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KEYS TO ACHIEVING THE AMERICAN DREAM AMONG MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS: THE ROLES OF HOMEOWNERSHIP, NATURALIZATION, AND ETHNORACIAL IDENTITY

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DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by Esther Castillo

Dissertation Committee:

Chancellor's Professor Frank D. Bean, Co-Chair

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2014

DEDICATION

To my husband, Richard: I NEVER would've, could've or should've gone this far without your love, encouragement and commitment to see me continue. Our 15 years together, thus far, saw me complete an Associate's degree, Bachelor's, Master's and now the ultimate Doctorate, and YOU made these POSSIBLE. I love you with all of my heart. This dissertation and degree carry my married name and not maiden name because these accolades and accomplishments belong to both of us-- Richard and Esther Castillo co-authored this dissertation.

To Richard and Katherine: without your energy and love this degree would not mean what it does. I love you my littles!! I present this dissertation to you as a family heirloom, one that you too should earn and pass on. You have no hardship story to tell that revolves around you being lost between two cultures but instead your story is about growing up seeing your parents reach for what others call the stars but your parents call doable goals that require hard work and sacrifice.

To my parents, Ramon and Josefina Sevilla, for guiding me to be the strong, hard-working and goal-oriented woman that I am today. Padres, en su honor estudié las formas proactivas con las que inmigrantes Mexicanos como ustedes, merecen y honran el termino "Americano/a". Hoy soy una mujer fuerte, trabajadora y orientada en metas.

To my siblings, Joel, Lisette and Adolfo: for believing in me and being just the most awesome tios anyone could want for their kids. Los quiero mucho!!

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To my tios, tias, primos, and primas, for your words and acts of encouragement.

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As the first of four children born to two Mexican immigrants, who arrived to this country with no more than a 5th grade education, I am not a “traditional” student. Acting as translator and mediator for my parents and their navigation of American social structures helped to slow my own achievement or *incorporation*. This that I’ve lived is some of what scholars write about and with the guidance of those below, I now share my own scholarly contributions to the immigration literature.

I want to thank my committee members, co-chairs Dr. Frank D. Bean, and Dr. Susan K. Brown, and Dr. Ann Hironaka, as well as proposal defense members Dr. Gilbert G. Gonzalez and Dr. Jennifer Lee.

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Frank and Susan, from the first day we met, back when I was considering applying to the program, you were the best advisors any graduate student could wish for. You patiently treated my graduate studies as an apprenticeship. I came in with a bachelor's degree that I earned while working full-time, 12 years after high school graduation. This delay in earning my B.A. was not due to lack of dedication to my studies, but to the many complications that a non-traditional student’s binder contains. Frank and Susan, you saw this and did not give up on me. You

mentored and went beyond your duties as advisors, guiding me as I acquired the tools to become a graduate student, researcher, faculty and Sociologist. Frank and Susan, I know that if it were not for you, I would have been another graduate student who found herself on the attrition list. From the bottom of my heart, an Infinite Thank you very much! Muchisisimas Gracias! Merci beaucoup! Grazie Mille! Heel Erg Bedankt! Mahalo!

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Keys to Achieving The American Dream among Mexican Immigrants: The Roles of
Homeownership, Naturalization, and Ethnoracial Identity

By

Esther Castillo

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Chancellor's Professor Frank D. Bean, Co-Chair

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In the general area of immigrant incorporation studies, few investigations have looked at interconnections among different kinds of incorporation, but instead have usually focused on only one facet of incorporation at a time. Scholars vary considerably in their perceptions of immigrant incorporation, and this variation is particularly pronounced for Mexican immigrants. Some scholars emphasize slow but steady mobility while others focus on barriers and downfalls. Still others see Mexicans and their descendants as unassimilable. Classic assimilation theory proposes that with the occurrence of “structural assimilation,” or entrance into mainstream primary groups, all other forms of assimilation will naturally follow in no particular order. It further holds that exposure to the host country will also help account for similarities shared by newcomers and natives, if for no other reason than time diminishes differences. This dissertation investigates relationships between indicators of the American Dream and some of the most important aspects

of the incorporation of Mexican immigrants-the strength and direction of the relationship between an important aspect of economic incorporation, homeownership, critical aspects of political and sociocultural incorporation, ethnoracial identity, and naturalization, respectively. It also investigates for U.S.-born Mexican Americans the relationship between homeownership and ethnoracial identity. The findings indicate that Mexican immigrant homeowners (44.6%) are more likely than non-homeowners (21.6%) to be naturalized. Time in the country for Mexican immigrants has a positive effect on homeownership, as age has a positive odds (1.012) on identifying as white in the race category listed by the U.S. Census Bureau. The data shows that 57% of Mexican Americans are homeowners, 54% identify as being white, and their mean years of education is just below 12 years, not too far from that of the average American-born native, with just above a mean household income of \$46,000. These findings suggest exposure to American ways of life, or proactively incorporating, is working for Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans on their pathway to achieving the American Dream.

Key words: Immigration, Incorporation, Mexican Immigrants, Mexican Americans, Homeownership, Naturalization, Citizenship, Racial Identity, American Dream

KEYS TO ACHIEVING THE AMERICAN DREAM AMONG MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS: THE ROLES OF HOMEOWNERSHIP, NATURALIZATION, AND ETHNORACIAL IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

The broad focus of this dissertation research is immigrant incorporation among Mexican immigrants in the United States. I investigate the incorporation of these populations via three key aspects of the American Dream: homeownership, citizenship and ethnoracial identity (identifying as white). I use U.S. census data from IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series- census microdata for social and economic research) to shed light on how dynamics involving these three crucial factors relate to each other and to the American dream.

I address the general question of to what extent these key aspects of the American dream overlap (or do not) in terms of incorporation. Based on classical assimilation theoretical perspectives, I expect that greater time spent in the country increases material well-being and thereby increases the likelihood of these facets of incorporation for the Mexican-born. In other words, given a classical assimilation theoretical perspective, and applying its temporal exposure perspective, I expect that Mexican-born persons who have been in the country the longest will show greater material well-being and thereby also increase the likelihood of these facets of incorporation occurring. But beyond this, I also expect that once I take out the time component, some overlap among these variables will remain. My interpretation is that this results from the American dream component, meaning that a portion of these aspects of incorporation exists independently of the usual temporal and economic incorporation.

According to Warner and Srole (1945) the assimilation of European immigrants, who shared some of the same characteristics as contemporary immigrant groups such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, expected to take one to six generations. This,

however, is not what Americans in general seem to think when they express an urgency for contemporary immigrants to assimilate. According to Jiménez (2009), these nativist concerns seem to overlook the fact that the continued flow of immigration may slow the apparent assimilation of the Mexican-origin population in general, regardless of time in the U.S. Other scholars, such as Bean and Stevens (2003), Brown (2007) and Lee and Bean (2010), for example, consider the Mexican population on track towards incorporation; in part because they show intermarriage rates that greatly surpass the country's historically largest minority population, African-Americans. Their hypothesis of delayed incorporation is more consistent with the empirical evidence and serves to better tie together both classical assimilation and contemporary incorporation theories, because it accounts for both the contemporary post-industrial migration of today, and the structures of the assimilation model of yesterday.

There is a lack of empirical work on the relationship multiple markers may have for immigrant incorporation. It is thus important to focus on the incorporation of the contemporary immigrant population in terms that can be clearly understood and measured. Works like those of Huntington's (2004) book help convince the public not to support current immigration because of its claim that the Mexican case is cause for concern. I saw a need for there to be a clear understanding of what sociologists and scholars in general are using to assess facets of incorporation. Contemporary scholars have described assimilation "as a type of incorporation process" (Bean and Stevens 2003). This dissertation uses the term *incorporation* to mean a more general process than assimilation. This research will focus on key aspects of economic, sociocultural and political incorporation because each is a marker of general incorporation. This research is important because there is a lack of empirical work on the relationship multiple

markers may have for immigrant incorporation and on their interconnections, especially for the Mexican-born and later-generation of Mexican-origin.

Economic incorporation is the process by which immigrants converge with the native-born in various aspects of economic status. This dissertation looks at how home ownership is a direct indicator of economic incorporation because for average Americans, it is their major source of wealth (Myers 2007). That's why it is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation.

Sociocultural incorporation is the incorporation facet that explains the ways in which people adapt to the host culture and the mainstream processes that begin to blend away immigrants' foreignness. These are among the ways in which immigrants to the U.S. begin to blend into the American mainstream, via social forms and cultural practices. In the past, scholars held that sociocultural incorporation (Gordon 1964) began and ended with the adopting of new or host practices, while more contemporary scholars find that it is more of a merging of mainstream practices with that of the immigrant (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2007; Jimenez 2010; Lee and Bean 2010).

Political incorporation is a dimension of immigrant incorporation because the right to vote, willingness to pay taxes and naturalization are viewed as indicators of American-ness (Bloemraad 2006). Immigrants must make decisions that change their identity, rights and privileges that they once saw as unchangeable before they choose to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006). It should also change the way immigrants are perceived by their neighbors, because it makes foreignness a difficult label to apply to naturalized citizens who now have the same rights and responsibilities as the general populace (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008; Myers 2007). Naturalization is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation because it helps

facilitate their parallel existence with the general population and their political incorporation into the receiving country.

The importance of each one of the key aspects of incorporation that I sought to investigate I applied to the Mexican-born population as follows:

Home ownership rates and the means by which homes are purchased by Mexican immigrants, can be expressed as operating against all odds. Mexican immigrants are and have been scapegoated for years, here in the U.S. and yet, the rates at which they are purchasing homes in some of the most expensive places in the U.S., such as California are indicative of both subjective and objective economic incorporation. Home ownership by Mexicans has been investigated by numerous scholars, and though this group is among the relatively lowest skilled and the lowest wage earners, they have homeownership rates that indicate that there is a tremendous drive to take part in the American dream. In short, they may “over-achieve” in regard to home ownership.

Naturalization rates of the Mexican-born have been steadily climbing in the last twenty years. And with home ownership being so important to Mexican immigrants, one can hypothesize that naturalization may be viewed as a next natural step for those that are home owners and LPRs. And since naturalization takes place with bureaucratic structures that also require money and stability, it reflects proactive and formal ways of embracing American ways of life.

Racial identity in American terms can be a confusing phenomenon for a population that was socialized by their parents, community, church and country to identify Mexicans as belonging to a fixed mixed race. Therefore, the trend of Mexican immigrants to choose the “other” category in the race question of the U.S. census’ short form may be indicative of their

pre-existing understandings of race. And with exposure to the American concept of race, their choice and therefore, their understanding of race, may be changing.

The importance of each one of the key aspects of incorporation that I sought to investigate I applied to later-generation Mexican-origin population as follows:

Home ownership rates and the means by which homes are purchased by later-generation Mexican-origin, can be expressed as operating many odds by purchasing homes at rates that surpass expectations. Given that this population is purchasing homes in some of the most expensive places in the U.S. such as California, are indicative of both subjective and objective economic incorporation. Home ownership by native-born Mexican-origin has been investigated by scholars (Myers 2007) who find that this group's low level of educational and income attainment continue to show tremendous drive to take part in the American dream. They partake in planning and proactively saving to achieve the goal of homeownership (Myers 2007) and in short, they may "over-achieve" in regards to home ownership.

Racial identity in American terms is dichotomous, with very little room for negotiation or interpretation. Americans in general, understand race to be a choice between "black", "white", or "other", and only recently in the 2000 decennial census did a category for bi- or multi-raciality appear within the race question. While the Hispanic question appeared decades ago, but only as an optional ethnic identity (Emeka and Aguis Vallejo 2011) to the racial question, responses to these two questions may be indicative of respondent's understandings, interpretations and acceptance of American racial divides. With exposure to the American concept of race, their choice and therefore, their understanding of race, are different than that of their parents, grandparents and predecessors.

HISTORICAL COMPONENT

The Hart-Celler law is very important because it eliminated the previous blocks to immigration from certain countries and instead created a national quota system for immigrant entrants from countries from all around the world (Massey et al. 1998; Portes 1999; Bean and Stevens 2003; Zolberg 2006). It also provided for family reunification and the legalization of loved ones by legal residents and U.S. citizens (Massey et al. 1998; Bean and Stevens 2003). The Hart-Celler law also included a clause for a preference system for employment-based skills (Bean and Stevens 2003).

This law is very important because it did away with previous restrictions on immigration from Asia, and it provided a threshold instead (Bean and Stevens 2003). It also increased the number of family reunifications, when in the mid 1960's the main basis for immigration became family unifications, instead of national origins quotas (Zolberg 2006). Overall, this immigration law is one of the most important and salient U.S. immigration acts to date, that gave way for immigration, instead of setting restrictions as most other laws have done.

Among the importance, and strengths of the Hart-Celler Act, is the inclusion of the reunification of families, and in the process, the legalization of those family members who are being brought over to the U.S. (Bean and Stevens 2003). In the years since this law enacted, the makeup of the immigrants to the U.S. has dramatically changed. The migration of people from Asia and Latin American have increased in staggering numbers, and their family reunifications have outnumbered those of their European counterparts by at least a two-fold (Bean and Stevens 2003). And this increase in immigration, family reunification can be seen as some of the unintended consequence of the Hart-Celler act, especially, when we consider nativist sentiments (Light 2006).

Some of the shortcomings of the Hart-Celler Act, is the emphasis on labor market demands as indicators for immigration flows (Portes 1999). The labor market, in the form of lobbyists such as agri-business, creates the immigration that we have today. With visas and legal immigration increasing since this law was enacted, for high-skilled labor migration from Asia (Levitt 2007), and unauthorized migration by low skilled labor migrants from Mexico (Bean and Lowell 2007). Both of these migration flows are viewed as problematic from the nativist perspective, because both flows are seen as creating unfair competition for American workers (Zolberg 2006).

Another unintended consequence of this act is that the process is slow and the bureaucratic hoops are difficult to meet for people that are at the bottom of the strata (Massey et al 1998). This further pushes people who are already in the U.S. with legal residency or not, especially among the Mexican population, to create family reunifications through unauthorized migration (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002). This only helps to create a second-class citizenry that is willing to work in almost any job, and is willing to do this for less than the average American citizen (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002).

An intended consequence is that those immigrants with money are financially able to bring their families to the U.S., therefore those that are at the top of the strata, or financially secure, are benefitting from the family reunification more so than those who come as labor migrants (Massey et al 1998). Therefore, the high-skilled migrants are being rewarded for their migration, and their high educational attainment. This could be seen as helping their families and children, by providing examples of how high educational attainment rewards those that have high educational attainment. This can be seen as an intended consequence of this law, strength, and a marker of sociological significance because it helps maintain the middle-class ideology

that the U.S. is built on. This same intended consequence is problematic because it adds to the widening gap of inequality among high-skilled and low-skilled labor, because it allows for a somewhat streamline road for legal migration for those with money, and a barrier for those without it.

The Hart-Celler act was amended with such acts as the Immigration, Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1985, and the Immigration Act of 1990. With IRCA being the law that allowed for the most number of unauthorized migrants to legalize their status in the U.S., through employer letters, and children born in the U.S. prior to 1980 (Massey et al. 1998). The 1990 act expanded the language of the Hart-Cellar act by adding a diversity clause, and expanded the language on skilled immigrants and visas (Bean and Stevens 2003). Both of these acts contributed to the sociological significance of the demographic changes that have taken place in the U.S. in the last fifty years. These demographic changes will continue to be seen, as the U.S. goes from being a White protestant nation to one that may continue to be mostly protestant and white, but who also shares its identity with being in the category of other as the nation reconfigures its identity (Bean and Stevens 2003; Zolberg 2006).

The major sociological significance of this law is the demographic changes that it is credited with creating (Massey et al. 1998, Bean and Stevens 2003, Light 2006, Zolberg 2006). According to many scholars (Massey et al. 1998, Portes 1999, Bean and Stevens 2003 and Zolberg 2006), the racial makeup of the United States has changed most dramatically since this law was enacted. The American mainstream has seen many changes since the 1960's, and among them have been the large number of non-European entrants to the U.S. (Bean and Stevens 2003). Which up until the 1960's, Europeans were still the majority of those that immigrated to the U.S., with the peak in surviving for the first half of the 20th century (Zolberg 2006).

With works like Massey et al. (1998) and Bean and Stevens (2003), we see that there are pros and cons to Hart-Cellar Act, both that could and those that could not be foreseen. With what we now know about what this immigration policy created with intended and unintended consequences. Contemporary American would not look as it does today if not for this law. Now an important question to ask is how are these immigrants incorporating? By measuring various key incorporation components like homeownership, naturalization and racial identity, or economic, sociocultural, and political incorporation.

This dissertation aims to speak to the immigrant incorporation and race boundary literature by investigating proactive ways that Mexican immigrants and native-born of Mexican-origin use their *tool kits* to access the American dream. Conversely, these tools are limited by the access that these individuals have to American bureaucracies, limited by their educational achievement and acceptance by nativist and of more tenured Mexican-origin. These limitations remain in the shadows, as these groups continue to become just as American as the nativist that acclaim that Mexicans are unassimilable, simultaneously, as Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans merge into American-ness via American citizenship, for immigrants, and American racial identity and American homeownership.

CHAPTER 1

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS: MEXICAN IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND NATURALIZATION

This research investigates the strength and direction of the relationship between an important aspect of economic incorporation, homeownership, and a critical aspect of political incorporation, naturalization. In the general area of immigrant incorporation studies, few investigations have looked at interconnections among different kinds of incorporation, but instead have focused on only one facet of incorporation at a time. Broadly speaking, incorporation can be broken down into four main types-- sociocultural, political, spatial and economic (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2006 and 2007). Each of these may be conceptualized as consisting of multiple facets. This paper focuses on naturalization as an aspect of political incorporation, although political incorporation can also include other phenomena, such as civic engagement, voting behaviors and forming political party affiliations. Similarly, economic incorporation can entail such additional facets as education, earnings and occupation (Brown 2006; Brown and Bean 2006). This paper concentrates on naturalization and homeownership in an effort to shed light on the important roles political and economic incorporation play in the decisions that many Mexican immigrants make to call the U.S. officially their home. But beyond this, this paper also seeks to better understand the significance of economic incorporation for not only early political incorporation (Brown, Bean and Rumbaut 2006), but also the broader incorporation process.

This broader significance derives from the fact that when foreign-born legalized residents of the United States decide to become citizens, their actions may carry more meaning than just doing something that is part of the process of political incorporation. They may also be making decisions that alter their narratives of self and change the ways they are perceived and treated by

the host country. Citizens are no longer just workers who became Legalized Permanent Residents (LPR's) to obtain a "green card" for the right to work and live in the U.S.; they are now persons attached formally to the land that they have decided to call home. For example, Rytina and Caldera (2008) wrote:

Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon foreign citizens or nationals after fulfilling the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy *nearly all the same benefits, rights and responsibilities* that the Constitution gives to native born U.S. citizens.

Mexican Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) were the least likely to naturalize within 10 years (LPRs must wait at least five years before they apply for naturalization), with approximate rates of 5-10 percent for the 1970's through mid-1980's cohorts and 15-30 percent for the more recent cohorts. Asian immigrants had the highest cumulative naturalization rates and Mexican immigrants had among the lowest although Mexican LPRs were least likely to naturalize within ten years, they also exhibited the greatest relative increase in rates between the earliest and latest cohorts.

THE FACETS OF INCORPORATION

Scholars vary considerably in their perceptions of immigrant incorporation (Gordon 1964; Gans 1999; Zhou 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Telles and Ortiz 2008), and this variation is particularly pronounced for Mexican immigrants. Some scholars emphasize slow but steady mobility (Bean and Stevens 2003, while others focus on barriers and downfalls (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Still others see Mexicans as unassimilable (Huntington 2004). Gordon's (1964) classic assimilation theory which poses that with the occurrence of "structural assimilation," or entrance in to mainstream primary groups, all other forms of assimilation will naturally follow in no particular order. It further holds that exposure to the host country will also help account for similarities shared by newcomers and natives, if for nothing else than exposure to native practices (Gordon 1964). However, later theories of incorporation, such as selective acculturation, suggest that some aspects of acculturation may not necessarily occur,

contemporaneously at all (Alba and Nee 2003). This paper argues that classical assimilation theory alone cannot explain the relationship between homeownership and naturalization for the Mexican immigrant population. Were the incorporation of the Mexican-origin to follow the classical assimilation path, homeownership and naturalization would be positively related to duration of residence. In other words, rates of homeownership and naturalization would rise among those with longer duration of residence in the country.

IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION

When people think of immigrant assimilation they often envision a relatively “straight-line” transition to the American mainstream based on the assumption that such changes took place in the case of European immigrants. Americans have a common sense notion that assimilation is easy for immigrants who come to this country and choose to be American. Especially because of what they are told and think they know about European immigration (Alba and Nee 2003), however, much of what Americans are taught in school or talk about over the water cooler in regards to immigrant assimilation is far from the truth. Immigrants like the Jews, Irish, Germans and Italians and others, for example, have been labeled as being unassimilable at different points in their history (Gans 1999). Now, for the most part, such groups are considered white and can choose to hold up their “ethnic card” to prove it (Alba and Nee 2003; Jiménez 2010). But each group experienced negative and unfriendly nativist sentiment due to their perceived slow assimilation, at earlier points in time. This is important to understand because with all of the negative things said today about the Mexican-origin population it is easy to forget that other groups were also once viewed as unassimilable in U.S. history (Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964; Lopez 1999; Alba and Nee 2003).

Some scholars argue that assimilation is what almost inevitably happens to people when they go about their everyday lives (Alba and Nee 2003). This may be oversimplified. It is the case that for European immigrants that shared some of the same characteristics as contemporary immigrant groups, such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, assimilation was expected to take one to six generations (Warner and Srole 1945). This, however, is not what Americans in general seem to think when they express an urgency for contemporary immigrants to assimilate. And they seem to overlook the fact that the continued flow of immigration may slow the apparent assimilation of the Mexican-origin population in general, regardless of time in the U.S. (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2006; Rumbaut, Massey, Bean 2006). Other scholars consider the Mexican-origin population on track towards assimilation, in part because they show intermarriage rates that greatly surpass those of the largest minority population, African-Americans (Bean and Stevens 2003; Lee and Bean 2007). Though most Mexican migrants comes to the U.S. with low human capital, their's and their descendant's English proficiency rates nearly parallel those of the Asian or "model minority" population, whose members come with very high human capital (Bean and Stevens 2003; Lee and Bean 2010). These two empirical facts, suggest the Mexican-origin population is moving along an assimilation track (Brown 2006), especially when scholars take into account length of stay for first generation entrants and generation status among the descendants of the original immigrants (Jiménez 2007).

It is important to focus on the assimilation of the contemporary immigrant population in terms that can be clearly understood and measured. Because the public has been exposed to works like Huntington's (2004) that deter them from supporting current immigration because of its claim that the Mexican case is cause for concern, there needs to be a clear understanding of what sociologists and scholars in general are using to measure facets of incorporation.

