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ABSTRACT

The prevalence and characteristics associated with dual earning may differ for Mexican-American couples compared to white couples in the U.S., partly because of the majority immigrant share of Mexican Americans. Cohabiting and Mexican-interracial couples are a substantial share of Mexican-American couples, a share which is more likely to diverge from a husband sole-earning pattern. Using the 2008-2012 Current Population Survey, we examine whether the observed differences between Mexican groups and white couples, both married and cohabiting, are due to racial-ethnic differences or to nativity composition. Married Mexican-American couples are no less likely to be dual earning than white couples after controlling for nativity, whereas cohabiting Mexican-American couples are not significantly different from white couples in their prevalence of dual earning, regardless of nativity. Mexican couples are also less likely to be female sole earning than white couples, though the gap narrows after controlling for nativity. These differences are largely explained by an assimilation pattern by which couples with two U.S.-born spouses are the most likely to be dual earning. Though educational attainment and the presence of young children are important determinants for all couples, these factors are significantly different in their impact on earnings decisions between Mexican-American and white couples.

Key words: Mexican, dual-earning, married, cohabiting, interracial, immigrant assimilation

Breadwinning in American families is continually evolving as socioeconomic opportunities and constraints evolve and as immigration increases the racial-ethnic diversity of families. By the end of the first decade in the 21st century, the Mexican-Americanⁱ population continues to be the largest ethnic group among Latinos (63%, up from 58% in 2000) (U.S. Census, 2000; 2010a) and among all immigrants (29%) in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2012a) During the 1970s and 1980s, much of the growth in the Mexican-American population was due to immigration. Starting from the 1990s, U.S. births to Mexican-American couples were a main driver of population growth (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). As this population continues to be a considerable and increasingly settled part of American society, their breadwinning patterns within families and how they change over time may impact how different American couples may employ various economic strategies within their families.

Though research has shown that Mexican-origin immigrant couples are less likely to be dual earning than U.S.-born white couples, less is known about the associations between human capital or family characteristics and dual earning within Mexican-American families. For those Mexican-American couples in which both spouses are U.S.-born, do their dual-earning patterns and the characteristics associated with them become similar to that of U.S.-born white couples? We might anticipate a higher rate of dual earning among Mexican-American couples because of the increased acceptance as well as necessity of wives' employment. Alternatively, Mexican-American couples may continue to be husband sole earning due to the persistence of "culturally based attitudes of defining men's role as provider and women's role as child caretakers" (Formoso et al., 2007).

The comparison of both immigrant and U.S.-born Mexican couples to white U.S.-born couples will shed some light on whether gender-specialized roles differ across racial-ethnic

groups or if immigrant composition largely explains group differences. In order to determine if differences in dual earning between Mexican-American and white couples are a reflection of the experience of immigration rather than ethnic differences, we include white immigrant couples in our analysis. Though Latinos and Asians make up the vast majority of the post-1965 immigrant population, non-Latino white immigrants comprise 20.3% of immigrants currently residing in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). As with Latino and Asian immigrants, white immigrants are also extremely diverse in terms of socioeconomic status and countries of origin but they all share the immigration experience. If we find that white immigrant couples have similarly lower rates of dual earning, then the difference between Mexican-origin and white U.S.-born couples may be a temporary one due to differences in country-of-origin labor market expectations for women or a disruption to their labor market trajectories because of the immigration process.

In this paper, we compare the prevalence of dual earning and its associated characteristics among Mexican and white immigrant couples relative to white U.S.-born couples to determine if the increasing presence of different racial-ethnic groups introduces different patterns of dual earning to the U.S. Or are observed differences in dual-earning patterns across groups a temporary phenomenon that will no longer persist for U.S.-born children of immigrants? More specifically, our research questions are the following: First, is there evidence of dual-earning assimilation in that second and third generation Mexican-American couples are more similar to U.S.-born white couples than their immigrant counterparts? Besides couples in which both partners are immigrants or U.S. born, we also include mixed-nativity couples in our analyses to determine if it matters that the female partner is an immigrant. Furthermore, are interracial couples, in which only one partner is Mexican American, more likely to be dual earning? Second, are the factors that are associated with dual earning (as opposed to husband sole earning)

among U.S.-born white couples, such as wife's human capital or presence of children, associated in the same ways for Mexican-American couples? Third, are cohabiting couples more likely to be dual earning than married couples? Finally, female sole-earning couples are increasingly common in the U.S. (Fry & Cohn, 2010). Are Mexican couples just as likely to be female sole-earning as U.S.-born white couples?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the research on earnings patterns among married Mexican-American couples is largely focused on the entrance of wives into the labor force or the kinds of occupations they have. Frequently in comparison to white U.S.-born wives and families, many researchers focus on three main contributing factors to whether, or to what extent, Mexican-American wives contribute to family earnings. First, the social and economic factors that facilitate or necessitate wives and mothers entering or remaining in the labor force are examined. Researchers find that rising human capital, increasing social acceptance of women in the labor force and higher-paying occupations, and economic structuring may have impacted Mexican-American dual earning in different ways than for U.S.-born whites. The second factor includes the gender dynamics and family characteristics that foster or hinder Mexican-American wives' entrance into the labor force and contribution to family earnings. Since many Mexican-American families are immigrant families, they may bring normative expectations around gender roles and motherhood that are different from those that are espoused in the U.S. These differences may help to explain some of the differences in dual earning patterns. Third, the differences between Mexican immigrant and U.S.-born white couples are temporary and eventually, U.S.-born Mexican couples may assimilate to have the same dual-earning patterns as U.S.-born white couples.

