

Who Remains Mexican? Selective Ethnic Attrition and the Intergenerational Progress of Mexican Americans

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Abstract

This chapter argues that selective ethnic attrition creates potentially serious problems for tracking the socioeconomic progress of the U.S.-born descendants of Mexican immigrants. As the descendants of Mexican immigrants assimilate into American society and often intermarry with non-Mexicans, ethnic identification weakens, particularly among the children produced by Mexican intermarriages. This process of ethnic leakage is highly selective, because Mexican Americans who intermarry tend to have much higher education and earnings than Mexican Americans who do not intermarry. Consequently, available data for third- and higher-generation Mexicans, who usually can only be identified by their subjective responses to questions about Hispanic ethnicity, understate the socioeconomic attainment of this population. In effect, through the selective nature of intermarriage and ethnic identification, some of the most successful descendants of Mexican immigrants assimilate to such an extent that they fade from empirical observation. We present several pieces of evidence that are consistent with this story.

I. Introduction

As a self-styled “nation of immigrants,” the United States takes great pride in its historical success as a “melting pot” able to absorb and unify people coming from diverse lands and cultures. At the same time, however, Americans’ pride in their immigrant heritage often seems tempered by the nagging fear that the most recent arrivals are somehow different, that the latest wave of foreigners will not integrate into the mainstream of U.S. society. Certainly, this fear was voiced when Italians and other relatively unskilled immigrants arrived in large numbers at the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s (Higham 1970). Time has assuaged this particular fear. In terms of outcomes such as educational attainment, occupation, and earnings, the sizeable differences by national origin that initially persisted among earlier European immigrants have largely disappeared among the modern-day descendants of these immigrants (Neidert and Farley 1985; Lieberman and Waters 1988; Farley 1990).

There is considerable skepticism, however, that the processes of assimilation and adaptation will operate similarly for the predominantly non-white immigrants who have entered the United States in increasing numbers over the past several decades (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1994). Of particular concern are Mexican immigrants and their descendants. Mexicans assume a central role in current discussions of immigrant intergenerational progress and the outlook for the so-called “new second generation,” not just because Mexicans make up a large share of the immigrant population, but also because most indications of relative socioeconomic disadvantage among the children of U.S. immigrants vanish when Mexicans are excluded from the sample (Perlmann and Waldinger 1996, 1997). Therefore, to a great extent, concern about the long-term economic trajectory of immigrant families in the United States is concern about Mexican-American families.

Are Mexicans following the same intergenerational trajectory that earlier European immigrants did? Huntington (2004), among others, is decidedly pessimistic, and he points to several factors that could slow the pace of assimilation by Mexicans today as compared to Europeans in the past. These factors include the vast scale of current immigration flows from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, the substantial (though lessening) geographic concentration of these flows within the United States, and the fact that such flows have remained sizeable over a much longer period of time than did the influx from any particular European country. In addition, the close proximity of Mexico to the United States facilitates return and repeat migration. These unique features of Mexican immigration foster the growth of ethnic enclaves in the United States where immigrants and their descendants could, if they so choose, live and work without being forced to learn English or to Americanize in other important ways. Another salient factor is that many Mexicans enter the United States as illegal immigrants.

Moreover, today's economy provides fewer opportunities for unskilled workers to advance than did the economy that greeted earlier European immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Perlmann 2005). Around 1900, high school completion was uncommon for native-born Americans, so while many European immigrants arrived with relatively meager educations, their skill disadvantage was smaller than that faced today by Mexican immigrants who typically lack the additional years of high school and college that have become the norm for U.S. natives. In addition, recent decades have witnessed a large rise in earnings inequality among American workers, driven by substantial increases in the labor market payoffs to education and other indicators of skill (Levy and Murnane 1992; Autor and Katz 1999). As a result, the skill deficit of Mexican immigrants has become even more of a liability in our modern economy that places a higher premium on knowledge and cognitive ability.

In contrast to Huntington (2004), Perlmann (2005) offers a cautiously optimistic assessment of the prospects for assimilation by the descendants of Mexican immigrants. After carefully comparing the intergenerational mobility experienced by low-skill European immigrants arriving in the United States around 1900 with that experienced by modern-day Mexicans, Perlmann (2005) concludes that “Mexican economic assimilation may take more time—four or five generations rather than three or four” (p. 124), but that such assimilation is nonetheless occurring. If this is correct, then the long-term integration of Mexican Americans may not turn out all that differently from the success stories often recounted for previous waves of U.S. immigration.¹

Several recent studies have explored this issue by comparing education and earnings across generations of Mexican Americans (Trejo 1997, 2003; Fry and Lowell 2002; Farley and Alba 2002; Grogger and Trejo 2002; Livingston and Kahn 2002; Duncan, Hotz, and Trejo 2006; Blau and Kahn 2007). Table 1 illustrates the basic patterns that emerge for men.² Between the first and second generations, average schooling rises by three and one-half years and average hourly earnings grow substantially for Mexicans. The third generation, by contrast, shows little or no additional gains, leaving Mexican-American men with an educational deficit of 1.3 years and a wage disadvantage of 20 percent, relative to whites. Note that, even for individuals in the

¹ Also relevant is a study by MacKinnon and Parent (2005) that documents the slow but eventual assimilation of the descendants of French Canadian immigrants in the United States. For our purposes, French Canadians are a particularly interesting group because their migration to the United States had several of the same features that Huntington (2004) identifies as important obstacles to the past and future assimilation of Mexican Americans.

² These averages are calculated using outgoing rotation group data from the 1994-2006 Current Population Survey (CPS); the data are described in more detail in Section V below. In Table 1, standard errors are shown in parentheses. The samples include men ages 25-59. The samples for the hourly earnings data are further limited to men employed at wage and salary jobs during the survey week. Earnings have been converted to 2006 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Hourly earnings observations below \$1 or above \$500 are excluded as outliers. First-generation Mexicans are individuals who were born in Mexico. Second-generation Mexicans are U.S.-born individuals who have at least one parent born in Mexico. Third- (and higher-) generation Mexicans are U.S.-born individuals who have U.S.-born parents and who self-identify as Mexican in response to the Hispanic origin question in the CPS. Third- (and higher-) generation whites and blacks are U.S.-born, non-Hispanic individuals who have U.S.-born parents.

third generation and beyond, Mexican schooling levels are low not just in comparison with non-Hispanic whites, but also relative to African Americans. Similar patterns emerge for women and when regressions are used to control for other factors such as age and geographic location (Grogger and Trejo 2002; Duncan, Hotz, and Trejo 2006; Blau and Kahn 2007).

The apparent lack of socioeconomic progress between second and later generations of Mexican Americans is surprising. Previous studies have consistently found parental education to be one of the most important determinants of an individual's educational attainment and ultimate labor market success (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Mulligan 1997). Through this mechanism, the huge educational gain between first- and second-generation Mexican Americans should produce a sizable jump in schooling between the second and third generations, because on average the third generation has parents who are much better educated than those of the second generation. Yet the improvement in schooling we expect to find between the second and third generations is largely absent.

The research summarized in Table 1 suggests that intergenerational progress stalls for Mexican Americans after the second generation. As noted by Borjas (1993) and Smith (2003), however, generational comparisons in a single cross-section of data do a poor job of matching immigrant parents and grandparents in the first generation with their actual descendants in later generations. Indeed, Smith (2003) finds evidence of more substantial gains between second- and third-generation Mexicans when he combines cross-sectional data sets from successive time periods in order to compare second-generation Mexicans in some initial period with their third-generation descendants twenty-five years later. Yet even Smith's analysis shows signs of intergenerational stagnation for Mexican Americans. In his Table 4, for example, five of the six most recent cohorts of Mexicans experience no wage gains between the second and third

generations. Moreover, all studies conclude that large education and earnings deficits (relative to whites) remain for third- and higher-generation Mexicans.³

These findings—that the economic disadvantage of Mexican Americans persists even among those whose families have lived in the United States for more than two generations, and that the substantial progress observed between the first and second generations seems to stall thereafter—raise doubts whether the descendants of Mexican immigrants are enjoying the same kind of intergenerational advancement that allowed previous groups of unskilled immigrants, such as the Italians and Irish, to eventually enter the economic mainstream of American society. Such conclusions could have far-reaching implications, but the validity of the intergenerational comparisons that underlie these conclusions rests on assumptions about ethnic identification that have received relatively little scrutiny for Mexican Americans. In particular, analyses of intergenerational change typically assume, either explicitly or implicitly, that the ethnic choices made by the descendants of Mexican immigrants do not distort outcome comparisons across generations.

Consider, for example, the Mexican generations defined in Table 1. First- and second-generation Mexicans are identified using a more or less “objective” indicator of ethnicity: whether the respondent or either of his parents was born in Mexico. Like virtually all large, national surveys, however, the CPS does not provide information on the countries of birth of an adult respondent’s grandparents. As a result, third- and higher-generation Mexicans in these data can be identified only from a “subjective” measure of ethnic self-identification: the

³ Borjas (1994) and Card, DiNardo, and Estes (2000) investigate patterns of intergenerational progress for many different national origin groups, including Mexicans.

Hispanic origin question.⁴ Almost without exception, studies of later-generation Mexican Americans rely exclusively on the Hispanic origin question (or something very similar) to identify the population of interest.

