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# *A Dynamic View of Mexican Migration to the United States*

## **Introduction**

For most of the twentieth century, the principal mechanism that has connected Mexico with the United States has been immigration northward. The idea of going north for opportunity has resulted in the arrival of many Mexicans without legal papers authorizing them to work.<sup>1</sup> It has also created a migration process that, by most accounts, is dynamic (Massey et al., 1994; Escobar Latapí et al., 1998). Therefore, as the determinants and consequences of migration have shifted over time, migration to the United States from Mexico has ebbed and flowed.

During the same period, women's presence in international migration has changed and scholarship on gender and migration has improved (see *International Migration Review*, vol. 18, 1984; Simon and Brettell 1986; Gabaccia 1989, 1992; Pedraza 1991; Donato 1993; Kanaiaupuni 1998). Despite improvements, however, many questions remain about differences in the migration process of women and men from particular countries to the United States. This is especially true for Mexico, a nation that is the largest source of U.S. migration (Passel and Woodrow, 1987; Warren and Passel, 1987; U.S. Department of Justice, 1996), and has a long history of sending many more men than women to the United States (Donato, 1992).

In this article, we examine the extent to which patterns of migration vary by legal status and community of origin over time, and emphasize how gender differentiates the processes of legal and undocumented migration. Throughout, the article speculates about specific contextual conditions, such as immigration policies or economic trends, that may explain the dynamic process of women's and men's

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migration and the differences in their chances of migrating by legal status, gender, and community of origin. On the whole, taking legal status into account reveals more diversity in migration patterns than suggested by Massey et al. (1994), who examined the prevalence of migration from Mexico to the United States and developed a theory of cumulative migration.

We set the context for our analysis of migration as a dynamic process by reviewing community studies that show how the factors that motivate Mexico-U.S. migration have changed over time. We then describe the data and methods used to estimate the chances that women and men will migrate on a first U.S. trip, with and without documents, since 1942. Examination of the probabilities reveals three key findings. First, there is considerable variation in the chances of migrating by age forty by community of origin. Second, across all communities, by the mid-1990s, the overall chance of migrating rose sharply from the level set in 1990. Third, gender differentiates migration trends especially by legal status. These insights led us to consider their implications in the final section of the article.

### **Factors Motivating Migration from Mexico: A Dynamic View**

We begin by analyzing findings from prior studies to determine what factors were considered to be most important in initiating and sustaining Mexico-U.S. migration, and how these have changed. The studies are summarized in Table 1 from oldest (top) to newest (bottom), and the major factor motivating migration runs from demand (on the left) to supply and network ties (on the right). In general, they illustrate how a migration process that began largely as demand-pull recruitment has evolved into a more complex migration relationship in which supply-push and network factors play ever larger roles (Escobar Lapatí et al., 1998).

*First Wave Studies.* The earliest studies of emigration communities emphasized how U.S. government-approved recruitment of Mexican workers and large wage gaps between border areas and northern states motivated Mexican migrants to search for employment before 1930 (Taylor, 1929, 1931, 1932, 1933). After a decade that witnessed severe economic depression, large-scale deportation of many Mexicans from the United States, and World War II, labor recruitment between the two nations once again emerged as a strategy to increase agricultural labor.<sup>2</sup> Hancock (1959) found that Mexicans migrated because of very high wage ratios between places in the United States and Mexico. They were also attracted to migration because of the basic freedoms it insured: justice that was more impartially administered than in Mexico, including treating ordinary citizens with respect (1959).

By the 1960s and 1970s, studies revealed that economic factors still played a strong role in motivating and sustaining migration. Wiest (1973) emphasized the

**TABLE 1**  
**Case Study Grid**  
**Factors Initiating and Sustaining Mexican Migration to the United States**

Year of Study	Factors Influencing the Initial Decision to Migrate		
	Demand-Pull	Supply-Push	Network/Other
<i>First Wave Studies Prior to 1960s</i>			
Taylor (1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933) Hancock (1959)	Bracero recruitment	Low wages in Mexico	
<i>Second Wave Studies (1960s-1970s)</i>			
Weist (1973)	Bracero recruitment	Low wages in Mexico	
Cornelius (1976a, 1976b)	Bracero recruitment		
Reichert (1979, 1981, 1982)	U.S. agricultural employment		
Reichert and Massey (1979, 1980)			Family Reunification
Roberts (1982)	U.S. agricultural employment		
Mines (1981, 1984) and Mines and de Janvry (1982)	U.S. agricultural employment		
Mines and Massey (1985)	Bracero recruitment		
Dinerman (1982)	Bracero recruitment		
<i>Third Wave Studies (post 1980)</i>			
Taylor (1987, 1992) and Stark and Taylor (1991)	Bracero recruitment	Low wages in Mexico	
Massey et al. (1987)	Specific U.S. employment		
Goldring (1990)			Social connections to other migrants
Massey (1987)			Wage/job information
Donato et al. (1992)			Family reunification
Lindstrom (1991)			Family reunification
Donato (1993)			Family reunification
Kanaiaupuni (1998)			Family reunification
Massey (1987)		Landlessness and personal attributes	