Contemporary scholars have described assimilation “as a type of incorporation process” (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown, Bean and Rumbaut 2006). In the rest of this paper, we will use the term *incorporation* to mean the same as assimilation did for earlier waves of immigration. This research will focus on economic and political incorporation because each is a marker of general incorporation. This research is important because there is a lack of empirical work on the relationship these two markers may have for immigrant incorporation (Bean and Stevens 2003). Economic incorporation is the process by which immigrants converge with the native-born in various aspects of economic status (Bean and Stevens 2003). For the purposes of this study, I will look at how homeownership relates to the likelihood of naturalization. Homeownership, or more precisely home equity, is a direct indicator of economic incorporation because for the average American, it is their major source of wealth (Myers 2007). That’s why it is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation.

Political incorporation is another marker of immigrant incorporation because the right to vote, willingness to pay taxes and naturalization are all viewed as indicators of American-ness (Bloemraad 2006). Immigrants must make decisions that change their identity, rights and privileges that they once saw as unchangeable before they choose to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006). To naturalize involves swearing to uphold the rules and governance of the receiving country and it gives individuals the right to vote and carry a U.S. passport. It should also change the way immigrants are perceived by their neighbors, because it makes foreignness a difficult label to apply to naturalized citizens who now have the same rights and responsibilities as the general populace (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). Naturalization is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation because it helps facilitate their parallel existence with the general population and their political incorporation into the receiving country. Both

homeownership and naturalization as markers of incorporation are important because what continues to be debated about contemporary immigration is “the degree to which newcomers affect and are affected” by the fabric of American life, and it’s expected that immigrant minorities become ever more indistinguishable from natives, at least after several generations” (Bean and Stevens 2003; Susan 2006; Jiménez 2010). To choose to be an American through naturalization and becoming a homeowner are important ways in which immigrants put down roots.

The theories on incorporation continue to differ from each other and the founding literature on assimilation therefore it is appropriate to indicate that there is yet a given formula for immigrant incorporation. When you read Gordon’s (1964) formula on immigrant assimilation which reflects a more uni-dimensional process, immigrants are intrinsically expected to absorb the mainstream or native way of life. Whereas, when you look at contemporary works, such as Bean and Stevens’ (2003), you see a multi-dimensional process, or a concise depiction of how immigrants and natives give and take from each other as both incorporate one another. It remains unresolved, however, whether incorporation is a uni-dimensional process as classic assimilation theory implies (Gordon 1964), or a multi-dimensional process as most of its variants like ethnic disadvantage, segmented assimilation and selective acculturation theories suggest (Zhou 1999; Alba and Nee 2003), when they note that it has different components that may move in fits and starts, rather than together (Bean and Stevens 2003). If the former process, uni-dimensional incorporation, predominates then different components of incorporation would all move together as a result of one main underlying process—the general diffuse dynamic of gradually becoming more and more involved in the American mainstream as a consequence of greater exposure over time to the destination society

(Gordon 1964). If it's the latter process that predominates, however, then the implication is that the different components do not all merely derive from exposure to underlying "Americanization", but rather are separate factors whose occurrence may often reinforce other components over time and across generations (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean et al 2009). This admits of the possibility that a given separate component might exert its own force and have an independent effect on another component. In short, the overall process could be either facilitated or arrested by the presence or absence respectively of a given incorporation sub-component which would be affecting another either positively or negatively. And for the purpose of this paper, I am arguing that homeownership as a marker for economic incorporation; could be the sub-component that may affect the likelihood of naturalizing for Mexican-immigrants.

NATURALIZATION AS AN INDICATOR OF POLITICAL INCORPORATION

This paper will conceptualize naturalization as an aspect of political incorporation. Naturalization is a form of political incorporation because once naturalized an individual can more fully participate in a society as a citizen with full membership status (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). Making the decision to change citizenship may be difficult, especially when one belongs to a group whose members often seem unwelcome in the United States. Naturalization not only may impart a sense of belonging, it confers the formal the right to political participation and formal irreproachable legal status. According to Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul (2008), citizenship can be disaggregated into four components: legal status, rights, political participation and a sense of belonging. What could be more symbolic for an individual that has left a long-time home country, hoping to return some day, than to make another nation their home, as represented by legal citizenship? Naturalizing thus helps make a

new place of residence meaningful, through deciding to stay by making membership legal and binding. To naturalize for some means no longer being stateless or in limbo, like a common saying among Mexican immigrants implies; “*ni de aquí ni de allá*” - *neither from here nor from there*, a virtual state of social, political and identity limbo-- a saying that tells of the uncertainty that the undocumented, legal residents, the naturalized and even later generations also face when they do not have a sense of connectedness to mainstream U.S. or Mexico’s ways of life.

For many, naturalizing is a process they began when they decided to migrate north to the country that offered better opportunities than the place they previously knew as home. And to put down roots through naturalization should benefit an immigrant’s life chances, both social and economic, not to mention political, for now they can vote (Van Hook, Brown and Bean 2006). Citizenship rights and responsibilities are further guaranteed once naturalized because being American carries social, political and especially economic opportunity. By naturalizing, immigrants begin [or continue] to cross social boundaries (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). For Americans someone becoming a naturalized citizen legitimizes residency as well as existence on U.S. soil (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). Naturalization also has other benefits, such as helping move immigrants out of the second-class status (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). It offers increased job opportunities, like government positions through exams that are only open to them if they are citizens (Motomura 2006). Education funding such as scholarships and fellowships, many times, are only open to citizens, not legal immigrants or otherwise. And because integration or incorporation is enhanced, especially the longer immigrants are residents; becoming naturalized helps build up to full membership and equality in their new destinations. Once naturalized, immigrants continue to narrow the difference between themselves and the native born leading to further incorporation (Bloemraad, Korteweg and

Yurdekul 2008) and possibly also homeownership. When Americans and immigrants think of home, they contemplate homeownership, seeing it as an integral part of the American dream. It seems intuitive for Americans and immigrants to name homeownership as a goal.

HOMEOWNERSHIP AS AN INDICATOR OF INCORPORATION

For the purpose of this paper, I will conceptualize homeownership as a marker of economic incorporation. That homeownership reflects economic incorporation is indicated by its varying positively with income attainment. In the short run, homeownership also permits entree to better neighborhoods, and provides a sense of rootedness for those with owner-occupied homes. Furthermore, homeownership symbolizes commitment to the neighborhood and city and by extension, the country. In the long term, homeownership promotes wealth accumulation through mortgage tax breaks, credit incentives and growth in equity. More generally, the American Dream is constantly quoted as a reason why homeownership is important to Americans. Early U.S. laws set landownership as a requirement for the right to vote (Rohe and Watson 2007). Homeownership is thus deeply rooted in American culture. Even now, owning a home rewards people with a “stake in society”. Homeownership is thus often taken as an indicator of progress for individuals and for society in general (Rohe and Watson 2007). Homeowners are considered full-fledged and connected members of American communities with generally greater access to local information and amenities (Guest et. al 2006), as well as respected taxpaying or contributing member of society status.

Homeownership is likely to be linked to a variety of indicators of incorporation. English ability and length of residency in the United States are correlated with homeownership net of the usual measures of age, income and household composition (Alba and Logan 1991; Krivo 1995;

Clark 2003; Myers 2007). In turn, English ability and length of residency are associated with economic mobility through higher wages. Greater incomes, together with English ability and other forms of sociocultural incorporation, provide immigrants access to ever higher-status neighborhoods (Alba and Logan 1999; Clark 2003; Light 2006) than what renters have access to. Renters, especially immigrants, have greater access to multi-unit housing that is usually in overcrowded neighborhoods in urban zones that offer underfunded schooling and neglected streets and public services. Thus, homeownership may lead immigrants to better opportunities for themselves and their families.

INCORPORATION: THE MEXICAN CASE

The debate over the assimilation of the Mexican-origin population has recently intensified. Its focus on such topics as language acquisition and economic incorporation continues (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002; Bean and Stevens 2003; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006). Though the stereotype is that language acquisition among persons of Mexican-origin lags behind other immigrant groups, studies show that most Mexican-origin persons lose their native and parents' language at the same rate or faster than their European counterparts of the early 20th century (Bean and Stevens 2003; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006). However, the educational attainment of Mexican-origin persons continues to lag behind that of non-Hispanic whites (Brown 2006). As of 2000, the average years of schooling for non-Hispanic white males was 13.5, and for Mexican immigrant males it was 8.4 (Bean and Stevens 2003). This in fact helps explain the income gap between non-Hispanic whites and Mexican-origin persons. According to Bean and Stevens (2003), Mexican male immigrants' hourly wages are 51.6 % lower than those of non-Hispanic white men. This gap leads to the idea that for many Mexican-

origin persons, American goals, especially homeownership, are far from reach, because without money, little is possible. Most importantly what the income and educational gap indicate for the Mexican-origin population is that their income attainment surpasses their educational attainment. This is of substantive importance because the income attainment for this population is several percentage points what is expected when educational attainment is considered. Therefore, there is room for optimism for the Mexican immigrant population, because if they make more money than would be expected according to their level of education, other positive outlooks may be at play, as well.

Less educational attainment, less income than their native counterparts, and sometimes a less than welcoming environment could lead Mexican-origin persons to flee the U.S. However, the opposite is true. More often, circular migration is turning into immigrant settlement (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002; Light 2006; Bean and Lowell 2007) where the individuals that once came for seasonal work and then returned home every year now stay for year-round work and residence. Why do so many people of this group choose to set up residence in the U.S.? Because many immigrants do return home as planned, and then find themselves comparing their U.S. existence with their home country's reality, they often decide to return to the U.S. This is because the reality of disparity that sent them on the Russian roulette of migration northward through deserts and unwelcomed terrain continued the same during their absence. And the U.S., with finance companies, credit options and education looks better than the nation they hold dear. Among the perks that the U.S. has to offer is free primary education for children and affordable secondary options for even working adults, something not as readily available in Mexico. Because with more education, higher income levels are possible, and higher income levels lead to social investments. Social investments come in the form of growing social

networks, leisure time, leading to blending in to the mainstream and enhancing financial well-being. All of these are facilitated if you have your own space. Something that is valued in Mexico just as much as it is in the U.S. is homeownership, having a place to call home, share family moments, and show that they are a contributing member of society.

MEXICAN IMMIGRANT HOMEOWNERSHIP

The Mexican-born population, in the U.S., has a homeownership rate of 47.3 percent which is about 27 percentage points less than that for non-Hispanic whites (Borjas 2002; Lee et al. 2004). According to James and Atilés (2008), Hispanic households are more likely than non-Hispanic households to be actively saving for the purchase of a home (James and Atilés 2008). While homeownership is part of the American Dream it is part of the dream of immigrants to other countries as well. According to Bourassa (1994), immigrants are “at least as and sometimes more ‘Australian’ than the Australian-born population” in regards to accomplishing the “Australian dream of homeownership.” This could signify that for some immigrants, homeownership (or landownership) was already in their sights or goals before they arrived.

However, Hispanic immigrants may not be able to purchase homes as often as native without pooling resources (Light 2006; Hernandez 2007). Myers, Megbolugbe and Lee (1998), found that unless they accounted for immigrant families doubling up in single family homes, they would underestimate immigrant males’ probability of becoming homeowners. Study after study finds that homeownership is of value to Hispanic immigrants and especially to Mexican immigrants and their descendants (Myers, Megbolugbe and Lee 1998). However, the length of time by which they reach their neighborhood goal is different mostly because of socioeconomic

status and family obligations that postpone homeownership for children that contribute to parent households (Brown 2007).

Many immigrant households are comprised of extended families that pool funds to own one home. This is the way that immigrant homeowners overcome obstacles, such as requirements of lending institutions, lack of credit or citizenship and limited buying power (Hernández 2007; Massey 2010 and 2011). Immigrants strategize by using their social networks to overcome homeownership barriers (Hernández 2007). Among the strategies that immigrants turn to is converting single-family homes into multi-family homes by restructuring the house to accommodate more people (Light 2006). This sometimes leads to converting garages to apartments, adding make-shift or un-permitted rooms and sections to existing dwellings. This practice is common in lower to middle class sections of receiving cities, where people struggle to make mortgage or rent payments, or sometimes do as an entrepreneurial endeavor. Such practices also facilitate the purchase of an additional property by the group or individuals who are cohabitating, a common practice in immigrant communities (Light 2006). Cohabitating and pooling funds may also be a necessity for the Mexican origin, because areas of Hispanic concentration tend to be more expensive than other cities (Light 2006; Massey 2011).

MEXICAN IMMIGRANT NATURALIZATION RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Because of legal status and or low wage employment, newly arriving Mexican migrants tend to stay in coethnic neighborhoods (Brown 2007). The children of the latter, the 1.5 and second generation, are more likely to seek out less coethnic neighborhoods, but due to such things as family obligations and economic restraints, they remain in coethnic areas, such as East Los Angeles. However, later generations do seem to be on their way to spatial integration

(Brown 2007). This can be attributed to higher levels of income and education, as well as English acquisition (Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006). That may be a result of later generations' becoming not only more spatially assimilated, but possibly more culturally assimilated as well. Therefore, Mexican immigrants who purchase homes in the U.S. are consciously *echando raíces*, or *putting down roots*, to continue their lives as new Americans. This practice is likely to be connected to naturalization because, those who are homeowners and are not naturalized, may opt to become naturalized in part to make their investment safer, because if naturalized they would enjoy improved access to jobs and thus be less likely to lose their home and monetary investment.

In addition, the very act of putting down roots and investing in a community may encourage greater psychological investment in the country as a whole. The existing literature places Mexican migrants, who see their stay in the U.S. as transitory instead of fixed, at odds with their legal status. Because the door back home has been shut, according to Zolberg (2006) and Massey (2010), many are left with no other option than to sit in limbo while the immigration debate continues. Therefore, as the individual remains in limbo, so does their view of home, set in the homeland. Yet, the reality remains that Mexican immigrants have chosen to purchase homes, even when in legal limbo. It could be simply because they are becoming more incorporated in general as more time passes and thus as they become more able to afford it, they increasingly buy homes as well as increasingly naturalize. This is in essence the unidimensional general assimilation hypothesis which envisions the entire process as rather passive in nature.

But the American Dream of homeownership and what it means to Mexican migrants according to the literature leads to the overall conclusion that immigrants in general, but Mexican migrants and their descendants, specifically, will more actively choose to purchase

homes to better their overall well-being (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Homebuyers are more likely to be seen as functioning and contributing members of society as a whole. They buy a home in part to become American (Hernández 2007). By paying taxes, building community and sharing cultural values, they are seeking to enhance the accumulation of social and cultural capital. Much the same active dynamic may characterize naturalization. A legal resident that hopes to or already owns a home in the U.S. will be more likely to invest in becoming a naturalized citizen in order to complete the process of such accumulation, which I here describe with the phrase “putting down roots”. This suggests becoming naturalized helps *finalize the deal*, because in the mind of most immigrants, legal residents or not, and for the federal government, being a naturalized citizen affords more opportunities and rights to civically participate in the U.S. I also expect that since the life course phenomena will likely apply, as people get older the likelihood of naturalization and homeownership will increase.

For all of these reasons, naturalization and homeownership should be positively related among Mexican immigrants. However, this positive relationship could derive from the general diffuse underlying process of “Americanization” implied by classic assimilation theory, or it could derive from the fact that the more active pursuit of homeownership operates independently and contributes also to the active pursuit of naturalization. I hypothesize the latter. I can assess the adequacy of a more active multi-dimensional incorporation perspective by examining what happens to the positive homeownership and naturalization relationship when income and time in the country are held constant. If the classic assimilation hypothesis underlies the relationship, the association should be more attributable to how long people have lived in the U.S., and the relationship should disappear when income and duration of residence are controlled. This argument exists because according to the basic premise of classic assimilation, the longer a

person is in the country, the more likely they are to resemble the native-born in practice and understanding. But if the relationship is not merely a product of the general assimilation processes, it should also vary as a function of other factors and not disappear when basic exposure is held constant.

DATA AND METHODS

This cross-tabulation test, helps one look at this data and relationship in basic form. I operationalized homeownership as the independent variable, because I expect that it is an adequate variable that will help us see if a basic pattern exists, persists and remains after controls have been added. I operationalized naturalization as the dependent variable, because I wanted to test under what conditions it existed and if those that were homeowners were more likely or not, to naturalize. I look at this possible relationship due to the nature of homeownership and naturalization. The fact that homeownership is possible, if you have the money, at any time during your tenure in the U.S. is undeniable. However, you cannot naturalize as a Mexican immigrant, unless you meet certain criteria; time in the country, time as an LPR and meet other criteria, including passing criminal records check. Therefore, homeownership in theory is easier to ascertain than naturalization.

I chose to look at census year 2000, because this census year includes individuals who became LPR during IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986), and who in 2000 were eligible to naturalize due to the minimum of 5 year requirement set forth as the threshold for naturalizing. *Relation to head of household* was used in order to identify those individuals who self-identified as the head of household. This was done in order to identify individual households, instead of individuals who reported other statuses. I chose to control for *age* and

recode it, in order to only look at those of working age (25-64) in order to get a better sense of what those of working age are accomplishing. Finally, the variable *years in U.S.* was recoded as *reslength*, in order to look at the patterns, if any according to duration of residence in the U.S.

FINDINGS

In Table 1, the percent of U.S. Mexican-born heads of household's naturalization and homeownership status. Mexican-origin homeowners do exhibit a higher relative prevalence of naturalization. Homeowners (44.6%) are more likely than non-homeowners (21.6%) to be naturalized. Therefore, the results are consistent with the general hypothesis with which the research began, that homeownership and naturalization would show a positive association.

Next, when we examine the relationship by length of stay to see if the relationship disappears, when controlling for this factor. An association between homeownership and naturalization still remains. The basic pattern of a positive association does not disappear, as is evident in Table 2. Persons who have lived in the country 14 years or less (short-timers) who are also homeowners (24.4%) are more likely than non-homeowners (10.1) to naturalize. For those in the country 15 years or longer (long-timers), we find that homeowners (51.7%) are also more likely than non-homeowners (35.2) to naturalize. This leads me to the conclusion that the relationship between homeownership and naturalization does not appear to follow the classic assimilation idea, because even when we control for length of stay, the pattern remains. Moreover, this pattern is slightly higher for those who have resided in the U.S. for shorter periods of time than those that have been in the country longer (Table 2).

In short, the explicit pursuit of homeownership and naturalization occurs rather quickly for some Mexicans (the short-timers), which is the opposite of what one would expect if these

actions were substantially the consequence of the more passive exposure process implied by classic assimilation. Therefore, the implications of unidimensional incorporation theory do not seem to solely characterize the Mexican immigrant incorporation experience, at least as far as this research is concerned. These preliminary findings may thus contribute to the development of incorporation theories that are more variegated in their processes than the founding assimilation model which argues that assimilation will happen in somewhat set patterns, and more specifically will be primarily driven by exposure to the native-born population (Gordon 1964). Because these findings indicate that even those that have been in the country for a shorter period of time present slightly higher rates of naturalization and homeownership, the premise that exposure to the native-born population is mostly driving their homeownership and naturalization rates is called into question and must be further researched.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis lead away from the classical assimilation model, which says that exposure will account for assimilation trends moving at more or less the same pace. Instead at least in this study, and more precisely for the Mexican-origin immigrant group, homeownership and naturalization do show a positive correlation, but one that does not go away when we control for length of stay. This is an exploratory analysis, the purpose of which it is to investigate the relationship between two facets of incorporation, a political and an economic one, naturalization and homeownership respectively. The findings thus do not constitute a complete investigation, but rather a first approximation of the nature of the relationship that homeownership and naturalization have among the Mexican-origin. We can also assume that because this pattern is not totally consistent with the classical assimilation model, that these

findings can lead us to ask, what else can be explained by these patterns of homeownership and naturalization?

Future research could look at what factors lead an individual who is not familiar with the American dream or the citizenship perks of homeownership to purchase a home in the U.S. Against all odds, could this be due to something other than simple exposure? What if instead of purchasing homes in the U.S. in order to further well-being in this country, Mexican migrants and their descendants were buying homes because becoming a landowner or homeowner is something that was valued by them or their ancestors in Mexico, before they even knew what opportunities for achieving well-being in this country were? Would this change the way that we as a culture see our own ideals, or would this help us to accept that people that come here do in fact come with preexisting positive cultural attributes, regardless of legal status?

Table 1.1. Percent of U.S. Mexican-Born Heads of Household that are Naturalized by Homeowner Status

	Naturalized	Non-Naturalized	Total
Homeowners	44.6	55.5	100
Non-Homeowners	21.6	78.4	100
N	39,097	82,778	121, 875

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010)

Table 1.2. Percent of U.S. Mexican Heads of Household who have Naturalized by Homeownership and Duration of Residence

Duration		Naturalized	Non-Naturalized	Total
Short-Timers	Homeowner	24.4	75.6	100
5-14 years	Non-Homeowner	10.1	89.9	100
Long-Timers	Homeowner	51.7	48.3	100
15+ years	Non-Homeowner	35.2	64.8	100

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=121,875

CHAPTER 2

ACHIEVING THE AMERICAN DREAM: MEXICAN IMMIGRANT HOMEOWNERSHIP, NATURALIZATION AND ETHNO-RACIAL IDENTITY

This chapter examines relationships among homeownership, naturalization and ethno-racial identity for Mexican immigrant heads of household at the national level via quantitative analysis. I present statistical models that look at the implications home ownership and tenure have for the incorporation of the Mexican immigrant population using Census data. The current literatures on immigrant homeownership (Coulson 1999; Painter, Gabriel, and Myers, 2001; Yu and Myers, 2007), immigrant household (Fisher, 1959, 1976; Grigsby and Rosenburg, 1975; Baer, 1990), migration status and naturalization have not looked at these as interconnected facets of incorporation for Mexican immigrants. This chapter contributes to the Mexican immigrant incorporation literature (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003; Myers 2007) because it assesses the nature and kind of relationships and direction that homeownership, naturalization (Dahlin and Hironaka 2008) and ethno-racial identification have for Mexican families living in the U.S. and the pace of their incorporation as compared to their European counterparts at the earlier part of the last century (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003).

The examination of immigrant incorporation among Mexicans living in the United States is investigated here by focusing on three key aspects of the American Dream; homeownership, naturalization and racial identity (identifying as white). I use U.S. census data from IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series- Census data for social and economic research) (Ruggles et. al 2010) to address my general question, of the extent to which these key aspects of incorporation increase with length of time in the U.S. Based on a classical assimilation theoretical perspective, I expect that greater time spent in the country will increase material well-

being and thereby increase the likelihood of these facets of incorporation. Beyond this, I expect that once I take out the time component, the connection among these variables will remain, and because the force of the American dream component surpasses that of other aspects of incorporation if (as indexed by homeownership) will exist independently of the other.

In terms of identity in the U.S. context, “whitening” or assimilation hypotheses imply that Americanizing and incorporating are not only synonymous, but also interchangeable because the more you blend in, or are considered a *blank* slate in terms of ethnicity, the quicker you may *blend* with the native-born or become accepted as simply American. In American terms this blankness may also be understood as symbolic ethnicity. Symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) is the way in which Americans who otherwise are viewed by others as simply American, express their ethnic identity. This ethnic identity is an optional expression of national origin and cultural meanings.