Ethnic identification is to some extent endogenous, especially among people at least one or two generations removed from immigration to the United States (Alba 1990; Waters 1990). Consequently, the descendants of Mexican immigrants who continue to identify themselves as Mexican in the third and higher generations may be a select group. For example, if the most successful Mexican Americans are more likely to intermarry or for other reasons cease to identify themselves or their children as Mexican, then available data may understate human capital and earnings gains between the second and third generations.⁵ In other words, research on intergenerational assimilation among Mexicans may suffer from the potentially serious problem that the most assimilated members of the group under study eventually fade from empirical observation as they more closely identify with the group they are assimilating toward.⁶

Recently, we have begun to assess the potential empirical importance of selective ethnic attrition among Mexican Americans (Duncan and Trejo 2007, 2008a, 2008b). Specifically, we have investigated what factors influence whether individuals choose to identify themselves (or their children) as Mexican origin, and how these ethnic choices may affect inferences about the

⁴ Since January 2003, the CPS has collected information about Hispanic origin as follows. Respondents are asked whether they are “Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino,” and those who answer affirmatively are then asked to designate a specific Hispanic national origin group (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central/South American, or Other Spanish). The Hispanic origin question in the 2000 U.S. Census is similar. Prior to 2003, the CPS elicited Hispanic origin by asking respondents to choose their “origin or descent” from a list of about 20 possibilities that included responses such as “Italian,” “Polish,” and “Afro American (Black, Negro)” in addition to the specific Hispanic national origin groups listed above. Responses for the specific Hispanic groups were coded and reported separately in the public use data files, along with a residual category that combines into a single group all of the non-Hispanic responses.

⁵ For groups such as Mexicans with relatively low levels of average schooling, Furtado (2006) shows that assortative matching on education in marriage markets can create a situation whereby individuals who intermarry tend to be the more highly-educated members of these groups.

⁶ Bean, Swicegood, and Berg (2000) raise this possibility in their study of generational patterns of fertility for Mexican-origin women in the United States.

socioeconomic attainment of later-generation Mexican Americans. In this chapter, we summarize and synthesize the evidence on this issue.

II. Ethnic Identification and Ethnic Attrition

For our purposes, the ideal data set would include the family tree of each individual, enabling us to identify which individuals are descended from Mexican immigrants and how many generations have elapsed since that immigration took place. It would then be a simple matter to compare outcomes for this “true” population of Mexican descendants with the corresponding outcomes for a relevant reference group (e.g., non-Hispanic whites) and also with those for the subset of Mexican descendants who continue to self-identify as Mexican origin.⁷ Such an analysis would provide an unbiased assessment of the relative standing of the descendants of Mexican immigrants in the United States, and it would show the extent to which selective ethnic identification distorts estimated outcomes for this population when researchers are forced to rely on standard, self-reported measures of Mexican identity.

Following the 1970 Census, unusually detailed information of this sort was collected for a small sample of individuals with ancestors from a Spanish-speaking country. After each decennial U.S. Census, selected respondents to the Census long form are reinterviewed in order to check the accuracy and reliability of the Census data. The 1970 Census was the first U.S.

⁷ Detailed ancestry information of this sort would raise complicated issues about how to define ethnic groups. For example, should calculations for the Mexican-American population differentially weight individuals according to their “intensity” of Mexican ancestry? In other words, among third-generation Mexicans, should those with four Mexican-born grandparents count more than those with just one grandparent born in Mexico? The answer might depend on the question of interest. For the questions of intergenerational assimilation and progress that we study here, our view is that all descendants of Mexican immigrants should count equally, regardless of how many branches of their family tree contain Mexican ancestry. This conceptualization allows intermarriage to play a critical role in the process of intergenerational assimilation for Mexican Americans, as it did previously for European immigrants (Gordon 1964; Lieberman and Waters 1988). As we note below, however, some of our analyses can shed light on the direction, but not the ultimate magnitude, of measurement biases arising from selective intermarriage and ethnic identification by Mexican Americans. Our conclusions about the direction of these

Census to ask directly about Hispanic origin or descent, and therefore a primary objective of the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1974) was to evaluate the quality of the responses to this new question. For this purpose, individuals in the reinterview survey were asked a series of questions regarding any ancestors they might have who were born in a Spanish-speaking country. Among those identified by the reinterview survey as having Hispanic ancestors, Table 2 shows the percent who had previously responded on the 1970 Census long form that they were of Hispanic “origin or descent.”⁸

Overall, 76 percent of reinterview respondents with ancestors from a Spanish-speaking country had self-identified as Hispanic in the 1970 Census, but the correspondence between Hispanic ancestry in the reinterview and Hispanic identification in the Census fades with the number of generations since the respondent’s Hispanic ancestors arrived in the United States. Virtually all (99 percent) first-generation immigrants born in a Spanish-speaking country identified as Hispanic in the Census, but the rate of Hispanic identification dropped to 83 percent for the second generation, 73 percent for the third generation, 44 percent for the fourth generation, and all the way down to 6 percent for higher generations of Hispanics. Interestingly, intermarriage seems to play a central role in the loss of Hispanic identification. Almost everyone (97 percent) with Hispanic ancestors on both sides of their family identified as Hispanic in the Census, whereas the corresponding rate was only 21 percent for those with Hispanic ancestors on just one side of their family. Given the small number of Hispanics in the reinterview sample (369 individuals reported having at least one ancestor from a Spanish-speaking country), the percentages in Table 2 should be regarded with caution, especially those for the very small

measurement biases require only that persons of mixed ancestry—i.e., the products of Mexican intermarriage—be included with some positive weight in whatever definition is adopted for the Mexican-American population.

⁸ The information in Table 2 is reproduced from Table C of U.S. Bureau of the Census (1974, p. 8).

samples of Hispanics who are fourth generation or higher. Nonetheless, these data do suggest that self-identified samples of U.S. Hispanics might omit a large proportion of later-generation individuals with Hispanic ancestors, and that intermarriage could be a fundamental source of such intergenerational ethnic attrition.

Unfortunately, the microdata underlying Table 2 no longer exist, so we cannot use these data to examine in a straightforward manner how selective ethnic attrition affects observed measures of intergenerational progress for Mexican Americans.⁹ Out of necessity, we instead adopt the less direct and less comprehensive strategies for trying to shed light on this issue that are described below. Before turning to this description, however, we first discuss some prior research on intermarriage and ethnic identification that is especially relevant for our study.

Frequent intermarriage is one of the strongest signals of social assimilation by an ethnic group (Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 2003). After a few generations in the United States, so much intermarriage had taken place among the descendants of earlier European immigrants that most white Americans could choose among multiple ancestries or ethnic identities (Alba 1990; Hout and Goldstein 1994; Waters 1990). For such individuals, ethnicity has become subjective, situational, and largely symbolic, and the social boundaries between these ethnic groups have been almost completely erased. In this context, it is interesting to note that exogamy is

⁹ Starting in 1980, the Census has included an open-ended question asking for each person's "ancestry" or "ethnicity," with the first two responses coded in the order that they are reported (Farley 1991). For the purposes of identifying individuals with Mexican or Hispanic ancestors, however, the Census ancestry question is not a good substitute for the detailed battery of questions included in the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study. Indeed, many 1980-2000 Census respondents who identified as Hispanic in response to the Hispanic origin question failed to list a Hispanic ancestry in response to the ancestry item that comes later on the Census long form questionnaire, perhaps because they thought it redundant and unnecessary to indicate their Hispanic ethnicity a second time. Comparatively few respondents listed a Hispanic ancestry after identifying as non-Hispanic when answering the Hispanic origin question, so the ancestry question actually produces a lower overall count of Hispanics than does the Hispanic origin question (Lieberson and Waters 1988; del Pinal 2004). See Duncan and Trejo (2008a), described below in Section IV.B, for an analysis of how Mexican Americans respond to the Hispanic origin and ancestry questions in the 2000 Census. The patterns of responses are complex and strongly associated with human capital, labor market outcomes, intermarriage, and the Mexican identification of children. Emeka (2008) investigates some of these issues for Hispanics as a whole, rather than specifically for Mexicans.

increasingly common for Mexican Americans. Rosenfeld (2002, Table 1) shows that the intermarriage rate of Mexican-American women grew substantially between 1970 and 1980 and even more sharply between 1980 and 1990. As of 2000, more than a third of married, U.S.-born Mexicans have non-Mexican spouses, with the overwhelming majority of these non-Mexican spouses being U.S.-born, non-Hispanic whites (Duncan and Trejo 2007). Perlmann and Waters (2004) argue that the proclivity for intermarriage by second-generation Mexicans today is similar to what was observed for second-generation Italians in the early 1900s. This argument has potentially provocative implications for ethnic attachment among future generations of Mexican Americans, because intermarriage became so commonplace for subsequent generations of Italian Americans that Alba (1986) characterized this group as entering the “twilight of ethnicity.”

In the U.S. context, analyses of ethnic responses in large national surveys have focused primarily on whites of European descent (Alba and Chamlin 1983; Lieberman and Waters 1988, 1993; Farley 1991), and therefore new insights could be gained from an analysis such as ours that highlights ethnic choices among the Mexican-origin population. For other minority groups, existing research illustrates how selective ethnic identification can distort observed socioeconomic characteristics. American Indians are a particularly apt example, because they exhibit very high rates of intermarriage, and fewer than half of the children of such intermarriages are identified as American Indian by the Census race question (Eschbach 1995). For these and other reasons, racial identification is relatively fluid for American Indians, and changes in self-identification account for much of the surprisingly large increase in educational attainment observed for American Indians between the 1970 and 1980 U.S. Censuses (Eschbach, Supple, and Snipp 1998). In addition, Snipp (1989) shows that those who report American Indian as their race have considerably lower schooling and earnings, on average, than the much

larger group of Americans who report a non-Indian race but claim to have some Indian ancestry.

