

Beyond "White by Law": Explaining the Gulf in Citizenship Acquisition between Mexican and European Immigrants, 1930

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Between 1790 and 1952, naturalization was reserved primarily for “free white persons.” Asian immigrants were deemed non-white and racially ineligible for citizenship by legislation and the courts. European immigrants and, importantly, Mexican immigrants were considered white by law and eligible for naturalization. Yet, few Mexicans acquired US citizenship. By 1930, only 9 percent of Mexican men had naturalized, compared to 60 percent of southern and eastern Europeans and 80 percent of northern and western Europeans. If Mexicans were legally white, why did they rarely acquire citizenship in the early decades of the 20th century? We go beyond analyses focused on formal law or individual-level determinants to underscore the importance of region and non-white social status in influencing naturalization. Using 1930 US Census microfile data, we find that while individual characteristics (e.g., length of residence and literacy) explain some of the gulf in citizenship, the context of reception mattered nearly as much. Even if Mexicans were “white by law,” they were often judged non-white in practice, which significantly decreased their likelihood of naturalizing. Moreover, the more welcoming political and social climate of the Northeast and Midwest, where most European migrants lived, facilitated their acquisition of American citizenship.

Introduction

Scholars of race, ethnicity, immigration, and citizenship have long studied the role of US law and courts in structuring racialized notions of membership. Racial exclusions to citizenship were written into the first Naturalization Act of 1790; in order to naturalize, individuals had to be “free white persons.” Following the Civil War, the Naturalization Act of 1870 broadened this provision to encompass “aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent.” But racial

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exclusions to naturalization were eliminated definitively only with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.¹

Absent from early laws was any mention of people understood to fall outside the categories of “white” or “African descent,” or the precise boundaries of the “white” population. This legal silence grew problematic as migration from Asia grew in the latter half of the 19th century. The courts consequently attempted to specify which groups were “white by law.” Through a series of intellectually inconsistent judicial decisions that variously called on “scientific” notions of race and color, the classification strategies of the “average man,” congressional intent, and geographic origins, immigrants of East and South Asian origins were deemed non-white and therefore ineligible for naturalization. These laws and court decisions had lasting consequences on notions of race, deservingness, and membership, and reinforced power hierarchies and subordination by structuring access to everything from business licenses to suffrage rights (Gross 2008; Haneý López 1996; Smith 1997).

We go beyond formal law to understand historical processes of citizenship acquisition for other racialized subjects. We do so by highlighting an understudied group within this literature: Mexican immigrants. Like Europeans, the courts deemed Mexicans legally eligible for naturalization. Yet, in stark contrast to Europeans, including southern and eastern Europeans, very few Mexican migrants acquired US citizenship. By 1930, only 9 percent of Mexican men had naturalized, compared to 60 percent of southern and eastern Europeans and 80 percent of northern and western Europeans.²

If Mexicans were white by law, what explains the gulf in citizenship acquisition between Mexican and European immigrants? Traditional accounts of citizenship acquisition among European immigrants focus on individual-level differences between people and groups. Key factors explaining why these immigrants became “Americans by choice” (Gavit 1922) include time in the United States, socioeconomic status, or an individual’s intent to return to his or her country of origin, what we might call differences in resources, skills, and motivations (Bernard 1936; Gavit 1922; Gosnell 1928, 1929; see Bloemraad [2006a] for one exception).

This paper supplements, and in some cases challenges, the attention to either law or individual attributes to explain historical naturalization. Instead, we draw attention to variation in the treatment experienced by different immigrants living in different parts of the United States. Scholars of contemporary immigration note that integration experiences are often influenced by the “context of reception,” a term that can encompass diverse structural and social processes. Much of this literature highlights the fact that immigrant incorporation varies across geographic space. Immigrant incorporation may vary cross-nationally due to labor-market structures and social policy (e.g., Crul and Schneider 2010; Kesler 2006; Reitz 1998), or with citizenship and multiculturalism policy (e.g., Bloemraad 2006b; Koopmans et al. 2005). Within the United States, geographic contexts of reception affect contemporary migrants who move to new gateway cities, suburbs, or rural areas outside traditional gateways (e.g., Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008), or to the South, a region with little immigration experience and a history of segregated race relations (e.g., Massey 2008; Marrow 2011).

The concept of context of reception has also been used, however, to distinguish outcomes between contemporary immigrant groups within the same location. Depending on their racial status, different groups may face hostile, welcoming, or neutral receptions, which may generate distinct assimilation trajectories (Portes and Böröcz 1989; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993).

We extend the concept of context of reception—attentive to both regional variation and color status—to explain differences in naturalization between Mexican and other migrants in the first third of the 20th century. Canadians enter our analysis to show how living in a border country affected naturalization, but we focus our attention on the Mexican-European comparison. Some scholars suggest that the context of reception faced by European immigrants, especially those from southern and eastern Europe in the early 20th century, was similar to the context of reception that Mexicans face today (Alba 2009; Perlmann 2005). We instead compare Mexican and European immigrants at the same historical moment. We argue that while variation in resources, skills, and motivations helps explain some of the gulf in citizenship acquisition, it is insufficient to explain it all. Non-white social status mattered. Even though Mexicans were white by law, they were usually judged non-white in practice. We find that non-white social status significantly decreased Mexicans' likelihood of naturalizing. Regional context also mattered, but primarily for European immigrants. The more welcoming political and social climate of the Northeast and Midwest facilitated their acquisition of citizenship. Since this is where most European immigrants lived, this deepened the national citizenship gulf with Mexicans.

To make our case, we evaluate existing historical scholarship and undertake an original empirical analysis using a 5 percent sample of the 1930 US Census. The 1930 Census microfile data include large numbers of European, Canadian, and Mexican immigrants and individual-level measures of resources, skills, and motivations, as well as geographic identifiers to evaluate regional variation in context of reception. We also take advantage of a novel enumeration procedure in the 1930 Census, one that classified most *but not all* Mexicans as non-white, allowing us to estimate more precisely the effect of a non-white social status on the propensity to naturalize.

White by Law

Between 1790 and 1952, judges were called upon to define the boundaries of whiteness as a precondition for naturalization in 52 racial prerequisite cases. The courts ultimately found that Asian immigrants were non-white.³ By contrast, European immigrants were judged to be white and eligible for citizenship. In fact, aside from immigrants from the borderlands between Asia and Europe—especially Syrians and Armenians—the color status of European immigrants was rarely litigated (Gross 2008). US naturalization attorneys in Minnesota did attempt to bar some politically “radical Finns from naturalizing on the ethnological grounds that they were ‘Mongolian’ and therefore not white,” but the judges hearing the case affirmed their claims to whiteness, stating that the Finns “are now among the whitest people in Europe” (Roediger 2005, 61). Indeed, in its landmark *US v. Thind* decision in 1923, which declared Asian Indians ineligible

for naturalization because they were not white by the standards of “the great body of our people,” the Supreme Court justices characterized “immigrants from Eastern, Southern and Middle Europe” as “unquestionably akin” to northern and western Europeans, all belonging to “the various groups of persons in this country commonly recognized as white” (Haney López 1996, 182). Many scholars underscore the consequential and sharp membership divide created by the law and courts, which opened a wide door to naturalization for European migrants, regardless of religion and property, but which firmly shut that door to Asian migrants (Ueda 1982; Zolberg 2006).

