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Abstract

Recent research findings have brought attention to the hardship faced by children of immigrants in the United States, particularly in the Mexican origin population. In this study, we are concerned with the extent to which US-born Mexican children of immigrants who live in unmarried families may face exceptional risks. Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, we examine social and economic indicators of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers and their children vis-à-vis unmarried US-born mothers and their children. Descriptive analyses show that children of Mexican immigrants in unmarried families face significant disadvantages on a variety of levels compared to children of US-born mothers. Mexican immigrant mothers have significantly lower levels of education and employment and much higher rates of poverty, as well as less access to social services. On some indicators, children of unmarried Mexican origin mothers appear to be quite well off, most notably because their rates of low birth weight are low and maternal health behaviors are so positive. The poor socioeconomic and social service profile of children born to Mexican origin unmarried women, however, suggests that even when healthy at the starting gate, they may potentially face poor outcomes during childhood and beyond.

The Living Conditions of US-Born Children of Mexican Immigrants in Unmarried Families

Roughly one in three children of immigrants (39%) has at least one Mexican-born parent, thus making them the largest group of children of immigrants in the United States (Shields & Behrman, 2004). Overall, one in five children under the age of 18 is the child of an immigrant (America's Children, 2002). Although the vast majority, 93%, are US-born (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2004), children of immigrants are disproportionately represented in the population of children in poverty. They make up fully one-quarter of all children in poverty (Elmelech, McCaskie, Lennon, & Lu, 2002). In addition to experiencing higher poverty, children of immigrants are more likely than are children of US-born parents to live in crowded housing, be in families who worry about or have difficulty affording food, and have less access to health care and poorer health status (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2004). However, not all children of immigrants face similar hardships. Studies suggest that the children of immigrants facing the greatest risk are those whose parents originate in Mexico (Hernandez, 2002; Perlman & Waldinger, 1999). Yet, in-depth analyses of this population are lacking.

Children of Mexican immigrants are exceptionally healthy at birth: their rates of low birth weight are parallel to those of non-Hispanic whites, in spite of low socioeconomic status and poor prenatal care (Ventura, Martin, Curtin, Mathews, & Park, 2000). Known as the *epidemiological paradox*, this trend of healthy birth outcomes in the Mexican origin population has been extensively documented. Nevertheless, experts caution that living conditions in their early years are likely to play a critical role in their subsequent health and development (Guendelman 2000). We know that parental social status influences the well-being of children through a variety of mechanisms (Gershoff, Aber, & Raver, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), including home environment, neighborhood environment, and access to health and social

services. Parental SES has consequences for child outcomes in all aspects of health and development: physical, cognitive, and social-emotional. Above all, family income affects child health and development because it determines the availability of a wide range of goods and resources, including health and social services (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn 1997; Gershoff, Aber, & Raver, 2003). Financial hardship is associated with lack of adequate nutrition, shelter, child care, and medical care (Mayer, 1997). Consequently, compared to children in higher income families, children in poor families are more likely to be in poor health, suffer from lead poisoning, and exhibit cognitive and emotional problems (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997). Family income is also related to the quality of the larger neighborhood and community environment of children and the availability of institutional resources (Garcia Coll et al, 1996, Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000), which in turn are likely to affect their healthy development.

In view of the critical impact of parental characteristics, a variety of circumstances facing immigrant families – including language barriers, unfamiliarity with the social service system, and cultural differences (Takanishi, 2004) – are likely to pose additional risks for the health and development of children in these families. We are particularly concerned with one social factor that may place children of immigrants at an even greater risk, having unmarried parents. Research shows that children in single-parent families face multiple disadvantages. Although increasing numbers of studies have revealed the harsh conditions confronting children of immigrants (Brandon, 2002; Hernandez, 2002; Lessard & Ku, 2003), there is a paucity of research on the added impact of family structure. With regard to Mexican immigrants, this may be due in part to the fact that within US minority groups, they have disproportionately high marriage rates. Only 35.1% of Mexican immigrants are unmarried compared to 46.3% of the US-born Mexican origin population and 72.3% of non-Hispanic blacks (Ventura et. al., 2000, Table

14). Higher marriage rates, however, do not buffer children of immigrants from poverty. Although children of immigrants are more likely to live in two-parent families than are children of natives, they are more likely to be in poverty than are children in US-born two-parent families (Reardon-Anderson, Capps, & Fix, 2002).