To cite another example, Waters (1994, 1999) observes selective ethnic identification among the U.S.-born children of New York City immigrants from the West Indies and Haiti. The teenagers doing well in school tend to come from relatively advantaged, middle-class families, and these kids identify most closely with the ethnic origins of their parents. In contrast, the teenagers doing poorly in school are more likely to identify with African Americans. This pattern suggests that self-identified samples of second-generation Caribbean blacks might overstate the socioeconomic achievement of this population, a finding that potentially calls into question the practice of comparing outcomes for African Americans and Caribbean blacks as a means of distinguishing racial discrimination from other explanations for the disadvantaged status of African Americans (Sowell 1978).

Existing studies (Stephan and Stephan 1989; Eschbach and Gomez 1998; Ono 2002; Brown, Hitlin, and Elder 2006; Choi, Sakamoto, and Powers 2008; Perez 2008) demonstrate that the process of ethnic identification by Hispanics is fluid, situational, and at least partly voluntary, just as has been observed for non-Hispanic whites and other groups. Most work in this area, however, analyzes Hispanics as an aggregate group, even though available evidence suggests that the ethnic responses of Mexican Americans may differ in fundamental ways from those of other Hispanics (Eschbach and Gomez 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Perez 2008). More importantly, earlier studies do not directly address the issue that we focus on here: the selective nature of Mexican identification and how it affects our inferences about intergenerational progress for this population. Though previous research has noted the selective nature of intermarriage for Hispanics overall (Qian 1997, 1999) and for Mexican Americans in particular (Fu 2001; Rosenfeld 2001), this research has not examined explicitly the links between

intermarriage and ethnic identification, nor has previous research considered the biases that these processes might produce in standard intergenerational comparisons of economic status for Mexican Americans. Closer in spirit to our analysis is recent work by Alba and Islam (2008) that tracks cohorts of U.S.-born Mexicans across the 1980-2000 Censuses and uncovers evidence of substantial declines in Mexican self-identification as a cohort ages. In contrast with our analysis, however, Alba and Islam (2008) are able to provide only limited information about the socioeconomic selectivity of this identity shift, and they focus on the identity shifts that occur within rather than across generations of Mexicans.

Although most research in this area has been conducted by social scientists outside of economics, an emerging literature within economics explicitly recognizes the complexity of ethnic identification and has started to investigate the implications of this complexity for labor market outcomes and policy.¹⁰ In particular, economic models emphasize the potential endogeneity of identity and suggest mechanisms through which ethnic identification could be associated with both observed and unobserved characteristics of individuals. To date, however, most empirical work in the relevant economics literature has focused on immigrants. The analysis presented here demonstrates that some of the same issues can apply to native-born members of minority groups. In addition, we emphasize the complications that intergenerational shifts in ethnic identity can create for measuring the socioeconomic progress of later-generation descendants of immigrants.

¹⁰ Examples include Akerlof and Kranton (2000); Bisin and Verdier (2000); Darity, Hamilton, and Dietrich (2002); Bisin, Topa, and Verdier (2004); Mason (2004); Darity, Mason, and Stewart (2006); Constant, Gataullina, and Zimmermann (2006); Bodenhorn and Ruebeck (2007); Manning and Roy (2007); and Nekby and Rodin (2007). Constant and Zimmermann (2007) and Zimmermann (2007) survey some of the relevant literature.

III. Intermarriage and Mexican Identification of Children¹¹

The data in Table 2 from the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study not only demonstrate that ethnic attrition could be a serious issue for the later-generation descendants of Mexican immigrants, but these data also suggest that intermarriage plays a leading role in the process. For ethnic attrition to distort significantly the standard measures of intergenerational progress for Mexican Americans, however, it is not enough that such attrition be sizeable; the attrition must also be selective on key indicators of socioeconomic attainment such as education or earnings. In this section, we discuss evidence on the extent and selectivity of Mexican intermarriage and on how intermarriage influences the Mexican identification of children in the subsequent generation.

A. Extent and Selectivity of Mexican Intermarriage

We start with intermarriage, because intermarriage is probably the predominant source of leakage from the population of self-identified Mexican Americans (through the ethnic choices made by the children and grandchildren of these intermarriages). Therefore, knowing the extent and selectivity of Mexican intermarriage is important for evaluating the potential bias that such leakage could produce in intergenerational comparisons. More generally, intermarriage is of interest because it is often viewed as the ultimate indicator of assimilation by an ethnic group with immigrant origins (Gordon 1964, Alba and Nee 2003), and also because it is a key determinant of weakened and/or multiple ethnic attachments for future generations of the group (Hout and Goldstein 1994, Perlmann and Waters 2007).

We employ microdata from the 2000 U.S. Census. The sample includes marriages that

¹¹ Much of this section is based on Duncan and Trejo (2007).

meet the following conditions: both spouses are between the ages of 25-59, the couple currently lives together, and at least one spouse is a U.S.-born individual identified as Mexican by the Census question regarding Hispanic origin. Furthermore, we exclude marriages in which the information about Hispanic origin for either spouse has been imputed by the Census Bureau. These restrictions yield a sample of 62,734 marriages.

For the U.S.-born Mexican husbands and wives involved in these marriages, Table 3 shows the nativity/ethnicity distributions of their spouses. Intermarriage is widespread in our samples of Mexican-American husbands and wives. The first column indicates that just over half (51 percent) of U.S.-born husbands of Mexican descent have wives of the same nativity and ethnicity, and another 14 percent are married to Mexican immigrants. Therefore, the remaining 35 percent of Mexican-American husbands have wives that are neither Mexican nor Mexican American, with the bulk of these wives (27 percent) being U.S.-born non-Hispanic whites. The nativity/ethnicity distribution of Mexican-American wives is quite similar, except for a somewhat higher rate of marriage to Mexican immigrants and a correspondingly lower rate of marriage to U.S.-born Mexicans.

Table 3 suggests that, in terms of nativity and ethnicity, the marital choices of U.S.-born Mexicans can be classified into three main categories of spouses: U.S.-born Mexicans, foreign-born Mexicans, and non-Mexicans. Based on this simplification, Table 4 proposes a typology of marriages involving U.S.-born Mexicans that also indicates, for marriages in which only one spouse is a U.S.-born Mexican, whether the other spouse is the husband or the wife. In Table 4, the unit of analysis is the marriage, rather than the U.S.-born Mexican husband or wife as in Table 3. This shift in focus is consistent with our interest in how Mexican intermarriage may impact the ethnic identification and observed socioeconomic characteristics of subsequent

generations, because children are a product of the marriage. Table 4 demonstrates the potential for ethnic leakage among the children of Mexican Americans. Note that it takes two Mexican-origin spouses to create an endogamous Mexican marriage, whereas a Mexican intermarriage requires only one Mexican-origin spouse. As a result, the intermarriage rates for Mexican-American men and women observed in Table 3 imply that, in Table 4, almost half (48 percent) of Mexican-American marriages involve a non-Mexican spouse.

Next we explore the selectivity of Mexican intermarriage. Using the same typology of Mexican-American marriages as in Table 4, Table 5 reports two important indicators of human capital for the husbands and wives in each type of marriage. The human capital measures are average years of schooling¹² and percent deficient in English, with standard errors displayed in parentheses. We define someone to be “deficient” in English if they speak a language other than English at home and they also report speaking English worse than “very well.”¹³ These calculations include *all* husbands or wives in the relevant marriages, not just the Mexican-American husbands or wives. Therefore, we can observe not only the selectivity of U.S.-born Mexicans who intermarry, but also the characteristics of their spouses. For example, wife outcomes for the marriage type “Husband non-Mexican” provide information about Mexican-American women who marry non-Mexicans, whereas husband outcomes for this same marriage type provide information about the spouses of these women. For both husbands and wives, outcomes for the marriage type “Both spouses U.S.-born Mexican” provide information about Mexican Americans involved in endogamous marriages.

¹² Beginning in 1990, the Census questions about educational attainment were changed to ask specifically about postsecondary degrees obtained rather than years of schooling. We follow Jaeger’s (1997) recommendations for how to construct a completed years of schooling variable from the revised education questions.

¹³ The Census asks individuals whether they “speak a language other than English at home,” and those who answer affirmatively then are asked how well they speak English, with possible responses of “very well,” “well,” “not well,” or “not at all.”

Table 5 reveals striking differences in human capital between Mexican Americans married to Mexicans and those married to non-Mexicans. U.S.-born Mexicans married to non-Mexicans have much higher levels of educational attainment and English proficiency than those with spouses that are also U.S.-born Mexicans, whereas U.S.-born Mexicans married to Mexican immigrants possess less human capital than any other group of Mexican Americans. Among Mexican-American husbands, for example, those with non-Mexican wives average a year more schooling than those with U.S.-born Mexican wives. Compared to their counterparts in endogamous marriages, intermarried Mexican-American men also have a 9 percentage point lower rate of English deficiency. In addition, Table 5 shows that non-Mexican spouses of Mexican Americans have the highest human capital of any group considered, and that Mexican immigrant spouses of Mexican Americans have the lowest. In Duncan and Trejo (2007), we find similar patterns for indicators of labor market performance such as employment rates and hourly earnings, and we demonstrate that most of these differences in labor market performance derive from the human capital selectivity of Mexican intermarriage.

Our finding of positive human capital selectivity for intermarried Mexican Americans is not unexpected (Qian 1999). First of all, opportunities for meeting and interacting with people from other racial/ethnic groups are better for more educated Mexican Americans, because highly-educated Mexican Americans tend to live, study, and work in less segregated environments (Massey and Denton 1992; Alba and Logan 1993). Second, given the sizeable educational deficit of the average Mexican American, better-educated Mexican Americans are likely to be closer in social class to the typical non-Mexican (Furtado 2006). Third, attending college is an eye-opening experience for many students that may work to diminish preferences for marrying within one's own racial/ethnic group. Finally, the theory of "status exchange" in

marriage formulated by Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) predicts that members of lower-status minority groups (such as Mexican Americans) would tend to need higher levels of socioeconomic attainment to attract spouses who are members of higher-status majority groups.

