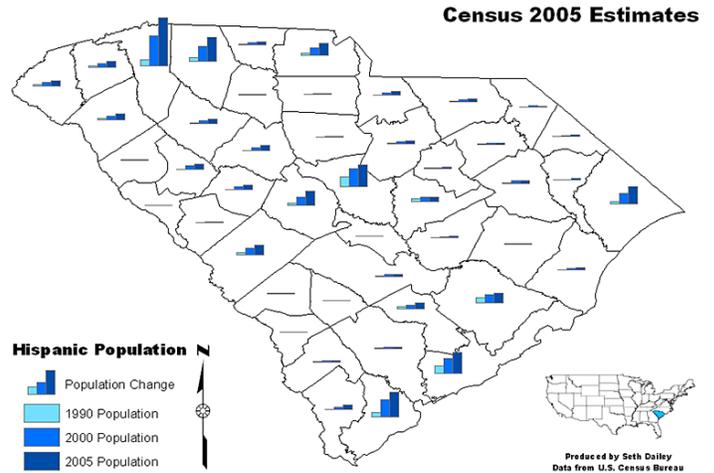
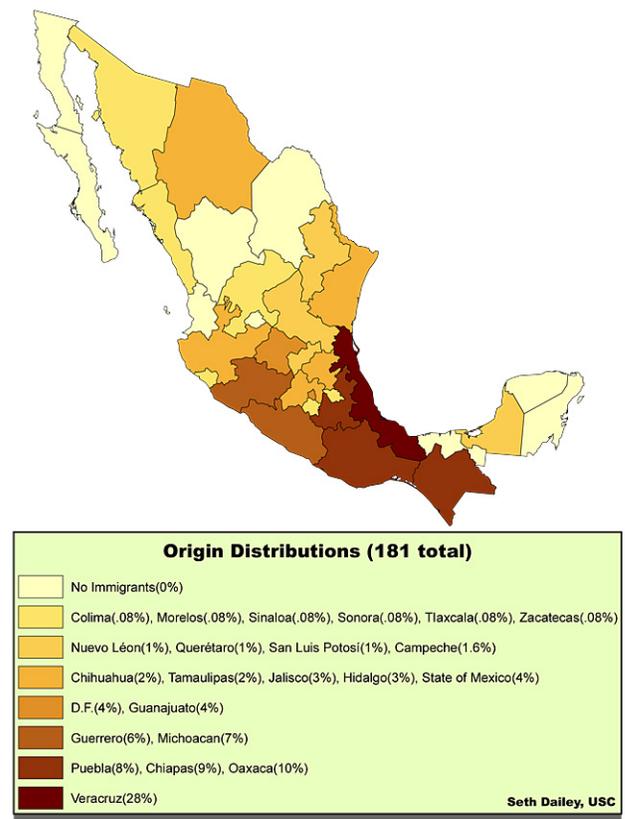


Figure 3: Mexican States Of Origin

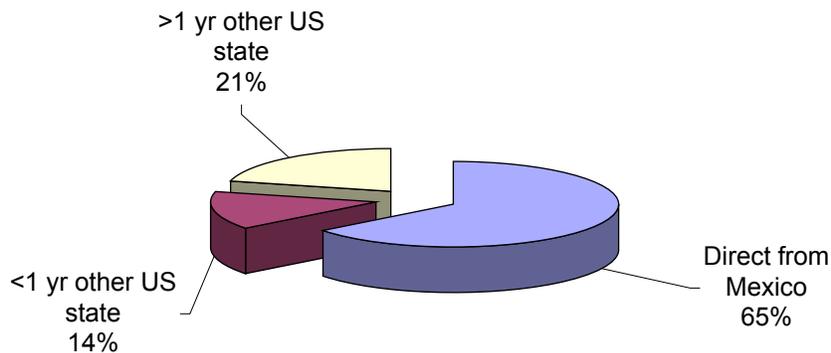


areas has proven critical in terms of social and economic mobility, educational attainment, and the ways in which new immigrants become incorporated (Hernández-León and Zúñiga, 2002).

Length of stay in the U.S. also has been shown to have a positive effect on the accumulation of social capital. In our study, respondents' average length of time in the U.S. was 4.5 years (SD 4.7), and the average number of years in South Carolina was 3.5 (SD 3.7), a relatively short time period. Length of stay also has been shown to correlate with greater socioeconomic mobility, acculturation and integration (Toussaint-Comeau, 2006; Leach, 2005; Fix and Passel, 1994).

Their migration patterns indicate that this new population cohort faces numerous challenges: most have recently left new sending areas in Mexico and are coming directly to a state without a Mexican-origin cohort already in place that could speed up processes of incorporation. They must construct social networks and locate jobs, housing, schools, churches, English-language classes, transportation, and health care facilities on their own. Further, they must learn new cultural practices and laws. Many respondents in this study expressed the difficulties they and others they know have had in gathering information.

Figure 4. Migration Routes To SC



Why Leave Mexico?

While virtually all respondents in this study (95 percent) explained that they left Mexico to improve their economic situation, some immigrants' pre-migration situation appears to have been more desperate than others.

This is particularly the case in states such as Veracruz, where the collapse of the coffee and sugar industries in the last two decades along with other economic woes resulting from trade liberalization have resulted in severe economic deprivation. According to the latest "Marginalization Index," which was based on the 2000 federal census, Veracruz has the fourth highest rate of marginalization in the country. The result has been a flood of emigration from the state, particularly of those who had worked in the devastated agricultural sector. In 1992, Veracruz ranked 30th of the 31 states and the Federal District in Mexico in the rate of out migration, but in 2002 it was fourth in the country (Pérez, 2003).

A 50-year-old male from Veracruz in South Carolina just over a year said, *"Our country is . . . very humble. There we make 70 pesos (\$.70 an hour), here we make \$6.00. . . . That's why we have to have the courage to come here, because [in Mexico] there isn't a life, you have to make a change to break the chains of poverty."*

Areas other than

those in southeastern Mexico such as Guanajuato, Mexico City, and San Luis Potosí have also suffered economic crises since the late 1990s, and their out-migration rates have doubled as result (Escobar Latapí and Martin, 2006). In South Carolina, a 33-year-old woman from San Luis Potosí said, “[I left Mexico] because in my town we are very poor, we don’t have work, we don’t have anything. I worked making tortillas and they paid me I think 12 pesos a week [about \$1.20].”

A number of respondents said their decision to migrate was based on a desire to save money for a better future for themselves and their children. A 40-year-old male immigrant said, “In Chiapas there aren’t economic resources at all. We came here to get ahead. . . to have something for the children and their education. This is why we came, because here there are more opportunities.” Some respondents said they came to earn money to start businesses, buy land and/or build homes back in Mexico. A woman from Mexico City who is living in Beaufort voiced her dream this way: “I’m thinking of staying here awhile to get some money together to be able to start a business [in Mexico] because I want to be near my family. I would like to start a clothing store because my mother had a clothing store 30 years ago. I would like that.”

“We need help learning about services, doctors, cars, language. If you need information and don’t speak English, you need someone who is bilingual to get information from, to find work, to help with problems with the car or your house. You can go to a place where Mexicans live to ask, but there isn’t a place where you can get more information.”

Male immigrant from Chihuahua, age 18, living in Saluda

Among the most common reasons for emigrating is the need or desire to help family members in Mexico with basic expenses such as food, housing, health care, and education. A 28-year-old man now living in Lexington said he tried to return to Veracruz to live at one point (after working in South Carolina for about a year), but “I couldn’t adjust: the work wasn’t the same, I earned a little more here and I [had been sending] money to my mother, for example, every two weeks. I sent it for her food, what little I could. . . I also [sent] a little to my mother-in-law . . . so I couldn’t go [back] to Mexico because if I earn less I can’t help them in the same way.” A

32-year-old Saluda resident said he is in the U.S. to help support his family: he sends \$600 a month to his mother and brothers in Mexico City to help with basic expenses and education.