Growing up in an unmarried family can have significant consequences for children. Poverty rates tend to be higher in unmarried families. In 2003, 28% of children in unmarried families fell below poverty compared to 5.4% in married couples (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Mills, 2004). Furthermore, in their examination of families from the National Survey of Families and Households, Hanson, McLanahan, and Thomson (1996) found that children in family structures other than the traditional two-parent household had lower levels of well-being in a several areas, including lower school performance, increased school behavior problems, lower sociability, lower initiative, and lower quality of life. Studies have also demonstrated long-term impacts of growing up in an unmarried family, including lower graduation rates and post-secondary attendance (Aquilino, 1996; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Given that the marital status of parents is known to be significantly associated with diverse indicators of child well-being, understanding the particular circumstances of children of immigrants in unwed families can provide us with information about the extent to which these children can be especially disadvantaged. In our study we concentrate on the period of early childhood. We focus on the first year of life in order to obtain a profile of the living conditions of children of Mexican immigrants at a very young age, conditions that may change as they grow older, enter school, and so on. In addition, previous research has combined children of immigrants born in the United States with children born in the parents' country of origin. In our analysis we include only children of immigrants born in the United States in order to eliminate

the potential effects of unknown circumstances of children of immigrants who were born and have lived outside of the United States for a period of time.

The study of immigrant assimilation has generally focused on the adult socioeconomic attainment of immigrants. In this study, we focus on the socioeconomic status and social and community environment of Mexican immigrant families to understand the life chances of their US-born children. Whereas previous studies have shown that Mexican immigrants do not fare as well as the general US population, we are also interested in determining how children of Mexican immigrants do compared to US-born Mexican Americans. It is possible that comparisons with the general population magnify the actual differences based on nativity. Thus, in addition to comparisons with the general US-born population, we compare children of Mexican immigrants to children born to three US-born groups: Mexican Americans, non-Hispanic blacks, and non-Hispanic whites.

We begin by providing a snapshot of the immigration profile of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers, specifically their share of the larger US immigrant population, recency of immigration, and citizenship status. We are able to provide detailed data on economic resources and employment as well as maternal health and risk behaviors. We also look at the availability of social support, neighborhood stability, access to health care, and access to public assistance among these women and their children. The question is whether within a very vulnerable population, as in the case of unmarried families, immigrant status has a significant effect on well-being. We use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which contains rich information on the living conditions of children in unmarried families.

The Fragile Families Study

Data were drawn from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a new

nationally representative, longitudinal survey that follows a cohort of new parents and their children for five years, providing comprehensive, in-depth information about the ways in which these families' lives influence the diverse dimensions of their well-being, and more specifically, the well-being of their children (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel & McLanahan, 2001). Baseline interviews were conducted at the time of the child's birth with a total of 4,898 mothers in sixteen randomly-selected cities and four additional cities chosen for convenience across the United States from 1998 to 2000. We use the sixteen-city data, which when weighted is representative of unmarried mothers and their newborn children in US cities with populations over 200,000 (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel & McLanahan, 2001; Study Design, n.d; Vu, 2003.). We utilize the data for unmarried mothers collected when the child was born (at baseline) and when the child turned one year old; data for the children as they are older are not yet publicly available.