B. Mexican Identification of Children

We now investigate the link between intermarriage in one generation and ethnic identification in the next by examining how the children of U.S.-born Mexicans are identified.¹⁴ We start with the same sample of Mexican-American marriages from the 2000 Census used in the preceding intermarriage analysis, but henceforth we further restrict the sample to those marriages that have produced at least one child under age 19 currently residing in the household. We continue to exclude marriages in which the information about Hispanic origin has been imputed for either spouse, and we now impose this condition for the relevant children as well. Finally, to the extent possible with the information available in the Census, we exclude families in which any of the children are suspected of being stepchildren. These restrictions produce a sample of 37,921 families.

Using the same typology of Mexican-American marriages introduced earlier, Table 6 reports for each type of marriage the percent in which the youngest child is identified as Mexican by the Hispanic origin question in the Census.¹⁵ Of primary interest for our purposes is how this

¹⁴ For a wide range of groups, previous research has employed U.S. Census data to investigate the racial/ethnic identification of children in intermarried families. Lieberman and Waters (1988, 1993), for example, consider the ancestries assigned to children when the mother's ancestry differs from the father's ancestry. Along the same lines, Xie and Goyette (1997) study the determinants of Asian identification among children produced by intermarriages between an Asian and a non-Asian. Qian (2004) extends this analysis to examine the racial/ethnic identification of children produced by intermarriages between U.S.-born, non-Hispanic whites and several different minority groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians.

¹⁵ Because Mexican identification varies little across children within a given family, we report results using only information for the *youngest* child. Instead using information for the *oldest* child produces similar results, as does incorporating information from any or all of a family's children. We do not know who filled out the Census form, but parents are likely to be responding for their children. An important question is how these children will respond to survey questions about ethnic

percentage varies with the nativity and ethnicity of the parents. Overall, the youngest child is identified as Mexican in 84 percent of these families, which raises the possibility of substantial ethnic attrition among the children of Mexican Americans. The crucial determinant of a child's Mexican identification is whether both parents are Mexican origin. In marriages between two U.S.-born Mexicans or between a U.S.-born Mexican and a Mexican immigrant, Mexican identification of the child is virtually assured (i.e., the relevant rates are 98 percent). In marriages between a U.S.-born Mexican and a non-Mexican, however, the likelihood that the child is identified as Mexican drops to 64-71 percent, with the precise figure depending on which parent is non-Mexican, the father or the mother.¹⁶

Table 7 shows how the human capital of parents correlates with whether their youngest child is identified as Mexican. In these marriages involving at least one Mexican-American spouse, parents with children not identified as Mexican average about a year more schooling and have approximately a 10 percentage point lower rate of English deficiency than do their counterparts with children designated as Mexican. In Duncan and Trejo (2007), we show that parents with children not identified as Mexican also exhibit advantages in employment and earnings. Moreover, *within* the group of marriages involving a non-Mexican spouse, parents' outcomes do not vary with the Mexican identification of their children. In other words, intermarriage is the crucial link between the ethnic identification of Mexican-American children and the human capital and labor market performance of their parents. The strong correlation

identification when they answer from themselves. See Portes and Rumbaut (2001, Chapter 7) for a discussion of parental and other influences on the evolving ethnic identities of second-generation adolescents. Eschbach and Gomez (1998) analyze changes in the Hispanic identification of adolescents between the first and second waves, two years apart, of the High School and Beyond panel, and Brown, Hitlin, and Elder (2006) and Perez (2008) do similar types of analyses using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

¹⁶ In analyses not reported here, we find that the impact of intermarriage on the Mexican identification of children does not change when controls are included for the age and gender of the child, the number of additional children in the family, geographic location, and various characteristics of the parents (age, education, and English proficiency).

observed between parental skills and whether the child is identified as Mexican arises because of the intense selectivity of Mexican-American intermarriage, especially in terms of human capital, and the powerful influence of intermarriage on the ethnic identification of children.

In this section, we have demonstrated that Mexican intermarriage is highly selective on human capital and also that having a non-Mexican parent determines, in large part, whether children of Mexican descent are at risk of losing their Mexican identity. Taken together, these findings provide a mechanism for selective ethnic attrition among Mexican Americans. Those Mexicans who intermarry tend to have higher levels of human capital, and many of the resulting children are not identified as Mexican in Census data. In this way, selective intermarriage interacts with the intergenerational transmission of human capital and ethnic identity to create a situation in which available data for later-generation Mexican Americans may omit an increasingly large share of the most successful descendants of Mexican immigrants.¹⁷

Despite the apparent strength of intermarriage selectivity and its close link to the Mexican identification of children, however, one could use our data to argue that these factors ultimately produce little bias in observed outcomes for Mexican Americans. For example, Table 7 shows that, in families with at least one Mexican-American parent, fathers average 1.1 years more schooling (and mothers average 0.8 years more schooling) if their youngest child is not identified as Mexican. This pattern reflects the educational selectivity of Mexican intermarriage, but the impact of such selectivity is attenuated by the small overall incidence of non-Mexican affiliation among children with at least one Mexican-American parent (i.e., from the bottom row

¹⁷ Analyzing 2000 Census data for U.S.-born youth ages 16-17 who have at least one Mexican-origin parent, Duncan and Trejo (2008b) show explicitly how ethnic identification and the intermarriage selectivity of human capital gets passed from parents to children. In particular, we find that rates of Mexican identification and high school dropout are much lower, and English proficiency much higher, for Mexican-American youth who are the product of exogamous rather than endogamous marriages.

of Table 6, just 16 percent of these children fail to identify as Mexican). As a result, in Table 7, restoring to our samples the potentially “missing” families with children not identified as Mexican only raises the average schooling of fathers from 12.1 to 12.3 years (and of mothers from 12.3 to 12.4 years). Moreover, estimates of intergenerational correlations suggest that less than half of any educational gains for parents get transmitted to their children (Couch and Dunn 1997; Mulligan 1997; Card, DiNardo, and Estes 2000). Therefore, our Census analyses can directly substantiate only a tiny amount of “hidden” progress for these children of Mexican Americans: less than 0.1 years of education, and similarly small amounts for the other outcomes.

We think it premature, however, to conclude that the measurement issues and potential biases which motivated our research can be safely ignored. In our Census samples, for us to know that a child is of Mexican descent, at least one of his U.S.-born parents must continue to self-identify as Mexican. We therefore miss completely any Mexican-origin families in which the relevant Mexican descendants no longer identify as Mexican. Data from the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study, presented earlier in Table 2, indicate that we could be missing a large share of later-generation Mexican-origin families (e.g., well over half of Mexican descendants beyond the third generation). For this reason, we believe that our results show the direction, but not the magnitude, of measurement biases arising from selective intermarriage and ethnic identification by Mexican Americans.

IV. Indirect Evidence of Selective Ethnic Attrition

Do selective intermarriage and selective ethnic identification bias observed measures of socioeconomic progress for later generations of Mexican Americans? In this section, we discuss

additional research we have done which provides indirect evidence of such bias and suggests that the direction of the bias is to understate measured attainment for the population of U.S.-born descendants of Mexican immigrants.

*A. Spanish Surname and Hispanic Identification*¹⁸

To acquire the initial piece of indirect evidence concerning ethnic attrition, we exploit the information about Spanish surnames that was made available most recently in the 1980 Census. The microdata file indicates whether an individual's surname appears on a list of almost 12,500 Hispanic surnames constructed by the Census Bureau. This information, however, is provided only for those individuals who reside in the following five southwestern states: California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico.

Though the surname list constructed for the 1980 Census is more extensive and accurate than those used with previous Censuses, as a tool for identifying Hispanics the list suffers from sins of both omission and commission. Indeed, both types of errors are introduced by the common practice of married women taking the surname of their husbands, as Hispanic women can lose and non-Hispanic women can gain a Spanish surname through intermarriage. The surname list also errs by labeling as Hispanic some individuals of Italian, Filipino, or Native Hawaiian descent who have names that appear on the list (Bean and Tienda 1987; Perkins 1993).

For our purposes, another weakness of the surname list is that it cannot distinguish Mexicans from other Hispanic national origin groups. This weakness is minimized, however, by limiting the sample to the aforementioned five southwestern states. In 1980, the Puerto Rican and Cuban populations in these states were still quite small, and large-scale immigration from

¹⁸ The research discussed in this section comes from Duncan and Trejo (2007).

Central and South America had not yet begun. As a result, the overwhelming majority of Hispanics in these southwestern states are Mexican origin. Indeed, in the samples of U.S.-born individuals analyzed below, 88 percent of those who self-report as being of Hispanic origin indicate Mexican as their national origin, and almost all remaining self-reported Hispanics fall into the “Other Hispanic” category. Individuals in this “Other Hispanic” category are especially prevalent in the states of New Mexico and Colorado, where some Hispanics whose families have lived in these regions for many generations prefer to call themselves “Hispanos,” emphasizing their roots to the Spaniards who settled the new world over their Mexican and Indian ancestry (Bean and Tienda 1987).

