

PROPOSAL: THE EVOLUTION OF THE DOCUMENTED AND UNDOCUMENTED POPULATION OF MEXICAN MIGRANTS TO THE US

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The first objective of this project is to describe the evolution (over the period 1960-2000) of the number and characteristics of the documented and undocumented population of Mexican migrants to the US. That is, the goal is to recover a collection of distribution functions of migrants' characteristics. Characteristics of interest are, for instance, the age of the household head (henceforth head), his education and skills (occupation, labor market experience), and the location and documentation of the head and of his immediate family members. The second objective of this project is to identify the determinants of the (recovered) time variation in migrants' distributions of characteristics. Candidate determinants considered are e.g. the US immigration policy and the economic conditions in Mexico and the US.

Availability of these distributions allows us to answer questions such as: (i) Have the skills of Mexican migrants to the US changed over time? Are there differences in this respect between migrants with documentation and without? (ii) How do Mexican migrants who are in the US with their dependents differ from those migrants whose family is in Mexico? Have these differences changed over time? (iii) Have the characteristics of those migrants who cross the border undocumented changed over time? How has their performance in the US labor market evolved? (iv) How responsive is migration (documented and undocumented) to Immigration laws and economic conditions in Mexico and the US?

There is an extensive literature that chronicles the evolution of e.g. the skills of the immigrant population to the US. Most of these works use Census and/or CPS data. As Jasso and Rosenzweig point out “because the standard sources of data [...] do not distinguish among the foreign born population by their legal status [...] we do not know whether any resulting secular trend characterize legal or illegal immigrant flows alone or some unknown amalgam of the two” (Guillermina Jasso and Mark R. Rosenzweig (2000), “The Changing Skill of New Immigrants to the United States”, in *Issues in the Economics of Immigration*, edited by G. Borjas, NBER, page 185. In this regard, while our proposed research project restricts attention to one sending country (Mexico), we are able to include both documented and undocumented migrants to the US and describe their characteristics, and the characteristics of their immediate relatives, well beyond their education and occupation.

In this project we use the Mexican Migration Project data (MMP, 1950-2000) as the main source of household-level longitudinal information. The main advantage of the MMP is that it contains longitudinal information on location, documentation, and demographics for the head and his immediate relatives. No Mexican or US national survey (or census) collects such a wealth of information, at such high frequency (yearly), over such a long period of time. We supplement the MMP with data from several other sources: Mexican

Census (1950 onwards), CPS (1972-2000), WHO (1955-2000), and Immigration and Naturalization Services (1972-2000).

Making use of the MMP data is not straightforward. The MMP (i) is not a representative sample of the Mexican population, (ii) is collected retrospectively, and (iii) excludes households that at the survey time are in the US in their entirety. We tackle these difficulties by exploiting the data sources described above in conjunction with a dynamic model of the location choice. First, the community level data is used to reweight the non random sample of MMP communities, in so handling problem (i). Second, individual-level information from the MMP is "filtered" through the location model to "correct" for the selection issue (iii). This is possible because the choice that determines sample inclusion in the MMP is not absorbing. Indeed, we observe a nontrivial number of families who return to Mexico after having resided in the US (both for short and long periods of time). It is thus this "reversal" in the location choice that enables us to deal with the choice-based nature of the MMP sampling scheme. Finally, mortality and population growth data allow us to properly use the retrospective component of the MMP data, in so handling problem (ii).

- The student will help collect data, organize the existing data from the various sources, obtain summary statistics, and carry out exploratory statistical analysis.
- **It will be essential that the student has working knowledge of STATA including basic programming. It would be ideal if the students had knowledge of ArcGIS or the willingness to learn this software.**
- The primary benefits to the student of this research experience will be to learn how to (i) gather statistical data from multiple sources, (ii) organize and use large data sets, (iii) work with statistical software packages (**STATA, ArcGIS**), (iv) apply a wide array of statistical techniques to answer policy relevant questions such as those related to the much debated reform of the current US Immigration law.