Factors Sustaining Migration			
Year of Study	Demand-Pull	Supply-Push	Network/Other
<i>Factors Sustaining Migration</i>			
First Wave Studies Prior to 1960s			
Taylor (1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933)		Low wages in Mexico	
Hancock (1959)		Low wages in Mexico	
<i>Second Wave Studies (1960s-1970s)</i>			
Weist (1973)		Low wages in Mexico	
Cornelius (1976a, 1976b)	U.S. agricultural employment		
Reichert (1979, 1981, 1982)	U.S. agricultural employment		
Reichert and Massey (1979, 1980)	Family Reunification		
Roberts (1982)	U.S. agricultural employment		Wage/job information
Mines (1981, 1984) and			
Mines and de Janvry (1982)	U.S. agricultural employment	Drought in Mexico	Prior U.S. experience
Mines and Massey (1985)			Wage/job information
Dinerman (1982)	U.S. nonfarm employment	Owning Mexican land	Prior U.S. experience
Lopez (1988)			Prior U.S. experience
Chavez (1988)			
<i>Third Wave Studies (post 1980)</i>			
Goldring (1990)			Information about specific U.S. jobs
Taylor (1987, 1992) and			Close relatives in U.S.
Stark and Taylor (1991)			Wage/job information
Massey et al. (1987)			Social connections to other migrants
Massey (1987)			Wage/job information
Donato et al. (1992)			Women migrate if there is an active migrant in family
Lindstrom (1991)			Women migrate if member of household is IRCA amnesty recipient
Donato (1993)			Family reunification
Kanaiaupuni (1998)			Quantity and quality of social ties
Massey and Espinosa (1996)			

economic effects of emigration by describing immigrants in the late 1960s as legal green carders who took advantage of huge income differences between the two nations.<sup>3</sup> Most green card commuters were former Braceros who intended to return to their Mexican village after migration. Other studies also reported many former Braceros had become green card commuters, traveling seasonally from homes in Mexico to U.S. jobs (Cornelius 1976a,b).

A decade later, studies reported that most Mexican migrants were sojourners employed in agriculture, but many had illegally entered the United States. For example, Reichert (1979, 1981) noted that there was about one illegal U.S. migrant for every two legal migrants. By this time, the wage gap between seasonal farm jobs in the two nations had narrowed somewhat,<sup>4</sup> but remittances were not promoting stay-at-home development. As migrants' households in Mexico raised their standards of living, they also became more dependent on recurrent migration as a way to maintain their status (1981).

Other studies also described the evolution of migration in Mexican origins. In a small village in Zacatecas, Mines (1981, 1984) reported that over half of the village's income came from remittances sent home by persons employed in the United States. By 1979, this community had reached a "migratory equilibrium," where the population remained stable because, as many young residents went northward and settled abroad, many workers older than forty illegally shuttled between homes in Mexico and seasonal U.S. farm jobs (Mines and de Janvry, 1982).

Mines and Massey (1985) used migration patterns in two communities to describe how migration networks mature. In both, although Mexico-U.S. migration began in the 1920s, it reemerged in 1942 with U.S. recruitment of Mexican agricultural workers, and along with it, increased numbers of men crossed illegally. The pattern of illegal migration persisted until 1954–55, when the United States cracked down on illegal migrants (called Operation Wetback) and the Bracero program expanded. Thereafter, for a short time, migration shifted back toward legal, but seasonal moves. However, after a severe drought in 1957, illegal immigration increased again. By the 1970s, migration networks had matured and sister communities were established in the United States.

Reichert and Massey (1979, 1980) used these data to separate migration into two phases: pre-1965, and post-1965, when many women and children outmigrated to join ex-Braceros who had become legal U.S. immigrants. Estimates suggest that as many as 80 percent of the 55,000 Mexican immigrants admitted to the United States in 1962 were ex-Braceros who obtained permanent labor certification (U.S. Senate, 1965).<sup>5</sup>

By the end of this first wave of studies, authors had begun to compare findings from one community to another. However, a strong emphasis remained on the economic factors that motivate migration. Using data from farmers in four Mexican states (San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Puebla, and Oaxaca), Roberts (1982) concluded that some local farm income was needed to attempt to migrate. He argued that because incomes in Oaxaca were so low, many migrated to Mexican cities where they had contacts (1982). However, from the state of Guanajuato, where farm incomes were considerably higher, a significant number of people migrated across the U.S. border. Dinerman (1982) also found differences in migrants and nonmigrants in two communities in Michoacan, where the "rate and frequency of U.S. migration were much higher" in one community than the other (1982). Although both communities sent Braceros in roughly equal numbers, migrants from one community had, by the early 1970s, shifted to nonfarm U.S. employment, and hired workers in Mexico to tend their plots. In the other community, fewer ex-Braceros owned land, and more ex-Braceros migrated within Mexico, until government support for handicraft activities created local job opportunities.

*Second Wave Studies.* As the number of studies grew, authors relied on larger data sets that often encompassed multiple communities and permitted them to draw inferences. Perhaps the most cited study is that done by Massey, Alarcón, Durand, and Gonzales in *Return to Aztlan* (1987). This book was built around extensive interviews in four communities using an ethnosurvey instrument. It concluded that the integration of the southwestern United States into the national economy in the late 1800s created a demand for Mexican labor, the restructuring of Mexican agriculture created a supply of workers willing to migrate, and the railroads provided the link between U.S. demand and Mexican supply (1987).

*Return to Aztlan* makes four points about the process of Mexico-U.S. migration in the twentieth century. First, few Mexicans migrated from these communities before the 1950s and, when they did migrate, they were as likely to move within Mexico as to migrate illegally to the United States. Second, Mexican migration was almost stopped in the 1930s as a result of the Depression and repatriations. Third, Bracero program recruitment began significant U.S.-bound migration after 1942, and this migration continued at roughly Bracero-era levels after U.S.-government approved recruitment was stopped in 1964. Fourth, illegal migrants comprised at least 50 percent of first-time U.S.-bound Mexicans except in the late 1950s, when the Bracero program was at its peak.

In general, Massey et al. (1987) described an upward trend in a migratory process that began over one hundred years ago. The significant blips in an otherwise steadily rising migration flow occurred in the 1930s, when Mexico-U.S.

migration slowed or stopped, and in the late 1950s, when many migrants went legally to the U.S. as Braceros. That the volume of migration continues to grow suggests that Mexico-U.S. migration is a dynamic social process with a strong internal momentum fueled by social ties and difficult to stop (Massey et al., 1987). Furthermore, rising probabilities that young men by age forty make a first unauthorized U.S. trip between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s suggested that the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), designed to reduce illegal migration, had little noticeable impact on stemming the tide of illegal migrants (Donato et al., 1992a).<sup>6</sup>

In their review of past studies, Durand and Massey (1992) argued that Mexico-U.S. migration evolves similarly in each community and that differences in factors motivating and sustaining migration results from the origin community's stage of migration. For example, when communities first participate in migration, they typically send mostly young men who migrate illegally without their families for U.S. farm or other unskilled jobs. Over time, however, migration streams mature and many women and children accompany male family members from a Mexican community.

