

Cost of Being a Mexican Immigrant and Being a Mexican Non-Citizen in California and Texas

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This study examines the labor market costs associated with being foreign-born and not having U.S. citizenship among Mexicans in California and Texas, the two largest states. Data from the 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample are used to conduct the multivariate regression analysis. The results show that being an immigrant, particularly a non-citizen immigrant, is associated with lower hourly wages in California as compared with Texas. The results also indicate that these costs are greater for those who arrived after 1990, especially in California. Findings suggest that Mexican immigrants faced harsher social context in California in the post-IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act) period, as represented in anti-immigrant policies and sentiments. Partly, larger population concentration of immigrants, especially non-citizens, could be a source of intensive within-group labor market competition among the foreign-born workers.

Keywords: *Mexican immigrants; Mexican non-citizens; wages; California; Texas*

Over the last half century, California has been the preferred destination of Mexican immigrants. The clustering of Mexicans in this state has led to positive outcomes among them in the state. For example, the large Mexican population has helped in the formation of social networks and social support for compatriots. However, the large Mexican population has

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also attracted censure from the mainstream population of the state. Indeed, anti-immigrant sentiments have been leveled against Mexican immigrants along with allegations that they draw more resources from the state than they contribute. Furthermore, a series of propositions have been formed to limit or eliminate the resources that immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, can access. Under such a context, it is likely that Mexican immigrants face significant costs for being foreign-born and also for lacking naturalization status.

This study examines the earnings costs associated with these statuses among Mexican immigrants in California and Texas, the states with the largest Mexican immigrant populations. In part, because of its smaller Mexican immigrant population, Texas has not been nearly as great of a hotbed for the formation of anti-immigrant sentiments as has California. Thus, we examine whether indeed Mexican immigrants face greater labor market costs for their foreignness in California than in Texas. Data from the 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) are used to conduct the analysis.

The Context for Mexican Immigrants

Although both California and Texas continue to attract the majority of Mexican immigrants, these persons have encountered harsher treatment in California at least over the last decade. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 caused an expansion of the labor supply in the state (Durand, Massey, & Charvet, 2000). Because of a fear triggered by the massive growth of the immigrant population, mainly low-skilled undocumented Mexicans, California passed a series of anti-immigrant laws such as Proposition 187, 209, and 227 during the 1990s.¹

The passage of these propositions represents social hostility that induced unfavorable treatment toward Mexican-origin workers in particular. The fiscal imperatives have directed their attention to Mexican migrant workers by unreasonably labeling them as “undeserving poor,” because of their so-called culture of dependency, suggesting that they migrate to the United States to draw societal resources (Kurthen, 1997).

It is likely that these harsh political and social contexts in California are translated to worse labor market outcomes for Mexican immigrants in California than in Texas in various ways. First, employer sanctions by IRCA and sentiments toward Mexicans have induced general discrimination against Mexican-origin workers in general (Davila, Pagan, & Grau, 1998). Second, after IRCA, Mexican immigrants faced wage penalties

based on the absence of legal status (Donato & Massey, 1993; Phillips & Massey, 1999; Sorensen & Bean, 1994). Moreover, as greater concentration of immigrants is associated with lower hourly wage (Borjas, 1987, 1994, 1995; Tienda & Lii, 1987; Topel, 1994), hourly wages are expected to be lower in California than in Texas, all else equal.

State Differences in Anti-Immigrant Policies and Sentiments

Kalleberg and Sorensen (1979) argue that *labor markets* can be used to denote geographic areas instead of occupational and industrial groups. Indeed, the description of the literature on the impact of regional differences on wages reminds us of the importance of considering the state and local labor market characteristics where people reside. This perspective enables us to better understand the different labor market situations of Mexican-origin workers because such a perspective also takes into account non-economic factors (e.g., social issues and politics) that often influence the economic outcomes of minority workers.

To closely examine the state and local labor market characteristics, this study focuses on hourly wage variations within Mexican-origin workers across California and Texas. In spite of the fact that both states continue to attract the majority of Mexican immigrants, it is likely that variations in the strength of anti-immigrant policies and sentiments between California and Texas during the last decades resulted in different labor market conditions for Mexican-origin immigrants. In particular, it is apparent that those in California experienced harsher conditions than did their counterparts in Texas.

The IRCA of 1986 directly affected the economic situation of different groups of Mexican-origin workers (see Baker, 1997; Davila et al., 1998; Donato & Massey, 1993).² "IRCA for the first time made it illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers, imposing both civil and criminal penalties against those who did" (Durand et al., 2000, p. 9). Because of the disproportionate concentration of Mexican immigrants in the Southwest (especially in California and Texas), the impact of IRCA was especially obvious in this region.

Although IRCA was intended to reduce the number of undocumented migrants, it did not accomplish this goal. Indeed, research suggests that IRCA was not particularly successful in reducing Mexican illegal migration to the United States (Baker, 1997; Donato, Durand, & Massey, 1992b; Donato & Massey, 1993), and employers using undocumented migrants continued to

hire them at low wages through increasing subcontract arrangements.³ Yet IRCA did have other consequences. For example, about 2.3 million Mexicans acquired legal documents through IRCA, allowing many to enter the larger traditional labor market (Donato, Durand, & Massey, 1992a; Durand et al., 2000; Phillips & Massey, 1999; Valdes, 1995). In addition, employer sanctions induced general discrimination against undocumented-appearing Mexican-origin workers, including U.S.-born workers (Davila et al., 1998).

