Labor Force Participation of Foreign Born Women, 1980-2012: Role of Cohort, Duration of Stay and Age at Migration

Introduction

As per a recent release by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the civilian women's labor force participation rate in 2013 was 53.2% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014). Although women's labor force participation have been declining since 1999 when the rate peaked at 60%, yet the gap between women's and men's participation rate has been reducing. This trend of shrinking gender gap in labor force participation expectedly has implications on multiple dimensions such as marital stability, empowerment level, gender- role specialization, gender earning differentials, wives' and husbands' proportional contributions to total household income, correlation between spousal earning differentials with gender division of housework, availability of public or private provision of alternatives to substitute and/or to complement familial duties (Brines, 1994; Glenn, 2004; Greenman & Xie, 2008; Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009; Offer & Schneider, 2011; Oppenheimer, 1994; Sayer & Bianchi, 2000; Shafer, 2011; Winslow-Bowe, 2009).Further, specific nature of the general trends has been documented to vary by both measurable characteristics such as macro level labor market structural factors and micro level socioeconomic circumstances and less measurable characteristics like gender ideology (Davis & Greenstein 2009). The interaction between the above sets of characteristics has in turn been shown to systematically differ by one's attributes such as race, ethnicity, immigration status as well as by the more exogenous cultural prescriptions (Browne & Misra, 2003; Kane, 2000; Tienda, Donato, & Cordero-Guzman, 1992; Zinn, 1990).

The present study explores labor force participation of immigrant women by conducting a cohort analysis. The existing research tends to focus on cross-sectional data (Duleep & Sanders, 1993; England, Garcia-Beaulieu & Ross, 2004; Read & Cohen, 2007; Schoeni 1998; Stier & Tienda, 1992). While cross-sectional analyses contribute to the understanding of the factors pertinent for labor force participation, they fall short of distinguishing amongst the roles of the duration of stay, age at immigration, and the characteristics prevailing at the time of entry. The couple of studies that adopt the cohort approach to

examine women's economic outcomes either do not distinguish by the immigration status (Macunovich, 2012) or focus on earnings (and not labor force participation) of immigrant women from one sending region (Hamilton, 2012). Our study by delineating the roles of entry cohort, duration of stay and age at entry for immigrant in predicting labor force participation of immigrant women from all the major sending regions contributes to the existing body of work. Further by covering the period between 1980 and 2012, it helps us shed light on the effects of the Great Recession.

Background

More generally, women's labor force participation has been conceptualized as being a function of household and individual level factors (England, Garcia-Beaulieu & Ross, 2004; Greenlees & Saenz, 1999; Kahn & Whittington, 1996; Read & Cohen, 2007; Stier, 1991). With respect to the household level factors, economic theory conceptualizes labor supply decisions as a trade-off between work and leisure (Becker, 1991; Cain, 1966). In case of married women, it is a three way allocation between housework, market work and leisure. The primary factors determining this allocation are household budgetary constraints and household composition. The former suggests that husbands' higher market wages eases the pressure on wives' to participate in paid labor. On the other hand, it has been argued that paid employment by wives, especially so, for immigrants in their initial years of stay in the destination country, is a strategy to facilitate husbands to temporarily move out of paid employment to invest in enhancing their human capital and consequently long run levels of household income (Baker & Benjamin, 1997). The other household level variable that has been deemed important is presence of young children as that arguably lowers women's ability to participate in paid labor market (Budig & Hodges, 2010).

The individual level characteristics comprise human capital attainments such as education and work experience. The household level factors and individual attributes can be theorized into two major perspectives; a) gender specialization and b) economic independence respectively. The gender specialization (male breadwinner-female homemaker) model falls under the auspices of the functionalist/neo-classical approach and contends that gender based task specialization maximizes overall

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gains (Becker, 1991). The economic independence hypothesis, a derivative of exchange theory, questions the consensual nature of the neo-classical theory. Structural and feminist critiques argue that marital relationship is essentially competitive and women's earnings improve their bargaining power (within the marriage) and their ability to exit an unfavorable situation (Oppenheimer, 1997).

Human capital and labor supply arguments posit the positive relationship between human capital and labor market opportunities. Individuals with higher human capital experience greater hours of labor supply and therefore higher earnings. Research documents the recent surge in women's paid employment across the board as being significantly attributable to the secular rise in their (women's) educational levels (Cohen & Bianchi, 1999; England, Garcia-Beaulieu & Ross, 2004). The increasing levels of women's educational endowments render the gendered division of labor less efficient making the economic independence model seem less relevant than gender specialization model. It may however be noted that given there is educational assortative mating and men earn more than women at all levels of education and in all occupations (Winslow-Bowe, 2009), the relevance of economic independence model is not that straightforward.

