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*Changing Flags: Naturalization and its Determinants Among Mexican Immigrants*¹

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The Johns Hopkins University, January 1987

This article presents a secondary analysis of citizenship acquisition among legal Mexican immigrants who arrived in the United States during the early 1970s. A large array of individual characteristics found to be significant in previous studies, such as age, occupation, income and length of residence in the United States, are found not to correlate with an interest in naturalization. Instead, positive correlations are found with three general themes combining several characteristics. These are: roots in the United States, such as home ownership and number of children; residential patterns, both in Mexico and the ethnicity of the neighborhood in the United States; and the barriers and attitudes faced during periods of legal residence, such as type of immigrant visa and discrimination faced in the United States.

Citizenship acquisition and the vote have been important ways through which immigrant minorities in the United States have advanced collectively and gained recognition from the dominant society. This is especially true in the case of immigrant groups who came to the United States primarily as sources of wage labor and who, hence, started at low levels of economic and political power. Most immigrant flows have been of the wage-labor type and, among recent ones, Mexicans represent the largest national contingent.

This article presents results of a secondary analysis of citizenship acquisition among legal Mexican immigrants who arrived in the United States during the early seventies. Table 1 presents data which illustrate the need for this analysis. Immigrants from Mexico have the lowest propensity to naturalize among major national contingents arriving during the last decade. This is shown both in the rate of naturalization and in the average length of U.S. residence among those changing citizenship in a given year.

The first four columns of Table 1 present results which indicate that Mexican immigrants arriving during the early seventies had the lowest rate

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TABLE 1
NATURALIZATION BY SELECTED COUNTRIES OR REGIONS, YEAR OF ENTRY, AND LENGTH OF U.S. RESIDENCE, 1970-1983

Country	1970 Cohort	Naturalized After Ten Years %	1971 Cohort	Naturalized After Ten Years %	1983 Naturalizations %	Naturalized During First Six Years %	Naturalized After Ten Years %
Mexico	44,469	3	50,103	4	12,587	9	72
South and Central America	31,316	20	41,431	15	15,678	34	42
Cuba	16,334	47	21,611	33	10,311	4	77
Canada	13,804	6	13,128	7	2,809	13	78
Europe ¹	92,433	19	85,455	17	30,738	20	56
Asia	92,816	48	108,461	55	88,054	34	19
All Countries	373,326	25	370,478	28	178,948	27	38

Notes: ¹ Cohort data for 1970 and 1971 limited to Western European countries.

Sources: Adapted from Portes and Mozo (1985) and I.N.S. (1985).

of naturalization among major national and regional groups and were significantly below the average for the total 1970-71 immigrant cohort. The last three columns show that in 1983, the last year for which citizenship data are available, Mexicans had one of the lowest proportions of "early" naturalizations (six years of legal residence or less) and that more than three-fourths of those acquiring U.S. citizenship had been in the country for a decade or more². Both figures indicate a significant delay before citizenship change relative to the average for all nationalities.

Low propensity to naturalize dilutes the potential political influence of an immigrant group and hence deprives it of a major channel for demand-making and collective mobility. In a previous analysis, we examined the determinants of this situation by comparing several immigrant minorities (Portes and Mozo, 1985). For Mexicans, in particular, the study found that proximity to the home country; economic, as opposed to political motivations for migration; and, above all, the low average educational and occupational status of recent immigrants were the principal factors differentiating them from groups with high rates of naturalization.

The earlier study intended to clarify differences among various national or regional groups in the propensity to naturalize. The general finding regarding delayed naturalization among Mexican immigrants leads to the complementary question of determinants of citizenship acquisition within the Mexican minority itself; that is, factors differentiating Mexican immigrants who intend to naturalize or have already done so from those who resist this change. Our purpose here is to identify, at a preliminary level, the major causes of this cleavage.

DATA AND METHOD

Results presented below are based on a study of legal Mexican immigrants, interviewed upon arrival in the United States and re-interviewed after three and six years of residence in the country. Findings in the study on such topics as labor market participation, occupation, income, and the extent and character of immigrant social relations have been reported elsewhere (Portes, McLeod, and Parker, 1978; Portes, 1979; Portes and Bach, 1980, 1985). The present analysis focuses on one question asked of immigrants after three and six years of U.S. residence, namely whether they intended to acquire U.S. citizenship.

² Table 1 also identifies Canadians and Cubans as latecomers in the process of naturalization. Factors accounting for the resistance to citizenship change among Canadians are partially similar to those identified among Mexicans in a comparative study, described in the text below. Cubans are, however, a special case. As seen in the first four columns of Table 1, rates of naturalization among the 1970-71 Cuban cohorts were quite high. The apparent delay shown in the 1983 figures is an artifact due to the virtual absence of immigration from Cuba between 1975 and 1980. The pool of eligible immigrants arriving during this period shrank to almost zero and, hence, those acquiring U.S. citizenship in 1983 were limited, almost exclusively, to earlier arrivals.

