

Hispanic Families' Utilization of Social Benefits: A Regional Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The connection between race and social benefits is so strong that many times the issue of social benefits is seen as a racial versus a social issue. I hypothesize that Hispanic families in new destination locations which are located in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States will receive social benefits at a lower rate when compared to Hispanics that live in established immigrant locations which are located in the Northeastern and Western regions of the United States. I conclude, based on a historical analysis, that the lower uptake rate of Hispanics living in Southern and Midwestern regions is due to the particularly racial history of these regions as well as due to the racial and political ideology of those regions.

To test my hypothesis, I conducted a logistic regression analysis using data that was collected by the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) which is composed of four integrated, nationally representative surveys conducted in 2012. The logistic regression analysis of uptake rate by region reveals that being in the South or Midwest lowers a family's uptake rate of social benefits. This result is significant because it indicates that the hypothesis proposed in this analysis is correct and can allow for future analysis in how to increase equity among Hispanics living in different regions of the United States.

INTRODUCTION

Discussion of the racial differences between the uptake rate of social benefits is critical in today's increasingly globalized world. There is a very strong positive correlation between social benefits and race as 41.6% of African Americans participated in a social benefit program, followed by Hispanics¹ at a rate of 36.4% (U.S. Census Bureau). The connection between race and social benefits is so strong that many times the issue of social benefits is seen as a racial versus a social issue. Hispanic communities are not evenly spread throughout the United States (US). In particular, Hispanics are usually concentrated in the American Southwest, but an increasing number of Hispanics are deciding to live outside their traditional settlement areas and move into the South and Midwest. My study will focus on the uptake rate of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and free lunch programs of families and their children regionally. The uptake rate of social benefits by Hispanics is particularly important to examine if certain barriers exist that are unique to their situation and hinders their uptake of social benefits. Some barriers that distinguish Hispanics from other minority groups is that many are undocumented or have family members that are undocumented which may deter them from applying for social benefits. Another factor that is unique to Hispanic families is that many face language barriers which could hinder their ability to understand the benefits available to them as well as the application process. The fact that Hispanic communities are concentrated in different parts of the country, as seen by the emerging community of Hispanics in the South, as well as the particularly racial history of the South makes it important to look at the uptake rate regionally.

¹ I use the term Hispanic interchangeably with Latino/Latina and Latinx.

My research will distinguish the differences in Hispanic family's uptake of social benefits according to region.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis will explore the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in Hispanic families' uptake rates of social benefits by region in the United States? The regions are divided into four categories: Northeast, Midwest, South and West.
2. If there is a regional difference in the uptake rates of social benefits, which region has the lowest uptake and which region has the highest uptake of social benefits?
3. If there is a regional difference in the uptake rates of social benefits, why do some regions have lower or higher uptake rates?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Geographical Concentrations of Hispanics in the United States

The diversity of the US has been growing at a rapid rate; however, the growth is uneven across the different regions. There has been a recent demographic shift as to where Hispanics are deciding to reside called “new destinations” because they are outside of the traditional settlement zones for Hispanics. The most traditional areas for Hispanics to reside are in the American Southwest - New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, California and Texas (Johnson and Lichter, 2016). Recently, there has been a shift where approximately one-half of all Hispanics live outside of these immigrant settlement areas. The Hispanic population has diffused into smaller metropolitan cities and rural areas in the South and Midwest (Johnson and Lichter, 2016). This can be seen in cities like Atlanta and Raleigh-Durham where the Hispanic population has grown by 362 percent and 569 percent, between 1990 and 2000 respectively, which can be contrasted to the 27 percent and 30 percent growth in Los Angeles and San Antonio, respectively (Parrado and Kandel, 2008). Clearly, Hispanics are moving out their traditional settlement areas.