Why South Carolina?

Almost two-thirds of those in this study (62 percent) came to South Carolina because they had friends or family in the state, indicating the importance of social networks in migration decision-making. Many said they had heard

“You have to send [money] to the family, a lot or a little or what you can, but you have to send [some].”

Male immigrant from Veracruz, age 55, living in Beaufort

about jobs in South Carolina from friends and/or family already here, or from friends or neighbors in Mexico. A man from Chiapas who had been in South Carolina for three years at the time he was interviewed reported, *“Eight or ten years ago some friends came here to South Carolina from Chiapas and they told us that it’s peaceful, and that work is easier. Because of that, we came here.”*

Most of those who relocated to South Carolina from other states came at least in part because they had friends or family here already. A woman from Veracruz said, *“[I am in South Carolina] because my brothers helped me come here. It’s much better [here] than in Texas. There I didn’t have family.”* A 23-year-old man from Puebla who moved here after spending two months in Texas with family members said he did so *“because I wanted to see my [oldest] brother . . . and I liked it better here.”*

Roughly one-third of respondents who relocated to South Carolina from other states said they chose South Carolina because of the lower cost of living, greater availability of or better paying jobs, better climate, and/or relative safety/tranquility. Several respondents said the lower crime rates and lack of gangs in South Carolina gave them a feeling of security.



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Respondents’ Gender and Age

Sixty-nine percent of respondents in our sample were males. This is similar to Census data for

Mexican residents of South Carolina, which reports that 64.7 percent of Hispanics in the state are males (2005 American Community Survey data). The median age among males in this study (all of whom are age 18 and over) was 29 (SD 10.5) and among females, 30 (SD 10.1). This is older than the national average for newly arriving Hispanic immigrants: the Census reported the average age of Mexican

“[In Mexico] it’s difficult, there is no money, you earn too little to help your family. We decided to come here for a better future. [There] if you get sick there is no money for a cure. My mother died because we didn’t have money, and 9 brothers were left with only a father. This is why we came here.”

Female immigrant from Oaxaca, age 25, living in Columbia

immigrants at entry into the U.S. as 21 (Census 2000). Still, immigrants in this study were much younger than both South Carolinians age 18 and over and the U.S. population age 18 and over as a whole, which was 43 (Census 2000). As studies elsewhere have demonstrated, the relative youth and resulting lower mortality rate, along with higher fertility rates among Mexican immigrants, results in greater population growth in that cohort than among the white or African American populations (Kasarda and Johnson, 2006).

Education Levels

The median education level among the Mexican immigrant sample was 9 years for both males and females. This is comparable to the national average, which in 2000 was 8.8 years for Mexican immigrant males and 8.7 years for females (Census 2000). However, the education

level among the South Carolina study group is higher (at a median 9 years for both males and females) than among all Latinos in a North Carolina study, which reports a median 7.5 years (Kasarda and Johnson, 2006). Further, more Mexican immigrants in the South Carolina sample had attended or completed high school than had those in the Pew study of Mexican immigrants nationwide (December 2005). Seventy-two percent of Mexican immigrants in the Pew study had not attended or graduated from high school (vs. 61 percent in South Carolina). Further, only 6 percent in the Pew study had attended some college, but in South Carolina 10 percent had done so. One possible reason for these differences is that many of South Carolina's immigrants are older and better educated people displaced by deteriorating economic conditions in southeastern Mexico.

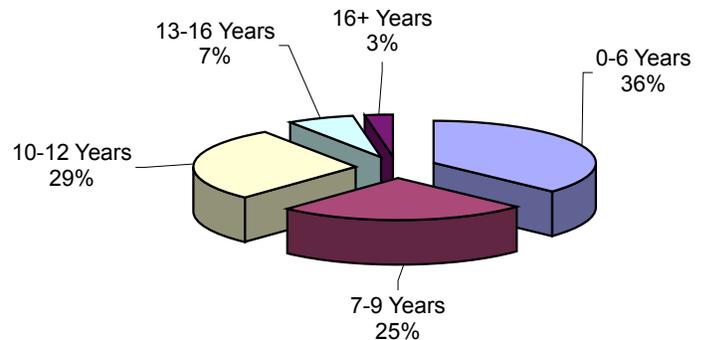
Family Characteristics

Over half (56 percent) of males in this study were married, and more than half (53 percent) of these married men brought their wives to South Carolina. Family reunification increased with IRCA in the late 1980s, and has continued since that time. In addition, tighter border security after September 11, 2001, has contributed to the number of Mexican immigrants who choose to bring wives and children here rather than to repeatedly cross the border. Only 19 percent of women in the study are unmarried. The remainder are either married or live in *unión libre*, or common-law arrangements.

Of married Mexican immigrants, over half (54 percent) have households that include children in South Carolina. Almost one-quarter of married respondents had children born in the U.S. About one-third of married respondents left children with family members in Mexico, and some families (4

percent) have one or more children in Mexico and one or more children here as well. Just over one-third (37 percent) have children in South Carolina schools.

Figure 5.
Educational Attainment



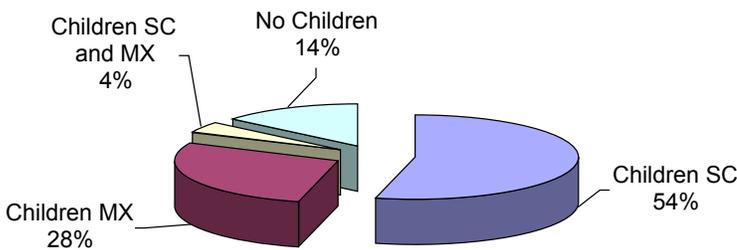
Jobs and Income

Most participants in this study work in four economic sectors: construction, restaurants, manufacturing, and service industries. Poultry processing and landscaping are the other most commonly held jobs.

Only .02 percent of all respondents in this study described themselves as unemployed, although some women (11 percent of all women) who were home makers said they would take a job to supplement the family income if they could find one. Lack of English skills seemed to be a major factor in finding employment for these women.

Fifty-four percent of women in the study were employed. Most (56 percent) employed women worked in restaurants or domestic work (which included housecleaning, elder and child care).

Figure 6.
Family Characteristics



Respondents' earnings vary dramatically. Those in the construction industry (45 percent of the total work force) reported an average monthly income of \$1,350, although this amount varies with weather conditions, among other factors. Restaurant workers' average monthly income was slightly higher, \$1,450, and those in manufacturing reported average earnings of about \$1,200 per month. Those in service jobs such as laundry and domestic work, most of whom are women, reported the lowest average income, close to \$800 per month, and those in professional positions (such as social worker or teacher) earn an average of \$2,600 per month. Average monthly income for poultry plant workers is \$1,100. Women's total average monthly income was far lower than that of males: \$947 for women vs. \$1,395 for men.

Even though wages in South Carolina are as much as ten times higher than most respondents could earn in Mexico, the cost of living in the U.S. is also much higher, and many Mexican immigrant workers live in near-poverty conditions, especially if they are remitting funds to assist

family members in Mexico. Job insecurity proves problematic also: several respondents hold more than one job, in part because their construction jobs are temporary or their earnings in one job (such as hotel or office cleaning) is too low. If the recent slowing of construction jobs in the state and region and region continue, more may seek other types of jobs.

