



American Jewish Committee

The Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Institute  
for Latino and Latin American Affairs

Focus Groups with Latino Jews in Five American Cities

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Implemented by

**Latino**  **Decisions**

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## 1. Project Description

On behalf of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Institute for Latino and Latina American Affairs (BILLA), Latino Decisions conducted ten focus groups with self-identified Latino Jews in five American cities. Established in 2004, BILLA highlights AJC's sustained commitment to strengthen ties among the United States, Ibero-America and Israel, promote the well-being of Jews and other minorities in the region, and solidify collaborative bonds with Hispanic communities in the United States.

The purpose of this project is two-fold: first, to learn more about who Latino Jews are; and second, to consider how members of this unique group can leverage their many identities to build domestic, global, and transnational bridges. This study breaks new ground with its unique combination of participants and subject matter. Convening groups exclusively comprised of Latino Jews living in the U.S. to discuss their unique blend of culture and identity is an unprecedented undertaking. Placing this small but thriving population at the center of research is also a novel approach to expand existing knowledge about Jewish and Latino diversity in the United States.

*This project breaks new ground by focusing exclusively on this small but thriving population, giving voice to their distinctive perspectives and experiences that cut across language, borders, and culture.*

The discussion sessions focused on topics associated with ethnic and cultural identity, transnational attachments, and community engagement. Participants articulated how their Jewish and Latino identities color their daily lives, and how their unique backgrounds simultaneously position them as both insiders and outsiders to multiple communities.

This report proceeds in the following fashion: first detailed descriptions on the focus groups are provided, then ten key overall findings are presented, followed by additional observations related to the core topics (identity, transnational attachments, and

community engagement), and site-specific findings, and finally we conclude with recommendations articulated by the participants.

## **2. Focus Groups: Approach, Sites and Participant Profile**

### **Focus Group Approach**

This project holds the distinction of being the most extensive focus group work with Latino Jews in the United States to date. While it is true that focus groups are not scientifically representative samples, we can say with confidence that the demographic mix (national origin, age, gender, etc) reflects key demographic among Latino Jews in the United States that are critical to understanding the diversity within this population.

For the purposes of this study, the use of focus groups is the optimal approach due to the very specific population of interest, and the substantive questions pursued here. Random sampling survey methods would be cost prohibitive, and would not provide the level of detail necessary to evaluate the responses. More specifically, the focus group setting allows participants to express their views on topics and terms with personal meaning beyond formal definitions (for example "American" or "Hispanic" in this study) that can easily be misinterpreted without the context of conversation. For these reasons, focus groups were the best method to investigate perspectives on identity and cultural attachments among Latino Jews in the United States.

Demographers estimate that Latino Jews comprise about 2.5 to 5 percent of the total Jewish population in the United States<sup>1</sup>, the total number is estimated to be between 130,000 to 227,000. To identify focus group participants, AJC and BILLA reached out to their membership and personal networks throughout the country. Latino Jews were recruited for focus groups in five metro areas across the United States. Potential participants were identified via a combination of AJC's networks and snowball sampling.

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<sup>1</sup> Bokser Liwerant, Judit 2014. "Jewish Diaspora and Transnationalism: Awkward (Dance) Partners?" In *Reconsidering Israel-Diaspora Relations*. eds. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Judit Bokser Liwerant, and Yosef Gorny. Leiden: Brill, 369-404.

Tighe, E., Saxe, L., Kadushin, C., Magidin de Kramer, R., Nursahedov, B., Aronson, J., et al. 2011. "Estimating the Jewish Population of the United States: 2000-2010." Waltham, MA: Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Brandeis University.

Additional demographic factors were used to screen participants to provide balance in terms of gender, age, national origin, and other traits.

**Sites**

A total of sixty-three people took part in the focus groups conducted between September 1st and October 21st, 2015. Latino Jews residing in Miami/South Florida, the Chicago metro area, New York City, Los Angeles, and Houston participated in the discussions. Two sessions were held at each site to maximize participation and collect information on local perspectives. Table 1 reports the number of participants at each site and session dates.

**Table 1. Participants by Site**

Site	Miami Metro Area	Chicago Metro Area	New York	Los Angeles	Houston
Date	September 1st	September 2nd	October 8th	October 20th	October 21st
Number of Participants (Total = 63)	17	13	8	16	9

Sites were selected based upon several factors including:

- The estimated size of the Latino Jewish population
- Geographic and associated demographic diversity in the metro area
- Local capacity to facilitate the specialized recruitment effort

There is extensive diversity within the Latino Jewish population. Perspectives and experiences often vary by national origin, time in the U.S., age, local demographic context, and many other factors. In order to capture some of these differences in more detail, focus groups were segmented by age cohort in Miami, and by national origin in Los Angeles.

Miami's large Latino Jewish population made it possible to convene groups by age to explore how age may differentiate perspectives and experiences. All participants in the first group were over 40 years old, and the second group consisted of participants under 35 years of age. This approach revealed nuanced experiences. For example, with respect to community engagement, the under 35 group discussed participation in activities more

tailored to their roles as young professionals, or as parents with young children. The over 35 group was engaged in a wider range of activities, held more leadership roles, and described broader personal and professional networks.