This geographic spread of the Hispanic populations from traditional settlement zones is largely attributed to the 1986 Immigration and Control Act (IRCA). The IRCA legalized the status of about three million undocumented immigrants, which, in turn, caused many of them to migrate domestically, as they were now legal residents and no longer feared deportation. Another reason for this geographic shift is that Hispanics want to reside in locations that they perceive will increase their quality of life. Ethnographic studies have concluded that the “pull factors” which have encouraged Hispanics to move to small cities outside of the South and Midwest are their needs to fulfill their “desire for better schools, lower crime rates, fewer street gangs, more affordable housing, and greater tranquility in general” (Parrado and Kandel, 2008). The main

“push factor” that has encouraged Hispanics to leave the South and Midwest is that in the 1980s the labor markets of Southern California and Texas became very weak, so they were forced to move elsewhere and find better economic opportunities. The South and Midwest offered new low-skilled job opportunities for Hispanics in the construction, meat, and agricultural industries. The increase in economic opportunities for Hispanics that reside in new destination locations is seen by the fact that in new destinations “Hispanic median family income is more than 20% higher than that of Black families” (Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor, 2012). New destination locations provide opportunities that Hispanics would not have if they were to stay in their traditional settlement locations.

Additionally, the establishment of strong immigrant social networks in new destination areas has enabled the mobility of new waves of Hispanic migrants, even if they are not motivated to move because of a particular job opportunity. The concept of migrant networks is so strong that it is defined as “the sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origins and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Korinek and Loebach, 2016). Migrant networks are the key components that connect migrants to their destination locations as well as are an integral component of the recruitment of labor among a variety of industries. Many US industries have relied on migrant social networks and have created an indispensable labor force. This can be seen by the fact that demand for agricultural labor outstripped the supply of workers provided by government bracero contracts and the labor force then became composed of “flows of undocumented workers that were generated by personal relationships between migrants” (Korinek and Loebach, 2016). The power that Hispanic social networks have in attracting other migrants to destination communities is much stronger than the power the government has in implementing policies.

Uptake Rates of Social Benefits

Overall Uptake Rates

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report, about 52.2 million, 21.3%, of the United States population participated in a means-tested government assistance program in 2012. SNAP has a 13.4% participation rate which is the social benefit program with the second highest participation rate, following Medicaid. The population that was most likely to participate in government assistant programs in an average month was the African American population as 41.6% of African Americans participated in a government assistance program. Hispanics were the second most likely with a participation rate of 36.4%. Hispanics were followed by Asians or Pacific Islanders at a rate of 17.8% and non-Hispanic whites at a rate of 13.2%.

My study will particularly focus on the uptake rate of social benefits for Hispanic families as they present a unique population to study as there has been minimal research conducted on the uptake rate of Hispanics when compared to African American usage of social benefits. This could be due to the fact that the Hispanic population is a relatively new population in the US, but it is now the fastest growing minority in the US which makes this study increasingly more important.

Uptake Rate of Minorities

Race and political ideology have played a crucial role in the development of the United States' welfare system. The political ideology and environment of states heavily influences the exclusion of Hispanics and minorities in general. States that have a more liberal ideology are "significantly more likely to include immigrants in their [social benefit programs] than are conservative states" (Filindra, 2013). Research has also proven that when there is a large

concentration of minorities in a certain area it leads to more restrictive policy outcomes (Filindra, 2013).

The size of the Hispanic population in the state is not the primary cause of immigrant exclusion from social welfare programs, but rather the size of the African American population living in that area does have a positive correlation with immigrant exclusion in regards to social welfare (Filindra, 2013). Southern states are more conservative, are linked to the civil rights movement, and African American populations living there are already less likely to receive social benefits (Finlindra, 2013); therefore, when Hispanics enter these states, they are competing for social benefits in an area that is already underserved. Hispanics are seen as economic competition and taking away welfare resources that “correspond to a reduction in the slice of the pie that goes to the black community” (Filindra, 2013). Therefore, Hispanics are more likely to be excluded from social welfare programs in the South.

The intrinsic nature of social benefit programs like WIC and SNAP makes it much easier to be subject to race politics as WIC and SNAP are largely used by minorities and exclusion only affects the individuals, families and communities where the immigrants live. Additionally, programs like WIC and SNAP have limited funding so not everyone who qualifies for benefits can receive those benefits. The costs of immigrants not being able to receive WIC and SNAP benefits is not as visible to the general public. This can be contrasted with Medicaid, in which the state typically faces the burden of paying for costs of emergency health care, so there is more of an incentive for all people- including minorities- to be included in Medicaid (Filindra, 2013).