The Spanish surname information provided in the 1980 Census is in addition to the race and Hispanic origin questions typically employed to identify racial/ethnic groups. Our hope is that, particularly for men, the presence of a Spanish surname in the five southwestern states provides an objective, albeit imperfect, indicator of Mexican ancestry that allows us to identify some individuals of Mexican descent who fail to self-report as Hispanic and who are therefore missed by subjective indicators such as the Hispanic origin question in the Census. If so, then perhaps differences in human capital between Spanish-surnamed individuals who do and do not self-identify as Hispanic can reveal something about the selective nature of ethnic identification for Mexican Americans.

To pursue this idea, we extracted from the 1980 Census five-percent microdata sample all U.S.-born individuals between the ages of 25-59 who reside in the states of California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. We focus on individuals in this age range because they are old enough that virtually all of them will have completed their schooling, yet they are young enough that observed labor market outcomes reflect their prime working years. We focus on

persons born in the United States because Hispanic identity is likely to be much more fluid and malleable for U.S.-born Mexican Americans than for Mexican immigrants whose birthplace serves to reinforce their ethnicity.¹⁹ Given our interest in ethnic identification, we exclude from the sample anyone with missing or imputed information about race, Hispanic origin, or country of birth. To increase the accuracy of the Spanish surname indicator, individuals whose race is American Indian or Asian are also excluded.

In our data, there are two different ways for individuals to be identified as Hispanic. They can self-report being Hispanic in response to the Hispanic origin question, and they can possess a Spanish surname. Based on these two Hispanic indicators, we define three mutually exclusive types of Hispanic identification: those identified as Hispanic *both* by self-report and by surname, those identified as Hispanic by self-report *only* (and not by surname), and those identified as Hispanic by surname *only* (and not by self-report). We exclude non-Hispanics (i.e., persons who do not self-report as being of Hispanic origin and also do not possess a Spanish surname).

For our sample of U.S.-born Hispanics, the first column of numbers in Table 8 reports the distributions of men and women across the three types of Hispanic identification. For men, self-reported and surname-based indicators of Hispanicity are usually consistent with one another. Just 4 percent of the men that we label as Hispanic are so identified only by their Spanish surname. A larger share of Hispanic men, 13 percent, self-identify as Hispanic but do not possess a surname on the Census list of Spanish surnames. The vast majority of these men, 83 percent, identify as Hispanic through both self-report and surname. For U.S.-born Hispanic women, the corresponding proportions are 13 percent identify as Hispanic by surname only, 21

¹⁹ Indeed, we show below in Section V that the issue of ethnic attrition matters most for Mexican-origin persons whose

percent by self-report only, and 66 percent through both indicators. Not surprisingly, women show more inconsistency between self-reported and surname-based indicators of Hispanicity than men do, presumably because of errors sometimes introduced when married women take their husband's surname.

The remaining columns of Table 8 show how completed years of schooling and English proficiency vary by type of Hispanic identification. On average, those identified as Hispanic by self-report only or by surname only possess much more human capital than those identified as Hispanic by both indicators. For example, men with inconsistent responses to the Hispanic indicators have at least a year and a half more schooling than Hispanic men with consistent responses, and rates of English deficiency are markedly lower for men with inconsistent responses. The bottom panel of Table 8 indicates that the patterns for women are qualitatively similar but even stronger. In Duncan and Trejo (2007), we report analogous results for labor market outcomes (i.e., employment rates and hourly earnings), and we show that differences in labor market outcomes across the Hispanic identification groups are largely driven by the corresponding differences in human capital (i.e., education and English proficiency).

How should we interpret these patterns? If the group of Hispanic men identified by surname only captures some Hispanics who are choosing to loosen their ethnic attachment, then our evidence suggests that such individuals are positively selected in terms of human capital and labor market outcomes. We also find evidence of positive selection for Hispanic men identified by self-report only. These men may be Hispanics who lost their Spanish surname through intermarriage, as could occur if they have a Hispanic mother or grandmother who married a non-Hispanic man and took his surname. Therefore, the results for the "Hispanic by self-report only"

families have been in the United States for more than two generations.

group are consistent with the findings we reported earlier on the selectivity of Mexican intermarriage. Similar patterns emerge for women, though in this case interpretation is clouded by the common practice of married women taking the surname of their husbands. Overall, our findings support the notion that individuals of Mexican descent who no longer self-identify as Hispanic are positively selected in terms of socioeconomic status. Relatively few individuals with Spanish surnames fail to self-identify as Hispanic, however, so it would be unwise to regard these results as anything more than suggestive.

*B. Mexican Ethnicity and Ancestry*²⁰

Starting in 1980, the U.S. Census has included an open-ended question asking for each person's "ancestry or ethnic origin," and the first two responses are coded in the order that they are reported. This ancestry information is in addition to the race and Hispanic origin questions typically employed to identify racial/ethnic groups. The Hispanic origin and ancestry questions give Mexican Americans multiple ways of expressing ethnic identification in Census data. We consider whether for Mexicans it makes sense to think of different patterns of responses to these questions as indicating varying degrees of ethnic attachment. If so, then the complexity of ethnic responses by Mexican Americans might provide another piece of indirect evidence regarding selective ethnic attrition.

For ease of exposition, throughout this section we will use the term "ethnicity" to refer to an individual's response to the Census question regarding Hispanic origin, and we will use the term "ancestry" to refer to an individual's responses to the Census ancestry question. Employing this terminology, Table 9 categorizes individuals based upon their joint responses to the

²⁰ This section is based on Duncan and Trejo (2008a).

Hispanic origin and ancestry questions. The data are from the 2000 Census, and the samples include U.S.-born men and women ages 25-59 who report Mexican as an ethnicity and/or ancestry.²¹ The first column of numbers in Table 9 shows the distributions of men and women across ethnicity/ancestry groups, and these distributions illustrate the complexity of ethnic identification for Mexican Americans. In our samples of U.S.-born adults who give some indication that they are of Mexican descent, just over two-thirds of these individuals answer “Mexican” to both the Hispanic origin and the ancestry questions in the Census. About 20 percent report a Mexican ethnicity but do not list a Mexican ancestry, and the remaining 11-12 percent identify as Mexican in response to the ancestry question but not the Hispanic origin question.

For our purposes, this last group is of special interest. Because most studies of U.S.-born Mexican Americans identify the target population using only the Hispanic origin question (or something very similar to it), the Mexican-origin samples in these studies typically exclude individuals who report a Mexican ancestry but not a Mexican ethnicity. Table 9 shows that most of these excluded Mexicans give a pan-ethnic or “general Hispanic” response to the Hispanic origin question, using labels such as “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or “Spanish.”²² Note, however, that a significant proportion of these excluded Mexicans instead report their ethnicity as “not Hispanic.” U.S.-born adults who identify as “not Hispanic” (in response to the Hispanic origin

²¹ We exclude anyone with imputed information about Hispanic origin.

²² The “general Hispanic” ethnicity category also includes individuals who, in response to the Hispanic origin question, check the box for “other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino” (i.e., besides Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban) but do not write anything in the space provided to designate a specific group. Logan (2002) and Cresce and Ramirez (2003) document and discuss the sharp increase in “general Hispanic” responses to the Hispanic origin question that occurred between the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses.

A few individuals simultaneously report a Mexican ancestry and an “other Hispanic” ethnicity (i.e., a specific Hispanic national origin group other than Mexican (e.g., Cuban or Salvadoran). In Table 9, these individuals are grouped together with the much larger number of individuals who report a Mexican ancestry and a “general Hispanic” ethnicity. Given the relative

question that appears near the front of the Census questionnaire) but nonetheless list Mexican as an ancestry (in response to the ancestry question that comes later) may represent a segment of the Mexican-American population with somewhat weaker or more distant ethnic ties. If so, then by studying this segment of the population we might be able to learn something about the selectivity of ethnic identification for Mexican Americans and about the potential for selective ethnic attrition to bias standard measures of socioeconomic status for the U.S.-born descendants of Mexican immigrants.

The second and third columns of numbers in Table 9 show how levels of schooling and English proficiency vary across the Mexican ethnicity/ancestry groups. Among persons who report a Mexican ethnicity, the group that stands out is people who do not respond to the Census ancestry question. For both men and women, those who do not report an ancestry have much less human capital than any other group of Mexican Americans. Men with unreported ancestry, for example, average only 10.7 years of schooling, compared to 12.3 years for the majority group of U.S.-born Mexicans who report Mexican as both their ethnicity and their ancestry.²³ Similarly, compared to the majority group, Mexican men with unreported ancestry are 3 percentage points more likely to be deficient in English. Putting aside the group with unreported ancestry, differences between other groups of men who report a Mexican ethnicity are generally small, except that those with “general Hispanic” or “other” ancestries tend to speak English better than those with a Mexican ancestry. The corresponding patterns for women are similar (see the bottom half of Table 9).

sizes of its component groups, the combined category representing persons with Mexican ancestry and an ethnicity of “general or other Hispanic” is dominated by individuals who report a “general Hispanic” ethnicity.

²³ Farley (1991) shows that, in a broad sample of 1980 Census respondents which includes all nativity and racial/ethnic groups, persons with higher educational attainment are much more likely to respond to the ancestry question, and they are also much more likely to list multiple ancestries.

Among persons who list a Mexican ancestry but do *not* report a Mexican ethnicity, there are two quite distinct groups. Those who report a “general Hispanic” ethnicity have somewhat lower levels of educational attainment and English proficiency than are observed in the overall samples of U.S.-born Mexican men and women. In contrast, persons who list a Mexican ancestry but simultaneously report their ethnicity as “not Hispanic” have much higher levels of human capital than any other ethnicity/ancestry group of U.S.-born Mexicans. Compared to men who report Mexican as both their ethnicity and their ancestry, for example, men of Mexican ancestry who identify their ethnicity as “not Hispanic” enjoy a schooling advantage of over half a year and a rate of English deficiency that is 9 percentage points lower. The patterns are very similar for women. In addition, Duncan and Trejo (2008a) show that similar patterns emerge for labor market outcomes such as employment rates and hourly earnings.