The methodology of the study has been described in detail in prior publications (*See*, Portes and Bach, 1985). In essence, the original sample was drawn from male Mexican immigrants aged 18 to 60 and coming to the United States through border entry points in Laredo and El Paso. These are the main ports of entry along the Texas-Mexico border. The sample ($N=822$) proved to be representative of fiscal year 1973 legal Mexican immigrants over a series of variables such as age, education, and occupation. It over-estimated, however, the proportion of Mexicans settling in Texas and Illinois and underestimated the number settling in California, a consequence of the sites where the original interviews were conducted.

This sample was followed over time and re-interviewed in 1976 and 1979. During the course of the study, respondents became widely dispersed throughout the country, although predictable concentrations emerged in metropolitan areas of Texas, California, and Illinois. Geographical dispersion made it difficult to trace the sample over time but, with the help of several innovative tracing procedures, it was possible to retrieve and re-interview approximately 55 percent of the original sample in each follow-up. The proportion of respondents re-interviewed either in 1976 or 1979 is higher, 67 percent.

The sample mortality during the later surveys prompted a series of statistical analyses to determine whether follow-up cohorts were representative of the original sample and, hence, of the 1973 population of Mexican immigrants. These procedures included comparing retrieved and lost cases over a series of first survey variables and regressing a dummy variable, labelled "Missing", on a large set of 1973 predictors. Results of these analyses have been reported in the original study (Portes and Bach, 1985: Ch. 3). They consistently indicated the absence of any significant bias in the 1976 and 1979 sub-samples relative to the first survey. Results of the original study as well as those reported below will be interpreted accordingly.

The present analysis focuses on potential determinants of the decision to naturalize after six years of residence in the United States. Independent variables are drawn from past theorizing on the subject (Bernard, 1936; Garcia, 1981; Grebler, 1966) and encompasses indicators measured at all three points in time. The resulting, fairly extensive set of predictors can be classified into four categories:

a) *Background Characteristics and Skills*, including age, marital status, number of children, education, parental socio-economic status, size of community of origin, modernity, work experience, and length of U.S. residence prior to legal entry.

b) *U.S.-Acquired Skills and Resources*, such as present occupation and income, home ownership, education since arrival, knowledge of English, and information about U.S. society.

c) *Residential Patterns and Social Relations*, including size and location of area of residence, ethnicity of neighborhood, opportunities to interact with Anglos, ethnicity of employers and co-workers, and number of relatives and friends.

d) *Attitudes and Orientations* toward various aspects of American society, satisfaction with present lives, willingness to return to Mexico, and perceptions of discrimination against Mexicans in the United States.

Table 2 presents the complete list of independent variables included at various stages of the analysis, their units of measurement, and indicators of central tendency.

RESULTS

Frequencies and Bivariate Findings

Table 3 presents the distributions of responses to the question on intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship in 1976 and in 1979. As shown, the majority of the sample was favorably disposed toward naturalization, the number increasing slightly over time. However, approximately over one-third of respondents on both occasions were either opposed to changing citizenship or ambiguous about it. In contrast to the large proportion of respondents who said that they planned to become U.S. citizens, we found that only 20 respondents or approximately 5 percent of the final sample had done so after 6 years in the United States.

This low number is noteworthy because approximately 70 percent of respondents had lived in the United States prior to legal entry, most for an extensive period, and because 60 percent had wives awaiting them in the United States, a significant proportion of whom were U.S. born. Both characteristics should presumably increase the rate of naturalization by improving knowledge of the country and, hence, of the advantages of citizenship or by shortening the requisite residence period for U.S. citizenship acquisition. On the other hand, this low rate of naturalization is congruent with the known tendency of Mexican immigrants to resist or delay citizenship change, described in Table 1.

The following causal analysis focuses on the 1979 dependent variable, because actual naturalizations occurred only during the last follow-up period and because plans to do so may be assumed to be more stable at this point in time. Given the focus of the general study of which this analysis forms part (See, footnote 2), we attempted to identify predictors which are: 1) causally unambiguous; 2) easily identified empirically; and 3) amenable to possible influence. The first noteworthy result is, however, the dearth of such predictors. Results run against a number of apparently plausible hypotheses, including those derived from our own prior comparative analysis of naturalization among immigrant groups, cited above. Tables 4-a and 4-b illustrate

TABLE 2
PREDICTORS OF INTENTIONS TO NATURALIZE AND CITIZENSHIP
ACQUISITION, MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS 1973-79