Uptake Rate of Hispanics

Areas that experience high rates of non-white immigration perceive that its economic and social welfare are threatened, increasing the negative views of immigrants (Filindra, 2013). This

perceived threat that new immigrants pose can lead to restrictive legislation regarding social benefits at a local level. This can be seen in states that have had high immigration growth since the 1990s, have also been more likely to exclude legal permanent residents from social programs out of the fear of becoming “immigrant welfare magnets” (Filindra, 2013).

A study conducted by Graefe et al. (2008) indicates that states that are traditionally considered to be composed of more immigrants are more likely to extend social benefit eligibility than are new destination states. This study is significant because it may predict the outcome of where social uptake rates of Hispanics are higher and where they are lower. Since the South and Midwest are composed of new destination states, Hispanics uptake rate of social benefits may be lower than in established Hispanic states.

Hispanic Immigrants Low Access of SNAP due to Immigrant Status

For many Americans, welfare reciprocity among immigrant communities is viewed as an indicator of immigration policy failure (Hook and Bean, 2009). When immigrants utilize social benefits, people begin to believe that the wrong kind of immigrants are being allowed into the US or that the policies which are supposed to help immigrants are failing because they are too generous. This, in turn, leads to the majority of the voting population not supporting legislation that allows immigrants to utilize social benefit programs like WIC and SNAP. What the majority fails to consider is how difficult US policy and legislation makes it for immigrants to find jobs that can support a family.

Children born into immigrant families are more likely to experience economic deprivation as “in 2009, some 24% of children in immigrant families lived below the official poverty line and 51% below double the poverty line” (Skinner, 2012). The reasons that poverty

is higher in immigrant communities include limited English proficiency, lack of citizenship status, and lack of parental education (Skinner, 2012).

Children who are raised in households with significant economic deprivation are associated with lacking health insurance, having hearing and speech problems, underperforming in the classroom and suffering from chronic health problems (Skinner, 2012). These families are eligible to receive social benefits, but immigrant families access them at a much lower rate than do native families as studies show that “44% of mixed immigrant families [who are eligible to receive benefits] participate in the [SNAP] program compared to 65% of income-eligible families composed of all-citizen children and parents” (Skinner, 2012).

There has been substantial research conducted as to why there is a lower uptake rate regarding immigrant families. Part of this is due to The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 which limited the benefits that documented immigrants could receive in social benefits programs like SNAP. Additionally, this lower take-up rate is also due to difficult program enrollment, lack of knowledge regarding eligibility and fear of government as both undocumented and documented immigrants believe that utilization of social benefits will jeopardize their citizenship potential (Skinner, 2012).

SNAP is a crucial program to helping families that are impoverished survive. Participation rates in SNAP have a strong positive correlation with the national poverty rates. Through SNAP, households are given a monthly stipend amount that is only allowed to be spent on certain types of foods. The federal government sets all the rules regarding SNAP program benefits and funds the full benefit cost as well as half of the administrative cost of state SNAP programs (Skinner, 2012). SNAP provides different benefits according to family needs. For example, families that struggle to meet their basic food needs are given a stipend to ensure that their most basic needs are

met, while families that do not struggle as much economically are allowed to allocate extra money to other approved goods. SNAP has improved health, learning, and food insecurity of participants. Thus, understanding how to apply and receive SNAP benefits is crucial to decreasing poverty and food insecurity across the United States for Hispanic families.

There is a lower uptake rate of social benefits for Hispanic families nationwide. There may be differences in the uptake rate of social benefits by region, but there is a gap in the existing research. Regional analysis is important because it could indicate if there are barriers that are unique to particular regions and policies could be implemented to lower the obstacles faced by Hispanic communities. My study will research the difference in Hispanic family's uptake rates of social benefits by region.

Currently, no research exists that examines how the Hispanic uptake rates of social benefits in the South and Midwest are different from the Southwest. My research will examine if the racial history of the South and Midwest deter Hispanics in these new emerging communities from applying for social benefits, particularly WIC and SNAP.