Many studies have examined IRCA's effects on the economic outcomes of Mexican-origin workers, mostly the immigrant population (Davila et al., 1998; Phillips & Massey, 1999; Sorensen & Bean, 1994). Such research has indicated that IRCA resulted in wage penalties against workers with undocumented status (Davila et al., 1998; Donato et al., 1992a; Donato & Massey, 1993).⁴ The wage penalty for being undocumented suggests that there is a reward for being a legalized immigrant. In fact, research by Aguilera (2004) shows that Mexicans who became legal through IRCA experienced upward mobility.⁵ Furthermore, in the post-IRCA period, the effect of human capital (e.g., occupation and the duration of trips to the United States) declined in determining wages of both legal and undocumented migrants (Phillips & Massey, 1999), with legal status becoming the primary determinant of wage rates (Donato & Massey, 1993).⁶

Although IRCA is a federal law, Mexican immigrant workers in California might have faced harsher labor market conditions than their counterparts in Texas because of a greater concentration of Mexican immigrants in California. Indeed, California initiatives such as Propositions 187, 209, and 227 represent societal reactions and fears related to the perceived social and economic costs associated with the increasing presence of immigrants, mainly low-skilled undocumented Mexicans (Kurthen, 1997; Martin, 1995; Tolbert & Hero, 1996).⁷

The adoption of anti-immigrant policies and hostility suggest that the costs associated with foreign-born status and lack of naturalized status are greater in California than in Texas. However, it is also important to examine the human capital literature to obtain a more expansive view of the factors that affect the labor market earnings of Mexican immigrants.

Immigrant Status and Naturalization Status

Past research shows that for Mexican-origin workers, immigrant status is a key factor negatively affecting their wages (e.g., Chiswick, 1978, 1986; Saenz, 2004b; Tienda, 1983, 1989; Trejo, 2003). Moreover, naturalization

status well reflects immigrants' labor market values. Thus, the rate at which an immigrant group acquires citizenship is important (Portes & Mozo, 1985); however, data from the 2000 5% PUMS show that only 22.5% of Mexican immigrants are naturalized, compared with 30.2% of other immigrants from Latin America. The Mexican's low naturalization rate suggests that foreign-born Mexican workers face more wage disadvantages compared with their counterparts of other nationalities. Another major reason for the disadvantageous position of immigrants is that human capital acquired outside the United States is imperfectly remunerated in the U.S. labor market (Borjas, 1999; Chiswick, 1978; Chiswick, Cohen, & Zach, 1997; Massey & Espinosa, 1997).

The disadvantage of being an immigrant varies by length of U.S. residence. In the short run, immigrants earn significantly less than native-born workers (Kossoudji, 1989). In industrialized countries, there is apparently a tendency for citizens to be less willing to take on certain menial and low-status jobs as economies advance (Marshall, 1984; Massey, Gross, & Shibuya, 1994). Thus, immigrants compensate for their lower earnings by putting in more working hours with their strong motivation to work (Dominguez & Fernandez de Castro, 2001).

However, immigrants generally improve their wage returns to their human capital with increasing length of stay in the host country (see Chiswick, 1978; 1986; Chiswick et al., 1997; Jensen, 1988; Simon, Moore, & Sullivan, 1988; Tienda, 1983), although Borjas and Tienda (1993) argue that the disadvantages of undocumented relative to documented immigrants increase with age. With increasing time in the United States, Mexican immigrants have higher rates of English fluency, higher levels of education, higher presence in higher-status occupations, higher labor market wages, and lower poverty rates (Saenz, 2004a). In turn, these socioeconomic improvements increase the likelihood of naturalization (Liang, 1994). It is expected that all else equal, the costs associated with immigrant status and non-naturalization status are greater in California than in Texas because of the relatively larger concentration of immigrants and harsher anti-immigrant sentiments in California.

Hypotheses

This study seeks to assess internal hourly wage differentials within the Mexican-origin workers for a better understanding of their heterogeneity. We draw on the literature discussed above to develop a more comprehensive

understanding of the labor market outcomes of Mexican immigrants in the key states of California and Texas. In particular, this study seeks to assess the extent to which the association between wages and immigration status/citizenship status among persons of Mexican origin varies across California and Texas. Put simply, we investigate the costs of being a Mexican immigrant or the hourly wage differentials between the native-born and foreign-born in California and Texas. In addition, among the foreign-born, we estimate the cost of being a Mexican immigrant without U.S. citizenship or the wage differentials between naturalized immigrants and non-naturalized immigrants in the two states.

This study examines two sets of hypotheses. First, the following two major hypotheses regarding the costs associated with foreign-born status and the lack of naturalized status are examined:

- H1:* Foreign-born persons of Mexican origin have lower hourly wages than native-born Mexican Americans across both states (cost of being an immigrant).
H2: Among foreign-born Mexican workers, those who are not naturalized U.S. citizens have lower hourly wages than U.S. naturalized citizens across both states (cost of being an immigrant non-citizen).

Second, following the literature on the impact of the California social and economic context (established anti-immigrant hostility and laws) on Mexican-origin workers' wages, the above two hypotheses are further specified as follows:

- H3:* The cost of being an immigrant is higher in California than in Texas.
H4: The cost of being a non-citizen is higher in California than in Texas.