The situation of Mexican migrants adds an important nuance to a simple story of legal inclusion or exclusion. By law, Mexicans were eligible for naturalization. But unlike European immigrants, their eligibility was a product of foreign relations and treaties rather than any “scientific” or common acceptance of their whiteness (Fox and Guglielmo 2012). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which transferred large swaths of land from Mexico to the United States, extended US citizenship to Mexicans in the newly incorporated territories. When Ricardo Rodríguez’s 1893 application to become a US citizen was challenged on the grounds that he was not white, the court upheld Rodríguez’s application because of US treaties with Mexico. But the court also noted that “if the strict scientific classification of the anthropologist should be adopted, he would probably not be classed as white” (Foley 2004, 345).

The Rodríguez decision served as an important precedent in future cases when Mexicans’ whiteness was on trial. By granting Mexicans naturalization at a time when naturalization was reserved for free white persons and persons of African descent, the court was treating Mexicans “as though they were white” (Gross 2008, 259). When state courts subsequently enforced laws banning marriages between blacks and whites, they “began with the presumption that Mexican Americans were white” (Gross 2008, 260). In this sense, Mexicans were “white by law.”

This claim to legal whiteness, however, was tenuous since it did not align well with scientific or popular ideas about Mexicans’ color status. Those overseeing naturalization continued to question whether Mexicans were racially eligible for citizenship (Molina 2010, 178–79). Under pressure from a California nativist organization, a New York judge upheld an immigration officer’s denial of the naturalization petitions of three Mexicans in 1935 because they were not white, but rather individuals “of Indian and Spanish blood” (Lukens 2012, 121). Had it been sustained on appeal, this decision could have made most Mexicans ineligible for citizenship (Molina 2010). Concerned about how such a decision would affect US-Mexico relations, the US State Department tried to “quiet the controversy,” convincing the judge to reverse his decision. Labor Department officials warned field officers “to withdraw all appeals based on race,” and ordered that “in all future cases, [Mexican] immigrants be classified as ‘white’” (as quoted in Fox 2012, 44; Lukens 2012). To prevent further controversy, Congress amended its naturalization laws in 1940 to include “all races indigenous to the Western Hemisphere” (Lukens 2012; Molina 2010). Yet, Mexicans’ claims to whiteness were not evenly recognized, and their color status was far from settled (Fox and Guglielmo 2012).

Resources, Skills, and Motivations

If Mexicans were legally white and eligible for naturalization, can their low levels of citizenship be understood using prevailing explanations applied to European immigrants? A major concern at the time was that limited citizenship among newer southern and eastern European immigrants, relative to earlier northern and western European migrants, reflected biological and cultural differences, an idea advanced by the Immigration (Dillingham) Commission of 1911 (Gavit 1922; Ueda 1982). This framing, pitting European “races” against each other, set off the first academic debate over naturalization as critics amassed empirical evidence to challenge charges of racial inferiority (DeSipio 1987). John Palmer Gavit (1922) culled through more than 26,000 naturalization petitions in 1913–14, ultimately concluding that citizenship differences were largely attributable to immigrants’ length of residence, not inherent racial, cultural, or economic differences. Drawing on a survey of 3,500 immigrants in Chicago, Harold Gosnell emphasized immigrants’ motivations and perceptions of the benefits of citizenship, including a desire to identify with the community, secure economic advantages, and gain the vote (1928, 938). William Bernard contended, based on a survey of immigrants in New Haven, that naturalization was largely driven by education, occupational status, and income (1936, 948, 953). Later multivariate statistical analyses of eight European national-origin groups using 1900 and 1920 Census microfile data confirmed the importance of length of residence, literacy, occupation, and English ability (Bloemraad 2006a). In short, variation in naturalization among European immigrants flowed from differential resources, skills, and motivations, a perspective that continues to the present.

Applied to Mexican migrants in the early 20th century, this approach suggests that their low naturalization levels stem primarily from individual characteristics. For example, length of residence might play a determinative role (Grebler 1966). Mexican immigration started to increase significantly only during World War I, more than two decades after the beginning of mass immigration from southern and eastern Europe. In 1930, Mexican men had lived in the United States an average of 18 years, compared to 23 years for southern and eastern Europeans and 33 years for northern and western Europeans (see table 1).

Individual skills and resources might also matter. The Naturalization Act of 1906 reiterated many of the requirements of earlier laws: a mandatory residency period (five years), good moral character, and an oath of allegiance. Would-be citizens also had to convince a judge of their ability to speak English and their knowledge of the US Constitution. Many contemporaries suggested that low literacy and poor English partly explained low Mexican naturalization (Krichefsky 1963; US Immigration Commission 1911; Walker 1929). In 1930, only 71 percent of Mexican men were literate, compared to 87 percent of southern and eastern Europeans and 98 percent of northern and western Europeans. Census enumerators reported that only 53 percent of Mexicans spoke English, compared to more than 90 percent of Europeans.

The naturalization process also entailed financial costs, equivalent to two or three days’ pay for some applicants (Reisler 1976; Rich 1940). Non-citizens

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Immigrant Men, 21 Years and over, 1930

	Mexicans	Southern & eastern Europeans	Northern & western Europeans	All Canadians
Naturalized citizen (%)	9	60	80	65
Resources, skills and motivations				
Time in US (yrs)	18	23	33	31
Speaks English (%)	53	93	98	98
Literate (%)	71	87	98	96
SEI score ^a (0–96)	13	25	24	28
Age at migration (yrs)	21	20	19	19
Own a home (%)	22	46	55	48
Married, spouse present (%)	62	73	67	70
Married, spouse absent (%)	5	5	3	4
Children in household (%)	55	66	54	54
From border country (%)	100	0	0	100
Served in WWI (%)	1	6	5	7
Racism				
Classified as “white” (%)	4	100	100	100
Region				
Northeast & Midwest (%)	9	87	75	80
South (%)	1	3	3	2
Southwest (%)	82	6	9	8
Northwest (%)	8	4	13	10
Observations	11,936	165,548	122,945	23,976

^aCalculated for those in the labor force only.