The household context explanation contends that women are constrained by the domestic responsibilities to a greater extent than men. As per the gender specialization perspective, women's greater domestic responsibilities is owing to their comparative advantage in handling household chores and therefore such division of labor results in more efficiency. On the contrary, the economic independence framework posits that gendered notions are embedded in the social structure lead to levying of household responsibilities to a greater extent on women (relative to men). This kind of gendered division of labor constrains paid labor force participation of women more (compared to men). Additionally, as housework is valued less than paid outside work, the proponents of economic independence framework argue that gender based division of labor advocated by the gender specialization model undermines women's status.

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The Immigrant Context

While the human capital endowments such as education and age apply universally to all women, there are characteristics such as English proficiency, length of stay in the host country, and nativity status that are associated with immigrant women's economic contribution. As per the assimilation theory with time (in the destination country), immigrants gain knowledge of the opportunities, acquire skills and job specific training that is valued in the host country and hence build their human capital over time (Alba & Nee, 2003). Hence longer stay potentially leads to higher rates of employment among immigrant women reflecting either 'cultural assimilation' or 'skill assimilation' (in the host country) or both (Greenlees & Saenz, 1999; Read & Cohen, 2007; Reimers, 1984, 1985; Stier & Tienda, 1992). Further, a factor that has received attention in recent research on earnings of the foreign born is whether (the foreign born) attained human capital in the U.S. (Zeng & Xie, 2004). In a similar vein, native born immigrants are culturally closer to native born majority population[1]. In terms of the gender specialization versus economic independence framework, it is reasonable to hypothesize that overtime Asian immigrants make a transition from gender specialization to economic independence model.

The above theoretical developments have been tested by sizable empirical literature in the context of Black, Hispanic and White women's paid employment. More generally, the findings suggest significance of combination of human capital and household characteristics (Greenless & Saenz, 1999; Khan & Whittington, 1996; Winslow-Bowe, 2009). In the case of the immigrant population, additional mix of household and individual level factors such as geographical location, English language proficiency, duration of stay have been seen to play a decisive role (Choi, 1999; Greenlees & Saenz, 1999; Kahn and Whittington, 1996; Shaw, 1985; Stier & Tienda, 1992; Winslow-Bowe, 2009; Woo, 1985).

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[1] In the more recent years, there is a debate on the variations in the modes of assimilation (Alba & Nee, 2003), discussion of which is beyond the scope of this study.

The literature on Black-Hispanic-White comparisons indicates that historically, Black women have experienced higher employment relative to White and Hispanic women. Advocates of the intersectionality perspective attribute Black women's higher work force participation to Black men's labor market disadvantages and thereby suggesting that the option of exercising the 'division of labor' thesis may not be available for some groups. The evidence seen from Hispanic women calls for somewhat of a different explanation. The lower (relative to Blacks) proportion of economically active Hispanic women cannot be explained by Hispanic men's differential labor market prospects relative to their Black counterparts since Hispanic men too face significant disadvantages. Instead, the multiple constraints in form of low levels of human capital, recency of stay in the U.S., lack of English proficiency and cultural inclination to emphasize traditionally feminine roles of child rearing alleviate Hispanic women's employment opportunities (Kahn and Whittington, 1996; and Stier & Tienda, 1992). However, updated research on this subject indicates that Whites followed by Hispanics have been experiencing noticeable rise in employment rates (England, Garcia-Beaulieu, & Ross, 2004). Rising significance of education and weakening role of household level attributes (Cohen & Bianchi, 1999; Stier & Tienda, 1992) can be seen as plausible reasons for the increase in White employment rates. This recent rise can be interpreted as a reflection of the significance of the economic independence model.

We examine recent the data from the 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses as well as the 2001-2012 American Community Surveys, to assess the following questions;

a) What is the role of assimilation (as measured by duration of stay) after accounting for the cohort effects in labor force participation?

b) How does the role of assimilation vary across the different categories of age at migration?

c) What is the association between the probability to participate in the labor market and the ascribed characteristics such as race/ethnicity, region/country of origin and the variable that is relatively one of choice, namely region of residence in the U.S.?

d) Is there a differential impact of the Great Recession across the racial/ethnic groups,

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region/country of origin and educational levels?