Variable	Measurement	Central Tendency ^a
Age	Years	\bar{x} = 25.9
Education at Arrival	Years	\bar{x} = 6.44
Father's Education	Years	\bar{x} = 3.87
Mother's Education	Years	\bar{x} = 3.49
Race	White = 1/Indian, Mestizo = 0	p = .213
Community of Last Residence Before Immigration	50,000 or more = 1 49,999 or less = 0	p = .735
Entry Visa ¹	IR-1 = 1/Else = 0	p = .453
U.S. Residence Prior to 1973	No Prior Residence(0)to15 Yrs. or More	me = 1.35
Marital Status, 1973/76	Married = 1/Else = 0	p = .870
Spouse's Country of Birth	U.S. = 1/Else = 0	p = .323
Education of Spouse	Years	\bar{x} = 8.04
Relatives and Friends in U.S. at Arrival	Number	\bar{x} = 3.95
Religion	Catholic = 1/Else = 0	p = .923
Psycho-Social Modernity, 1973	OM-5 Scores ²	\bar{x} = 0.0
First U.S. Occupation	Duncan SEI Scores ³	\bar{x} = 17.87
Formal Education in U.S., 1973-76	Months	\bar{x} = 2.74
Knowledge of English, 1979	KEI Scores ⁴	\bar{x} = 3.12
Language Spoken at Home, 1976	English = 1/Spanish, Other = 0	p = .064
Frequency of Newspaper Reading, 1976	Daily (1) to Never (4)	me = 2.14
Information, 1979	USIN Scores ⁵	\bar{x} = 3.08
Help Received from Relatives, 1973-76	Much (1) to None (4)	me = 2.01
Opportunities to Interact with Anglos, 1976	Many (1) to Very Few (4)	me = 2.44
Ethnicity of Neighborhood, 1976	Anglo = 1/Mexican, Other = 0	p = .208
Primary Social Relations, 1979	Anglos, Mixed = 1/Mexicans = 0	p = .216
Relatives in the Same City, 1979	Number	\bar{x} = 4.31
Occupational Status, 1976	Skilled Worker or Higher = 1/ Semi-skilled or Lower = 0	p = .215
Income, 1976	Dollars per Month	\bar{x} = 629.40
Unemployment, 1976-79	Never (0) or 3 or More (3)	me = 0

TABLE 2 (Continued)
PREDICTORS OF INTENTIONS TO NATURALIZE AND CITIZENSHIP
ACQUISITION, MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS 1973-79

Variable	Measurement	Central Tendency ^a
Workplaces, 1976-79	Number	\bar{x} = 2.05
Home Ownership, 1976	Owner = 1/Else = 0	p = .245
Place of Residence, 1979	Central City = 1/Suburb, Rural Area = 0	p = .685
Size-Place of Residence, 1979	Thousands	\bar{x} = 803.88
Children, 1979	Number	\bar{x} = 2.93
U.S.-Born Children, 1979	Number	\bar{x} = 1.50
Attitudes toward U.S. Society, 1976	PSDI Scores ⁶	\bar{x} = 1.53
Plans to Return to Mexico, 1976	Yes = 1/No, Other = 0	p = .103

Notes: ^a \bar{x} = mean; p = proportion; me = median.

¹ IR-1 visas are granted to spouses of U.S. citizens. Immigrants receiving this visa are exempted from quota limits.

² Smith and Inkeles' OM-Short Form 5 Scale selected because of its brevity and the fact that it had been developed in six Third World countries, including two in Latin America. Scores are standardized to mean, 0; standard deviation, 1. The range is 4-08.

³ Socio-economic Index of Occupations. Occupational status scores range from 0 (lowest) to 99.

⁴ Knowledge of English Index. Objective test of English comprehension administered in 1973 and 1979. Scores range from 0 (lowest) to 9. Reliability, as measured by the maximum likelihood Omega coefficient, exceeds .90 in both years.

⁵ U.S. Information Index. Objective test of knowledge of political, tax, and credit matters administered in 1979. Scores range from 0 (lowest) to 9. Omega reliability is .67.

⁶ Perceptions of Society and Discrimination Index. Attitudinal scale constructed through exploratory factor analysis in 1976 and re-administered in 1979. Scores range from 0 (less critical perceptions) to 2. Omega reliability was .79 in 1976 and .82 in 1979. Only the 1976 measure is included in the following analysis.

these negative results with bivariate associations between 1979 intentions to naturalize and fifteen categorical and continuous predictors.