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census sample, 1930.

frequently cited cost to explain why they had not yet naturalized (Schneider 2001, 58). Although the Census Bureau did not collect information on income prior to 1940, Mexicans’ lower incomes (and modest educational attainment) can be inferred by their scores on the Duncan Socioeconomic Index (SEI), which was only 13 for Mexicans (similar to the score for black Americans), compared to 25 for southern and eastern Europeans and 24 for northern and western Europeans.

Another possible determinant is veteran status. During World War I, citizens and non-citizens were subject to the draft. In 1918, Congress amended the law to facilitate citizenship for aliens who served in the armed forces. The law eliminated the need for first papers, proof of long-term residence, background checks, and sometimes even knowledge of English or the US Constitution, and it reasigned examiners from civilian courts to military bases (Gavit 1922, 255–65;

Salyer 2004; Schneider 2011, 212–13). All told, 288,000 military men took the oath of allegiance, representing “almost a quarter of all those naturalized during the years 1918 to 1924” (Schneider 2011, 213). But Mexicans (1 percent) were less likely than southern and eastern European (6 percent) or northern and western European (5 percent) immigrants to serve in the US military during World War I.

Many contemporaries also argued that Mexicans held distinct motivations for migration. Commentators underscored that Mexican migrants were “not interested in becoming naturalized” because they intended to return to Mexico after some years of work (Walker 1929, 466; see also Bogardus 1930; US Immigration Commission 1911). While we lack systematic data on individuals’ intent to return, we can gain traction on the question with Census data. For example, individuals who owned a home in the United States may have had “stronger ‘roots’ in local communities” and envisioned a permanent stay (Portes and Curtis 1987, 361). Only 22 percent of Mexicans owned a home in 1930, compared to 46 percent of southern and eastern Europeans and 55 percent of northern and western Europeans.

Other measures, however, ones less dependent on wealth, cast doubt on the idea that Mexicans naturalized at lower rates simply because they intended to return to Mexico. A high proportion of male migrants could indicate a sojourner mentality—with migrants planning to return to their families in the homeland after accumulating savings—but we find only slight differences in gender ratios: men made up 56 percent of all Mexicans, 56 percent of southern and eastern Europeans, and 52 percent of northern and western Europeans. Similarly, immigrants who were married but whose spouses were still in the country of origin might be more likely to return, while those with families in the United States might be more likely to stay. While southern and eastern Europeans were somewhat more likely than Mexicans to be married with a spouse present in the household (73 versus 62 percent, respectively), and to have children (66 versus 55 percent, respectively), there were fewer differences between Mexicans and northern and western Europeans in this regard.

Proximity to their homeland might also have fostered dreams of return and depressed naturalization among Mexicans (Garcia 1981). Migrating from a border country could make the process of naturalization more difficult, too. Immigrants who arrived “in or after 1906 had to produce a Certificate of Arrival issued by the Bureau of Immigration (which kept a list of arriving passengers) in order to receive their first papers” (Schneider 2011, 206). But “getting such a certificate turned out to be a significant problem for many immigrants—especially for those who had crossed land borders—because the official records were incomplete, faulty or simply nonexistent” (Schneider 2011, 206). Canadian immigrants’ experiences are instructive here, as historical scholarship suggests similar dreams of return, at times encouraged by institutions and elites in Canada, as well as bureaucratic difficulties in securing official records of entry (Ramirez 2001; Gabaccia 2007). Yet, although Canadians were also from a border country, their naturalization level was seven times higher than that of Mexicans (65 versus 9 percent, respectively).

The Context of Reception

A desire to return to one's homeland can also be influenced by the context of reception. If one does not feel welcome, one may dream of leaving (Humphrey 1944; Portes and Curtis 1987; Reisler 1976, 114–15). A group's racial or color status and the level of discrimination they encounter is part of the national context of reception. As Portes and Rumbaut argue, "Though race is in appearance a personal trait, in reality it inheres in the values and prejudices of the culture... In America, race is a paramount criterion of social acceptance" (2001, 47). Geographically based differences in native-born groups' efforts at civic and political incorporation also create a regional context of reception. We argue that existing scholarship has paid insufficient attention to the effects of non-white social status and geographical contexts on historical naturalization.

National Context of Reception: White by Law, Not in Practice

Whiteness studies scholars have popularized the notion that southern and eastern European immigrants were not considered white when they arrived in large numbers in the 1890s. Rather, they had to "work toward whiteness," and achieved it securely only after the immigration restrictions of the 1920s, or perhaps as late as World War II (Barrett and Roediger 1997; Brodtkin 2000; Roediger 2005). Other scholars, however, suggest that such claims are exaggerated, even while they recognize that southern and eastern Europeans suffered more discrimination than their northern and western European counterparts (Arnesen 2001; Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Gross 2008; Guglielmo 2003). Both sets of scholars would agree that discrimination might have depressed naturalization among southern and eastern Europeans relative to northern and western Europeans, consistent with aggregate levels of naturalization in 1930, 60 versus 80 percent, respectively. But the latter group of scholars would argue that color status had little to do with it. Guglielmo (2003) argues that discrimination against southern and eastern Europeans was usually centered on religion, nationality, citizenship, or race—not color status. These migrants, he claims, were "white on arrival."

The key distinction lies between the concepts of "race" and "color" (see Jacobson 1998, 5–7). In the early 20th century, color was often used to refer to groups like whites or blacks, what the Dillingham Commission called the "grand divisions of mankind" (US Immigration Commission 1911, 6). Race described these categories as well, but *also* smaller ones like Italians, Germans, Nordics, and Jews. Italians were widely considered racially inferior to the French, but it was not because they were perceived to be non-white. When Italians filled out their Declaration of Intent, the first step in the process of naturalization, they listed their color as "white," and their race as northern or southern "Italian." However racially inferior southern and eastern European immigrants were deemed to be, they were treated by most American institutions—including the courts, the Census, political parties, unions, schools, realtors, and social workers—as white (Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Guglielmo 2003).

Mexicans, however, straddled the boundaries of whiteness (Foley 2004; Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Guglielmo 2006). Mexicans were white by law, but they were often

perceived to be non-white by race scientists, local, state and federal officials, as well as the “common man.” This determination of non-white social status could be based on how others read physical attributes (skin color, hair, etc.) as well as language, surname, or socio-economic condition. Such social designation was consequential. Unlike European immigrants, Mexicans often attended segregated schools, lived in segregated neighborhoods, and were excluded from public accommodations on the basis that they were Mexican and therefore not white (Foley 1997, 2004; Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Haney López 1998; Reisler 1976 Valdés 2000).

