

Socioeconomic Ranks of Cubans and Other Hispanics in Florida

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Recent immigration from the Caribbean and Latin America has played a major role in shaping the current population characteristics of Florida and especially of Dade County. The 1959 Cuban Revolution had an obvious impact, resulting in the spectacular changes that have occurred in the ethnic composition of South Florida's population over the past 25 years.

As recently as 1950, the Latin American component of Florida's population was only of minimal significance, except in Key West and Tampa where small colonies of Cuban exiles had established several cigar factories. In that year, persons of Latin American birth constituted only about .5% of the state's total population and just under 2% of the city of Miami's residents. In fact, in 1950 New York contained 45% of the United States' population of Cuban birth and Florida ranked second with only about 27% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1952 and 1954, pp. 7 and 71).

By 1960, the demographic situation was beginning to change rapidly. The first wave of the Cuban exodus was under way. Puerto Ricans and other former Caribbean island residents were also discovering the attractions of Florida, as were some Mexican migrants who had arrived in the state originally as itinerant workers in agriculture. As a result, a little over 3% of the state's population had been born somewhere south of the United States. Dade County was beginning to emerge as the epicenter of activity for these new migration streams. Still, only about 7% of Dade's population was of Latin American origin in 1960 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963, 303).

Although the flow from Cuba would alternately ebb and flow according to the dictates of the Castro government in Cuba, the general trend over the next twenty years would be upward. By 1980, Hispanics accounted for approximately 9% of the state's total population. In Dade County, the corresponding figure was close to 36%. At that time, persons of Cuban origin represented 55% of Hispanics in Florida. In Dade, Cubans constituted approximately 70% of its Latin American-origin population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981, pp. 48 and 66). By 1989, approximately 861,000 Hispanics resided in the county, accounting for almost 47% of its total population.¹

At least three important characteristics of the Latin American immigration flow to Florida should be emphasized. **First**, the recency of this migration means that many are still adjusting to the cultural characteristics of their new homeland. **Second**, these new immigrants have not been evenly dispersed throughout the state. In 1980, about 68% of the state's Hispanics resided in Dade County. When Cubans are considered alone, they are even more concentrated, with about 87% in Dade. This high degree of concentration makes Hispanics even more visible than they would be if they were evenly distributed throughout the state. **Third**, it is important to understand that the movement from Latin America is not simply a single stream from Cuba. Instead, there are many streams from almost all the countries located in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This paper focuses on the socioeconomic characteristics of Hispanics in Florida as enumerated in the 1980 Census of

¹The estimates of Hispanics living in Dade County for 1989 were obtained from Oliver Kerr (Director of Research, Metropolitan Dade County Planning Department) during a phone conversation on September 5, 1989.

Population. Florida was selected as the study site because in 1980 it contained about 58% of U.S. Cubans (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982, 13).

The principal source of information will be the "1980 Public-Use Microdata Sample A (PUMS)" computer tape for Florida (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983a). These data were derived from a 5% sample of the state's entire population on April 1, 1980. Because of this date, information is not provided for the Mariel-Cuban entrants, who began arriving from Cuba on April 21, 1980. It also does not include the approximately 170,000 Nicaraguans currently in Dade County, most of whom also arrived after the 1980 Census. Data for the socioeconomic characteristics of Hispanics derived from the forthcoming 1990 Census probably will not become available for analysis until either late 1992 or 1993. As evidence of this, the PUMS data used in this study were not available until 1983. In any event, the present study should be regarded as providing a baseline for an update study when the 1990 Census are available.

This analysis of Florida's Hispanics will be divided into two sections. In the first, Florida will be considered as a whole. The state's residents of Cuban descent (470,250) in 1980 will be compared to those of Mexican (79,393), Puerto Rican (94,775), and "Other Spanish" origin (213,741), as well as to non-Hispanics. These comparisons will provide an understanding of the demographic context of Florida's Cubans. In the second section, Florida's Cuban population will be classified according to five areas of residence within the state to determine if any regional differences exist in their socioeconomic characteristics.