HYPOTHESIS AND OBSERVABLE IMPLICATIONS

I hypothesize that Hispanic families in new destination locations which are located in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States will receive social benefits at a lower rate

when compared to Hispanics that live in established immigrant locations which are located in the Northeastern and Western regions of the US. I believe that the lower uptake rate of Hispanics living in Southern and Midwestern regions is due to the particularly racial history of these regions as well as due to the racial and political ideology of those regions. I will conclude empirically that my hypothesis is true by conducting a logistic regression analysis that will indicate the uptake rates of social benefit programs of Hispanics separated by region.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

I will be conducting my analysis using data that has been collected by the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) which was conducted mainly through a contract with NORC at the University of Chicago and subcontractors Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. The main purpose of the study was to provide a snapshot of the availability and use of early care and education in the United States. The NSECE is composed of four integrated, nationally representative surveys that were conducted in 2012. The four surveys were: 1) households with children under 13, 2) home-based providers, 3) center-based providers, and 4) the center-based provider workforce. The reason why I chose these data sets is because they indicate the number of households that use social benefits such as food stamps, free lunch or reduced lunch, and WIC. Furthermore, the data sets categorize households into regions as well as race/ethnicity which are critical to being able to answer my research question.

Data Collection

In my study, I will be focusing only on data collected with the surveys that consisted of households with children under 13, which is the DS6 data set called “Household Quick Tabulation File”. The Household Survey was conducted with a parent or guardian of a child in households in which at least one child was under the age of 13. Most of the interviews were conducted in person with about 5% of the interviews being conducted over the phone. The total number of households interviewed was 11,629 which yielded a weighted interview completion rate of 61.7% (NSECE Codebook, 2012).

The particular variables within the Household Quick Tabulation File that I will be looking at are household region, household language, household race, household receiving food stamps, household children participating in free lunch or reduced lunch, and household WIC usage. I am going to conduct a descriptive comparison between Hispanics and other ethnic groups. But, in order to conduct my logistic regression analysis, I will be sub-setting the data to look only at Hispanic families.

The independent variable in this study will be the household region which asks participants about the region of where their household is located. The regions are divided into four categories: Northeast, Midwest, South and West. The dependent variable in this study will be the use of aid. The questions in this study that I will use to capture the use of aid are the questions that ask the households about their use of food stamps, free or subsidized lunch programs, and WIC. These questions were asked in the survey in the following format: “do you or your child/children receive food stamps? Do you or your child/children participate in a reduced or free school meals program? Do you or your child/children receive WIC?”. The answers coded are either yes or no variables.

Analysis

The analysis I will be conducting is to first combine the variables of social benefits listed. This means that if a family indicated yes to receiving *any* type of federal aid (food stamps, reduced of free school meal programs, or WIC), they will be coded as “yes” to receiving aid, if they said no to *all sources* they will be coded as “no” for receiving aid. The statistical procedure I will be using is logistic regression because my dependent variable is binary, so I will need to use logistic regression to predict aid usage by the region of the country these families live in. My analysis will tell me if Hispanic families that live in Northeastern and Western regions of the US receive aid at a higher rate than those who live in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the US.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Effects of Uptake Rates by Region

I begin by separating my data into four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South and West. I then narrow down the data to focus on Hispanic families and their uptake rate of social benefits. There are many variables involved in data, so I only draw attention to the most important results which are those that indicate the uptake rates of social benefits by region.

Table 1 is about the distribution of Hispanic and Non-Hispanic people among 4 regions: Northeast, Midwest, South and West.

Table 1: Distribution of Hispanic and Other Households Among 4 Regions		
	Hispanic Households	Other
Mid-West Mean	.1276124	.2554598
South Mean	.2602913	.336442
West Mean	.4924003	.2136702
Northeast Mean	.119696	.194428

The first column indicates that the population being analyzed among the four regions of the United States is the Hispanic population. The second column indicates that the population being analyzed is the non-Hispanic population among the four regions of the United States.

When looking at the 1st column and 1st row the mean of .127 indicates that about 13% of Hispanic people live in the Midwest. In the 1st column and 2nd row, the mean of .26 indicates that 26% of Hispanic people live in the South. In 1st column and 3rd row the mean of .49 indicates that about 50% of Hispanics live in the West. Finally, 1st column and 4th row, the mean of .119 indicates that about 12% of Hispanics live in the Northeast. Table 1 indicates that the majority of Hispanics live in West followed by the South.