The two ethnicity/ancestry groups considered in the preceding paragraph represent segments of the Mexican-American population that usually are excluded from empirical research on this population, because most studies use only the Hispanic origin question to identify U.S.-born persons of Mexican descent. As noted by Alba and Islam (2008), the very different characteristics of these two groups make it important to distinguish between them whenever possible. Persons of Mexican ancestry who identify their ethnicity as “not Hispanic” possess relatively high levels of human capital. This group seems to provide a prime example of ethnic attrition in which the attrition is “positively” selected, consistent with what we document in the other sections of this chapter. Persons of Mexican ancestry who report a “general Hispanic” ethnicity, on the other hand, possess relatively low levels of human capital, suggesting “negative” selection for the segment of the Mexican-origin population that adopts pan-ethnic Hispanic labels. Much of the selectivity of these two contrasting groups would be hidden if they

were combined into a single category consisting of all persons who report a Mexican ancestry but not a Mexican ethnicity.

V. Direct Evidence of Selective Ethnic Attrition²⁴

The empirical patterns reported thus far are suggestive of selective ethnic attrition among Mexican Americans, but this evidence is somewhat indirect. Using data on U.S.-born Mexican-American children from the Current Population Survey (CPS), we now provide more direct evidence on this issue. In particular, we assess the influence of endogenous ethnicity by comparing an “objective” indicator of Mexican descent (based on the countries of birth of the child, his parents, and his grandparents) with the standard “subjective” measure of Mexican self-identification (based on the response to the Hispanic origin question).

A key feature of recent CPS data is their inclusion of the information about parental countries of birth that is currently missing from the Census. For children living with both parents, the CPS data reveal how many parents and grandparents were born in Mexico. By examining how the ethnic identification of these children varies with the numbers of parents and grandparents born in Mexico, we can directly estimate the extent of ethnic attrition among second- and third-generation Mexican children. The analysis sample consists of U.S.-born children ages 17 and below who live in intact families and who have some identifiable Mexican ancestry.²⁵ We describe as “second-generation Mexicans” those U.S.-born children with at least

²⁴ The research discussed in this section comes from Duncan and Trejo (2008b).

²⁵ We exclude children with missing or imputed information about Hispanic origin or country of birth for themselves or either parent. We employ microdata from the CPS for all months from January 1994 through December 2006. The CPS is a monthly survey of about 50,000 households that the U.S. government administers to estimate unemployment rates and other indicators of labor market activity. In addition to the detailed demographic and labor force data reported for all respondents, the CPS collects earnings information each month from one-quarter of the sample, the so-called “outgoing rotation groups.” The data we analyze come from these outgoing rotation group samples. The CPS sampling scheme is such that surveys for the same month in adjacent years have about half of their respondents in common (e.g., about half of the respondents in any January

one parent born in Mexico, and we designate as “third-generation Mexicans” those U.S.-born children with no parents but at least one grandparent born in Mexico.

For comparison purposes, we create one final category of U.S.-born Mexicans, the “fourth-and-higher generation,” which denotes U.S.-born children with no parents or grandparents born in Mexico but with at least one parent identified as Mexican by the CPS question regarding Hispanic origin. For expositional convenience, we will refer to this group as the “fourth generation.” Note that, whereas second- and third-generation Mexican children can be identified using “objective” criteria (i.e., the countries of birth of their parents and grandparents), fourth-generation Mexican children are revealed only by “subjective” indicators (i.e., whether either parent self-identifies as Mexican). Consequently, for our purposes, the fourth-generation category is flawed, because it misses children descended from Mexican immigrants if neither parent self-identifies as Mexican. Data from the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study, presented earlier in Table 2, indicate that we could be missing a large share of later-generation Mexican-origin families. Nonetheless, we think it informative to include statistics for this flawed fourth-generation category in the tables that follow, but interpretation of these statistics should take into account the incomplete and potentially selective nature of this category.

For the U.S.-born children of Mexican descent in our CPS sample, Table 10 shows their distribution by generation and the rates at which these children subjectively identify as Mexican. Given our definitions, the vast majority (61 percent) of these U.S.-born Mexican-American children are second generation, 13 percent are third generation, and the remaining 26 percent are

survey are re-interviewed the following January). To obtain independent samples, we use only data from the first time a household appears in the outgoing rotation group samples (i.e., we use only data from the fourth month that a household appears in the CPS sample). By pooling together these 13 years of monthly CPS data, we substantially increase sample sizes and improve the precision of our estimates.

higher generation. The heterogeneity *within* generations of Mexican Americans is striking, however, and perhaps somewhat surprising. Almost a third of second-generation Mexicans have a parent who was *not* born in Mexico, and only 17 percent of third-generation Mexicans have a majority of their grandparents born in Mexico. Among so-called fourth-generation Mexicans, 57 percent have a parent who does *not* self-identify as Mexican.

The generational complexity evident in Table 10 has two sources: intermarriage between Mexican ethnics and non-Mexicans, and marriage between Mexican Americans of different generations. The only way that a third-generation Mexican child can have three or four of his grandparents born in Mexico, for example, is if both parents are second-generation Mexicans (i.e., the mother and father are both the U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants). By contrast, if a second-generation Mexican marries either a non-Mexican or a later-generation Mexican (i.e., a Mexican American from the third generation or beyond), then the children resulting from such a marriage can have at most two Mexican-born grandparents. The generational categories for U.S.-born Mexican-American children listed in Table 10, based on how many of a child's parents and/or grandparents were born in Mexico, show in finer detail than usual how far removed each child is from his Mexican immigrant origins.

Moreover, this generational complexity is closely related to children's subjective Mexican identification. Children are virtually certain of identifying as Mexican if both parents or three or more grandparents were born in Mexico, or if both parents self-identify as Mexican. In contrast, rates of Mexican identification fall to 81 percent for second-generation children with only one Mexican-born parent, 79 percent for third-generation children with two grandparents born in Mexico, 58 percent for third-generation children with just one Mexican-born grandparent, and 50 percent for fourth-generation children with only one parent who identifies as

Mexican. Among all U.S.-born children in the CPS with some identifiable Mexican ancestry, 16 percent do not subjectively identify as Mexican, and this rate of ethnic attrition rises to almost 30 percent for children in the third generation and beyond.

Table 11 begins to explore the selectivity of Mexican identification, in this case by showing how parents' education varies with the Mexican identification of their children. In all generations, children of Mexican descent who fail to identify as Mexican have parents with much higher levels of educational attainment than do the corresponding children who retain a Mexican identification. Consider, for example, the fathers of third-generation Mexican-American children. Compared to their counterparts whose children identify as Mexican, the fathers whose children do not so identify average almost a year more schooling (13.3 versus 12.4 years), are about half as likely to be high school dropouts (12 versus 22 percent), and are over twice as likely to be college graduates (23 versus 11 percent). Analogous differences for mothers are similar but slightly less dramatic. The strong correlation between parents' education and children's Mexican identification is not surprising, given previous evidence (described in Section III above) of the human capital selectivity of Mexican intermarriage and of the powerful influence that intermarriage exerts on the ethnic identification of Mexican-American children.

By examining an indicator of human capital available for a subset of the Mexican-American children analyzed in Tables 10 and 11, Table 12 provides an initial glimpse at the ultimate impact of selective ethnic attrition. For U.S.-born youth ages 16-17, we investigate the relationship between Mexican identification and high school dropout rates.²⁶ Information about school enrollment pertains to the CPS survey week, so we exclude observations from the months

²⁶ Note that the CPS sample in Tables 10 and 11 includes all U.S.-born children ages 17 and below (who live in married, intact families and have some identifiable Mexican ancestry). In order to analyze high school dropout rates, we now further restrict the sample in Table 12 to the subset of these children who are ages 16 or 17.

of June, July, and August when students typically are on summer vacation. Table 12 reports how dropout rates vary by generation and Mexican identification. For comparison purposes, the table also displays the corresponding dropout rates for U.S.-born, non-Hispanic white and black youth (with two U.S.-born parents of the same race).

When we do not limit the sample to those who subjectively identify as Mexican, the dropout rate falls sharply from 5.6 percent for second-generation Mexicans to 2.7 percent for the third generation. These data thus suggest that by the third generation, Mexican-American youth have converged to the same dropout rate observed for third- and higher-generation non-Hispanic white youth. Moreover, the dropout rate of third-generation Mexican youth is 25 percent higher (3.4 percent versus 2.7 percent) when the sample is limited to those youth who self-identify as Mexican. Though the sample sizes are small and the estimates are therefore imprecise, Table 12 provides some direct evidence that selective ethnic attrition could produce sizeable downward bias in standard measures of attainment for later-generation Mexicans which typically rely on ethnic self-identification rather than objective indicators of Mexican descent. Certainly, the apparent extent of such ethnic attrition—in our CPS sample, about 30 percent of third-generation Mexican youth fail to self-identify as Mexican—creates the potential for endogenous ethnicity to affect our inferences about the progress of Mexican Americans.