Therefore, as migration develops and matures in local communities, more immediate family members, wives and children, join their spouses (Reichert and Massey, 1980; Fonseca and Moreno, 1988; Gonzalez and Escobar, 1990; Goldring, 1990; Donato, 1993, 1994; Donato and Kanaiaupuni, 1998). In one study, women were especially likely to make a first U.S. trip by 1990, in some cases joining men who had migrated seasonally for years (Kanaiaupuni, 1998). In another, the chance that women would migrate increased considerably if they had an immediate relative who received temporary amnesty as a result of IRCA (Donato, 1993). And in some communities, social networks have facilitated the chances of making a first trip northward because they promote employment specialities that fit niches in the U.S. economy (Goldring, 1990). Cornelius (1990) too reported that U.S.-bound migrants from four communities had followed well-trodden network paths to a few U.S. destinations.

A recent salient contribution to this literature is Massey and Espinosa (1997). Based on an analysis of data from twenty-five Mexican communities, they found that what motivates Mexico-U.S. migration is much more complex than what is suggested by policy makers or popular media. Neither a wage differential nor peso inflation/devaluation was the major factor explaining illegal or legal migration during the last twenty-five years. What drives Mexican migration to the United States are three key processes: social capital formation, which exists because Mexicans who are related to migrants are more likely to migrate themselves;<sup>7</sup> human

capital formation, which is captured by U.S. experience; and market consolidation of U.S. and Mexican economies (1997).

To sum, this section has reviewed the leading studies of Mexican emigration communities to determine what factors initiated and sustained migration to the United States. In general, studies suggest that the factors motivating migration have shifted away from economic and wage differences to a complex set of social and economic mechanisms that make Mexico-U.S. migration a challenge for policy makers to control. In particular, the studies lead to several conclusions:

- Early studies identify the Mexico-U.S. wage differential as well as U.S. recruitment of Mexican workers, especially in the 1942–64 period, as key factors that unleashed immigration from Mexico. For this reason, most early migrants were young men from rural areas coming to work on U.S. farms.
- Immediately after the Bracero program ended in 1965, studies suggest that Mexicans increasingly entered first as legal green card holders. By the late 1960s, however, the studies also document an upward rise in the volume of illegal migration.
- All studies agree that, by the early 1990s, the probability that a young man would make a first trip to the U.S. had risen to very high levels, that more women and children had begun to migrate, and that noneconomic factors, such as the social capital and network ties that Mexicans have to migrants, and experience in the United States, motivated young men and women to migrate.

*Prevalence of Mexican Immigration.* To understand these and other findings, Massey et al. (1994) developed a theory of cumulative causation and a dynamic way of viewing the process of migration across communities. Using data from nineteen Mexican communities, the authors documented how migration unfolds over time by analyzing trends in the prevalence of migration in origin communities for the 1940–89 period. On the whole, they found that prevalence rose, and that rates of change in migration differed, over time and by community.

Their analysis depicted three patterns of male and female migration in these origin communities. The first was one of rising migration prevalence since 1942, where women's movement lagged behind men's by approximately twenty years. The second pattern was that migration rose early in the 1940s, stagnated and declined in the 1950s and 1960s, and then experienced an upturn by the early 1970s. The third pattern was very slow growth, whereby at the end of the 1980s, migration levels remained low.<sup>8</sup>



We build on these findings by developing an alternative method to understand the dynamic process of migration across communities. In general, the method permits an identification of trends in the chances of migrating over time, by legal status and gender. It also allows us to speculate about specific structural conditions (e.g., immigration policies, political conditions, or economic trends) that may explain community differences in the propensity to migrate from Mexico. Before presenting our findings, however, the data and methods are described below.

## Data and Methods

*Data.* For this analysis, we use data from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP, 1995). The MMP data were collected in the 1980s and early 1990s from about 200 households in each of thirty-nine communities in western central Mexico. The communities range in size from small ranchos with populations of approximately 1,000 people, to a section of Guadalajara which had a 1990 population of 2.9 million (Table 2).

In each of the thirty-nine communities, households were randomly selected and interviews were conducted in the winter months of December and January, when sojourner U.S. migrants often return to Mexico. Individual migration histories were compiled for all members of the household, and included detailed information about the year of the first (and subsequent) U.S. trip, duration of stay, occupation, place of destination, and legal status. Interviewers spoke with household heads and obtained information on all children, whether they were present or not, and if absent, whether they were in Mexico or the United States. For household heads, migration histories were compiled for each year after age fifteen, and they included such questions as whether the person migrated to the United States and if so, with or without documents. In addition, interviewers collected data in the summer following the Mexican data collection from about approximately twenty migrant households who had resettled in the United States.

*Methods.* One strength of the MMP data is that they permit me to separately distinguish between the chances of making an initial (first) or subsequent (two or more) trips to the United States. Together these events determine the overall flow of legal and illegal migrants across the border (Donato et al., 1992). In this report, we examined the chances that male household heads and women migrate on an initial U.S. trip, and for men, the chances that they migrate on a subsequent trip.

For the analysis, we drew on two basic sources of information: the birth date and the date of the first trip to the United States (compiled for all household members), and the history of border crossing (gathered from household heads).

