

**THE GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION OF FEMALE MEXICAN MIGRATION
IN THE UNITED STATES, 1985 TO 2005**

Mark A. Leach
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Extended abstract submission.
Population Association of America Meetings
2008

THE GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION OF FEMALE MEXICAN MIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 1985 TO 2005

Long Abstract

The recent geographic dispersion of Mexican migration to new destinations across the United States is no longer news to immigration scholars. Change in settlement patterns is illustrated in the fact that only 10 percent of Mexican-born persons lived outside the five traditional destination states in 1990, yet this more than doubled in 2000 to 24 percent. Our understanding of this phenomenon in terms of the underlying causes and subsequent social, political and economic outcomes, however, continues to be limited to descriptive analyses of the size and characteristics of the migration flows (Durand, Massey and Capoferro 2005; Leach and Bean Forthcoming) and to dynamics in particular new destination locales (see, for example, Smith 2005; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Furthermore, research on the role of women in the geographic dispersion of Mexican migration is virtually nonexistent (a notable exception is Smith 2005). The present research seeks to shed light both on the extent to which female migrants contributed to rapid growth of migration flows in non-traditional destinations of Mexican migration and on how settlement in such places may indicate fundamental transformation in the dynamics of Mexican migration, particularly with regard to gender and female migration (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005).

The role and implications of women in international migration continues to be understudied in the social sciences in spite of women comprising a majority of all international migrants (Donato et al. 2006; Harzig 2006; Pedraza 1991). And although

women do not out-number men in the case of Mexican migration to the United States¹, their role in migration processes and implications for other outcomes should be considered no less important. Recent changes in the dynamics of female migration from Mexico will continue to have social and economic consequences for generations to come. For example, recent female migrants enter the country increasingly without authorization, are relatively younger, and are more likely to be single than in the past (Bean et al. 1990). Such changes indicate that female migrants are assuming relatively more risk than their predecessors and may be migrating for reasons other than for family reunification as is often assumed (Pedraza 1991). When considered in light of shifting settlement patterns, qualitative changes in female migration may lead to regional variation in outcomes such as education and English language acquisition that carry great significance for the economic mobility of not only immigrants but for the children of immigrants and future generations.

This paper investigates patterns of female Mexican migration to non-traditional destinations in the past 30 years. It seeks to shed light on the important factors that contribute to increased female settlement in new destination regions outside the Southwest and Chicago. The following questions guide the analyses. What role did women play in the rapid growth of migration flows into non-traditional destinations? Has settlement in new destinations contributed to change in the mechanisms of female migration from Mexico to the United States? What are the most important factors that affect the locational choices of female migrants? Specifically, do female migrants continue to rely on previous male migration or does empirical evidence show that

¹ About 2 in 5 Mexican migrants who came to the United States between 1995 and 2000 were women Ruggles, S. and M. Sobek. 2003. "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 3.0." Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota..

settlement in new destination is facilitating relatively more independence for recent female migrants? In other words, this paper assesses whether current migration theory sufficiently accounts for changes in the size and composition of female Mexican migration.

My paper primarily uses the framework of the cumulative causation theory of migration to shed light on the dynamics of female Mexican migration to non-traditional destinations although other explanations of migration are considered. Past research finds that social networks and kinship ties largely explain self-sustaining migration flows which may become independent of economic activity (Massey 1986; Massey et al. 1987). Put simply, cumulative causation predicts that migration will continue to occur in places where migration has occurred in the past. In fact, my previous work finds that cumulative causation is a significant factor in the settlement of male migrants in non-traditional destination states (Leach and Bean Forthcoming). This research also finds evidence that other factors such as labor demand and individual-level decisions also play an important role in the growth of migration flows to new destination states.

