

## ***Who's Coming to America? Absolute vs. Relative Change in the Size of the Latino Professional Population***

The dramatic increase in the Latino population has been one of the major demographic trends in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bean and Stevens 2003). Demographers have only begun to understand the full social, economic and political implications of the emergence of Latinos as America's largest minority group (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Farley 2002). One aspect of this population that has not been rigorously examined is the change in the size and nature of the Latino professional class. Accordingly, this paper asks the following questions: 1) How has the Latino professional class changed relative to the non-professional Latino population from 1980-2000? 2) Are there significant gender differences in the change in the Latino professional class over the two-decade period? 3) What role does country of origin play in the growth of Latino professionals? 4) Are these Latino professionals more likely than their non-professional counterparts to self-identify as white? and 5) What are the implications of the findings for both sociological theory and the future of the Latino community?

### Theoretical Considerations

The theory to be employed in this study is the population and structural change thesis (hereafter, PSCT). According to the PSCT, changes in the size of the minority population *interact* with changes in the social structure to impact levels of racial and ethnic inequality (Horton 1995, 2002). In the case of Latinos, it is expected that while there has been an increase in the absolute size of the professional class, there may have

been stability, if not a slight decline, in the relative size of the same. The logic here is that while it is expected that Latinos professionals have benefited from changes in the social structure as a result of the Civil Rights Movements as have other groups, these increases are likely to have been dwarfed by those among the non-professional Latinos. Moreover, change in the Latino professional class is expected to vary by race, gender, age, immigration status, country of origin and year of immigration.

### Data and Methods

The data for this study are the 1980-2000 Integrated Public Use Micro-data Series (IPUMS). The IPUMS have been prepared by the Minnesota Historical Census Project and represent arguably one of the richest sources of data currently available on the U.S. population. These data facilitate detailed cross-tabulations of unique subpopulations that are unlikely to appear in print or any other format. Thus, Latino professionals from countries other than Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba may be included in the analysis so as to gain a fuller picture of change this population over the two-decade period. In addition, to facilitate the analysis of change in the Latino professional population these data will be pooled and analyzed via multi-level changing-parameter models.

### Expected Results

Based upon the PSCT, it is expected that the increase in the Latino professional population will be greatest in those places where the overall Latino population is either relatively small or has experienced relatively limited increase. In addition, it is expected that white Latinos will experience more growth in its segment of the professional class

than non-white Latinos. Finally, it is expected that among both white and non-white Latinos, women will experience more growth among the professional class than males. In each of the above categories, it is expected that lower levels of resistance by the dominant population would be a primary reason for the increase. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and policy implications of the findings.