**TABLE 2**  
**Characteristics of 39 Mexican Communities Sampled**  
**for Study of U.S. Migration**

Type of Community and Name	State	1990 Population <sup>a</sup>	1940 Population	Mexico		U.S. Sample*
				Survey Year	Sample Size*	
<i>Metropolitan Areas</i>						
Community 24	Jalisco	2,870,000 <sup>b</sup>	229,235	1982	200	16
Community 2	Guanajuato	868,000 <sup>b</sup>	74,155	1987	200	0
Community 32	S.L.P.	526,000 <sup>b</sup>	97,762	1993	200	0
Community 19	Michoacán	493,000 <sup>b</sup>	44,304	1991	200	20
Community 15	Guanajuato	363,000 <sup>b</sup>	32,377	1991	200	20
Community 29	Michoacán	217,000 <sup>b</sup>	20,583	1992	200	13
Community 35	Zacatecas	109,000 <sup>b</sup>	26,673	1994	239	10
Community 31	Guerrero	101,000 <sup>b</sup>	21,882	1993	100	0
Community 28	Jalisco	74,000 <sup>b</sup>	22,170	1992	201	20
<i>Smaller Urban Areas</i>						
Community 1	Guanajuato	52,000	12,015	1987	201	20
Community 38	S.L.P.	42,000	29,556	1994	200	0
Community 26	Guanajuato	34,000	8,341	1992	200	15
Community 9	Michoacán	32,000	5,452	1989	200	20
Community 17	Jalisco	31,000	13,003	1991	200	20
Community 27	Guanajuato	24,000	5,698	1992	200	15
Community 13	Guanajuato	21,000	5,635	1990	200	20
Community 11	Nayarit	20,000	4,720	1990	200	20
Community 4	Guanajuato	17,000	6,159	1988	200	22

Given each subject's date of birth and year of first trip, we first constructed separate year-by-year life histories up to the date of the first U.S. trip for both men and women. That is, we built discrete-time person-year files that followed each subject from birth to the date of the survey or to the first U.S. trip, whichever came first. For the recurrent trip analysis, we built a similar discrete-time person-year file but constructed it from year-by-year files that began with the year migrants returned from their first trip up to the year of their next trip.

Because the outcome measure was trichotomous (migrated illegally, legally, or did not migrate), we used multinomial logistic regression to estimate the chance of migrating with and without legal papers versus not migrating at all (the reference category) (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989). We began by estimating age-period

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Type of Community and Name	State	1990 Population <sup>a</sup>	1940 Population	Mexico		U.S. Sample*
				Survey Year	Sample Size*	
<i>Towns</i>						
Community 36	S.L.P.	13,000	13,923	1995	201	0
Community 23	Jalisco	12,000	5,531	1982	200	20
Community 12	Nayarit	12,000	551	1990	200	20
Community 18	Zacatecas	8,000	2,821	1991	365	20
Community 33	Colima	7,000	6,641	1995	200	20
Community 22	Michoacán	7,000	5,131	1982	200	20
Community 14	Michoacán	7,000	3,046	1990	200	20
Community 8	Michoacán	6,000	2,304	1989	200	20
Community 6	Jalisco	5,000	2,167	1988	200	20
Community 3	Jalisco	4,000	1,257	1988	200	22
<i>Ranchos</i>						
Community 7	Jalisco	3,000	615	1988	200	15
Community 20	Jalisco	3,000	1,900	1982	106	14
Community 21	Jalisco	2,000	1,128	1982	94	6
Community 10	Michoacán	2,000	808	1989	150	20
Community 5	Guanajuato	2,000	1,630	1988	150	10
Community 34	Zacatecas	2,000	30,894	1995	149	0
Community 30	Zacatecas	1,000	384	1991	187	0
Community 16	Guanajuato	1,000	303	1991	100	10
Community 39	S.L.P.	1,000	29,556	1995	100	0
Community 25	Jalisco	1,000	275	1992	100	7
Community 37	S.L.P.	1,000	13,933	1995	102	0

\* Sample size refers to number of households in the sample

<sup>a</sup> Rounded to nearest thousand

<sup>b</sup> Population of metropolitan area

Source: Mexican Migration Project (1995).

models and age-period-community models by sex (models available from author upon request). From them, we calculated the conditional chances that male household heads (or women) of a given age migrate legally or illegally on an initial U.S. trip. Using these probabilities as a baseline, we built life tables that produced the cumulative chances that men (or women) by age forty would make a legal trip, illegal trip, or not migrate, in a certain year (Shyrock et al., 1976). The probabilities depict the lifetime migration experience in some community and year by age, assuming the probabilities of Mexican out-migration that prevailed up to 1994, and

show what would happen if a male household head born into this community were to go through life subject to the probabilities of out-migration prevailing in different years. (See the appendix for more details.)

### *Migrating on a First and Subsequent U.S. Trip*

Let us begin simply. For example, for Community 2, a large metropolitan area in the state of Guanajuato, Table 3 shows that the chance that a young man aged 20–24 would migrate illegally to the United States was just 1 percent in 1994. Applying the year-by-year migration probabilities to all men who were in the sample illustrates that about 16 percent of men will migrate once illegally by age forty.

To better understand trends over time, consider a typical community, say number 11, which in 1990 was a small urban area with a population of 20,000. Table 3 shows that 12 percent of men aged 20–24 in this community took a first illegal trip in 1980. Ten years later, when legal migration associated with IRCA's amnesty program was quite high, approximately the same percentage of young men—11 percent—was likely to take a first unauthorized trip. Just one year later, the chance of making an illegal first trip among young men dropped to 5 percent, but by 1994, it rose to 7 percent. This means 7 of one-hundred young men in community 11 made a first illegal trip to the United States in 1994.

Probabilities for communities 3 and 10, which are more typical of the villages that depend on emigration and remittances to supplement earnings from a mostly agricultural economy, tell similar stories. In general, young men were more likely to make a first illegal U.S. trip in all years up through 1986. In that year, the chance of making a first illegal trip from community 10 was 45 percent, twice as much as making a first legal trip. For community 3, the chance of making an unauthorized trip was 38 percent, more than ten times higher than making a legal trip.