Twenty-one percent of respondents said they considered low wages, job insecurity or the lack

Figure 7.
Male Occupations

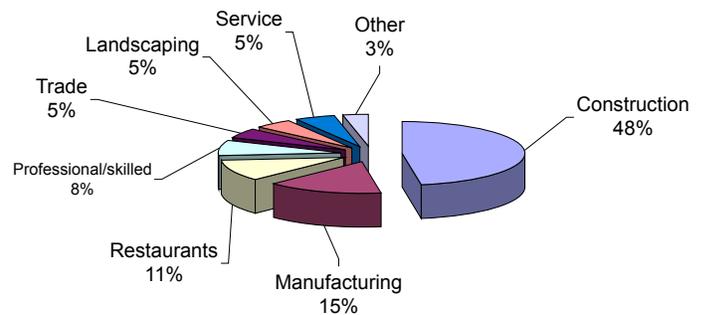
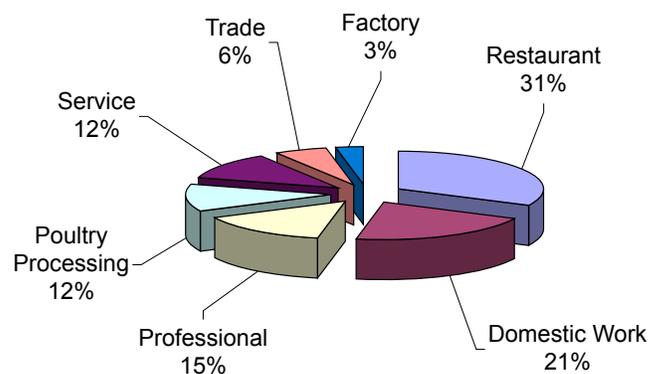


Figure 8.
Female Occupations



of jobs the most difficult problem they faced. A 33-year-old woman from San Luis Potosí said

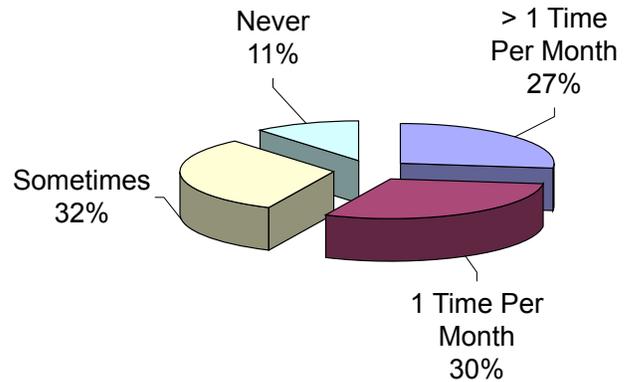
her husband came to South Carolina (and she followed) because “*they told us you can earn a lot here. That’s a lie,*” she said, despite the hard work immigrants do.

A number of respondents who held professional jobs in Mexico are now engaged in wage labor positions in South Carolina, demonstrating the decline in some Mexican economic sectors. In fact, unemployment rates in Mexico are highest among the most educated. A former nurse from Chiapas and an accountant from Guanajuato now wait tables in Columbia restaurants. A former executive secretary from Chiapas works in a poultry processing plant in Saluda, an engineer from Queretaro now works in landscaping in the upstate. A business owner and a teacher from Veracruz are now working construction jobs. Many have had to learn new skills: former soldiers, a shepherd, a butcher, and a picker of coffee beans are now working in the construction industry. A soccer referee and a factory worker now work in restaurant kitchens. But many others brought skills with them: carpenters, bricklayers, and other skilled construction workers are employing their talents in South Carolina. Another former butcher from Michoacán works in a Columbia restaurant kitchen, and a man from Veracruz who worked in maquiladoras in Mexico now works in a factory in Newberry. A man who remodeled homes in Tamaulipas owns his own house painting company in Beaufort County.

Remittances

Over half (57 percent) of immigrants in this study who were willing to disclose the amount of remittances they send back to Mexico said that they send money at least once per month. Another 20 percent send money back on an irregular basis, and 11 percent say they do not send funds back at all.

Figure 9.
Frequency of Remittances



The average monthly amount returned to Mexico by those who send back funds at least once per month was \$435. Those remitting the largest portion of their income were married men supporting wives and children in Mexico, or single males helping parents in Mexico. This average is higher than that reported in other studies (U.S. Congressional Budget Office, 2005; Suro, 2004; Woodward, 2005).

Studies elsewhere have demonstrated that length of time in the U.S. affects remittance flows: those in the U.S. longer send less back to Mexico (Durand et al., 1996; Orozco, 2002). The average length of time the latter group has been in the U.S. is 9 years, which is considerably longer than the overall average length of time in the U.S. for this study population (4.5 years). Still, length of time in the U.S. does correlate to reduced remittances among this study group: half (N=11) of those respondents who have been in the U.S. 9 years or more only occasionally or never send remittances, while 73 percent of those in the U.S. less than 9 years regularly remit funds.

The majority (81 percent) of those who remit earnings to Mexico reported that the money is

used to meet basic expenses or pay off debts. These basic expenses sometimes include the cost of educating siblings or immigrants’ own children who remained in Mexico. For some, at least a portion of the funds are being saved for higher education in Mexico, or to build or remodel a home. Some of the funds (5 percent) reportedly go toward medical care of family members.

Housing

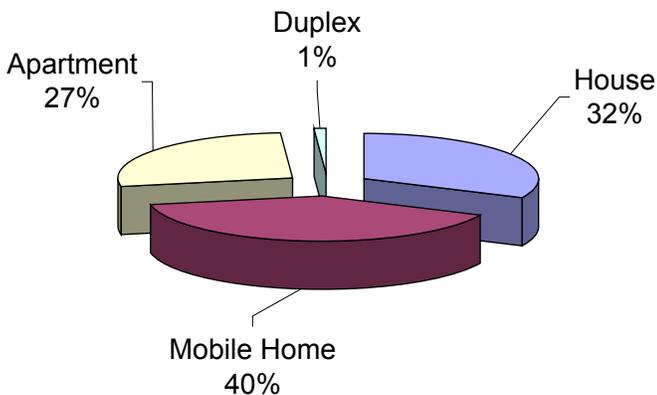
Sixty-seven percent of the study population live in apartments or mobile homes, usually sharing that living space with others outside immediate family members (73 percent do so). While 32 percent report living in homes, only 46 percent of those are single family units.

Housing conditions are often less than desirable. A number of respondents described their dwellings as too small, in disrepair, or in some

Some respondents described their mobile home parks as unsafe, saying that robberies were common. A man from Chiapas who lives in a mobile home park in Columbia said that when they call the police after being robbed it takes up to two hours for the police to arrive.

South Carolina’s state government officials have long recognized the state’s critical shortage of safe, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families. (SC State House, 2006). The majority (73 percent) of respondents in this study share housing, and overcrowded conditions are common. Less than one-third live in single-family units, and of the remaining two-thirds, well over half live in units with four to six people. Many communities where Mexican immigrants have settled lack affordable, safe housing stock. Some of the respondents interviewed in Saluda, for example, live in North Augusta and commute to Saluda because they cannot find adequate housing in Saluda.

**Figure 10.
Housing Type**



other way unacceptable. One man reported that the mobile home his family of four shares with two other people is infested with roaches and mice, and has no hot water. When they complained to the owner, he threatened to report them to immigration authorities. Safety concerns in mobile home parks arose in several interviews.

Most (80 percent) of participants in this study indicated that they lived in mobile home parks, apartment buildings or neighborhoods where other Latinos lived. Historically, such enclave behavior is typical of first-generation immigrants, particularly those in the U.S. a short time (Massey, 1985; Logan, Zhang and Alba, 2002). Typically, these are transitional neighborhoods for new immigrants as they become incorporated into U.S. culture and society. As research elsewhere has demonstrated, residents of such neighborhoods “search for areas with more amenities as soon as their economic situations improve, their outlooks broaden, and they learn to navigate daily life in a more mainstream setting” (Logan, Zhang and Alba, 299-300). This study confirms that length of time in the U.S. serves as an important factor



"[Our mobile home park is] a place where the poorest people live. The trailers don't get the maintenance they need. They are very neglected, deteriorating, and old. So they have the cheapest rent. You try to survive, to save money, so you have to live in the oldest trailers. That's why I say it's a place for the poorest people. . . if you see them they're the ones with the most dents."