Mexican-American couples are making decisions around labor force participation and earnings with the broader U.S. context. In the past 40 years, many married couples in the U.S. have transitioned to shared breadwinning and dual earning has become more normative among the middle class. Prior to this transition, minority and working class families were consistently more likely to be dual earning than middle class and white families (Bianchi, 1981). Increased female labor force participation rates (LFPRs) have contributed to the normative nature of dual earning among white couples. As married women's LFPRs rose through the 1990s (Juhn & Potter, 2006), the prevalence of dual-earner couples has increased (Raley et al., 2006).

Social and Economic Context of Dual Earning in the U.S.

Raley et al. (2006) confirmed that equal earning spouses are increasing (Nock 2001) but that wives continue to be secondary providers of family income (Moen & Sweet, 2003). The authors concluded that wives' education is positively associated with dual earning and negatively associated with the presence of children, particularly when there are two or more children in the family. Nevertheless, most studies of dual earning are mainly focused on white U.S.-born couples and less is known about other racial-ethnic groups, immigrants, and cohabiting couples.

The context in which U.S.-born and immigrant couples make labor force decisions is informed by broad social and economic trends, including women's current educational attainment levels and labor force participation rates. Just as women's educational attainment and labor force participation have shifted, economic restructuring has also resulted in changes in the labor market for men and women. Both immigrant men and women are affected by changes in the economy, but immigrant women often face different challenges compared to immigrant men.

Women are obtaining increasingly higher levels of education. In 2010, nearly 30% of women over age 25 had attained at least a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Among men and women ages 25 to 34, a larger proportion of women (35%) have at least a bachelor's degree compared to men (27%). On the other hand, less than half of Hispanic immigrants have a high school degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b).

Women's increased investment in human capital has translated into steady female labor force participation rates which have remained stable at just under 60% over the past decade (Solis & Hall, 2011). For all married women, age 16 and older, the labor force participation was 57.4% in 2010. Among married mothers, 77.2% of women with older children (ages 6 to 17) work compared to 64.2% of mothers of younger children (Solis & Hall, 2011). In general, the labor force participation of married women with children has remained stable over the past two decades, wherein married women with children are about 13 percentage points less likely to be in the labor force compared to married women without children (Hoffman, 2009).

Beyond changes in women's education and labor force participation of mothers, the complexities of the labor market that shape American life also impact the lives of immigrants and their labor force decisions. The low-skilled, blue-collar jobs that were once abundant are no longer readily available to newcomers. Instead, contemporary immigrants face a bifurcated hourglass economy where workers are funneled into high-skill high wage jobs or low-skill low wage jobs, with very few low-skilled jobs that provide a living wage (Alba & Nee, 1997). For immigrant men, these structural factors may translate into labor force difficulties and may impede their ability to fulfill the sole breadwinner role. In turn, the difficulties faced by men in the labor market may put more pressure on their wives to adjust their labor force participation.

Lastly, the salience of cohabitation in U.S. families differs across racial and ethnic groups (Smock 2000). Though Mexican women are less likely to cohabit than white women by age 24 (50% versus 62%) (Schoen, Landale, & Daniels, 2007), cohabitation is an important factor with consideration to dual earning among Mexican American couples. With consideration to childbearing and eventual marriage, cohabitation is more similar to marriage for Hispanic women than for non-Hispanic white women. Evidence that Hispanic women are more likely to conceive, and report pregnancies as intended, while in a cohabiting union suggests that cohabiting unions among Hispanic couples are more similar to marriage compared to white couples (Manning, 2001; Musick, 2002).

Immigrant Families and Work

Unlike the determinants of the LFPRs for all women, the dynamics of dual earning in terms of who works involve choices beyond the individual. In their study of immigrants in Australia, Cobb-Clark and Connolly (2001) emphasize that migration is not a solitary undertaking and therefore, analyses that ignore the interactions between family members “may be inaccurate in their representation of the financial health and economic contributions of immigrant families” (p. 808). It is not only the direct effects of human capital as well as familial and economic circumstances, but also the interactions between these determinants of labor market outcomes that explain dual earning patterns for married couples.

Among married Mexican-origin women in the U.S., it is unclear which characteristics are associated with their LFPRs. Reimers (1985) examines the LFPRs and labor supply of married women in four broad race/ethnic groups including Latinos by nativity. She shows that the difference in the LFPRs of both foreign-born and U.S.-born Latina wives, as well as foreign-born

white wives, compared to U.S.-born white wives is explained entirely by differences in measured characteristics (educational attainment and English proficiency, in particular). Reimers further supports Ortiz and Cooney's findings (1984) that traditional beliefs or Latino culture do not necessarily dictate the behavior of Latina women in the labor force. Because her study was conducted for all Latinas with data from 1976, it remains to be seen how Mexican-American women are faring now within the context of mass immigration in the last few decades.