Baseline interviews were conducted in the hospital with the mothers generally about twenty-four hours after the birth. (Data collected in separate interviews with the fathers are not used in this study.) Sample restrictions included those parents who planned to place the child for adoption, children whose fathers were not living at the time of the baby's birth, parents who were too ill to complete the interview, parents whose baby died before the interview could take place, and mothers who were under 18 years of age (with the exception of a few hospitals). The response rates for baseline interviews were very high, with over 90 percent of mothers successfully completing the interviews. The first follow-up interview, which took place when the child was one year old, was conducted via telephone with a follow-up success rate of 89 percent (Response Rates for First Three Waves, 2004).

Compared to other currently available surveys of families, the Fragile Families data

presents rich, comprehensive information about several key areas of concern: parental demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, formal and informal support, and child well-being indicators. Together, all of these important components form a holistic picture of the living conditions and well-being of children of immigrants in unmarried families. Furthermore, because Hispanics represent a large share of unmarried mothers in the US population, this survey provides an adequate sample of Mexican origin mothers for statistical analyses.

Sample Characteristics and Immigration Profile of Unmarried Mothers

Our sample is made up of mother-child dyads. We report on maternal characteristics to obtain a profile of the home environment of children in Mexican immigrant families. We start by determining the place of origin of our sample of unmarried immigrant mothers by categorizing the data into major sources of US immigration. As shown in Table 1, the greatest proportion of women in this sample originate in Mexico, 50.6%, followed by Central and South America with 26.1%. A total of 7.5% are from other North American countries and 9.7% are from Asia. Only 3.2% of all immigrants in the sample are from European countries. The very large proportion of Mexican immigrants in the sample reflects the US population, although the proportion of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers is somewhat larger, and the proportion of European immigrants somewhat smaller, than that found in the general US immigrant population (Schmidley, 2001). These differences are partly affected by the fact that (a) unmarried mothers were targeted, rather than the general population, and (b) interviews for this survey were conducted in only two languages, English and Spanish.

In our study, we compare the conditions of children of Mexican immigrants to those of children of native-born parents in unmarried families. “Children of immigrants” are defined as those with Mexican-born mothers and “children of natives” as those with mothers born in the

United States. The children of Mexican-born parents in this study were all born in the United States. We compare Mexican immigrant mothers to mothers in three US-born groups: Mexican Americans, non-Hispanic blacks, and non-Hispanic whites, for a total national sample of 2,155 at baseline. (Other US-born groups are excluded from the analysis due to small sample sizes.) Table 2 shows the breakdown of mothers in the total sample. Mexican immigrant mothers constitute 8.7% of the total sample. Thus, 8.7% of the children in the sample are children of Mexican immigrant mothers. (In the Fragile Families sample, 10.5% of the children under the age of one have at least one Mexican-born parent. In this study, however, we look only at mothers' nativity, because of our focus on unmarried mothers.) Of the US-born comparison sample of unmarried mothers, 13.8% are Mexican American, 56.9% are non-Hispanic black, and 20.6% are non-Hispanic white. Within the population of Mexican American mothers, a very large proportion (34.9%) are recent immigrants (have lived in the US less than 5 years) and only 11.4% are US citizens (Table 3).

The rest of the article compares mothers (and their young children) by nativity in the following areas: (a) family structure, (b) socioeconomic characteristics, (c) maternal and child health, (d) levels of assets, social support, and neighborhood stability, and (e) access to health care and public assistance. All variables are measured at Year 1, unless labeled as baseline (BA).

Family Structure Among Unmarried Mothers

Unmarried mothers are in a variety of living arrangements, as shown in Table 4. Nearly three-quarters (68.6%) of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers are cohabiting when their child is one year old, a significantly higher proportion than that of the total US-born population of unmarried women (43.6%). Furthermore, analyses not shown here reveal that rates of cohabitation among Mexican immigrant mothers when the child is one year old reflect an

increase from the time of the child's birth (60.9%). The opposite is true among all the US-born groups, for whom cohabitation decreased in the same time period. Among Mexican immigrant mothers who are not non-cohabiting at Year 1, 10.8% are romantically involved or maintain a friendship with their baby's child. About one-fifth are not in a relationship with the father of their child, which reflects the pattern among other US-born ethnic groups, but is lower than among non-Hispanic whites.