The incorporation of Mexican immigrants may be affected by various proactive practices, such as purchasing a home, mimicking American housing patterns (Brown 2006; Aguis Vallejo 2012), attaining citizenship and identifying in American racial terms. One of my arguments is that those who understand how to navigate American bureaucracies are more likely to begin the whitening, blending, incorporating, assimilating or Americanizing, I argue that these terms are synonymous for the focus of this study. Mexican immigrants proactively seeking to legalize their status, seek naturalization, while proactively also aiming to become homeowners can be seen as proactive practices I view as facets of incorporation.

While these facets of incorporation have been investigated by scholars as markers of incorporation, they have not been investigated as interconnected and as involving both objective and subjective elements. I hypothesize that because homeownership is more easily attained than

naturalization (it does not involve as many bureaucratic hurdles and the same time constraints), immigrants will proactively seek homeownership before naturalization. And when an immigrant becomes a homeowner their relationships with American bureaucracies is likely to lead them to next steps, such as legalization or naturalization. I will further posit that naturalization has a similar relationship with whiteness, where those that naturalize are on the road to whiteness or Americanizing, and those that are experiencing whiteness or Americanization will be more likely to naturalize. The contemporary wave of immigration has not strayed from the previous waves' practices of learning how and what American mainstream society values and identifies with. For one, Immigrants to the U.S., past and present, have quickly learned how to distance themselves from negatively perceived groups or groups that are viewed as unassimilable, such as the black community, and build upon the social expectations of the American mainstream while enabling their boundaries with whiteness to begin to blur (Alba and Nee 2003; Lee and Bean 2010). Although this may seem over-simplified, it is something that scholars have found in research time and time again (Alba and Nee 2003; Lee and Bean 2010).

In examining relationships among homeownership, naturalization and ethno-racial identification as aspects of immigrant incorporation, I will show how facets of incorporation are interconnected using census data. Census data is essential to this research because it contains very large numbers of observations that are helpful in ascertaining relationships among variables for this population. I will also provide theoretical reasons for my arguments about multiple facets of incorporation, and how these multiple facets are interconnected in terms of contemporary immigration. I pose that these relationships are interconnected conditionally and contingent upon other factors. For example, naturalization leads those that naturalize to feel as though they deserve and have earned their stay in the U.S., leading to a more proactive citizenry

due to a sense of membership and belonging. While homeowners have something invested in staying and putting down and strengthening their roots in the U.S. With the growing number of Mexicans naturalizing and becoming homeowners, this study is of much importance and contributes to the ongoing literature on the incorporation of this contemporary immigrant group.

In the past, groups that were at first identified as unassimilable, like the Irish, Italian, and German were able to lose their foreignness, gain whiteness; or access symbolic ethnicity by making their otherness disappear (Gans 1999; Bean and Stevens 2003; Jimenez 2008). These groups are now able to use their symbolic ethnicity card (Gans 1999) because their American identity is no longer questioned and their ethnicity has blended into the American fabric. Now it is safe to say that there are Irish descendants that have no connection to their Irish ancestry, and that there are those that continue to identify as Irish. It is possible to find people that are third or fourth-generation who have Irish last names and Irish ancestors who do not view themselves as being ethnically Irish and at the same time find those that do continue to identify as being Irish. The counter argument for the Mexican case is that so far, those of Mexican ancestry that either have Spanish surnames or have Mexican phenotypes cannot make a choice about their ethnic card (Jimenez 2008). They are still understood to be and expected to be Mexican and this may owe to the “ongoing replenishment by Mexican immigrants” (Jimenez 2008). Thus, those Mexicans who have been here longest may not subjectively show higher levels of whiteness than those who have been here shorter lengths of time.

According to Warner and Srole (1945) for example, European immigrants that shared some of the same characteristics as contemporary immigrant groups, such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, assimilation was expected to take one to six generations. This, however, is not what Americans in general seem to think when they express an urgency for

contemporary immigrants to assimilate. According to Jiménez (2009), these nativist concerns seem to overlook the fact that the continued flow of immigration may slow the apparent assimilation of the Mexican-origin population in general, regardless of time in the U.S. Other scholars, such as Bean and Stevens (2003), Brown (2007) and Lee and Bean (2010), for example, consider the Mexican population on track towards incorporation; in part because they show intermarriage rates that greatly surpass the country's historically largest minority population, African-Americans. Their hypothesis of delayed incorporation is more consistent with the empirical evidence and serves to better tie together both classical assimilation and contemporary incorporation theories, because it accounts for both the contemporary post-industrial migration of today, and the structures of the assimilation model of yesterday.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: BACKGROUND

Worldwide migration has different driving forces behind it. If we consider that most migration occurs between countries that have previous economic and political relationships (Bean and Stevens 2003), we can further expect this flow to be continuous (Bean and Lowell 2007), especially when there is an exchange of labor for goods (Portes 1999), both of which have become dependent on each other (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002).

Massey et al. (1998), new economics of migration theorists, sum up international migration as economic patterns that create, drive, and reward migration. Their empirical evidence suggests international migration is being driven by different factors that can be interconnected or self-contained. They present how the Mexican case is driven by multiple factors which include the economic dependence that the Mexican government has on the U.S.'s labor needs. They also identify the dependency at the individual level, meaning the household,

to send a member of the household to the U.S. to solve an immediate financial burden, build wealth, or make a purchase (such as equipment or land).

Massey et al. (1998), also analyze the dependency of developing economies on U.S. remittances. They found that remittances may be a strong driving force, but not one that alone drives continuous migration. They consider this finding to be problematic because the data is a self-reported use of remittances from people all over the world who receive migradollars. This self-reported use of migradollars is what Massey et al. (1998), use to analyze the question of, if there is a preference for circulatory migration, for immediate and quick relief to the household, or if the dependency of those who stay, for the migradollars, are who keep those who migrate motivated to stay.

In the case of Mexican migration, Massey et al. (1998), find that Mexicans on average report migrating to the U.S. more commonly to send money back home for instant relief, rather than for investment for the betterment of the household. In addition, these migrants migrate with plans to Mexico to make use of their migradollars (Massey et al. 1998). However, Massey et al. (1998), findings indicate that migradollars are used less for development or investment and more for extending everyday comforts. They further find that households in Mexico report using the migradollars to buy land for construction (and not for agricultural uses), add on to existing dwellings and purchase commodities such as televisions, motor vehicles and other personal items (Massey et al. 1998).

Massey et al. (1998) do not view the purchase of real estate as a form of investment, whether purchased in the U.S. or in Mexico. However, in both countries, purchasing real estate is not something that is easy to do, without money. Therefore, migrating to the U.S. for labor migrants may be a form of investment in their futures, and the purchase of real estate as an

investment made with their earnings. Massey et al. (1998) should not altogether discredit this practice, as it entails more than just wasted time and monies. And purchasing real estate does not provide an instant extension of everyday comforts, but helps provide for a more secure future, both in Mexican and U.S. contexts as renting rather than owning your own home in both countries is cause for stigma.

Other immigration scholars argue that there are economic and demographic contexts that help explain the continuous flow of migration to the U.S. (Bean and Stevens 2003). Bean and Stevens (2003) discuss and present a dynamic model that can be applied to the continuous flow of migration to the U.S. by various groups, but more specifically Mexicans (Bean and Stevens 2003). They argue that Mexico and the U.S. have a reciprocal relationship, where both countries need to not only accept, but engage in strengthening their relationship for the benefit of both nations, specifically for immigration reform. They establish the long history that Mexico and the U.S. share when it comes to the exchange of labor for goods (Bean and Stevens 2003). Bean and Stevens (2003), also find that Mexico continues to be the low-skilled labor source of replenishment for the U.S. Their work portrays an increasing number of undocumented entries to the U.S., with the Mexican-born population exhibiting lower unemployment rates than African-Americans. Some of the causes of this continuous flow of Mexican migration may include the weak Mexican economy (Bean and Stevens 2003), which is seeing its traditionally agricultural lands and laborers displaced because of NAFTA (Zolberg 2006).

Bean and Stevens (2003) also see the purchase of real estate as a sign that the migrant is doing relatively well enough to save enough to purchase real estate. They see this purchase as a sign that the migrant is doing well economically. Both Bean and Stevens (2003) and Massey et al. (1998) agree that social capital theory is applicable as the creation of a new resource and that

migration perpetuates itself as more and more related people to someone migrate to the U.S. This creates a network and leads to a more conducive road to migration (Massey et al. 1998; Bean and Stevens 2003).

Portes and Rumbaut (2006), who are segmented labour market theorists, state that most contemporary migration is only a byproduct of globalization and the deregulation of various markets. They also state that as more and more jobs in the developed world are service industry jobs, these jobs need to be filled and usually even those at the bottom of the strata in the first world don't want these jobs (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). In the U.S., you have stigma and other social pressures that keep Americans from taking service sector jobs, where as in European countries and some Asian countries you have the issue of a decreasing working age population. Therefore, there are more opportunities for those from the third world to migrate to the U.S. (Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Pessar (1999) argues that the role of gender, households and social networks in the migration process are important factors recently incorporated into the theories of international and contemporary migration. She posits that those that are chosen by the household to migrate to the U.S., maintain communication in their sending countries, and this leads to various kinds of social networks being developed that serve both different and parallel purposes. She further argues that these social networks help buffer the constraints of migration for those that stay behind and those that migrate. She explains that in the receiving nation, men used to be recruited by other men to work in the same occupation or workplace. Pessar (1999), states that social network theory is not a new phenomenon, but a more complex migration theory that encompasses an engendered approach to immigration.

Schiller (1999), states that transnational migration and the role of the nation-states in the flows of migration are integral to the understanding of why people migrate. Transnationalism presents the immigrant experience as dynamic and salient. This theory places the immigrant as having more choices for connection to their sending nations. The immigrant is not living in only one place, but because of technology and the drive that immigrants have, they are able to successfully communicate and maintain social and political ties in their sending and receiving countries (Schiller 1999). She describes the lives of immigrants that are pulled and pushed to migrate, and explains how some of these contexts of immigration affect the lives of the migrants and their families. She explains that families who maintain constant communication with their loved ones' who have migrated, have a less stressful experience than those that do not (Schiller 1999).

MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, A HETEROGENOUS GROUP

There have been four waves of migration to the U.S. from Mexico (Zolberg 2006). The first was the smallest and occurred at the beginning of the 20th century during the Mexican revolution. The railroad bank rolled by the U.S. government that criss-crossed Mexico and connected it to American railroads is also thought to have helped propel this migration . The second wave was the migration created by the Bracero Program (1942-1964) which led to the onset of circulatory migration during and preceding the end of the program. The third took place in the late 60's through the late 70's and is thought be an extension of the previous with less circulatory migration and more settlement taking place. The fourth and final wave of migration from Mexico is precipitated by extensive and far reaching neo-liberal economic practices of the

U.S. (Massey et.al. 1998) and took place during the early 90's through the year 2000, although some argue that it is slowed but ongoing (Massey 2011).

With each of these waves came an increase in the size of the migration. Wave one is believed to have been more self-selection of migration, with wave two seeing more selective labor handpicked by agribusiness interests. Wave three is found to be a mix between Push-Pull and Neo-liberal economic factors and wave four is less arguably propelled by Neo-liberal economic factors; although this is argued by some as being the factor affecting all four waves.

It is easy to look over the within group differences that Mexican immigrants reveal. There are those that make up the majority, migrants from rural areas who also known as misplaced agricultural workers. Then there are those migrants from urban settings that come with backgrounds in service industries, domestic work and manufacturing. The third and less numerous, are migrants that are high skilled and those that are highly educated, they are usually also from urban zones.

I think it is important to understand that although this work may seem to oversimplify the Mexican immigrant experience and at times pose generalizations, it is by no means because I believe that this population is homogeneous. I understand that there are those individuals and families that hold dear ultra-conservative catholic and Christian beliefs, and although it is a smaller proportion there are: Christians, Jews, Mormons and other religions represented within the Mexican immigrant population. Those with strong and ultra-conservative beliefs are usually ignored or overlooked by some Americans and the Media. The media tends to present the case that Mexicans in general are permissive parents that either encourage or generally accept gang activity, general criminality, teenage and adult promiscuity. When for the most part, Mexican

families are shamed by having children who are gang members, criminals, teenage parents and in some cases parents and communities turn their backs on these *mores* violators. In fact, religion is quite important to most Mexican immigrants as they lay their lives down crossing borders and living on the fringes and so they label their work and lives “as paying a debt,” or “*pagando una manda,*” to God or a saint (Levitt 2007). Their actions and those of their families are viewed as Godly contributions to their well-beings (Levitt 2007). It is quite common for parents to shun and kick out their daughters, at any age, for getting pregnant: the most popular reaction is to turn over a minor daughter to the parents of the minor boyfriend or to the adult boyfriend. This is a way of turning over the shame, and transferring the shame to another family. These for honor actions are shared with other cultures and religions (Levitt 2007).

There are also more liberal Mexican immigrants who are more tolerant, comfortable or accepting of promiscuity and street life for their children (Levitt 2007). And within the Mexican immigrant group these parents are believed to be permissive, Americanized parents, or *padres Americanizados*. An interesting take since most Americans do not perceive Mexicans in general to be Americanized much less would most Americans accept that those who are permissive parents are more so Americanized over those parents who are strict or conservative. This liberal Mexican immigrant can also sometimes be suffering from the guilt of knowing that their jobs and strides toward a better life for their families leave their children exposed to a world that they don't know and can't control. This type of parent is known in child development as *permissive*, whereas the aforementioned parent had an *authoritative* or *authoritarian* parenting style. Mexican immigrants are a heterogeneous group, much like Americans. Americans speak different dialects dependent on geographical location and they have different motivations and

class statuses, much the same are Mexican immigrants. Although the previous may seem like a deviation from the current project, it is a necessary description of the population I study.

The Mexican-Immigrant Narrative

This scholarship argues that most Mexican immigrants, especially those that migrated with circulatory migration or return plans, see themselves as returning to Mexico someday (Bean and Stevens 2007), *algun dia* therefore some will altogether avoid partaking in American ways of life that they see as unnecessary (Myers 2007). These individuals will not learn English, may not buy homes, and they may not invest time in to their children's education. They purposefully avoid setting down roots. Their homeownership will happen in Mexico, their children (even American-born children) acculturated in Mexican cultural forms and view the U.S. as a pastime, and American ways of life are ridiculed: from the standpoint of the Mexico that the immigrants romantically idealize but left behind (Light 2007). The Mexico that the immigrants idealize will be front and center in their ways of life: from religion, to cultural practices, all the while avoiding American ways of life. It is not difficult to meet individuals who were born in the U.S. to Mexican-born parents who returned to Mexico and lived there for a few years. Only a few years, generally, because the parents ran out of money and had to return to the U.S. or returned to the U.S. because the parents realized that their children had better opportunities awaiting them if they returned to the U.S. (Light 2007).

When this reality sets in, children must play catch up on American ways of life. Immigrants realize that their children and the immigrants themselves do not have much to look forward to in the Mexico that they idealized, because the reasons why they had to leave, still exist, economic opportunity is null and is not offering their children the best in form of education or opportunity, and much less economic returns. These "forgotten" realities, unintentionally

serve to “slow down” the incorporation of the immigrant and their children in to American ways of life. Mexican immigrants, similar to other immigrants and ethnic minorities, value interdependence and collectivism (Zolberg 2006; Bean and Stevens 2006; Brown 2007). On the other hand, most Americans, including later-generations value individualism in their cultural practices and repertoire. Mexicans in general seem to be synonymous with family, with marriage rates higher than other groups (Lee and Bean 2011), through activities that reflect on group interdependence (Brown 2007). Homeownership, naturalization, and social class climbing also fall under the scope of this value system. Mexican immigrants’ are found to value and argue that persons with goals will achieve those goals if and only if, they collectively create and reach those goals (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002).

Context of Mexican Immigrant Reception

When scholars posit the contexts of reception and future implications for the current immigrant groups, they consider homeownership as only related to economic attainment, naturalization related to political incorporation and ethno-racial identification to sociocultural incorporation in terms of the U.S. fixed understanding of race. I am interested in looking at how homeownership, naturalization and ethno-racial identification may change and alter, as well as be related to overall immigrant incorporation. I will use data from the U.S. decennial census (1960-2010) to find out if and how homeownership, naturalization and ethno-racial identification affect, and have changed the ways in which Mexican immigrants self-identify according to American terms of race. I am also interested in how that self-identification of race, homeowner status and naturalization changes or evolves during their tenure in the U.S. Also, I want to find out what other steps or changes Mexican immigrants partake in to participate in American life.

For example, how do Mexicans who have been here the longer see themselves compared to whites, blacks, and their immigrant counterparts? Of those that self-classify as white who are Mexican-born what percentage do they make up of Mexican-born homeowners? These questions are important to consider due to the fact that the Mexican nation-state identifies as a *mestizo* nation, or in American terms it considers itself a biracial nation, mixed with indigenous and European ancestry. Therefore, when Mexicans arrive to the U.S. they are more likely than not, ready to identify as being of the Mexican race, and not with one or the other. Biraciality is not a new phenomenon in the U.S., just one that was up to recently considered taboo and much less thought to be associated with Mexico. And so what does a Mexican immigrant do when they are asked to decide if they are white, black or other, what do they choose? And how do they come about making this choice.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCORPORATION

Scholars vary considerably in their perceptions of immigrant incorporation (Gordon 1964; Gans 1999; Zhou 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Telles and Ortiz 2008), and this variation is particularly pronounced for Mexican immigrants. Some scholars emphasize slow but steady mobility (Bean and Stevens 2003), while others focus on barriers and downfalls (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Still others see Mexicans as unassimilable (Huntington 2004). Gordon's (1964) classic assimilation theory poses that with the occurrence of "structural assimilation," or entrance into mainstream primary groups, all other forms of assimilation will naturally follow in no particular order. It further holds that exposure to the host country will also help account for similarities shared by newcomers and natives, if for nothing else than exposure to native practices (Gordon 1964). However, later theories of incorporation, such as selective acculturation, suggest that

some aspects of acculturation may not necessarily occur, contemporaneously at all (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean, Stevens and Wierzbicki 2003).

When people think of immigrant assimilation they often envision a relatively “straight-line” transition to the American mainstream based on the assumption that such changes took place in the case of European immigrants. Americans have a common sense notion that assimilation is easy for immigrants who come to this country and choose to be American. Especially because of what they are told and think they know about European immigration (Alba and Nee 2003), however, much of what Americans are taught in school or talk about over the water cooler in regards to immigrant assimilation is far from the truth. Immigrants like the Jews, Irish, Germans and Italians and others, for example, have been labeled as being unassimilable at different points in their history (Gans 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003). Now, for the most part, such groups are considered white and can choose to hold up their “ethnic card” to prove it (Alba and Nee 2003). But each group experienced negative and unfriendly nativist sentiment due to their perceived slow assimilation, at earlier points in time. This is important to understand because with all of the negative things said today about the Mexican-origin population, it is easy to forget that other groups were also once viewed as unassimilable in U.S. history (Lopez 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003).

Some scholars argue that assimilation is what almost inevitably happens to people when they go about their everyday lives (Alba and Nee 2003). This may be oversimplified. It is the case that for European immigrants that shared some of the same characteristics as contemporary immigrant groups, such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, assimilation was expected to take one to six generations (Warner and Srole 1945). This, however, is not what Americans in general seem to think when they express an urgency for contemporary immigrants

to assimilate. And they seem to overlook the fact that the continued flow of immigration may slow the apparent assimilation of the Mexican population in general, regardless of time in the U.S. (Jimenez 2009). Other scholars consider the Mexican population on track towards assimilation, in part because they show intermarriage rates that greatly surpass those of the largest minority population, African-Americans (Bean and Stevens 2003). Though the Mexican population comes to the U.S. with low human capital, their English proficiency rates nearly parallel those of the Asian or “model minority” population, whose members come with very high human capital (Bean and Stevens 2003). These two empirical facts, suggest the Mexican-origin population is moving along an assimilation track, especially when scholars take into account length of stay for first generation entrants and generation status among the descendants of the original immigrants.

It is important to focus on the assimilation of the contemporary immigrant population in terms that can be clearly understood and measured. Because the public has been exposed to works like Huntington’s (2004) that deter them from supporting current immigration because of its claim that the Mexican case is cause for concern, there needs to be a clear understanding of what sociologists and scholars in general are using to measure facets of incorporation.

Contemporary scholars have described assimilation “as a type of incorporation process” (Bean and Stevens 2003). This dissertation, will use the term *incorporation* to mean the same as assimilation did for earlier waves of immigration. This research will focus on certain aspects of economic, sociocultural and political incorporation because each is a marker of general incorporation. This research is important because there is a lack of empirical work on the relationship multiple markers may have for immigrant incorporation (Bean and Stevens 2003). Economic incorporation is the process by which immigrants converge with the native-born in

various aspects of economic status (Bean and Stevens 2003). This chapter will look at how homeownership is a direct indicator of economic incorporation because for the average American, it is their major source of wealth (Myers 2007). That's why it is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation.

Sociocultural incorporation is an integral component of the assimilation process. It is the incorporation part that explains the ways in which people adapt to the host culture and the mainstream processes that begin to blend away immigrants' foreignness. It is the ways in which immigrants to the U.S. begin to blend into the American mainstream, via social forms and cultural practices. In the past, scholars held that sociocultural incorporation (Gordon 1964) began and ended with the adopting of new or host practices, while more contemporary scholars find that it is more of a merging of mainstream practices with that of the immigrant (Bean and Stevens 2003). Therefore, one can argue, that when immigrants arrive to the U.S. and find out how race, in American terms is detrimental to their reception, each immigrant [group] learns how to cope with or resist the racial category ascribed to them, as others begin to adapt to "whiteness" (Bonilla-Silva 2003). To oversimplify the latter, further, I view the relationship that whiteness has with sociocultural incorporation as ever changing, for the Mexican immigrant population. As the many changes that this population has seen in terms of their racial and ethnic categories on the U.S. census during the last hundred years, for example, they went from being classified as white at the very beginning of their appearance on the U.S. census, to their own Mexican category, to now being lumped into a political term known only in the U.S., the term "Hispanic" (Zolberg 2006). The Mexican immigrant population may well be actively and proactively working on changing the ascription of their ethnic minority status to white, partly as a

mechanism for not being black and partly as a way for blending into the American fabric, as immigrants of Italian, Irish and German descent previously did.

Political incorporation is another dimension of immigrant incorporation because the right to vote, willingness to pay taxes and naturalization are all viewed as indicators of American-ness (Bloemraad 2006). Immigrants must make decisions that change their identity, rights and privileges that they once saw as unchangeable before they choose to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006). To naturalize involves swearing to uphold the rules and governance of the receiving country and it gives individuals the right to vote and carry a U.S. passport. It should also change the way immigrants are perceived by their neighbors, because it makes foreignness a difficult label to apply to naturalized citizens who now have the same rights and responsibilities as the general populace (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). Naturalization is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation because it helps facilitate their parallel existence with the general population and their political incorporation into the receiving country. Both homeownership and naturalization as markers of incorporation are important because what continues to be debated about contemporary immigration is “the degree to which newcomers affect and are affected” by the fabric of American life, and it’s expected that immigrant minorities become ever more indistinguishable from natives, at least after several generations” (Bean and Stevens 2003). To choose to be an American through naturalization and becoming a homeowner are important ways in which immigrants put down roots.