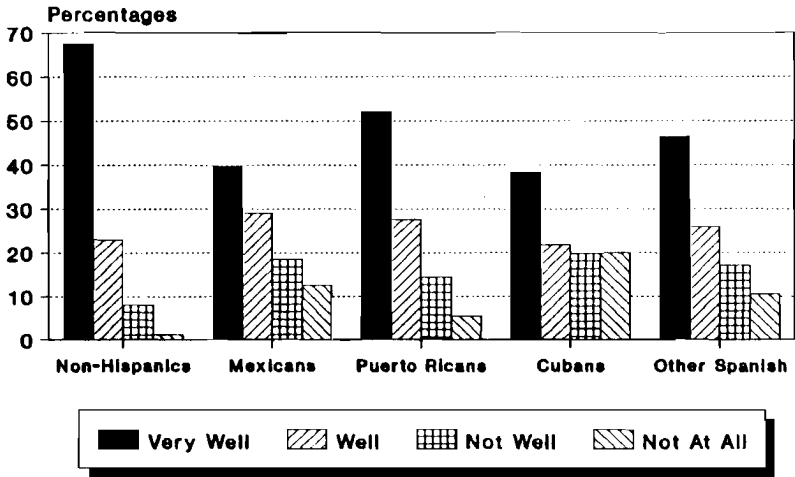
Florida's cubans vs. other hispanic populations

One question on the 1980 Census of Population inquired whether individuals considered themselves to be of Spanish or Hispanic origin or descent. All individuals were thus classified as: (1) not of Spanish or Hispanic descent, (2) Mexican or Mexican-American, (3) Puerto Rican, (4) Cuban, or (5) Other Spanish or Hispanic. The class of "Other Spanish" is a residual category, including all persons indicating they were of Hispanic descent, but did not trace their origins to Cuba, Mexico, or Puerto Rico. Note that a person considered to be of Spanish descent may not have been foreign born. Thus, persons born in Cuba, plus all subsequent generations of their American-born progeny are considered as Cuban-Americans, as long as they consider themselves as such.²

This paper compares the socioeconomic characteristics of the four Hispanic populations and non-Hispanics in Florida. Specifically, the following four sets of variables are examined: (1) ability to speak English, (2) occupational structure, (3) educational attainment, and (4) income. Following this discussion, a system is devised to rank the five populations in terms of their respective socioeconomic characteristics.

²There are a small number of persons born in Cuba, but of American or other foreign parents, who do not consider themselves to be of Cuban descent. These individuals are not considered in this report as being Cuban-Americans. Instead, they are included in one of the other four categories (based on their own preferences).

ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH By Hispanic Type in Florida: 1980



Source: U.S. Census, PUMS, 1980

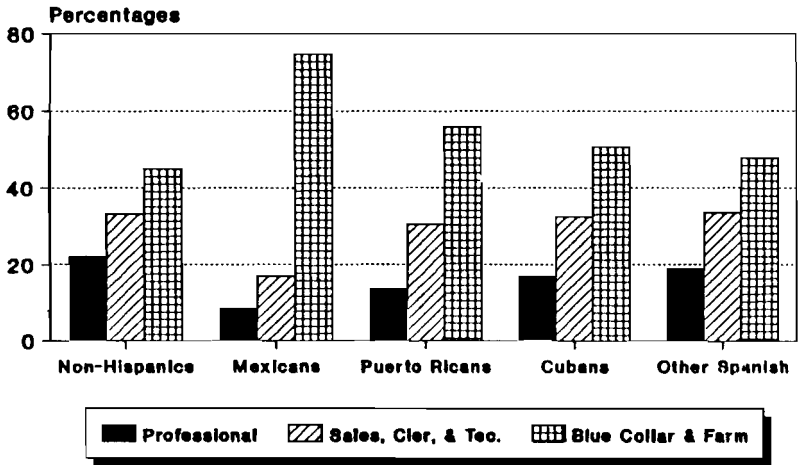
Figure 1

Ability to speak english

One indicator of the degree of acculturation of an ethnic group whose mother tongue is not English, is its ability to converse in English (Portes, Clark, and Bach, 1977, pp. 1-32 and Portes, Clark, and Lopez, 1982, pp. 1982). Obviously, ability to speak English provides opportunities for jobs that do not exist for Hispanics who speak only Spanish. Clearly, Cubans have the greatest problem with English, since approximately 40% do not speak English "not well" or "not at all." (Figure 1). Comparable percentages are notably lower for Mexicans (31%), Puerto Ricans (20%), and the Other Spanish (27%). Two factors

account for this disadvantageous characteristic of Cubans. First, more than 80% of Cubans are immigrants from a Spanish-speaking country; whereas the comparable proportion of foreign-born is much lower for the other three Hispanic groups. Second, most Cubans have arrived recently in the United States, almost all since 1959.³