Immigrants' labor force experiences and difficulties vary by gender which in turn impacts labor force participation rates for women and their relative economic contribution to the family. Fernández-Kelly and García (1990) and Espirtu (1997) find that immigrant women are often exploited by employers. In the workplace, women may be preferred by employers because they work for lower wages based on the assumption that women's earnings are secondary to that of men and are more suited to jobs in routine or detailed work with few or no advancement opportunities (Espirtu, 1997). Whatever the case may be, the economic needs of the family may come into direct conflict with their familial ideology. For families facing economic hardship, Fernández-Kelly and García (1990) note, "For poor men and women the issue is not so much the presence of the sexual division of labor or the persistence of patriarchal ideologies, but the difficulties of upholding either" (p. 148).

Whether they work because of choice or economic necessity, Latina women are increasingly becoming wage earners. Many case studies have aimed to disentangle immigrant women's roles in the household from the labor force. Immigrant men may expect, and be expected, to be breadwinners and provide financial support for their wives and children. To these couples, a wife's wage-earning position may not be an indicator of immigrant women's increasing status in the home or in the labor force. Instead, it may be indicative of vulnerability

and severe economic need in the family (Fernández-Kelly & García, 1990) or men's labor force difficulties in a bifurcated economy (Alba & Nee, 1997). Therefore, immigrant women's efforts to "maintain intact families" should not be misinterpreted as an acceptance of patriarchy. Instead, we might view immigrant women's behaviors as a refusal to accept the ideals of the mainstream society that may undermine their familial ideology (Pessar, 1999).

Women's LFPRs are also affected by family structure, particularly the presence of children. Aiming to understand Mexican immigrant wives' LFPR, Greenlees and Saenz (1999) find that the presence of children in the household is a deterrent to Mexican wives' employment (Greenlees & Saenz, 1999) just as it is for women in the U.S. more generally (Cohen & Bianchi, 1999). Greenlees and Saenz' (1999) findings conflict with prior research arguing that the presence of children under 6 had little to no impact on the LFPR of Mexican immigrant wives (Stier & Tienda, 1992). Angoa-Pérez and Fuentes-Flores (2006) further find that the presence of children under 6 is a smaller deterrent to being in the labor force than for white women.

Labor-Market Assimilation

Immigrants arriving from Mexico have lower levels of education and fewer financial resources than U.S.-born whites as well as other immigrants, especially as compared to those from Asian or European sending countries (Perlmann & Waldinger, 1997). These limited resources, in combination with potential labor force disruptions (discussed above), are often associated with lower LFPRs and other labor market outcomes during the first few years in the U.S. after migration (Chiswick, 1978; Card, 2005). Congruent with the labor market assimilation hypothesis, with increasing duration in the receiving country (i.e., the United States), immigrants become increasingly similar to the U.S.-born in labor market outcomes, in this case, the

prevalence and kind of dual earning. Though we recognize that there are other aspects of assimilation, including acculturation or “anglo conformity,” we focus on assimilation as the convergence in breadwinning patterns between U.S.-born Mexican-American couples and white couples.

This immigrant labor-market assimilation hypothesis more consistently explains the differences in LFPR outcomes between immigrant and native-born men, but the results vary for immigrant women (Rendall et al., 2010). Overall, Mexican immigrant women are less likely to be in the labor force compared to non-Hispanic white women, yet more likely to be in the labor force than women in Mexico. Once in the U.S. labor force, married Mexican immigrant women and men experience wage and LFPR assimilation differently. Education is a strong predictor of women’s employment, but education is more useful in predicting whether or not women work within ethnic groups rather than across ethnic groups or compared to white women (Read & Cohen, 2007). In a comparison of women in Mexico and first generation and 1.5 generation Mexican women (those who immigrated as young children) in the United States, more highly educated women are more likely to be in the labor force across all groups. In fact, among those with a bachelor’s degree or higher, 1.5 generation Mexican women exhibit LFPRs that are nearly as high as those for non-Hispanic white women (Angoa-Pérez & Fuentes-Flores, 2006). Yet, the relationship between educational attainment and the LFPRs may vary for Mexican women once family structure is considered, particularly if there are children in the family.

When Mexican immigrant men first enter the labor force, their annual hours in the labor force are somewhat higher compared to U.S.-born white men’s whereas U.S.-born Mexican men’s annual hours are lower. Mexican women exhibit a greater deficit of annual hours compared to U.S.-born white women. Though the deficit decreases with time in the U.S., it does

not completely diminish. With consideration to wage rates, Mexican immigrant men achieve higher wages as their time in the United States increases. Second and higher generation Mexican men continue to receive higher wages, suggesting intergenerational wage assimilation. A similar wage assimilation pattern was not observed for Mexican women, within or across generations (Blau & Kahn, 2007). In their study of immigrant women's labor-force participation in nine European countries, Rendall et al. (2010) reported findings that are consistent with the assimilation hypothesis, though complete convergence with native-born women was not always found. Traditional assimilation theory would hypothesize complete convergence with the U.S.-born, not necessarily for immigrants themselves but for subsequent generations (Park & Burgess, 1921; Warner & Srole, 1945; Gordon, 1964). It is unclear whether Mexican second-generation daughters achieve complete parity with U.S.-born white women with regard to breadwinning in the family.