It may be noted that we employ native born non-Hispanic white women as the reference category for the descriptive analysis.

Data and Methods

Our research draws upon the 1 percent state sample of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) of the 1980 through 2000 decennial censuses (Ruggles et.al 2010) and the 2001-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) data[2]. In case of the ACS data, the samples for the years 2001-2004 range between 9.3% to 0.4% and 1% for the years 2005-2012 of the U.S population. Despite the limitations posed by the lack of detailed immigration related questions, the large sample sizes and the near uniformity in the information collected across the years makes census and the ACS data perhaps the only sources of information that enable the analyses of immigrants disaggregated by arrival cohort, country of origin and race/ethnicity.

The pooling of 1980 through 2000 Census data with 2001-2012 data helps us address the two major disadvantages posed by the census data. The first one is that the decennial census being 10 years apart, for any given cohort of immigrants, one can only observe the change between year t and t+10. For example, the labor force participation for immigrants arriving between 1980 and 1985 recorded in the censuses of 1990 and 2000 is the one associated with 5-10 and 15-20 years of stay respectively. This however enables us to only address the change in rate of labor force participation between t and t+10 years and not be able to assess the improvement from year 1 to year 2 of stay. The combining of the Census 2000 with the ACS 2001-2012 data makes it possible to follow immigrant cohorts for twelve continuous years. We can thus examine the rate of labor force participation in a more continuous manner. The second shortcoming with the census data is that for the years 1980 and 1990, the length of stay was recorded in five year intervals (such as 0-5 years, 6-10 years). This implies one cannot know the exact year of immigration and therefore not be able to distinguish those being in the U.S. for five years versus

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[2] Appendix Table 1 through 4 provide the number of observations for the native born and the foreign born women

those being in the U.S. for only one year. On the contrary, since exact year of migration is recorded in the ACS data, it helps determine the precise number of years of stay and not just a range.

Given the objective of this research is to evaluate the labor force participation of the foreign born[3], the analytic sample comprises foreign born population identified by the country of birth. The census and the ACS data contain information on the person's country of birth. A person who reports her country of birth as other than the 50 states of the U.S., Washington D.C and the U.S. outlying territory is categorized foreign born. Accordingly, the comparison category, native born non-Hispanic population comprises a person who reports her birth as within the 50 states of the U.S., Washington D.C and the U.S. outlying territory and her race as non-Hispanic White. Further, since our dependent variable is not a labor market outcome, we restrict the sample to working age range, 15-65[4].

Further, again following prior research, we operationalize the dependent variable using as a binary variable;

1 = participated (working or available for work) in the labor force

0 = did not participate in the labor force

The variable indicating the length of the stay in the U.S. that we call 'duration' is, as mentioned previously, directly identifiable from the variable 'years since migration' in the 2000 Census and the ACS data. In the 1980 and 1990 Censuses, however, the information on length of stay is reported in five year intervals such as 0-5 years, 6-10 years. We therefore employ the yearly duration dummy (1 year, 2 years, 3 years…) when analyzing the 2000 Census and 2001-2007 ACS data. In case of the analysis pertaining to the 1980 and 1990 Census data, we use interval duration dummies (such as 0-5 years, 6-10 years…).

'Age at migration' is derived by subtracting the respondent's length of stay in the U.S. from his/her current age. Further, following the opinion that formulating the 'age at migration' as curvilinear

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[3] We use the terms foreign born and immigrants interchangeably.
[4] We recognize that for the purposes of the official data collection, the working age range is 16-64. However considering a reasonable percentage of immigrants working illegally, we expect the official benchmark to be nor followed so strictly.

specification generates best fit results (Meyers, Gao, and Emeka 2009), we include 'age at migration' and the square of 'age at migration' simultaneously. The variable 'Cohort' enters the model as a set of dummy variables indicating the arrival cohort of the immigrant. For example, if an immigrant arrived in the U.S. during 1990-1995 then he/she has Cohort9095=1. The other independent variables which we conceptualize as controls comprise years of education, gender, region/country of origin, race/ethnicity, region of residence, metropolitan area of residence.