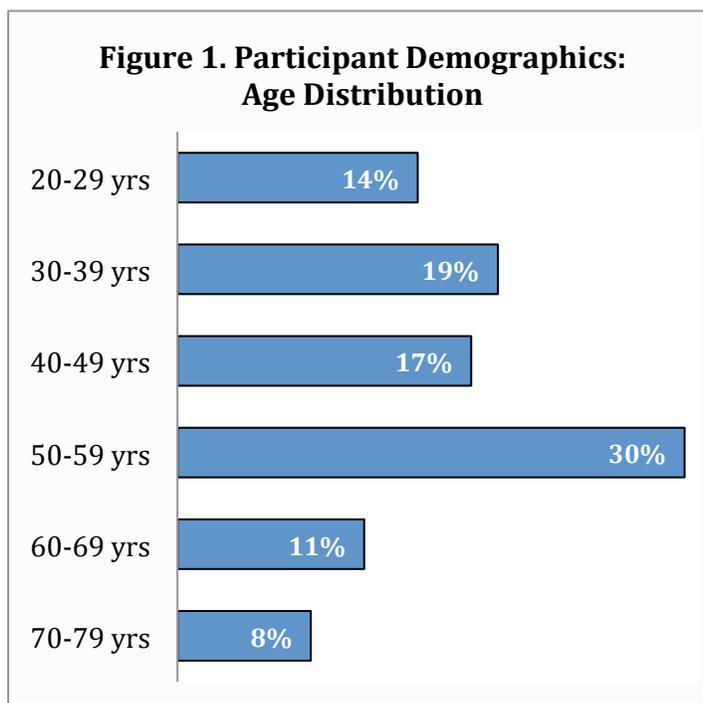
Mexican-origin Latino Jews are part of the largest segment of the Latino population in the United States, as 64 percent of all Latinos in the U.S. are Mexican origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The large Latino and Mexican-origin populations in Los Angeles made it an ideal setting to segment by national origin, to observe perspectives from Mexican-origin Jews, and how they may differ from other focus group participants.

### Participant Profile

Engagement and recruitment efforts spearheaded by AJC produced a diverse set of respondents that embodies the diversity among Latino Jews in the United States. In order to provide context, the detailed participant demographic discussion provides comparison references between the focus group participants and national trends for the U.S. Latino, and the U.S. Jewish populations using data from the most recent U.S. Census Bureau population estimates<sup>2</sup>, and the 2013 Pew Survey of U.S. Jews<sup>3</sup>.

### Age Socioeconomics and Gender

Participant ages ranged from 22 to 78 years. Half were under age 50, and half were above that threshold. Figure 1 reports more details on age distribution by age cohort. The median age was 48, which is younger than the median age among all Jews in the U.S. (50 years),

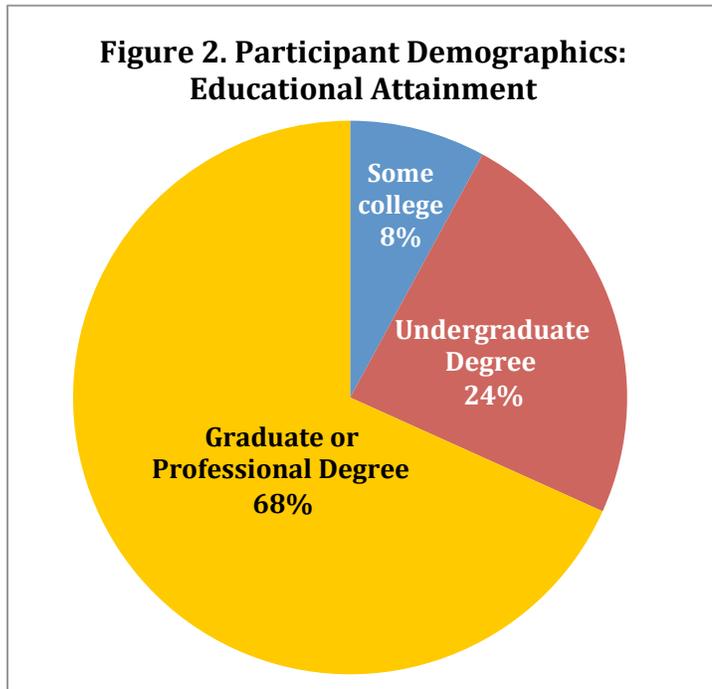


<sup>2</sup> Detailed tables derived using U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5-year estimates located at [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov).

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center. October 1, 2013. "A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews". Washington, DC. Located at: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/jewish-american-full-report-for-web.pdf>.

and significantly older than the median age among U.S. Latinos, which is 34 years of age.

This set of participants is especially well-educated, 92 percent are college graduates, and 68 percent hold graduate or professional degrees (Figure 2). Among the 8 percent (5 of the 63 participants) that did not have a college degree, all had some college experience. U.S. Census estimates indicate 29



percent of adults in the U.S. are college graduates, and 10 percent hold graduate or professional degrees. Among Latinos, only 13 percent are college graduates, and 3 percent have post-graduate degrees. Among Jews in the U.S., 58 percent are college graduates and 28 percent hold post-graduate degrees.

