

## Bacon's Rebellion

Reinventing Virginia for the 21st Century

---

### Surprise! Latinos Not a Monolithic Bloc!

Posted on [March 20, 2013](#) | [Leave a comment](#)



Virginia Latinos — a diverse group

A week ago, [I asked](#) whether the high concentration of Latinos in certain Northern Virginia neighborhoods was best described as “segregation” or “self separation.” Are Latinos the victims of residential discrimination, or do they voluntarily cluster together for reasons of income (they can afford to live only in certain neighborhoods) or culture (they like being around others like themselves)? Predictably, a visitor to the blog suggested that my post “verged on racism,” presumably for suggesting that racism and discrimination did not fully explain Latino residential patterns.

I based last week’s observations on research sponsored by the Civil Rights Project. Now comes a new study, [“Hispanics in the United States: Not Only Mexicans,”](#) which finds that residential segregation varies widely among Hispanic sub-groups.

The original study does not appear to be available online, but Brown University wrote [this article](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#) extracted some of the report’s key findings. Cubans, Puerto Ricans and South Americans have much higher levels of education and income than Mexicans and Central Americans, for instance. The level of residential segregation has declined for all Hispanic groups since 1990 — except for Mexicans, who comprise more than half of all Hispanics. (Interestingly, the study does not discuss Hispanics of *American* origin, whose ancestors settled in territories before they were acquired by the United States.)

The boundaries between smaller immigrant groups and larger American society also appear to be breaking down more rapidly than the boundary between Mexicans and mainstream society, even though members of the smaller groups have lived in the U.S. for shorter periods of time. The assimilation trend applies even to less affluent Hispanics from Central America who have comparable income and education levels to Mexicans. Perhaps the ability of Mexicans to coalesce in larger communities explains their ability to maintain ethnic boundaries longer.

What a breakthrough — recognizing that Latinos/Hispanics are not a monolithic group! Immigrants from different nations come to the United States under different circumstances, they are imbued with different types of social capital, and they behave differently when they get here. Culture matters. Circumstances matter. There are many factors at work beyond the default explanation of racism and discrimination so routinely invoked to account for differences between racial and ethnic groups.

— JAB

This entry was posted in [2013](#), [Demographics](#), [Housing](#), [Poverty & income gap](#), [Race and race relations](#) and tagged [James A. Bacon](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

---

*Theme: Coraline by Automattic Proudly powered by WordPress.*