The method we employ, following the standard practice in the literature is the probit regression technique to estimate the effect/s of the explanatory variable/s (duration of residence, age of migration, years of education, country of origin, race, region of residence, arrival cohort) on the binary outcome of whether an individual has participated in the labor market (=1) or has not participated in the labor market (=0). The probit method allows predicting dichotomous dependent variable and is better suited to such variables than the familiar ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, which estimates the effect of one or more explanatory variable on a continuous or interval dependent variable (Long 1997). The probit regression in the present analysis takes the following form:

$$Y = \gamma \text{Duration} + \varphi \text{Age at migration} + \delta \text{ Cohort} + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

where $Y = 1$ if the respondent participates in the labor market

$Y = 0$ if the respondent does not participate in the labor market

Once again, the vector X comprises years of education, gender, region/country of origin, race/ethnicity and region of residence.

Further, for the ease of interpretation, we present 'marginal' effects, namely the changes in the probability of employment with a one unit change in X. Marginal effects are calculated at the sample means for the continuous variables while in case of the dummy variables they are changes in the probability of labor force participation when X changes from 0 to 1. Additionally, for the continuous variables which have also been used in their squared form (such as age at migration and years of education), we present the total derivatives, since the marginal effects (dF/dX) in such cases do not

account for the quadratic transformation. In considering the total derivatives, we examine the relationship between the rate of change in the dependent variable and per unit change in the independent variable specified as both X and square of X.

Preliminary Results

Figure 1 presents the labor force participation rate of native born non-Hispanic White women aged 15-64 as obtained from all the data points used in this analysis. The trend shows that the rate stabilizes at 60%. The trend in the paid employment rates for foreign born women as depicted by the single year data (see Figure 2) shows that the participation rate steadily rises with increases in the duration of stay in the U.S. The rate at longer years of stay even surpasses that of native born non-Hispanic White women.

Figures 3 through 5 trace the participation rates for foreign born women for increase in the duration of stay by single year for women migrating in the age group of 15-24, 25-34 and 35-44 respectively. The trends indicate that women migrating when they are less than 35 years of age at the time of the entry experience lower labor force participation rate (30%-40%) than those who enter at an older age, 35-44 (40%-50%).
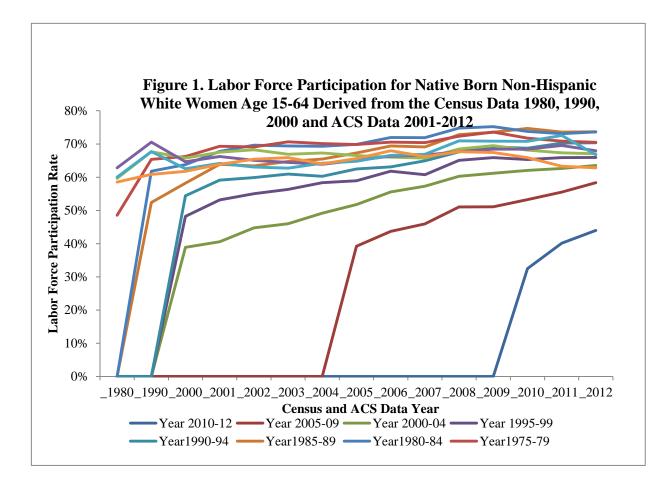
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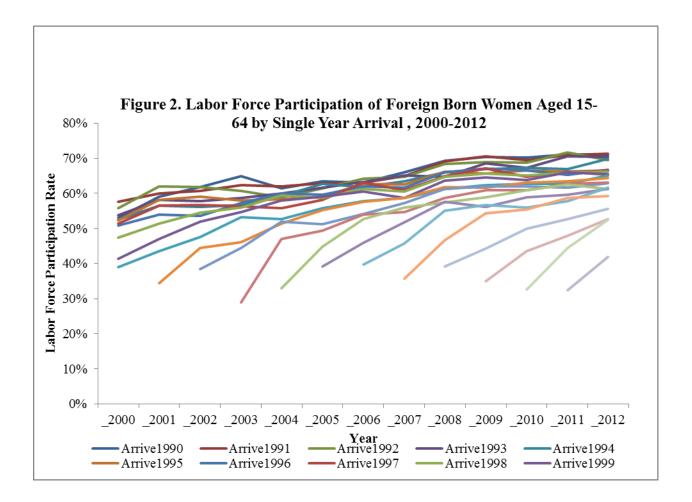
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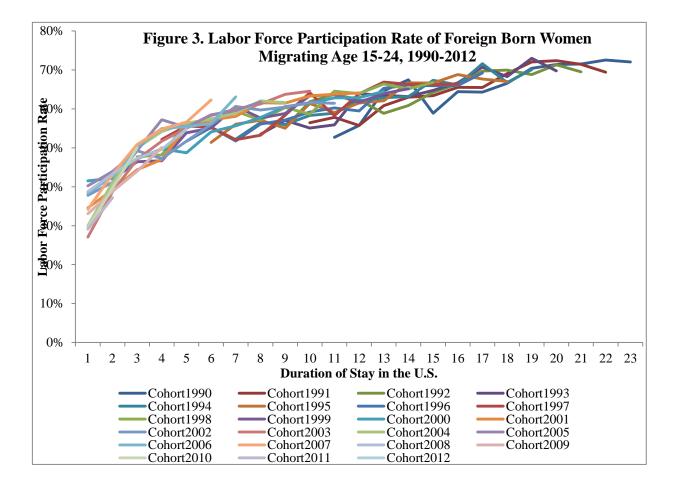
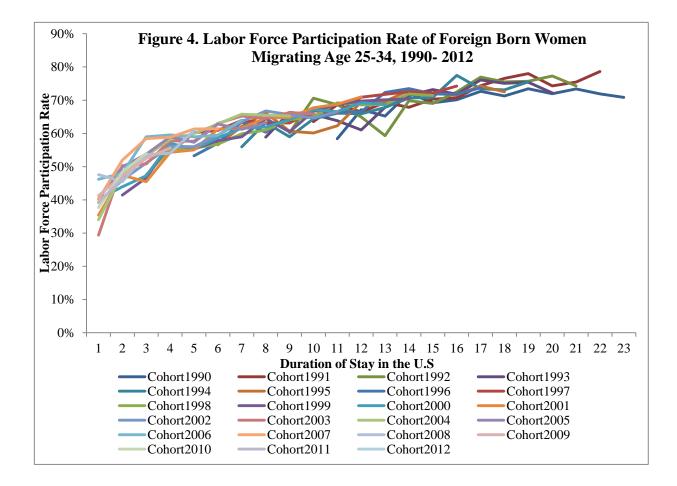earnings in the United States. *Social Forces, 86,* 1217-1244.