In focusing on the dynamics of female migration, the present research first assesses change over time and across locales in the characteristics of female migration flows with regard to both who is more likely to migrate to new destinations and in what kinds of places do they settle. My data come from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) for the 1980, 1990 and 2000 decennial Censuses and the 2005 American Community Survey (Ruggles and Sobek 2003). The sample consists of all recent Mexican-born female migrants, ages 18 to 64, that settled in new destination states within the past five years of each survey. I focus only on recent migrants to

capture the composition of migration flows rather than the stock of all Mexican-born women who settled in new destination states. I construct individual-, household-, and state-level variables that enable me to analyze the migrants' demographic characteristics, their living arrangements and the kinds of places in which they settled. Preliminary descriptive statistics for a subset of characteristics for both 1990 and 2000 are provided in Table 2 below. Additional variables will be included in the analysis.

Prior research shows that the composition of migration flows change as they mature and the costs of migration are reduced as networks develop between migration origins and destinations (Massey 1986; Massey et al. 1987). I thus hypothesize that the kinds of female migrants settling across all new destination states should be diverse in terms of both individual characteristics and the kinds of places in which they settled due to different rates of growth of migration flows. For example, Mexican migration to Atlanta, Georgia started in the 1970s whereas Mexican migrants did not settle to a large degree in South Carolina until the 1990s. Thus, because migration flows into Georgia were more mature in 1990 than those in South Carolina, one should find evidence of different kinds of migrants involved in each of the flows. I use factor analysis to understand the primary dimensions across which both the migrants and places varied. Preliminary results are provided in Table 3 below and show the multidimensional nature of female migration to non-traditional destination states. The fact that multiple factors describe both migrants and places shows that they are not homogeneous with respect to their individual and household characteristics nor in terms of the kinds economic activities that predominate in the places in which they settled. The final paper will further explore these relationships and the extent to which these pattern differ both from

historical patterns of female migration from Mexico and from contemporary migration to traditional destinations.

The paper then investigates the extent to which migrant and place characteristics predict the timing of an individual's migration in terms of the relative size of migration flows. Migration theory posits that as the migration flow grow and mature, the costs of migration decrease and more diverse kinds of migrants join the flows. I first use OLS regression models to assess relationships between the maturity of migration flows and the characteristics of female migrants to non-traditional destinations. The relative size of total migration and the size of male migration flows are analyzed separately to assess the strength of association between male and female migration as predicted by theory. I also evaluate such relationships over time and geography. Two well known issues arise, however, when using OLS regression to analyze cross-sectional data. I use Instrument Variable (IV) models to address problems of endogeneity between migrant and place characteristics and the timing of their migration. Furthermore, preliminary analyses suggest that there are several indirect relationships between the migrant characteristics, place characteristics and the size of migration flows. A simple path analysis is also performed to assess such relationships. Detailed results will be shown and discussed in the final paper, however, preliminary analysis suggests that female migrants who recently settled in new destination states are somewhat more autonomous from male migrants than was the case in the past indicating that settlement in new destinations may be changing the dynamics of Mexican migration, particular that of female migration. The implications of such changes will be discussed as well.

Table 2

Individual and Household Characteristics of Recent Female Mexican-born Migrants and Characteristics of the Places They Settled, 1990 and 2000

Attribute	1985-1990	1995-2000	Combined
Number of cases in sample	2,775	12,946	15,721
Migrants' Individual Attributes			
Age	30.8	30.7	30.7
U.S. Experience			
Percent Naturalized	16.5	9.4	10.6
Percent from U.S. Origins	41.3	34.5	35.6
Avg Years in United States	7.9	6.7	6.9
Marriage and Family			
Percent Married	60.4	58.6	58.9
Percent Householder or Spouse of Householder	61.7	58.6	59.1
Percent Living with Own Children	54.6	54.7	54.7
Migrants' Household Attributes			
Percent Living with Non-Family Household Members	24.4	31.2	30.1
Percent Living in Vertically Extended Household	11.1	16.4	15.5
Percent Living in Horizontally Extended Household	29.7	37.5	36.3
New Destination State Attributes			
State Industries			
Percent Agricultural Industries	3.0	2.3	2.4
Percent Food Manufacturing	1.2	1.2	1.2
Percent Retail Trade	16.1	7.6	7.7
Percent Construction	6.9	8.0	7.8
Percent Durable Manufacturing	9.5	8.9	9.0
Percent Low-skill Service Industries	8.1	16.2	16.2
Percent Wholesale Trade	4.2	3.5	3.6
Percent Professional and Business Services	32.5	35.2	34.8
Percentage of Mexican Migrants Self-Employed	5.3	5.3	5.3
Economic Indicators			
Average Earnings	\$24,369	\$25,370	\$25,208
Unemployment Rate	5.4	4.8	4.9
Migration Flow in Previous Decade			
Recent Mexican-born Per 1000 in State for Previous Decade	0.7	3.0	2.6
Not Recent Mexican-born per 1000 in State for Previous Decade	2.6	3.9	3.7
U.S.-born Mexican origin per 1000 in State for Previous Decade	9.6	12.5	12.0