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSES By Hispanic Type in Florida: 1980



Source: U.S. Census, PUMS, 1980

Figure 2

³Only 10.5% of Cubans born in Cuba arrived in the United States before 1960. Almost 60% arrived after 1965. Also, recall that these figures omit the 125,000 Cubans who arrived from Mariel in 1980 before the 1980 U.S. Census.

Occupational characteristics

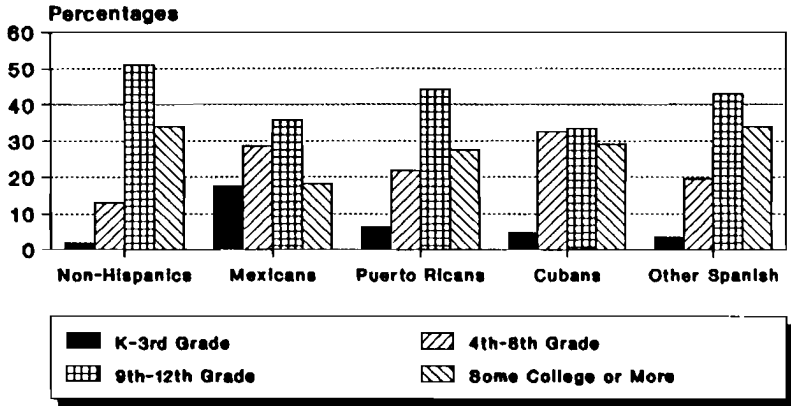
Among Hispanics, Mexicans and Cubans represent opposite ends of the occupational spectrum (Figure 2). Mexicans have by far the largest share (almost 75%) of their labor force employed in the blue collar and farming category, primarily because close to one-third of Mexican-Americans employed in Florida in 1980 were in agriculture. Cubans and the "Other Spanish" had very similar occupational structures with almost 20% employed in professional jobs, and "only" about 50% in blue collar and farming jobs. In fact, less than 2% of Cubans were working in agriculture in 1980. Still, it is relevant to note that both Cubans and "Other Spanish" ranked considerably below that of non-Hispanics. The significance of this latter point is that it is evidence that it is a mistake to view Cuban-Americans as composed mainly of golden exiles from Cuba's former elite classes (Boswell and Curtis, 1984, Chapter 3 and 4).

Educational attainment

Three tendencies may be seen in the comparison of population groups with respect to educational attainment (Figures 3 and 4). First, Mexicans clearly are the most disadvantaged. Second, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Other Spanish display very similar educational attainment levels. Third, the latter three Hispanic groups are also very similar to the state's non-Hispanics.

Figure 3 also reveals that: (1) when compared to non-Hispanics, Cubans have a much higher proportion over age 25 that received an eighth grade education or less (37% vs. 15%), but (2) the percentage that attended some college was only slightly lower for Cubans (29% vs. 33%). In fact, a slightly *larger* proportion of

HIGHEST GRADE ATTENDED By Persons 25 Yrs. of Age or Older By Hispanic Type in Florida: 1980