Mexican immigrant mothers are significantly older, specifically about 2 years older on average, than are all US-born mothers, and about 3 years older than Mexican US-born mothers. Families are slightly larger among Mexican immigrant mothers, who have 2.6 children in the household, including the new baby. The biggest difference in family size is in comparison to non-Hispanic white mothers, who have only 1.8 children.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Mexican immigrant mothers are at a significant disadvantage in terms of human capital, employment, and poverty levels, as shown in Table 5. First, their educational levels are significantly lower than those of both the US-born Mexican American and the overall population of unmarried mothers. Over three-quarters of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers have less than a high school education. Although still significantly lower, the difference between Mexican immigrants and US-born Mexican Americans is smaller than between any of the other US-born groups. What sets apart Mexican immigrant mothers is their disproportionate rates of very low education. A full 34.7% have less than 9 years of schooling compared to only 9.1% of US-born Mexican Americans and 4.2% of the total US-born population. Nevertheless, at all levels, unmarried Mexican mothers, both immigrant and US-born, are vastly disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment.

Second, as expected given the educational profile, there is a significant difference in occupational status according to nativity. Unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers are heavily concentrated in non-professional occupations, particularly service and labor jobs. Nearly 28% are in labor occupations and 51.1% are in service occupations. This is in sharp contrast to US-born Mexican Americans and the overall US-born population, about 70% and 60% of which, respectively, are in higher-level occupations. Among all groups of unmarried mothers, the lowest proportion is found in professional occupations. In addition, Mexican immigrant mothers are significantly less likely to be employed (27.0%) than are both Mexican US-born mothers (51.0%) and native mothers overall (52.4%).

Finally, unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers are also significantly more likely to fall below poverty than are their US-born counterparts, at a rate of 69.6%. About half of the US-born Mexican American population falls below poverty, which is about the same rate as that of the overall US-born population. There are, however, very large within-group differences. The poverty rate among non-Hispanic blacks is nearly 60%, but only 30% among non-Hispanic whites. Thus among unmarried mothers, the poverty rate among Mexican immigrants is closest to that of non-Hispanic blacks.

Maternal and Child Health

Outcomes are reversed for immigrant mothers in the category of health behaviors, as shown in Table 6. Along every measure – smoking, alcohol use, and drug use – Mexican immigrants are much less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors during pregnancy. However, immigrant Mexicans are more similar to US-born Mexican Americans than to the overall US-born population. For example, only 3.7% of Mexican immigrant mothers report smoking during pregnancy compared to 11.5% of US-born Mexican American mothers and

26.6% of the total US-born unmarried mothers group. The largest gap is between Mexican immigrant mothers and non-Hispanic white mothers, nearly half of whom report having smoked during pregnancy. Note also that although the likelihood of alcohol use between Mexican immigrants and the overall US-born population is significantly different, there is no significant difference for Mexican origin mothers based on nativity. Mexican immigrant mothers also maintain healthy behaviors after the birth of their child. They are far more likely to breastfeed in the child's first year than are US-born mothers, at a rate of 86.3%, compared to about half of US-born Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic whites and 37.1% of non-Hispanic blacks.

Birth outcomes among unmarried mothers are more favorable among Mexican immigrant mothers than they in the general US-born group. The rate of low birth weight among immigrant mothers is about half that of US-born mothers, although the difference is not statistically significant due to the relatively small number of low weight babies in the sample. The only statistically significant difference is between Mexican immigrant mothers and non-Hispanic black mothers, the group with the highest rate of low birth weight. However, by the age of 1, Mexican immigrant mothers are significantly less likely to report excellent or very good health for their children relative to all the US-born groups. The same pattern is evident for mother's report of her own health at Year 1.