Mexicans’ non-white social status might have affected naturalization in two key ways. First, Mexicans who applied for naturalization may have faced more discrimination than Europeans because examiners questioned Mexicans’ color status or subjected them to different standards. Contemporaries argued that there were few common standards to evaluate suitability for citizenship (Rich 1940). Knowledge of English was, according to one observer, “enforced with a great variety of degrees of strictness” (Gavit 1922, 120). Similarly, there were no national rules for how to evaluate “knowledge of the constitution” (Schneider 2001, 57), rendering the examination process “subject to the whims, theories, prejudices, and intellectual limitations of the individuals upon whom its enforcement devolves” (Gavit 1922, 123). Menchaca’s examination of naturalization applications filed by Mexican and European migrants in South Texas between 1848 and 1906 is consistent with a discrimination argument. She found that only 1.4 percent of Mexicans who applied for citizenship were successful, compared to 44 percent of Europeans (2011, 256–58).

Second, Mexicans’ non-white social status might have affected their interest in applying for citizenship. According to Mexican sociologist Manuel Gamio, European immigrants were more eager to naturalize because they were more socially accepted. For white immigrants, “There is no racial prejudice to keep him from intermarriage with Americans,” and they are “more often able to reach a position of economic parity with native-born Americans.” But for Mexicans, even after naturalization, “the racial and other prejudice against him continues, and his social and economic conditions are scarcely changed” (1971[1930], 128). “What is the use?” explained one Mexican migrant. “They will call me a dirty greaser anyway” (Bogardus 1930, 78). Under these circumstances, the benefits of US citizenship were modest. Furthermore, there were advantages to retaining Mexican citizenship, including appealing to the Mexican Consul when faced with discrimination (Bogardus 1930; Sánchez 1993). Menchaca argues that Mexicans in Texas applied for naturalization at a much lower rate after the turn of the century as anti-Mexican sentiment increased and efforts to disenfranchise Mexican Americans became more widespread and effective (2011, 162–63, 179–80).

To measure the effect of non-white social status on naturalization, we turn to a unique feature of 1930 Census data. For decades, Census enumerators were tasked with gathering information on the nation’s inhabitants, including residents’ country of birth—which allows us to classify migrants by national origin—as well as their “race or color.” Virtually all immigrants from Europe were classified as “white” in every US Census. Up until 1920, most individuals from Mexico were classified as “white” as well. But in 1930, responding to political pressure from Congress, the Census Bureau distinguished whites from a new “Mexican” “color or race” status

(Hochschild and Powell 2008). The Census instructed enumerators: “All persons born in Mexico, or having parents born in Mexico, *who are not definitely white*, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese, should be returned as Mexican” (US Bureau of the Census 1933, 27, italics added). The Census Bureau acknowledged the messiness of race and color status and did not provide enumerators with specific instructions to determine who was or was not “definitely white,” but they hinted that local custom might be a reasonable guide: “practically all Mexican laborers are of a racial mixture difficult to classify, though usually well recognized in the localities where they are found” (US Bureau of the Census 1933, 27). The boundary between white and non-white social status might consequently vary somewhat across localities. Census enumerators appear to have employed a narrow definition of whiteness, recording only 3.6 percent of immigrants from Mexico as white in 1930; the rest were categorized as racially Mexican.

Cross-tabulations of Census data by birthplace and “race or color” show that white Mexican men were more than three times as likely to be naturalized as non-white Mexican men (27 versus 8 percent, respectively; see table 2). Mexicans

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Mexican Men, 21 Years and over, 1930

	White Mexican	Non-white Mexican
Naturalization rates (%)	27	8
Resources, skills, and motivations		
Time in US (yrs)	19	18
Speaks English (%)	84	52
Literate (%)	89	71
SEI score ^a (0–96)	23	13
Age at migration (yrs)	18	21
Own a home (%)	25	22
Married, spouse present (%)	48	62
Married, spouse absent (%)	5	5
Children in household (%)	38	55
Served in WWI (%)	4	1
From border country (%)	100	100
Racism		
Classified as “white” (%)	100	0
Region		
Northeast & Midwest (%)	34	8
South (%)	5	0.5
Southwest (%)	54	83
Northwest (%)	7	8
Observations	431	11,505

^aCalculated for those in the labor force only.

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census sample, 1930.

categorized as white were also more likely to speak English, to be literate, to have higher socioeconomic status, and to own a home. It is possible that their higher socioeconomic status followed from lighter phenotype, since darker Mexicans suffered more discrimination (Foley 1997, 41; Gamio 1971[1930], 53). Alternatively, English ability, homeownership, literacy, and higher socioeconomic status might have “whitened” some Mexicans in the eyes of locals and enumerators. This possibility was recognized by contemporaries. Writing in the *LULAC News*, the President General of the League of United Latin American Citizens discussed the “ticklish question” of how enumerators determined who was racially “Mexican,” which could be based on whether “The subject speaks Spanish, or has a Mexican (meaning Spanish) name, or looks ‘Mexican,’ or is dark, or...[is] in destitute circumstances, and is illiterate, or is a day laborer, a cotton picker or a beetfield worker” (Salinas 1939, 7). Irrespective of whether phenotype and other markers drove socio-economic outcomes, or whether they were read in light of education, occupation, and wealth, if non-white social status was a deterrent to naturalization, we would expect that individuals classed as “white”—including white Mexican immigrants—would be more likely to naturalize than those who were not, even controlling for individual resources.

More problematic for our analysis is the possibility that Census enumerators’ evaluation of color status was dependent on their knowledge of an individual’s citizenship status. If American citizenship might “whiten” Mexicans, then the causal arrow we propose, namely that color status affects naturalization, may run in the opposite direction. But there are good reasons to believe that citizenship status, by itself, had very limited influence on race or color classifications. As a technical matter, when filling out the Census form, enumerators had to note racial or color status ahead of the question on birthplace and citizenship. Conceptually, just as African Americans could be classified as non-white and US citizens, so could those of Mexican origin. Indeed, 96 percent of second-generation Mexican Americans—all of whom held US citizenship based on birthplace—were classified as non-white Mexicans in the 1930 Census. Finally, when discussing the classification of Mexicans as non-white in the Census, the President General of LULAC explained how high socioeconomic status might “whiten” Mexicans, but did not mention that American citizenship could do the same. In fact, he noted that a “bona fide, real Mexican citizen” might be classified as racially “white” instead of “Mexican” (Salinas 1939, 7).

Regional Differences in the Context of Reception

Low Mexican naturalization may have also been influenced by regional context. In 1930, 82 percent of Mexican immigrants lived in the Southwest, while 87 percent of southern and eastern Europeans and 75 percent of northern and western Europeans lived in the Northeast and Midwest. Naturalization levels varied significantly by region: 68 percent of foreign-born men in the Northeast and Midwest were naturalized, compared to only 47 percent in the Southwest. These differences are not simply a function of the larger proportion of Mexicans in the Southwest; European naturalization levels were also somewhat depressed there.

