

Chapter 2

American Population Estimates, Trends in American Immigration, and Neuropsychology: Influences on Assessment and Inferential Processes with Hispanic Populations¹

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A review of the most recent decennial U.S. Census (U.S. Census, 2001) indicates that Hispanics account for approximately 11% of the total American population. The conservative 11% estimate represents a total of approximately 32 million legal individuals of Hispanic origin living in the U.S. Table 2.1 presents a brief description of the most recent census estimates for the U.S. Hispanic population according to country of origin for selected nations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The data collected by the U.S. Census is to a large extent impacted by patterns of American immigration, and although a comprehensive review of such patterns is beyond the scope of this book, a brief examination of American immigration trends for Hispanics will be reviewed.

It is first proper to examine the biased nature of American migrations as they relate to Hispanics, in an attempt to understand with greater insight their subsequent impact on the acquisition and application of neuropsychological norms and standards. Close scrutiny of migrational patterns reveals that American migration, legal immigration to the U.S., is not the product of random mechanisms and processes (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 1991; U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1991; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Portes and Borocz, 1989). The nonrandom nature of these migratory patterns is the result of selective factors associated with both the host and sending nations (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990). With regard to host country receiving factors, Garcia (1981), and reviews of historical records, convincingly have noted that the U.S. government has had selective immigration aims in the past that are arbitrary by their very nature and that significantly affect current and past immigration patterns. In addition, revisions in American immigration laws and guidelines during the past decades led to significant alterations in migrational patterns. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1991) notes that the predominant shift occurred due to the elimination of “country specific quotas,” replacing them with quotas partially based on “humanitarian concerns” and shifting American migrational patterns from “European to Asian and Latin American immigration.” This change in immigration

¹ This chapter is largely based on previous work by the author, most notably Llorente et al., 1999, 2000.

Table 2.1 U.S. Census Estimate for the Hispanic Population According to Country of Origin

Hispanic or latino by type	Number	Percent
Mexican	20,640,711	58.5
Puerto Rican	3,406,178	9.6
Central American	1,686,937	4.8
South American	1,353,562	3.8
Cuban	1,241,685	3.5
Dominican	764,945	2.2
Spainiard	100,135	0.3
All Other Hispanic or Latino (e.g., write in Hispanic or Latino)	6,111,665	17.3
Total	35,305,818	100

Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau, 2001.

Note: For the purpose of Census reporting, country of origin is defined by the origin of the head of household, the individual responsible for completing the Census.