Data and Methods

The data are drawn from the 5% PUMS of the 2000 census. The PUMS is widely used in earnings studies as it provides a large, nationally representative sample of all sectors of the labor force. The PUMS also ensures adequate sample sizes for minority populations.

The population from which we draw our sample is persons of Mexican origin (both native- and foreign-born) living in California and Texas at the time of the census. The samples of California and Texas have a total of 221,661 Mexican-origin residents: California has 140,598 and Texas, 81,063. There are a total of 119,947 immigrants in the sample: 84,616 in

California and 35,331 in Texas. Only persons of Mexican origin who worked at least 1,040 hours in 1999 are included in the sample. This restriction ensures that only workers who are attached to the labor force are included in the analysis. Note that persons who worked 1,040 hours in 1999 include full-time workers who were employed half the year as well as half-time workers who were employed year-round. The hourly wage is used instead of the annual wage income to account for the varying hours that people worked over the course of 1999. Analyses are restricted to individuals within the prime working age range from 16 to 64.

Variables

The description of all variables is presented in Table 1. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the hourly wage based on earnings in 1999. This transformation procedure is used to minimize the effect of outliers. Because we use the natural logarithm of wages, the coefficients can be interpreted as the percentage change in hourly wages, given a one-unit change in the independent variable.

The first independent variable measures immigrant status (foreign-born versus native-born status), scored 1 if the person is foreign-born (including both U.S. citizen by naturalization and non-citizen of the United States) and scored 0 if the person is U.S.-born. The construction of this variable allows the assessment of “the cost of being a foreign-born Mexican,” which is the heart of the analysis. The second independent variable measures the immigrant’s citizenship status, coded 1 if the person is not a naturalized citizen of the United States and 0 if the person is a U.S. citizen by naturalization. This particular variable allows the estimation of “the cost of not being a naturalized citizen,” which is another major interest of the analysis.

Furthermore, for the analysis of the immigrants’ duration of U.S. residence, the immigrant population is partitioned into four cohorts: arrivals in 1990-2000, arrivals in 1980-1989, arrivals in 1970-1979, and immigrants who arrived prior to 1970. Namely, the immigrant status variable is replaced with four years-since-migration dummy variables using the variable YR2US (year of entry to United States) in the PUMS.

Analytical Models

The variables are analyzed using an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model because of the interval-level dependent variable. The first two state-specific models (1A for California and 1B for Texas) investigate the

Table 1
Variable Descriptions

Variable	Description
<i>Dependent variable</i>	
Log-wage	Natural logarithm of hourly wages = log (annual income/total hours worked in year 1999)
<i>Independent variables</i>	
Immigrant	Dummy variable; immigrant = 1; non-immigrant = 0
Non-citizen	Dummy variable; not a U.S. citizen = 1; U.S. citizen by naturalization = 0
Length of U.S. residence for immigrants	Dummy variables: reference = native-born
Immigrated before 1970	Foreign-born who came to the U.S. before 1970 = 1; otherwise = 0
Immigrated in 1970-1979	Foreign-born who came to the U.S. between 1970 and 1979 = 1; otherwise = 0
Immigrated in 1980-1989	Foreign-born who came to the U.S. between 1980 and 1989 = 1; otherwise = 0
Immigrated in 1990-2000	Foreign-born who came to the U.S. between 1990 and 2000 = 1; otherwise = 0
<i>Control variables</i>	
Age	Numerical variable; age range: 16-64
Male	Dummy variable; male = 1; female = 0
Speak English	Dummy variable; speak English = 1; do not speak English = 0
Metropolitan area	Dummy variable; living in a metropolitan area = 1; not living in a metropolitan area = 0
Self-employed	Dummy variable; self-employed = 1; not self-employed = 0
Educational attainment	Dummy variables: reference = some middle school
Some high school	Some high school but no diploma = 1; otherwise = 0
High school graduate	High school graduate = 1; otherwise = 0
Some college	Some college but no degree = 1; otherwise = 0
College graduate	College graduate = 1; otherwise = 0
Occupation	Dummy variables: reference = farming, fishing, and forestry
Managerial and professional	Managerial, professional, and related occupations = 1; otherwise = 0
Service	Service occupations = 1; otherwise = 0
Sales and office	Sales and office occupations = 1; otherwise = 0
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations = 1; otherwise = 0
Production, transportation, and material moving	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations = 1; otherwise = 0

cost of being a Mexican immigrant, that is, the hourly wage differentials between the native-born and the foreign-born. The second set of models (2A for California and 2B for Texas), based solely on the foreign-born population, analyze the cost of being a Mexican immigrant without U.S. citizenship, that is, the wage differentials between naturalized immigrants and non-naturalized immigrants. We conduct *z* tests to seek whether the coefficients indicating these costs are statistically different between California and Texas.⁸

The third set of models (Model 3A for California and Model 3B for Texas) assesses the costs associated with foreign-born status in terms of the four different periods in which immigrants came to the United States. The focus on immigrants' length of U.S. residence will allow us to assess the extent to which the initial results (Models 1 and 2) hold when length of U.S. residence is taken into account.