Source: U.S. Census, PUMS, 1980

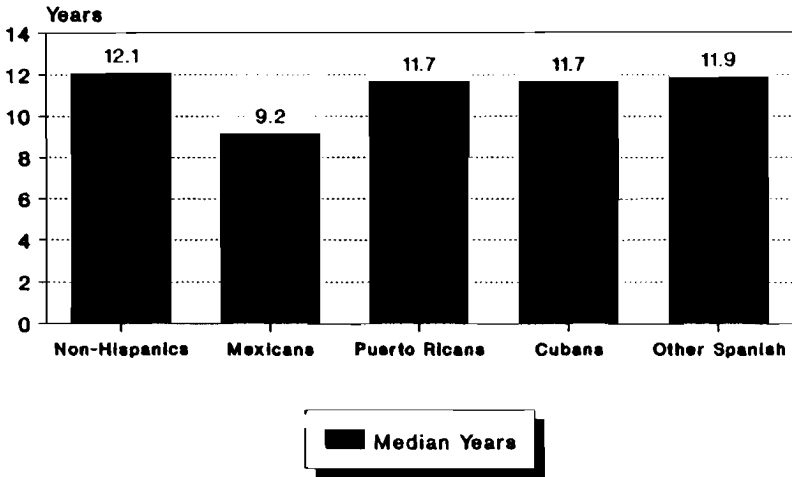
Figure 3

these Cubans attended four or more years of college (8% vs. 7%). Perez (1984, 9) explains this educational polarization as follows:

On the one hand, the traditional socioeconomic selectivity of the migration from socialist Cuba, combined with the high proportion of young Cubans who have attended and are attending universities in this country (the United States), has produced a fairly high proportion of college graduates. On the other hand, a population with a high proportion of elderly persons (especially if they are migrants from a developing country) can be expected to have many

persons who did not attend school beyond the elementary grades.

HIGHEST GRADE ATTENDED By Hispanic Type in Florida: 1980



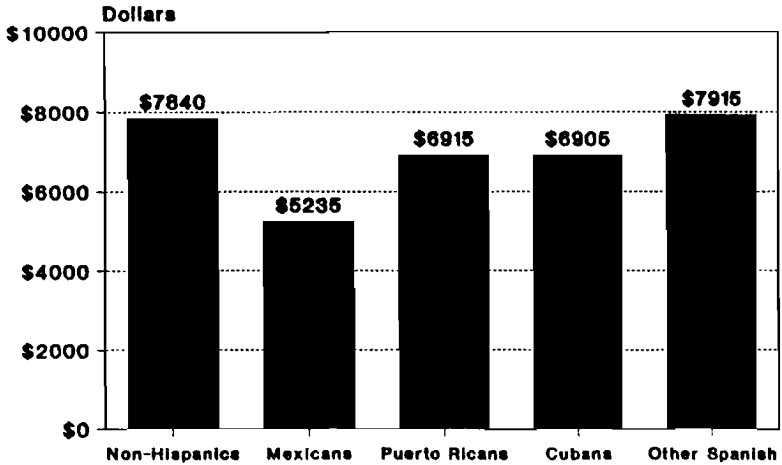
Source: U.S. Census, PUMS, 1980

Figure 4

Income patterns

Because income is most often used as an indicator of economic status, Figures 5 and 6 view income from two perspectives: (1) individual income; and, (2) family income levels with respect to the poverty threshold established by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for 1980. Interestingly, Figure 5 indicates that the “Other Spanish” not only have the highest median income when compared

MEDIAN INDIVIDUAL INCOME By Hispanic Type in Florida: 1980



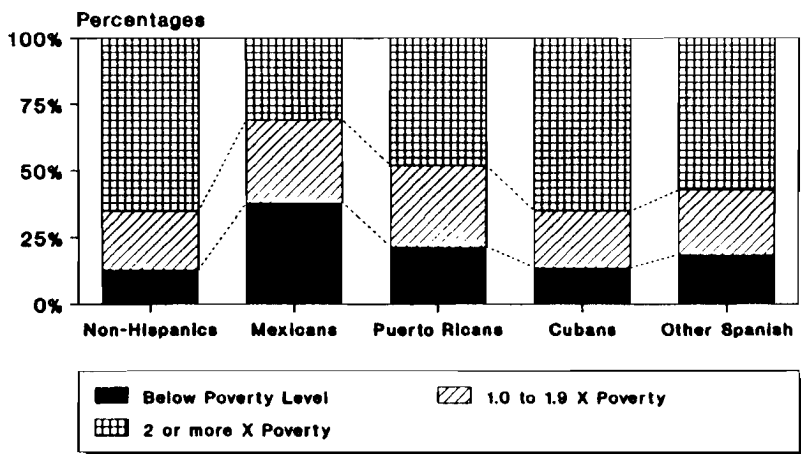
Source: U.S. Census, PUMS, 1980

Figure 5

to the other three Hispanic groups, but also have a level slightly above that of Florida's non-Hispanics. Mexicans, on the other hand, have by far the lowest median income level; whereas Puerto Ricans and Cubans have almost identical levels between those of the Mexicans and "Other Spanish."