The theories on incorporation continue to differ from each other and the founding literature on assimilation. Therefore it is appropriate to indicate that there is not yet a fixed formula for immigrant incorporation. When you read Gordon’s (1964) formula on immigrant assimilation which reflects a more unidimensional process, immigrants are intrinsically expected

to absorb the mainstream or native way of life. Whereas, when you look at contemporary works, such as Bean and Stevens (2003), you see a multidimensional process, or a concise depiction of how immigrants and natives give and take from each other as both incorporate one another. It remains unresolved, however, whether incorporation is a unidimensional process as classic assimilation theory implies (Gordon 1964), or a multi-dimensional process as most of its variants like ethnic disadvantage, segmented assimilation and selective acculturation theories suggest (Zhou 1999; Alba and Nee 2003), when they note that it has different components that may move in fits and starts, rather than together (Gordon 1964). If the former process, unidimensional incorporation, predominates then different components of incorporation would all move together as a result of one main underlying process—the general diffuse dynamic of gradually becoming more and more involved in the American mainstream as a consequence of greater exposure over time to the destination society (Gordon 1964). If it's the latter process that predominates, however, then the implication is that the different components do not all merely derive from exposure to underlying “Americanization”, but rather are separate factors whose occurrence may often reinforce other components over time and across generations (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean et al 2009). This admits of the possibility that a given separate component might move independently of other components. In short, the overall process could be facilitated, arrested or not affected by the presence or absence respectively of a given incorporation sub-component which could be operating independently (i.e., could be unconnected with) other sub-components, or which could be completely tied to other components. I will be arguing that whiteness as a marker for sociocultural incorporation may be the sub-component of those examined here that for Mexican-immigrants that does not vary independently of other sub-components.

The debate over the assimilation or incorporation of the Mexican-origin population has intensified. Its focus is on such topics as language acquisition, economic incorporation (Bean and Stevens 2003) and sociocultural incorporation. Though the stereotype is that language acquisition among persons of Mexican-origin lags behind other immigrant groups, studies show that most Mexican-origin persons lose their native language at the same rate or faster than their European counterparts of the early 20th century and contemporary Asian counterparts (Bean and Stevens 2003; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006). However, Mexican-origin persons continue to lag behind non-Hispanic whites in regards to educational attainment. As of 2000, the average years of schooling for non-Hispanic white males was 13.5, and for Mexican immigrant males it was 8.4 (Bean and Stevens 2003). This in fact helps explain the income gap between non-Hispanic whites and Mexican-origin persons. According to Bean and Stevens (2003), Mexican male immigrants' hourly wages are 51.6 % lower than those of non-Hispanic white men. This gap leads to the idea that for many Mexican-origin persons, American goals, especially homeownership, are far from reach, because without money, little is possible.

Less educational attainment, less income and a sometimes a less than welcoming environment could lead Mexican-origin persons to flee the U.S. However, the opposite is true. More often, circular migration is turning into immigrant settlement (Bean and Lowell 2007), where the individuals that once came for seasonal work and then returned home every year now stay for year-round work and residence. Why do so many people of this group choose to set up residence in the U.S.? Because many immigrants do return home as planned, and then find themselves comparing their U.S. existence with their home country's reality, they often decide to return to the U.S. This is because the reality that sent them on the Russian roulette of migration northward through deserts and other atrocities continued the same during their absence. The

U.S., with finance companies, credit options and free education looks better than the nation they hold dear. Among the perks that the U.S. has to offer is free primary education for children and affordable secondary options for even working adults, something not available in Mexico. Because with more education, higher income levels are possible, and higher income levels lead to social investments. Social investments come in the form of growing social networks, leisure time, blending into the mainstream and enhancing financial well-being. All of these are facilitated if you have your own space. Something that is valued in Mexico just as much as it is in the U.S. is homeownership, having a place to call home, share family moments, and show that they are a contributing member of society. This dissertation will argue that classical assimilation theory alone cannot explain the relationship that homeownership, naturalization and ethnoracial identity have for the Mexican immigrant population. Were the incorporation of Mexican immigrants to follow the classical assimilation path, homeownership, naturalization and ethnoracial identity will be positively related with duration of residence and with changes in the objective material well-being of the group over time. However, the more subjective aspects of these dimensions may also vary independently of one another, as other theories of incorporation imply. Here we suggest that whiteness may be the sub-component that is most likely to do so because, as matters of identity have become more fluid, dynamic and situational in post-industrial societies (Bean et al 2011), their connections to class and political activity diminish.

MARKERS OF INCORPORATION

Because of the lack of empirical work on the relationship multiple markers may have for immigrant incorporation. It is important to focus on the incorporation of the contemporary immigrant population in terms that can be clearly understood and measured. Works like those of

Huntington's (2004) book help convince the public not to support current immigration because of its claim that the Mexican case is cause for concern. I saw a need for there to be a clear understanding of what sociologists and scholars in general are using to assess facets of incorporation. Contemporary scholars have described assimilation "as a type of incorporation process" (Bean and Stevens 2003). This dissertation uses the term *incorporation* to mean a more general process than assimilation. This research will focus on key aspects of economic, socio-cultural and political incorporation because each is a marker of general incorporation. This research is important because there is a lack of empirical work on the relationship multiple markers may have for immigrant incorporation and on their interconnections, especially for the Mexican-born.

homeownership rates and the means by which homes are purchased by Mexican immigrants, can be expressed as operating against all odds. Mexican immigrants are and have been scapegoated for years here in the U.S. and yet the rates at which they are purchasing homes in some of the most expensive places in the U.S., such as California are indicative of both subjective and objective economic incorporation. homeownership by Mexicans has been investigated by numerous scholars, and though this group is among the relatively lowest skilled and the lowest wage earners, they have homeownership rates that indicate that there is a tremendous drive to take part in the American dream. In short, they may "over-achieve" in regard to homeownership.

Naturalization rates of the Mexican-born have been steadily climbing in the last twenty years. And with homeownership being so important to Mexican immigrants, one can hypothesize that naturalization may be viewed as a next natural step for those that are homeowners and Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs). And since naturalization takes place

within bureaucratic structures that also require money and stability, it reflects proactive and formal ways of embracing American ways of life.

Racial identity in American terms can be a confusing phenomenon for a population that was socialized by their parents, community, church and country to identify Mexicans as being biracial. Therefore, the trend of Mexican immigrants to choose the “other” category in the race question of the U.S. census’ short form may be indicative of their pre-existing understandings of race. And with exposure to the American concept of race, their choice and therefore, their understanding of race, may be changing.

My research aims to address how the responses of the Mexican-born changeover time, from identifying and believing that they are biracial or *mestizo* when they first arrive, to 55% choosing the *other* category, and 45% choosing the “white” category on the race question of the 2000 U.S. Census. Also, do these individuals change their self-identification to just being white? Or do they choose to use the biracial identity now that it is available on the U.S. census? Racial categories are important in the U.S., and these questions are important because most Mexican immigrants are surprised to find out that in the U.S. biraciality or multiraciality is relatively new to the American dialogue and far removed from the national identity.

PATH TO AMERICAN IDENTITY

The convergence of cultural practices, social structures, and racial/ethnic identity is what makes an all around American. We see this in basic cultural and social structures integrating new and old American ways. Just drive around any American urban city and you will find these foods and terms in restaurant names, on cruise ships and at any other tourist spot catering to Americans. Eating and food are very much integral to the American dream, it is “normal” for

Americans to see food as a way of bringing family and friends together. This then translates for immigrants into ways of also joining family and friends, via food. What is more accurate, is to say that Americans staple food to social settings and social ways of life that are more indicative of class standings. Middle class foods and lower class foods are a blur, but upper class food items and ways of meal sharing are a completely different and foreign affair! So then again, to what do immigrants incorporate?

Responding to the ongoing question about what is it that immigrants incorporate to is faceted and complex. Immigrants vary in context of emigration, immigration and migration, but most salient is that the context of reception varies by immigrant group and within groups as it changes according to waves. The ways, reasons, and strategies applied by each group and within every group vary; and what varies just less so, are the types of contexts of reception (Massey et. al 1998). Immigrant groups are received (this is the reception part of this term) quite differently depending much on the state of the receiving place and politics surrounding the newly arrived group. The contexts vary according to things such as, political climate and economic climate. When there is [an immigrant] group that is portrayed by the media and introduced, and recognized by voices of popular culture or political bodies as “deserving of positive attention” Americans find ways to refuge individuals with language, and then follows the flows of positivity, again (Light 2006). When the opposite is done, and a group is presented as “earning negative attention” then the reaction of Americans, is to find ways to vilify individuals and groups with negativity. These are two very important contexts of reception. When a group of refugees or immigrants are viewed and therefore offered positive receptions and positive expectations, studies show these groups do much better, in terms of their educational and income

attainment or modes of incorporation, than their counterparts that are vilified with negative receptions and negative expectations.

It is easy to find advertisements by vehicle manufacturers, insurance companies and more, using piñatas, to portray a predominantly blonde and blue-eyed family celebrating a child's birthday party. Nachos (nickname to the name Ignacio, in Spanish, by the way) are given at ballparks, concerts and movie theaters, throughout the United States, places where Mexican immigrants are NOT expected to be present. Even the autocorrect to this researcher's laptop, auto corrected the 'n' that I typed and replaced it with the proper "ñ" in the word piñata; and I do not have a Spanish dictionary added to my word software. Cultural practices are transmitted between newcomers and the native-born and these cultural transfers will lead the Mexican case to be more like the Italian case or the African-American case.

HOMEOWNERSHIP AS PART OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Homeownership is more American than apple pie! Land ownership was among the propellers of the English movement to the New Land. Land ownership has a long standing history of protected status. It was among the first ways of guaranteeing voting rights, via land ownership. Homeownership was protected by legislative protections up until the late 1990's. Since then, the housing market was deregulated and was on the verge of collapse until the government once again, stepped in and safeguarded homeownership. Homeownership is key for immigrants and natives to reach the American dream. In order to purchase a home, the first thing people need is the knowledge of how real estate works, the second thing is money that at the very least has to cover a down payment and closing costs. Individuals have to build networks where they can access this information, or they have to share this information within the group.

What is even more telling is that scholars (Yu and Myers 2010; Massey 2011; Trulia Report 2011) and journalists have found that homeownership remains as a strong for all groups.

Although these same works found that “minorities” may take the longest to recover from the real estate bubble, their drive towards homeownership remained as part of their American Dream.

Homeownership is important not only as part of the American Dream, but it is intrinsic to the American Economy, as well (Myers 2007, Zhou and Myers 2010). High homeownership rates and high market values are related to booms in the economy, whereas low homeownership rates and drops in market values are connected to economic downturns (Rohe and Watson 2007). Therefore, homeownership is not just relatively important, but it is directly linked and reflective as well as fueling to the American economy (Myers 2007). Homeownership as a *key* component of the American dream also holds value for Americans. The wealth that most Americans own is in the equity of their homes. This serves as bedfellow to what is said of the American economic recovery. One need only turn on the television at any time in the years since the real estate bubble burst, to see a concerted advertised effort by non-profit and for-profit financial institutions advertising to individuals in mortgage default, dreaming of homeownership and those that are just not sure about where they stand. Since the real estate bubble burst, Homeownership has been included in President’s state of the union speeches. Homeownership is a pivotal economic and social label and role for Americans.

Homeownership as a marker of success in contemporary terms may be found in modern settings, such as reality shows. There you will find that owning numerous homes and properties is a marker of undeniable success. The additional importance of owning properties is location, where a property is located is a very significant factor. For those that are at the bottom end of the socioeconomic echelon, location is important because of the safeties that a “good”

neighborhood provides. The better location the higher the price tag, so also is the prestige associated with such a location. According to an article in the Huffington Post, “Americans have been skittish about buying new houses since the collapse of the real estate bubble,” however, the drive to purchase homes in the U.S. continues to exist among the average American (Trulia 2011).

Continued Significance of Homeownership

According to Trulia (2011), 70 percent of Americans still consider homeownership a central part of their "American Dream". They also found that nearly two-thirds of young people - - 65 percent of those aged 18 to 34 also consider homeownership to be part of their American Dream. These numbers are of interest to those in the homeownership literature, because the figures for attaining homeownership within this age group have steadily declined over the last three decades (Myers 2007, Massey 2011).

Young people, in their twenties and thirties are dealing with debt and a weary job market, and so they find themselves putting off homeownership and opting to live with parents longer than in previous decades (). The current recession has left fewer people financially secure enough to leap into homeownership. Myers (2011) found that about half of renters said that having enough money for a down payment was their set back in reaching the goal of homeownership, when looking at 18-34 year olds, this rate rises to sixty percent.

Yet, study after (Myer 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011) study year after year find that homeownership is still central to people’s American Dream and national identity. And these notions, ideals and goals about the American dream and national identity were more prevalent among Hispanics, African-Americans and young people, in general. Myers (2011) found that 42

% of Latinos own homes by age 44 and the rate of homeownership for Latinos, in California, is on the rise with 78% of California's total growth attributed to Latino homeownership.

Unintended Consequences of Lending Practices

It is easy to accept that the higher rates of homeownership and access to homeownership was due in the past to the way that the real estate market was set up (Myers 2007). From application packets that allowed for informal proofs of income, and a semi-red lining of real estate markets, to subprime mortgages being directly marketed to minorities (Massey 2011, Rugh and Massey 2011). Up to the latter part of the 20th century, homeownership was protected by U.S. government regulation, this regulation was meant to protect the sanctity of homeownership as a cultural jewel and as a reflection of the United States' long standing protection of the American homestead (Zolberg 2006, Myers 2007).

INCORPORATION VIA HOMEOWNERSHIP FOR THE MEXICAN-BORN

An important aspect of incorporation is homeownership because of its salience in American culture. Though homeownership can be used as a marker for socioeconomic incorporation, it can also be used as a marker for political incorporation as it gives homeowners a stake in their community and makes them full-fledged taxpayers and at the same time it is an economic marker of achievement in American culture. The even broader significance of homeownership as a facet of incorporation is the fact that when foreign born legalized residents of the United States decide to become homeowners, their actions may carry more meaning than just buying a house. Owning land is a well-recognized goal and cause for migration for people from all around the world (Massey 1999). In the U.S. it is held as a symbol of belonging, and contributing to society in general, hence its political incorporation marker (Myers 2007).

Homeownership is an important facet of incorporation, because it necessitates a proactive engagement into the American mainstream (Myers 2007). And though we find differing interpretations of what immigration incorporation should look like, or how we as scholars should interpret it (Gans 1999). What remains constant about homeownership as a marker of incorporation is that Americans, who are native-born, are also actively pursuing the American dream of homeownership. Therefore, homeownership is a helpful tool in assimilating to the American way of life (Gordon 1964).

Within the foundation of immigrant incorporation, is Gordon's (1964) classical assimilation theory which poses that with the occurrence of "structural assimilation," or entrance into mainstream primary groups, all other forms of assimilation will naturally follow, in no particular order, necessarily. He further argues that exposure to the host country will also help account for similarities shared by newcomers and natives. Again, homeownership fits Gordon's (1964) model of incorporation, because it brings newcomers and natives closer together, literally because of spatial proximity (Brown 2006).

When people think of immigrant assimilation, they often envision a relatively "straight-line" transition to the American way of life, based on the assumption that such changes took place in the case of European immigrants (Alba and Nee 2003). However, what is true is that immigrants like the Jews, Irish, Germans and Italians, for example, were labeled to be just as unassimilable at different points in their histories, as some of today's immigrants (Gans 1999, Alba and Nee 2003). And now for the most part, such groups are considered white, and can choose to hold up their "ethnic card" when needed (Alba and Nee 2003).

Some scholars argue that assimilation is what almost inevitably happens to people when they go about their everyday lives (Alba and Nee 2003). This may be oversimplified. This may

have been the case for some European immigrants who were already considered white, and may happen today for those immigrants who may share some similarities with the American mainstream, such as religion, language and “race”. Otherwise, we can clearly see how some immigrants of the past wave of immigration who share some of the same characteristics with contemporary immigrant groups, such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, their assimilation was expected to take one to six generations to fully assimilate (Warner and Srole 1945). This however, is not what Americans in general think when they express urgency for contemporary immigrants to assimilate (Myers 2007). Just as the immigrants of yesterday, contemporary immigrant are expected to take part in common cultural practices, homeownership continues to be a strong front runner as it continues to remain part of the American dream.

It is important to focus on the assimilation of the contemporary immigrant population in terms that can be clearly understood and measured (Gans 1999). There needs to be a clear understanding of what sociologists and scholars in general are using to measure facets of incorporation. Because contemporary scholars have described assimilation “as a type of incorporation process” (Bean and Stevens 2003), homeownership as a common path to the American dream for the native-born, is a strong and sufficient indicator and facet of incorporation for contemporary immigrants. Economic incorporation is the process by which immigrants converge with the native-born in various aspects of economic status (Bean and Stevens 2003). Homeownership, or more precisely home equity, is a direct indicator of economic stability within the American understanding of wealth. Home equity is also the direct indicator or economic incorporation because for the average American, it is their major and sometimes only source of wealth (Myers 2007). And this is why homeownership is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation.

Homeownership helps incorporation because it reflects income attainment, which is of particular importance for immigrants that are low-wage earners. In the short run, homeownership permits entrée to better neighborhoods, and provides a sense of rootedness for those with owner-occupied homes. Furthermore, homeownership symbolizes commitment to the neighborhood and city and by extension, the country. In the long term, homeownership promotes wealth accumulation through mortgage tax breaks and growth in equity. More generally, the American Dream is constantly quoted as a reason why homeownership is important to Americans, and immigrants. Early U.S. laws set landownership as a requirement for the right to vote (Rohe and Watson 2007). Because even now, owning a home rewards people with a “stake in society”, thus homeownership is often taken as an indicator of progress for individuals and for society in general (Rohe and Watson 2007). Homeownership is thus deeply rooted in American culture.

Homeownership is also much more accessible to the general public here in the U.S. than in most other countries, through multiple financing options that exist through government programs and other loan sources. Some studies have suggested that immigrants who choose the U.S. as a destination, have identified doing so because of the ease of homeownership that does not exist in their home countries (Massey 1999). This suggests that the dream of homeownership may be a pre-existing goal for some immigrants. That is, many Mexicans are already similar to Americans in the value they place on homeownership. As a result, incorporation requires no cultural shift of attitudes toward ownership.

FROM LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENT (LPR) STATUS TO CITIZENSHIP

Although Mexican LPRs were least likely to naturalize within ten years, they also exhibited the greatest relative increase in rates between the early and later arriving cohorts

(Rytina and Caldera 2008). Immigrants must make decisions that change their identity, rights and privileges that they once saw as unchangeable before they choose to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006). To naturalize involves swearing to uphold the rules and governance of the receiving country and it gives individuals the right to vote and carry a U.S. passport. It should also change the way immigrants are perceived by their neighbors, because it makes foreignness a difficult label to apply to naturalized citizens who now have the same rights and responsibilities as the general populace (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). Naturalization is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation because it helps facilitate their parallel existence with the general population and their political incorporation into the receiving country. With the added rights and responsibilities of dual citizenship immigrants may indeed partake in homeownership in the U.S. and abroad (Dahlin and Hironaka 2008).

Naturalization is a form of political incorporation because once naturalized an individual can more fully participate in a society as a citizen with full membership status (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). Making the decision to change citizenship may be difficult, especially when one belongs to a group whose members often are unwelcomed and scapegoated in the United States (Bean and Stevens 2003). Naturalization not only may impart a sense of belonging, it confers the formal right to political participation and formal irrefragable legal status. According to Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul (2008), citizenship can be disaggregated into four components: legal status, rights, political participation and a sense of belonging. What could be more symbolic for an individual that has left a long-time home country, hoping to return some day, than to make another nation their home, as represented by legal citizenship and naturalization? Naturalizing thus helps make a new place of residence meaningful, through deciding to stay by making membership legal and binding. To naturalize

for some people means no longer being stateless or in limbo, like a common saying among Mexican immigrants implies; “*ni de aquí ni de allá*”- *neither from here nor from there*, a virtual state of social and identity limbo-- a saying that tells of the uncertainty that the undocumented, legal residents and even native-born face when they are not connected to Americanness or Mexicanness. Mexican immigrants and early generation Mexican-origin will state that they feel this sense of cultural limbo.

Immigrant Replenishment and the Peter Pan Fallacy

Myers (2012) coined the term “Peter Pan Fallacy” to exemplify what Americans believe about Mexican immigrants. Myers argues that Mexican immigrants are viewed as frozen in time and that they continue to be novice to American ways of life regardless of time in the country. Continued immigrant replenishment (Jimenez 2010) helps sustain this ideology making it more difficult for middle-class Americans to accept that immigrants are not “eternal” newcomers. Immigrants do age and learn American ways of life, and will retire in droves and many are joining their American-born baby boomers.

RACIAL IDENTIFICATION AND INCORPORATION

Immigration scholarship is undecided or split, in regards to the racialization of new immigrants and where immigrants fall in respect to the existing black and white racial divide that exists in the U.S. One group believes the current black and white racial categories will remain, but evolve into a tri-racial hierarchy, with a buffer zone that will consist of all other minorities that are either dark-skinned or downward assimilated (Zhou 1999). Others envision a black-nonblack divide, a view of the future placing African-Americans as the least incorporated group in the U.S. case (Gordon 1964; Lee and Bean 2010; Massey 2007). The latter is plausible if we

consider what happened with European immigrants in the twentieth century when Italians and the Irish were in some instances considered to be black, but for the most part non-white who with exerted effort managed to distance themselves from blacks. Both groups were thus able to achieve ethnic and racial identities in the American context.

Because of the ways in which European immigrants achieved whiteness as suggested by the immigration literature, and the way that some groups reject ethnic ascription, an emerging black-nonblack divide seems feasible. If ethnicity takes a symbolic, optional form for later-generation Asian and Hispanic immigrants, especially those that have intermarried or are the offspring of intermarriage, then the expectation is that for later generations, as with the past immigrant groups, assimilation should be achievable for them as well (Alba and Nee 2003). Some studies find that some Asians are already on the road to whiteness because of the ongoing structural and economic “successes” that often times surpass the expectations and outcomes of even the native-born whites (Bean and Stevens 2003), and some could argue that Asians are at times perceived to be more American than native-born whites. Mexican-born persons are not understood by scholars or colloquial understandings of race, nonetheless Mexican-born heads of household are identifying themselves as white about 44% of the time according to my research findings.