Findings

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics and sample sizes. U.S.-born Mexican Americans (G2) have an average hourly wage that is \$3.61 higher than that of their immigrant counterparts (G3) in California compared with an advantage of only \$1.98 in Texas. Similarly, among foreign-born Mexican workers, U.S. naturalized citizens (G4) in California have a greater average hourly wage advantage (\$3.65) over their non-citizen counterparts (G5) in California than is the case in Texas (\$2.44). As such, the descriptive results hint that there is a greater cost in being an immigrant and in being a non-citizen immigrant in California than in Texas, with the cost being 1.8 and 1.5 times higher, respectively, in California than in Texas.

Nonetheless, at least part of the hourly wage variations between the native- and foreign-born and between citizen and non-citizen immigrants reflects differences in social and economic attributes that are associated with wages. For example, while the majority of native-born Mexican Americans speak English, only slightly more than half of the foreign-born speak English, although naturalized citizens (70%) are more likely to speak English compared to non-citizens (approximately 45%). In addition, the native-born have higher education than their foreign-born counterparts in both states. Moreover, among the foreign-born, naturalized citizens are approximately 1.7 times more likely to have completed high school compared to their compatriots who have not become naturalized citizens.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	California					Texas				
	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5
Mean hourly wage	12.47	14.64	11.03	13.66	10.01	11.31	12.17	10.19	11.93	9.49
Mean age	35	34	36	40	34	35.7	36	36	40	34
Male	63.35%	54.67%	69.10%	60.93%	72.28%	62.42%	55.18%	71.79%	64.80%	74.59%
Speak English	71.50%	97.84%	54.08%	76.28%	45.42%	77.21%	96.91%	51.72%	72.66%	43.35%
Metropolitan area	87.89%	87.70%	88.02%	88.44%	87.86%	65.35%	59.57%	72.84%	67.33%	75.04%
Education										
Some high school	20.87%	16.12%	24.01%	21.23%	25.10%	20.80%	18.06%	24.34%	20.98%	25.69%
High school graduate	22.51%	29.97%	17.58%	20.15%	16.58%	25.35%	31.93%	16.84%	19.97%	15.58%
Some college	23.13%	38.35%	13.06%	21.30%	9.85%	21.88%	30.46%	10.78%	17.21%	8.20%
College graduate	7.20%	11.98%	4.04%	7.14%	2.83%	9.03%	12.50%	4.55%	7.34%	3.43%
Some middle school	26.29%	3.59%	41.31%	30.18%	45.64%	22.94%	7.05%	43.50%	34.51%	47.10%
Occupation										
Managerial and professional	14.43%	23.66%	8.35%	14.63%	5.90%	17.02%	23.93%	8.10%	13.65%	5.88%
Service	18.66%	14.37%	21.49%	18.07%	22.82%	18.40%	15.75%	21.82%	19.29%	22.83%
Sales and office	21.81%	33.30%	14.23%	19.23%	12.29%	21.64%	29.10%	12.02%	16.29%	10.31%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	13.00%	10.62%	14.57%	12.69%	15.30%	18.68%	12.44%	26.75%	19.88%	29.49%
Production, transportation, and material moving	25.97%	16.61%	32.14%	30.55%	32.76%	22.17%	17.76%	27.88%	27.97%	27.84%
Farming, fishing, and forestry	6.13%	1.44%	9.21%	4.83%	10.92%	2.08%	1.03%	3.44%	2.93%	3.65%
Self-employed	1.96%	1.70%	2.13%	2.51%	1.98%	2.23%	1.90%	2.66%	3.52%	2.31%
Sample size	140,598	55,982	84,616	23,725	60,891	81,063	45,732	35,331	10,088	25,243

Note: Variables in parentheses are omitted categories used in regression models. G1 = all Mexican-origin workers; G2 = all native-born; G3 = all foreign-born; G4 = foreign-born U.S. naturalized citizens; G5 = foreign-born without U.S. citizenship.
Source: 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample.

There are also significant differences along nativity lines with respect to the types of jobs that Mexican-origin workers perform. In particular, more than half of the native-born work in higher status occupations (managerial and professional occupations, and sales and office). In contrast, a significant majority of the foreign-born (76% in Texas and 68% in California) work in three blue-collar occupations (production, transportation, and material moving; construction, extraction, and maintenance; and service occupations). There are some differences, additionally, among the foreign-born population with naturalized citizens being less likely to be concentrated in these blue-collar occupations compared to those who are not naturalized citizens.

Cost of Being a Mexican Immigrant and Being a Mexican Non-Citizen in California and Texas

The analysis reported above provides preliminary evidence for the hypotheses—namely, that immigrants and those who are not naturalized citizens experience wage penalties for their status and that this cost is greater in California than in Texas. However, because of the compositional differences pointed out above, it is necessary to examine the hypotheses using multivariate analysis. Table 3 presents the first set of two multivariate regression models comparing the differentials in predicted log of hourly wages between the foreign-born and native-born Mexican-origin workers in California and Texas.

As hypothesized, being a Mexican immigrant is disadvantageous with respect to earnings in both states, and the cost of being a foreign-born worker is higher in California than in Texas. Specifically, in the California model, the median hourly wage of a given foreign-born worker is estimated to be 6% lower (i.e., $e^{-0.06198} - 1$) than that of a given native-born peer. In the Texas model, on the other hand, the median hourly wage of a given foreign-born worker is estimated to be only 2% lower (i.e., $e^{-0.01755} - 1$) than that of a given native-born worker. The relative nativity gap is therefore three times larger in California, and the differential is statistically significant ($z = 7.30$, two-tailed test).