When looking at the 2nd column and 1st row, the mean of .25 indicates that 25% of all non-Hispanic people live in the Midwest. When looking at the 2nd column, 2nd row the mean of .34 indicates that 34% of all non-Hispanic people live in the South. In 2nd column, 3rd row the mean of .21 indicates that 21% of all non-Hispanic people live in the West. Finally, in the 2nd column, 4th row the mean of .19 indicates that 19% of non-Hispanic people live in the Northeast. Table 1 indicates that the majority of non-Hispanic people live in the South followed by the Midwest.

This is important when looking at the uptake rates of social benefits as we can compare the

uptake rate per region with the amount of the Hispanic/Non-Hispanic population that lives in each region to prove justify why the proposed hypothesis is correct.

Table 2 analyzes the uptake rate of assistance across races in order to determine which race has the highest uptake rate of social benefits.

Table 2: Uptake of Assistance Across Races			
Race	Number of Households	Mean	Standard Deviation
American Indian	46	.6956522	.4652151
Asian	275	.2509091	.4343267
Hawaiian/Pacific	19	.7368421	.4524139
Hispanic	3,158	.7536415	.430958
Multi-racial	1,539	.5516569	.4974861
NA	46	.5454783	.5036102
Other	7	.7142857	.48795
Two Races	110	.6	.4921401
White	4,683	.3442238	.4751652
Total	11,629	.5443288	.4980525

The race that is most heavily represented is White with 4,683 households. The mean indicates that 34% of Whites take a form of assistance. The second biggest group is Hispanic, with 3,158 households. The mean indicates that 75% of Hispanics, in this dataset, take a form of assistance. This mean is the highest mean among all of the races listed indicating that Hispanics have a higher uptake rate of assistance compared to all other races, in this dataset. Keeping this

in mind will be very significant when analyzing my hypothesis as since so many Hispanics receive some form of assistance, the distribution among regions should be expected to be relatively even due to the relatively similar population densities, but that is not the case.

Looking at which social benefits Hispanics predominately use is important to understand the particular needs of the Hispanic community. Table 3 analyzes the mean to determine which social benefit Hispanics use the most: food stamps, free lunch, or WIC.

Table 3: Social Benefit Uptake Rate by Hispanics Separated into Categories			
	Food stamp	Free lunch	WIC
Mean	.391387	.5677644	.3502217
Standard Deviation	.488138	.4954652	.4771148

The means indicate that out of all Hispanics, 39% of Hispanics utilize food stamps, 56% utilize free lunch, and 35% utilize WIC. Free lunch is the social benefit that has the highest uptake rate which is comparable with research as about 28% of Hispanic children live in food insecure households, and Hispanic children make up about one-third of school children that receive free lunch at 32% (NCLR, 2015). Clearly, food insecurity is a very big issue in the Hispanic community and any discrimination that Hispanics face when applying to receive a social aid like free lunch can be detrimental to the family.

Table 4: Hispanic Households In-Depth Regional Analysis

	North East				Midwest				South				West			
	# of House holds	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	# of House holds	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	# of House Holds	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	# of House Holds	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Assistance	378	.793	.405	1	403	.741	.438	1	822	.686	.464	1	1555	.782	.412	1
Annual Income	378	29799.16	28583.74	20000	403	33296.83	31524.64	2500	822	34942.56	35910.73	24000	1555	34660.34	31919.61	2500
Household Members	378	4.193	1.45	4	403	4.689	1.600	5	822	4.53	1.43	4	1555	4.80	1.577	5
English Speaking	378	.664	.473	1	403	.451	.498	0	822	.607	.488	1	1555	.569	.495	1

The data in Table 4 is about only Hispanic households, which make up 3,158 of the households included in the data set. The majority of Hispanic households are located in the West with about 1,555 living there and an uptake rate of social benefits at 78%. The region where there are the least number of Hispanic households is in the Northeast, but Hispanics in the Northeast have the highest uptake rate at 79%. The region where Hispanic households have the lowest uptake rate is in the South with an uptake rate of 68%. This finding provides a very important contribution to help analyze the hypothesis as it would be expected that the higher number of Hispanics living in a region, the higher the uptake rate of social benefits for that same region. Table 4 proves that this expectation is not met, and my research analyzes why that is.