Later generation Mexican Americans are also on their way to whiteness, if not already assimilated structurally, economically, culturally and some would argue socially (Gordon 1964; Bean and Stevens 2003; Jimenez 2008). First and second generation Mexican-Americans may indeed have continued connections economically restrict their incorporation (Massey 2007; Aguis Vallejo), but 3rd, 4th, 5th generations and beyond are more so removed from the financial responsibilities to family that previous generations had impede their entrance to American

individualism. Especially for those that no longer have Spanish surnames and those that are light-skinned (Jimenez 2008), some of which already view themselves and present themselves as being white. However, continued replenishment of immigrants from their ancestors' land may keep the sense of foreignness more salient (Jimenez 2008).

Their foreignness is visible to the native-born population due to their phenotypic attributes that evoke their Mexican-ness (Jimenez 2008), due to perceived Mexican stereotyped phenotypes as well as their Spanish surnames. However, there is little said about those that get violently angry at being labeled Mexican or Mexican-origin. This is very similar to what middle and upper-middle class African-Americans face when they are confronted with racial profiling or stereotyped as lower-class African-Americans or what is perceived as being part of black culture. Black culture is perceived to be socially dependent and collectively deviant from American norms (Gordon 1964). And as long as the black population (in general) is perceived to be [different] or deviant (Gordon 1964) from mainstream America then they will continue to be seen as unassimilable. This may be why [some] immigrants find ways to not participant in perceived deviant behavior, in collective terms. Some scholars have posited that this distancing begins well before Mexicans immigrate to the U.S. (Zamora 2012 upcoming).

Some would add to this mix a racialization that contemporary immigrants' experience. They have to accept the ascription of a race, as Americans understand race, or remain in racial limbo. Most Americans do not know that Mexico identifies itself as a mestizo nation (Duran). And not as a minority, indigenous, Hispanic or Latino nation, as most Americans tend to imagine. The new question to the decennial census in 2000 was about multiraciality, and this term remains a topic of concern for Americans and academia alike. However, when Mexican children are in Mexican schools, they are introduced to their nation as one that is biracial. In

some cases even as multiracial, especially in the gulf states. That is one of the proposed explanations some sociologists give when studying why most Mexicans designate their race as other, instead of as white or even multiracial on the U.S. census (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002).

Ethno-racial identification is important to investigate because of the American understandings of race and ethnicity. Mexican national identity and American racialization are polar opposites. Mexicans may not embrace their indigenous roots, but they acknowledge them politically even if not in practice. It is among the reasons why even 2nd generation Mexican immigrants and later generation youth consider their race to be Mexican. There is more to this because of the empowerment movements that some youth are exposed to that embraces Aztec, Mayan and other indigenous groups. That is not to say that the hierarchy of racial grouping is not present for the Mexican population, their children and descendants, just that the hierarchy includes the acknowledgement of “mixed” races. Some argue, however, that immigrant groups are becoming racialized (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Telles and Ortiz 2008). Because as more groups are found to be “worthy” of whiteness, or becoming American they are allowed to have the privileges that whiteness guarantees (Hochschild 1995), while others who are not viewed as following suit are on their way to becoming black (Zhou 1999). The first of the two previous arguments is the least problematic because it reflects what happened to the European immigrants of the twentieth century. When Mexicans already view themselves as half white, it is arguably a point of proximity to whiteness that leads this sociologist to juxtapose that Mexican immigrants may already see themselves on the road to whiteness.

AMERICAN RACIALIZED IMMIGRANT IDENTITY

To say that the contemporary state of Italian immigrants' identity should be applied to Mexican immigrants, is somewhat oversimplifying the complexity of contemporary immigration. It is difficult to ascertain the level of discrimination that Italian immigrants dealt with almost 100 years ago, especially with how Italian immigrants are viewed today. Today, Italian immigrants are viewed as welcomed Europeans without any further negative connotations. Later generation Italians are considered simply 'white', and they choose to use the symbolic ethnicity card at will, without any negative backlash. This is particularly remarkable as some later generation Italians tan in tanning booths or in the sun to the point that their skin is altered. This skin altering produces darker skin, and it indicates an understanding that race is not an issue, especially as the darker tanned individuals continue to refer to themselves as white. Tanning the skin, or altering the skin can change the appearance and therefore the race of an individual, since most race-based arguments are rooted in color of the skin or pigment. When the color of skin is what is used to signify race, this altering of the skin to darken it is a test of that same racial argument.

Skin color is associated with American-ness, either by having too much pigment, you can be considered foreign or black, and the absence of less presence of pigment--you may be on your way to whiteness. Not much is said about those that are right in between, at least not until recently (Light 2007; Jiménez 2009; Lee and Bean 2011) did scholarship discuss the polarized black and white American racial lines. Those lines begin to give way for other groups, as they had done for the previous wave of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (Warner and Srole 1945; Alba and Nee 2003; Myers 2007). The racialization of Germans, Italians and the Irish is erased from American memory. German phenotypes, Italian religion and language and Irish poverty were all of concern to Americans back a century ago. Much of what is said today

of Mexican immigrants and their descendants, can be found in newspapers during the Eastern and Southern European immigrant waves.

Race and Ethnicity- The Italian Case

All it takes is a glimpse at any cable show that depicts Italian-Americans living the American dream. Here the validity of symbolic ethnicity for later generation immigrant generations is pervasive enough to be missed, but salient enough that this sociologist caught the subtleties of a third and fourth generation Italian being offended by someone calling them “1/16 Italian, and Olive Garden Italian.” This sociologist immediately thought of the arguments that Gans (1979) made, where the ever-changing ethnic identity of individuals would change over time. Here, it is evident that the transgressions that Italian immigrants experienced during their large influx migration, when they experienced nativists created contexts of reception, have not become history pieces. Now, later generation Italians some of whom are 1/8 Italian, are not using just a symbolic ethnicity card for the world to see, but they are labeling themselves “Italian first and American second.”

It is quite difficult to envision a time when a person who is understood as American, insists on being called “Mexican” because they are proud of being Mexican, more so than being American. Imagining that in later generations, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and beyond, Mexican-origin who are passing in the eyes of the general public, will want to be labeled “Mexican,” instead of American, seems unlikely. This is not to say that individuals who are of Mexican-origin, partly or wholly won’t ‘out’ their lineage, we have seen this in cases of politicians and the famous (New Mexico’s own, Bill Richardson (2nd generation on his mother’s side) and Eva Longoria (6th generation).

Contexts of Reception and Whiteness

Italian and Italian-Americans today are allowed more flexibility than contemporary Mexicans and Mexican-Americans about proclaiming that they are white or even just American. If Mexicans, who to this day have been discouraged to proclaim whiteness throughout their time in the United States, although Mexicans have been in the United States just as long as Italians (Jimenez 2008). What would happen if Mexicans, newly immigrated as well as later-generation Mexican-origin, proclaimed whiteness? It isn't difficult to imagine that Mexicans consider themselves to be white, if one is familiar with México, the nation-state. Mexican national identity is biracial: white and indigenous to be exact. The white racial identity is due to their European ancestry traced back in Mexican history to colonial times when the Spanish and other Europeans occupied what is modern-day México. The indigenous racial identity is due to the Native-American or *indígena* background, even if the indigenous background isn't enthusiastically embraced, it used or applied to explain the variance in pigmentation among Mexicans, who vary from fair skinned, light colored eyes, blond haired, tall and thinned out build, to darker eyes, dark hair, shorter build. This seemingly all-encompassing identity, sounds not only tolerant but progressive, although in practice, discrimination dictated by skin color is just as present in Mexican culture as it is in American (U.S.) culture.

The Black and Nonblack Divide

Men who are feminized or emasculated, tend to be men of color (CITE). Men in jobs who are feminized are men in service industries, where they are cooks, waiters, and dish washers, doing jobs that are otherwise gendered as being women's work. Men working in cruise ships are emasculated, waiters who dance at dinner and wear frilly outfits to get a laugh from patrons for a chance at upped tips. These men tend to be darker skinned, Asians, Blacks and Hispanics. On two different cruises, 10 separate nights, that this researcher experienced this was

the rule. No European or white or American-white wait staff partook in these exercises. The awkwardness of this experience was evident in the faces of the wait staff and the onlookers that shared the make-up of this group: people that could see themselves having to do this work.

INCORPORATION, AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM AND *NO MÁS* FAMILISM

These types of traditional party, organizing and socializing slowly go away as the immigrant families partake in American ways of life (Levitt 2007). As immigrants become more comfortable with friends than with family members and learn of the more individualistic American ways of life that are also much simpler and less stressful. The immigrants soon begin to shrink party sizes and begin to add such things as start and end times and the never followed RSVP. These types of incorporative practices are not seen directly as forms of assimilation or even incorporation by the immigrants. But instead, they are negotiated as more contemporary ways of life. For this researcher, this is *blending or blanking*. The Mexican immigrant, much like other large waves of immigration, must leave their otherness behind and adopt *blending or blanking* practices that allow for a stress free or less stressed experience. You see, it is a lot of work to prepare for 50-100 people show up and have full meals ready, set up of tables and decorations as well as doing this without a real understanding of what to expect, since there is no RSVP system in place. Therefore, *blending* becomes at first a way of alleviating the pressures of party planning, but soon becomes a way of having something in common with friends and neighbors that also follow a less stressed approach to parties.

Familism and individualism differ, where familism places the family first and foremost in decision-making: and individualism places the self at the forefront of rational thinking. These parties used to serve the purpose of joining the family with friends to gather all stratas of the

family to reconnect after possible days or weeks of work or school (Lugo Steidel and Contreras 2003). As the immigrants' lives get more Americanized or westernized, family begins to take second place in the leisure time of the immigrants, as friends and possible hobbies begin to take the place that extended family used to take in the immigrants' life. This *blending* enables immigrants to better extend their networks to be more inclusive of outsiders who can better benefit the immigrant's life. These relative outsiders provide the benefit of introducing the immigrant to American ways (Wimmer 2008), by providing them with social cues that serve to help the immigrant continue to blend in to American ways of life.

These outsiders can be understood to be friends, or interpretive of the intermarriage rates that are seen for immigrants (Lee and Bean 2010). These relationships are important because it demonstrates a crossing of boundaries (Wimmer 2008) as outsiders and insiders marry and share and exchange information about each other's' social worlds. This can be argued helps lead immigrants to lose their foreignness.

Site-Specific Incorporation

Immigrants who live in ethnic enclaves tend to stay within those enclaves, building their networks and social life within them. Those same immigrants may not meet or socialize with White-Americans, therefore their incorporation will be different than those that live in diverse ethnic American neighborhoods. Immigrants who work in a more diverse work environment or socialize with a more diverse crowd will also experience and build a different network than those that only know and socialize with co-ethnics. To elaborate, immigrants who move in to white neighborhoods or black neighborhoods will learn to adapt to each environment. Therefore, the incorporation into American ways of life may be localized.

It isn't a stretch to see how individuals living in the multi-ethnic and multi-ethnic mixed suburban neighborhoods of Anaheim or West Los Angeles will have experience with various groups of people. And it is also isn't a stretch to see how individuals living in ethnic enclaves like East Los Angeles will find themselves not quite comfortable in mixed ethnic or racial company. The exposure that immigrants have to Americans is key to their incorporation, those that stay within the expected safety net of the ethnic enclaves will not be exposed to American mainstream ways of life, in the same manner than those that live in more diverse social settings, where people that are not like them live.

FINDINGS

I examine data for census year 2000, because in 2000 individuals who became LPRs during IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986), and who in 2000 were eligible to naturalize due to the minimum 5 year residency requirement set forth as the threshold for naturalizing for this group, will be especially numerous. *Relation to head of household* was used in order to identify those individuals who self-identified as the head of household. This was done in order to identify individual households, instead of individuals who reported other statuses. We choose to control for *age* and recode it, so as to only look at those of working age (25-64) in order to get a better sense of incorporation patterns for this group. Finally, we choose the variable *years in U.S.* in order to look at the patterns according to duration of residence in the U.S. I also want to see if respondents who are Mexican immigrants change their racial identification once they are exposed to American hierarchical views of race. I posit that Mexican immigrants will first identify as either white or other, and then those who have been here the longest will be more likely to choose

“white”. I also expect to find that Mexican immigrants who become homeowners and naturalize will also racial identify more as “white”.

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations of variables used in the analyses reported in this chapter, and the correlations among these variables, are displayed in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. As we can see there, the average age of the Mexican-immigrant household heads in the analyses is 40 years old and 79 percent are male. The relatively youthful group reflects the fact that our focus here is on immigrants, not the native-born population. Interestingly, despite this relatively young age, 45 percent are homeowners, 33 percent are naturalized citizens, and the average length of time the household heads have been in the country is 18 years. Education is very low, showing a mean of only 8.3 years of schooling. Average annual household income, however, is over \$41,000, a figure less than that of Anglos, but not nearly as far behind whites as the level of education. This undoubtedly helps explain the relatively high rate of homeownership among the Mexican immigrants.

The correlations reflecting the degree and direction (sign) of the associations between the row and column variables are in Table 2. They show that the relationships among these immigrant incorporation-measurement variables involve a mix of negative and positive associations, but generally indicate moderate positive relationships as would be expected. However, the moderate correlations suggest that there is variation between the extent to which immigrants may be following an expected or projected path through incorporation. The relatively moderate correlations provide evidence that a) each measure may represent a separate and distinct path, and b) that the frequency and distribution of these variables varies across these measures. Not many research studies have utilized this multi-faceted approach to measuring

incorporation, and even less have revealed multiple paths that are obscured when only general measures of use are employed. Thus, depending how one measures incorporation, the relationship between incorporation and proactive incorporation seems to differ. Such differences may account for some of the complexity policy makers and immigration scholars confront when interpreting immigration and more specifically, incorporation, research.

Zero-order odds associations among the variables are shown in Table 3. For the Mexican-born, age shows a positive odds (1.012) for identifying as white in the race category listed by the U.S. Census Bureau. For every year's increase in age, there is a higher likelihood that an individual will identify as white on the 2000 U.S. Census. Males are less likely to identify as white, showing a negative odds ratio (.945) indicating that Mexican-born are about five percent less likely to identify as white than females. This may have to do with the exposure factor associated with their participation in the labor force, and their understanding of American race. To identify as other is to accept a foreign-ness that whiteness isn't as likely to reflect. Whiteness shows a negative relationship (.935) with income. The more money a Mexican-born household makes, the less likely the head is to identify as white. Turning to Education we see that the more years of education a person has, the higher the likelihood they will identify as white (1.021), although the effect is quite small. Identifying as white has a positive relationship (odds=1.112) with homeownership for the Mexican-born. Homeowners are more likely to identify as white than renters. This relationship is positive and strong, with homeownership serving as a marker of achievement of the American dream. This marker is may be telling of what white racial identity may mean for the Mexican-born. Homeowners being more likely to identify as white is an indication that having community ties may in fact serve as an aspect of incorporation. Without in-depth interviews, however it is difficult to ascertain which comes first, the white

racial identification or the homeownership. The odds of identifying as white also are greater for those who are naturalized (1.160) by about 16 percent, versus those who are not naturalized. Years in the U.S. shows little zero-order relationship with identifying as white (1.001).

Controlling for Other Variables

Homeownership, and naturalization are “dream” variables when we think of them in reference to the connection to the American dream. Hence for the purpose of this analyses I will refer to these as dream variables. In table 4, we can see when we control for other variables that homeownership and naturalization have a positive relationship with white identification and that the strength of these relationships remains constant or increases with the added variable in the model of years in the U.S. Years in the U.S., however, remains unrelated with white racial identification, not indicating that the longer an individual is in the U.S. does not affect whether they identify as white.

Homeownership, naturalization and years in the U.S. are three telling factors in the incorporation of Mexican immigrants. Although this group is scapegoated constantly, by politicians and popular media, criminalized and badgered for their undocumented status--their dream of homeownership thrives. Although they make the lowest wages among Spanish speaking immigrants, and arrive in the U.S. with the lowest educational attainment levels and are among the least likely to continue their education in the U.S., Mexican homeownership and naturalization rates continue to climb. With little money and less education, Mexican immigrants report that they are saving and planning to invest and partake in the American dream of homeownership (Myers 2012). This incessant drive towards homeownership is much like fighting an uphill battle. Not only do Mexican immigrants have to....

The next analyses add education to the models. In table 5 we see it shows a positive

relationship with the same approximate 2 percent higher likelihood that for every year of education, of an increase in white racial identification. This relationship and likelihood remains the same with added controls such as being naturalized and years in the U.S. We see that in table 5, that regardless of controls, all of the variables retain their relationships with identifying as white. This indicates that these variables are consistent indicators.

Next we add income. In table 6 we see its effect remains constant within each model. The more money someone makes, the less likely they are to identify as white. This relationship went from .935 in table 3, without controls, to .920 in model 6.1, and in 6.4 not controlling just for education, this relationship is almost the same at .917. In model 6.2 controlling for income, education and homeownership shows that the more money a person makes, they are about 10% less likely to identify as white, with education and homeownership remaining constant showing that those that are educated and homeowners are 2% and 16%, respectively, more likely to identify as white. In model 6.3 income, education and homeownership show a similar relationship with whiteness as in model 6.2 and for every log change in income the less likely that they are to identify as white, and those that are naturalized are about 14% more likely to identify as white than those that are not naturalized, and the longer persons are in the U.S. they are slightly less than 1% likely to identify as white. The sharpest, although modest, change with controls in table 6 is for those that are naturalized. In model 6.4, when education is no longer a control those that are naturalized are 3 percentage points more likely than those that are not-naturalized to identify as being white than when education is controlled.

In table 7, are the results adding age and gender. White identity is regressed on all variables, including the descriptive variables: age and sex (male). We see that age remains constant from Table 3, showing a slight but consistent 1% likelihood, or a positive relationship

with identifying as white. Males are 2% less likely to identify as white when controlling for age in model 7.1, dropping from its effect in Table 3 where males without controls are 6% less likely to identify as white than females. In model 7.2 with the added income variable, males are just as likely as females, or just under 1% more likely to identify as white than females, and income remains unchanged from Table 3. In model 7.3 the older a person is, the slightly more likely they are to identify as white, at just above 1%, and males are 3% more likely, while the more money a person makes the less likely they are white at 9%, and the more educated a person is the more likely they are to identify as white, at about 4%. Overall we find that income and years in the U.S. are the only control variables that have a negative relationship with identifying as white in Table 7. The more controls that are added the less likely are those that make more money to identify as white. Years in the U.S. slightly increases its effect from table 3. With controls in model 7.6 we see that the longer someone has in the U.S. they are just under 2% less likely to identify as white than those that have been in the U.S. longer.

CONCLUSIONS

The above findings may be indicative of what the exposure to American race does to individuals who arrive with an ingrained understanding that they are biracial. The more money that these individuals make and the longer they're in the U.S., the more they are exposed to and embrace American dichotomous understandings of race. As we noted earlier in the chapter, Mexican nationals are brought up by their families, nation and culture as biracial, or mestizo, where they are of European and indigenous races. Then they arrive in the U.S. and find that the indigenous are erased from the mainstream and what remains is white or black identity. Americans make no quarrel of disregarding blackness as otherness, as most arrive with the belief

that the more pigment skin has the less likely they are to be allowed within mainstreams, and as newcomers their otherness is already in question, as their language, and cultural skills are developing. Social cues all around them mark them as other, and identify them as being in between American racial identity, evident by this population being split almost in half: when half of them opt in to the white or and the other half opt in to the other racial category in terms of racial identity. And as the years of American racial discourse are understood by the more tenured immigrants, the less likely they are to identify as white and they become slightly more likely to identify as other.

Table 2.1. Means and Standard Deviations for Variables Used in Logistic Regression Analyses for Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age (yrs)	40.0	13.3
Male (%)	79.0	41.0
Household Income	\$41,109.9	\$40,293.0
Education, in years	8.3	4.4
Homeowner (%)	45.0	50.0
White Race ID (%)	43.0	50.0
Naturalized (%)	33.0	47.0
Years in U.S.	18.0	10.3

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010);
N=133,548

Table 2.2. Correlations of Variables Used in Logistic Regression Analyses for Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Age	Male	HH Income	Education	Homeowner	White Race ID	Naturalized	Years in U.S.
Age	1							
Male	-.097**	1						
Household Income (ln)	-.006*	.183**	1					
Education	-.265**	.001	.135**	1				
Homeowner	.279**	.077**	.229**	.005	1			
White Race ID	.079**	-.012**	-.029**	-.046**	-.026**	1		
Naturalized	.290**	-.057**	.092**	.094**	.260**	-.035**	1	
Years in U.S.	.555**	-.050**	.103**	-.094**	.348**	.001	.383**	1

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=133, 548; 2-tailed. **. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level. *. Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2.3. Unadjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership, Control and Structural Factors among Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Age	1.012						
Male		.945					
HH Income (ln)			.935				
Education				1.021			
Homeowner					1.112		
Naturalized						1.160	
Years in U.S.							1.001
Constant	.474	.802	1.282	.645	.731	.730	.767

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); Model 7 not significant at the 0.05 level, all other models are significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level; N= 133, 548

Table 2.4. Adjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership, Naturalization and Years in the U.S. among Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Homeowner	1.078	1.128		1.104
Naturalized	1.136		1.190	1.171
Years in U.S.		.998	.997	.996
Constant	.711	.753	.765	.753

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=133,548. All models significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level

Table 2.5. Adjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership Controlling for Structural and Political Incorporation Variables among Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Education		1.019	1.021	1.019
Homeowner	1.021		1.120	1.101
Naturalized	1.111	1.158		1.141
Years in U.S.		.998	.999	.997
Constant	.615	.644	.625	.636

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=133,548; Male variable in all models, and Years in U.S. in model 3 are not significant at 0.05; all other models are significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level

Table 2.6. Adjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership Controlling for Economic and Structural factors among Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
HH Income (ln)		.902	.902	.917
Education	.920	1.024	1.022	
Homeowner	1.024	1.158	1.144	1.142
Naturalized			1.143	1.177
Years in U.S.			.997	.996
Constant	1.197	1.297	1.337	1.444

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=133,548; all models significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level.

Table 2.7. Adjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership Controlling for all Independent Variables among Adult Mexican-Born Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Age		1.012	1.015	1.015	1.015	1.020
Male	1.012	1.007	1.028	1.025	1.026	1.019
HH Income (ln)	.981	.936	.911	.908	.907	.916
Education			1.037	1.036	1.036	1.036
Homeowner				1.033	1.032	1.083
Naturalized					1.005	1.074
Years in U.S.						.986
Constant	.482	.786	.617	.638	.640	.608

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=133,548; Male variable in all models, and Years in U.S. in model 3 are not significant at 0.05 level; all other models are significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level

CHAPTER 3

MORE HERE THAN THERE? U.S.-BORN MEXICAN-ORIGIN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND ETHNORACIAL IDENTIFICATION

This chapter investigates relationships between indicators of the American Dream and some of the most important aspects of the incorporation of native-born Mexican-Americans. By *incorporation* I mean a more general process than assimilation which many contemporary scholars view as a kind of incorporation (Bean and Stevens 2003; Aguis Vallejo 2012). The particular aspects of incorporation on which I focus on fall within the economic, sociocultural and political domains of the process. Each of these dimensions represents a key part of overall incorporation (Bean et al 2012). As noted in Chapter 2, the present study is important because there is a lack of empirical work examining relationships among aspects of incorporation and the American Dream, both in the case of Mexican immigrants and native-born persons of Mexican-origin (I use the phrases native-born persons of Mexican-origin and later-generation persons of Mexican-origin interchangeably in this study). Such individuals are defined as those 2nd, 3rd, 4th and beyond generations who self-report as being U.S.-born, Hispanic and of Mexican descent in the 2000 U.S. census. We distinguish these persons from persons who are Mexican-born. These two groups combined are defined (and often colloquially understood and labeled) as Mexican Americans.