Recourse to Assets, Social Support, and Neighborhood Stability

When considering the overall US-born population, nativity does not seem to play a major role in the likelihood that the mother will possess assets, except for owning a bank account.

However, there exist very large differences between Mexican immigrant mothers and non-Hispanic white mothers. Mexican immigrant mothers are much less likely to own a bank account, a credit card, or a car. Only about 34.6% of Mexican immigrants have a bank account, compared to 70.6% of white-non-Hispanic whites. The figures are 24.1% and 42.8% for having a credit card, and 58.6% and 76.2% for owning a car (Table 7). Home ownership does not differ among the various groups of unmarried mothers. Immigration, however, does not seem to affect the level of assets for the two Mexican origin populations. Along every dimension, there is no difference between Mexican immigrants and US-born Mexicans.

Despite a disadvantaged socioeconomic status and lower possibilities for relying on assets as a recourse, Mexican immigrant mothers are not any more likely than US-born mothers to be able to get help, if needed, in terms of cash or emergency child care, and are *less* likely to believe they could get help with a place to live. Furthermore, unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers are severely disadvantaged compared to unmarried US-born white mothers. For example, there is no significant difference in terms of the availability of financial help between Mexican immigrant mothers, US-born Mexican American mothers, and the overall US-born population. Yet, although only 77.2% of Mexican immigrant unmarried mothers believe they could get help with \$200 if they needed it, a full 94.2% of US-born non-Hispanic white mothers report they could do so.

Another source of social support is related to neighborhood stability, measured here in terms of years in the neighborhood and neighborhood safety. Mexican immigrant mothers are more likely to have lived in their neighborhoods less than 1 year relative to US-born Mexican American mothers (42.9% vs. 28.7%). No statistically significant differences exist among unmarried mothers between Mexican immigrants and the general US-born populations or the

other two US-born subgroups. Perceptions of neighborhood safety do not differ significantly between Mexican immigrants and native Mexican Americans or non-Hispanic blacks. There is, however, a significant difference between Mexican immigrants and non-Hispanic whites. Only 79.1% of unmarried Mexican immigrant mother report that they view their neighborhoods as very safe or safe compared to 91.8% of unmarried white non-Hispanic mothers.

Access to Health Care and Public Assistance

In Table 8, we examine access to health care and public assistance, including prenatal care, health insurance, well-child visits, and several forms of public assistance benefits. Among unmarried mothers, there is no significant difference in access to prenatal care or infant health care (well-child visits) based on immigrant status. Differences in access to health insurance are evident only between Mexican immigrant mothers and non-Hispanic white mothers, who tend to have lower rates of Medicaid and higher rates of private insurance.

Immigrant mothers are significantly less likely to receive welfare assistance in the form of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) than are US-born mothers, although all the children in this sample are US-born. Only about 12.2% of Mexican immigrant mothers receive TANF compared to 20.4% of US-born Mexican mothers and 38.9% of black non-Hispanic mothers. Unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers do not significantly differ from non-Hispanic white mothers in this measure. The same pattern is observed for Food Stamps and rent assistance. Only 21.3% of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers receive Food Stamps, and only 7.2 receive rent assistance. In terms of assistance from Head Start/Early Head Start, we found no significant difference between Mexican immigrants and natives. Finally, rates of receipt of Women, Infants and Children (W.I.C.) benefits are similar across all groups, although Mexican immigrant mothers are slightly more likely to receive WIC benefits than are non-

Hispanic white mothers.

Conclusion

On some indicators, children of unmarried Mexican origin mothers appear to be quite well off, most notably because their rates of low birth weight are low and maternal health behaviors are so positive. Thus, children in unmarried Mexican immigrant families reflect the healthy beginnings found in established research on the general Mexican American population (Ventura et. al., 2000). The poor socioeconomic and social service profile of children born to Mexican origin unmarried women, however, suggests that even when healthy at the starting gate, they may potentially face poor outcomes during childhood and beyond.