Beyond individual decisions around labor force participation, Baker and Benjamin (1997) propose the family investment model to describe the economic strategies of immigrant families. According to the family investment model, upon arrival, immigrant wives work more than U.S.-born wives and immigrant husbands work less than U.S.-born husbands. Over time, as husbands acquire more skills, their labor supply rapidly increases whereas wives' labor supply decreases. The authors argue that this occurs because women initially take on menial, "dead-end" jobs in order to support their husbands. In contrast, Blau et al. (2003) found that both husbands and wives work less than their U.S.-born counterparts upon arrival and both experience assimilation with regard to labor supply (measured by annual hours worked) and wages, eventually surpassing the labor supply of the U.S.-born. Given the current gender roles prevalent in Mexico, Blau and Kahn (2007) reexamine the family investment model with Mexican-American

immigrant and U.S.-born couples. The authors' findings still do not support the family investment model. Instead, they find that immigrant husbands and wives both experience labor supply assimilation, with wives actually exhibiting more rapid assimilation (Blau & Kahn, 2007).

Like other scholars of assimilation and gender (e.g., Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005; Smith 2002), Blau and Kahn's (2007) findings about labor supply assimilation by gender suggest that women may experience a different rate of assimilation than their male counterparts.

Ramakrishnan (2004) also finds that couples with only one immigrant spouse are less assimilated than couples in which both spouses are immigrants. Furthermore, his findings show that the extent of socioeconomic assimilation is contingent upon whether it is the wife or husband who is an immigrant. Therefore, it stands to reason that it may also be important to distinguish the nativity composition of couples when examining dual-earning patterns.

Another issue to consider for the assimilation process for the Mexican-origin population is that migration from Mexico to the United States is not a new phenomenon, and has remained a constant throughout the 20th century (Reichl & Waldinger, 2008). A steady flow of new immigrants from Mexico creates an environment in which even third generation or later Mexican Americans are forced to define their ethnicity according to the expectations of newer coethnics (Jiménez, 2010; Gutiérrez, 1995). This constant renewal of the first and second generations may have implications for immigrant adaptation, such as immigrants choosing to not adhere to mainstream familial norms. Thus, decisions made by Mexican-American couples today are situated in a context that may offer or insist on different alternatives – mainstream beliefs and behaviors versus practices that are distinctively Mexican (Gutierrez, 1995) – and these often

competing messages received by Mexican-American couples may impact their labor force decisions.

To summarize, though it is clear that dual earning and wife-majority providers are on the rise, dual earning dynamics among Mexican-American couples are not well understood. Human capital and fertility factors may operate differently for U.S.-born Mexicans than for the foreign-born. Furthermore, the characteristics and attitudes of U.S.-born Mexicans may be impacted by the continuous flow of foreign-born Mexicans and the norms around their LFPR. There is other evidence that U.S.-born Mexican women's LFPR mirrors that of U.S.-born white women. Findings suggest that the same factors that affect employment and earnings for U.S.-born women, such as increased educational attainment or presence of children, also encourage dual earning for Mexican women. Therefore, the main research questions in this study are: is there evidence of dual-earning assimilation among Mexican couples? Second, do the determinants that are associated with dual earning among white couples, such as wife's human capital or presence of children, impact Mexican families in the same way? Third, is there evidence of dual-earning assimilation amongst cohabiting Mexican couples? Finally, are Mexican couples just as likely to be female sole-earning as U.S.-born white couples?

DATA AND METHOD

Data

The data used in the analysis are pooled data from the 2008 to 2012 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) supplements of the Current Population Survey (CPS), referred to as 2010 CPS throughout this paper (IPUMS 2010). The pooled data have the benefit of analyzing smaller population groups which may not be sufficiently represented in a single-year sample. The CPS is

a nationally representative sample of the civilian non-institutional population. The ASEC was chosen for this project for two reasons. First, the ASEC provides comprehensive data about respondents' work experience, employment status, and earnings. Second, a sample of about 4,500 Hispanic households is added to the ASEC supplement, providing a larger sample of Mexican Americans for analysis. Mexican American is defined by a category within Hispanic Origin regardless of race or nativity. The CPS interviews households for two consecutive four-month periods across two years (e.g., months February-May, months 1-4, in year t and those same months, months 5-8, in year $t + 1$). To avoid including re-interviewed respondents from 2008 to 2012 ASEC, we include only respondents who were interviewed in months 1-4.

The sample consists of Mexican-American and white marital and cohabiting couples as defined by the IPUMS. Mexican-American couples were defined as at least one partner identify as Mexican, regardless of nativity. The female partner's nativity or generation status determines how a couple is categorized. For example, a couple in which the female partner is an immigrant and the male partner is second generation is categorized as "immigrant female & U.S.-born male." Lastly, we define interracial couples as those in which one partner is Mexican. The other partner can be either of a different race or Hispanic-origin group. The inclusion of Mexican-American couples in which only one partner identifies as Mexican reduces selection bias. Research has shown that the most assimilated Mexican Americans may no longer self-identify as ethnically Mexican in survey data (Duncan & Trejo 2008; 2011).