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Figure 1. Labor Force Participation for Native Born Non-Hispanic White Women Age 15-64 Derived from the Census Data 1980, 1990, 2000 and ACS Data 2001-2012

Figure 2. Labor Force Participation of Foreign Born Women Aged 15-64 by Single Year Arrival , 2000-2012

Figure 3. Labor Force Participation Rate of Foreign Born Women Migrating Age 15-24, 1990-2012

Figure 4. Labor Force Participation Rate of Foreign Born Women Migrating Age 25-34, 1990- 2012

Legend:
Cohort1990, Cohort1991, Cohort1992, Cohort1993, Cohort1994, Cohort1995, Cohort1996, Cohort1997, Cohort1998, Cohort1999, Cohort2000, Cohort2001, Cohort2002, Cohort2003, Cohort2004, Cohort2005, Cohort2006, Cohort2007, Cohort2008, Cohort2009, Cohort2010, Cohort2011, Cohort2012

X-axis: Duration of Stay in the U.S
Y-axis: Labor Force Participation Rate

Figure 5. Labor Force Participation Rate of Foreign Born Women Migrating Age 35-44, 1990-2012

Appendix Table 1
Number of Observations and Labor Force Participation Rate for the
Native Born Non-Hispanic White Women 1980-2012

Census/ACS Year	Number of Observations	Labor Force Participation Rate
1980	688,504	59%
1990	730,507	68%
2000	5,618	56%
2001	2,022	60%
2002	1,667	56%
2003	1,844	58%
2004	1,947	59%
2005	4,754	58%
2006	5,062	60%
2007	5,263	59%
2008	5,091	64%
2009	5,414	62%
2010	5,328	61%
2011	5,478	60%
2012	5,329	62%