As seen in these tables, variables such as knowledge of English at arrival, parental occupation, early occupation in the United States, and education acquired during the respondents' U.S. residence have no relationship with intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship; spouse's country of birth, which was expected to have a strong effect on the dependent variable, also proves to be

TABLE 3
PLANS TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN,
MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS

Year %	Yes %	No %	Doesn't Know %	Totals %
1976	67.6	14.8	17.6	100.0 (438)
1979	71.0	11.6	17.4	100.0 (455)

a significant predictor. Results in Tables 4-a and -b are presented for illustration, as well as for substantive reasons. Negative findings are important because they call attention to potentially erroneous expectations based on plausible, but unproven hypotheses.

Variables in Tables 4-a and 4-b do not exhaust, however, those that were found to be unreliable predictors, either at the level of simple bivariate analysis or after more complex multivariate procedures. Results of the latter yield two general conclusions: first, there are few reliable influences on either intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship or actual naturalizations; second, the causal structure of these two dependent variables is quite distinct. Each conclusion is illustrated with empirical findings below.

TABLE 4-A
MEAN DIFFERENCES OF SELECTED CONTINUOUS PREDICTORS OF INTENTION
TO ACQUIRE U.S. CITIZENSHIP — MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, 1979

Predictor	Yes \bar{x}	No \bar{x}	Significance P_t
Knowledge of English at Arrival (Standardized Scale)	.097	.231	.18
First U.S. Occupation (Duncan SEI Scores)	18.5	16.9	.59
Number of Relatives and Friends in the U.S. at Arrival	4.1	4.2	.28
Education in the U.S., 1973-1976 (Months)	2.9	2.9	.83
Spouses Education, 1979 (Years)	7.9	8.3	.23
Number of Relatives in Same City, 1979	4.1	4.9	.41
Number of Workplaces, 1976-1979	2.0	2.4	.14

TABLE 4-B
SELECTED CATEGORICAL PREDICTORS OF INTENTION TO
ACQUIRE U.S. CITIZENSHIP — MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, 1979

Variable	Categories	Percent Intending to Naturalize or Already Citizen		Significance p ^a
		%	n	
Spouse's Country of Birth	Mexico or Other	86.5	(221)	.96
	U.S.A.	86.1	(111)	
Phenotype	Mestizo	85.0	(290)	.86
	White	83.2	(85)	
Marital Status at Arrival	Single	84.1	(65)	.52
	Married	85.4	(315)	
Language Spoken at Home	Spanish	83.5	(242)	.72
	English	80.0	(20)	
	Both Alike	92.6	(27)	
Help Received from Relative	Much	78.9	(90)	.657
	Some	89.8	(59)	
	Little	86.0	(50)	
	None	82.7	(81)	
Opportunities to Interact with Anglos	Many	87.5	(88)	.80
	Enough	81.7	(131)	
	Few	86.9	(99)	
	Very Few	86.7	(60)	
Frequency of Newspaper Reading	Daily	88.7	(115)	.41
	Weekly	84.7	(118)	
	Monthly	87.5	(56)	
	Rarely/Never	79.1	(91)	
Number of Times Unemployed	Never	80.9	(230)	.20
	Once	76.7	(89)	
	Twice	87.1	(30)	
	Three or More	87.4	(31)	

Causal Models

Both dependent variables are dichotomies³ and thus the search for predictive models cannot be based on ordinary least squares regression procedures. The measurement of these variables violates the assumptions of a normal distribution and equal intervals between units, and would probably misspecify the true probability function. This is especially true in the case of actual naturalizations which is a highly skewed variable. Maximum likelihood logistic regression obviates the problems of OLS analysis in this case and, although it has limitations of its own, it is clearly a preferable procedure. Tables 5 and 6 present regressions of each of our dependent variables on a set of eighteen

³ Intent to acquire U.S. citizenship and actual naturalizations are coded 1; others are coded 0.

predictors, selected as potentially significant from the initial bivariate analyses. Predictors are described by their labels; their units of analysis and measures of central tendency appear in Table 2.

Tables 5 and 6 present full reduced-form models for each dependent variable. Included are unstandardized logit coefficients, their significance levels, multiple R analogs, likelihood ratio chi-squares, and their respective probabilities for each equation. Full models are presented for comparison and as additional evidence of the insignificant effects associated with most predictors. Reduced-form models are those which fit the data best after multiple successive runs. An indicator of their goodness-of-fit is given by the average chi-square point increase relative to the full equations. For the intention models, $\log \text{likelihood } X^2/df_{12} = 11.28$; for the actual naturalization models, $X^2/df_{14} = 4.23$. Both figures indicate a significant improvement in the fit of causal models after deletion of insignificant or unstable effects. The following discussion focuses primarily on the more parsimonious models.

Table 5 identifies four reliable effects plus two marginal ones on our attitudinal dependent variable — intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship. Contrary to conventional expectations, this decision is not bolstered by such variables as education, knowledge of English, length of residence in the United States, or income. Instead, significant causal effects are associated with a different set of predictors: home ownership, ethnicity of neighborhood, urban-rural origins in Mexico, and attitude toward U.S. society.