First, unmarried Mexican immigrants tend to be new immigrants. A full 57% of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers have lived in the United States for less than 10 years compared to 45% of the general Mexican immigrant population (Schmidley, 2001). The citizenship gap is even wider. Only about 1 in 10 has become a naturalized citizen, compared to 1 in 5 in the overall US Mexican immigrant population and about 2 in 5 in the total foreign-born population (Schmidley, 2001). This presents serious concerns given that under welfare reform immigrants who are not citizens, with very limited exceptions, are not eligible for basic benefits, such as TANF and Food Stamps (Hernandez, 2002). Add to this the fact that the vast majority of the states where three-quarters of all immigrants concentrate (CA, NY, TX, FL, IL, NJ, and AZ), with the exception of California, do not provide benefits substituting for lost federal benefits in the areas of health, cash assistance, and nutrition (Weil & Finegold, 2002). Furthermore,

although their US-born children are fully eligible for benefits, immigrant families are often reluctant to seek public assistance for them for fear of adverse consequences for other family members (Children of Immigrant Families, 2004). One result is that in 2000, among low-income families about one quarter of citizen children with noncitizen parents lacked health insurance coverage compared to only one-sixth of children with citizen parents (Lessard & Ku, 2003).

Second, considering the higher cohabitation rates of unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers, we would expect them to have lower rates of poverty than do their native counterparts. Furthermore, because they are slightly older and, on average, do not tend to have more children than do US-born Mexican mothers, neither mothers' age nor family size are likely to be large factors in explaining their lower socioeconomic outcomes. Nevertheless, nearly three quarters live below poverty, a rate approximated by that of unmarried non-Hispanic black mothers. An important part of the disadvantaged position of Mexican immigrant mothers, compared to US-born mothers, is explained by their extremely low levels of education, employment in low-paying occupations, and lower employment rates. Notwithstanding these facts, the causal links between low human capital and poverty in the immigrant population are not as simple as they are sometimes portrayed (see, for example, Camarota, 2002). For example, analyses show that among children whose parents have attained more than a high school education, children of immigrants are more likely to be in poverty than are children of native born parents (Elmelech et al, 2002). Similar results are evident for immigrant families in terms of negative returns to parental fulltime employment and growing up in a two-parent family.

Third, on the other hand, Mexican immigrant mothers exhibit very healthy behaviors during pregnancy in terms of smoking and alcohol and drug use compared to US-born mothers, although the patterns among Mexican origin mothers are more similar regardless of nativity. In

addition to healthy behaviors prenatally, Mexican immigrant mothers also exhibit extremely high rates of breastfeeding. Despite these healthy beginnings, by the time their child reaches the age of one, Mexican immigrant mothers rate their child's health, as well as their own health, only as good or fair at a significantly higher rate than do all other US-born groups. However, reports of health by nativity may be difficult to compare because of language and interpretation differences across groups (Angel & Guarnaccia, 1989; Cho, Frisbie, Hummer, & Rogers, 2004).

Fourth, unmarried Mexican immigrant mothers lack substantial sources of social support. Although they have significantly less recourse to assets compared to US-born non-Hispanic white mothers, there are no significant differences in terms of both informal and formal support among Mexican origin unmarried mothers based on nativity. Compared to non-Hispanic white mothers, they are less likely to have access to social support from family. They are also less likely to be settled in their communities: a significantly higher proportion than US-born Mexican origin mothers have lived in their neighborhoods for less than one year. The limited support from family does not substantiate the findings of qualitative studies, which have shown the existence of strong family support networks that serve to attenuate the effects of poverty in Mexican origin families (Guendelman 2000; Sherraden & Barrera 1995, 1996). Finally, in spite of high poverty rates, immigrant mothers are less likely than are US-born mothers to receive formal support, including TANF or Food Stamps, or to have private health insurance.