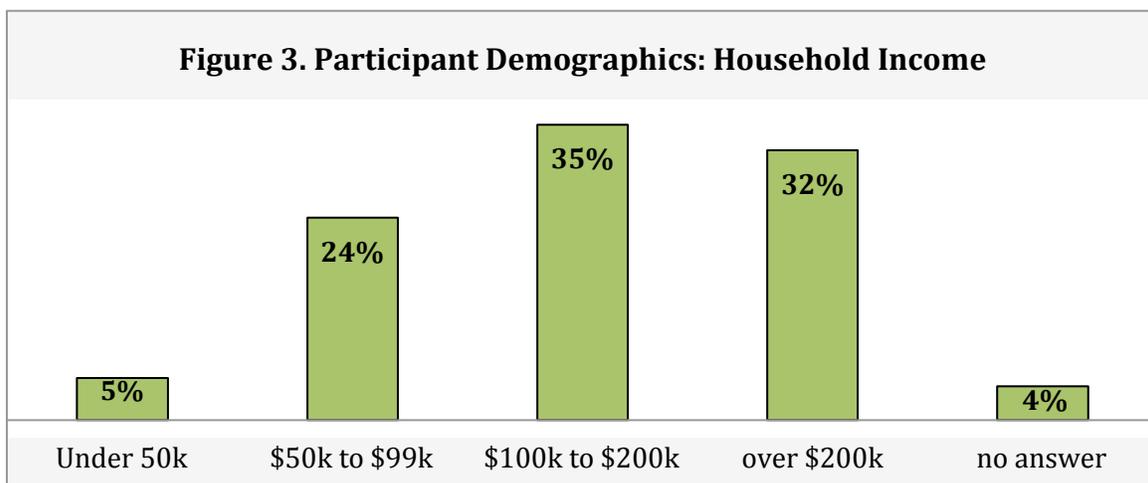
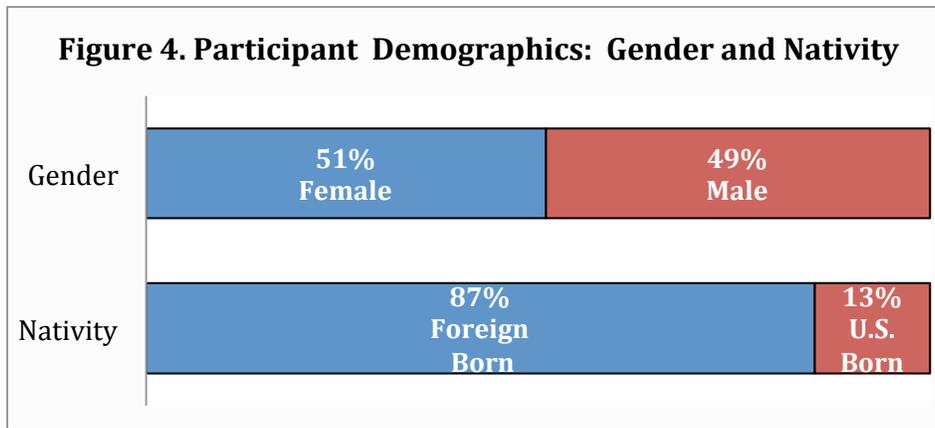


Figure 3 reports household income for all participants. The majority, 67 percent, earn \$100,000 a year or more. Only 29 percent have annual household incomes under \$100,000.

While the share of high-income households is quite large, it is consistent with the educational attainment trends among the participants reported in Figure 2. The 2013 Pew study found 30 percent of Jewish households with incomes above \$100,000. The U.S.



Census Bureau estimates the median household income in the U.S. is \$53,046, and \$39,005 for Latinos. Participants noted how socioeconomic gaps between Jewish and non-Jewish Latinos distinguishes their life experiences, despite elements of cultural commonality.

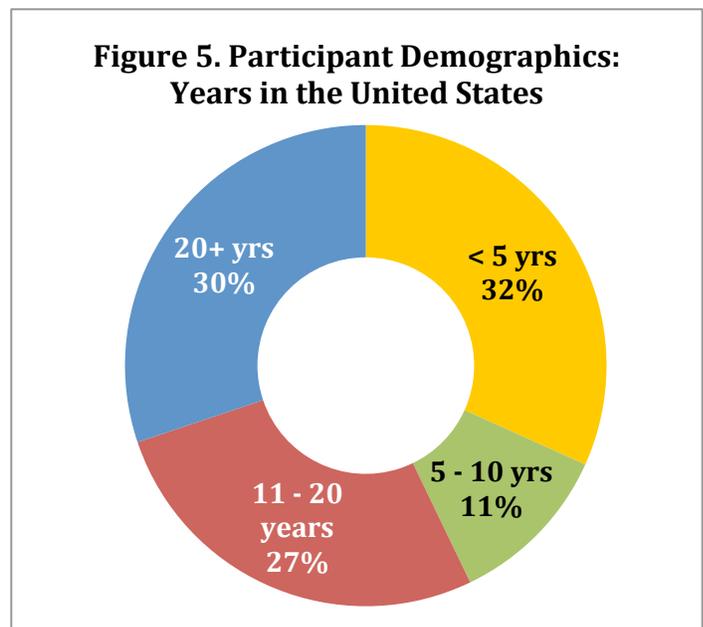
Gender distribution was nearly even, with women comprising 51 percent of participants, and men 49 percent. Immigrants comprised the vast majority of participants: 87 percent were foreign born, and 13 percent U.S. born. This stands in contrast to national trends where only 14 percent of American Jews are foreign born, and 50 percent of all Latino adults in the U.S. are foreign born. With respect to citizenship status, 81 percent are U.S. citizens, 13 percent hold legal permanent residency, and 5 percent are visa holders.