**Male immigrant from Veracruz,
age 35, living in Columbia**

in processes of incorporation. Respondents in this study who were not part of ethnic enclaves have been in the U.S. an average of 7 years (SD 6.8) as opposed to the average 4.5 years in the country for the entire study population.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Marginalization

Most Mexican immigrants in this study live on the margins, both in economic and social/cultural terms. Low wages and/or job insecurity, lack of affordable and safe housing, lack of transportation, discrimination, language barriers, lack of affordable health care, difficulty in adapting to a new culture, and isolation/separation from family were among the most commonly

mentioned problems respondents encounter in South Carolina.

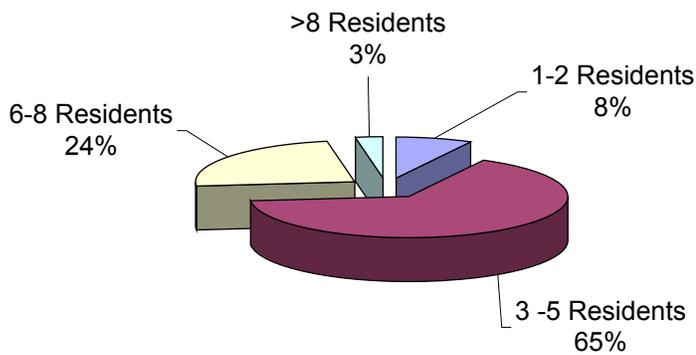
Transportation

Public transportation or driver's licenses were named as among the greatest needs of the Mexican immigrants community by almost half (46 percent) of respondents. Public transportation exists only in metropolitan areas of South Carolina, and even in cities few immigrants rely on public transportation, largely because language barriers, lack of suitable bus routes, and limited information regarding where and how to access public transportation (Hudgins, 2005). South Carolina is among the states that deny a driver's license to unauthorized immigrants, and even those with proper documentation sometimes find it difficult to navigate the process of obtaining a driver's license. Many who drive without a valid license report that they do so only as absolutely necessary, which tends to increase their sense of isolation. Further, several in this study listed lack of transportation as a barrier to health care access or to attending English classes.

Discrimination

It is the perception of almost 40 percent of respondents that they have experienced at least some form of discrimination in South Carolina. Most describe episodes such as being ignored and/or passed over in stores, governmental offices and health care facilities, being called derogatory names, being assigned heavier workloads than non-Latinos in the workplace, having people making faces at them, and being accused of taking jobs (and sometimes women) from native-born Americans. Several describe their treatment as "racist," and report being followed by policemen and denied treatment in emergency rooms. Perceived discrimination has been linked with isolation and depression among immigrant

Figure 11.
Household Size



populations, and with delayed assimilation (Finch, Kolody, and Vega, 2000; Smith, 2003). The sense that they are not recognized as human beings was stressed by several subjects: a 24-year-old waitress from Veracruz who has lived in South Carolina two years said that she would just like to be visible. She said, “Only people at work know your name, but outside it’s as though we don’t exist.”

Separation

Migration scholar V. D. Volkan describes immigrants as “perpetual mourners,” having left behind people and places central to their lives (Volkan, 1993).

This separation affects the lives of immigrants in a variety of ways. As Ricardo C. Ainslie makes clear, mourning can shape the process of incorporation and engagement in their new place of residence: “The immigrants’ engagement with the processes of mourning plays an important role

“It’s another kind of life here. It’s very different there in Mexico and it’s more difficult [here]. It’s difficult because of not knowing how to speak English. There are different things that sometimes you don’t know how to do. . . the change to another culture is difficult, to adjust to another country is hard.”

Female immigrant from Oaxaca, age 29, living in Columbia

in the strategies deployed in managing grief, how the immigrant participates in the new social context, and the nature of his relationship with people and lands that have been left behind” (Ainslie, 1998).

Separation from familiar places and family came up in many different ways in the interviews. One young man from Veracruz said that during the first months he spent in South Carolina he missed Mexico so much “it was like someone had torn something out” of his body. An 18-year-old woman here from Michoacán says she is depressed, and spends all day in a mobile home thinking about Mexico and her parents. A 20-year-old male in the U.S. 4 years said he misses his family terribly, and that when he is treated badly here, “I think about my family and loved ones who are back there in Mexico and that gives me strength to go on.” Separation from family has been linked to drug and alcohol abuse, especially among single men or men who left wives and children behind (Borges et al., 2006), and has also been linked to depression among immigrant women (Golding et al., 1993). Alcohol (and sometimes drug) abuse was listed by several

respondents as the most serious problem faced by Mexican men who are separated from family.

Isolation

Along with their legal status and English language abilities, the absence of a large Spanish-speaking community in South

Carolina can also result in immigrants’ feelings of marginalization and social isolation. A young man working construction jobs in Columbia,

Many men who work with my husband return to Mexico for a month or two then come back to work here for a year. My husband did that for four years. . . . It was very difficult. The children were living with their father very little, you drift apart, and a marriage isn't the same. Now it is different because we have been together more than a year. But children lose touch with parents. [The father] doesn't see them grow, isn't with them in their happiest times and something is lost. At least I saw that with my children. My oldest son still doesn't communicate well with his father . . . He remembers little about him but he remembers that when he needed him he wasn't there. Yes, [my husband] sent money but my son needed his father more. So they still have problems.

Female from Mexico City, age 37, living in West Columbia.

in the state about a year, said that he and other Mexicans live their lives “in hiding” because of their legal status. A 22-year-old from Chiapas who does not drive and speaks no English said she spends her days “shut in” a mobile home, unable to communicate with many of her neighbors. Another woman, age 39, who followed her husband from Hidalgo to South Carolina a year prior to the interview, said that even though she speaks some English she still gets lonely. She lives in an American neighborhood and rarely communicates with other Mexicans. She reported, “I feel that I am enclosed in a very small [social] circle. Americans live in their world and are always very busy.”

Some women expressed increased vulnerability not only because of separation from family but also because of increased reliance on their husbands or partners for economic and emotional support. Other studies have underscored this vulnerability, which sometimes includes experiences of domestic violence (Swan and Lacy, 2006). Women in this study also proved vulnerable because of their low earnings and the fact that many of them had not found jobs, largely because of language barriers and the lack of broad

social networks. A male respondent in this study (age 21, from Veracruz) summed up immigrant women's vulnerability in this way: “*Someone [needs to] help Mexican women. They need help with rights here. . . If there could be help [when] women are alone and their husbands leave them. . . A man can work and get ahead, but a woman. . . with a child, how are they going to do that?*”

Language

English language acquisition proves challenging for many immigrants, even though virtually all respondents expressed the desire to do so, and one-third of respondents said that learning English was their most pressing need. Despite the charges made by some in the U.S. that Mexican immigrants refuse to learn English, many (27 percent) respondents in this study had taken or were taking English classes at the time they were interviewed, and another 23 percent were trying to learn English by listening to purchased tapes, watching English-language TV or reading English-language newspapers and books. Another 18 percent said they were learning English at work or from English-speaking family members. We encountered no one who said they did not want to learn English. A young construction worker from Puebla living in Lexington said, “*At work*

we have Mexican friends and American friends. When we work with Americans, well, logically we have to talk to them. We try to speak their language because it's our obligation, we came looking for opportunities, . . . [and] we have to make the effort to learn more English."