On the whole, this study shows that US-born children of Mexican immigrants in unmarried families are at risk due to their disadvantaged

socioeconomic conditions and thus may potentially face poor health and developmental outcomes in the long term. Recent policy developments under the 1996 Welfare Reform Act exclude immigrant families from access to many health and social services. Parents often lack benefits for their children and, thus, their children run the risk of not getting their basic needs met. Research suggests that policies that hinder the integration of immigrant families hurt both foreign-born and US-born children in these families (Reardon-Anderson, Capps, & Fix, 2002). All this suggests that, at the beginning of life, children in unmarried Mexican immigrant families face exceptional risks. It remains to be seen how the vulnerable position of Mexican immigrant families during their children's early formative years will impact their future health and development. Research on the long-term health and development of this population is thus urgently needed.

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Table 1

Sample Distribution by Place of Origin of Immigrant Unmarried Mothers

Country of Origin	Total Number of Immigrant Mothers	Proportion of Immigrant Sample
Mexico	188	50.5
Central/South America	97	26.1
Other North America ^a	28	7.5
Asia	36	9.7
Europe	12	3.2
Other	11	3.0
Total	369	100.0

^aOther North American countries include Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British West Indies, Canada, Caribbean, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, Virgin Islands, and the West Indies.

Table 2

Sample Distribution by Nativity and Race/Ethnicity of Mexican Immigrant and US-Born

Unmarried Mothers

	Mexican Immigrant	US-Born				Total Sample
		<i>Mexican American</i>	<i>Black Non- Hispanic</i>	<i>White Non- Hispanic</i>	<i>Total</i>	
N	188	297	1,227	443	1,967	2,155
Percent	8.7	13.8	56.9	20.6	91.3	100.0

Table 3

Percentage Distribution of Recency of Immigration and Citizenship of Mexican Immigrant Mothers

Immigration Characteristics	Proportion
Years in US	
Less than 5 years	34.9
Between 5 and 10 years	22.0
More than 10 years	43.1
US Citizen	11.4

Table 4

Percentage Distribution of Family Composition Characteristics Among Mexican Immigrant and US-Born Unmarried Mothers

	Mexican Immigrant	US-Born			Total
		Mexican American	Black Non-Hisp.	White Non-Hisp.	
Relationship Status***					
Cohabiting	68.6	54.7**	33.4***	58.6	43.6***
Not Cohabiting:					
Romantic/Friends	10.8	23.0	45.6	13.3	33.5
Not in Relationship	19.9	20.0	19.1	27.4	21.2
Sep/Widowed/Divorced	0.7	2.4	2.0	0.8	1.8
Mother's Age (Mean) (BA)	25.5	22.7***	23.7***	23.7***	23.5**
Number of Children in					
Household (Mean) (BA)	2.6	2.3**	2.5	1.8***	2.3***

Note. For Tables 4-8, chi-square significance levels of *** $p=.01$, ** $p=.05$, * $p=.10$ are shown for differences between Mexican immigrants and each column of US-born groups (1) Mexican Americans, (2) Black Non-Hispanics, (3) White Non-Hispanics, and (4) total US-born population.

Table 5

Percentage Distribution of Socioeconomic Indicators Among Mexican Immigrant and US-Born Unmarried Mothers

	Mexican Immigrant	US-Born			Total
		Mexican American	Black Non-Hisp.	White Non-Hisp.	
Education					
Less than 9 years	34.7	9.1***	2.1***	5.3***	4.2***
9 to 11 years	43.7	46.9	33.3	26.4	34.5
H.S. Diploma/GED	16.2	29.4	41.7	41.0	39.0
Some College	4.9	14.4	20.3	22.9	19.6
Bachelor's Degree+	0.0	0.3	2.7	4.5	2.6
Occupation					
Professional/Technical	3.9	13.9***	8.4***	14.3***	10.9***
Admin. Support/ Sales	17.0	55.7	51.9	41.8	50.3
Service	51.1	24.2	28.2	33.8	28.7
Skilled Labor/Not Spec.	28.0	6.2	11.5	10.1	10.1
Currently Employed	37.0	51.0**	52.1***	54.5***	52.4***
Poverty at Year 1					
0-99%	69.6	48.2***	58.8*	28.4***	49.7***
100-199%	22.0	32.9	25.8	35.5	29.5
200%+	8.5	18.9	15.5	36.1	20.9