VI. Conclusion

This chapter argues that selective ethnic attrition creates potentially serious problems for tracking the socioeconomic progress of the U.S.-born descendants of Mexican immigrants. Almost without exception, studies of later-generation Mexican Americans rely on subjective measures of ethnic self-identification to identify the population of interest. As the descendants

of Mexican immigrants assimilate into American society and often intermarry with non-Mexicans, ethnic identification weakens, particularly among the children produced by Mexican intermarriages. Unfolding across generations, this dynamic suggests that an increasingly small fraction of the descendants of Mexican immigrants continue to identify themselves as Mexican. Moreover, this process of ethnic leakage is highly selective, because Mexican Americans who intermarry tend to have much higher education and earnings than Mexican Americans who do not intermarry. Consequently, available data for third- and higher-generation Mexicans, who usually can only be identified by their subjective responses to questions about Hispanic ethnicity, understate the socioeconomic attainment of this population. In effect, through the selective nature of intermarriage and ethnic identification, some of the most successful descendants of Mexican immigrants assimilate to such an extent that they fade from empirical observation.

The evidence presented here is consistent with this story. Data from the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study suggest that self-identified samples of U.S. Hispanics omit a large proportion of later-generation individuals with Hispanic ancestors, and that intermarriage is a fundamental source of such intergenerational ethnic attrition. Data from the 2000 Census indicate that intermarriage is widespread among Mexican Americans. More than a third of married, U.S.-born Mexicans have non-Mexican spouses, with the overwhelming majority of these non-Mexican spouses being U.S.-born, non-Hispanic whites. Because it takes two Mexican-origin spouses to create an endogamous Mexican marriage, whereas a Mexican intermarriage requires only one Mexican-origin spouse, the observed rate of intermarriage implies that almost half of Mexican-American marriages involve a non-Mexican spouse. In addition, Mexican intermarriage is highly selective on human capital and labor market success,

and having a non-Mexican parent largely determines whether children of Mexican descent are at risk of losing their Mexican identity. Taken together, these findings provide a mechanism for selective ethnic attrition among Mexican Americans. Those Mexicans who intermarry tend to have higher levels of education and earnings, and many of the resulting children are not identified as Mexican in Census data. In this way, selective intermarriage interacts with the intergenerational transmission of human capital and ethnic identity to create a situation in which available data for later-generation Mexican Americans may omit an increasingly large share of the most successful descendants of Mexican immigrants.

Two pieces of indirect evidence corroborate the direction of the measurement bias generated by this process of selective ethnic attrition. First, in 1980 Census data for five southwestern states where the Hispanic population was overwhelmingly Mexican origin at that time, men with a Spanish surname who nonetheless self-identify as “not Hispanic” are much more educated and English proficient, on average, than their counterparts who are consistently identified as Hispanic by both surname and self-report. Second, in 2000 Census data, human capital advantages are also evident for men and women who list a Mexican ancestry but simultaneously report their ethnicity as “not Hispanic,” relative to those who report Mexican as both their ancestry and their ethnicity. In each case, the segment of the Mexican-American population that seems to have weaker or more distant ethnic ties displays significantly higher levels of socioeconomic attainment.

Finally, using data on U.S.-born Mexican-American children from recent years of the Current Population Survey (CPS), we provide some direct evidence of selective ethnic attrition. For children living with both parents, the CPS data reveal how many parents and grandparents were born in Mexico. We assess the influence of endogenous ethnicity by comparing an

“objective” indicator of Mexican descent (based on the countries of birth of the child, his parents, and his grandparents) with the standard “subjective” measure of Mexican self-identification (based on the response to the Hispanic origin question). Immigrant generations turn out to be quite complex, and this complexity is closely related to children’s subjective Mexican identification. For example, only 17 percent of third-generation Mexicans have a majority of their grandparents born in Mexico. Moreover, third-generation children are virtually certain of identifying as Mexican if three or more grandparents were born in Mexico, whereas rates of Mexican identification fall to 79 percent for children with two grandparents born in Mexico and 58 percent for children with just one Mexican-born grandparent. Overall, about 30 percent of third-generation Mexican children fail to self-identify as Mexican in our CPS sample. Importantly, this ethnic attrition is highly selective. For example, the high school dropout rate of third-generation Mexican youth is 25 percent higher when the sample is limited to those youth who self-identify as Mexican. Therefore, these CPS data provide some direct evidence that ethnic attrition is substantial and could produce significant downward bias in standard measures of attainment which rely on ethnic self-identification rather than objective indicators of Mexican descent.

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Table 1: Average Years of Education and Hourly Earnings, Men Ages 25-59

	Mexicans			3 rd + Generation Whites	3 rd + Generation Blacks
	1 st Generation	2 nd Generation	3 rd + Generation		
Years of education	8.78 (.03)	12.26 (.04)	12.36 (.03)	13.64 (.004)	12.70 (.01)
Hourly earnings	12.60 (.07)	17.79 (.18)	17.77 (.15)	22.29 (.03)	16.84 (.06)

Source: 1994-2006 CPS data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The samples include men ages 25-59. The samples for the hourly earnings data are further limited to men employed at wage and salary jobs during the survey week. Earnings have been converted to 2006 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Hourly earnings observations below \$1 or above \$500 are excluded as outliers. First-generation Mexicans are individuals who were born in Mexico. Second-generation Mexicans are U.S.-born individuals who have at least one parent born in Mexico. Third- (and higher-) generation Mexicans are U.S.-born individuals who have U.S.-born parents and who self-identify as Mexican in response to the Hispanic origin question in the CPS. Third- (and higher-) generation whites and blacks are U.S.-born, non-Hispanic individuals who have U.S.-born parents.

Table 2: Hispanic Identification of Individuals with Ancestors from a Spanish-Speaking Country, as Reported in the 1970 Census Content Reinterview Study

<u>Hispanic Ancestry Classification in Reinterview</u>	<u>Percent Who Identified as Hispanic in the Census</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>
Most recent ancestor from a Spanish-speaking country:		
Respondent (i.e., 1 st generation)	98.7	77
Parent(s) (i.e., 2 nd generation)	83.3	90
Grandparent(s) (i.e., 3 rd generation)	73.0	89
Great grandparent(s) (i.e., 4 th generation)	44.4	27
Further back (i.e., 5 th + generations)	5.6	18
Hispanic ancestry on both sides of family	97.0	266
Hispanic ancestry on one side of family only	21.4	103
Father's side	20.5	44
Mother's side	22.0	59
All individuals with Hispanic ancestry	75.9	369

Source: Table C of U.S. Bureau of the Census (1974, p. 8).

Note: Information regarding the generation of the most recent ancestor from a Spanish-speaking country was missing for 68 respondents who nonetheless indicated that they had Hispanic ancestry on one or both sides of their family.

Table 3: Nativity/Ethnicity Distributions of the Spouses of U.S.-Born Mexicans

<u>Nativity/Ethnicity of Spouse</u>	<u>U.S.-Born Mexican:</u>	
	<u>Husbands</u>	<u>Wives</u>
<u>U.S.-born</u>		
Mexican	50.6	45.3
Other Hispanic	2.7	2.3
Non-Hispanic:		
White	26.7	28.1
Black	.6	1.5
Asian	.4	.3
Other race	.8	.6
Multiple race	1.0	1.0
<u>Foreign-born</u>		
Mexican	13.6	17.4
Other Hispanic	1.5	1.8
Non-Hispanic:		
White	1.1	1.2
Black	.04	.06
Asian	.7	.3
Other race	.06	.03
Multiple race	.2	.2
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

Source: 2000 Census data.

Note: The sample includes marriages that meet the following conditions: both spouses are between the ages of 25-59, the couple currently lives together, and at least one spouse is a U.S.-born individual identified as Mexican by the Census question regarding Hispanic origin. For the U.S.-born Mexican husbands and wives involved in these marriages, the table shows the nativity/ethnicity distributions of their spouses. There are 62,734 such marriages, and these marriages involve 38,911 U.S.-born Mexican husbands and 43,527 U.S.-born Mexican wives.

Table 4: Types of Marriages Involving U.S.-Born Mexicans

<u>Type of Marriage</u>	<u>Percent of Sample</u>
Both spouses U.S.-born Mexican	31.4
Husband foreign-born Mexican (Wife U.S.-born Mexican)	12.0
Wife foreign-born Mexican (Husband U.S.-born Mexican)	8.4
Husband non-Mexican (Wife U.S.-born Mexican)	25.9
Wife non-Mexican (Husband U.S.-born Mexican)	22.2
	<hr/> 100.0%

Source: 2000 Census data.

Note: The sample includes marriages that meet the following conditions: both spouses are between the ages of 25-59, the couple currently lives together, and at least one spouse is a U.S.-born individual identified as Mexican by the Census question regarding Hispanic origin. There are 62,734 such marriages.

Table 5: Human Capital of Husbands and Wives, by Type of Marriage

	<u>Average Years of Education</u>	<u>Percent Deficient English</u>
Husbands		
Type of marriage:		
Both spouses U.S.-born Mexican	12.0 (.02)	14.1 (.25)
Husband foreign-born Mexican	9.6 (.05)	53.3 (.57)
Wife foreign-born Mexican	11.5 (.04)	24.4 (.59)
Husband non-Mexican	13.5 (.02)	4.0 (.15)
Wife non-Mexican	13.1 (.02)	5.1 (.19)
All husbands	12.3 (.01)	15.0 (.14)
Wives		
Type of marriage:		
Both spouses U.S.-born Mexican	12.1 (.02)	14.2 (.25)
Husband foreign-born Mexican	11.4 (.03)	18.8 (.45)
Wife foreign-born Mexican	10.3 (.05)	53.5 (.69)
Husband non-Mexican	13.1 (.02)	6.0 (.19)
Wife non-Mexican	13.3 (.02)	4.4 (.17)
All wives	12.4 (.01)	13.7 (.14)

Source: 2000 Census data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The samples include husbands and wives in marriages that meet the following conditions: both spouses are between the ages of 25-59, the couple currently lives together, and at least one spouse is a U.S.-born individual identified as Mexican by the Census question regarding Hispanic origin. The sample sizes are 62,734 husbands and 62,734 wives.