### Time in U.S. and Latin Roots

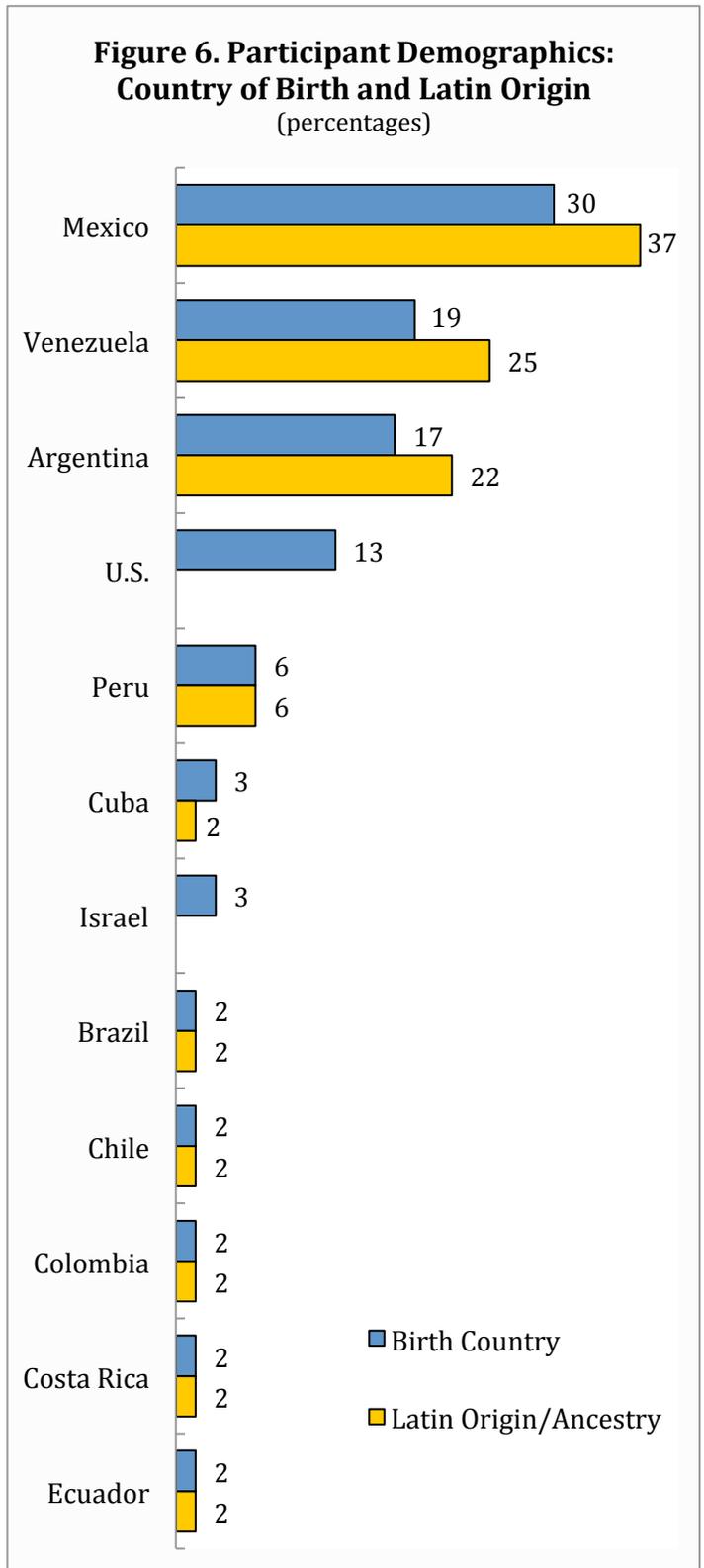
The participants have varied lived experience in the United States; time in the U.S. ranged from three months to fifty years, the average was sixteen years.

Figure 5 shows nearly one-third (20

participants) have resided in the country less than five years, and an almost equal number