These regions were distinct in many ways that may have affected naturalization levels, from geography, population density, and demography to political

economies, local histories of race relations, “Americanization” efforts, and political context (Fox 2012). Given the importance of political context and Americanization efforts for naturalization, we focus on these two factors to illustrate how region could matter.⁴

Regional Variation in Political Context

Early in the 20th century, Northeastern and Midwestern cities were rife with machine politics. In many cities, political machines provided services for immigrants in their wards, including direct assistance with naturalization (Forthal 1948; Schneider 2001, 54; Stave 1970). Party workers could fill out naturalization papers, act as witnesses, teach immigrants English, and coach them for the citizenship examination. In addition, a party worker might speak “to the naturalization examiner” on “behalf of the declarant,” and pay his fees (Forthal 1948, 38). In 1928, more than 70 percent of Chicago’s Democratic precinct captains assisted “their constituents with naturalization” (Erie 1988, 94). Party workers elsewhere often did the same (Erie 1988, 94–95; Gosnell 1928, 937).

In the Southwest, by contrast, municipal reformers were more successful in repelling machine politics. They saw that machines drew their strength “from the unquestioning partisanship of working class, especially immigrant, voters bought with the dispensation of favors and patronage.” Thus, they advocated at-large, nonpartisan elections to “erode the ties of party,” and instead promoted government by the city’s leading experts (Bridges 1997, 7–8). Cities in the Southwest adopted, on average, 2.5 out of these three municipal reforms, compared to only 1.6 in the North (Fox 2012, 46).

Municipal reformers did little to encourage political participation (Sonenshein 2006, 27). In fact, they often allied with nativists or eugenicists and shared these groups’ “antipathy to immigrants and people of color” (Bridges and Kronick 1999, 693). Wishing to limit suffrage to “worthy” voters, municipal reformers championed literacy testing, poll taxes, early registration, and longer residency periods for voting (Bridges 1997, 8). Even where machines existed, especially in rural areas of Texas, scholars find no evidence that they did much to encourage Mexican naturalization in the early 20th century. Aliens were eligible to vote in Texas until 1921, so political bosses dependent on the Mexican vote needed only to arrange for aliens to declare their intention to naturalize (Anders 1982, 16, 250). Moreover, the Ku Klux Klan, women’s suffrage groups, prohibitionists, and municipal reformers made voting increasingly difficult for Mexicans and Mexican Americans throughout Texas in the first third of the 20th century (Menchaca 2011). The result was low voter participation, little electoral competition, and the disfranchisement of much of the naturalized immigrant community throughout the Southwest (Bridges 1997; Fox 2012).

Regional Variation in Americanization Efforts

There were also regional differences in efforts to “Americanize” immigrants. The Americanization movement, which began at the turn of the 20th century, took on new significance during World War I as concerns about national solidarity intensified (Higham 1994[1955]; King 2000). Many aspects of this movement

were coercive. Initially, the “100 percent Americanism” movement targeted Germans, who were forced to abandon their language, newspapers, and German schools. The targets of nativism soon broadened: some businesses promoted only employees who were citizens or who declared their intention to do so (Leiserson 1924, 249–53; Roediger 2005, 208–9). In 1916, Congress threatened to deport all immigrants who refused to naturalize within three months of becoming eligible. The proposal did not pass, but the number of deportations increased significantly (Higham 1994[1955], 248–49, 255).

However, institutions involved in Americanization also promoted more benign methods to encourage naturalization. The US Board of Education established a Division of Immigrant Education, which funded English language, literacy, and civics instruction. The US Bureau of Naturalization promoted immigrants’ civic education, cooperating with school officials in 2,000 communities to ensure that they had lists of immigrant children subject to compulsory attendance laws as well as the names of adults who might benefit from citizenship classes (Higham 1994[1955], 242; King 2000, 87–120; Schneider 2001; Thompson 1920, 46–48).

We find little variation in *coercive* Americanization between regions. Following World War I, some state legislatures passed laws requiring citizenship for certain professions or union membership (Vernier 1938). Southwestern, Northeastern, and Midwestern states passed such laws at similar rates. There were also no significant regional differences in state Americanization laws, which required that schools use English as a medium of instruction, teach American history and government, place American flags on schoolhouses, and hold patriotic exercises (King 2000, 114).

In contrast, more inclusionary Americanization efforts varied significantly by region. Northeastern and Midwestern state legislatures were more likely to pass legislation favoring adult English and citizenship classes (83 percent) than Southwestern states (50 percent) (US Bureau of Education 1925). Similarly, in 1927–28, Southwestern states devoted only \$0.22 per alien resident on naturalization education, compared to \$1.42 in the Northeast and Midwest (US Bureau of Education 1929). Furthermore, while other institutions, including churches, settlement houses, and employers, worked to incorporate European immigrants in the Midwest and Northeast, these institutions did less to Americanize Mexicans, regardless of where they lived (Fox 2012). There were also few social service agencies along the Mexican border, and those that did exist often refused to serve Mexicans (Hanna 1935). The relative dearth of benign Americanization services in the Southwest reflects in part the deep ambivalence that native-born whites felt about whether to encourage the political incorporation of Mexicans (Reisler 1976; Sánchez 1993; Valdés 2000).

Regional differences in the warmth of reception may have affected all immigrants equally, or regional differences may have mattered more for some groups than others. If Mexicans in the Northeast and Midwest were ignored by political machines or Americanization efforts due to overriding social exclusion based on color, then regional differences should matter less for them. Conversely, Europeans’ white color status, irrespective of residence, suggests that region-specific dynamics could affect them more. We thus consider whether the impact of regional residence on naturalization varied across groups.

Data and Models

To test these possible explanations, we use a 5 percent sample of the 1930 Census from the Integrated Public Use Micro Data Sample (IPUMS) (Ruggles et al. 2010). We restrict our sample to foreign-born men, 21 and over, who had entered the country at least five years prior to 1930, since these were requirements of naturalization. We exclude women because their naturalization was tightly linked to that of their husbands, especially before 1922 (Bredbenner 1998). Although we are primarily interested in understanding the naturalization gap between Mexican and European immigrants, we include Canadians in our models to test whether low naturalization among Mexicans is the result of living in a border country. We are left with a data set containing 11,936 Mexican, 165,548 southern and eastern European, 122,945 northern and western European, and 23,976 Canadian immigrant men.