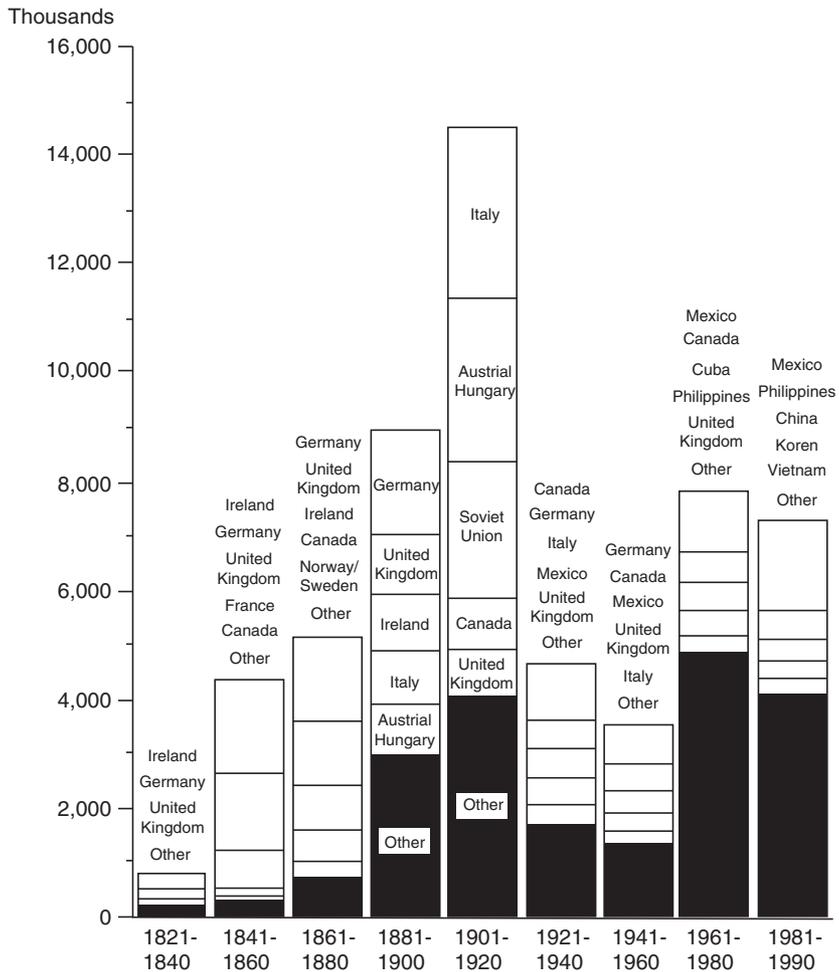


Figure 2.1 Changes in U.S. Immigration (1901-1990)

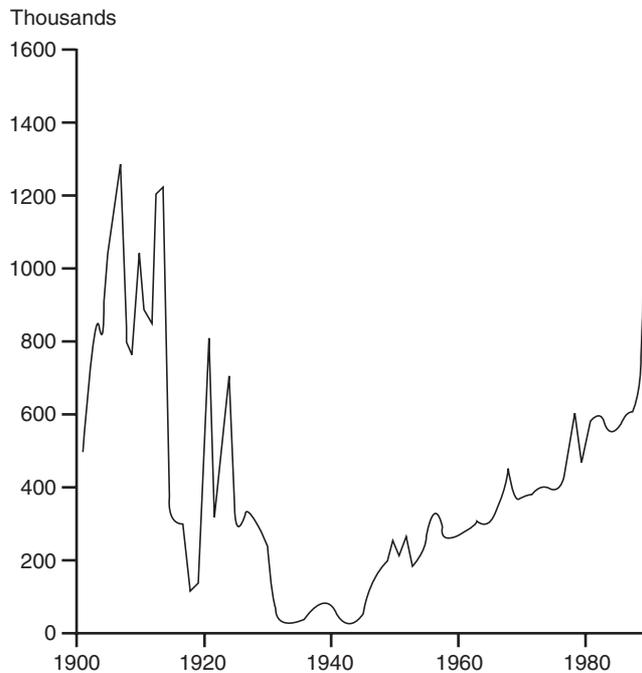


Figure 2.2 Total legal U.S. immigration (1901–1990)

policy altered the profile that typified U.S. migrations for “over 200 years.” This shift in migrational trends is best depicted by Figure 2.1.

The substantial variability observed in the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. during the past 90 to 100 years is another marker capable of elucidating the nonrandom and rapidly shifting nature of American immigration patterns. Figure 2.2 clearly shows the toll that various socioeconomic and historical events (e.g., the Great Depression, World War II) had on the total number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. between the early 1930s and the mid to late 1940s. This figure additionally depicts the increasing number of legal immigrants that have been allowed to enter the U.S. in the last three to five decades and the sudden shifts in total migration that have taken place across time. Although reliable data are not yet available, significant alterations will be evidenced shortly after September 2001, and in particular after the Immigration and Naturalization Service was absorbed by the Department of Homeland Security, which led to new immigration guidelines as a result of governmental restructuring and which, most critically, selectively impacted specific groups of Hispanics.

Although data for level of education are not available, Figure 2.3 shows the reported occupational allegiance of legal immigrants entering the U.S. from 1976 to 1990. These data indicate that the various occupational categories, closely associated with the educational attainment of such legal immigrants, during those two decades were not proportionally represented. Although great variability in immigrants’ occupational and educational attainment is observed in the literature, dis-

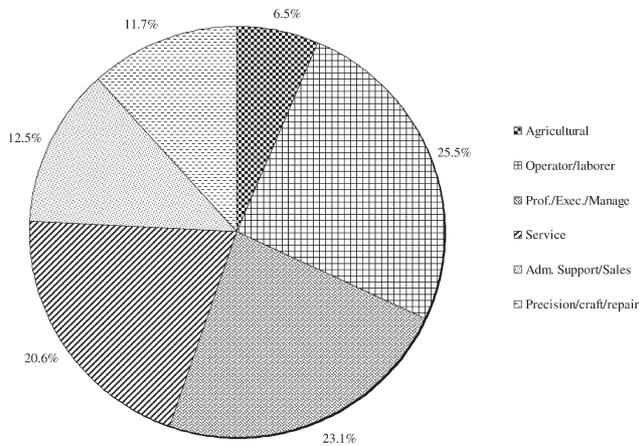


Figure 2.3 Immigration and occupational allegiance (1970)

proportionate occupational representations are more pronounced for certain Hispanic groups relative to others (see Llorente, 1997; Llorente et al., 1999, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001.)