The family income levels relative to the poverty cutoff displayed in Figure 6 show that, among Hispanics, Cubans rank the highest. In fact, Cubans exhibit a level almost identical with that of non-Hispanics. Both Cubans and non-Hispanics had about 13% of their families with incomes below the poverty cutoff in 1980. Again, Mexicans had the lowest average level, with 38% below this minimum standard. The reason Cubans rank higher in terms

FAMILY POVERTY STATUS By Hispanic Type in Florida: 1980



Source: U.S. Census, PUMS, 1980

Figure 6

of family income, than they do when individual income is considered, is because a larger share of Cuban families has two or more wage earners. This primarily reflects a higher labor force participation rate for Cuban women.

Socioeconomic status of hispanics for florida

Methodology

An attempt has been made to estimate the socioeconomic status of the five population components referenced above. Five of the above variables have been selected that are thought to be reasonable indicators of socioeconomic status (Table 1). Each

population component is provided a status score for each of the five variables. These scores are derived by dividing each population's raw variable value by the lowest value for that variable among the five populations. For example, the socioeconomic score for median highest grade attended for non-Hispanics was calculated by dividing its average highest grade attended value (12.1 years) by the lowest value (9.2 years), which happened to be for Mexicans. The resulting value is 1.32 (Table 1), which means that non-Hispanics had an average highest grade attended rate that was 32% higher than that of the Mexicans, who had the lowest value among the five populations. Thus, the higher the socioeconomic score the higher the status. The composite SES scores are derived by adding the five variable scores for each of the populations and dividing the result by five (the number of components). Thus, the composite scores provide summary measures for each population considering all five variables simultaneously.

Discussion of the results

The composite SES scores indicate that non-Hispanics clearly have the highest rank in Florida (Table 1). The "Other Spanish" rank the highest among the Hispanics, with Cubans in second place, *only barely* ahead of the state's Puerto Ricans. Mexicans are clearly ranked last in terms of their composite SES score.

An earlier study of Hispanics in the United States in 1970 (Jaffe, Cullen, and Boswell, 1980, pp. 245-278) and another for 1980 (Boswell and Rivero, 1987, pp. 49-51) examined a similar set of socioeconomic score rankings, except that the status of the Cubans was *much higher* than that of Puerto Ricans. In fact, in these two studies, Puerto Ricans were found to be more similar to Mexicans

Table 1
Socioeconomic Scores for Selected Variables
for Hispanic Groups in Florida, 1980

Ethnic Type	Scores for Variables [@]					Composite SES Score*
	1	2	3	4	5	
Non-Hispanic	1.32	1.50	2.59	1.50	2.01	1.78
Mexican	1.00	1.14	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.03
Puerto Rican	1.27	1.33	1.61	1.32	1.47	1.40
Cuban	1.27	1.00	1.98	1.32	2.01	1.52
Other Spanish	1.30	1.20	2.21	1.51	1.78	1.60

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, PUMS, 1980.

- 1 - Median Highest Grade Attended for Persons 25 Years of Age or Older
- 2 - Percent Able to Speak English Very Well or Well
- 3 - Percent Employed in Professional Occupations
- 4 - Median Individual Income
- 5 - Median Family Income Relative to the Poverty Cutoff

*Composite SES Score = Sum of the Individual SES Scores Divided by Five

@See text for an explanation of how these scores are calculated.