Conducting a logistic regression analysis of the data is essential to determining if there is a relationship between Hispanic family's being located in particular regions and their uptake rate of social benefits. Table 5, located below, draws conclusive results about this relationship.

Table 5: Results of Logistic Regression Analysis				
	OLS	OLS	Logistic Regression	Logistic Regression
Midwest	-0.0517*	-0.0727***	-0.186	-0.467***
=	(-1.68)	(-2.58)	(-0.97)	(-2.36)
South	-0.108***	-0.123**	-0.529***	-0.660***
=	(-4.03)	(-5.06)	(-3.15)	(-3.85)
West	-0.0110	-0.0199	0.135	-0.0981
=	(-0.45)	(-0.88)	(0.85)	(-0.60)
HH_Comp_Members	=*	0.0463***	=*	0.375***
=	=*	(10.15)	=*	(9.83)
Log of Income	=*	-0.152***	-1.533***	-1.538***
D_English	=*	-0.0899***	=*	-0.409***
_cons	0.794***	2.165***	17.03***	15.84***
=*	(35.96)	(30.20)	(22.49)	(20.59)
N	3158	3128	3128	3128
R-Sq	0.010	0.191	=*	=*
T-statistics in parentheses	**p<0.05	***p<0.01		

The main model used for Table 5 results are as follows:

$$Uptake_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 RegionDummies_i + \beta_3 Controls_i + \epsilon_i$$

Uptake_i is equal to 1 if someone takes any form of assistance and equal to 0 if no form of assistance is taken. β_2 is a 3x1 vector. β_3 is also a 3x1 vector and the region dummies include dummies for the Midwest, South and West. The control variables include: annual income (log income), number of household members, and the English language dummy. I estimate this model using two different specifications, one is OLS and the second is logistic regression. OLS is the most common regression method, but here since my dependent variable is either 0 or 1 it is better to use logistic regression. This is because logistic regression uses a logistic function to model a binary dependent variable. In this analysis, the binary dependent variable is uptake of assistance, 1 indicates the household takes assistance and 0 indicates that the household does not take any form of assistance. The independent variables are the regions: Midwest, South, West, and Northeast.

Table 5 results meets our reasonable expectations that the lower income a family has, the higher chance they have of taking social benefits. Additionally, when a family member does not speak English, that family has a higher chance of taking social benefits since it is harder to get a job without English language proficiency. Table 5 also indicates that if a family has more household members, they have a higher chance of taking social benefits, which is aligned with typical research associated with uptake rates of social benefits.

Due to the multicollinearity problem, the regression can include only 3 of the 4 variables so I decided to omit the variable for the region Northeast in order to allow me to compare the remaining 3 regions to the Northeast as a benchmark. The reason why I picked the Northeast to be my benchmark is because research indicates that the uptake rates in the Northeast vary much less than in the other 3 regions.

The OLS and Logistic regression results support each other which is why I have included both of the results in Table 5. I will focus my analysis on the results of the logistic regression analysis since my dependent variable is either 0 or 1. The 4th column of logistic regression includes the controls of income, language and number of households which are variables that can affect taking assistance and may change according to region so including these as my controls allows me to isolate the effect of solely the region on uptake rates.

In the model of logistic regression with controls (column 4) you see that the coefficient for Midwest is negative which means that being in the Midwest causes households to take less benefits compared to being in the Northeast. The coefficient for the South is also negative which indicates that being in the South causes households to take less benefits compared to being in the Northeast. The coefficient in the West is also negative, but it is not significant because it has a t-value of 0.06. This means that the data in the West and the Northeast are very similar, indicating that being in the West does not cause much of a difference in the uptake rates of social benefits when compared to the Northeast.

Additionally, looking at the relationship between Black and Hispanic uptake rate of social benefits is important to prove that the size of the Hispanic population in the state is not the primary cause of immigrant exclusion from social welfare programs. What is the primary cause of immigrant exclusion in social welfare programs is due to is the amount of African Americans living in the same area as Hispanics. Table 6 proves that there is a positive correlation the size of the African American population and immigrant exclusion in regard to social welfare.

