

**The Effects of Weak Ties and Community of Origin on
How Migrants Obtain Jobs in the U.S.**

Social capital facilitates the actions between actors within a social structure by ensuring that certain goals are achieved, which otherwise would not be possible if social capital were absent. Thus, access to social capital can determine the outcomes of a variety of life conditions. While the impact of social capital on the decision to migrate and labor market outcomes among migrants has been extensively documented, the goal of this project is to identify the *mechanisms* by which social capital can influence these outcomes in the form of how Mexican migrants obtain jobs. Granovetter (1974) suggests that weak ties are more likely to be beneficial than strong ties in connecting individuals to potential jobs, and friendship ties may be more beneficial than familial social networks.

Among migrants, organizational involvement and having a multiplex social network composed of individuals outside of one's ethnic group constitute forms of weak ties. As such, I will test whether organizational involvement and an ethnically diverse social network can influence how migrants obtain employment in the United States—whether through family, friends, or on their own. I contend that migrants with a diverse U.S.-based network composed of weak ties will be less likely to obtain a job through familial networks, and more likely to seek employment opportunities through non-familial ties. Close, familial ties offer homogenous or redundant information, while weak ties allow new information to enter one's network. Consequently, migrants benefit more from having non-familial friendship ties in their social network, and thus, will seek non-familial ties to obtain employment in the U.S. labor market.

Geographic origins may also play a pivotal role in influencing how Mexican migrants seek employment in the United States. Migration from particular regions of Mexico to the United States varies depending on the time period examined. Certain regions constitute a larger proportion of the migration flow than others depending on the decade. Mexico-U.S. migration streams can be categorized into four different regions: (1) West-Central, (2) Central, (3) Southeastern, and the (4) Border. Historically, labor recruiters sought workers from the West-Central region of Mexico in the early twentieth century; however, subsequent migration streams formed from other regions of Mexico in the eighties and nineties as well. The West-Central region of Mexico also makes up the largest share of Mexican migrants to the United States, while the Border region constitutes the smallest share.

Controlling for the individual characteristics of migrants (education, work experience, English proficiency, etc.), as well as background factors (i.e. changes to immigration policy, increased border security, or economic shocks), I contend that geographic origin will also influence how Mexican migrants seek employment. Those coming from communities where migration is more prevalent or that have more extensive histories of migration are more likely to have greater levels of community-based social capital than other regions of Mexico where migration flows are still relatively new. Migrants may be able to draw from a richer set of resources given that their social networks span a longer period of migration to the United States. Additionally, communities of origin with longer and more established histories of migration may have an inherently different set of resources or support system that is different from those with only recent histories of migration. Given that West-Central Mexico has a more extensive history of migration, I suspect that migrants from West-Central Mexico will be more likely obtain employment in the United States through the help of non-familial ties, rather than familial ties, compared to migrants from other regions of the country.

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Data will be drawn from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP). Every year, MMP surveys four to eight Mexican sending communities using simple random sampling methods. The communities are specially selected to include a wide range of demographic, social, and economic characteristics that are representative of the broader Mexico-U.S. migrant population, and respondents are interviewed throughout various communities in Mexico. My approach is to first analyze how a migrant's interactions with people and institutions in the United States influences how they obtain employment in the United States. I will examine whether a migrant's participation in social organizations (religious or sports-related), as well as their relations with different racial groups, influences the likelihood that they will seek familial or non-familial ties when finding a job in the United States. Second, I will examine whether the community of origin of a migrant affects the type of network ties a migrant will use to obtain employment.

The sample used for this study represents Mexican male household heads that have migrated to the United States from 1965 to 2011 (N=918). Given the limited number of female-headed household migrants, as well as the difference in labor market processes among female and male migrants, only male migrants are included in this study (Pedraza 1991; Hagan 1998). The year 1965 is used as a cutoff point to account for the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which placed a numerical restriction on visas, established a per-country-of-origin quota, and shifted U.S.-immigration policy toward a direction that favored family reunification. The respondents in this survey represent return migrants interviewed in Mexico.

There are two potential benefits to using return migrants for this study. First, return migrants are representative of the circular nature of Mexican migration. Second, using return migrants can address concerns related to unobserved heterogeneity. Migrants that remain behind in United States may be fundamentally different from those that have returned to their home country due to unobserved or unmeasured variables. Studying a homogenous sample eliminates these sources of variation, which will further allow me to analyze the role that different forms of social capital and regional effects can have on the earnings of Mexican migrants. I will also distinguish between undocumented and documented migrants in my study. I expect to see a diligent return on wages for undocumented and documented migrants. Given that undocumented migrants are more vulnerable to changes in the labor market and subject to exploitation, I suspect that undocumented migrants will be more dependent of their social network ties than documented migrants. Thus, they will be more likely to use non-familial, rather than familial ties, to seek employment in the United States. I also suspect that undocumented migrants from regions with more extensive histories of migration will also more likely to employ non-familial ties to find jobs, as they are subject to a different set of challenges and hurdles than documented migrants when seeking jobs in the U.S. labor market.