Additional sample restrictions include an age restriction of 25 to 54 for both spouses and dropping couples where neither spouse works nor earns wages. Black respondents are not included in the sample because black-white wage inequality and unemployment differentials among men may diminish observed differences between white and Mexican-American couples.

The unweighted counts and weighted percentage distribution of marital and cohabiting couples in each earnings group are listed in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Dependent Variables

Dual-earning status is a dummy variable coded to equal “1” for couples in which both partners are employed and wage-earning. Individual earnings are total person’s earnings, including wages from earnings and salary, self-employment, and farm self-employment. In order to be coded as dual-income couples, both partners must report earnings *and* employment to avoid including non-wage income. Because female partners as sole providers are a growing group (Fry & Cohn, 2010), we also include a separate analysis for this group. For both earning types, male sole provider serves as the reference group.

Independent Variables

Female partner’s educational attainment is measured with a series of dummy variables across four categories: less than high school diploma, high school diploma, some college, and bachelor’s degree or higher. Couples’ relative education is represented with three dummy variables: both partners have equal educational attainment, the male partner has higher educational attainment, and the female partner has higher educational attainment. Partners’ relative education is coded based on the educational attainment dummy variables capturing female partners’ educational attainment. Family structure variables are coded in the following ways: 1) the number of children and presence of children under five are coded into a series of dummy variables. The dummy variables represent one child, two children, and three or more

children, and 2) a dummy variable indicating whether a couple has one or more children under age five. Age of each partner is a continuous variable ranging from ages 25 to 54. To account for possible differences in the economic and labor market context from year to year, we control for the year in which a respondent was surveyed in all models.

RESULTS

Table 1 reports the sample count for Mexican-American and white couples by earnings patterns. Approximately half of all Mexican couples are dual earning (50.6%) compared to 68.7% of white married couples. Among Mexican married couples, those with two immigrant spouses are the least likely to be dual earning (43.5%) and second-generation Mexican couples are almost identical to that of U.S.-born whites (68.2% and 68.7%, respectively). Among Mexican interracial married couples, 62.4% are dual earning. Similar to whites (74.1% of cohabiting couples are dual earning), Mexican cohabiting couples are more likely to be dual earning than married couples (62.0%) with immigrant couples having the lowest dual earning (54.8%). Unlike Mexican married couples, third-generation cohabiting couples are the most likely to be dual earning (75.5%) which is higher than for U.S.-born whites. Overall, we consistently observe that Mexican couples are less likely to be dual earning than interracial and white couples, immigrants are the least likely to be dual earning, and married couples are less likely to be dual earning than cohabiting couples.

In Table 2, we report the educational attainment, the number of children, and the presence of a child under the age of five for different types of couples. The compositional differences in these characteristics are important when interpreting the model results. Mexican female partners in married and cohabiting couples have the lowest educational attainment with

more than 40% without a high school diploma compared to less than 10% for whites. The educational attainment composition may help to explain the lower prevalence of dual earning since higher education is associated with higher rates of labor force participation. Mexican-American married couples are more likely to have 2 or more children (total of 72%) whereas white couples are more likely to have no children (25%). As expected, cohabiting couples are substantially less likely to have children than married couples, regardless of race-ethnicity. However, almost half of Mexican cohabiting couples still have children in the household. Mexican married and cohabiting couples are more likely to have two or more children while interracial and white couples tend to have fewer. Over one third of Mexican and Mexican interracial married couples have at least one child who is under the age of five while it is only a quarter of white married couples. Cohabiting couples are far less likely to have young children present in the household and this may impact decisions about the entrance into the labor force by female partners. Finally, the vast majority of Mexican-American couples consist of two foreign-born spouses (63% compared to only 3% of white couples).

[insert Table 2 about here]

In Table 3, we present the multivariate results of the relationship between various characteristics of spouses and family structure and the likelihood of being a dual-earning couple. We first present the results for Mexican married couples; those with two immigrant spouses are the reference group for nativity and generation. Those with at least one U.S.-born spouse are more likely to be dual earning and it matters which spouse is the immigrant. Second-generation status yields the highest prevalence of dual earning and then a slightly lower effect for third-generation couples. This finding is consistent with other studies that observe a rise in status

attainment from the first to second generation but then a decline from the second to third generation. In the descriptive results, interracial couples had a higher share of dual earning but the model results indicate this is not significantly different from that of couples with two Mexican spouses. Next, we find that couples with wives who have less than a high school education are significantly less likely to be dual earning. For Mexican wives, those with at least some college are more likely to be dual earning compared to wives with a high school degree. Beyond wives' education, couples with husbands who have more education than their wives are less likely to be dual earning (coefficient of -0.246). The number of children is not associated with dual earning among Mexican couples. Yet, the presence of a child under the age of five is associated with a reduced likelihood of dual earning (coefficient of -0.640).