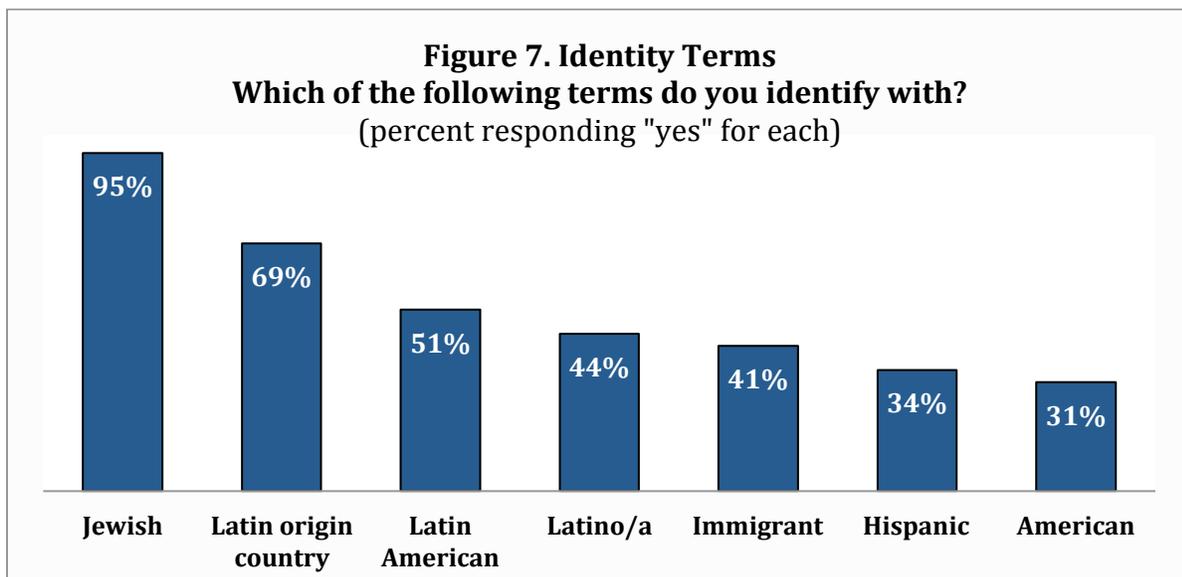
(19) have been in the U.S. more than two decades. Another 27 percent (17 participants) have been in the U.S. between eleven and twenty years, and 11 percent (7 participants) between five and ten years. The distributions on nativity and time in the United States naturally lead to exploring more detail on individual origins. Figure 6 reports two similar, but distinct characteristics: country of birth and Latin origin. The blue bars indicate the percentage of all participants born in the listed country. The yellow bars indicate the percentage of participants that reported a given country as their "Latin origin or ancestry". Two-thirds of participants were born in Mexico, Venezuela, or Argentina, and 84 percent trace their Latin roots to these three countries. The fact that the focus group participants largely come from Mexico, Venezuela, and Argentina reflects a combination of demographic, cultural, political, and historical factors that are the subject of extensive academic research. The large Mexican-origin share is consistent with the country's geographic proximity to the United States, a sizeable Jewish population in Mexico (third largest in Latin America), and the large Mexican-origin



Latino population in the United States. The recent wave of Venezuelan Jewish migration to South Florida accounts for the large number of Venezuelans in the Miami focus groups.

Sergio DellaPergola's global demographic research<sup>4</sup> indicates that Argentina is home to the largest Jewish population in Latin America, and has also seen a large share of this population relocate to South Florida due to economic crisis, particularly in the late 1990's and early 2000's (DellaPergola, 2014). These factors account for the notable presence of Argentines in the focus groups.

## Identity Terms



Participants were provided a list of terms and asked to indicate which ones they identify with, allowing for multiple "yes" and "no" responses (Figure 7). Note that they simply answered whether they identify with each of the terms, they were not asked to rank-order preferences. The findings section of this report addresses this topic in more detail, but it is worthwhile to consider the dramatic variation in the responses. On average, participants identify with at least three different terms. The vast majority, 95 percent of participants, identify with the term "Jewish". There is a twenty-six point gap between "Jewish" and the second most popular category, "Latin origin country", where 69 percent identify with their specific national origin term (e.g. Mexican, Venezuelan, etc). A majority also identify as

<sup>4</sup> Sergio DellaPergola. "World Jewish Population, 2014," in Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. (Editors) The American Jewish Year Book, 2014, Volume 114 (2014) (Dordrecht:Springer). Located at: <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Studies/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=3257>

"Latin American". The latter outcomes are consistent with the fact that the vast majority of participants were born in Latin America and spent formative years -- many well into adulthood -- in their Latin-home countries. A sizeable, but less than majority share identify as Latino/a (44 percent), or as immigrants (41 percent). The terms "Hispanic" and "American" had the least traction, at 34 and 31 percent respectively.

It is evident that the responses to the identity question reflect how participants define themselves, as opposed to formal definitions. For example, 87 percent of respondents are immigrants to the United States, born in Latin America. Yet only 41 percent indicated that they identify with the term "immigrant". Similarly, 81 percent of participants are United States citizens, but only 31 percent identify with the term "American". The focus group setting provided the venue and time to discuss the how these terms have different meanings for Latino Jews.

From this detailed demographic profile, and the pre-session survey on identity we can glean that the participants possess a distinctive point of view, rooted in their unique transnational experiences, inter-cultural, and cross-cultural relationships and interactions that color daily life for Latino Jews in the United States.

### 3. Overall Key Findings

The focus group discussions revealed compelling insights about how Latino Jews perceive and experience their cultural identities, remain attached to their home countries, and engage with their communities. The key overall findings were narrowed down to include observations where there was substantial agreement across all sites regarding core topics of interest (identity, attachment, engagement). There were, of course, some important differences across and even within the groups that are reported in the later sections. Additional findings on each of the thematic issues, and group-level distinctions are also included in the subsequent sections. Participants shared a similar set of life-experiences and articulated many of the same perspectives on a range of topics.

#### 1. Respondents enjoy their unique cultural blend, and overwhelmingly agreed it is an advantage to be both Jewish and Latino.