To analyze the effect of weak ties and community of origin on how the type of network that a migrant will use to secure employment in the United States, I will run a multinomial logistic regression. Organizational involvement and diverse networks are measured in terms of whether a migrant participates in a social or sports-related organization in the United States, and whether or not a migrant has an ethnically diverse social network. Respondents are asked about their relations with blacks, whites, and Asians, and the nature of their relationship (workplace, friendship, very close, etc.). Both organizational involvement and diverse networks are treated as scale variables, where each respondent will receive one point each if they are participate in an organization, or in the case of diverse networks, interact with an individual whose race is different from their own ethnicity. Geographic origins are classified according to the historical regions of migration, first outlined by Jorge Durand (1998). I expect to finish the analysis by

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December of 2014, and will continue explore these outcomes and any variation in effects thereafter. A final refinement of the analysis will take place between January of 2015 and March of 2015, before final submittal to PAA.

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Table 2. Means of the Dependent and Independent Variables Used in the Regression Analysis of Mexican Migrants¹

Variables	All Migrants		Documented		Undocumented		T-test ²
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>How last U.S. job was obtained</i>							
Oneself	.30	.46	.34	.48	.29	.45	1.29
Relative	.37	.49	.34	.48	.38	.49	-0.91
Friend / <i>paisano</i>	.33	.47	.32	.47	.33	.47	-0.32
<i>Social capital during last trip</i>							
<i>Nonfamily social capital</i>							
Organizational involvement index	.20	.49	.21	.47	.20	.49	0.35
Diverse network index	1.5	1.0	1.6	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.38
Lived with <i>paisanos</i> upon arrival	.07	.25	.02	.12	.09	.28	-3.34*
<i>Family social capital</i>							
Lived with relatives	.50	.50	.49	.50	.50	.50	-0.21
Parents/siblings with U.S. experience	.15	.36	.22	.42	.13	.34	3.18*
Parents/siblings currently live in U.S.	.59	.49	.64	.48	.57	.50	1.76
<i>Geographic origin in Mexico</i>							
West-Central	.46	.50	.51	.50	.45	.50	1.53
Central	.28	.45	.15	.36	.31	.46	-4.49*
Southeast	.11	.31	.03	.17	.13	.33	-3.82*
Border	.15	.36	.30	.46	.11	.32	6.82*
<i>Community of origin characteristics</i>							
Rural-based community	.56	.50	.35	.48	.62	.48	-6.90*
≥ .50 adults with migration experience	.01	.10	.01	.07	.01	.10	-0.73
<i>Human capital characteristics</i>							
Age at last U.S. migration	30	10	33	11	29	9	5.27*
Years of education	7	4	7	4	6	4	2.41*
Years of work experience	18	11	21	13	18	11	3.84*
Number of previous trips to U.S.	2	3	4	5	2	2	10.34*
Married	.90	.30	.92	.27	.90	.30	1.07
<i>English proficiency</i>							
Neither speak nor understand	.28	.45	.21	.41	.31	.46	-2.71*
Do not speak, but understand some	.48	.50	.38	.49	.50	.50	-2.94*
Speak and understand some	.19	.39	.30	.46	.16	.36	4.64*
Speak and understand well	.05	.22	.11	.31	.04	.19	4.12*
<i>Year of last migration</i>							
1965-1981	.15	.36	.13	.34	.16	.37	-0.82
1982-1985	.09	.28	.07	.26	.09	.28	-0.69
1986-1991	.19	.39	.21	.41	.18	.38	0.89
1992-2011	.58	.49	.59	.49	.57	.49	0.29
<i>Destination in U.S. during last trip</i>							
California	.44	.49	.49	.50	.42	.49	1.78
Texas	.10	.30	.10	.30	.10	.29	0.35
Illinois	.08	.28	.07	.25	.09	.29	-0.99
New York	.06	.23	.02	.12	.07	.25	-2.74*
Other	.33	.47	.32	.47	.33	.47	-0.18
<i>Occupation in U.S. during last trip</i>							
Professional, managerial, skilled	.02	.15	.06	.23	.02	.12	3.40*
Agriculture	.22	.42	.21	.41	.23	.42	-0.64
Manufacturing / manual	.50	.50	.46	.50	.51	.50	-1.18
Services, sales, office	.25	.43	.27	.45	.25	.43	0.77
<i>Model Statistics</i>							
N	918		193		725		

1 Data presented here is unweighted and is intended to represent the means and standard deviations of the selected sample group.

2 Compares the differences in means of documented and undocumented migrants.

* p<.05

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