[insert Table 3 about here]

Model 2 presents the likelihood that a couple is dual earning for all Mexican-American and white couples in a pooled sample without controlling for nativity. Mexican-American couples are significantly less likely than white couples to be dual earning (-0.409). The number of children is a significant factor associated with dual earning once white couples are also included and those with two or three children are significantly less likely to be dual earning. Once nativity and generation variables are included in Model 3, the difference between Mexican-American and white married couples disappear and in fact, Mexican couples are slightly more likely to be dual earning (though not significant). Nonetheless, the p-values from a fully interacted model (all covariates interacted with the Mexican dummy variable) are presented in the last column of Table 3. The p-values represent the probability that the estimated difference in magnitudes of each coefficient in the pooled model differs between Mexican-American and

white couples. For example, the difference in the effect of a wife having less than a high school degree is statistically significant at $p < .001$. The effects of a wife being better educated than her husband, the presence of two or more children, and nativity/generation are significantly different between Mexican-American and white couples.

Among married couples, Mexican-American couples are just as likely to be dual earning as white couples once nativity and generation is controlled. Cohabitation is increasingly becoming commonplace among couples but it is unclear whether economic strategies or contribution of each partner in these couples work in the same way as they do in married couples. In Table 4, we replicate models 2 and 3 from Table 3 for cohabiting couples. Mexican cohabiting couples are less likely to be dual earning than white couples but the difference is not statistically significant. Controlling for nativity and generation status, the difference between Mexicans and whites becomes even smaller.

[insert Table 4 about here]

Lastly, we test for differences between Mexican and white couples in the likelihood of having a female sole provider. The results are presented in Table 5. Among Mexicans, cohabiting couples are significantly more likely to have a female sole provider (odds ratio of 1.87). Couples with two immigrant partners are the least likely to have a female sole provider (given that all of the odds ratios for nativity and generation are larger than one). In model 2 in which Mexican couples are compared to white couples, Mexican couples are significantly less likely (odds ratio of 0.51) to have a female sole provider than white couples. Cohabiting couples are 1.66 times as likely to have a female sole provider compared to married couples. Even after nativity and generation are controlled, Mexican couples are still significantly less likely to have a

female sole provider (odds ratio of 0.78) but the difference does narrow. The inclusion of white couples changes the odds ratios for nativity and generation but much of this is due to the nativity composition of whites with only 4.2% with two immigrant partners.

[insert Table 5 about here]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, we find that the difference in dual earning between Mexican-American and white couples is explained by the differences in the nativity and immigrant generation composition. First, once nativity and generation are controlled, the difference in dual earning between Mexican-American and white married couples are no longer significant. Nonetheless, nativity patterns suggest an assimilation pattern by which couples with two U.S.-born spouses are the most likely to be dual earning, regardless of being second or third generation. Married couples with U.S.-born wives and an immigrant husband are more likely to be dual earning than those with immigrant wives and a U.S.-born husband for Mexican-American couples. This finding is consistent with the literature on gender and mixed nativity couples and their economic assimilation.

Interracial marriage is often considered both an outcome and determining factor of assimilation. Mexican interracial married couples are more likely to be dual earning than those couples that have two Mexican partners. However, this observed difference is not statistically significant when controlling for other characteristics. Cohabitation is becoming increasingly common among all ethnoracial groups in the U.S. We anticipated, as the literature suggests, that the earnings strategies among cohabiting couples may differ from that of married couples. Not only are cohabiting couples more likely to be dual earning compared to married couples but there

are no significant differences between Mexican and white cohabiting couples. Again, the prevalence of dual earning for Mexican interracial cohabiting couples is not significantly different from other cohabiting couples.

The difference in dual earning between Mexican and white couples is not one of ethnoracial differences in economic strategies but is explained by differences in nativity and generation composition. We do not find a persistent difference in dual-earning patterns for couples with second- or third-generation partners, which supports the notion of dual-earning assimilation. Besides dual earning, we analyze female sole provider as another alternative to traditional breadwinning patterns. Relative to male sole provider, the difference in female sole provider between Mexican and white couples is statistically significant. Mexican couples are less likely to have a female sole provider than white couples and this difference does not disappear when nativity and generation are controlled. Furthermore, cohabiting couples are more likely to have a female sole provider than married couples. It is unclear whether this persistent difference is due to ethno-cultural or other structural differences (e.g. occupation).

This paper also examined the characteristics of dual earning among Mexican-American couples and how they compare to white couples. First, we found that Mexican-American couples are less likely to be dual earning compared to white couples. The examination of human capital revealed the following findings: Mexican-American wives have substantially less education than white wives, and wives' lower levels of education are significantly related to a lower prevalence of dual earning for Mexican-American couples. This was expected, as scholars have shown that more highly educated Mexican-origin women are more likely to be in the labor force (Angoa-Pérez & Fuentes-Flores, 2006). Furthermore, educational attainment was a stronger predictor of differentiation between dual-earning groups for white couples than Mexican-American couples;

this confirms other studies that show education is a significant predictor of the LFPR within ethnic groups (Read & Cohen, 2007).