As can be seen, being an immigrant is a major source of the internal wage gap, and social and economic contexts matter with respect to the labor market outcomes of Mexican immigrants. We argue that the more hostile environment that immigrants face in California than in Texas—represented in a series of California propositions and related anti-immigrant sentiments—contributes to the greater wage penalty that immigrants experience in California.

Table 3
The Cost of Being a Mexican Immigrant in California and Texas:
Estimates of Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Log-Wage

Variable	Model 1A: CA Whole Sample			Model 1B: TX Whole Sample		
	Coefficient	SE	t Value	Coefficient	SE	t Value
Immigrant	-0.0620**	0.0035	-17.62	-0.0176**	0.0047	-3.78
Age	0.0150**	0.0001	109.99	0.0113**	0.0002	66.79
Male	0.1943**	0.0032	60.88	0.2158**	0.0043	50.64
Speak English	0.1580**	0.0038	41.21	0.1580**	0.0054	20.36
Metropolitan area	0.0455**	0.0045	10.15	0.0926**	0.0039	23.60
Self-employed	-0.0460**	0.0102	-4.50	0.0109	0.0124	0.89
Education						
Some high school	0.0485**	0.0044	10.97	0.0368**	0.0059	6.26
High school graduate	0.5533**	0.0047	34.38	0.1500**	0.0061	24.79
Some college	0.2904**	0.0050	58.67	0.2795**	0.0066	42.59
College graduate	0.5211**	0.0070	74.21	0.5836**	0.0086	66.72
Occupation						
Management and professional	0.4531**	0.0077	58.79	0.4565**	0.0138	32.98
Service	0.1197**	0.0068	17.54	0.1038**	0.0132	7.88
Sales and office	0.2885**	0.0071	40.40	0.2882**	0.0135	21.43
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	0.3832**	0.0072	53.16	0.3319**	0.0131	25.36
Production, transportation, and material moving	0.2394**	0.0066	36.39	0.3169**	0.0130	24.44
Intercept	1.1403**	0.0092	123.54	1.0989**	0.0156	70.39
R ²	0.2720			0.2503		

** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

Table 4 presents the second set of multivariate regression models comparing the costs of being a Mexican non-citizen between the two states. As hypothesized, being a non-citizen significantly drops foreign-born workers' predicted hourly wages across the states, and this cost is again higher in California than in Texas. In California, the median hourly wage of a given Mexican non-citizen worker is estimated to be 14% lower (i.e., $e^{-0.153035} - 1$) than that of a given naturalized-citizen worker. In Texas, on the other hand, a given non-citizen worker's median hourly wage is estimated to be 10% lower (i.e., $e^{-0.105583} - 1$) than that of a given naturalized-citizen worker. The relative citizenship gap is therefore 1.4 times larger in

Table 4
The Cost of Being a Mexican Non-Citizen in California and Texas:
Estimates of Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Log-Wage

Variable	Model 2A: CA Immigrant- Only Sample			Model 2B: TX Immigrant- Only Sample		
	Coefficient	SE	t Value	Coefficient	SE	t Value
Non-Citizen	-0.1530**	0.0044	-35.11	-0.1056**	0.0044	-15.92
Age	0.0101**	0.0002	53.96	0.0067**	0.0003	24.27
Male	0.2155**	0.0041	52.68	0.2454**	0.0068	35.97
Speak English	0.1439**	0.0040	35.94	0.1112**	0.0060	18.45
Metropolitan area	0.0195**	0.0058	3.37	0.0731**	0.0064	11.49
Self-employed	-0.0427**	0.0124	-3.45	0.0635**	0.0172	3.69
Education						
Some high school	0.0370**	0.0048	7.74	0.0215*	0.0072	2.96
High school graduate	0.1227**	0.0054	22.61	0.0978**	0.0084	11.67
Some college	0.2305**	0.0063	36.81	0.1608**	0.0102	15.73
College graduate	0.3765**	0.0101	37.34	0.3881**	0.0151	25.70
Occupation						
Management and professional	0.4483**	0.0095	47.00	0.5008**	0.0190	26.38
Service	0.1090**	0.0074	14.72	0.1086**	0.0164	6.62
Sales and office	0.2795**	0.0083	33.56	0.2984**	0.0177	16.84
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	0.3725**	0.0079	46.92	0.3313**	0.0161	20.57
Production, transportation, and material moving	0.2320**	0.0071	32.77	0.3300**	0.016	20.67
Intercept	1.4087**	0.0116	121.17	1.3362**	0.0213	62.85
R ²	0.2243			0.1848		

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

California, and the differential is statistically significant ($z = 6.73$, two-tailed test). The “dual costs” of being a Mexican immigrant without U.S. citizenship are indicated in the literature. In the post-IRCA period, legal status—rather than human capital attributes—emerged as the primary determinant of immigrants’ wage rates (Davila et al., 1998; Donato et al., 1992a; Donato & Massey, 1993; Phillips & Massey, 1999).⁹

As increases in the supply of immigrant labor force have a strong impact on the earnings of immigrants themselves (especially those without U.S. citizenship), frequency distributions of Mexican immigrants are also taken into account (see Table 5). First, the foreign-born represent a much larger