Appendix Table 2

Number of Foreign Born for the Migrating Age Group 15-24, 2000-2012

Year of Migraton	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1990	1938	663	559	610		1840	1796	1772	1755	1707	1986	1768	1791
1991	1483	482	410	501	489	1250	1345	1285	1337	1391	1310	1331	1276
1992	1592	487	486	566	516	1395	1401	1477	1395	1436	1429	1383	1489
1993	1475	465	424	502	458	1251	1200	1296	1357	1249	1232	1216	1253
1994	1656	499	450	501	463	1290	1312	1271	1230	1362	1331	1266	1299
1995	1831	576	449	530	480	1565	1448	1406	1461	1435	1550	1422	1520
1996	1612	588	425	504	499	1215	1451	1304	1315	1306	1354	1380	1330
1997	1567	462	457	518	469	1161	1191	1431	1208	1348	1260	1161	1298
1998	1909	578	469	627	515	1364	1573	1485	1657	1481	1581	1386	1465
1999	2320	588	539	634	615	1556	1658	1554	1534	1834	1715	1625	1630
2000	618	685	563	687	667	1769	2027	2013	2142	2039	2286	2093	2081
2001		309	481	538	567	1457	1675	1636	1448	1668	1629	1732	1666
2002			202	518	466	1322	1318	1370	1361	1308	1431	1289	1517
2003				239	429	1296	1397	1391	1413	1352	1356	1343	1307
2004					238	1231	1255	1291	1380	1426	1368	1286	1311
2005						640	1383	1342	1301	1359	1539	1453	1476
2006							681	1379	1238	1216	1289	1273	1303
2007								687	1294	1111	1337	1222	1148
2008									658	1200	1193	1200	1160
2009										551	1242	1316	1059
2010											630	1354	1151
2011												858	1315
2012													776

Appendix Table 3

Number of Foreign Born for the Migrating Age Group 25-34, 2000-2012

Year of Migraton	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1990	1437	496	436	540	504	1355	1324	1313	1292	1259	1493	1430	1354
1991	1081	437	391	362	391	1000	1080	1054	1034	1071	988	1160	1058
1992	1127	389	419	440	425	1023	1109	1105	1046	1140	1109	1081	1239
1993	1022	367	329	419	362	968	993	928	1010	992	993	979	1005
1994	1176	429	400	412	441	1009	1034	1032	1057	1082	1036	1033	1030
1995	1396	544	446	512	463	1293	1185	1223	1182	1254	1293	1256	1204
1996	1250	486	433	465	450	1098	1349	1164	1198	1248	1218	1142	
1997	1254	493	459	502	434	1194	1167	1332	1167	1201	1177	1148	1160
1998	1487	592	465	534	527	1391	1454	1380	1496	1372	1422	1347	1433
1999	1801	668	602	629	597	1473	1612	1652	1502	1744	1602	1509	1558
2000	507	638	591	679	686	1773	1900	1952	1888	1826	2152	1967	1894
2001		329	594	577	631	1546	1633	1604	1530	1660	1585	1634	1625
2002			228	493	517	1296	1227	1347	1297	1328	1311	1203	1323
2003				276	476	1220	1342	1284	1300	1265	1283	1165	1221
2004					245	1252	1201	1253	1259	1337	1255	1195	1264
2005						649	1301	1231	1317	1267	1463	1321	1350
2006							667	1298	1246	1252	1321	1211	1188
2007								665	1255	1176	1296	1122	1225
2008									591	1109	1190	1099	1053
2009										542	1168	1089	1139
2010											604	1169	1177
2011												682	1143
2012													627

Appendix Table 4

Number of Foreign Born for the Migrating Age Group 35-44, 2000-2012

Year of Migraton	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1990	634	236	202	233	198	580	609	563	524	588	636	598	566
1991	512	220	194	224	214	455	474	475	482	496	502	515	471
1992	510	191	217	189	213	536	542	540	532	588	544	518	604
1993	539	203	190	212	190	515	475	453	495	517	502	470	491
1994	576	213	192	241	244	495	534	499	509	493	549	538	489
1995	652	251	187	255	225	660	553	605	561	598	612	623	588
1996	581	244	186	245	199	506	656	550	578	546	581	610	584
1997	593	239	210	239	228	566	554	632	533	586	576	548	516
1998	718	307	226	242	262	628	655	647	723	650	714	656	689
1999	914	307	270	296	307	780	770	758	718	796	784	754	749
2000	241	328	260	317	333	925	948	931	932	916	1045	987	994
2001		148	257	321	293	799	796	843	777	813	851	895	822
2002			124	274	256	674	625	706	675	660	682	646	719
2003				109	222	681	624	594	617	668	678	625	658
2004					103	650	631	576	585	662	650	642	659
2005						333	632	649	591	675	714	653	672
2006							346	645	582	686	609	654	652
2007								332	622	584	656	629	577
2008									274	580	599	599	573
2009										257	623	634	607
2010											310	570	596
2011												326	615
2012													332