The characteristics of family structure are considered by examining the relationship between the number of children in the family as well as the presence of children under the age of five. For Mexican-American couples, the number of children is not significantly associated with dual earning, though it is for white couples. This is particularly noteworthy because Mexican Americans are much more likely to have two or more children in the family. As Damaske (2011) argues, the relationship between the number of children and mothers' LFPR may differ along the lines of economic necessity. She asserts that an increase in the number of children does not necessarily keep working class women in the labor force because of the needed income. Rather, she finds that working class mothers may have to exit the labor force because they have fewer resources to remain in the labor force (Damaske, 2011).

Contrary to both Greenlees and Saenz (1999) and Stier and Tienda (1992), the presence of a child under five does decrease the likelihood that a Mexican-American couple will be dual earning. Interestingly, for whites, the addition of family structure variables actually increases the relationship between wives' higher educational attainment and dual earning. Furthermore, the presence of a child under age five was significantly related to differences in dual earning groups. That only the presence of a child under five, and not children in general, reduced dual-earning among Mexican-American couples suggests that the factors that push mothers to work are not the same for Mexican-American women as for white women.

The analytical approach presented here adds to the literature in several ways. First, in order to more effectively capture dual-earning dynamics for Mexican-American couples, the effect of nativity and immigrant generation are also included in the analyses. Relatedly, we also

analyze the earnings patterns of Mexican interracial couples as well as cohabiting couples. Second, we examine the characteristics associated with dual earning among Mexican-American couples and how they differ from that of white couples. Third, we include white immigrants in our analyses in order to better determine if the difference between Mexican-American and white couples is more of a function of racial-ethnic differences or their nativity composition.

The research presented in this paper is not without limitations. Because we cannot trace the same couples over time with the CPS, it is unknown if the earning patterns of the couples captured in the cross-sectional analyses are indicative of their long-term breadwinning arrangements. Furthermore, we cannot make explicit assumptions about assimilation processes with cross-sectional data. More broadly, we may not have captured all Mexican Americans in our sample. Research has also shown that the most assimilated Mexican Americans may no longer self-identify as ethnically Mexican in survey data (Duncan & Trejo, 2008; 2011). Therefore, we may be systematically missing the most socioeconomically successful or assimilated Mexican Americans. In other words, we may be underestimating dual earning for Mexican-American couples.

The concepts and findings of this paper can be expanded in future research in several ways. With a larger sample of Mexican-American couples, the relationship between duration of U.S. residence and dual earning can be examined to determine whether Mexican immigrant couples become more like U.S.-born white couples over time. Relatedly, the age at arrival of each spouse can be included in the analyses to gauge whether an American education and socialization will increase dual earning among the 1.5 generation of Mexicans. This is particularly important because research has shown the importance of place of education in labor market outcomes for immigrants (Zeng & Xie, 2004).

Though there is still much research needed for the Mexican-American population and other ethnic groups in the U.S., the findings in this paper contribute to how Mexican-American families navigate breadwinning and these dual earning patterns also impact the gender dynamics within these families. Although the entrance of Mexican immigrant women into the labor force may indicate economic necessity for the family, regular wage work can have positive implications for gendered relations despite employers' assumptions. Immigrant women may gain independence as a result of wage employment. First, women gain greater access to social and economic resources once they leave the home (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Pessar, 1995b). These economic resources can include access to institutions of public and private assistance, which can ultimately aid a family's transition in the United States and support an ideology of family progress (Hirsch, 2003). Second, women's contribution to the family earnings may grant them more control over the household budget and may also increase their bargaining power with regard to household tasks (Espiritu, 1997; Lamphere et al., 1993; Pessar, 1995a). Finally, by entering paid employment, traditional patriarchal arrangements may be undermined (Kibria, 1993) as women have more access to resources outside of the home than they may otherwise have had (Hirsch, 2003).

As Mexican Americans continue to be an important part of American society in the 21st century, we find that there are some substantive differences in the economic strategies employed within these families. First, Mexican-American married couples are more likely to have husbands as sole breadwinners. Nevertheless, couples with two U.S.-born spouses are just as likely to be dual earning as white American couples. Second, human capital and the presence of children work differently for the Mexican-American population. These findings remind us that the prevalence of dual earning and its determinants varies across families along the lines of

ethnicity, class, and immigrant/generation status. Studies that consider and document the various ways in which different families employ economic strategies contribute to our understanding of the complexities of the American family.

ⁱ The term Mexican-American refers to all persons who self-identified as Mexican in the Hispanic-origin question of the Current Population Survey (IPUMS). For the sake of simplicity, we use Mexican-American and Mexican interchangeably to refer to the same population. The term Mexican-origin refers only to persons who were born in Mexico and are currently residing in the U.S.