Note: The higher the composite SES score the higher the status.

than to Cubans. It is my hypothesis that the reason for the difference (shown above) between the status levels of Cubans, when compared to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, is related to the retarding effect of geographic concentration on the socioeconomic characteristics of ethnic groups. For instance, it has been noted elsewhere that Puerto Ricans in New York tend to have lower socioeconomic status than those throughout most of the rest of the United States (Jaffe, Cullen, and Boswell, 1980, pp. 228-240). Similarly, Cuban-Americans outside Florida and New Jersey generally have higher achievement levels than those within these two states (Boswell and Curtis, 1984, pp. 108-111 and Boswell, Diaz, and Perez, 1982, pp. 29-41). Thus, Puerto Ricans in Florida have higher status than the average for all Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland. Conversely, Florida Cubans have somewhat lower status (when collectively considered) than the average for all Cuban-Americans. Because of this, the socioeconomic gap between Cubans and Puerto Ricans is much narrower in Florida than for the nation as a whole.

Socioeconomic ranks for cubans by areas in florida

Because there is an interdependent effect, it is impossible to determine the exact nature of the cause and effect relationships between "degree of settlement concentration" and "level of socioeconomic status." For instance, many older and poorer Cubans prefer to live in Miami's Little Havana and in Hialeah because of the cultural support systems in these areas. This tends to depress the average standard of living (in economic terms) of these two areas. On the other hand, it is probably equally true that ethnic concentration slows the rate of both economic and social assimilation because it is possible for an individual to restrict his or her activities to the Cuban microcosms of these neighborhoods.

Since it is not possible to determine the precise direction of the relationship between spatial concentration and socioeconomic status of Florida's Cubans, only the degree of locational association is examined. For this purpose, the state has been divided into five regions (Figure 7). The Miami-Hialeah⁴ area and Pinellas and Hillsborough counties (containing the cities of St. Petersburg and Tampa, respectively)⁵ represent areas of concentrated settlement, with the former representing a much larger concentration than the latter (Figures 8 and 9). Cubans are much more widely dispersed in the remainder of Dade County and in Monroe County, although collectively this region contains a large percentage of the state's Hispanics.⁶ Even greater dispersion exists for the Cubans in

⁴Miami and Hialeah are combined into one area because the main concentrations of Cubans in these areas are quite similar. A study conducted by the Latin Affairs Office for Dade County has noted this similarity (Levitan, 1980, pp. 51-55).

⁵Pinellas and Hillsborough counties are combined because their central cities are often regarded as economically and socially integrated. Cubans in these counties exhibit concentrated settlement in a few areas, like Ibor City. The data from the five percent PUMS sample clearly illustrate this. For instance, the county group that corresponds with the central city of Tampa contained 53.3% of the area's Cubans, while the other county group providing for the rest of Hillsborough County included 37.6%. Thus, almost 91% of the area's Cubans resided in Hillsborough. Also, by combining Cubans in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, a larger sample size, providing greater reliability, for statistical analysis was achieved.

⁶The rest of Dade County and all of Monroe county are combined because of the manner in which the county groups for South Florida were delineated by the Census Bureau in the PUMS sample. Since it was not possible to separate part of southern Dade from Monroe County, I decided to include all of Monroe with Dade as one region.

Broward and Palm Beach counties⁷ and the “Rest of the State.”

The hypothesis is that the socioeconomic scores for Cubans will be the lowest for those in the Miami-Hialeah area and next lowest for those in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties. The highest rank, conversely, should occur for the Cubans in the “Rest of the State,” with intermediate SES scores prevailing in the two regions of “Remainder of Dade and Monroe Counties” and “Broward and Palm Beach counties.” The same five variables that were used above to examine the composite SES scores for the Hispanic components for the state are used here and the methodology employed is the same.

The results displayed in Table 2 corroborate the hypothesized relationship between concentration and socioeconomic status. Cubans in the “Rest of Florida” region clearly have the highest status. Miami-Hialeah ranks at the bottom and the Pinellas and Hillsborough counties region ranks next to last. The “Rest of the Dade County and Monroe County” area and the “Broward and Palm Beach counties” region occupy intermediate ranks that also fit the hypothesized pattern, with their composite SES scores being virtually identical. Therefore, it does appear reasonable to generalize that Cubans in more concentrated areas have lower socioeconomic status than those in more dispersed areas.