One year later, this pattern had changed. In community 3, young men still faced higher chances of migrating illegally than legally, but the difference between the two narrowed considerably after 1986. For men in community 10, however, the pattern reversed itself. Beginning in 1987, the chance that a young man would migrate legally was higher than migrating illegally. In 1992, sixty of one-hundred young men in community 10 made a first authorized trip, representing the highest legal migration probability recorded since 1980.

The second panel of Table 3 presents cumulative probabilities that a young man would have taken at least one unauthorized or legal trip to the United States by age forty. The probabilities for each community are based on the chances of out-migration that were estimated for each community between 1980 and 1994. Young

**TABLE 3**  
**Predicted Cumulative Probabilities that a Male Household Head Migrates on a First U.S. Trip,**  
**for Selected Communities, 1980-94**

Community and Legal Status	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
<i>Predicted Probabilities at Age 20-24</i>															
<i>With Documents</i>															
Community 2	.00	.01	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.01	.02	.01	.02	.01	.02	.01	.01
Community 11	.03	.03	.03	.03	.03	.03	.03	.05	.09	.09	.10	.08	.11	.04	.08
Community 3	.03	.04	.03	.03	.03	.03	.03	.06	.11	.12	.11	.10	.14	.05	.10
Community 10	.23	.25	.23	.23	.23	.21	.21	.37	.52	.57	.51	.53	.60	.34	.51
<i>Without Documents</i>															
Community 2	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.02	.02	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
Community 11	.12	.11	.09	.09	.13	.14	.15	.08	.09	.05	.11	.05	.06	.03	.07
Community 3	.32	.31	.27	.26	.34	.36	.38	.24	.26	.15	.30	.15	.17	.11	.20
Community 10	.38	.37	.33	.33	.40	.43	.45	.25	.22	.13	.25	.14	.13	.13	.18
<i>Cumulative Probabilities by Age 40</i>															
<i>With Documents</i>															
Community 2	.11	.12	.10	.10	.11	.10	.11	.18	.18	.19	.15	.21	.07	.16	.29
Community 11	.18	.20	.20	.21	.18	.15	.15	.35	.55	.41	.50	.58	.31	.46	.52
Community 3	.08	.09	.09	.09	.08	.07	.06	.18	.39	.23	.35	.40	.25	.30	.30
Community 10	.33	.36	.36	.37	.33	.29	.28	.55	.78	.63	.76	.79	.68	.71	.71
<i>Without Documents</i>															
Community 2	.29	.27	.23	.23	.31	.34	.36	.20	.08	.18	.08	.09	.05	.10	.16
Community 11	.81	.79	.77	.76	.81	.84	.85	.63	.35	.56	.37	.36	.33	.44	.47
Community 3	.92	.91	.91	.91	.92	.93	.94	.82	.60	.77	.64	.60	.67	.70	.70
Community 10	.67	.64	.64	.63	.67	.71	.72	.45	.22	.37	.24	.21	.32	.29	.29

men enter the pool of potential migrants at birth, and leave at age thirty-nine or by death. So the pool of those who could migrate, or the denominator, is all men in the community under age forty who have so far not migrated legally or illegally.

Once again, beginning with community 2, men by age forty had a 29 percent chance of migrating illegally on a first trip in 1980. By the mid-1980s, the chance that a man would make at least one illegal trip rose to 27 percent but then quickly fell. By 1987, the chance dropped to 20 percent, and in 1988 to 28 percent. The decline continued through 1992, when the lifetime chance of making a first unauthorized trip was 5 percent. However, one year later, it had risen to 10 percent.

So far, our results suggest three key findings. First, from some communities, virtually all young men will make an initial U.S. trip by age forty. Second, the chances of migrating illegally and legally vary considerably by origin community—they are lower in larger metropolitan areas than in smaller rural communities. Third, despite declines immediately after 1986, the probability of making an initial undocumented U.S. trip by age forty began to rise again by 1994.

Table 4 presents the same two sets of probabilities calculated for women in the four communities. Like those for men, the patterns reveal that: (1) by age forty, many women will migrate to the United States on a first trip; and (2) the incentives to migrate have changed since 1980. However, unlike those for men, the year-by-year probabilities show that women were more likely to migrate legally than illegally, and that shifts in the chances of migrating legally and illegally were more gradual than those for men. For example, declines in the chances that a woman would migrate illegally occurred in the 1990s rather than immediately after 1986.

Finally, the probabilities presented in Table 5 suggest that recent repeat trips to the United States were more likely made with legal documents rather than without them. In communities 2, 11, and 10, the lifetime chance of making a second trip (after making a first) with legal documents was much higher than making an illegal trip in the mid-1990s. Before 1987, however, the chance of making a second unauthorized trip was much higher than migrating legally.

To better understand migration trends over a longer period of time for all thirty-nine communities, we estimated the probabilities separately for each year beginning in 1943. From these probabilities (available upon request), we derived Figures 1 and 2. Each illustrates trends in the chances that a male household head (or a woman) migrates on a first U.S. trip

On the whole, the data reveal the same difference that we observed earlier between the predicted and cumulative probabilities. The predicted chances that young men migrate on a first illegal or legal trip at age 20–24 were quite low throughout the period, but magnified over forty years, the chances of migrating were considerably higher. Figure 1 documents several interesting trends in the

**TABLE 4**  
**Predicted Cumulative Probabilities that a Woman Migrates on a First U.S. Trip,**  
**for Selected Communities, 1980-94**