Although unexpected, three of these effects are readily interpretable. Individuals who own their homes tend to have stronger "roots" in local communities and greater interest in influencing decisions which affect their property. Those who come from large cities are often better informed about conditions in the receiving country, including the advantages of citizenship. Immigrants whose orientations toward American society are more positive and who perceive less discrimination against their own group can be expected to be less resistant toward changing citizenship.

It is less clear, however, why living in an Anglo neighborhood reduces the propensity to naturalize. The relevant coefficient is not only sizable, but remains stable under different model specifications, a fact which rules out the possibility of random error. A previous analysis of the same data, summarized below, found that increasing contact with Anglo institutions and greater information about U.S. society led to more critical views and greater perceptions of discrimination against Mexicans (Portes, Parker, and Cobas, 1980). The same process may be at play here; in other words, immigrants whose everyday life places them into frequent contact with members of the dominant majority may encounter more instances of discrimination and thus develop more critical perceptions translated, in turn, into greater resistance to change nationalities. Tentative evidence in support of this interpretation is provided by the correlation between living in an

TABLE 5

LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS DESCRIBING EFFECTS OF EXOGENOUS VARIABLES
ON INTENTIONS TO ACQUIRE U.S. CITIZENSHIP — MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, 1979

Variables	Logit Coefficients		ΔP^3 III
	I	II	
Age — 30 or less ¹	-.069	(.81) ²	
Age — 40 or more ¹	.670	(.23)	
Education	.060	(.31)	
Father's Education	-.011	(.85)	
Community of Last Residence	.512	(.09)	.466 (.05) ² .086
Entry Visa	.148	(.29)	.310 (.16)
Prior U.S. Residence	-.015	(.85)	
Marital Status	-.175	(.72)	
Knowledge of English Information	-.003	(.96)	
Ethnicity of Neighborhood	-.329	(.29)	-.536 (.04) -.121
Primary Social Relations	.098	(.69)	
Occupational Status	.751	(.06)	.528 (.10)
Income	-.001	(.18)	
Home Ownership	.712	(.05)	.635 (.04) .112
Place of Residence	.372	(.18)	
Children	-.022	(.77)	
Attitude toward U.S.	-.109	(.12)	-.116 (.05) -.025
Intercept	1.443	(.06)	.997 (.00)
	-2 Log L = 390.04; $\chi^2 = 25.71$; 18 df. P = .107 Concordant Pairs = .648; R = 0.0 N = 354	-2 Log L = 525.44; $\chi^2 = 21.23$; 6 df. P = .002 Concordant Pairs = .60; R = .13 N = 453	

Notes: ¹ Dummy variables used in lieu of continuous age variable because of observed curvilinearity of relationship. The continuous-age effect on the dependent variable is also insignificant.

² Probability levels in parentheses.

³ ΔP is the net change in probability of scoring 1 on the dependent variable associated with a unit change in the independent variable. It is evaluated at the mean of the distribution of the dependent variable, in this case at .709, the sample proportion intending to change citizenship. See, Petersen (1985).

TABLE 6
LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS DESCRIBING EFFECTS OF EXOGENOUS VARIABLES
ON ACTUAL NATURALIZATIONS — MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, 1979

Variables	Logit Coefficients		III
	I	II	
Age — 30 or less ¹	1.022	(.19) ²	
Age — 40 or more ¹	-.580	(.68)	
Education	-.280	(.09)	
Father's Education	-.244	(.16)	
Community of Last Residence	2.092	(.10)	
Entry Visa	2.107	(.01)	1.621 (.01) ² .142
Prior U.S. Residence	-.603	(.06)	
Marital Status	-.165	(.90)	
Knowledge of English Information	.377	(.05)	.210 (.04) .010
Ethnicity of Neighborhood	.239	(.26)	
Primary Social Relations	1.854	(.02)	
Occupational Status	1.016	(.15)	
Income	-1.661	(.12)	
Home Ownership	.002	(.10)	
Place of Residence	1.800	(.02)	.873 (.09) .054
Children	1.771	(.08)	
Attitude toward U.S.	.538	(.01)	.313 (.00) .015
Intercept	-.256	(.22)	
	-8.768	(.00)	-6.061 (.00)
	-2. Log L = 79.30; x ² = 38.59; 18 df. P = .003 Concordant Pairs = .86; R = .148 N = 354		-2 Log L = 130.05; x ² = 18.65; 4 df. P = .000 Concordant Pairs = .73; R = .27 N = 421

Notes: ¹ Dummy variables in lieu of continuous age variable because of observed curvilinearity of relationship. The continuous-age effect on the dependent variable is also insignificant.

² Probability levels in parentheses.