Because of the scarcity of empirical and theoretical work on the extent to which aspects of the American Dream overlap with immigrant incorporation, we do not know the extent to which these vary somewhat independently of economic incorporation. I focus here on native-born Americans of Mexican-origin because the extent to which this overlap occurs may vary between later-generation native-born persons of Mexican-origin and first-generation Mexican immigrants. Works like those of Huntington (2004) imply the public should not support current

levels of immigration or accept Mexican-origin persons because they often do not incorporate. He argues that Hispanics are so tied to their sending places and the sending places of their ancestors that Hispanics, and Mexican Americans in particular, will never accept or assimilate to American ways of life. However, he fails to examine the ways in which Mexican immigrants have actually pursued the American Dream as a part of their incorporation to American ways of life, or even independently. This is why I see a need to assess clearly how aspects of the American Dream connect with incorporation.

In this chapter I investigate this issue for self-enumerated native-born Americans of Mexican-origin living in the United States. I gauge the incorporation of this population via two key aspects of the American Dream; homeownership and racial identity (identifying as white). I use U.S. census data from IPUMS (the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series- census microdata for social and economic research) (Ruggles et al. 2010) to address my research questions because it provides a large enough number of cases to control adequately for the influence of economic indicators on markers of achieving the American Dream.

I thus pose the general question: How are key aspects of achieving the American Dream related to incorporation? Based on a classical assimilation theoretical perspective, one would think that American dream components would co-vary with other aspects of incorporation rather than exist independently. According to Warner and Srole (1945) and Blackburn and Bloom (1987) for example, among European immigrants who shared some of the same characteristics as contemporary immigrant groups, such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, assimilation was expected to take one to six generations. This, however, is not what Americans in general seem to think when they express an urgency for contemporary immigrants and later-generations to assimilate. According to Jiménez (2009), these nativist concerns seem to

overlook the fact that the continued flow of immigration may slow the apparent assimilation of the Mexican-origin population in general, regardless of time or generations in the U.S. Other scholars, such as Bean and Stevens (2003), Brown (2007) and Lee and Bean (2010), for example, consider both the Mexican-born and native-born Americans of Mexican-origin to be mostly on track towards incorporation; in part because they show intermarriage rates that greatly surpass the country's historically largest minority population, African-Americans (Tafuya Estrada et. al 2010). Their hypothesis of delayed incorporation is more consistent with the empirical evidence and serves to better tie together both classical assimilation and contemporary incorporation theories, because it accounts for both the contemporary post-industrial migration of today, and the predictions of assimilation models of yesterday.

Economic incorporation is the process by which immigrants and later-generation immigrants converge with the native-born or host society in aspects of economic status. To some extent homeownership is a direct indicator of economic incorporation and for average Americans it is their major source of wealth (Myers 2007). It is also an important indicator of the American dream because when homeownership is attained, then investment and identity link the new homeowner with his/her neighborhood, city and by extension, nation. Here I ask whether this varies only as a part of incorporation (i.e., along with economic incorporation) or also varies independently of this kind of incorporation?

Sociocultural incorporation refers to the ways in which people adapt to receiving societies, culture and the mainstream processes that begin to dissolve ascribed immigrant foreignness. It is the ways in which later-generation immigrants to the U.S. begin to blend into the American mainstream, via social forms and cultural practices such as religion (Levitt 2007), intermarriage, (Lee and Bean 2010), language (Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2007) and racial

identification (Dubois). In the past, scholars held that sociocultural incorporation (Gordon 1964) began and ended with the adopting of new or host practices, while this scholar finds that it is more of a merging of mainstream practices with those of immigrants (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2007; Myers 2007).

Political incorporation is a dimension of incorporation because citizenship, and racial identity are undeniable American markers (Bloemraad 2006). It should also change the way immigrants and their descendants are perceived by their neighbors as it makes foreignness a difficult label to apply to naturalized citizens who have the same rights and responsibilities as the general populace (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008), but who have been ascribed a foreign label. Racial identity is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation because identifying as white may facilitate a parallel existence with the general population and the political incorporation of the immigrants into the receiving country. Racial identity in American terms is difficult for a population socialized by their parents and grandparents who view themselves and their children as being of mixed race (Durand 2007). American race is understood as dichotomous with either white or other as a subjective choice. For the case of native-born Americans of Mexican-origin, their identity in the pan-American classification of Hispanic only further complicates their American identity (Emeka and Aguis Vallejo 2011). On the U.S. census and most survey forms, Americans are first asked to identify themselves as Hispanics or Non-Hispanics, and then they're asked to identify according to race, where white and a list of other races are listed as options emerge. Native-born Americans of Mexican-origin have little opportunity to leave their foreignness behind them. According to Emeka and Aguis Vallejo (2011) a small number of Hispanics, including Mexican-origin, are self-enumerating as non-Hispanic and as "other" in the race question. This study provides support for my theory that

race is an important incorporation facet because it is a key and uncontested American identity component.

My research thus also focuses on racial identity because, among the facets of incorporation, it is one of the most salient ways of incorporating to American ways of life. Racial identity relates in particular to the incorporation of later-generation Mexican-Americans. I examine each of the key aspects of incorporation for the native-born Mexican-origin population. Homeownership and the means by which homes are purchased by native-born Mexican-origin persons can be expressed as occurring against high odds. The native-born Mexican-origin purchase homes at rates that surpass expectations, given that they are purchasing homes in some of the most expensive places in the U.S. such as California. This is indicative of both subjective and objective economic incorporation. Homeownership by native-born Mexican-origin persons has been investigated by scholars (Myers 2007) who find that this group's low level of educational and income attainment shows a tremendous drive to take part in the American dream. They partake in planning and proactively saving to achieve the goal of homeownership (Myers 2007). In short, they "over-achieve" in regards to homeownership. Since homeownership takes place only through the navigation of bureaucratic and social structures that require money and stability, it reflects proactive and formal ways of embracing and incorporating to American ways of life. Individuals have to reach out to banking institutions, inform themselves of credit requirements and learn about the housing market, just to begin to prepare for house hunting.

Racial identity in American terms has historically been quite dichotomous, with little room for negotiation. If we consider that children have been born to bi-racial couples for centuries in the U.S., one can easily be surprised that bi-raciality only appeared on the U.S.

Census as recently as the centennial census of 2010. This alone can be a confusing phenomenon for a population that was socialized by their parents, community, and church to identify as belonging to a fixed mixed race of indigenous and European ancestry. Therefore, the tendency of the Mexican-origin population to choose the “other” category in the race question, more so than the bi-racial categories of the U.S. census’ short form may be indicative of their understandings and acceptance of American approaches to racial classification. With exposure to the American concept of race, their choice and therefore, their understanding of race, are expected to be different from that of their parents, grandparents and predecessors.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Scholars vary considerably in their perceptions of immigrant incorporation (Gordon 1964; Gans 1999; Zhou 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Telles and Ortiz 2008), and this variation is particularly pronounced for Mexican immigrants. Some scholars emphasize slow but steady mobility (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2007; Lee and Bean 2010), while others focus on barriers and downfalls (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Still others see Mexicans as unassimilable (Huntington 2004). Gordon’s (1964) classic assimilation theory posits that with the occurrence of “structural assimilation,” or entrance into mainstream primary groups, all other forms of assimilation will naturally follow in no particular order. It further holds that exposure to the host country will also help account for similarities shared by newcomers and natives, if for no other reason than exposure to native practices (Gordon 1964). However, later theories of incorporation, such as selective acculturation, suggest that some aspects of acculturation may not necessarily occur, contemporaneously at all (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003; Wierzbicki 2003).

When people think of immigrant incorporation they often envision a relatively “straight-line” transition to the American mainstream based on the assumption that such changes took place in the case of European immigrants. Americans have a common sense notion that assimilation is easy for immigrants who come to this country and choose to be American. Especially because of what they think they know about European immigration (Alba and Nee 2003), however, much of what Americans are taught in school or talk about over the water cooler in regards to immigrant assimilation is far from the truth. Immigrants like the Jews, Irish, Germans and Italians and others, for example, have been labeled as being unassimilable at different points in their history (Gans 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003). Now, for the most part, such groups are considered white and can choose to hold up their “ethnic card” to prove it (Alba and Nee 2003). But each group has experienced negative and unfriendly nativist sentiment due to their perceived slow assimilation at earlier points in time. This is important to understand because with all of the negative things said today about the Mexican origin population, it is easy to forget that other groups were also once viewed as unassimilable in U.S. history (Lopez 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003).

Some scholars argue that assimilation is what almost inevitably happens to people when they go about their everyday lives (Alba and Nee 2003). This may be oversimplified. For European immigrants that shared some of the same characteristics as contemporary immigrant groups, such as being low-skilled and having low English proficiency, they were expected to take one to six generations to incorporate (Warner and Srole 1945). This, however, is not what Americans in general seem to think when they express an urgency for contemporary immigrants to assimilate. And they seem to overlook the fact that the continued flow of immigration may slow the apparent assimilation of the Mexican population in general, regardless of time in the

U.S. (Jimenez 2009). Other scholars consider the Mexican population on track towards assimilation, in part because they show intermarriage rates that greatly surpass those of the largest minority population, African-Americans (Lee and Bean 2010). Though the Mexican population comes to the U.S. with low human capital, their English proficiency rates nearly parallel those of the Asian or “model minority” population, whose members come with very high human capital (Bean and Stevens 2003). These two empirical findings suggest the Mexican-origin population is moving along an assimilation track, especially when scholars take into account length of stay for first generation entrants and generation status among the descendants of the immigrants (Bean and Stevens 2003; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006; Bean, et al. 2009). It is important to focus on the assimilation of the contemporary immigrant population in terms that can be clearly understood and measured. Because the public has been exposed to works like Huntington’s (2004) that deter them from supporting current immigration because of its claim that the Mexican case is cause for concern, there needs to be a clear understanding of what sociologists and scholars in general are using to measure facets of incorporation. Contemporary scholars have described assimilation “as a type of incorporation process” (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2007; Bean, et. al. 2009). This dissertation will use the term *incorporation* to mean the same as assimilation did for earlier waves of immigration, but with a more proactive and blending process. This research will focus on certain aspects of economic, sociocultural and political incorporation because each is a marker of general incorporation. This research is important because there is a lack of empirical work on the relationship multiple markers may have for immigrant incorporation (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2007). Economic incorporation is the process by which immigrants converge with the native-born in various aspects of economic status (Bean and Stevens 2003; Myers 2010). This dissertation looks at how

homeownership as a direct indicator of economic incorporation because for the average American, it is their primary source of wealth (Myers 2007). That is why it is also an important indicator of immigrant incorporation.

Sociocultural incorporation is an integral component of the incorporation process, because it is the incorporation process that explains the ways in which people adapt to the host culture and the mainstream processes. These processes begin to blend away immigrants' foreignness and immigrants, as well as later-generations begin to blend into the American mainstream, via social forms and cultural practices. In the past, scholars held that sociocultural incorporation (Gordon 1964) began and ended with the adopting of new or host practices, while more contemporary scholars find that it is more of a merging of mainstream practices with that of the immigrant (Bean and Stevens 2003; Brown 2007; Bean et al. 2009; Lee and Bean 2010; Myers 2011). Therefore, one can argue, that when immigrants arrive to the U.S. and experience race in American terms, their context of reception is detrimental to each immigrant [group] understandings of racial categories ascribed to them, as others begin to adapt to and begin to achieve "whiteness" (Bonilla-Silva 2003). To clarify the latter further, I view the relationship that whiteness has with sociocultural incorporation as ever changing, for the Mexican-origin population. As the many changes that this population has seen in terms of their racial and ethnic choices on the U.S. census during the last hundred years, for example, they went from being classified as white at the very beginning of their appearance on the U.S. census, to their own Mexican category, to now being lumped into a political term known only in the U.S., the term "Hispanic" (Zolberg 2006). The Mexican immigrant population may well be actively and proactively working on changing the ascription of their ethnic minority status to white, partly as

a mechanism for not being black and partly as a way for blending into the American fabric, as immigrants of Italian, Irish and German descent previously did.

Political incorporation is another dimension of immigrant incorporation because the right to vote, paying taxes, and participation in American ways of life are indicators of American-ness (Bloemraad 2006). Immigrants and their descendants must make decisions that change their identity, rights and privileges that they once saw as unchangeable (Bloemraad 2006) when first arrived to the U.S. Citizens have the same rights and responsibilities as the general populace (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008), and participating in such things as homeownership, English as a primary language and receiving education in American institutions facilitates their acceptance to the general population and their political incorporation into the receiving country. Homeownership is a marker of incorporation because what continues to be debated about contemporary immigration and their descendants is “the degree to which newcomers affect and are affected” by the fabric of American life, and it’s expected that immigrant minorities become ever more indistinguishable from natives, at least after several generations” (Gordon 1964; Bean and Stevens 2003).

Theories on incorporation continue to differ from each other and the founding literature on assimilation therefore it is appropriate to indicate that there is not yet a given formula for immigrant incorporation. When one reads Gordon’s (1964) formula on immigrant assimilation, which reflects a more unidimensional process, immigrants are intrinsically expected to absorb the mainstream or native way of life. Whereas, when you look at contemporary works, such as Bean and Stevens (2003), you see a multidimensional process, or a concise depiction of how immigrants and natives give and take from each other as both incorporate one another. It remains unresolved, however, whether incorporation is a unidimensional process as classic

assimilation theory implies (Gordon 1964), or a multi-dimensional process as most of its variants like ethnic disadvantage, segmented assimilation and selective acculturation theories suggest (Zhou 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2009). These variants note that it has different components that may move in fits and starts, rather than altogether (Gordon 1964; Huntington 2004). If the former process, unidimensional incorporation, predominates then different components of incorporation would all move together as a result of one main underlying process—the general diffuse dynamic of gradually becoming more and more involved in the American mainstream as a consequence of greater exposure over time to the destination society (Gordon 1964). If it's the latter process that predominates, however, then the implication is that the different components do not all merely derive from exposure to underlying “Americanization,” but rather are separate factors whose occurrence may often reinforce other components over time and across generations (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean et al 2009). This admits of the possibility that a given separate component might move independently of other components. In short, the overall process could be facilitated, arrested or not affected by the presence or absence respectively of a given incorporation sub-component which could be operating independently (i.e., could be unconnected with) other sub-components, or which could be completely tied to other components. For the purpose of this paper, I argue that self-enumerated whiteness serves as a marker for sociocultural incorporation working with other facets examined here for the Mexican-origin, which may also vary independently of other sub-components.

The debate over the assimilation or incorporation of the Mexican-origin population has recently intensified. Its focus on such topics as language acquisition and economic incorporation continues (Bean and Stevens 2003; Huntington 2004; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Bean et al. 2009;

Emeka and Aguis Vallejo 2011). Though the stereotype is that language acquisition among persons of Mexican-origin lags behind other immigrant groups, studies (Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006) show that most Mexican-origin persons lose their native language at the same rate or faster than their European counterparts of the early 20th century. However, Mexican-origin persons continue to lag behind non-Hispanic whites in regards to educational attainment. As of 2000, the average years of schooling for non-Hispanic white males was 13.5, and for Mexican immigrant males it was 8.4 (Bean and Stevens 2003). This in fact helps explain the income gap between non-Hispanic whites and Mexican-origin persons. According to Bean and Stevens (2003), Mexican male immigrants' hourly wages are 51.6 % lower than those of non-Hispanic white men. This gap leads to the idea that for many Mexican-origin persons, American goals, especially homeownership, are far from reach, because without money, little is possible.

Less educational attainment, lower incomes, and a sometimes a less than welcoming environment could lead Mexican-origin persons to flee the U.S. However, the opposite is true. More often, circular migration is turning into immigrant settlement (Bean and Lowell 2007), where the individuals that once came for seasonal work and then returned home every year now stay for year-round work and residence. Why do so many people of this group choose to set up residence in the U.S.? Because many immigrants do return home as planned, and then find themselves comparing their U.S. existence with their home country's reality, they often decide to return to the U.S. This is because the realities that sent them on the Russian roulette of migration northward through deserts and in living conditions that were less than comfortable remained the same during their absence. In the U.S., with finance and credit options, as well as free education—makes more sense than the nation they hold dear. Among the perks that the U.S. has to offer: is free primary education for children and affordable secondary options for even

working adults, something not as readily accessible or available in Mexico. Because with more education, higher income levels are possible, and higher income levels lead to social investments. Social investments come in the form of growing social networks, leisure time, blending into the mainstream and enhancing financial well-being. All of these are facilitated if you have your own space. Something that is valued in Mexico just as much as it is in the U.S. is homeownership, having a place to call home, share family moments, and show that they are a contributing member of society. This paper argues that classical assimilation theory alone cannot explain the relationship that homeownership and ethnoracial identity have in the Mexican-origin population. Were the incorporation of later-generation Mexican-origin persons to follow the classical assimilation path, homeownership and ethnoracial identity would show parallel rates of both that resembled native-born white rates of changes in the objective material well-being of the group over time. However, the more subjective aspects of these dimensions may also vary independently of one another, as other theories of incorporation imply. Here we suggest that whiteness may be the sub-component that is most likely to do so because, as matters of identity have become more fluid, dynamic and situational in post-industrial societies (Bean et al 2011), their connections to class and political activity diminish.

STRUCTURAL INCORPORATION: EDUCATION AND INCOME

Socialization begins in the home and is supported and strengthened by society and social structures (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Socialization arguably begins in utero; everything a mother and or parents do become part of the human capital a person carries with them through life. The social things that parents and society provide enhance the human capital. Education is the way that children and young adults are socialized into their social roles. As the years of education

progress so too does the exposure that children have to social things. These social things are transmitted and supported by home life, education and other social structures; cultural and language are among the social things that are transmitted, protected and supported by education, home life and social structures. Children at a very young age pick-up on social cues that include language and social roles that help them learn to adapt and respond to society.

Family, and social structure expectations directly influence an individual's educational attainment. Children who have the opportunity and receive support to access education, have better life chances. These children are better prepared to learn, adapt to and thrive in school and social settings. This confidence is gained and retained through continued social stimuli that presents itself in their home life, education and social institutions. This confidence can be understood to be *successful* socialization. This success of the child, family and society can be measured by how far a child goes in school (educational attainment), their gpa and test scores; these children are revered by families and schools as *successful*. In American understandings of individualism, the child's *success* is credited to that child's individual astuteness and stride. When the child is not *successful* they are labeled as lazy and average (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Sociologists use labeling theories to reflect the understanding that once a child is labeled and provided the tools to succeed they will, succeed. And when a child is lacking the necessary tools to engage in school and learn while in school, society has failed this student.

According to the Federal Department of Education (2008) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) (2011), the dropout rate of every ethnic group has decreased over the last three decades. All except the Hispanic population, who according to the Department of Education have a 15% at the federal level and LAUSD reports a 35% high school dropout rate. These dropout rates are alarming, one in terms of their translation to real numbers and the other

in terms of their significance to the greater picture. The U.S. Census reports (2012) the Hispanic population is the fastest growing population. The Hispanic population is also a young population. This fact leads some education and inequality scholars to show concern over the increasing gap in educational attainment (Myers 2012) and quality of education available to Hispanic children.

Two of the ways that these low levels of educational attainment can be understood is in terms of *access* and *contribution* to the American dream. The first way to understand this relationship is that the higher educational attainment of a person, the higher the likelihood that person will become a homeowner and in essence *access* the American dream. This American dream is in direct relation or *contributes* to the American dream of others, as the younger American purchases the home from an older American who invested time and money into building equity in a home or nest egg. This home becomes the baton in the race to and the trophy piece that you have accessed the American dream. We also have to keep in mind that the higher the educational attainment the higher the income, therefore the more income one makes the more one can be qualified for and can afford in terms of buying a house. Therefore the older American can ask and receive more for their investment, than they would get if they had an offer from a high-school dropout with less income.

These relationships are further correlated if one thinks of the neighbors and schools that benefit from maintaining property values high: the higher the property value the higher the property assessment that in turn keeps neighborhoods well maintained by local governments and school districts highly funded to provide higher quality education. This then creates a better educated child that then is able to purchase a house in the same or better neighborhood than where they began which creates a full circle beginning and ending with the American dream!

Structural incorporation is a key piece of immigrant incorporation considering that scholars argue that immigrants and the later-generations' trajectories vary according to the incorporation style of the host polity (Alba and Nee 2003; Lee and Bean 2007; Bean et al 2011). This diversity in policies affects the context of reception as immigrants as well as how later-generations navigate social structures. The degree that immigrants are welcome or are provided with mechanisms to learn and adapt to social structures may facilitate their incorporation. For the U.S. born of Mexican-origin population structural incorporation may seem to be a done deal since birth-right gives them citizenship and membership in the American mainstream. In addition, traditionally their first or only formal language is English due to their attendance in U.S. schools (Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006) and participation in mainstream social structures, such as government agencies. Arguably, and depending on the generation, context, and some may argue location, Mexican Americans may not necessarily consider themselves anything other than singularly American. Some scholars argue that Mexican Americans residing within large ethnic centers throughout the U.S. may not distinguish themselves from Mexican immigrants due to the continued replenishment of the latter (Jimenez 2010) albeit if only their structural incorporation may be what sets them apart from their immigrant counterparts.

HOMEOWNERSHIP AND INCORPORATION

When Americans think of where they live, they contemplate homeownership, seeing it as an integral part of the “American Dream” (Hornstein 2005, Rohe and Watson 2007; Myers 2007). Homeownership is thus deeply rooted in American culture. Early U.S. laws set land ownership as a requirement for the right to vote (Rohe and Watson 2007). Even now, owning a home rewards people with a “stake in society” (Rohe and Watson 2007). Homeownership is

thus often taken as an indicator of progress for individuals and for society in general (Rohe and Watson 2007). Homeowners are considered full-fledged and connected members of American communities (Guest et. al 2006) with generally greater access to local information and amenities.

But homeownership is an immigrant dream, too, one that crosses time and place. By becoming homeowners, immigrants continue to narrow the difference between themselves and the native born (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdekul 2008). In the mid-20th century, European immigrants, still often living in enclaves, had higher rates of homeownership than native-born whites (Lieberson 1963). In Australia, immigrants are “at least as and sometimes more ‘Australian’ than the Australian-born population” in regards to accomplishing the “Australian dream of homeownership” (Bourassa 1994). This immigrant propensity to buy housing could signify that for some immigrants, homeownership (or landownership) was already in their sights or goals before they arrived. My argument is that Mexicans also think of homeownership as part of their dream, and once they establish themselves in the U.S., many see their dream through to fruition. Study after study finds that homeownership is of value to Hispanic immigrants and especially to Mexican immigrants, as well as the Mexican-origin population (Myers, Megbolugbe and Lee 1998). In addition to the numerous tax incentives and social benefits to homeownership that renting simply does not provide.