Table 6: Mexican Identification of Youngest Child by Type of Marriage

Type of marriage:	<u>Percent with Youngest Child Identified as Mexican</u>
Both spouses U.S.-born Mexican	98.2 (.12)
Husband foreign-born Mexican	97.9 (.20)
Wife foreign-born Mexican	97.8 (.24)
Husband non-Mexican	63.5 (.51)
Wife non-Mexican	71.1 (.51)
All types of marriages	84.4 (.19)

Source: 2000 Census data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The sample includes marriages that meet the following conditions: both spouses are between the ages of 25-59, the couple currently lives together, at least one spouse is a U.S.-born individual identified as Mexican by the Census question regarding Hispanic origin, and the marriage has produced at least one child under age 19 that resides in the household. There are 37,921 such marriages.

Table 7: Parental Human Capital, by Mexican Identification of Youngest Child

	<u>Average Years of Education</u>	<u>Percent Deficient English</u>
Fathers		
Youngest child identified as:		
Mexican	12.1 (.02)	18.0 (.21)
Not Mexican	13.2 (.03)	6.2 (.31)
All fathers	12.3 (.02)	16.1 (.19)
Mothers		
Youngest child identified as:		
Mexican	12.3 (.02)	15.8 (.20)
Not Mexican	13.1 (.03)	6.5 (.32)
All mothers	12.4 (.01)	14.4 (.18)

Source: 2000 Census data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The samples include fathers and mothers in marriages that meet the following conditions: both spouses are between the ages of 25-59, the couple currently lives together, at least one spouse is a U.S.-born individual identified as Mexican by the Census question regarding Hispanic origin, and the marriage has produced at least one child under age 19 that resides in the household. The sample sizes are 37,921 fathers and 37,921 mothers.

Table 8: Human Capital, by Type of Hispanic Identification

	<u>Percent of Sample</u>	<u>Average Years of Education</u>	<u>Percent Deficient English</u>
Men			
Identified as Hispanic by:			
Self-report and surname	83.1	10.6 (.02)	28.8 (.23)
Self-report only	12.9	12.1 (.05)	14.4 (.46)
Surname only	4.0	12.2 (.08)	7.0 (.61)
All types of Hispanics	100.0%	10.8 (.02)	26.1 (.20)
Women			
Identified as Hispanic by:			
Self-report and surname	66.2	9.7 (.02)	33.3 (.26)
Self-report only	21.1	11.7 (.03)	13.0 (.32)
Surname only	12.7	12.3 (.03)	3.2 (.21)
All types of Hispanics	100.0%	10.5 (.02)	25.1 (.19)

Source: 1980 Census data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The samples include U.S.-born individuals ages 25-59 who reside in the states of California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. Individuals whose race is American Indian or Asian are excluded, as is anyone else with a race other than white or black who neither has a Spanish surname nor self-reports as being of Hispanic origin. The sample sizes are 46,339 men and 53,800 women.

Table 9: Human Capital, by Mexican Ethnicity/Ancestry

	<u>Percent of Sample</u>	<u>Average Years of Education</u>	<u>Percent Deficient English</u>
Men			
Ethnicity/Ancestry:			
Ethnicity is Mexican and Ancestry is Mexican	67.8	12.3 (.01)	13.1 (.14)
General Hispanic	7.9	12.1 (.03)	10.8 (.37)
Other ancestry	3.6	12.3 (.05)	9.7 (.53)
Not reported	9.5	10.7 (.04)	16.5 (.40)
Ancestry is Mexican and Ethnicity is General or other Hispanic	8.1	11.9 (.03)	15.0 (.42)
Not Hispanic	3.1	12.9 (.05)	3.8 (.37)
All men	100.0%	12.1 (.01)	13.0 (.11)
Women			
Ethnicity/Ancestry:			
Ethnicity is Mexican and Ancestry is Mexican	68.5	12.3 (.01)	12.4 (.13)
General Hispanic	8.8	12.1 (.03)	9.8 (.33)
Other ancestry	3.8	12.3 (.05)	7.5 (.44)
Not reported	6.4	10.9 (.05)	17.2 (.49)
Ancestry is Mexican and Ethnicity is General or other Hispanic	9.3	11.9 (.03)	15.5 (.39)
Not Hispanic	3.1	12.9 (.04)	3.8 (.36)
All women	100.0%	12.2 (.01)	12.3 (.11)

Source: 2000 Census data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The samples include U.S.-born men and women ages 25-59 who report Mexican as an ethnicity and/or ancestry. The sample sizes are 88,989 men and 92,644 women.

Table 10: Generation and Mexican Identification of U.S.-born Children of Mexican Descent

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Percent of All U.S.-born Mexicans</u>	<u>Percent of Generation</u>	<u>Percent Identified as Mexican</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>
2 nd generation Mexicans:				
Both parents born in Mexico	41.9	68.4	97.9	17,235
One parent born in Mexico	19.3	31.6	80.6	7,959
All 2 nd generation Mexicans	61.2	100.0	92.4	25,194
3 rd generation Mexicans:				
Neither parent born in Mexico and Four grandparents born in Mexico	1.3	10.0	96.2	524
Three grandparents born in Mexico	0.9	7.1	95.2	375
Two grandparents born in Mexico	4.4	34.5	78.7	1,815
One grandparent born in Mexico	6.2	48.5	58.4	2,551
All 3 rd generation Mexicans	12.8	100.0	71.8	5,265
4 th + generation Mexicans:				
No parents or grandparents born in Mexico and Both parents identified as Mexican	11.2	42.9	98.4	4,592
One parent identified as Mexican	14.8	57.1	50.1	6,112
All 4 th + generation Mexicans	26.0	100.0	70.8	10,704
All U.S.-born Mexicans	100.0		84.2	41,163

Source: 1994-2006 CPS data.

Note: The sample includes U.S.-born children ages 17 and below who live in intact families and either have at least one parent or grandparent born in Mexico or else have at least one parent identified as Mexican in response to the CPS question regarding Hispanic origin. Suspected stepchildren are excluded. "Identified as Mexican" represents the percentage of these children who are identified as Mexican by the CPS Hispanic origin question.

Table 11: Parental Education of U.S.-born Children of Mexican Descent, by Child's Generation and Mexican Identification

	Parental Education, by Mexican Identification of Child								
	Average Years of Education			Percent without High School Diploma			Percent with Bachelor's Degree		
	Mexican	Not Mexican	All Children	Mexican	Not Mexican	All Children	Mexican	Not Mexican	All Children
Father's Outcomes									
Child's generation:									
2 nd generation Mexicans	9.00 (.03)	11.04 (.08)	9.16 (.02)	63.61 (.32)	37.31 (1.11)	61.61 (.31)	4.22 (.13)	11.36 (.73)	4.76 (.13)
3 rd generation Mexicans	12.36 (.04)	13.26 (.06)	12.61 (.03)	22.02 (.67)	11.90 (.84)	19.16 (.54)	11.36 (.52)	23.40 (1.10)	14.76 (.49)
4 th + generation Mexicans	12.31 (.03)	13.20 (.04)	12.57 (.02)	21.09 (.47)	9.77 (.53)	17.79 (.37)	12.17 (.38)	21.72 (.74)	14.96 (.34)
Mother's Outcomes									
Child's generation:									
2 nd generation Mexicans	9.24 (.02)	11.26 (.08)	9.39 (.02)	62.28 (.32)	36.05 (1.10)	60.29 (.31)	3.84 (.13)	10.78 (.71)	4.37 (.13)
3 rd generation Mexicans	12.36 (.04)	13.05 (.05)	12.55 (.03)	20.30 (.65)	11.97 (.84)	17.95 (.53)	10.35 (.50)	18.63 (1.01)	12.69 (.46)
4 th + generation Mexicans	12.21 (.03)	13.04 (.03)	12.45 (.02)	21.52 (.47)	9.96 (.53)	18.15 (.37)	10.56 (.35)	16.63 (.67)	12.33 (.32)

Source: 1994-2006 CPS data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The sample includes U.S.-born children ages 17 and below who live in intact families and either have at least one parent or grandparent born in Mexico or else have at least one parent identified as Mexican in response to the CPS question regarding Hispanic origin. Suspected stepchildren are excluded.

Table 12: Dropout Rates of U.S.-Born Youth Ages 16-17, by Generation and Mexican Identification

Generation/Ethnicity	Percent Identified as Mexican	Dropout Rate		All Youth	Sample Size
		Identified as Mexican	Not Identified as Mexican		
2 nd generation Mexicans	92.6 (.7)	5.75 (.69)	3.30 (1.88)	5.57 (.65)	1,238
3 rd generation Mexicans	68.9 (2.7)	3.43 (1.28)	1.09 (1.09)	2.70 (.94)	296
4 th + generation Mexicans	70.6 (1.7)	4.13 (.86)	2.70 (1.09)	3.71 (.69)	755
No grandparents born in Mexico and Both parents U.S.-born, non-Hispanic whites				2.78 (.10)	25,334
Both parents U.S.-born, non-Hispanic blacks				2.70 (.37)	1,924

Source: 1994-2006 CPS data.

Note: Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The sample includes U.S.-born youth ages 16 and 17 living in intact families. Suspected stepchildren are excluded. "Identified as Mexican" represents the percentage of youth who are identified as Mexican by the CPS question regarding Hispanic origin. The "dropout rate" represents the percentage of youth who are not attending school and have not yet completed high school (either through classes or by exam).