Many respondents recognize that English skills would improve their circumstances. A 23-year-old from Chiapas who has been in the U.S. 4 years said, *"It would be nice to speak English, because it would open many doors, I could make friends with anyone, and it would give me confidence. It's difficult to find an American who will speak Spanish with you."* A 25-year-old construction worker from Puebla in South Carolina only a month (and in the U.S. 3 months) said, *"Our greatest need is to master or speak English . . . We could get a better job and later work for more rights, for insurance, for a [driver's] license."* But another young Pueblan living in Anderson for 8 years found learning English to be difficult for the reason expressed by many others: *"The reason I don't speak more English is because I work 12-16 hours every day, every week so I can have something in the future, for my kids and my wife."*

In addition to lack of time for English language classes, barriers to learning English mentioned by respondents in this study included lack of transportation and lack of information about where to take classes. Further, English acquisition is likely slowed for some because they speak only Spanish in the workplace and at home.

Healthcare

Almost half (46 percent) of those in the study have received no medical care in South Carolina. Most who have received treatment have gone

"[In stores] they make me wait. They say 'just a minute' and they aren't doing anything but they make me wait, so I get bored and I leave. In some stores . . . I am asking something and they say 'I don't speak Spanish,' but I'm speaking English [to them], and they say, 'Well, I don't understand you.'"

Female from Veracruz, age 18, who attended 3 years of high school in the U.S.

to doctors for work-related injuries, childbirth, and for colds and other minor health problems. Eleven percent said they visit doctors only when their children are ill. Several mentioned that they self-medicate when they are ill, and several others said they had returned to Mexico for medical treatment. The most commonly-mentioned ailment was stomach problems, which many respondents related to stress.

Thirty-eight percent of all respondents said they or someone they knew had difficulty getting health care here. The most commonly cited reasons included the high cost of healthcare or lack of health insurance (55 percent) and language barriers (26 percent). Only 6 percent of respondents were covered by health insurance. Lack of information or misinformation about medical care options acted as obstacles for some. For example, several respondents said they have not sought medical care because they lack documentation. Others complained that they were denied care or were made to wait for hours in emergency facilities because they spoke no English.

Since in Mexico one can purchase medicinal drugs in any pharmacy without a doctor’s prescription, some in the study either send back to Mexico for medicines or purchase remedies in Mexican tiendas here in South Carolina. An immigrant from Veracruz living in Columbia for 6 years said, *“Really I haven’t been to a clinic nor have I gone to visit a doctor because it is very expensive. So every time I feel bad, I go to the tienda Hispana, buy some pills, they give me the rest I need...in Mexico we take pills they sell in the store. [There] you ask someone who works in a Pharmacy, ‘Hey, Doctor, this hurts, what should I take to feel better,’ and they say, ‘Here, take this and this, and rest.’ And thus one is cured. That’s our custom. Neither here nor there do we visit doctors frequently. We just buy the medicine that we know and we feel better.”*

“I was obligated to speak your language, I am here...I am the one who has to speak your language. How did I learn it? I learned it by studying the dictionary, time passed, and I learned little by little.”

**Male, 29, from Veracruz, in SC
1.5 years/US 9 years**

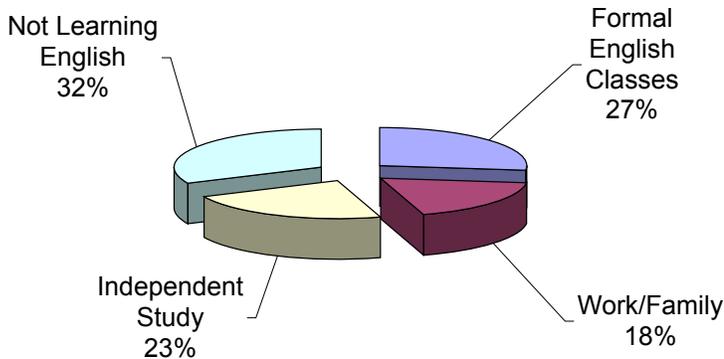
Studies elsewhere have demonstrated a positive correlation between length of time in the U.S. and timely health care (LeClere, Jensen and Biddlecom, 1994).

Given the rather short-term duration of this immigrant population, however, the number of respondents in the U.S. 10 years or more is insignificant. Those immigrants in the country 5 years or longer received medical treatment only slightly more often than those here for a shorter time period (excluding those who sought medical care for injuries on the job or childbirth): 72 percent vs 68 percent for those here less than 5 years.

Adaptation, Incorporation, and “Assimilation”

The manner in which Latino immigrants adapt and become socially, culturally and economically incorporated in new settlement areas is of growing concern to migration scholars (Gibson, 2001; Leach, 2005; Leach and Bean, 2006). Of

**Figure 12
English Language Acquisition**



**Figure 13.
Language Spoken At Home**

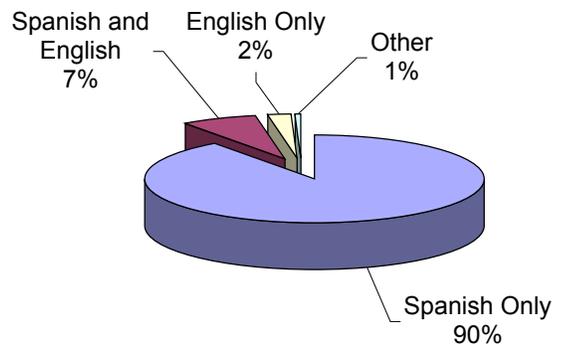
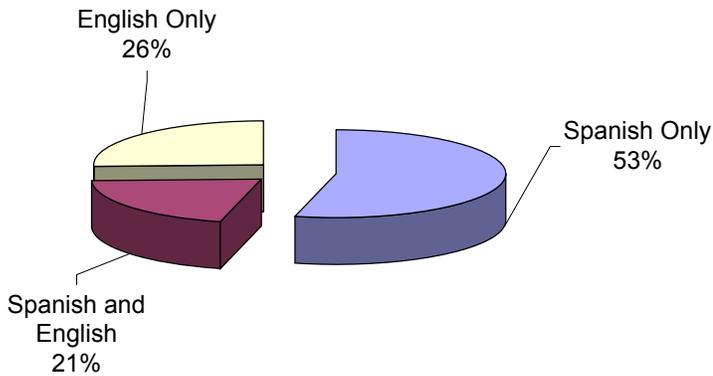


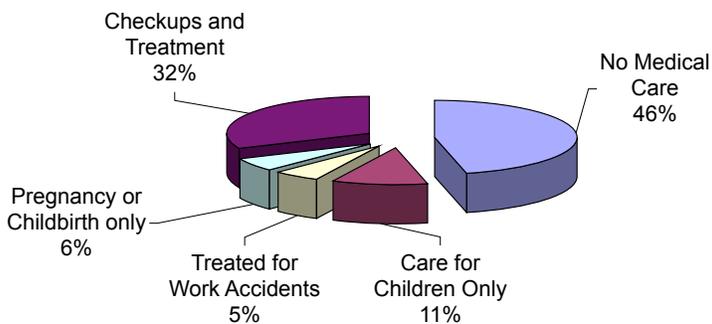
Figure 14.
Language Spoken In The Workplace



particular interest is the issue of whether these migrants' level of socioeconomic incorporation differs from those who migrated to traditional settlement areas. As has been noted in the migration literature, immigrants' processes of acculturation and adaptation will vary depending on their social and economic situation before they migrated, their gender, ethnicity, and post-migration socioeconomic class (Zhou, 1997). But these processes are also greatly affected by "where immigrants settle in the United States, . . . and whether or not they are surrounded by co-ethnics or are more isolated from their ethnic culture" (Gibson, 2001).