Table 6: Relationship Between Black and Hispanic Uptake Rate of Social Benefits		
	Assistance Uptake Rate	Assistance Uptake Rate
Black Share	-0.475***	-2.650***
Household Members	0.0450***	0.366***

Table 6 looks at how having a higher number of Black families in an area affects the uptake rate of social benefits by Hispanic families. There are no regional indicators in Table 6 because the results are simply about the proportion of the population that is Black. In this table, the dependent variable is Hispanic uptake rate of social benefits. What this table indicates by the significant negative coefficients is that when there is high Black population share in a region, we find less social benefits up-taken by Hispanics. This indicates that as the value of Black families living in an area gets higher, the uptake rate of social benefits by Hispanic families gets lower.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings

The analysis of uptake rate by region proves my hypothesis to be true; being in the South or Midwest lowers a family's uptake rate of social benefits. This result is significant because it indicates that Hispanic families in new destination locations, which are located in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States, receive social benefits at a lower rate when compared to Hispanics that live in established immigrant locations which are located in the Northeastern and Western regions of the US. Despite the fact that Hispanics represent the second largest group regionally in the South, as 26% of Hispanics live there, Hispanics in the South are the least likely to receive social benefits. I believe that this is because there is an equity issue at stake when it comes to Hispanics that live in the South. They are facing the consequences of systemic racism. I hypothesize that it is due to the racial history of the South that Hispanics are

discriminated against when trying to apply for social benefits which is why they receive social benefits at such a lower rate when compared to other regions. Additionally, this could also be attributed to the fact that already established Black communities living in the South are less likely to receive social benefits so when a new racial minority enters, they are even less likely to receive social benefits due to the racist ideology regarding minorities.

The uptake rate of social benefits of Hispanics in the Midwest is higher than the South, but lower than the Northeast and West. I believe that this can also be traced to the racial history of the Midwest as well as the fact that that the Midwest is a new destination location and immigrants have not historically composed the population of the Midwest. I hypothesize that because the Midwest is not used to having a high immigrant population, this makes the local government less likely to allow immigrants to receive the social benefits they need due to the stigma associated with a correlation between high uptake rate of social benefits and “failed immigration policy initiatives” (Hook and Bean, 2009).

This is not to say, however, that Hispanics in the Northeast and Midwest do not face issues in regard to receiving social benefits. Although, the uptake rates are higher in the Northeast and Midwest this does not mean that everyone is receiving the aid that they are entitled to and this could also be caused by racist ideology as well and by negative stigmas around welfare states and not wanting to become welfare magnets. The data is a little less conclusive here. Needless to say, more work by the government may need to be done in these regions despite it not being as obvious as the work that needs to be done in the Southern and Midwestern regions.

Limitations

Firstly, the scope of my thesis is limited. This is due to the fact that I only looked at the uptake rate of three kinds of social benefits: WIC, food stamps, and free lunch. There are many other kinds of social benefits that were not included in the data I used. If more kinds of social benefits were included, this could have caused the uptake rate to be higher in different regions. Despite this, the analysis is still valid because utilizing three social benefits as a marker for uptake rates of social benefits can still be representative of the issue with the population at large and we would assume that even if the uptake rates were higher, the proportion would remain the same.

Secondly, the data I used is from 2012 which can seem a little outdated. I used this data because it had all of the variables that I needed in order to test my hypothesis and the most recent 2019 data was not available at the time I began my thesis. Though this does not make my data wrong, it does not account for the changes that have occurred between 2012 and 2020.

Policy Implications

This data provides an opportunity for local governments that are located in Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States to acknowledge that the uptake rate of social benefits by Hispanics in these regions does not correlate to the amount of Hispanics that live in these regions. A much higher number of Hispanics should be up-taking social benefits in these regions. This research can incentivize the implementation of policies that encourage anti-discrimination that targets Hispanic and Black families when applying to receive social benefits. Additionally, these results can allow for a future more general analysis on how to increase equity among Hispanics living in different regions of the United States that does not have to be tied to discrimination. It is important that local governments located in these regions take the first step

of acknowledging that there is some discrepancy in the uptake rate of social benefits by Hispanics to ensure that positive changes occur.

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