Our dependent variable is self-reported citizenship status,⁵ coded 1 if the immigrant is a naturalized US citizen and 0 if he is not. We include dummy variables for birth in Mexico, in southern or eastern Europe, or French Canada; our reference group includes those from northern or western Europe or English Canada.⁶ These variables aim to capture the crucial distinction of the time between “older” and “newer” European migrants, they incorporate our key comparison with Mexican migrants, and they allow us to include Canadians as a group of border immigrants. We differentiate between French and English Canadians since the two were usually set apart by language and religion, with (Catholic) French Canadians experiencing more discrimination than their Anglophone (and usually Protestant) compatriots (Gabaccia 2007; Ramirez 2001; Richard 2009) (see appendix B for descriptive data on English and French Canadians).

To evaluate whether the context of reception is consequential for naturalization, we employ a second measure, dividing Mexicans into two groups: those who were classified as white by Census enumerators and those classified as non-white. Regional variation is captured by dummy variables for South, Southwest, and Northwest residence. The reference group is Northeast and Midwest.

While our central interest lies in racial and regional contexts of reception, the primary alternative account of naturalization outcomes centers on individuals’ resources, skills, and motivations. We therefore include continuous variables for age at migration, years since migration, and SEI. We include dummy variables measuring literacy, ability to speak English, and WWI veteran status. We also include dummy variables for homeownership, marriage with a spouse present in the household, marriage with a spouse absent, having children in the household, or being born in a country that borders the United States (i.e., Canada or Mexico).

Results

We start with the bivariate relationship that motivated this research: variation in naturalization by birthplace (see table 3). We employ a logit regression model with robust standard errors adjusted for the fact that the data are clustered in

Table 3. Determinants of Naturalization for Foreign-Born Men, 21 Years and over, 1930

VARIABLES	(1) National origin	(2) Resources, skills, and motivations
Mexican	-3.628*** (0.215)	-1.632*** (0.251)
Southern & eastern European	-0.871*** (0.106)	-0.441*** (0.087)
French Canadian	-0.981*** (0.130)	-0.377*** (0.090)
Years in USA		0.071*** (0.003)
Age at migration		-0.009*** (0.001)
Literate		0.962*** (0.070)
Speaks English		1.624*** (0.082)
SEI score		0.016*** (0.001)
Owens home		0.296*** (0.049)
Children		0.153*** (0.023)
Married, spouse present		0.320*** (0.023)
Married, spouse absent		-0.117** (0.051)
Border country		-0.780*** (0.077)
Served in WWI		1.372*** (0.050)
Constant	1.295*** (0.085)	-3.805*** (0.096)
Observations	324,863	324,863

Note: Robust standard errors in brackets. The reference group for origin is English Canadians and northern and western Europeans, and for region is Northeast and Midwest.

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census sample, 1930.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$

states, and first look at birthplace as a predictor of citizenship acquisition. Converting the point estimates in table 3 into predicted probabilities, we find that Mexicans were 56 percent less likely to be naturalized than the reference group of English Canadians and northern and western Europeans, while southern and eastern Europeans were 18 percent less likely to be naturalized than the reference group.⁷

Next, we add measures for resources, skills, and motivations. Table 3 shows that, as expected, these variables are significant predictors of naturalization. For a substantive sense of these effects, we estimate the effect of each variable on the “median” immigrant’s probability of naturalizing.⁸ Speaking English made an immigrant 38 percent more likely to be naturalized compared to one who did not; being literate made him 23 percent more likely to be naturalized. Time in the United States, service in World War I, and hailing from a border country have similar substantive effects: the likelihood of naturalization increases with length of residency (24 percent higher for those who had lived in the United States for 30 as opposed to 15 years); WWI veterans were 22 percent more likely to naturalize; and migrants from a border country were 19 percent less likely to naturalize than Europeans, all else equal.⁹ In comparison, changes in the probability of naturalization were more modest for those who owned a home (+6 percent), were married with a spouse present (+7 percent), had children in their household (+3 percent), or were married but whose spouse was absent (−3 percent).

Taken together, resources, skills, and motivations explain half of the gap in the predicted probability of naturalization between southern and eastern Europeans and the reference group, and explain over 30 percent of the gap between Mexicans and the reference group. Once these variables are taken into account, Mexicans are 38 percent less likely to be naturalized than English Canadians and northern or western Europeans. This large citizenship gap contrasts sharply with southern and eastern Europeans, who are only 9 percent less likely to be naturalized than the reference group once individual-level controls are introduced.¹⁰

To assess the effect of color status on naturalization, we replicate model 1 in table 3, but distinguish between Mexicans who were classified as white by Census enumerators and those classified as non-white. Table 4 shows that the statistical results for non-white Mexicans look very similar to those for all Mexicans in the earlier model: non-white Mexicans were 57 percent less likely to be naturalized than the reference group. (This is not surprising, since 96 percent of Mexican immigrants were classified as non-white.) Importantly, we do see a difference with white Mexicans: they are 47 percent less likely to be naturalized. Just as in model 1, table 3, southern and eastern Europeans are only 18 percent less likely to be naturalized.¹¹

Next, we replicate model 2 from table 3 to consider how resources, skills, and motivations affect the results. As in table 3, the addition of these variables explains over 30 percent of the gap in the predicted probability of naturalization for non-white Mexicans (see figure 1); non-white Mexicans are now 39 percent less likely to be naturalized, less than before, but still a very sizeable difference. For white Mexicans, however, controlling for resources, skills, and motivations explains almost 60 percent of the gap in the predicted probability of naturalization

Table 4. Determinants of Naturalization for Foreign-Born Men, 21 Years and over, 1930