⁷Broward and Palm Beach counties are combined because their Cuban populations appear similar, and yet somewhat different from the Cuban population in Dade and Monroe counties. On the other hand, both Broward and Palm Beach are close to Miami, so considerable economic and social interaction exists among the counties. Some consider Broward and Palm Beach counties to be the more distant suburbs of the Miami metropolitan area.

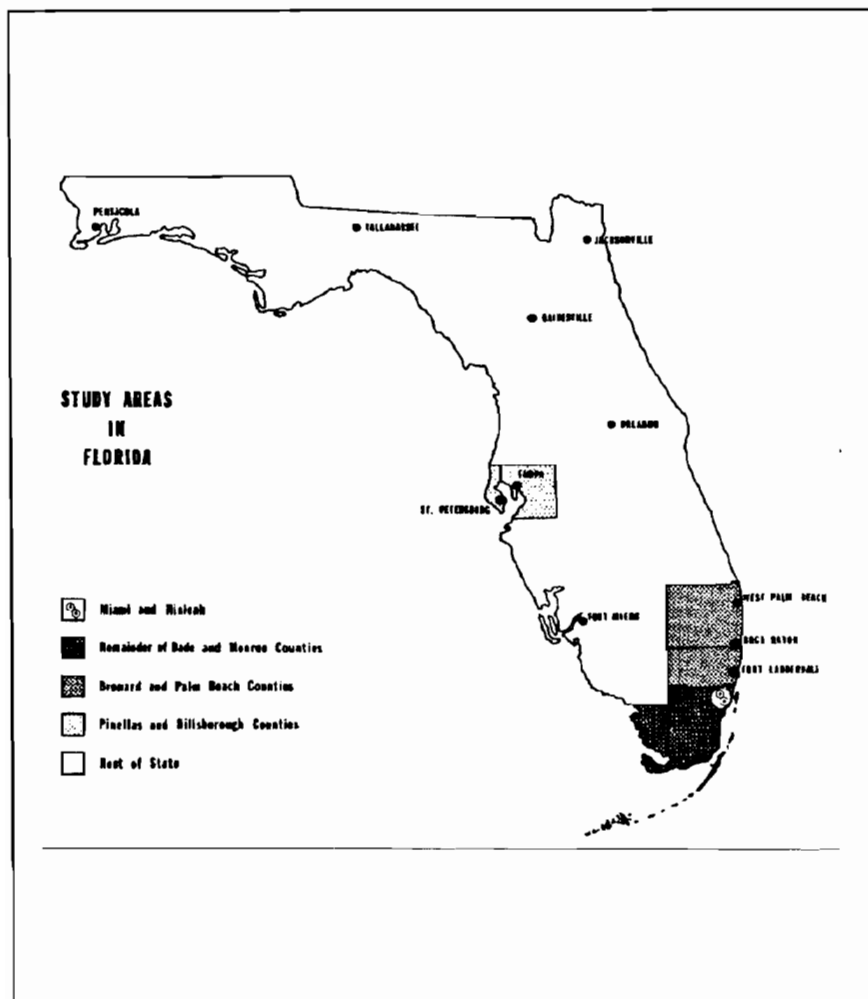
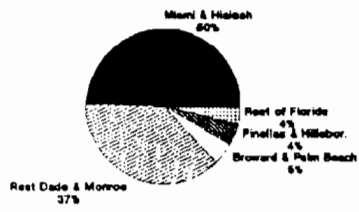


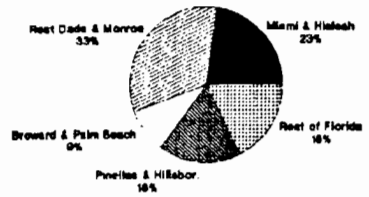
Figure 7

Figure 8

Distribution of Cubans
State of Florida by Areas: 1980



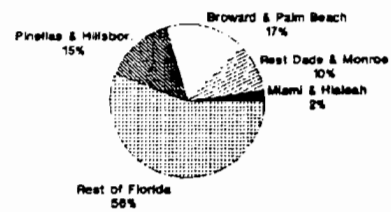
Distribution of Other Spanish
State of Florida by Areas: 1980



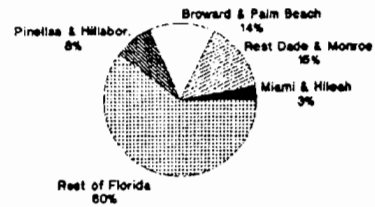
DISTRIBUTIONS OF HISPANICS IN FLORIDA BY AREAS 1980

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, PUMS, 1980.