This study's findings reveal wide variations in the level of adaptation and acculturation

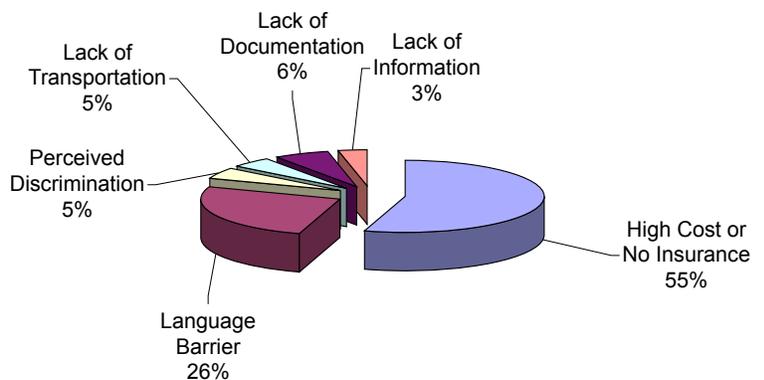
Figure 15.
Medical Treatment



among Mexican migrants to South Carolina. As is disclosed elsewhere in this report, many respondents remain socially and culturally isolated, in part because of the relative short duration of their time in the state, the fact that most arrived directly from new sending areas in Mexico, and few have broad social networks or well-developed English language skills. Those who have been in the U.S. for longer periods and/or who moved to South Carolina from other U.S. states demonstrated better English language skills, tended to spend more leisure time with non-Latinos, and to have a better understanding of how to navigate U.S. society.

Still, for many in our study, adjusting to a new culture and new circumstances is proving challenging. A 25-year-old single male from Veracruz who has lived in Saluda 5 years said, *[What is different here] is the way of dressing and. . . more than anything, living with [other kinds of] people. I like things here, but basically what I don't like here is that there is no freedom, in terms of the laws...there aren't many options for us for documentation. On the other hand, there is too much freedom...In Mexico, families are more united.* A young single man from Chihuahua who had lived in South Carolina a few months said, *"The culture here is very different from*

Figure 16.
Barriers To Healthcare Access



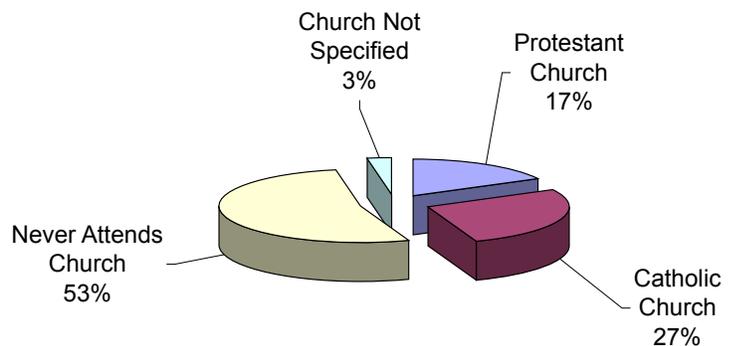
Mexico's. People are very different. In Mexico everyone says hello, gives you hugs, gives you a kiss. Here people don't greet that way, they are more distant. There people are friendly, here they are different."

Numerous studies of immigrant settlement and adaptation stress the value of immigrant organizations and associations in helping newcomers adapt to their new environment (Hagan, 1998). In South Carolina, however, no Mexican associations exist, and only a handful of Latino-based organizations are active across the state, many of them social organizations led by non-Mexicans. When asked if they had knowledge of Latino organizations or associations in the state, only 5 persons (.03 percent) of respondents in this study said "Yes." A 27-year-old construction worker from Mexico City, who has lived 2 years in South Carolina said, *"If I have a problem, I try to solve it [on my own]. Maybe there are people who know about organizations and things, but I don't know about them."*

For many respondents churches have proven helpful in processes of adaptation and incorporation. Many churches across the state, both Catholic and Protestant, offer services in Spanish, and others have made the effort to meet the newcomers' needs. Forty-seven percent of respondents in this study regularly attend churches in South Carolina, and even some who do not regularly attend say they have relied on churches for English-language classes and basic necessities including food and clothing. A 39-year-old woman from Hidalgo reported, *"Just after arriving [in South Carolina] I got pregnant and my husband was without work for six months. . . . It was very difficult, and truthfully,*

I am very grateful to the U.S. and to God . . . We received help from churches. They gave us clothes, shoes, even food." For regular attendees, churches provide and opportunity to build social networks from which new immigrants can derive social capital.

**Figure 17.
Church Attendance**



Also important to immigrants' processes of adjustment are the resources one derives from family, and the "intensity of stresses associated with migration" (Ainslie, 2002). The degree of cultural difference, knowledge of the local language, and losses of friends and loved ones are among the typical stressors that can shape engagement and acculturation (Volkan 1993; Akhtar, 1995). Almost sixty-five percent of respondents in this study had family members living in South Carolina or at least in the region, but most were cousins and siblings. As was noted earlier in this report, many in the study said they missed parents and sometimes children they had left behind.

For this reason, the majority of Mexican immigrants maintain close contact with family members remaining in Mexico. The relative low cost of cellular phones and phone cards and availability of internet connections enable today's migrants to communicate with family and friends

left behind far more easily than could migrants during the waves of massive immigration in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. The term most frequently used to describe such trans-border connections is “transnationalism.” One of the leading scholars on transnationalism, Nina Glick Schiller, describes “transmigrants” as those who “claim and are claimed by two or more nation-states into which they are incorporated as social actors, one of which is widely acknowledged to be their state of origin” (Glick Schiller, 1999).

In addition to remittance behaviors (described above), 68 percent of those in this study report that they phone home at least once a week, and another 19 percent say they call family and/or friends twice a month. Eight percent of respondents maintain contact through email.

Length of time in the U.S. did not seem to affect frequency of contact. Further, over 40 percent still own a house, land, or a business in Mexico.

Transnational connections are also maintained through what some call “circular migration,” the practice among some immigrants of returning to their country of origin to visit or work for a few months to a year, returning to the U.S. for one or more years, going back to Mexico for short periods, and so on (Brettell, 2003). The overwhelming majority in our studies reported that they or people they know have engaged in circular migration. Many go home to rest up, others to stay, but many return to South Carolina because, as both a young man from Oaxaca and

a young woman from Michoacán said, they can’t adjust to life in Mexico again. A 63-year-old man from Veracruz said, “*Everyone knows that the Mexican comes and goes, papers or not. Everyone wants to stop this, but they haven’t been able to.*” Such sojourns not only refresh contact with home communities, but the migrant’s sharing of news and stories of “home” with other immigrants upon their return to South Carolina helps maintain other immigrants’ identification with sending areas as well. While tighter border security appears to have

led to increased family reunification, it clearly does not totally eliminate circular migration, particularly for single males.

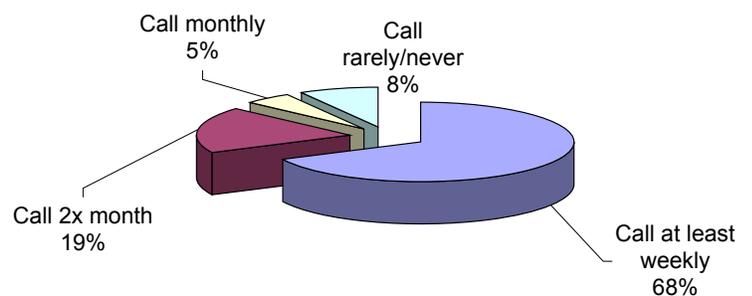
Their continuing ties to communities of origin has led some observers to conclude that today’s immigrants will not “assimilate” into U.S.

culture and society in the same manner as did earlier immigrant groups. It is important to recognize, however, that while most immigrants identify and maintain affiliations with their place of origin, they also develop affiliations and identify

“The man who gave me the driving test [in Columbia] was very serious and curt with me. I don’t care if he was not nice, but he could have been more cordial. There are many cultural differences; we Latinos are more courteous [than Americans].”