³ Computed as in Table 5; P* = .043 is the sample proportion who actually naturalized.

Anglo neighborhood and favorable perceptions of U.S. society ($-.285$; $p < .000$) and between Anglo neighborhood and actual instances of discrimination experienced by the respondent ($+.198$; $p < .001$).

The remaining effects in column II are those of occupational status in 1976 and type of entry visa, and both are in the predicted direction. Spouses of U.S. citizens and immigrants who attained better occupations after three years of residence are more favorably disposed toward naturalization. These effects do not reach statistical significance, however, and are thus omitted from the final estimates of probability in column III.

Before describing these estimates, it should be noted that the causal order of the effects described above is unambiguous. Entry visa and size of community of origin were ascertained at the time of arrival in 1973; home ownership and ethnicity of neighborhood were measured three years later. They are all temporally prior to intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship, measured in 1979 or six years after arrival. Temporal order is particularly important in the case of attitudes toward U.S. society because, had they been measured at the same time as the dependent variable, the direction of causality could not have been established unambiguously.

Logit coefficients presented in columns I and II express the incremental effect of exogenous variables on the logarithm of the odds ratio of intending to change citizenship. In order to make the causal effects intelligible, we also present probability change statistics for significant effects. This statistic,

ΔP , reflects the change in probability associated with a unit increase of the particular independent variable. ΔP figures are presented as proportions, which can be readily converted to percent change scores by moving the decimal point two places to the right. The ΔP statistic is an exact estimate which converts log-odds to proportional change (Petersen, 1985).

Immigrants who come from urban communities in Mexico are about nine percent more likely to plan to change nationalities. The effect of living in an Anglo neighborhood is somewhat larger, and in the opposite direction. The tendency to resist citizenship change is also reinforced by perceptions of inequality and discrimination against Mexicans in the United States. Each unit increment in the 7-point PSDI scale decreases the probability of intending to acquire U.S. citizenship by nearly three percent⁴. One final strong effect is associated with home ownership; this variable yields an 11-point increase in the probability of planning for naturalization, net of other predictors.

Spouse's birthplace and 1976 plans to return to Mexico were also found to have reliable and near-reliable effects in separate regression runs. They are omitted here because of high collinearity with exogenous variables already included. Predictably, spouse's birthplace (U.S. vs other) is highly correlated with type of entry visa; intentions to leave the United States in 1976 correlates, in turn, with PSDI scale scores in the same year.

⁴ See, Table 2 for definition of this scale.

Perhaps more crucial than a general disposition to change citizenship is the actual deed. Despite the few respondents who did so, maximum likelihood procedures are robust enough to permit a preliminary analysis of causal structure of these decisions. Contrary to earlier results, the full logistic model suggests the presence of a number of reliable predictors of actual naturalizations. The list includes education, length of prior U.S. residence, number of children, knowledge of English, home ownership, and type of visa, although several of these effects run in an unexpected direction.

Table 6 presents these results. The full model already indicates that the causal process leading to actual citizenship change is significantly different from that producing a favorable disposition toward it. Among predictors of the latter, only home ownership maintains a significant effect on naturalizations. Urban origins in Mexico increase the probability of citizenship change and negative attitudes toward U.S. society decrease it, but neither effect is reliable. Finally, living in an Anglo neighborhood, which was found previously to discourage intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship, is seen here as increasing the probability of really doing so.

This seeming contradiction is interpretable as a consequence of the different influences associated with one's place of residence in the United States: greater exposure to Anglos may lead to more frequent experiences of discrimination and, hence, more negative attitudes among some immigrants; however, it may also yield greater knowledge of American society and a greater appreciation of the benefits of citizenship. As tentative support for this interpretation, we note that while the correlation between living in an Anglo neighborhood and favorable perceptions of U.S. society is negative, that between Anglo neighborhood and level of U.S. information is both positive and significant (+.139; $p < .003$). This result reflects the potentially different effects of place of residence among different groups of immigrants.

There are other suggestive trends in these data, but they need not be discussed since subsequent runs revealed a far more parsimonious causal model. This is presented in column II of Table 6; the corresponding change effects appear in column III. When compared to those in Table 5, the chi-square and significance level and R analog at the bottom of column II indicate that actual citizenship change is better predicted than are intentions, and that this superior fit is achieved on the basis of only four predictors.

Mexican immigrants who entered as spouses of U.S. citizens (IR-1 visas) are about 14 percent more likely to naturalize during the early years of legal residence. This strong effect can be interpreted as a straightforward consequence of the greater facility for citizenship change by such individuals, including a shorter required period of U.S. residence. Each additional child increases the probability of early naturalization by slightly more than one percent. Substitution of number of children born in the United States for absolute number of children does not alter this result because both variables

are highly correlated. This suggests that the influence of children in the naturalization process is not due to any administrative facilitation, as in the case of type of visa, but to the greater "rootedness" that a larger family creates. This interpretation is reinforced by the effect of home ownership, the only predictor with reliable effects on both dependent variables. Those who own homes are more than five percent more likely to have naturalized, other factors being equal.