Table 6

Percentage Distribution of Maternal and Child Health Indicators Among Mexican Immigrant and US-Born Unmarried Mothers

	Mexican Immigrant	US-Born			Total
		Mexican American	Black Non-Hisp.	White Non-Hisp.	
Health Behaviors During Pregnancy (BA)					
Smoking	3.7	11.5**	23.3***	48.9***	26.6***
Alcohol	4.3	9.1	11.2**	15.5***	11.7**
Drug Use	0.9	4.5*	9.6***	6.0**	7.8***
Ever Breastfed During Child's First Year					
	86.3	55.2***	37.1***	52.5***	44.3***
Low Birth Weight (BA)					
	6.5	4.0	14.7**	11.1	11.7
Child Health at Year 1					
Excellent/ Very Good	64.8	86.6***	88.2***	90.4***	88.4***
Good/ Fair	33.9	13.1	11.7	8.1	11.2
Poor	1.2	0.4	0.0	1.4	0.4
Maternal Health (BA)					
Excellent/ Very Good	38.5	56.3***	68.9***	65.8***	65.7***
Good/ Fair	60.8	42.0	30.8	34.0	33.8
Poor	0.8	1.7	0.3	0.2	0.6

Table 7

Percentage Distribution of Social Support Among Mexican Immigrant and US-Born Unmarried Mothers

	Mexican Immigrant	US-Born			Total
		Mexican American	Black Non-Hisp.	White Non-Hisp.	
<i>Assets</i>					
Have Bank Account	34.6	43.1	43.8	70.6***	50.2***
Have Credit Card	24.1	27.5	26.5	42.8***	30.7
Own Car	58.6	55.3	46.8**	76.2***	55.8
Own Home	11.2	7.3	6.2	14.5	8.3
<i>Access to Support if Needed</i>					
Financial Help (\$200)	77.2	82.6	9.8	94.2***	83.6
Emergency Childcare	82.7	86.9	85.6	95.4***	88.1
Place to Live	72.3	87.7***	82.4**	94.2***	86.2***
<i>Number of Years in Neighborhood (BA)</i>					
Less than 1 year	42.9	28.7**	33.4	45.7	35.1
1 year	10.9	20.5	14.4	16.3	16.1
2 years	16.1	11.4	12.5	12.3	12.2
More than 2 years	30.2	39.4	39.7	25.6	36.6
<i>Neighborhood</i>					
Very Safe or Safe (BA)	79.1	80.5	82.6	91.8***	84.2

Table 8

Percentage Distribution of Access to Public Benefits Among Mexican Immigrant and US-Born Unmarried Mothers

	Mexican Immigrant	US-Born			Total
		Mexican American	Black Non-Hisp.	White Non-Hisp.	
Prenatal care in First 3 Months of Pregnancy (BA)					
Months of Pregnancy (BA)	79.0	72.9	78.4	81.8	78.1
No. of Well Child Visits					
0-3	10.1	8.6	6.1	5.6	6.5
4+	89.9	91.4	93.9	94.4	93.5
Health Insurance (BA)					
Medicaid	77.0	79.0	70.2	70.0***	69.1
Private	16.3	16.2	22.9	23.8	24.8
Other	6.7	4.8	6.9	5.2	6.1
TANF Receipt	12.2	20.4*	38.9***	14.8	29.6***
Food Stamp Receipt	21.3	40.3***	53.5***	30.4	45.8***
Rent Assistance	7.2	22.3***	24.4***	9.9	21.0***
Head Start	5.2	5.4	3.5	3.8	4.0
WIC Receipt	84.6	88.1	86.7	76.0*	84.6