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Table 1. Unweighted Counts and Weighted Percentages of Married and Cohabiting Mexican, Mexican Interracial, and White Couples by Earnings Type and Nativity

		Dual	Husband Sole	Wife Sole	
Married Couples					
Both Mexican	n	%	%	%	Total
Both Foreign Born	3,267	43.5	51.3	5.2	100
Wife US born, Husband Foreign Born	471	58.2	32.8	9.0	100
Wife Foreign Born, Husband Native Born	303	54.3	40.8	4.9	100
Second Generation ^a	340	68.2	24.2	7.6	100
Third Generation ^a	688	66.0	24.6	9.4	100
Both Mexican	5,069	50.6	43.1	6.3	100
All Interracial	2,099	62.4	29.1	8.6	100
White, NH U.S.-born	38,164	68.7	23.3	8.0	100
Cohabiting Couples					
Both Mexican					
Both Foreign Born	162	54.8	41.0	4.2	100
Wife US born, Husband Foreign Born	51	74.6	25.4	0.0	100
Wife Foreign Born, Husband Native Born	159	45.9	45.3	8.9	100
Second Generation ^a	93	68.9	18.1	13.0	100
Third Generation ^a	29	75.5	13.5	11.0	100
Both Mexican	494	62.0	31.4	6.6	100
All Interracial	400	68.7	17.6	13.7	100
White, Non-Hispanic U.S.-born	3,702	74.1	15.1	10.8	100

Source: 2008-2012 Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

^a Determined with wife's generation

Table 2. Percent Distribution of Mexican and White wives' Nativity, Education and Children

	Married Couples			Cohabiting Couples		
	Mexican	Interracial	White	Mexican	Interracial	White
Both Foreign Born	63	14	3	55	14	1
Wife US born, Husband Foreign Born	9	12	2	7	10	2
Wife Foreign Born, Husband Native Born	6	12	3	4	8	2
Second Generation ^a	7	4	1	12	5	0.3
Third Generation ^a	14	57	91	22	62	94
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Interracial		28			43	
<i>Wife's Education</i>						
Less than High School	44	12	3	43	17	7
High School Degree	29	26	25	31	29	32
Some College	17	33	29	19	34	32
Bachelor's Degree or More	10	29	43	8	20	29
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Number of Children</i>						
0	11	20	25	52	63	69
1	17	23	24	12	16	16
2	34	33	33	19	14	10
3+	38	24	18	17	8	5
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Kid under 5</i>	36	34	25	21	9	9
<i>Total n</i>	5,069	2,099	38,164	494	400	3,702

Source: 2008-2012 Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

^a Determined with wife's generation

Table 3. Likelihood of Dual Earning compared to Husband Sole Earning among Married Mexican, Mexican Interracial, and White Couples

	Mexicans		Pooled		p value Mexicans vs. Whites
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>		
<i>Intercept</i>	-0.021	1.736 ***	1.001 ***		--
<i>Mexican</i>	--	-0.409 ***	0.027		--
<i>Interracial</i>	0.062	-0.155 **	-0.02		--
<i>Nativity (ref=both foreign born)</i>					
Wife Foreign Born	0.339 **	--	0.359 ***		0.001 ***
Husband Foreign Born	0.670 ***	--	0.465 ***		0.000 ***
2nd	1.010 ***	--	0.658 ***		0.000 ***
3rd+	0.816 ***	--	0.733 ***		0.000 ***
<i>Wife's Education (ref=high school diploma)</i>					
Less than High School	-0.151 *	-0.542 ***	-0.400 ***		0.000 ***
Some College	0.308 ***	0.197 ***	0.179 ***		0.047 *
Bachelor's Degree or More	0.254 **	0.353 ***	0.349 ***		0.537
<i>Couple's Relative Education (ref=equal education)</i>					
Husband Better Educated	-0.246 ***	-0.246 ***	-0.178 ***		0.139
Wife Better Educated	0.146	0.146 +	0.364 ***		0.000 ***
<i>Number of Children (ref=no children)</i>					
One	0.129	0.019	0.028		0.226
Two	0.043	-0.221 ***	-0.209 ***		0.002 **
Three or more	-0.179	-0.650 ***	-0.646 ***		0.000 ***
<i>Child under age 5</i>	-0.640 ***	-0.656 ***	-0.648 ***		0.655
<i>n</i>	6,681	41,796	41,796		
-2 Log Likelihood	8355.59	46506.02	46266.08		

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Source: 2008-2012 Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

^a Determined with wife's generation

Note: Age and year of survey are included as controls in all models

Table 4. Odds of Dual Earning among Mexican and Interracial Cohabiting Couples Compared to White Couples

	<i>O.R.</i>	<i>O.R.</i>	
Mexican	0.806	0.842	
Interracial	0.934	0.947	
Wife Foreign Born	--	0.764	
Wife Native Born	--	0.020	*
Both Second Gen	--	0.751	
Both Third Gen	--	0.087	
n	4,089	4,089	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Notes: O.R.= Odds Ratios; Age and year of survey are included as controls in all models

Source: 2008-2012 Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

^a Determined with wife's generation

Table 5. Odds of Wife Sole Earning Compared to Husband Sole Earning in Cohabiting and Married Couples

	<i>O.R.</i>		<i>O.R.</i>		<i>O.R.</i>	
Mexican	--		0.512	***	0.775	***
Interracial	1.149		0.954		1.071	***
Cohabiting	1.866	***	1.660	***	1.621	***
Wife Foreign Born	1.658	*	--		2.006	**
Wife Native Born	2.236	***	--		1.979	***
Both Second Gen	3.004	***	--		0.971	***
Both Third Gen	2.813	***	--		0.887	***
<i>n</i>	3,542		16,449		16,449	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Notes: O.R.= Odds Ratios; Age and year of survey are included as controls in all models

Source: 2008-2012 Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

^a Determined with wife's generation