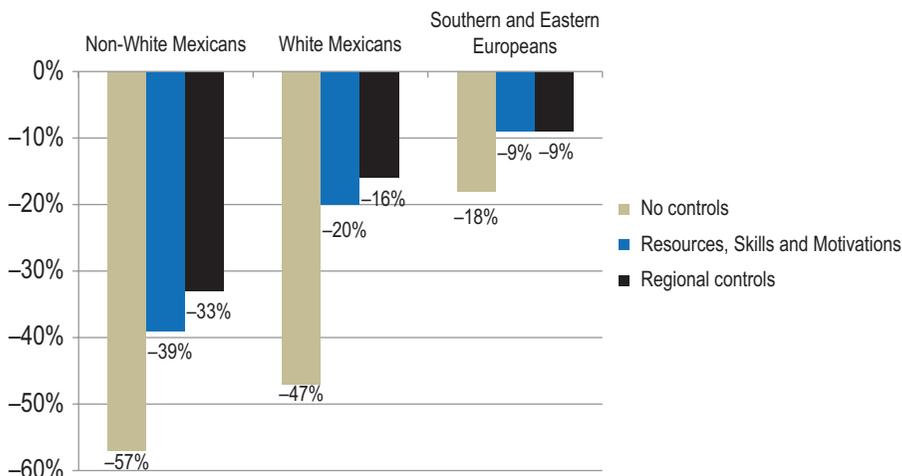
VARIABLES	(1) National origin	(2) Resources, skills, and motivations	(3) Regional context
Non-white Mexican	-3.715*** (0.251)	-1.693*** (0.276)	-1.408*** (0.216)
White Mexican	-2.294*** (0.143)	-0.826*** (0.210)	-0.648*** (0.160)
Southern & eastern European	-0.871*** (0.106)	-0.441*** (0.087)	-0.451*** (0.085)
French Canadian	-0.981*** (0.130)	-0.378*** (0.090)	-0.408*** (0.088)
Years in USA		0.071*** (0.003)	0.071*** (0.003)
Age at migration		-0.009*** (0.001)	-0.009*** (0.001)
Literate		0.961*** (0.070)	0.966*** (0.070)
Speaks English		1.621*** (0.083)	1.620*** (0.081)
SEI score		0.016*** (0.001)	0.016*** (0.000)
Owens home		0.295*** (0.049)	0.299*** (0.046)
Children		0.153*** (0.023)	0.141*** (0.025)
Married, spouse present		0.321*** (0.023)	0.316*** (0.020)
Married, spouse absent		-0.117** (0.051)	-0.126*** (0.045)
Border country		-0.780*** (0.077)	-0.778*** (0.082)
Served in WWI		1.372*** (0.050)	1.380*** (0.051)
South			-0.170 (0.113)
Southwest			-0.388*** (0.138)
Northwest			0.020 (0.156)
Constant	1.295*** (0.085)	-3.801*** (0.096)	-3.775*** (0.109)
Observations	324,863	324,863	324,863

Note: Robust standard errors in brackets. The reference group for origin is English Canadians and northern and western Europeans, and for region is Northeast and Midwest.

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census sample, 1930.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$

Figure 1. Gaps in predicted probabilities of being naturalized for white and non-white Mexicans and southern and eastern Europeans*



Note: *Reference group is English Canadians and Northern and Western Europeans

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census Sample, 1930

with the reference group. Compared to the reference group, white Mexicans are 20 percent less likely to be naturalized, and southern and eastern Europeans only 9 percent less likely.¹²

Finally, we look at the role of regional context, the final column of table 4. As predicted, those who lived in the Southwest were 9 percent less likely than immigrants in the Northeast and Midwest to be naturalized; living in the South or Northwest had no significant effect. After taking regional controls into account, non-white Mexicans are now 33 percent less likely to be naturalized than the reference group. In comparison, white Mexicans are now only 16 percent less likely to be naturalized. Regional controls do little, however, to explain the remaining variation in naturalization levels between southern and eastern Europeans and the reference group; the former are still 9 percent less likely to be naturalized than the latter. Overall, the gap between white Mexicans and southern and eastern Europeans has been significantly diminished and, in fact, the difference between the two is no longer statistically significant.

The reduction in the Mexican-European naturalization gap, after introducing regional controls, could suggest that region was especially important for Mexican naturalization, but it could also reflect the fact that southern and eastern European and northern and western European migrants did not experience region differently *from each other*. Europeans, regardless of national origin, might have experienced region differently from Mexicans. The latter is in fact the case. Based on the interaction between region and national origin, we find that the negative regional context effect of the Southwest applied to European immigrants: *all* European immigrants were significantly less likely to be naturalized if they lived in the Southwest as opposed to the Northeast and Midwest. In other words, the probability that the median European immigrant

would be naturalized was 70 percent if he lived in the Northeast or Midwest, where the vast majority lived, but 61 percent if he lived in the Southwest. For the typical southern and eastern European immigrant, the probability of being naturalized was 64 percent in the Northeast or Midwest but only 50 percent in the Southwest.

In contrast, region of residence was largely insignificant for Mexicans: living in the Southwest, Northeast, or Midwest, where 91 percent of all Mexican migrants resided, made little difference; the median non-white Mexican immigrant's probability of being naturalized was just 12 percent in each of these regions, while the median white Mexican immigrant's probability of being naturalized was 25 percent in each.¹³ The lack of regional variation suggests that it is unlikely that Mexicans could have improved their chances of naturalization simply by moving to the Northeast and Midwest. For Mexicans, the national context of reception, notably the vast majority's non-white color status, mattered most, not regional differences. In contrast, where one lived mattered for European migrants, regardless of national origin. This suggests that part of the gulf in naturalization between non-white Mexicans and Europeans might have closed had more European immigrants lived in the Southwest, which was a less welcoming place for them.

Conclusion

Scholars rightly underscore how racial prerequisites for naturalization and court decisions helped define the boundaries of whiteness and notions of race, deservingness, and membership (Gross 2008; Haney López 1996; Smith 1997). But our research highlights the equally important conclusion that being deemed "white by law" was no guarantee to gaining citizenship through naturalization. In the early 20th century, even though Mexicans were eligible to naturalize, they rarely acquired citizenship in practice. Differences in resources, skills, and motivations—the standard approach to understanding variation in naturalization among Europeans—explain 41 percent of the citizenship gap between Mexican immigrants, on the one hand, and all Europeans and Canadians, on the other. But over half of the variation between these groups remains unexplained.

We argue that sociologists' attention to contexts of reception in the contemporary period also helps us understand naturalization patterns and immigrant integration a century ago. In particular, social conceptions of race or color status and the civic, economic, and political structures operating in specific regions influenced naturalization. The regional concentration of Europeans in the Northeast and Midwest increased their probability of naturalizing, while the effect of color status is clearly visible when we compare the experiences of white and non-white Mexicans. In fact, even after controlling for resources, skills, motivations, and region of residence, the probability that non-white Mexicans would be naturalized was just 33 percent, compared to 51 percent for white Mexicans.

We may well have underestimated the effect of non-white social status on Mexicans' naturalization. Color-based racism may be responsible for some of the

differences in resources, skills, and motivations between non-white Mexican and white Mexican or European immigrants. For example, discrimination in the labor market likely reduced non-white Mexicans' wages, while non-white Mexicans' modest English ability may have stemmed, in part, from high residential, educational, and occupational segregation rooted in racism. Since benign Americanization efforts—efforts that helped immigrants learn English and demonstrate knowledge of the US Constitution for naturalization—targeted southern and eastern Europeans (King 2000), Mexicans probably did not benefit much from free adult night schools, even when programs were available. We consequently believe that our results represent lower-bound estimates of the effect of non-white social status on naturalization.