As seen previously, knowledge of English is not a significant determinant of intentions, but it does affect actual citizenship change. As shown in the bottom of Table 2, the 9-point KEI index is a reliable objective test of English proficiency. Each unit increment in this index increases the probability of early naturalization by almost 1 percent. A summary view of these results may be obtained by noting that a Mexican immigrant whose spouse is U.S. born, who has three children and a home in the United States, and who speaks English fluently is about 30 percent more likely to have naturalized by the end of his sixth year of legal residence than one in the opposite situation.

Indirect Effects

The final question is that of factors affecting the principal determinants of our dependent variables. These factors are important because they represent indirect influences in the process leading to the final outcome — naturalizing or preserving Mexican citizenship. Several of the significant predictors identified above, such as size of community of origin and type of entry visa, are straightforward and do not require a separate causal analysis. Others, like knowledge of English, are more likely candidates, but their causal structure is dominated by one or two factors which are easily identified⁵. For this reason, the following analysis focuses on two variables for which determinants are less evident: home ownership and perceptions of U.S. society.

As seen above, owning property in the United States is a reliable predictor of both intentions to acquire U.S. citizenship and the actual deed. Since income is not a significant determinant of either variable, it is clear that the process at play involves more than mere economic success. This prompts, in turn, the question of what factors lead some immigrants to acquire their homes while others do not. Because the variable is a dichotomy, the maximum likelihood methods employed above are also appropriate in this case.

Table 7 presents a logistic model which summarizes our results after multiple runs. In total, twenty-five potential predictors of home ownership

⁵ Knowledge of English is primarily an outcome of level of education and, secondarily, of length of prior U.S. residence. This is illustrated by the corresponding gross (zero-order) effects: the effect of education at arrival on the KEI-1979 index is .341 ($P < .000$); that of prior U.S. residence is .163 ($P < .001$).

were considered. Most proved insignificant, including education, work experience, parental socio-economic status, marital status, prior U.S. residence, type of visa, last occupation in Mexico, and aspirations at arrival. The best-fitting model presented in Table 7 included only five variables, three of which have reliable effects. So as to confirm that economic resources by themselves are not the decisive factor, the effect of 1973 income on home ownership is insignificant. Instead, the dependent variable is positively associated with knowledge of English at arrival and current residence in a small city and negatively associated with living outside the Southwest.

TABLE 7
LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF HOME OWNERSHIP ON SELECTED PREDICTORS,
MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, 1973-76

Variable	Measurement	Logit Coefficient	P ¹
City of Residence	50,000 or less = 1/ Else = 0	.811	.155
Income, 1973	Dollars per month	.001	
Knowledge of English at Arrival	KEI Scores	.265	.044
State of Residence	Illinois, Midwest = 1 Southwest = 0	-1.491	-.138
Intercept		-1.692	
		-2 Log L = 357.11; $\chi^2 = 23.11$; 5 df. P = .001 Concordant Pairs = .636 R = .186	

Note: ¹ Computed as in Table 5; P* = .188 is the sample proportion owning homes.

The first effect is straightforward; it indicates that knowledge of English exercises both a major direct effect on citizenship change and an indirect influence through its effect on property acquisition. This influence is sizeable: each unit increment in the 9-point KEI index increases the probability of home ownership by more than four percent three years later. We can only speculate whether the two remaining effects in this model are due to the relative costs of housing in different localities, facilitating or impeding its acquisition by immigrants, or to other factors. Both effects are, however, very strong; living in a small city leads to a 15.5 percent net increment in the probability of home ownership; settling outside of the Southwest, primarily in the state of Illinois, decreases it by about 14 percent.

As seen above, negative perceptions of U.S. society and of the condition of Mexicans in it decrease the intention to acquire U.S. citizenship and have a

negative, although weaker effect on actual naturalizations. It is thus appropriate to consider, in turn, the factors leading to these attitudes. The PSDI scale is an interval-level measure constructed on the basis of factor analysis. It is thus amenable to analysis with ordinary least squares regression procedures. The variable was measured in 1976 and again in 1979 and it is thus possible to examine its causal structure on both occasions. Table 8 summarizes results of this analysis. In addition to OLS coefficients, we include those from a maximum likelihood full information procedure (FIML), designed to compensate for the fallible measurement structure of the dependent variable. The FIML routine, designed by Joreskog and Sorbom (1978), yields more accurate estimates of effects because it corrects for unreliability in empirical measures of both predictors and endogenous variables.