- Dual cultural orientations and practices personally connect them to many people, communities, and countries around the world.
- People discussed how Jewish and Latino identities and cultural fluency enriched their lives, and provide vast opportunities to engage with others.

*Spanish is like an orchestra of one hundred musicians. English is like an orchestra of ten.*

*Upon meeting another Jew there is an instant connection. There is an element of trust.*

#### 2. Many articulated the point that being Jewish means belonging to a global community, deeply connected by their relationship with Israel, shared values and cultural traditions.

- For Latino Jews, their Jewish cultural identity is fostered through their connection to Israel, and reinforced via community relationships and activities.
- It was pointed out that synagogue and religiosity were not primary conduits to Jewish cultural identity.

*More than a religion, it's a culture.*

*News from Israel doesn't feel like its "over there", it is right here.*

*In our countries it is more secular Jewish. Here you don't see so many cultural and humanistic expressions of Judaism.*

### **3. Participants actively work to pass along their particular sense of Jewish and Latin American identity and culture to their children.**

- Parents described their efforts most often in terms of observing Jewish holidays, maintaining Spanish at home, travel to Israel and Latin America, enrolling in Jewish day schools, and fostering connections with other Latino Jews.
- Several observed that, relative to their parents and grandparents, later generations would inevitably develop more "Americanized" manifestations of Jewish and Latino cultural identities and attachments.

*I want my kids to have a sense of multiple identities, I want them to go to Mexico and feel that is part of their world too.*

*We lived in a very compact community in Venezuela, there was no question of your Jewish identity. Maintaining that here is way more difficult.*

### **4. Latino Jews feel simultaneously connected to and distinctive from American Jews.**

- Participants feel great kinship based upon their affinity and ties to Israel, shared history, and common cultural practices such as affixing mezuzahs to their doors, and celebrating bar mitzvahs. Shared sensibilities about the value of education, appreciation for arts and letters, and humor were also discussed.
- Participants consistently described American Jews as more formal in their social, cultural, and religious practices; making it difficult to relate at a personal level. Many also discussed experiences that led them to conclude the vast majority of American Jews are unaware that Latino Jews exist in the United States.

*When you meet someone who is Jewish, you understand each other on another level.*

*My grandparents are Holocaust survivors. It is very important to protect Israel.*

*Every time I say 'I'm a Mexican Jew', they say, 'Oh, so your mom converted.', because they don't think we exist.*

### **5. Latino Jews feel simultaneously connected to and distinctive from the broader U.S. Latino community.**

- Spanish language, close families, vibrant celebrations, and entrepreneurial spirit were all elements of Latino culture that participants expressed sharing with non-Jewish Latinos.
- Socioeconomic and class differences were cited as some of the most consequential differences between Jewish and non-Jewish Latinos in the U.S. Most felt that non-Jewish Latinos have limited experience or information about Jews altogether.

*I have a lot of Latino non-Jewish friends, we have a lot in common. I feel like we raise our children in similar ways, and manners are important.*

*Hispanics think, 'Oh you're Jewish, so you're rich, you don't have problems.'*

**6. Robust ties to their Latin American countries of origin endure, this held true even among those born in the United States.**

- Participants have close business and familial relations, including parents, siblings, and life-long friends -- most of them Jewish -- in their Latin American home countries.
- Years and decades after leaving Latin America, most indicated they continue to keep up with the local Jewish community and follow national events that are especially relevant to the Jewish population in their origin countries.
- There was a sense of gratitude for these countries that opened the door to their parents and grandparents decades ago.

*I visit Mexico about five or six times a year to see family and attend company board meetings.*

*My parents and two brothers still live in Mexico. I told my husband we need to go back this year.*

*In Venezuela, when there was a (Jewish) political issue, the community would convene and take a stand, as a bloc.*

**7. The vast majority of respondents were enthusiastic about the idea of building bridges between the Jewish and non-Jewish Latino populations in the United States, and believe there is a need for programs pursuing such goals.**

- There was a keen understanding that the Latino population in the United States will continue to grow for decades to come, and that developing stronger relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish Latinos is a worthy endeavor that can produce many positive outcomes.
- Many said they would be glad to take on a role in this effort if they were asked to participate.
- Several described the need for different types of outreach that would be effective with various segments within the U.S. Latino community. For example: local collaboration among business professionals, international cooperation between Jewish organizations and Latino-led/owned businesses, educational partnerships and exchanges with high school and college students, engaging more Latino journalists and researchers, and partnerships with non-profits and other organizations focused on immigration issues.

*We could make bridges and connections to all kinds of communities if we build bridges with Latinos in the United States.*

*Hispanics are the next majority in the U.S. It just makes sense, and it is important not just to be friends, but to have them understand us.*

*We are both, right? We are good Hispanics and Jewish, so we need to make those two ends meet.*

## **8. Participants seek out and want more opportunities to connect with Latino Jews.**

- At each site participants voiced their interest in activities, programs, and settings, that would foster interaction among Latino Jews.
- Many said they would like to see Jewish cultural and religious institutions actively incorporate and welcome Latino Jewish participation via targeted programming featuring bilingual or Latino elements (e.g. guest speakers, music, lecture topics, etc.)