I am particularly interested in homeownership as something that may vary separately from incorporation because of its symbolism as part of the American dream (Myers 2007; Aguis Vallejo 2012) and the way in which homeownership is particularly valued as a social institution and socialization tool. Of course, it also has instrumental benefits as well, by providing access to neighborhoods with better amenities and a means of building savings among groups with lower income (Kain and Quigley 1972). Both symbolically and socioeconomically, homeownership

may also be an important facet of incorporation. However, the incorporation literature only rarely addresses homeownership directly, and more work needs to be done to identify the extent to which it and other facets of incorporation work in tandem.

American homeownership and the homeownership of this group can be linked to a variety of indicators of incorporation. For example, English ability and length of residency in the United States have been found to be correlated with homeownership net of the usual measures of age, income and household composition (Alba and Logan 1991; Krivo 1995; Clark 2003; Myers 2007). Age at arrival also influences housing outcomes (Mendez 2009). In turn, English ability and length of residency are associated with economic mobility through higher wages. Greater incomes, together with English ability, provide immigrants access to higher-status neighborhoods (Alba and Logan 1999; Clark 2003; Myers 2007).

I conceptualize homeownership as reflecting incorporation along three dimensions: the sociocultural, economic, and political. The process of buying a house requires knowledge of the host country, its housing and credit markets, and real-estate practices, all of which reflect sociocultural incorporation. At the same time, income levels and maintenance of a credit rating sufficient to guarantee lending indicate economic incorporation. Because homeownership also symbolizes a tangible stake in the host country and requires the payment of property taxes, it also reflects political incorporation, although this aspect may develop over time and is unnecessary for the initial purchase of property. But it seems highly probable that of the various dimensions of incorporation, homeownership is primarily an indicator of economic incorporation. In the United States, the homeownership rate for the Mexican-origin population is 57 percent, which is about 20 percentage points less than that for non-Hispanic whites. But Hispanic households have lower incomes than non-Hispanic whites. And interestingly, perhaps, reflecting American-

Dream motivation, Hispanic households are more likely than non-Hispanic households to be actively saving for the purchase of a home (James and Atilas 2008).

Given the income differentials between Mexican-origin person's households and the native population, it is a substantial accomplishment to purchase a home. It is a notable achievement for those of Mexican-origin, because areas of Hispanic concentration tend to be more expensive than other cities (Light 2006). The Mexican-origin population may in fact be using a form of selective acculturation to achieve incorporation through homeownership. Especially when studies find that the income of second generation of Mexican-origin persons may be affected by remittances and financial support of parents and other family commitments (Agius Vallejo 2007; Wierzbicki 2003). While other later-generation groups share housing with older generations (McConnell and Akresh 2008) for extended periods of time and generations, Mexican-origin individuals set up independent households at much younger ages (Myers and Zhou 2011) which in turn leads to this group having less opportunity, not less of a drive towards homeownership but, less income to achieve homeownership. These empirical findings and arguments present the case for the apparent slowing to incorporate for the Mexican-origin. If individuals are setting up house at younger ages and sometimes simultaneous providing financial support to extended family, their individual achievements in terms of higher education or homeownership will be affected.

According to the Huffington Post (2011) and Trulia (2012), homeownership is still part of the American dream, although Americans remain skittish about buying homes since the real estate collapse of 2008, they are still committed the American dream of homeownership. The uncertainty of demand and market recovery has not affected the centrality of the American dream of homeownership. Trulia (2012) shows that almost two-thirds of 18 to 34 year olds

believes homeownership to be part of the American Dream, although ownership rates figures for that group has been on the decline since 1980. The study also found that renters' main hindrance on the road to homeownership was simply saving up for the down payment. As obstacles present themselves en route to homeownership, national identity (Trulia 2012) and class status continue to be wrapped in the American dream of homeownership. A Fannie Mae (2011) survey found that these sentiments were "more widespread" within Hispanics and African-Americans. Myer (2011) found that U.S. 2010 Census data indicated that 42 % of Latinos own homes by age 44. The rate of homeownership for Latinos, in California, is on the rise with 78% of California's total growth attributed to Latino homeownership. In terms of economic and political incorporation, one study in Germany found that immigrants with a stronger commitment to the host country are more likely to buy a house (Constants, Roberts and Zimmermann 2009).

Homeownership is thus a *key* component of the American dream. This is supported by empirical works that find that the wealth that most Americans have is in their home's equity (Myers 2011). Homeownership thus serves as bedfellow to the economy, with economists and media outlets often nothing that homeownership is integral to the health of the economy. One need only turn on the television, open a newspaper or listen to the radio at any time in the last 6 years, since the real estate bubble burst to see a concerted effort by non-profit and for-profit financial institutions. These companies advertise to those in mortgage default, dreaming of homeownership, and those that are just not sure about where they stand! Homeownership is a pivotal social label and key component of the American dream.

Homeownership as a marker of success within contemporary forms of culture may be found in modern settings, as observation shows. It is often remarked that owning numerous homes and properties is a marker of undeniable success. The additional importance of owning

properties is [location], where a property is located is a very significant factor. For those that are at the bottom end of the socioeconomic echelon, location is important because of the safeties that a “good” neighborhood provides. Here you will find that educational attainment is not as important or telling as risk taking and other forms of bureaucratic understandings of American ways of life, including lending practices. American ways of life may be better understood and applied if someone is: educated and therefore socialized in American schools.

RACIAL IDENTIFICATION AND INCORPORATION

Contemporary immigration has many things in common with the immigration wave of the early part of the twentieth century. Among the similarities that contemporary immigrants share with European immigrants of the early twentieth century is that some of them seem to be softening the ethnic boundary between themselves and whites (Bean and Stevens 2003; Lee and Bean 2007). Among the differences between the previous wave and the contemporary waves is their ethnic and racial make-up (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003). This fact is the most salient difference that immigration scholars point to when providing historical backgrounds regarding the two large waves of U.S. immigration (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Class boundaries between immigrant groups and whites soften as they enter spaces that are off limits to blacks, such as spatial proximity (Gordon 1964; Bean and Stevens 2007; Brown 2007), intermarriage (Lee and Bean 2007) and politics (Kasinitz et al 2008). For example, if we take Gordon’s (1964) typology for assimilation, Asians and (in some ways) the Mexican-origin are on their way to (successful) integration as they take on cultural practices of the U.S. native-born white population and continue to overcome structural and social barriers, some of which the

black population (in general) has been unable to do. If contemporary immigrants continue to follow the path of past immigrant waves as they seem to be doing (Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003) their merge into the white or nonblack category (Lee and Bean 2007) will be taking shape in the next twenty years. This means that the black-white race and class boundaries will continue to be strong.

The current understanding of how contemporary immigrants differ from the previous wave of immigrants, their national and ethnic identities, will help make the race boundary stronger. There are studies that point to the group efforts by past and present immigrants to distance themselves from blacks (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean et. al 2009) as a mechanism for “success”. This continued distancing from blacks is one of the strongest tools European immigrants used to gain an ethnic, instead of a racial identity. If this trend continues with contemporary immigrants, it will lead to the hardening of both the black-white race and the class boundaries.

Immigration scholarship is undecided or split, in regards to the racialization of new immigrants and the existing black and white racial divide that exists in the U.S. One group believes the current black and white racial categories will remain, through a tri-racial hierarchy, with a buffer zone that will consist of all other minorities that are either dark-skinned or downward assimilated (Zhou 1999). Other scholars envision a black-nonblack divide; a view of the future placing African-Americans as the only unassimilable group in the U.S. case (Gordon 1964; Lee and Bean 2007). This may be more plausible if we consider what happened with European immigrants in the twentieth century (Bean and Stevens 2003), when Italians and the Irish were in some instances considered to be black, and for the most part non-white. With

exerted efforts to distance themselves from blacks, both groups were able to achieve ethnic and not racial identities.

When the ways that European immigrants achieved whiteness in the immigration literature (Alba and Nee 2003) are juxtaposed with the ways that some react to ethnicity ascription, the black-nonblack divide seems more feasible. If ethnicity takes a symbolic, optional form for later-generation Asian and Hispanic immigrants, especially those that have intermarried or are the offspring of intermarriage, and who's primary or only language is English. Then the expectation is that if immigration ceases, like it did for the past immigrant groups, then assimilation should be achievable for them as well (Bean and Stevens 2003). Some Asians are showing parallel structural and economic "successes" that surpass the expectations and outcomes of even native-born whites (Bean and Stevens 2003), and some could argue that they are more American than native-born whites. The later-generation Mexican-origin population is also on their way to whiteness, for those that are not already assimilated politically, economically, and socio-culturally (Gordon 1964; Bean and Stevens 2003; Jimenez 2008). Especially for those that no longer have Spanish surnames and those that are light-skinned (Jimenez 2008). However, continued replenishment of immigrants from their ancestors' land, keeps their foreignness identifiable (Jimenez 2008).

Their foreignness is visible to the native-born population due to their phenotypic attributes that evoke their Mexican-ness (Jimenez 2008), due to perceived Mexican facial features as well as their Spanish surnames. However, there is little said about those that get violently angry at being labeled Mexican or Mexican-origin. This is very similar to what middle and upper-middle class African-Americans face when they are confronted with being profiling or stereotyped as lower-class African-Americans or what is perceived as being black culture. Black

culture is perceived to be socially dependent and collectively deviant from American norms (Gordon 1964). As long as the black population (in general) is perceived to be [different] or deviant (Gordon 1964) from mainstream America then they will continue to be seen as unassimilable. This may be why [some] immigrants find ways to not participate in perceived deviant behavior, in collective terms.

Immigrants can be seen as distancing themselves from blacks by choosing to use public social services on a temporary basis (Van hook, Brown and Bean 2006), which helps to maintain their class status visibly different from the black stereotype of having generational dependency on social services. For example, Mexican immigrants have lower levels of education than blacks (Department of Education 2011) but have lower levels of unemployment (Bean and Stevens 2003). This helps support the notion that blacks understand that labor migrants are a “preferred” labor option when it comes to service sector jobs. Another way to consider how immigrants are becoming integrated in to the American mainstream is their increasing spatial proximity to whites. It is another way that immigrants soften the class and ethnic boundaries between them and whites, and hardened the racial boundary between them and blacks. Since they are able to live in large urban areas where housing is more expensive (Alba and Nee 2003), placing them closer to whites, and distancing them from blacks.

Racial and class boundaries are created and maintained by groups to distinguish between the “us” and “them” (Gordon 1964), and constantly change in order to make the distinctions salient. However, white identity has allotted for groups it once labeled “other” to become white, which some have argued will also happen to contemporary immigrant groups (Gans 1999; Lee and Bean 2007). As new groups have white privilege, even if it is temporary, honorary or probationary, it helps those groups understand that associating with mainstream America or

whiteness or simply following beneficial paths will allow them to become part of the American fabric. Because white privilege is in direct conflict with blackness, other groups that don't quite fit in either category learn that their associating with blackness, can take away any temporary benefit that honorary whiteness provides (Zhou 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2003). The boundaries of whiteness or class privilege will continue to be maintained and hardened by all groups who are allowed to identify with or benefit from them, and any sign of softened boundaries will allow groups to become part of the American fabric while distancing themselves from blacks.

Being an immigrant in the U.S. context, involves racial socialization and perception (Gans 1999), or some may say that immigrant groups are racialized (Gans 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Because as more groups are found to be "worthy" of whiteness, or becoming American, they are allowed to have the privileges that whiteness guarantees (Hochschild 1995), while others are viewed as on their way to becoming black (Zhou 1999). The first of the two previous processes is the least problematic because it reflects what happened to European immigrants of the twentieth century.

In the past, groups that were at first identified as unassimilable, like the Irish, Italians, German and the Slavs, were able to gain whiteness or make their otherness disappear (Gans 1999; Bean and Stevens 2003; Jimenez 2008). These groups are now able to use their symbolic ethnicity card (Gans 1999) because their race is not questioned and their ethnicity has blended into the American fabric. Now it is safe to say that there are Irish descendants that have no connection to their Irish ancestry, and that there are those that continue to identify as Irish. It is possible to find people that are third or fourth-generation who have Irish last names and only Irish ancestors who do not view themselves as being ethnically Irish and at the same time find those that do continue to identify as being Irish. The counter argument for the Mexican case is

that so far, those of Mexican ancestry that either have Spanish surnames or have Mexican phenotypes cannot make a choice about their ethnic card (Jimenez 2008). They are still understood to be and expected to be Mexican and this may be reinforced by the “ongoing replenishment by the Mexican-born” (Jimenez 2008).

An example of how ethnic boundaries may become hardened is the case of Mexican-origin individuals. They are expected to identify as being Mexican, no questions asked (Jimenez 2008), even if they have lived in the U.S. for generations, which should be looked at as being incongruent. Since Mexico’s national identity is *mestizo*, which is mixed white European and native indigenous ancestry (Jimenez 2008), it is expected that after becoming English monolingual and beginning to integrate in other forms (Bean and Stevens 2003), that the Mexican-origin [especially the light-skinned] (Jimenez 2008) would easily be seen as white. However, their last names are presented by Jimenez (2010) as showing that Mexican-Americans whose identities are questioned by white Americans due to the continued replenishment of Mexican-born immigrants (Jimenez 2008). He presents the Mexican-American case to be one where almost exclusively they identify as being Mexican. This is problematic because his subjects have no direct connection to the Mexican land, culture and in some cases resent the Mexican-born in general (Jimenez 2008). This is a clear matter of ascription because Americans are ascribing an ethnic identity to a group that is arguably no less white than the Irish in the previous example. Jimenez (2008) could have made a clearer case about how the ongoing wave of immigration from Mexico affects the way that people of [stereotyped] Mexican phenotype are perceived (Gans 1999).

However, Jimenez’ (2010) suggests Mexican-Americans, who in their social world are simply American or even white, are being confronted with and in some cases accepting the

ascription by white Americans, that they are Mexican or Mexican-American instead. Jimenez (2010) seems to bypass this by giving examples of how interviewees accept the Mexican ascription, more than he focuses on those that find the ascription problematic, although he mentions such individuals in passing. However, this seems to be a better example of how ethnic and racial boundaries are maintained by keeping those that are deemed to be different out of the white or American category. Because if white Americans allow their fellow neighbors who “look” Mexican but are American in every other way to identify as being white or American, then the newly arrived Mexican-born will be next in line to weaken or overcome the racial boundary. However, this softened racial boundary is what is inevitably occurring as more of the later-generation Mexican-origin population are losing their Spanish proficiency (Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006). Others are entering the American economic and political mainstream (Kasinitz et al 2008) and a few are not identifying as Hispanic (Emeka and Aguis Vallejo 2011), although they identify as having origins in Mexico, Central and South America.

Another example of how boundaries are softened and maintained, as the previous example shows, comes from people constantly reinforcing or holding the lines. Class or social status has a strong effect on the softening and maintenance of ethnic, racial and class boundaries, and is the most apparent in the case of “honorary” whites (Bean et al. 2009). Honorary whites are those minorities that have achieved or are on their way to “successful” integration in to mainstream American culture (Rajjman and Tienda 1999). Though their skin color or ancestry is still not viewed as white, their spatial, sociocultural, economic and political patterns towards incorporation are recognized as becoming “parallel” to the U.S. mainstream (Bean and Stevens 2003; Lee and Bean 2007). Some scholars believe these include light-skinned Mexican-origin persons and most Asians (Gans 1999). There are several works that depict how different Asian

groups have learned quite early on that in order to be accepted into the American mainstream, they must distance themselves from blacks (Gordon 1964; Lee and Bean 2007) and perceived deviant behaviors from white-Americans. Asians are understood to make up a panethnic category that has emerged in the last three decades (Lopez and Espiritu 1990) that encompasses many ancestries and origins and is understood to be the “model minority.” This group is a “model minority” because of its levels of high human at arrival and that [most] later generations continue to attain (Raijman and Tienda 1999; Bean and Stevens 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Brown and Bean 2009). These attributes contribute to their being viewed as being on the path to whiteness.

Asians have high levels of intermarriage with white Americans and very low levels of intermarriage with black Americans (Lee and Bean 2010), with close spatial proximity to whites in white suburbs, leading to their having less social distance to whites. This pattern is closely followed by Hispanics (Bean and Stevens 2003), with blacks being the farthest from whites, in terms of social distance. This has not been an easy road for the Asian population, especially for those who were here in the U.S. during the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Portes and Rumbaut 2006) although like most American history, this is commonly forgotten (Chinese Exclusion Act, for one). During their earlier time in this country, they were met with harsh nativist sentiment which resonates with what Hispanic immigrants are experiencing today (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003). However, this group as a collective has made tremendous strides, especially true about their educational attainment (Bean and Stevens 2003). Asians are not only paralleling native-born white achievement levels in education and income, but in most cases surpassing them (Lee and Bean 2007), something that blacks and the Mexican-origin have not done (Hochschild 1995; Lee and Bean 2010).

It is important to understand how some boundaries are hardened as others become softer. For example, the Asian and Hispanic populations have been structurally assimilating through spatial incorporation and intermarriage, therefore crossing into the white boundary (Lee and Bean 2007) which blacks as a collective have not been able to do. This softened boundary has also allowed Asian and Hispanic populations to purchase homes in the same neighborhoods as whites (Bean and Stevens 2003) more so than blacks (Hochschild 1995). This provides immigrants with a social proximity to whites that benefits their entrance into social networks and their children's education, therefore they are able to cross the ethnic boundary and facilitate their entry into and becoming white or nonblack identities (Kasinitz et al 2008; Lee and Bean 2007). Living in white suburbs benefits individuals because of the good schools, safe prosperous neighborhoods (Bean and Stevens 2003), and access to strong social networks which benefits their income outcomes. By entering the white suburbs, Asians are distancing themselves from blackness, because blacks are not moving to white suburbs (Bean and Stevens 2003). At the same time distancing themselves from the negative attributes that blackness is ascribed, they are shortening the distance between themselves and whiteness, in turn maintaining racial boundaries (Zhou 1999). In other words, as long as the Mexican-origin population continues on their current path, they will benefit from their social proximity and identity of whiteness or being nonblack. To do this, they will have to continue distancing themselves from blacks (Bean et. al 2009) and softening social, ethnic and racial boundaries with whites.

However, some view this as problematic because the contemporary wave of immigrants, have identities that due to transnationalism and technology, help them maintain ties to their sending homelands (Glicker-Schiller 1999). This can help contribute to hardened ethnic boundaries, which would halt or slow their assimilation. Because due to their social ties, it can

be perceived that immigrants in the U.S. will be less likely to want to lose their ethnic identities (Huntington 2004). However, if we consider the classical assimilation model, which says that simply due to exposure or time in the U.S. immigrants will lose their ethnic identities (Gordon 1964) then their incorporation is well on its way. As their assimilation or incorporation stays on track, immigrants continue en route to the nonblack category (Lee and Bean 2007), while blacks continue to be the only unassimilable group in U.S. history.

Other groups such as the Mexican-origin can continue through their assimilation path if the replenishment of immigrants slows down as did the European immigration of the last century (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003; Jimenez 2008). Once this happens, academia should be better able to ascertain the levels of “success” that Mexicans and their descendants reach (Gans 1999). Unfortunately, this would help to make clear that to be black in the U.S. is to have the lowest life chances or opportunities than even newcomers. When we consider that newcomers who are not Protestant, English speakers or culturally American, are better able to gain entrance into white American life, we begin to see black-white and class boundaries harden during the next twenty years if contemporary immigrants and their descendants continue on their current assimilation paths (Gordon 1964; Motomura 2008). If current immigrant groups continue on their path to assimilation then these boundaries will be hardened to create a black-nonblack divide and ethnicity will become even more of an optional form and less of an ascriptive one for the Mexican-origin population (Gans 1999). And as long as those newcomers are allowed to live and prosper in American suburbs where the hub of social networks and commodities are held and distributed—the next twenty years will continue to move in the direction of a black-nonblack divide in the U.S., if not world context.

When scholars posit the contexts of reception and future implications for the current immigrant groups, one has to wonder: in what ways can we measure how class and race boundaries affect or contribute to the decision making of immigrant groups to partake in American life? This is an important question to consider due to the predisposition that Mexicans arrive to the U.S. with, and that is whether Mexican-origin persons identify themselves as *mestizos*: whereas in the U.S., bi- or multi-raciality is relatively new to the American mainstream understanding of racial identity.

Mestizaje

Politicizing a mixed-race identity as the nation-state identity may have been developed to appease the masses, in Mexico (Krauze 2006). During two long-winded revolutions that were created and maintained by the lower-classes, Mexico's elites may have brainstormed to create a way to appease the masses. What better way to appease the masses who saw themselves intrinsically different than the upper class who were mostly white, than to create a mixed identity that over time has been embraced by the general Mexican populace. Individuals who are naturally blonde and blue-eyed (*güero/a*) consider themselves to be racially mixed white-indigenous, similarly to someone who is highly pigmented with black eyes (*prieto/a*) and black hair.

This bi-racial identity may be holding back 45% of Mexican-origin persons, who identify as "other," from identifying as either indigenous or white in the American context and it may be what is helping propel "white," identity for 55% (see tables on racial identity). This mixed racial identity or Mestizo identity, alongside American white and black notions of race (Portes and Rumbaut 2006), with no place for those who see themselves as in between or none of the above may be what is propelling the white racial identity of native-born of Mexican-origin persons to

choose the white racial category of the U.S. census, as well as publicly identifying as being white.

Generation and incorporation has an unintended relationship that Jimenez (2010) finds as the ongoing arrival of Mexican immigrants may be affecting the way that Americans identify later-generation individuals of Mexican-origin. This apparent replenishment of Mexican immigrants is similar to what Myers (2011) calls the *Peter Pan Fallacy*, where due to this same continued flow of Mexican immigration Americans see Mexican immigrants as forever newly arrived. When we think back to American history, but more specifically to Mexicans in the U.S., we recall a mix caveat of contexts of reception. We had the first group that was kept at bay during the first part of the 20th century, kept away in company towns where they were thought of as separate but equal. Then there were the forced deportations or repatriations of the post-World War I era that saw mostly later-generation of Mexican-origin persons repatriated to Mexico.

Today, we see later-generations of Mexican-origin persons distancing themselves as Americans from “them metsicans [sic].” Ochoa (2007) wrote about the community of La Puente, CA and the effort some members of that community took to try and find a bridge between their differences and reminders of their similarities. Not all of the members of even this community were for community building. Distancing by native-born of Mexican-origin persons from Mexican immigrants can be understood and undertaken as a survival mechanism.

Individuals who feel that their being not only unfriendly, but unkind and even bigoted against Mexican immigrants see their actions as “natural,” identifying as American, alone or first and Hispanic as non-optional or second, is quite important to individuals who understand Mexican immigrants to be foreigners who are so different that they must distance themselves from this foreignness.