Community and Legal Status	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
<i>Predicted Probabilities at Age 20-24</i>															
<i>With Documents</i>															
Community 2	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.02	.02	.03	.04
Community 11	.11	.12	.12	.14	.12	.13	.13	.13	.14	.14	.15	.17	.20	.25	.32
Community 3	.05	.05	.05	.06	.05	.05	.06	.06	.06	.06	.07	.08	.10	.13	.17
Community 10	.19	.19	.20	.23	.21	.21	.21	.22	.23	.23	.26	.29	.32	.40	.47
<i>Without Documents</i>															
Community 2	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.01
Community 11	.20	.20	.20	.21	.22	.23	.24	.25	.25	.27	.31	.36	.34	.38	.28
Community 3	.12	.12	.13	.14	.14	.15	.15	.16	.16	.18	.21	.26	.25	.30	.22
Community 10	.15	.15	.15	.16	.16	.17	.18	.18	.19	.20	.23	.26	.24	.26	.18
<i>Cumulative Probabilities by Age 40</i>															
<i>With Documents</i>															
Community 2	.25	.26	.27	.31	.28	.29	.30	.31	.20	.24	.29	.32	.45	.51	.69
Community 11	.53	.53	.54	.56	.53	.52	.51	.52	.51	.50	.49	.54	.57	.70	.70
Community 3	.40	.41	.41	.44	.41	.40	.40	.40	.40	.39	.39	.44	.48	.61	.61
Community 10	.72	.72	.73	.75	.72	.71	.71	.71	.70	.70	.69	.73	.75	.84	.84
<i>Without Documents</i>															
Community 2	.13	.14	.14	.15	.15	.16	.17	.17	.10	.12	.14	.13	.16	.11	.16
Community 11	.47	.47	.46	.44	.47	.48	.49	.48	.49	.50	.51	.46	.43	.30	.30
Community 3	.60	.59	.59	.56	.59	.60	.60	.60	.59	.60	.60	.56	.52	.39	.39
Community 10	.28	.28	.27	.25	.28	.29	.29	.29	.29	.30	.31	.27	.25	.16	.16

**TABLE 5**  
**Predicted Cumulative Probabilities that a Man Migrates on a Subsequent U.S. Trip,**  
**for Selected Communities, 1980-94\***

Community and Legal Status	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
<i>Predicted Probabilities at Age 20-24</i>															
<i>With Documents</i>															
Community 2	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.03	.04	.05	.08	.06	.08	.03	.09
Community 11	.10	.09	.10	.09	.09	.09	.09	.15	.19	.22	.30	.25	.32	.15	.34
Community 3	.06	.05	.06	.05	.06	.06	.05	.10	.12	.16	.21	.17	.23	.10	.24
Community 10	.37	.35	.39	.35	.37	.36	.34	.52	.58	.68	.73	.68	.76	.55	.75
<i>Without Documents</i>															
Community 2	.05	.05	.04	.05	.05	.05	.06	.04	.05	.02	.04	.03	.03	.03	.05
Community 11	.13	.12	.11	.12	.13	.13	.16	.10	.11	.05	.08	.07	.06	.08	.09
Community 3	.34	.33	.31	.33	.34	.34	.39	.27	.30	.16	.24	.22	.20	.24	.27
Community 10	.36	.36	.32	.36	.36	.36	.41	.24	.23	.12	.14	.15	.11	.21	.14
<i>Cumulative Probabilities by Age 40</i>															
<i>With Documents</i>															
Community 2	.22	.21	.24	.21	.22	.21	.20	.35	.43	.53	.46	.57	.30	.57	.63
Community 11	.41	.39	.45	.39	.41	.40	.36	.59	.78	.78	.75	.82	.62	.78	.78
Community 3	.14	.13	.16	.13	.13	.13	.11	.24	.47	.44	.41	.51	.28	.45	.45
Community 10	.49	.48	.53	.47	.49	.48	.44	.66	.84	.83	.81	.86	.71	.83	.83
<i>Without Documents</i>															
Community 2	.61	.60	.56	.60	.60	.61	.68	.47	.21	.29	.28	.24	.33	.30	.34
Community 11	.59	.60	.55	.60	.59	.60	.64	.41	.20	.22	.24	.18	.36	.22	.22
Community 3	.86	.87	.84	.87	.87	.87	.89	.76	.53	.56	.59	.49	.72	.55	.55
Community 10	.51	.52	.47	.53	.51	.52	.56	.34	.16	.17	.19	.14	.29	.17	.17

\* Community 2 represents communities 2 and 24.



chances of legal and illegal migration since the early 1940s. For example, in the beginning of the Bracero period, the chance that young men would migrate on a first U.S. trip with documents was higher than moving without documents. In 1947, the relative position of these chances changed, and male household heads were more likely to migrate illegally. In the early 1950s, and after Operation Wetback in 1954, the situation had reversed itself and legal migration became the norm until the end of the Bracero program.