*When I go to synagogues of predominantly American Jews I feel out of place, not religiously, but culturally. That is why I go to a Latin Jewish synagogue where I feel that everyone is like me.*

*I feel integrated through the school and our synagogue; it's missing the Latin piece though.*

## **9. Latino Jews in the U.S. experience a sui generis "outsider" status in their Latin American home countries, and the United States. Participants discussed this very particular set of circumstances at various turns.**

- As Jews, they were a cultural minority in their Catholic-dominated Latin American home countries.
- Latino Jews describe their outsider-experience in the United States in terms of being culturally different from non-Jewish Latinos, American Jews, and Americans in general.
- Participants described specific ways that their Jewish or Latino identities set them apart from other Jews, Latinos, and Americans.

*In Mexico it was like 98 percent Catholic and then whatever else. There were not a lot of religions, you really feel different.*

*In our countries we were kind of scared since there were few people like you. You had to work to find your comfort zone.*

*American Jews don't know what it is like to feel isolated.*

## **10. Participants see a need for strategic coalitions between the American Jews and the Latino community in the United States.**

- Several pointed to Black-Jewish coalitions that were solidified during the civil rights era as a model for Latino-Jewish alliance development.
- It is important that Latino officeholders and the increasingly influential Latino electorate support Israel.

*There isn't much contact between Jews and Latinos.*

*The general Jewish community should wake up because we need allies in Congress, and when it comes to voting on Israel, and funding on Israel.*

*We need to make alliances like we did during Civil Rights era.*

## 4. Findings: Cultural Identity

Additional observations about cultural identity, especially as it relates to identity terms and the vast diversity among Latino Jews are presented in this section.

### 1. Participants had strong feelings about the meaning of various Latino identity terms and whom they reference.

- Throughout the sessions participants used national origin terms, "Latin American", "Latino Jew", and "Latin" most often when referring to themselves. Only a few used the term "Latino" without the Jewish reference.
- The meaning of "Latino" in the U.S. was described in different ways across sites. The discussion helps explain why only 44 percent of all participants said that they identify with this term.
  - Some held that "Latino" specifically describes people born in Latin America. No one born in the United States, even if both parents were born in Latin America, can lay claim to the term by this interpretation.
  - In other instances, participants said the opposite, that "Latino" is an American term that has no meaning or authentic identity outside the U.S.
  - Others said the word was a marketing tool to sell products, so it had no resonance, especially when national origin and Jewish identity is so strong.

*For me the word has no meaning. It was made up to sell stuff.*

*Latino is an American term. No one in Latin America uses that word.*

*How can you be Latino if you were not born in Latin America?*

### 2. Participants are keenly aware that their parents or grandparents were not originally from Latin America, making their Latino background quite different from other Latinos in the Americas.

- Many respondents described the fact that their parents and grandparents migrated to Latin America during the Second World War.
- Several noted their lack of Latin American ancestry accounted for their different physiological appearance relative to non-Jewish Latinos in the U.S.

*My friends don't understand that I'm Latina, but not at all indigenous to the region. The connection is real, I was born and raised in Mexico.*

*We had advantages because our skin color was lighter.*

**3. The vast majority of participants are American citizens (51 out of 63), but few identify with the term "American" because of its strong cultural references that do not reflect their experience.**

- Throughout the sessions participants used the term "American" in reference to white Americans. The term "American Jews" referred to non-Latino Jews in the United States.
- Given the fact that most are foreign born, have lived in the U.S. less than 20 years, maintain strong attachments to their home country, Israel, Jewish, and Latin American culture, it makes sense that there is less of an identity as "American". This group already has many other identities that are stronger and more salient.

*American is my citizenship, I hold a passport and feel proud on the 4th of July. But I never say 'I'm an American Jew'. I'm a Latin or Latin American Jew.*

*There is a big distinction between Latin American (immigrants) and American-born Latinos.*

**4. The majority of participants are immigrants to the U.S. (55 of the 63), but few identify with the term "immigrant". People discussed how their circumstances are quite different compared to the most Latino immigrants.**

- Consistent with their survey responses, when discussing immigrants, or Latino immigrants, participants did not include themselves in the reference group.
- In contrast to the dominant media narrative on undocumented Latino, particularly Mexican, immigrants in the United States, Latin American Jews in the U.S. are typically English-fluent, professionally established, well-educated, and hold American citizenship.
- It is notable that participants at each site expressed concern about Donald Trump's aggressive posturing on Mexicans and immigration.

*I am an immigrant, I was born in another country, but no, I can't say that I identify with that term.*

**5. Latino Jews have a very strong sense of the cultural nuances that distinguish Latinos of various backgrounds (inside and outside of the U.S.).**

- While most do feel a strong kinship with other Latin American Jews, there was quite a bit of conversation about differences. Perceived differences, for example between Argentines, Mexicans, Venezuelans, U.S.-born Latinos, Texas Latinos, Florida Latinos, among others were articulated throughout.

*In California when they say "Latino" it really means Mexican, in Florida it means Cuban.*

## 5. Findings: Transnational Attachments

Additional observations focused on transnational attachments to Latin America and Israel, and the nexus between them, are reported here.