Gans (1999) presented the case for later-generation Italians who used the symbolic ethnicity card. In the same manner, it is easy to find later-generation Mexicans who use symbolic ethnicity when needed. It is not as hidden as most who keep it hidden believe, because Mexican immigrants as much as Italian immigrants can tell who is of their descent. Mexican immigrants call native-born Mexican-origin persons *pochos*; some use it as a passive way of identifying American-born of Mexican origin, while others use it as a label for individuals they see as “hiding their Mexican-ness” or denying or hiding their Mexican-ness. Later-generation Mexican-origin persons may see themselves as blending into American ways of life, whereas, the perceived replenishment of Mexican immigrants may be serving as a reminder that American identity is far from attained (Nahirny and Fishman 1965; Barth).

Gordon (1964) outlines the ways that immigrants and later-generation immigrant descendants integrate to American ways of life. Park and Burgess (1922) describe society as broken up into unique environments that vary much like nature. Therefore, it can be argued that people blend into American ways of life, in particular into environments that make up their surroundings. Therefore what mainstream means varies by place and time. Individuals may blend into a biker community where owning a motorcycle is key to their belonging, where in other communities, bikers are a deviant out-group.

Downward assimilation is considered to be the quintessential opposite of incorporation or assimilation. However, this sociologist sees downward assimilation as needing revision. Downward assimilation may not be as negative as it is perceived to be. Downward assimilation is a convoluted term because it assumes or infers that there is an upward assimilation process. I theorize and propose that incorporation is taking place in location-specific ways. Location-specific ways of incorporating can be seen at different spectrums, for immigrants and natives.

Individuals that migrate within the U.S. need to learn the ways of the location that they are new to, much like immigrants from other countries must do. This acclimation is of course much more passive and less restrictive for natives who are migrating within their own countries where the language they speak and the customs they have are generally the same throughout the country. However, customs, language (dialects and language usage), and locations can create and maintain culture in a vacuum. Where to know how to do something, how to ask for something and where something is may be daunting to someone who is new to the area. Therefore this location-specific incorporation can be daunting and problematic for both natives and immigrants.

Race and Ethnicity- The Italian Case

All it takes is a glimpse at any TV show that depicts “Italians” living the American dream. Here the validity of symbolic ethnicity for later generation immigrant generations is pervasive enough to be missed, but salient enough that this sociologist caught the subtleties of a third and fourth generation Italian being offended by someone calling them “1/16 Italian, and Olive Garden Italian....” This sociologist immediately thought of the arguments that Gans (1999) made, where the ever changing ethnic identity of individuals would change over time. Here, it is evident that the transgressions that Italian immigrants experienced during their large influx, when they experienced nativist created contexts of reception, have not become history pieces. Now, later generation Italians some who are 1/8 Italian, are not using just a symbolic ethnicity card for the world to see, but they are labeling themselves Italian first and American second.

It is quite difficult to envision a time when a person who is being called American, insists on being called “Mexican” because they are proud of being Mexican, more so than being

American. Imagining that in later generations, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and beyond, Mexican-origin individuals who are passing in the eyes of the general public, will want to be labeled “Mexican,” instead of American, seems unlikely. This is not to say that individuals who are of Mexican-origin, partly or wholly won’t acknowledge that fact, we have seen this in cases of politicians and the famous (New Mexico’s own, Bill Richardson and Eva Longoria).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND DATA

The question that frames this chapter is: what is the relationship between homeownership and racial identification for the later-generation of Mexican-origin population? An additional question is: How does the self-enumerated race identity of later-generation of Mexican-origin individuals vary with homeownership? Most particularly, I hypothesize, because of the strength of the American Dream drive, that homeownership will be positively related to identifying as white in the census and that this relationship will not disappear when income (economic incorporation) is controlled. Thus, initially I expect to find a greater number of Mexican Americans self-enumerating as “white” rather than as “other”. I expect that homeownership will vary positively with white identification due to their exposure to American ways of life, including education, ease with bureaucratic navigation, and understanding of the American dream. These expectations are educated guesses due to colloquial and academic understandings. Finally, as noted, I expect that their homeownership will positively affect white identification even after controlling for education and income. Evidence supporting these supporting hypotheses would reflect the high levels of homeownership attained by this population and how this population is moving forward towards the American dream against many odds.

For purposes of investigating these ideas, there is no more adequate data than census data due to its very large numbers of independent and overlapping cases which enable the detection of relationships among certain pairs of incorporation variables of interest (homeownership, education, income, and racial identification) while controlling for the others. There is no larger data set available to researchers than census data, and for the purpose of this research project I use the 2000 census file (Ruggles et al. 2010). Within this very large data set, I identify variables to investigate homeownership, white racial identification, income, gender and education; via these variables I assess my hypotheses, researching the covariability that these indicators show among later-generation Mexican-origin individuals that reflect their path to and through the American dream. The finding that homeownership shows a positive relationship with white racial identification net of the important influences of structural factors would provide support for the idea that American Dream dynamics are operating among Mexican Americans to affect both homeownership and white racial identification independently of economic incorporation.

FINDINGS

My findings indicate that for later-generation Mexican-origin persons, homeownership is a strong goal. Much is written about the low levels of educational attainment and income disparities, negatively affecting later-generation of Mexican-origin individuals and their futures. Some even argue that they are downwardly assimilating or racial/ethnic disadvantage impedes or blocks the incorporation of this group. However, what the present work finds is that although this group is confronted with myriad obstacles to achieving the American dream, their proactive seeking of the American dream is clear. I find that 57% of this group are homeowners, while

54% identify as being white, their mean years of education is just below 12 years, not too far from that of the average American-born native, with just above a household mean income of \$46,000. Heads of households are mostly male and show a mean age of about 43 years (see Table 1). These descriptives paint a picture of the Mexican-origin population or Mexican Americans that may be missing from contemporary works that portray them as on a downward spiral away from the American dream. Instead, this data indicates that the group has a substantial homeownership rate, greater than what mainstream understandings and contemporary works may assume. This group's racial identity is also not aligned with what most Americans, or scholars imply, with 54% of this population self-enumerating as white, rather than as other or something else in the U. S. Census.

The zero-order relationships among these variables are shown in Table 2. Particularly striking are the strong relationships of being an older head of household with education, income, home ownership and white racial identification. Older Mexican Americans have less education than younger ones ($r = - 0.362$), as would be expected given that schooling has increased substantially in recent decades across birth cohorts. Reflecting this, older Mexican Americans also have lower incomes ($r = - 0.033$). However, older Mexican Americans are also much more likely to be homeowners ($r = 0.332$) despite their weaker relationship between income and homeownership, implying that American Dream dynamics are stronger in affecting the tendency to own a home than those of economic incorporation alone. Also, although the relationship between income and homeownership is statistically significant, it is not nearly as large as that between homeownership and white racial identification ($r = 0.118$). Another way to express the relationship between homeownership and white race is as an odd ratio. This is positive and significant (1.614) (see Table 2). That is, those who are homeowners are 61 percent more likely

to identify as white than are those who are not. This relationship is positive and strong, with homeownership serving as a marker of participation in the American dream. This marker is quite telling of the role that white racial identity plays for the native-born of Mexican-origin population. Homeowners being more likely to identify as white may be an indication that having community ties may in fact serve as an incorporation aid. At this time, however, causal relationships are difficult to ascertain since we don't know what came first, the white racial identification or the the homeownership.

Those with higher incomes are 6 percent more likely to identify as white than those with lower incomes. This may indicate that income serves as a whitening tool, or serves as the tool to weaken racial boundaries. This is not to say that income alone will provide for a race-less class system, but it may facilitate entrance into echelons that otherwise are closed to people because of skin color or perceived otherness. Education shows a weak but still significant relationship with white racial identification (1.005). This indicates that those who are more highly educated are slightly more likely to identify as being white. This may have to do with the exposure individuals may have in higher education to cultural and racial histories and contexts. Individuals that are exposed to philosophical and historical backgrounds in the movements of people across space and time are more likely to not just accept labels, but instead be more proactive within and between social structures. Whereas individuals who are less academically educated, may only understand their environments as places where ascribed roles are fixed.

Also, for native-born Mexican-origin persons, age has a positive odds (1.025) effect on identifying as white. For every one-year increase in age, there is a higher likelihood that an individual will identify as white. This shouldn't come as a surprise, since a by-product of Americanization is found to be the embedded belief that races are divided into white and black

categories (Du Bois 1978). Arguably, the older a person is, the more likely they are to understand America's two racial categories. Racialization can be a powerful tool for inclusion and exclusion into mainstream valued epicenters of labor and enterprise (Myers 2012) as well as sociocultural systems (Brown 2006, Lee and Bean 2010). Individuals who are American-born may understand that to choose the other category is to acknowledge foreignness, whereas identifying as white, indicates American-ness (Gordon 1964). The achievement and ascription of race are found heavily weighted in everyday experiences. The way that you interact with society is contingent on your self-perception or looking-glass self and it affects the way that the world responds to you in affirmations if positive, or admonitions if negatively perceived. It is not enough to walk around saying that you are Black or white so that the world accepts it to be so, there have to be social cues and reference groups who are ever-present to support your identity and society's response to it speaks to its synchrony with societal norms. It isn't expected that you may be born to Mexican-born parents and identify as simply American or white. These racial identities are reserved for individuals who can claim sole origins in Europe, the middle-East or Northern Africa (Du Bois 1978).

Individuals who identify as bi-racial or multi-racial with at least one white or American-born parent, aren't understood to be white or singularly American but instead, are ascribed the otherness or black identity. This is not far from the reality that native-born of Mexican-origin, regardless of generation in the country experience. There are those of Mexican-origin individuals who have only their Spanish surnames to associate them to otherness and yet, although they identify openly as American first and white racial identity foremost, their ascribed identity as other prevails. This is quintessentially found and woven into the American fabric, individuals must have European lineage to be treated, accepted and understood to be blank

(free of foreign-ness) or simply American.

Males are more likely to identify as white (odds ratio of 1.103), indicating that native-born males of Mexican-origin are 10 percent more likely to identify as white. In other words, males are more likely to identify as white on the U.S. Census, than they are to identify as other. This again may have to do with the exposure factor associated with their participation in the formal labor force, and understanding of American race. To identify as other is to accept and identify with a foreign-ness that whiteness isn't as likely to embrace.

One of the most notable findings in Table 4 (model 4) is that with all control variables included, income becomes unrelated to white racial identity. In other words, when controlling for the relationship that household income has with identifying as white, this relationship disappears when various controls are applied (from 1.063 in Table 3 to .980 in Table 5). This finding indicates that as individuals age, are male, educated and homeowners, the more money they make bears no relation to identifying as white. This may be indicative of what exposure to better life circumstances may mean for the native-born of Mexican-origin population. The more money an individual makes, the more symbolic ethnicity becomes. Or it may mean that the more money an individual makes the more they are exposed to their otherness, in relation to their White, Black and Asian counterparts within the labor force or higher education. An additional interpretation of this model is that the more income someone makes the more they resent or embrace the dichotomous racial categories available to them and so they decide to go with the other category.

Mexican Americans have the lowest educational attainment of any later-generation immigrant group (Department of Education 2012; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Telles and Ortiz 2009) and yet their understanding and adaptation to American dichotomies of race is clearly

depicted in table 4 and 5. Added controls do not change the strength and direction of the relationship that education has with white racial identification for Mexican Americans. Attending American schools, participating in both ethnic and American enclaves nurtures an acceptance that to be other is to be foreign. This is something that as Americans we learn at a young age, to be other is to be something other than American. To be among the least educated and yet, to have homeownership rates that surpass what income and educational attainment foretell is of salient importance. Homeownership is key to the American dream, and to reach that dream their needs to be a certain comfort with American bureaucracies, such as the banking industry, credit bureaus, real estate and participation in the mainstream via work, and networking. The process of buying a house is a long and tedious process. It is overwhelming at times and mostly an individualistic and rational endeavor.

In sum, homeowners are more likely to identify as white than non-homeowners. Homeownership in all models retains a strong positive relationship with white racial identification. This remains constant in all models in Table 4 and in table 5, at 24 percent more likely to identify as white.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The incorporation of foreign-born individuals of Mexican ancestry has been under the radar of nativist for the last few decades. Some Americans perceive that those of Mexican-origin, regardless of generation, are not incorporating. This has in part to do with the black and white racial divides that have been part of the American fabric from deep in U.S. history, with the twist that existed during pre-slavery days and currently “post-civil rights era”-- the white and other racial divide. This divide is what W.E.B Dubois (1978) expected of American racial

understandings as blacks weren't allowed to cross into American mainstreams while ethnic-white groups began to blur racial lines. Although these lines are not fully blurred, the lines are giving way for those who phenotypically blend in. This blending may also come in the way of sociocultural incorporation, via such things as marriage (Lee and Bean 2010) and spatial incorporation (Brown 2006), as well as higher educational and income attainment. Whatever the mix of incorporation factors that may operate, it seems clear that achieving the American Dream as represented by homeownership and by seeing oneself as similar if not identical to the majority population also plays a role.

Table 3.1. Means and Standard Deviations for Adult Native-Born Mexican-Origin Heads of Household

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age (Yrs.)	43.5	16.1
Male (%)	65.0	48.0
Household Income	\$46,249.6	\$42,786.0
Education (years)	11.6	3.4
Homeowner (%)	57.0	50.0
White Race ID (%)	54.0	50.0

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010);
N=105,748

Table 3.2. Correlations of Variables Used in Logistic Regression Analyses for Adult Native-Born Mexican-Origin Heads of Household

	Age	Male	HH Income	Education	Homeowner	White
Age (Yrs)	1					
Male	.008*	1				
HH Income (ln)	-.033**	.254**	1			
Education	-.362**	.052**	.313**	1		
Homeowner	.332**	.175**	.282**	-.0003	1	
White Race ID	.187**	.023**	.029**	.009**	.118**	1

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=105,748; 2-tailed. **. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level. * Correlation significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3.3. Unadjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership, Control and Structural Factors among Adult Native-Born Mexican-Origin Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Age	1.025				
Male		1.103			
Household Income			1.063		
Education				1.005	
Homeowner					1.614
Constant	.420	1.122	.743	1.128	.912

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=105,748; All significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3.4. Adjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership Controlling for Age and Gender among Adult Native-Born Mexican-Origin Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age		1.022	1.022
Male	1.011*		1.049
Homeowner	1.611	1.291	1.280
Constant	.907	.407	.395

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=105,748; *not significant at the .10 level; all other models significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level.

Table 3.5. Adjusted Odds of White Racial Identification by Homeownership Controlling for All Independent Variables among Adult Native-Born of Mexican-Origin Heads of Household

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.025	1.025	1.029	1.026
Male	1.096	1.060	1.071	1.045
Household Income		1.069	1.009*	.980
Education			1.055	1.053
Homeowner				1.240
Constant	.396	.239	.170	.215

Source: Decennial U.S. Census Public-Use Micro-Data for 2000, Ruggles et al. (2010); N=105,748; *not significant at the .10 level; all other models significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level

CONCLUSION

This dissertation's findings highlight the proactive, agency-based paths to the American Dream that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans follow. We see that they are blending in to American ways of life via homeownership, racial identification, citizenship (via naturalization and homeownership), income, and educational attainment. Although many Americans understand Mexicans and those of Mexican-origin as being of various mixed-racial and ethnic backgrounds, a vociferous minority sees the Mexican-origin population as a fixed-race indigenous group that incites “otherness” and behaves in anti-American ways (Huntington 2004). This dissertation shows, however, that 45% of Mexican immigrants and 55% of Mexican Americans identify solely as white. Even in the 2000 Census, when these individuals had the opportunity to choose more than one racial category, this group split their identity between singular white identity and the other category. This seems to indicate an understanding of American racial identities and values, because most Mexicans arrive in the United States as mestizos, or biracially white and indigenous, which the “other” category may reflect. Even so, 45% choose the white racial category. This a priori racial identity also involves 55% of Mexican immigrants identifying as “other,” possibly as an American translation of the mestizo identity. Identifying as other may take the place of the biracial identity that they would otherwise choose if it were not that American racial understandings still encourage one-drop-of-blood thinkings suggesting any one-drop of otherness makes you “other.” Such a one-drop rule approach may characterize Mexican Americans, as a result of their American education and personal relationships with American bureaucracies and Americans, with minor to no language barrier to speak of, are confronted by the negative stigma associated with otherness, among natives.

This dissertation addresses and supports the theories implying that immigrants in the U.S. context are in a limbo state concerning race (Gans 1999), or as some may say, immigrant groups are in the process of becoming racialized (Gans 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Thus, as their proactive participation in American ways of life results in “success” on their path to the American Dream, their foreignness begins to *blend* away. We see that their racial identification is merging through the generations with an American understanding of race and that their “choices” or options may also be affected by how they see themselves and self-report their racial identity. Those that identify as white in later generations are more likely to be homeowners. Income does not fully explain either homeownership or naturalization for those that are migrants. But some Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans may start to share the expectation of most Americans that they are a homogenous group, when in fact they are not.

Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans are polarized, they are treated as though they remain newly arrived immigrants with little sense of their American environments, something that is referred to as the Peter Pan Fallacy (Myers 2012). Myers (2012) finds that Americans in general perceive individuals who immigrated to the United States as forever newcomers. This he finds is also the way that the children and grandchildren of immigrants retain this same label. I posit that among immigrants and later-generation Mexican Americans that phenotypical appearance, geographic location and language usage may also affect the way that these groups are perceived.

In posteriori, Mexicans and the Mexican Americans choose the white category in relation to the perceived positive associations that whiteness represents, especially in contrast to foreignness or otherness. Immigrant incorporation is no longer a community endeavor as it was during the last large immigration wave. The last large immigration wave of the early 20th

century received all of the negative press that the late 20th century and early 21st century waves received. All three waves incurred nativist backlashes in popular media, the American mainstream and American bureaucracies. One of the salient differences between early 20th century nativists and contemporary nativists is that the contemporaries have not for one, created Americanization classes to assist new immigrants' understanding and facilitate their participation in American ways of life.

Within the foundation of immigrant incorporation is Gordon's (1964) classical assimilation theory, which poses that: with the occurrence of "structural assimilation," or, entrance into mainstream primary groups, all other forms of assimilation will naturally follow, in no particular order. He further argues that exposure to the host country will also help account for similarities shared by newcomers and natives. Again, homeownership fits Gordon's (1964) model of incorporation, because it brings newcomers and natives closer together, literally because of spatial proximity (Brown 2006). Therefore the findings in this dissertation show that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans are blending into American neighborhoods.

When people think of immigrant assimilation, they often envision a relatively "straight-line" transition to the American way of life, based on the assumption that such changes took place in the case of European immigrants (Alba and Nee 2003). However, what is true is that immigrants like the Jews, Irish, Germans and Italians, for example, were labeled as just as unassimilable at different points in their histories as some of today's immigrants (Gans 1999, Alba and Nee 2003). And now for the most part, such groups are considered white, and can choose to hold up their "ethnic card" when needed (Alba and Nee 2003). Albeit tentative, in this study we begin to see this same pattern emerge for Mexican immigrants and later generations when they self-identify as being racially white.

Homeownership helps incorporation because it reflects income attainment, which is of particular importance for immigrants that are low-wage earners. In the short run, homeownership permits entrée to better neighborhoods, and provides a sense of rootedness for those with owner-occupied homes. Furthermore, homeownership symbolizes commitment to the neighborhood and city and by extension, the country. In the long term, homeownership promotes wealth accumulation through mortgage tax breaks and growth in equity. More generally, the American Dream is constantly quoted as a reason why homeownership is important to Americans, and immigrants. Early U.S. laws set landownership as a requirement for the right to vote (Rohe and Watson 2007). Because even now, owning a home rewards people with a “stake in society.” Thus, homeownership is often taken as an indicator of progress for individuals and for society in general (Rohe and Watson 2007). Homeownership is thus deeply rooted in American culture.

Class boundaries between immigrant groups and whites soften as they enter spaces that are off limits to blacks, such as the racial identification of white that this dissertation has found; spatial proximity (Gordon 1964; Bean and Stevens 2007; Brown 2007), intermarriage (Lee and Bean 2007), and politics (Kasinitz et al 2008). For example, if we take Gordon’s (1964) typology for assimilation, Mexican Americans are on their way to (successful) integration as they take on cultural practices of the U.S. native-born white population and continue to overcome structural and social barriers, some of which the black population (in general) has been unable to do. This dissertation presents the ways that racial identification is also path to incorporation by the Mexican-origin population. And if contemporary immigrants continue to follow the path of past immigrant waves as they seem to be doing (Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003), their merger into the white or nonblack category (Lee and Bean 2007) is taking place and the black-white race boundary will once again persist.

Because of the findings outlined in this study on the way that some react to ethnicity ascription, the black-nonblack divide seems more applicable for the Mexican-origin population. Ethnicity may take a symbolic, optional form for later-generation Mexican-origin and Mexican immigrants, especially those that identify as being white. Individuals who identify as being white may be considered on their way to whiteness, if not already assimilated structurally, economically, culturally and some would argue socially (Gordon 1964; Bean and Stevens 2003; Jimenez 2008), especially those that no longer have Spanish surnames and those that are light-skinned (Jimenez 2008). However, continued replenishment of immigrants from their ancestors' land keeps their foreignness alive (Jimenez 2008) to themselves and others.

Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans' foreignness is visible to the native-born population due to phenotypic attributes that evoke their otherness (Jimenez 2008), due to perceived Mexican facial features as well as their Spanish surnames. However, there is little said about those that get violently angry at being labeled Mexican or Mexican-origin. This is very similar to what middle and upper-middle class African-Americans face when they are confronted with being profiled or stereotyped as lower-class African-Americans or what is perceived as embracing black culture. Black culture is perceived to be socially dependent and collectively deviant from American norms (Gordon 1964). And as long as the black population (in general) is perceived to be [different] or deviant (Gordon 1964) from mainstream America, then they will continue to be seen as unassimilable. This may be why [some] immigrants find ways to not participate in perceived deviant behavior, in collective terms, such as self-identifying as white.

Racial and class boundaries are produced by groups to distinguish between the "us" and "them" (Gordon 1964), and constantly change in order to make the distinctions salient. However, white identity has allotted groups once labeled "other" as white, which some have

argued will also happen to contemporary immigrant groups (Gans 1999; Lee and Bean 2007). And as long as new groups have white privileges, even if temporary, honorary or probationary, it helps those groups understand that associating with mainstream America, or whiteness, or simply following paths that are beneficial, will allow them to become part of the American fabric. Because white privilege is in direct conflict with blackness, other groups that don't quite fit in either category, like immigrants, learn that their associating with blackness, can take away any temporary benefit that honorary whiteness provides (Zhou 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2003). The boundaries of whiteness or class privilege will continue to be maintained and hardened by all groups who are allowed to identify with or benefit from them, and any sign of softened boundaries will allow for groups to become part of the American fabric while distancing themselves from black racial identity.

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