

# **Family Ties and Migration Trajectories in the Context of Mexico-US Migration**

## **Introduction**

Migration is a complex decision that usually entails the aim to provide a better life for the person migrating and also for the family involved. The question of the importance of family ties in understanding migratory patterns and trajectories remains relevant and varies across different contexts. In the European context, it has been found that local ties with family decrease the likelihood of migrating (Mulder & Malmberg, 2014). However, in other contexts, such as the Mexico-US migration, it could be that the presence of family ties in the place of residence helps the decision to migrate since the family will not be left alone. For example, a parent with a family that can care for their children while they migrate.

The Mexico-US is the largest migration corridor worldwide (IOM, 2022). The causes and patterns of this migration have varied throughout the years. Durand and Massey (2019) identify what they call five eras of Mexican migration during the period of 1900 to 2020. The first one is Recruitment and Expulsion, the second is Bracero Circulation, the third one is Undocumented Circulation, the fourth one is Militarization and Settlement, and the fifth one is Repression and legal circulation. Each of these eras is characterized by the feasibility of migration given the restrictions at that time and serves as a response to the policies implemented by the US government in the preceding era. For example, the era of undocumented circulation is a response to the end of the Bracero program, a temporary work program, which resulted in some migrants obtaining permanent visas, and others not, but still having family ties in the US, therefore finding ways to migrate.

The motivations, patterns, flows, and composition of Mexican migration to the US have varied over time. For instance, the geography of Mexican migration to the US has experienced changes as new regions of origin and destination in both countries emerge (Riosmena & Massey, 2012). There are gender differences in the composition of migrants that vary by social class, ethnicity, and geography (Hamilton, 2015), and when looking at the relationship between migration and family trajectories, it has been found that they are highly dependent on both social class and gender (Castro Torres & Gutierrez-Vazquez, 2022).

Considering the different eras of Mexican migration to the US, the research aims to understand the role of family ties in the Mexico-US migration patterns over time. Additionally, this study seeks also to consider the linkage of internal and international migration within the Mexico-US migration, since, at times, the first step to migrate internationally, is to first migrate from rural to urban areas.

## **Theoretical Focus**

This research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature that studies migration in Latin America with family ties and life-course perspective. In the case of migration, the life-course perspective has emphasized that the different life paths chosen by individuals affect their decision to migrate (Clark, 2013). More recent research about migration from a life-course approach and family ties has studied the connection between internal and international migration. For instance, Bernard and Perales (2022) quantitatively study the linkage between internal and international migration in Europe, finding that both processes respond to similar life-course events within the family sphere. This research aims to also contribute to the study of the connection between internal and international migration.

## **Data and Research Methods**

The data we will use in this research comes from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP). There are several databases in the MMP, including person-level files with demographic information, including age, sex, relationship to head of household, marital status, current economic indicators, characteristics of the first and last trips made to the US/other Mexican locations, and details of border crossings. It contains data collected annually in Mexico and the United States from 1982 until 2019 through surveys administered yearly in Mexico and in the United States on different communities with high migration intensity in Mexico. Information is available for all the household members regardless of whether they have migrated or not. A life history file for the head of the household built with the person-level files is available, which will be the primary data set for the research. Other variables from the person-level files can be added to this life history data set.

Each year, a random sample of households in different communities were surveyed. In the beginning, it focused on rural areas, and afterward, more urbanized areas were included. Data was collected in the winter months when migrants are more likely to visit their families (Massey & Zenteno, 2000). A fraction of households were incorporated into the sample randomly, and others were incorporated through snowball sampling. Data is retrospective, meaning that every time a household was surveyed, they were asked for migration history. Data also includes whether other household members have had migratory experience. One of the limitations of the data is that it is biased toward return migrants with strong family ties and more stable family formation trajectories (Castro Torres & Gutierrez-Vazquez, 2022).

For the methods, I will use sequence analysis to understand different migration trajectories with the information of the place of residence of the last trip to the US and Mexico, finding clusters for different

trajectories in the different eras of migration. These different trajectories will become the dependent variable, and the variables of interest will be family-related and life course in a regression model, such as the presence of family members in the place of residence and marital status.

### **Expected findings**

Firstly, I expect to find different migrant trajectories that reflect differences in how people decide to migrate internally and/or internationally. Secondly, I also expect to find that within the different eras of Mexican migration, family ties and life-course events had different influences on migration trajectories. Finally, I expect to find that the presence of family in the place of residence has an important influence on the decision to migrate.

### **References**

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