Table 5
Distribution of the Mexican-Origin Population Used in
the Study Sample by Nativity, Period of U.S. Entry, and
Naturalization Status Among the Foreign-Born by State

	California	Texas	California–Texas Population Ratio
Nativity status			
U.S.-born	39.8%	56.4%	1.22
Foreign-born	60.2%	43.6%	2.39
Total Mexican-origin population	140,598	81,063	1.73
Foreign-born population by period of U.S. entry			
Came to the U.S. < 1970	8.6%	8.0%	2.57
Came to the U.S. in 1970-1979	24.9%	21.4%	2.78
Came to the U.S. in 1980-1989	36.7%	31.9%	2.75
Came to the U.S. in 1990-2000	29.9%	38.7%	1.85
Total foreign-born population	84,616	35,331	2.39
Foreign-born population naturalization status			
U.S. naturalized citizens	28%	29%	2.35
Not U.S. naturalized citizens	72%	71%	2.41
Total foreign-born population	84,616	35,331	2.39

share of the Mexican-origin population in California than in Texas. Three fifths (60.2%) of the Mexican-origin population in California is foreign-born, whereas nearly three fifths (56.4%) in Texas are native-born. Second, while there are 1.22 native-born Mexican Americans in California for every one native-born Mexican American in Texas, the respective ratio is 2.39 with respect to the foreign-born population. Third, the size of the California immigrant population is larger than that of the Texas immigrant population regardless of period of U.S. entry and naturalization status. However, it is clear that among the Mexican immigrant population, those who first immigrated to the United States since 1990 (the most recent immigrants) account for a larger share of the Texas immigrant population (38.7%) compared to the California immigrant population (29.9%). This perhaps signifies a change in the destination of Mexican immigrants away from California and toward Texas.

The higher costs associated with foreign-born status and the lack of naturalization status in California appear to reflect the harsher labor market conditions in which increases in the supply of immigrants, especially those who arrived after 1990, may have contributed to a lowering of the average hourly wage of the Mexican immigrant population in California. On the

other hand, the smaller costs based on the immigrant status and the lack of U.S. citizenship in Texas may be partly explained by the smaller immigrant population, which suggests a less intensive wage competition among the foreign-born in Texas.

Length of U.S. Residence and the Cost of Being a Mexican Immigrant and Non-Citizen

The literature notes that immigrants' wages differ depending on their length of stay in the United States because immigrants generally improve their wage returns to their human capital with time spent in this country. Furthermore, the literature suggests that the social and economic configurations of immigrants differ with respect to the period in which immigrants come to the United States. Thus, in addition to the costs associated with foreign-born status and the lack of naturalized status, the time when a Mexican worker came to the United States needs to be taken into account.

Table 6 examines variations in costs associated with foreign-born status by four periods of entry into the United States. The results show two important patterns. First, the most recent immigrants—those who arrived during the last decade—have the lowest wages relative to the native-born, all else equal, in both states. Second, the most recent immigrants in California have hourly wages that are 14% below (i.e., $e^{-0.148384} - 1$) that of their native-born counterparts, with the respective differential being only 6% (i.e., $e^{-0.06646} - 1$) in Texas. The 2.3 times higher relative gap is statistically significant ($z = 9.51$, two-tailed test).

The highest cost of being an immigrant who arrived since 1990 can be partly accounted for by a short duration of stay in the United States and low levels of human capital (e.g., English language proficiency and U.S. labor market experiences), although the multivariate analysis takes such compositional differences into account. Furthermore, the large wage cost among the most recent immigrants may be at least partly associated with the nationwide anti-immigrant sentiments leading initially to the passage of IRCA and to further animus against immigrants, especially in California in the 1990s. It is also likely that the most recent arrivals are also less likely to be naturalized citizens, an increasingly debilitating factor in wage attainment in the post-IRCA period.

In contrast, the patterns are relatively different for those who have been in the country longer. Mexican immigrants who arrived before 1990 display relatively lower costs for their immigrant status, suggesting that a combination of their human capital improvement with duration of stay in the

Table 6
The Cost of Being a Mexican Immigrant in California and Texas by Length of U.S. Residence: Estimates of Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Log-Wage

Variable	Model 3A: CA Whole Sample			Model 3B: TX Whole Sample		
	Coefficient	SE	t Value	Coefficient	SE	t Value
Length of U.S. residence						
Immigrated before 1970	-0.0220*	0.0070	-3.15	-0.0520**	0.0104	-4.98
Immigrated in 1970-1979	-0.0166**	0.0047	-3.54	0.0204*	0.0069	2.95
Immigrated in 1980-1989	-0.0591**	0.0043	-13.81	0.0068	0.0061	1.10
Immigrated in 1990-2000	-0.1484**	0.0049	-30.10	-0.0665**	0.0064	-10.33
Age	0.0135**	0.0002	88.84	0.0109**	0.0002	60.13
Male	0.1964**	0.0032	61.67	0.2167**	0.0043	50.89
Speak English	0.1316**	0.0040	33.12	0.0951**	0.0056	17.10
Self-employed	-0.0463**	0.0102	-4.53	0.0090	0.0124	0.72
Education						
Some high school	0.0521**	0.0044	11.79	0.0409**	0.0059	6.94
High school graduate	0.1637**	0.0047	35.14	0.1532**	0.0061	25.34
Some college	0.2920**	0.0050	59.02	0.2825**	0.0066	43.07
College graduate	0.5279**	0.0070	75.27	0.5903**	0.0088	67.44
Occupation						
Management and professional	0.4468**	0.0077	58.08	0.4576**	0.0138	33.10
Service	0.1199**	0.0068	17.61	0.1071**	0.0132	8.12
Sales and office	0.2810**	0.0071	39.41	0.2887**	0.0134	21.50
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	0.3799**	0.0072	52.80	0.3346**	0.0131	25.59
Production, transportation, and material moving	0.2337**	0.0066	35.59	0.3171**	0.0130	24.49
Intercept	1.2158**	0.0098	123.94	1.1210**	0.016	70.19
R ²	0.2753			0.2520		