### 1. Participants have strong transnational attachments to both their Latin American home countries and Israel.

- Affinity for the Jewish community in their home countries is not just sentimental nostalgia, participants contribute time and money to Jewish causes in their origin countries and Israel alike. This held true even among the U.S. born.
- Attachments to their origin countries are largely mediated by their continued concern and involvement with the Jewish community. That is to say, Jewish issues are the focus of their attention and activity when they engage with their origin countries.
- The fact that Latino Jews have strong transnational ties to both Israel and their Latin American home countries beyond the first generation is a notable distinction from other immigrants to the United States.

*In Argentina, we cover each other's back.*

*I like being Mexican for World Cup and to stand against Trump, but it is not more important than being Jewish. I definitely keep up with the Jewish community in Monterrey (Mexico).*

### 2. Support for Jews is a global concern that sharpens transnational attachments beyond their own countries of origin.

- The need to stand up for Jews around the world is a deeply held value that has special resonance for these participants with recent personal experience (either themselves or people they know) in countries that have been hostile towards Jews.
- This unique transnational attachment to Israel that endures across borders and generations facilitates a strong Jewish identity.

*Being a Mexican Jew makes me different, more worldly. Our Jewishness is more instilled in us, we assimilate less.*

### 3. Language ability fosters transnational attachments for Latino Jews.

- Spanish fluency makes it easy to stay abreast of local conditions and events using Spanish news outlets, social networks, and other online resources with local, national, and international perspectives.

*I still listen to radio news from Argentina (online).*

## 6. Findings: Community Engagement

Ways that Latino Jews engage with community organizations are discussed here, with more attention to some important local dynamics that shape participation.

### 1. Participants arrived from Latin American communities with well-established traditions of active participation in their local Jewish community. Most continue to engage now that they are in the U.S.

- Latino Jews engage with their local Jewish community via their local JCC, AJC, Jewish Day Schools, and synagogue-sponsored activities. Many seek out other Latino Jews in these venues.
- Due to the large number of Latino Jews residing in South Florida, Miami offered more extensive opportunities for engagement in a social milieu that is familiar and comfortable. Participants across the country were aware of this unique context.
- It is important to note that at all sites participants were involved in a variety of organizations and activities that are not attached to Jewish or Latino advocacy, for example professional associations, soccer clubs, and alumni associations.

*It's not like Aventura here, there aren't that many of us here.*

### 2. Because of their lived experiences outside of the U.S., participants evaluate their opportunities to engage with Jewish community and advocacy organizations from a comparative point of view.

- It was often noted that the Jewish community was a tight-knit hub for social, professional, educational, and personal connection in their home countries. In the U.S. these kinds of networks are diffused across many types of organizations, institutions, and religious traditions.
- Participants noted that even in places with many opportunities to participate, like New York and Miami, cultural gaps can discourage engagement.

*Here there are tons of Jews, but not the same sense of community as Venezuela.*

*The culture here is very competitive. It is hard to get involved and give more, everyone is so busy.*

**3. In a few instances, participants discussed their personal work to establish or expand existing organizational efforts to incorporate and engage Latinos Jews.**

- By virtue of their own experiences, participants knew there was a need and a healthy interest in more civic and cultural engagement opportunities for Latino Jews.

*I am part of the Jewish Latin Center, and I try to help bring more Latin Jews to events.*

**4. Participant engagement with Latino-focused organizations is varied, mostly centered on business relationships, volunteer work, and student groups.**

- Several are engaged with their local and the national Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Latino-focused associations within their professions.
- A number of people give time to Latino advocacy groups offering legal assistance, English language programs, and immigrant services. Participants interact with other Latino volunteers and staff as well as those benefitting from these services.
- Several mentioned being in Latino cultural appreciation societies as college students. Most were less inclined to join a more politically-oriented Latino student groups.
- In Miami and Houston participants specifically mentioned participating in Latino-focused events sponsored by various consulates.

*I do pro-bono legal work, mostly for Latino immigrants.*

*We used to go to events and hear speakers at the consulate here in Houston.*

## 7. Recommendations

Based upon the feedback provided in the discussions, we outline several recommendations to address the concerns and needs of Latino Jews as expressed in this focus group series.

**1. Follow up with focus group participants regarding coalition work between Latinos and Jews in the United States.** Many specifically said they want to play an active role in building bridges between Latino and Jewish communities. As noted in report, people believe there is a need, and many offered good ideas in need of implementation.

**2. Build out local programming specifically to promote social and networking opportunities;** participants are looking for outlets to express their Jewish identity and meet others like them.

**3. Regularly include and solicit input from Latino Jews on all manner of programming.** This group wants to be at the table when it comes to Jewish advocacy. Their experiences, personal and professional relationships, and passion for Israel can be applied to advance any number of particular organizational programs or efforts.

**4. Information about existing programs, events, and community efforts that are of particular interest to Latino Jews need to be shared more broadly.** Many people eager to contribute and looking for community do not know about excellent opportunities already in place.

**5. Share information at the affiliate level and identify best practices to engage Latino Jews.** What can Latino Jewish leaders in various cities recommend to other sites with similar demography?

**6. Keep an eye on the upcoming generations by exploring coalition opportunities on college campuses.** Latino and Jewish student organizations can be especially valuable resources with positive long-term impact as issues important to both communities are highly visible on college campuses.

**7. Retain the affinity of Latino Jewish young people in their 20's and 30's.** Most have been to Jewish Day School, have a great affinity for their culture and community, but are especially absent from organizational activities that tend to have more veteran members.