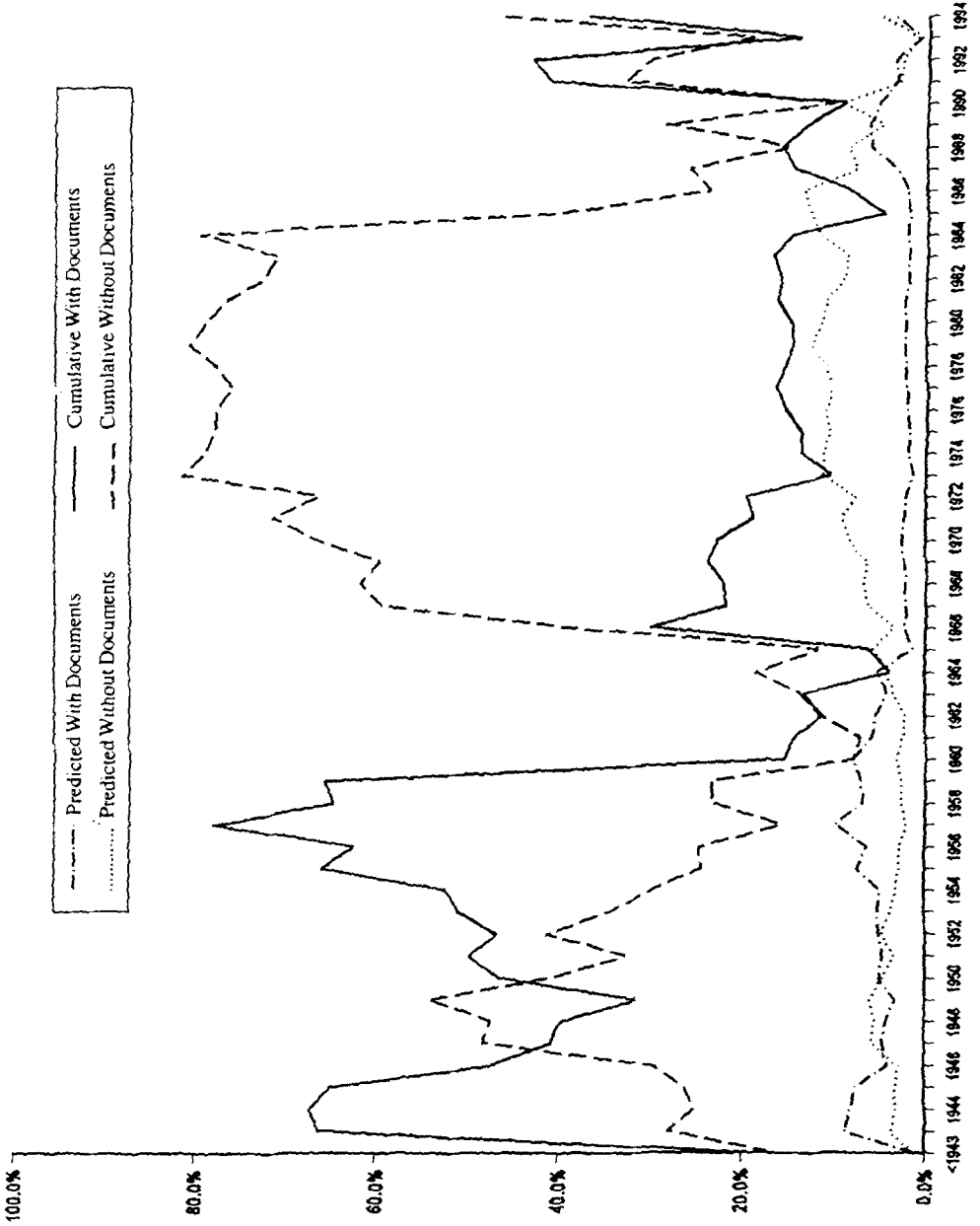
Beginning in 1964, however, the cumulative probability that young men migrated legally trended downward, while the cumulative probability of a first illegal trip moved up, peaking at 80 percent in these emigration communities in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, the lifetime probability that a young man would migrate on a first legal trip to the United States has fluctuated, with legal and illegal probabilities following similar year-by-year patterns. They reached an all-time low of approximately 20 percent in 1990, but then jumped to at least 30 percent by 1994.

These trends are consistent with evidence from some past studies, which suggest that stepped-up enforcement and the increased legalization of Braceros in the mid-1950s helped lower the chances of illegal first-time entry. As the number of Braceros was cut in 1959 and then again in 1963, the chances of illegal entry grew. This upward pattern continued until the mid-1980s, when IRCA implemented a series of incentives explicitly designed to reduce illegal entry to the United States. As a consequence, the probability of first-time illegal migration dramatically declined in the late 1980s, intersected with that for legal migration, and in recent years the chances of legal and illegal migration converged.

An examination of these trends by community reveals that the pressures to migrate have changed over time in the four typical communities featured earlier. In community 2, where migration was less established, the chance of illegal migration was on the whole much lower, and less symmetric, than in other communities. In communities 3 and 10, the most established migrant-sending origins from which virtually everyone migrates on a first trip with or without documents, overall trends reveal remarkably high levels of migration and almost perfect symmetry between the two types of cumulative probabilities. In 1971, from community 3, the lifetime chance of migrating illegally was close to 90 percent, whereas the chance of illegal migration dropped to roughly 10 percent. In that same year, the cumulative chance of migrating on a first U.S. trip from community 10 was 62 percent for men without documents and 38 percent for those making legal trips.

The chances of migrating continued at the same high levels through 1986, but with an important distinction—migrating legally replaced migrating illegally in these two villages. During the post-IRCA period, the chance of making a legal trip by age forty grew to a high of approximately 30 percent in community 3, and 80

**FIGURE 1**  
**Chances that a Male Household Head Migrates on a First U.S. Trip, for 39 Mexican Communities, 1943-94**



percent in community 10. In both communities, upward or downward shifts in the chances of legal and illegal migration essentially mirrored each other—a drop in the chance of illegal migration occurred in the same year that the chance of legal migration increased. Despite the shifts, however, the combined chances of migration suggest that virtually everyone will migrate on a first trip by age forty.

Community 10 illustrated Massey et al.'s (1987) view of how migration has become a self-feeding process. Of the thirty-nine communities in the data set, this community had the longest history of U.S. migration. With a high degree of illegal migration in the past, many residents were in a position to obtain legal papers after the implementation of IRCA's amnesty program. As a result, the probability of migrating on a first legal trip rose remarkably by 1988 and surpassed the chance of making a first unauthorized trip. Later, in the 1990s, with documents themselves, these migrants would then sponsor the legal migration of their dependents, thus facilitating very high levels of legal migration from this community.

In contrast to the patterns outlined above for men, women's chances of migrating on a first legal trip were much higher than for a first unauthorized trip throughout the 1943–94 period.<sup>1</sup> Particularly striking were the two peaks that occurred in the mid-1960s and again in the early 1990s. The first period witnessed the legalization of many Braceros (men), who in turn sponsored their immediate family members (many of them women) for purposes of family unification. The early 1990s was different, however. At that time, a woman's chance of migrating legally by age forty had reached a new high, widening the gap between the probabilities of legal and illegal migration rather than documenting a convergence of the two. This suggests that many women began to legally enter as relatives of IRCA's amnesty recipients.