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

United States and possibly higher rates of naturalization enabled them to reduce their wage penalties attached to their immigrant status.¹⁰

On the other hand, foreign-born Mexicans who arrived in California between 1980 and 1989 have 6% lower wages than those of their native-born counterparts. It is likely that the higher cost of being an immigrant attached to this cohort as compared with the costs attached to earlier arrivals reflects the inception of the harsher treatment toward Mexican immigrants in the state, which led to the implementation of anti-immigrant propositions during the last decade, and accordingly, immigrant status became a major determinant of internal wage differentials among the Mexican-origin workers.¹¹

Conclusions

For the comprehensive examination of the heterogeneity of Mexican-origin workers, this study focused on internal hourly wage differentials within this group. Instead of estimating the Mexican-White wage differentials, which is the major approach guided by the ethnic labor market perspectives, we examined the labor market experiences of Mexican immigrants and how social context matters. Specifically, we focused on the cost of being an immigrant and the cost of being an immigrant without U.S. citizenship. By comparing the two states with the largest concentration of Mexican-origin workers in the United States, California and Texas, we also examined the impact of the state-specific labor market characteristics on Mexican immigrant workers' wages.

The results consistently show that foreign-born status and the lack of U.S. citizenship are correlated with lower hourly wages across the states. Reflecting anti-immigrant policies and sentiments, Mexican immigrants in California bear a higher cost for being foreign-born than their counterparts in Texas. Furthermore, non-U.S.-naturalized foreign-born Mexicans face dual disadvantages with respect to wages, especially for those living in California. Partly, larger population concentration of immigrants, especially non-citizens, could be a source of intensive within-group labor market competition among the foreign-born workers.

The cost of being an immigrant was further examined in terms of immigrants' length of U.S. residence. Results show that immigrants who arrived during the last decade had significantly lower wages across the states. Furthermore, the greater cost attached to this cohort in California confirms the finding from the initial analysis that Mexican immigrants faced harsher social contexts in California in the post-IRCA period, in which foreign-born status became a stronger determinant of wages over human capital differences.

This study makes important contributions to our understanding of the importance of context in explaining variations in the labor market outcomes of Mexican workers. First, the findings show that nativity status and U.S. naturalized citizenship status are two major determinants of within-group wage differentials, which are often missing in the labor market analysis of Mexican-origin workers. Further analysis of the different labor market experiences within this group is encouraged, as the Mexican-origin population includes a number of historically disadvantaged foreign-born as well as continuing inflows of new immigrants. Second, findings show the importance of taking into account the effect of broad social contexts on wages beyond different types of labor market categories. As past studies tend to

rely on small-scale case studies limited to specific occupations and industries, further analyses on the impact of regional differences on labor market experiences of Mexican-origin workers are needed.

The results of this study raise several important immigrant policy implications. Unlike the anti-immigrant sentiments against Mexican workers in the background of IRCA and California propositions, the findings strongly suggest that Mexican immigrants, particularly non-citizens, faced harsher labor market conditions after the implementation of IRCA. The negative impact of IRCA on non-citizen Mexican workers' wages indicates that current discussions on the revival of temporary guest worker program and a legalization program possibly result in wage penalties against non-citizen workers. Future immigrant policies should be assessed to determine the likely costs and benefits to immigrant workers.

Several shortcomings of this study are also noted. The first limitation is attributed to the data set used to conduct the analysis. In separating the immigrant population into U.S.-naturalized citizens and non-citizens, the latter contains a wide variety of persons, including undocumented immigrants as well as others who are here legally but who are naturalized citizens (e.g., college students, persons who have applied for naturalization status, etc.). As undocumented workers may exert a large impact on the wages of other individuals (Bean, Lowell, & Taylor, 1988; Briggs, 1983), the inseparable undocumented portion in the immigrant population in the PUMS data is certainly an unavoidable problem in this study. The PUMS data are widely used in earnings studies as they provide a large, nationally representative sample of all sectors of the labor force. Nonetheless, considering that there is a certain portion of foreign-born Mexicans involved in the underground economy and informal sectors, the cost of being a non-citizen could be much greater than the findings of this study suggest.

Second, we attributed the higher costs associated with foreign-born status and non-citizenship status in California to the anti-immigrant hostilities due to higher population concentration of immigrants in that state. However, other possible factors associated with higher costs in California—for example, industrial changes taking place between California and Texas—have not been accounted for in this study. For example, the literature notes that immigrants in California faced declining wages during the 1990s due to a broad restructuring of the economy of the state (Durand et al., 2000), while Texas experienced an effective labor demand due to rural industrialization.