A 48-year-old woman from Mexico City, in South Carolina 4 months

Figure 18.
Frequency Of Phone Calls To Mexico



with the places in which they settle. Katherine Pratt Ewing considers “multiple, shifting, and negotiated identities” particularly relevant to immigrants’ and minorities’ experiences.

A number of migrants in this study refer to changes in themselves that suggest increased identification and affiliation with local culture and society. Some spoke of adapting to cultural norms and expectations such as punctuality, appreciation for education, moderation in alcohol consumption, and increased consumerism. Several mentioned that they were “*learning to live the American life.*” Gratitude to the U.S. for the opportunity to improve their circumstances pervaded the interviews. A 25-year-old man from Puebla said, “*In Mexico I felt worthless. There because you earn so little, you don’t succeed...you feel worthless and broke. Here it is different, you feel more useful.*”

Many have become attached to local culture and place. Some listed country music, rap and hip hop among musical preferences, they participate in events at their children’s school, they take walks in public parks with their families, attend local baseball games alongside whites and African Americans, and they shop at the flea markets on the weekend. Virtually all respondents said they hoped their children would be bilingual in Spanish and English, and many said they planned to celebrate both Mexican and U.S. holidays. A 38-year-old woman from Guanajuato talked fondly of her favorite Mexican holidays, but said she would also honor U.S. holidays: “*We are in this country and we must respect its traditions. This country isn’t going to adapt to us, we must adapt to this country.*” Still, she said her family would commemorate important dates in Mexico’s history in private. A 56-year-old immigrant from Tamaulipas living in Beaufort said his family celebrates “*July 4, also Cinco de Mayo,*

[Mexican Independence Day] September 16, and Thanksgiving, just like Americans.”

In this study we attempted to determine Mexican immigrants’ future intentions with the questions “Do you consider this move to the U.S. a permanent move?” and “Where would you like to live when you are elderly?” Almost 60 percent of respondents said they considered their presence in South Carolina to be temporary, although as migration studies elsewhere reveal, the majority of Mexican immigrants who plan to return to Mexico permanently do not do so. Many find that they are not building the nest egg they had hoped to, or that after returning to Mexico they cannot find work or make ends meet.

In response to the second question, however, almost 80 percent said they hoped to live in Mexico when they are elderly, or to go back and forth between South Carolina and Mexico.

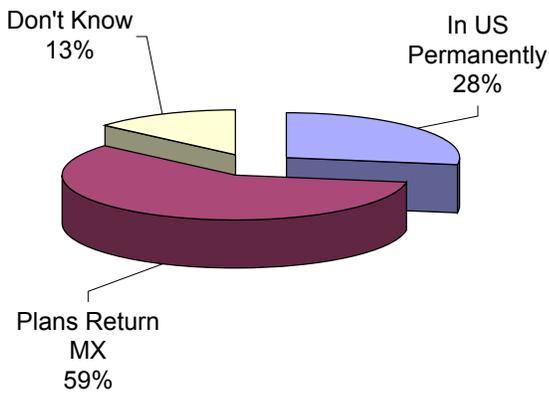
“In the beginning when I got here I thought I would stay only one year. But I realized that after a year my economic situation had not improved, nor had the situation changed for my family in Mexico. I think that I’ll stay a few more years but not permanently.”

Male, 25, from Veracruz, in SC 1 year

Such desires are common among migrants the world over. As Caroline Brettell says in her discussion of the Portuguese diaspora, “sustaining the idea of return [to the homeland] for as long as one is abroad is . . . deeply rooted in Portuguese history and culture” (Brettell, 2003).

It is too early to assess the manner in which South Carolina’s Mexican immigrants will become incorporated into the state’s culture and society. Typically, it is the second generation immigrant that becomes more fully incorporated, and the manner in which they do so depends on a variety of social and economic factors (Zhou, 1997).

Figure 19.
Future Plans



CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Mexican immigrants to South Carolina are in some ways distinctive from those of some other southeastern states: they have been here a relatively shorter period of time, they are slightly better educated, and they arrive mainly from new sending areas in Mexico rather than from other states. The latter point and the fact that this group has arrived to a new receiving area without a multi-generational Mexican population in place, as is the case in traditional receiving areas, has implications for this population group. The processes of settlement, adaptation and incorporation are likely to be more lengthy and difficult than for immigrants with more ready access to social capital both before migrating and after arrival.

At the same time, the study reveals tremendous resiliency among this population. Even though most live on the margins in terms of income, housing, and health care, and face isolation, loneliness and discrimination, they are working hard to provide better lives for themselves and their families, both here and in Mexico. Many are learning English, their unemployment rate is very low, and they are building social networks. Further, these immigrants are contributing to South Carolina’s economy (Woodward, 2005), rejuvenating communities, and enriching local culture.

Our interviews revealed that most Mexican immigrants begin to develop social networks shortly after arriving in the host community. Many begin to build new communities through religious affiliations, and others do so through English language classes, on the soccer field, and in public spaces such as the Mexican-owned combination grocery stores and restaurants throughout the state. As Caroline Brettell said of immigrant markets in Texas, such locations are key sites for maintaining ties to communities of origin and for developing social networks and therefore social capital (Brettell, 2003a).

This study also demonstrates the strong ties immigrants are maintaining with their places of origin. Through economic connections, phone calls, email chats, and visits back for rest, holidays, or sometimes medical care, migrants maintain strong ties to family and their cultural roots. Still, despite their short time in the U.S., immigrants are also developing attachments to life in the U.S. They mourn the distance of family but appreciate the opportunities and security their lives here afford, and many express a desire to live in both places when they are elderly. They negotiate new

identities while hanging on to old ones. Rather than being one or the other, they are “both.”

Does this mean today’s Mexican immigrant is not going to become “assimilated”? Perhaps not according to the definition many in this country hold today, which requires not only perfect English skills, but a full acceptance of our value system and “consciousness,” as Samuel Huntington puts it. One could question whether any immigrant group has met such standards. Further, given the dynamics of globalization, as Tamar Jacoby argues in *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, “we may need a new definition, or a new understanding of assimilation---a definition that makes sense today, in an era of globalization, the internet, identity politics, niche advertising and a TV dial that offers a choice among a hundred or more different channels” (Jacoby, 2004). Mexican immigrants in South Carolina, as well as elsewhere in the U.S. are identifying with their roots but also with local communities, and are learning the “American” way of life.

¹The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are often used interchangeably, but have different meanings. “Hispanic” refers to those persons originating in Spanish-speaking countries, and “Latino” refers to those originating in Latin America. Because the majority of Spanish-speaking residents of the Southeast originate in Latin America, we used the term “Latino” in this report other than in reference to Census data, which tends to use the term “Hispanic.”

² Of the few in this study who relocated to SC from other states in the U.S., most (56 percent) arrived from traditional settlement areas in Texas, California, Florida, Illinois and New York.



APPENDIX I. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Interviewer _____

Date _____

Male or Female subject _____

1. What is your place of origin? (state and city, town, or village)

¿De dónde es Ud.? ¿De que estado y pueblo or ciudad?

2. What is your age?

¿Cuántos años tiene Ud.?

3. What work do you do here in South Carolina?

¿Qué es su trabajo?

4. How did you secure your current job?

¿Cómo consiguió el trabajo que tiene ahora? (Por recomendacion, por contrato, etc.)

5. If you are comfortable in telling me/us, how much do you earn weekly or monthly?

¿Si se sienta comodo en decirmelo, cuánto dinero gana cada semana ó mes?

6. What work did you do before moving to the United States?

¿Que trabajo hizo antes de llegar a los EEUU?