Although our analysis explains much of the naturalization difference between white Mexicans and southern and eastern Europeans, a small difference remains between these groups (alongside French Canadians) and their northern or western European peers. Discrimination on the basis of religion, nationality, or race may explain some of the remaining gaps. Although southern and eastern Europeans were largely perceived and treated as “white,” they were still seen as racially inferior to other white Europeans, and suffered significant discrimination as a result. Such discrimination may have depressed naturalization among white Mexicans as well as southern and eastern Europeans. Moreover, unlike northern and western Europeans, who were predominately Protestant, most Mexicans (and French Canadians) were Catholic and most southern and eastern Europeans were Catholic or Jewish. The US Census does not collect information on religious identification, so we are unable to evaluate this possibility, but anti-Catholic or anti-Semitic sentiment may have also depressed naturalization.¹⁴ Finally, while discrimination against southern and eastern Europeans was, by all accounts, significant, coming from a border country had a greater dampening effect on naturalization. That is, our model suggests that English Canadians were less likely to naturalize than southern and eastern Europeans, holding all other variables equal.

Our research carries important implications for studies of citizenship and immigrant incorporation. Many earlier studies of European immigrants' incorporation a century ago focused on the urban areas of the Northeast and Midwest, where the majority of these immigrants lived (e.g., Bernard 1936; Lieberman 1963). Building on more recent work that sketches a national picture of historical immigrant integration (e.g., Alba and Nee 2003; Perlmann 2005), we evaluate how attention to regional contexts of reception and non-white social status, separately and together, deepens our knowledge. Our research shows that high levels of citizenship acquisition for European immigrants were regionally embedded. We thus add to a growing body of historical case studies and recent synthetic work that argues that an undifferentiated account of the past is inaccurate (e.g., Benton-Cohen 2009; Fox and Guglielmo 2012). If more Europeans had lived in the Southwest, where municipal reformers tried to repel political machines and where Americanization efforts were more coercive than benign, European immigrants' overall experiences might have been characterized by greater political and legal exclusion. Conversely, being judged non-white in practice, as was the case for the vast majority of

Mexicans, had a significant effect on the political incorporation of Mexican immigrants across the country in the early 20th century, despite their legal classification by the federal government and courts. In addition to our empirical understanding of the past, we concentrate on the consequential acquisition of US citizenship. American citizenship could provide benefits such as WPA jobs during the Depression, access to the ballot box, and protection against deportation (Fox 2012). Low Mexican naturalization might thus tell a broader story about impeded integration, not just in 1930, but beyond. Finally, our analysis highlights the significance of on-the-ground racial boundary formation for political and civic inclusion: being white by law was simply not enough.

Notes

1. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment enshrined the right of birthplace citizenship for those born in the United States, irrespective of race. This constitutional protection was upheld by the 1898 Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*. The court found that even if Chinese parents were barred from naturalization on racial grounds, their US-born children were US citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment.
2. We follow the Dillingham Commission definition of northern and western European versus southern and eastern European (US Immigration Commission 1911). In the appendix (table A.1), we provide a detailed table of naturalization rates for Mexicans, Canadians, southern and eastern Europeans, and northern and western Europeans.
3. Explicit exclusions of Asian migrants were first written into law with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which deemed Chinese migrants ineligible for naturalization on racial grounds.
4. We confine our discussion to the Southwest and the Northeast and Midwest because the vast majority of Mexican (91 percent), northern and western (84 percent), and southern and eastern European (92 percent) immigrants lived in one of these two regions.
5. We also exclude foreign-born individuals whose father was US born (697 cases), since they might have derived citizenship from their father rather than needing to naturalize.
6. Sixty-five percent of Canadians were recorded as “English Canadians” and 30 percent as “French Canadians.” The remaining 5 percent were classified in other categories, including simply “Canadian,” or by province. Since 95 percent of these “other Canadians” indicated “English” as their mother tongue, we include them with “English Canadians.” None of the results are sensitive to this specification.
7. French Canadians were 24 percent less likely to be naturalized.
8. The “median” immigrant in our sample was born in southern or eastern Europe, migrated at the age of 20, had lived in the United States for 25 years, was literate, spoke English, had an SEI of 17, was married with children living with him, did not own a home, did not serve in WWI, was white, and lived in the Northeast or Midwest.
9. As discussed above, we conceptualize the border country effect to capture migrants’ beliefs of return and administrative difficulties in naturalizing due to entry via a land border. In trying to model this effect, the coefficient on border country becomes identical to what we would have obtained if we instead had included a dummy variable for English Canadians (see table 4, models (2) and (3)). Doing so would, however, have made it more difficult to disentangle the effect of living in a border country from the origin or race effects for Mexicans and French Canadians.
10. French Canadians are 9 percent less likely to be naturalized.

11. French Canadians are 24 percent less likely to be naturalized.
12. French Canadians are only 9 percent less likely to be naturalized than the reference group.
13. We also found that Mexicans in the South were more likely to be naturalized than Mexicans in other regions. This is consistent with some historical scholarship, which suggests that the small number of Mexicans in the South were more socially accepted (Weise 2008). But since our southern sample includes only 68 Mexican men, we hesitate to make much of this finding.
14. Other factors might also play a role, such as sending countries' rules about dual citizenship and the penalties of losing citizenship, including property rights, in homelands that viewed acquisition of US citizenship as a renunciation of one's prior nationality.

Appendix A

Table A1. Citizenship Status of Select Groups of Immigrant Men, 21 Years and over, 1930

	% Naturalized	N
Mexican	9	11,936
Southern and eastern European	60	165,548
<i>Austria</i>	70	9,477
<i>Greece</i>	52	6,067
<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	69	11,686
<i>Italy</i>	58	47,922
<i>Hungary</i>	62	6,388
<i>Poland</i>	58	32,077
<i>Yugoslavia</i>	50	5,942
<i>Lithuania</i>	53	5,363
<i>Russia</i>	70	29,900
Northern and western European	80	122,945
<i>Ireland</i>	85	16,876
<i>England</i>	77	18,299
<i>Sweden</i>	79	15,210
<i>Germany</i>	85	35,405
<i>Scotland</i>	71	7,091
<i>Norway</i>	79	8,854
<i>Denmark</i>	83	5,076
Canadian	65	23,976

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census sample, 1930.

Appendix B

Table B1. Descriptive Statistics, English and French Canadian Immigrant Men, 21 Years and over, 1930

	English Canadians	French Canadians
Naturalized citizen (%)	68	58
Resources, skills, and motivations		
Time in US (yrs)	31	32
Speaks English (%)	99	95
Literate (%)	99	91
SEI score ^a (0–96)	31	21
Age at migration (yrs)	19	17
Own a home (%)	50	42
Married, spouse present (%)	70	71
Married, spouse absent (%)	4	4
Children in household (%)	51	60
From border country (%)	100	100
Served in WWI (%)	7	6
Racism		
Classified as “white” (%)	99	100
Region		
Northeast & Midwest (%)	74	93
South (%)	2	1
Southwest (%)	11	2
Northwest (%)	13	4
Observations	16,366	7,610

^aCalculated for those in the labor force only.

Source: IPUMS, 5% Census sample, 1930.

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