Third, although we discussed that Mexican immigrant workers in California have faced harsher labor market conditions, the smaller costs based on the immigrant status and the lack of U.S. citizenship in Texas

never suggest the absence of hostility toward persons of Mexican origin in the state (e.g., Acuña, 2007; Foley, 1997; Montejano, 1987). Therefore, despite the greater social issues faced by Mexican immigrants in California, it should be acknowledged that Texas still has its own share of difficulties for Mexican immigrants, especially non-citizens.

Finally, we note the direction for future research in this area. This study estimated the cost of being an immigrant and being a non-citizen in California and Texas, two states in the Southwest with the largest concentration of Mexican-origin workers in the United States. Further analysis needs to be conducted for testing the generalization of these costs in much broader social and economic contexts, such as in different regions of the country. In particular, future research needs to examine the labor market experiences of Mexican-origin workers in new-destination areas, places primarily in the South and Midwest where Mexicans, especially immigrants, have settled over the last decade.

Notes

1. Proposition 187 in 1994 blocked the access of illegal immigrants to public education (from kindergarten through university), welfare, and non-emergency health care services. Proposition 209 in 1996 eliminated affirmative action programs. Proposition 227 in 1998 officially abolished bilingual education programs in public schools, as public education is the most costly service used by illegal aliens in California (Martin, 1995). For detailed explanations of these propositions, see Purcell (1997) and Tolbert and Hero (1996).

2. Phillips and Massey (1999, p. 233) note that Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) sought to control undocumented immigration from Mexico by (a) sanctioning employers who knowingly hired undocumented migrants; (b) allocating additional budgets for the U.S. border patrol; and (c) authorizing an amnesty for undocumented migrants who could prove continuous residence in the United States after January 1, 1982.

3. Although the number arrested by the Immigration and Naturalization Service declined between 1986 and 1989, it surpassed pre-IRCA figures in 1990 (Williams, cited in Valdes, 1995).

4. After IRCA, undocumented migrants working in the nonagricultural sector earned wages that were 22% lower than those earned by documented migrants with similar characteristics, and those working in the agricultural sector earned an additional 33% less (Phillips & Massey, 1999).

5. However, Phillips and Massey (1999) and Sorensen and Bean (1994) argue that IRCA adversely affected the wages of legal immigrants.

6. More specifically, Massey (1987) finds that before IRCA, legal status had no effect on wage rates among Mexican migrants once selectivity and background differences between documented and undocumented migrants were controlled for. Among both legal and undocumented migrants, wage rates tended to increase with rising age, education, labor force experience, U.S. migrant experience, and length of stay, and being urban origin migrants and nonagricultural workers (Massey, 1987). Yet these factors became less important determinants of wages compared to legal status following the implementation of IRCA.

7. Borjas (1999) argues that more recent immigrant waves are also more likely to use welfare than earlier waves. Borjas (1999) notes, for example, that “a comprehensive study by the National Academy of Sciences concluded that immigration raised the annual taxes of the typical native household in California by about \$1,200 a year” (p. 12).

8. We used the following computational formula (Kleinbaum & Kupper, 1978):

$$z = \frac{\hat{B}_{CA} - \hat{B}_{TX}}{\sqrt{\sigma_{CA}^2 + \sigma_{TX}^2}}$$

9. To supplement the argument of wage gaps based on nativity difference and the possession of U.S. citizenship, four additional models with a California dummy variable (*California resident* = 1; *Texas resident* = 0) are estimated for four subgroups (native-born, foreign-born, foreign-born with U.S. citizenship, and foreign-born without U.S. citizenship). Largely due to the higher cost of living in California, all four groups have a “California wage advantage.” However, the fact that the California wage advantage is 1.7 times larger in the case of the native-born than that of the foreign-born supports the argument regarding the more disadvantageous position of immigrants in California. The same is true with respect to naturalized citizenship, where the California wage advantage is twice greater among the naturalized citizens compared to those lacking this status. These four additional models provide further support for the findings from the initial analysis that being an immigrant and non-citizen reduce Mexican-origin workers’ wages and that these penalties are greater in California than in Texas. The results are available from the author on request.

10. The greater wage penalty attached to the foreign-born Mexicans who arrived in Texas before 1970 compared with their counterparts in California appears to suggest shifts in the Mexican labor market core from Texas to California. The literature notes that compared to California, Mexican immigrant workers in Texas faced a severe internal wage competition before 1970. Starting from the bracero program between 1942 and 1964, immigrant workers had lower wages than the native-born, especially in agricultural industries (Jenkins, cited in Valdes, 1995; Sandos & Cross, 1983; Valdes, 1995).

11. We also assessed whether the significance of length of stay in the United States holds for non-citizens as well. While the cost of being a non-citizen is associated with 14% lower hourly wages in California and 10% lower wages in Texas in Models 2A and 2B, the foreign-born without U.S. citizenship have 11% and 8% lower wages in California and Texas, respectively, compared to the naturalized citizens in this additional model, holding immigrants’ duration of U.S. residence constant. The slight reduction in the cost associated with a non-citizen status in this additional model is accounted for by the fact that length of U.S. residence can reduce the wage penalty associated with lack of U.S. citizenship status. This pattern reflects the fact that immigrants’ longer duration of stay in the United States has a combined effect of higher naturalization rates and human capital improvement (e.g., English language proficiency and more U.S. labor market experiences). The results are available from the author on request.

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