Distribution of Non-Hispanics
State of Florida by Areas: 1980



Distribution of Mexicans
State of Florida by Areas: 1980



Distribution of Puerto Ricans
State of Florida by Areas: 1980

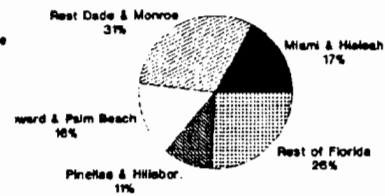


Figure 9

Percentage of Population
Pinellas and Hillsborough: 1980



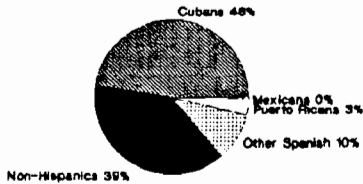
Percentage of Population
Rest of Florida: 1980



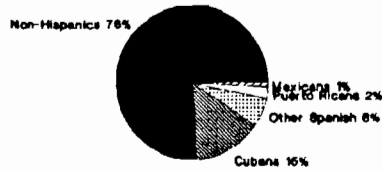
PERCENTAGES OF HISPANICS IN FLORIDA BY AREAS 1980

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, PUMS, 1980.

Percentage of Population
Miami and Hialeah: 1980



Percentage of Population
Rest of Dade and Monroe: 1980



Percentage of Population
Broward and Palm Beach: 1980



Table 2 Socioeconomic Scores for Selected Variables for Areas for Florida's Cubans, 1980						
Region	Scores for Variables [@]					Composite SES Score*
	1	2	3	4	5	
Miami/Hialeah	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Remainder of Dade & Monroe County	1.22	1.38	1.61	1.29	1.16	1.33
Broward & Palm Beach Counties	1.21	1.45	1.44	1.38	1.14	1.32
Pinellas & Hillsborough Counties	1.18	1.40	1.33	1.06	1.03	1.20
Rest of Florida	1.24	1.60	1.82	1.23	1.16	1.41

Source and Notes: See Table 1.

Conclusions

This study has two significant findings. First, it is clear in Florida (as well as in the rest of the United States) that all Hispanics are *not* alike. Except for the fact that most speak Spanish, practice Catholicism, and are from countries that were influenced by historical ties with Spain, there is little demographically that the various Hispanic nationality components all have in common.

This paper has shown that there are clear distinctions in the socioeconomic characteristics of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and "Other Spanish" in Florida. Despite the fact that several studies (Jaffe, Cullen, and Boswell, 1980; Davis, Haub, and

Willette; 1983, and Diaz, 1984) have noted similar nationality distinctions for the United States, some studies still persist in speaking collectively about Hispanics, as though they are a single ethnic group (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983b). Clearly, Cubans in Florida exhibit a collective socioeconomic status lower than that of non-Hispanics, but higher than that of the state's Mexican-Americans. Florida's Cuban residents are similar, in socioeconomic rank, to the state's Puerto Rican and "Other Spanish" populations. It has been noted that studies of Hispanics at the national scale have found Cubans to exhibit considerably higher socioeconomic status than Puerto Ricans. The difference between the findings in those studies and this study are attributed to the fact that Florida is an area of concentration for Cuban-Americans, but not for U.S. mainland Puerto Ricans, who are more concentrated in the New York metropolitan area.

A second significant finding is that not all Cubans are alike, even within Florida. For instance, those in Miami-Hialeah are not nearly as well off as those in the Rest of Dade County and Monroe County or those in Broward and Palm Beach counties. Another study has found that similar differences occur when Cubans are compared on a state scale for the entire United States (Boswell and Curtis, 1984, 108-112). Again, as with the Hispanic population components on a state scale, there appears to be an inverse association between "degree of spatial concentration" of Cubans and their "socioeconomic ranks" by regions within Florida, although the direction and precise cause and effect connection of this relationship is impossible to determine with the census data used in this investigation.

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