7. In what town or city do you live here do you live in South Carolina?

¿Ud. vive en que pueblo o ciudad aquí en SC?

8. What year of school did you complete?

¿Cuántos años estudió en la escuela?

9. If you are married, is your spouse also Mexican?

¿Si Ud. es casado/a, su esposo/esposa tambien es Mexicano/Mexicana?

10. (If so) Is she/he from the same place in Mexico?

¿Es su conyugue del mismo lugar de Mexico que Ud.?

11. Did you marry here or before coming here?

¿Se casó antes de llegar aquí?

12. Is your spouse here in South Carolina also?

¿Esta aquí también su marido?

13. Do you have children here? Are they in school? (If yes to both) How are they doing in school?

¿Tiene Ud. hijos aquí? ¿Van al colegio? ¿Cómo les va en el colegio? ¿Tienen problemas de algún tipo?

14. How long have you lived in South Carolina?

¿Cuántos años ha estado en Carolina del Sur?

15. How long have you lived in the U.S.?

¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en los EEUU?

16. Where did you reside before moving to South Carolina?

¿Dónde vivía antes de mudarse para Carolina del Sur?

17. Is this your first trip to the U.S.? To South Carolina?

¿Es la primera vez que ha vivido en los EEUU? En Carolina del Sur?

18. (If not) Why did you return to los EEUU or Carolina del Sur?

¿Por qué decidió a regresar?

19. What brought you to SC?

¿Por qué vino para acá (a esta parte y no otra)?

20. How often do you call friends or family in your place of origin?

¿Con qué frecuencia está en contacto por teléfono con family en su país?

21. Do you maintain contact with friends as well as family in Mexico? Describe the nature of that contact (frequency, how many friends do you maintain contact with, etc.)

¿Mantiene Ud contacto con amistades en su lugar de origen? Si así es, ¿Con cuánta frecuencia?

22. How often do you return to visit your place of origin?

¿Cuántas veces ha regresado a su país?

23. Do you often send money to your place of origin?

¿Les manda dinero al lugar de su origen frecuentemente?

24. If you are comfortable in telling me/us, how much do you send, and to whom?
Si se sienta comodo en decirmelo, ¿cuanto dinero manda á Mexico y a quién le manda?
25. Why do you send money back? For what purpose?
¿Por qué y para qué envía Ud. dinero a Mexico? (para ayudar, para que lo ahorren)
26. Do you belong to any organizations or associations in Mexico with which you maintain a relationship?
¿Es Ud. miembro de cualquier organización en México con la cual se mantiene una relación ahora? Cuales?
27. Do you own land, a house, or a business in Mexico?
¿Ud. es propietario de cualquier terreno, casa, o negocio en México?
28. What language do you most often use at home?
¿Qué idioma usa más en casa?
29. What language do you most often use at work?
¿Qué idioma usa más en el trabajo?
30. What language do you most often use with friends?
¿Qué idioma usa más con sus amigos?
31. What language do you prefer to use?
¿Qué idioma prefiere usar?
32. How and when did you learn to speak English?
¿Cómo y cuándo aprendió a hablar inglés?
33. How often do you speak English?
¿Con qué frecuencia habla inglés?
34. Do family or friends from you place of origin live near you?
¿Hay familia o amigos de su lugar de origen que también viven cerca de Ud. aqui?
35. Do you live with other Hispanic/Latinos?
¿Vive con otros hispanos/latinos?
36. If so, are they from the same country or state that you are from?
¿Vienen ellos del mismo lugar de ud?

37. Describe where you live (trailer, apartment, house)

¿Puede describir el tipo de la casa donde vive?

38. How many people live in your house/apartment?

¿Cuántas personas viven en su casa?

39. Do you live the entire year here in (where they currently reside)?

¿Vive todo el año aquí?

40. Do you work among other Hispanic/Latinos?

¿Trabaja con/entre otros hispanos/latinos?

41. Do you spend your leisure time with other Hispanic/Latinos?

¿Pasa sus ratos libres con otros hispanos/latinos?

42. (If yes): Are they from Mexico as well?

¿Ellos son de Mexico tambien?

43. How do you get along with other people from Latin America?

¿Como se lleva con los otros Hispanos/Latinos de otros paises aquí?

44. Do you belong to any social or civic organizations? If so, which ones?

¿Es Ud. miembro de una iglesia o alguna organización social o cívica? ¿Cuáles son?

45. What food do you prefer to eat at home?

¿Qué comida prefiere comer en casa? (ejemplos de platos)

46. If you eat in restaurants, what kind of food do you prefer to eat?

¿Si come en los restaurantes, qué comida prefiere comer en los restaurantes?

47. What radio station do you prefer to listen to?

¿Qué estación de radio prefiere escuchar?

48. What kind of music do you most often listen to?

¿Qué música escucha con más frecuencia?

49. Who is your favorite (musical) performer or group?

¿Quién es su artista o grupo (de musica) favorito/a?

50. Who is your favorite film actor?

¿Quién es su actor/actriz (de película) favorito/a?

51. What television station and what programs do you prefer to watch?

¿Qué estación de televisión prefiere mirar?

52. Do you regularly read newspapers? If so, which ones?

¿Lee Ud. un(os) periódico(s) con frecuencia? Cuales?

53. Do you read newspapers or books in Spanish?

¿Lee Ud. periodicos, revistas o libros en español?

54. Do you regularly listen to local or national news?

¿Escucha/mira las noticias con frecuencia?

55. Are you familiar with the top news stories in the U.S. (and the state) right now?

¿Sabe cuales son las noticias mas importantes en los EEUU ahora?

56. How would you identify yourself in terms of your nationality?

¿Qué prefiere que le llamen otros (mexicano, mexicano-americano, veracruzano, etc.)?

57. In what ways do you think you have changed since moving to the U.S.?

¿En que sentido ha cambiado Ud. desde que vive en EEUU?

58. Do you consider your move to the U.S. a permanent move?

¿Piensa que su mudarse a los Estados Unidos va a ser permanente?

59. Do you know many people who return to Mexico for short periods then return again to the U.S. on a regular basis? How many?

¿Conoce Ud. a alguien que vuelve a Mexico por un tiempo para luego regresar a EEUU?

60. What cultural traditions would you like to continue to practice even after living in the U.S. for many years?

¿Qué tradiciones culturales le gustaría continuar despues de haber vivido en los Estados Unidos por muchos años? (Por ejemplo, días de fiesta, etc.)

61. Are you registered to vote?

¿Ud. se ha registrado para votar?

62. Have you voted in a recent election?

¿Ha votado en una elección reciente?

63. What health care services have you required in the last two years?

¿Qué servicios médicos ha necesitado desde hace 2 años?

64. Have you had any difficulties getting the health care you need?

¿Ha sido difícil conseguir cualquier cuidado médico que ha necesitado?

65. Do you sometimes/often/regularly experience discrimination here in South Carolina? If so, from whom?

¿Ha experimentado discriminación aquí en Carolina del Sur? ¿Puede describir el tipo o forma de discriminación? ¿De quién(es)?

66. Where do you wish to live when you are elderly?

¿En dónde quiere vivir cuando Ud. es mayor de edad?

67. Describe the nature of any contact or help you have had with local or state officials (such as law enforcement, government agencies)

Describe por favor el tipo de contacto o ayuda que ha tenido con personas de gobierno local o del estado (por ejemplo, cualquier persona del agencias o de policia). ¿Era bueno o malo?

68. What are the greatest needs of the Mexican or Hispanic community?

¿Cuáles son las necesidades mas urgentes de la comunidad Mexicana o Hispana aquí?

69. What are the greatest problems the Mexican or Hispanic community has?

¿Cuáles cree Ud. que son los mayores problemas que tiene la comunidad Mexicana aquí?


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