The strongest effect on perceptions of U.S. society in both estimations and in both years is that of psycho-social modernity. This construct was measured at the time of arrival and, hence, the direction of causality is unambiguous. Despite low reliability of the OM-5 scale employed to measure modernity, effects are consistently significant whether corrected for unreliability or not⁶. The direction of this effect is also noteworthy: the more modern the value-orientation brought by immigrants from Mexico, the more critical their perceptions of U.S. society at a later time.

In 1976, education and current occupational status reduced negative perceptions somewhat, but these effects were exceptional. The remaining coefficients in Table 8 run in a direction congruent with the modernity effects. Thus, the longer period of U.S. formal education; the greater the fluency in English; and the longer the period of U.S. residence among Mexican immigrants, the more critical their perceptions.

These findings suggest that immigrants who, by reason of their knowledge of English, more education, and values, are more exposed to outside events may question their new social environment more than those secluded within ethnic communities⁷. This tendency is in line with the negative impact of residence in an Anglo neighborhood on the decision to change citizenship, reported above. It also indicates that apart from its direct effect on citizenship change, English knowledge affects intentions indirectly through predictors whose direct effects are contradictory: the greater the knowledge of English, the greater the facility for home ownership, but also the more likely immigrants will develop critical views inhibiting plans for naturalization. The combination of these factors may explain the absence of either a net or a gross (zero-order) effect of knowledge of English on intentions, because influences stemming from it tend to cancel each other.

⁶ Details of construction of the OM-5 scale and measures of its internal consistency are reported in Inkeles and Smith (1974).

⁷ These unexpected findings have been reported and discussed extensively elsewhere. See, Portes, Parker and Cobas (1980) and Portes and Bach (1985: Ch. 8).

TABLE 8
SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIETY AND
DISCRIMINATION (PSDI), MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, 1976-79

Variable	1976 ¹		1979 ¹	
	OLS	FIML	OLS	FIML
Age	—	—	—	—
Education	—	-.086	—	—
Occupational Status	—	-.067	—	—
Modernity	.597	.831	.611	.310
Knowledge of English	—	—	.097	.052
Prior U.S. Residence	—	—	.163	.126
Education in the U.S.	.032	.021	—	—
Information	—	—	—	—
R ²	.08	.31	.12	.18

Note: Unstandardized coefficients which exceed twice their standard errors.

Sources: Portes and Bach (1985; Ch. 8); Portes, Parker, and Cobas (1980).

CONCLUSION

Results of our analysis are less noteworthy for their positive than for their negative implications. The large array of individual characteristics which fail to correlate with citizenship change comprises many which come to mind immediately when attempting to explain the process of naturalization. Age, education, occupation, income, and length of time in the country are so many factors which can be reasonably identified *a priori* as major direct determinants, but which failed to play that role in these data.

Those few factors which do have reliable and causally unambiguous effects reflect three principal themes. First, there is a "roots" theme, represented by variables such as home ownership and number of children. Most of the men in this sample are relatively young and their children are thus likely to live with them. Owning one's home and being responsible for children appear to be effective ways of reducing the wanderlust of many immigrants and impressing upon them the advantages of gaining a secure foothold in their new country.

Second, there is a residential theme, exemplified by such variables as community of origin in Mexico and ethnicity of neighborhood. Places of settlement — past and present — appear to be linked to certain patterned experiences which lead, in turn, to certain views and expectations as to how the surrounding world works. Immigrants who come from large cities seem

less attached to their Mexican origin and thus more predisposed to acquire U.S. citizenship. Those who now live in areas dominated by Anglo Americans appear subject to contradictory experiences: on the one hand, contact with members of the native majority may increase awareness of the advantages of changing citizenship; on the other, it can also produce strong negative views inhibiting plans to do so.

There is, finally, a barriers-and-attitudes theme represented by type of entry visa, knowledge of English, and perceptions of U.S. society and discrimination. The role of the first two is clearly facilitational and they jointly exercise a major direct influence on actual citizenship change. The effect of English knowledge is, however, more complex because it also facilitates greater exposure to American society and, hence, the possible emergence of more critical perceptions.

This analysis has merely suggested the complexity of the forces at play without coming, by any means, to a final conclusion. Needed are studies over a longer time span which focus more explicitly on immigrants' attitudes toward the naturalization process and the actual process of citizenship acquisition. Present results must be regarded, therefore, as preliminary and subject to future verification. They are presented as evidence that many common-sense explanations of this process are not likely to be found valid and that other, less obvious and more complex interpretations are required. The importance of citizenship acquisition as a direct force affecting the potential political influence of legal Mexican immigrants, as well as other foreign minorities, makes additional research on this topic an urgently needed endeavor.

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