Absolute and Relative Migrations

Table 2.2 shows the number of legal immigrants entering the United States from Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico, by decades, between 1931 and 1990. Perusal of this table indicates that the total number of immigrants from Mexico surpassed three million during the past 60 years, while the total number of immigrants from Argentina during the same period only reached a total of approximately 131,000 immigrants. During the same time span, the total number of immigrants from Cuba reached an approximate total of 732,000 individuals. A great deal of variability was observed in timing of maximum immigration and the magnitude of maximum immigration. Whereas immigration from Mexico peaked at approximately 1.5 million between 1981 and 1990, migration from Cuba peaked at approximately 264,000 during the 1970s, while migration from Argentina to the U.S. reached approximately 50,000 legal immigrants between 1961 and 1970. With regard to absolute migration, the number of Argentinean immigrants is approximately 24 times less than the number of Mexican immigrants and approximately six times less than the number of Cubans entering the U.S. during the same period. The total number of immigrants from Cuba also is four times less relative to the total number of immigrants from Mexico during the same six decades.

Although analyses could have been conducted to determine whether the expected number of immigrants from each nation under investigation differed statistically for these countries across the six decades, such analyses are beyond

Table 2.2 Total Number of Immigrants (Absolute Migration) Across Six Decades (1931–1990): Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico

Decade	Country and number of legal immigrants		
	Argentina	Cuba	Mexico
1931–1940	1,349	9,575	22,319
1941–1950	3,338	26,313	60,589
1951–1960	19,486	78,948	299,811
1961–1970	49,721	208,536	453,937
1971–1980	29,897	264,863	640,294
1981–1990	27,327	144,578	1,655,843

Adapted from INS, 1991.

the scope of this exposition. However, it should be noted that analyses conducted in the past for Hispanic data easily reached statistical significance (cf. Llorente et al., 1999, 2000 indicating that the expected distribution of absolute numbers of immigrants changed significantly over time and for each country). It is also clear from the data presented above that the interrelationship and intrarelationship for these nations as they relate to absolute immigration is in all likelihood statistically significant. These data also underscore the biased nature of American immigration patterns.

An examination of the absolute number of immigrants was critical in an attempt to understand American migratory patterns. However, the proportion of immigrants for three separate decades (1961 to 1970, 1971 to 1980, and 1981 to 1990) relative to the total population of each country at the end of those decades is just as important to our understanding of Hispanic migrations to the U.S. This analysis was thus conducted for each country. In 1970, Argentina had an approximate population of 24,300,000 inhabitants and an approximate migration to the U.S. (1961 to 1970) of 50,000 or 0.2% of its population. In 1970, Cuba and Mexico had respective populations of 8,500,000 and 48,000,000, and approximate American immigrations of 208,000 and 454,000, between 1961 and 1970 or 3% and 1% of their respective populations. In 1980, Argentina had a total estimated population of 27,000,000 and a U.S. immigration of approximately 30,000 or 0.1% of its population, whereas Cuba had a total estimated population of 10,000,000 inhabitants and a U.S. migration of 265,000 individuals, a total of 2.6% of that country's population. Mexico's U.S. immigration was 1% of its total number of inhabitants (total U.S. immigration, 1971 to 1980 = 640,294 / total estimated population, 1980 = 72,000,000). In 1990, the relative population percentages for Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico were 0.1%, 1.3%, and 1.8%, respectively.

In summary, in terms of relative immigration, migrations from Argentina have remained relatively constant and small in magnitude over the last three decades. Cuban immigration reached its peak during the 1970s and 1980s, with decreasing American immigration during the 1990s, while Mexico's relative immigration to the U.S. has been steadily increasing during the same period.



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