Interestingly, however, trends in individual communities do not differ much. By 1994, the gap between the chance of migrating with and without documents was consistently wider than it was earlier in the period. In community 3, a woman's chance of making an undocumented U.S. trip approached that for migrating legally until 1989, when legal migration rose again. But in community 10, the gap in the lifetime chances of legal versus illegal migration was consistently larger than that observed for all thirty-nine communities.

### *Discussion*

These data suggest that the majority of men and women will leave west central Mexico on a first U.S. trip by age forty, and that most men will make a subsequent trip. On a year-by-year basis, the major issue is whether Mexicans made

their first trips legally or illegally, not whether or not they migrated. Legal status differences were also related to community of origin. From traditional emigration communities, prior high levels of illegal migration have fed on themselves, changing the legal status of newly arriving Mexican migrants without shifting the overall pressures to migrate over the long term. In fact, the present analysis reveals that the chance of migrating on a first trip had begun to rise in the 1990s. For men, the chances of both legal and illegal first-trip migration has increased, whereas for women, only the chance of migrating with legal documents has risen since 1990.

Together with findings from prior studies, the analysis suggests that the pressures to migrate are now as high as ever. Although the legalization program appears related to a rapid rise in the probabilities of legal migration, it is clear that overall pressures to migrate from many communities in west central Mexico remain strong for both men and women. So the question is how to get over the current migration peak or hump (Martin, 1993).

Therefore, the analysis suggests that recent migration from communities with long trajectories of migration has become a self-feeding process (Massey et al., 1987). After 1986, with amnesty and the ability to sponsor their relatives, many more migrants—especially women—have been entering legally. But at the same time that the incentives to migrate legally and illegally have changed, very high levels of male and female migration persist. Thus, controlling the U.S. border through enforcement efforts alone cannot effectively deter Mexicans from migrating because going northward has become a way of life in many communities. The solution lies in a multi-dimensional and dynamic approach to U.S.-Mexico immigration policy. Essential in this approach must be a binational propaganda campaign that is aimed at changing beliefs about migrating to the United States from Mexican communities.

## **Technical Appendix**

The MMP data permit us to separately distinguish between the chances of making an initial (first) or subsequent (two or more) trip to the United States. Together these events determine the overall flow of legal and illegal migrants across the border (Donato et al., 1992). In this report, we examined the chances that male household heads and women will migrate on an initial U.S. trip, and for men, the chances that they will migrate on a subsequent trip.

For the analysis, we drew on two basic sources of information: the birth date and the date of the first trip to the United States (compiled for all household members), and the history of border crossing (gathered from household heads).

Given each subject's date of birth and year of first trip, we first constructed separate year-by-year life histories up to the date of the first U.S. trip for both men and women. That is, we built discrete-time person-year files that followed each subject from birth to the date of the survey or to the first U.S. trip, whichever came first. For the recurrent trip analysis, we built a similar discrete-time person year file but constructed it from year-by-year files that began with the year migrants returned from their first trip up to the year of their next trip.

Because the outcome measure was trichotomous (migrated illegally, legally, or did not migrate), we used multinomial logistic regression to estimate the chance of migrating with and without legal papers versus not migrating at all (the reference category) (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989). The multinomial logit equation is given below:

$$g_j(x) = \ln \frac{P(Y = j | x)}{P(Y = 0 | x)}$$

$$= \beta_{j0} + \beta_{j1}x_1 + \beta_{j2}x_2 + \beta_{j3}x_3$$

where  $j$  represents legal status of migration on a first (or subsequent) trip and 0 indicates no migration, and where  $P(Y = j|x)$  is the probability of migration with legal status  $j$  given a set of characteristics represented by the vector  $x$ . The effects of the explanatory variables in time  $t$  on the log-odds ( $g_j(x)$ ) of migrating with legal status  $j$  in  $t + 1$  are; age given by  $\beta_{j1}$ , period given by  $\beta_{j2}$ , and community given by  $\beta_{j3}$ . Note that period and age are time varying, whereas community is a fixed variable.

We began by estimating age-period models and age-period-community models (available upon request). From them, we calculated the conditional chances that male household heads (or women) of a given age migrate, legally or illegally, on an initial U.S. trip using the equation below:

## Notes

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1. Of the roughly seven million Mexican-born persons living in the United States in early 1997, four million were Mexican legal immigrants, two million unauthorized immigrants and one million Mexican-born persons who have become naturalized U.S. citizens (INS, 1997).

2. Between 1942 and 1947 alone, some 220,000 Mexican braceros were admitted with U.S. government approval.

3. In 1966–67, Mexicans employed on U.S. farms earned \$15 to \$25 per day, versus \$0.80 to \$1.20 in the local day labor market—according to Wiest, “a relatively unskilled temporary job in the United States provides a higher income than jobs . . . in Mexico” (1973).

4. Wages were about \$30 per day in the U.S., and \$3.80 per day in Mexico at this time (Reichert, 1981).

5. At the time, U.S. policy permitted employers to write letters offering ex-Braceros jobs, enabling many Mexicans to become legal immigrants with the right to unify their families.

6. IRCA did, however, affect the wages and work conditions of Mexican migrants (Donato et al., 1992b; Donato and Massey, 1993; Massey and Philips, forthcoming).

7. As Massey and Espinosa (1997) note, national surveys suggest that approximately half of Mexican adults are related to someone in the United States (Camp, 1993).

8. Using these patterns as a guide, Massey et al. (1994) then classified communities according to their stage in the migration process each year and described how the characteristics of migrants change as prevalence moves from low to high.

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