Why Community-Based Participatory Research on the Effects of Unauthorized Immigrants Matters

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Increasing concern during the 1990s regarding how immigrants – especially unauthorized Mexican and other foreign-born residents – impact local communities and their residents.

- Myopic, expert-driven “community-placed research”

- Longer-term, resident-driven “community-based participatory research”
Need for Systematic Scientific “Facts”

- **Challenge**: discussion of the (1) costs and benefits of unauthorized immigration has been accompanied by (2) a paucity of credible estimates

- **Task**: to estimate (1) the number and characteristics of unauthorized Mexican and other Latino residents in California during 1990s; (2) their impact on U.S.-born workers’ earnings and employment; (3) their health and use of illicit drugs; and (4) their use of public health care and other social service programs
Data and Methodology

- 1994 and 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Residency Status Surveys (LAC-MIRSS)
- UMI = f (AGE, SEX, EDUC, YEARS)
- 1995-2001 February and March CPS
- 1990 5% PUMS
Residency Status Determination in the 1994/2001 LAC-MIRSS Data

1. **U.S. Citizen?**
   - 619
   - 157 Naturalized U.S. Citizens

2. **Legal Permanent Resident (LPR)?**
   - 241
   - 372

3. **IRCA Legalization?**
   - 145

4. **IRCA Program?**
   - 116 LAW LPRs
   - 20 SAW LPRs

5. **How LPR?**
   - 94
   - 38 NIVs

6. **Non-Immigrant Visa Holder (NIV)?**
   - 330 Unauthorized Immigrants
   - 70 Non-IRCA LPRs
Definitions

- **USB**: U.S.-Born
- **FB**: Foreign-born
- **UMI**: Unauthorized Mexican immigrant
- **ULI**: Unauthorized other Latino immigrant
- **AMI**: Authorized Mexican immigrant
- **ALI**: Authorized Other Latino immigrant
Slight Rise in California’s Proportion of Unauthorized Latino Immigrants Between 1994 and 2000
Negligible Effects on Other Workers’ Employment and Earnings, Los Angeles County, 1990

- 1% rise (fall) in the number of weeks worked by higher (lower) skilled US workers

- 1.4% (2.5%) rise in the hourly wages of higher (moderately) skilled US workers

Lower Reported Health Status among Unauthorized Latino Adults in California, Average, 1995-2000
Lower Reported Health Status among Unauthorized Mexican and Other Latino Children in California, Average, 1995-2000
Unauthorized Latino Arrestees Less Likely than Others to Have Tested Positive for Illicit Drug Use, California, 1994-1996

Unauthorized Latinos Represent About Fifteen Percent of Non-Elderly Uninsured Adults in California, 1994-2000
Unauthorized Latinos Represent Less than Five Percent of Uninsured Children in California, 1994-2000
Unauthorized Latinos Have Highest Uninsured Rates in California, 1994-2000
Unauthorized Latinos Have Lowest Rates of Job-Based Health Insurance among all Ethno-Racial Groups in California, 1994-2000

[Graph showing percentage trends for different ethno-racial groups from 1994 to 2000]
Unauthorized Latino Workers Aged 18-64 in California Concentrated in Jobs Less Likely to Offer Health Insurance, 1995-2001

[Bar chart showing the percentage of unauthorized Latino workers concentrated in different job categories.]
Unauthorized Latino Workers Aged 18-64 in California Have Lower Offer and Eligibility Rates but Higher Take-Up Rates, 1995-2001

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Unauthorized Latino Workers Aged 18-64 in California
More Likely to be Working One Full Time Job But Not to Have Been Employed More than One Year

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Unauthorized Mexicans Less Likely than Other Residents to Have Used Public Assistance, Los Angeles County, 1995

- Citizenship status, unit of analysis, and definition of welfare

- Using own citizenship status, measuring own welfare use, and analyzing as many welfare programs as possible, shows that unauthorized Mexicans are less likely to access public assistance programs, and when they do to receive smaller amounts of assistance

Unauthorized immigration still increasing

Unauthorized Mexicans complement most U.S.-born workers and benefit the US economy fiscally

Health and Health Insurance
Summary

- A new conceptual architecture
- Separate immigration and immigrant policies, and align them with North American trends in investment and trade
- Unauthorized immigration ≠ terrorism or illicit drug trafficking
Estimates of the Economic Behavior and Effects of Unauthorized Mexican Immigrants in the United States

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