Source: IPUMS (Ruggles et al. 2003)

Table 3

Principal Components for Recent Female Mexican Migrants to New Destinations, United States, 1990 and 2000

	<u>IPC1</u>	<u>IPC2</u>		
Individual-Level Analysis				
Traditional Family				
Married	84 *	-5		
Householder or Spouse of Householder	86 *	8		
Live with Own Children	77 *	9		
Live Non-Family Household Member	-61 *	-8		
U.S. Experience				
Migration Origin within United States	15	73 *		
Years in United States	10	87 *		
Arrived in U.S. at 14 or younger	-8	71 *		
Naturalized Citizen	5	62 *		
<hr/>				
	<u>SPC1</u>	<u>SPC2</u>	<u>SPC3</u>	<u>SPC4</u>
State-Level Analysis				
Construction and Low-Skill Service				
Percent Low-Skill Service Industries	64 *	-38	-37	-42
Percent Construction	84 *	-32	12	-9
Percent Durable Manufacturing	-76 *	-22	11	-1
Business Services				
Professional, Financial, Business Services	-13	92 *	6	15
Average Wages	9	79 *	-42	-18
Agriculture and Food Processing				
Percent Agricultural Industries	-27	-37	69 *	18
Percent Food Manufacturing	-48	-28	67 *	-1
Unemployment Rate	-28	-13	-81 *	23
Trade				
Percent Retail Trade	24	-29	33	72 *
Percent Wholesale Trade	-27	10	-1	70 *
Percent Mexican-Born Self-Employment	-3	6	-20	71 *

Note: Factor loadings are multiplied by 100 and rounded to the nearest integer. Absolute values of 50 or greater, indicating high loadings, are flagged by an asterisk.

References

- Bean, F.D., T.J. Espenshade, M.J. White, and R.F. Dymowski. 1990. "Post-IRCA Changes in the Volume and Composition of Undocumented Migration to the United States: An Assessment Based on Apprehensions Data." Pp. 111-158 in *Undocumented Migration to the United States: IRCA and the Experience of the 1980s*, edited by F.D. Bean, B. Edmonston, and J.S. Passel. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Donato, K.A., D. Gabaccia, J. Holdaway, M. Manalansan, and P.R. Pessar. 2006. "A glass half full? Gender in migration studies." *International Migration Review* 40(1):3-26.
- Durand, J., D.S. Massey, and C. Capoferro. 2005. "The New Geography of Mexican Immigration." in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, edited by V. Zúñiga and R. Hernández-León. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Harzig, C. 2006. "Domestics of the World (Unite?): Labor Migration Systems and Personal Trajectories of Household Workers in Historical and Global Perspective." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25(Winter/Spring):48-73.
- Leach, M.A. and F.D. Bean. Forthcoming. "The Structure and Dynamics of Mexican Migration to New Destinations in the United States." in *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration*, edited by D.S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Massey, D.S. 1986. "The Settlement Process Among Mexican Migrants to the United States." *American Sociological Review* 51(5):670-684.
- Massey, D.S., R. Alarcón, J. Durand, and H. Gonzalez. 1987. *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Pedraza, S. 1991. "Women and Migration - the Social-Consequences of Gender." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17:303-325.
- Ruggles, S. and M. Sobek. 2003. "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 3.0." Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota.
- Smith, R.C. 2005. *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zúñiga, V. and R. Hernández-León. 2005. "Introduction." in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, edited by V. Zúñiga and R. Hernández-León. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.