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# ON THE AUSPICES OF FEMALE MIGRATION FROM MEXICO TO THE UNITED STATES\*

MARCELA CERRUTTI AND DOUGLAS S. MASSEY

*In this paper we examine the circumstances and determinants of female migration between Mexico and the United States. Using data from the Mexican Migration Project, we considered the relative timing of males' and females' moves northward. We then estimated logit and probit models to study the determinants of male and female out-migration; among women we also estimated a multinomial logit model to uncover differences in the process of migration for work versus not for work. We found that women almost always followed other family members, either the husband or a parent; only a tiny minority initiated migration independently. Although males also are quite likely to be introduced to migration by a parent, nearly half of all male migrants left for the United States before or without a wife or a parent. Estimates of the determinants of migration suggested that males move for employment, whereas wives generally are motivated by family reasons. Daughters, however, display a greater propensity to move for work, and the determinants of their work-related moves closely resemble those of sons and fathers.*

**M**igration from Mexico to the United States is the largest sustained flow of immigrants anywhere in the world. Since 1970, at least 6.8 million Mexican immigrants have entered the United States, with or without documents, and an increasingly large share have been women. Only 41% of legal Mexican immigrants were women in 1985, but by 1995 the figure had risen to 57%. Among undocumented migrants, Massey and Cerrutti (forthcoming) report that the percentage of females has risen from 11% of those leaving Mexico during 1965–1959 to 28% among those leaving in 1990–1995.

Even though women constitute a large and increasing share of this flow, the subject of female migration has been relatively neglected. Critics have attributed this lack of attention to two basic misconceptions: that women are passive reactors to male migratory decisions (Brettell and Simon 1986; Kossoudji and Ranney 1984; Pedrazza 1991), and that women migrate for “family reasons” (Pessar 1984).

Although a number of studies have underscored the importance of gender in migration research, progress has been hampered by a lack of reliable data on the characteristics of female migrants (United Nations 2000). Sex is often included as a control variable in statistical analyses; yet women’s specific role in international migration deserves greater atten-

tion. Relatively few studies have even estimated separate statistical models for men and for women (for exceptions, see Donato and Kanaiaupuni 2000; Kanaiaupuni 1995).

Tilly and Brown (1967) refer to the social conditions surrounding a move as the “auspices” of migration. They emphasize the fact that human migration is necessarily embedded in larger social structures: households, kinship groups, friendship networks, and communities of residence or origin. In this paper we systematically examine the auspices of male and female migration between Mexico and the United States, focusing on the degree to which moves by each sex may be viewed as independent or as contingent on the movement of other family members.

## MIGRATION AND GENDER

The dominant theory of migration at the individual level is neoclassical economics, which posits that rational actors migrate because a cost-benefit calculation leads them to expect positive net returns from international movement (Borjas 1989; Todaro 1976). Migration is conceptualized as an investment in human capital: people move to places where they can be more productive, given their skills (Sjaastad 1962). Yet before they can reap the higher wages associated with greater productivity, they must pay the costs of traveling, looking for work, learning a new language and culture, adapting to a new labor market, and cutting old ties (Todaro and Maruszko 1987). Potential migrants estimate the costs and benefits of moving to alternative locations, and go where the expected net returns are greatest (Borjas 1989, 1990, 1994).

At the household level, the dominant theoretical paradigm falls under the heading of the new economics of labor migration, in which it is argued that household members act collectively not merely to maximize expected income but also to overcome various market failures (Stark 1991; Taylor 1986, 1987). In the absence of efficient insurance markets, households reduce risks by diversifying their allocation of workers across labor markets (local, national, and foreign); given barriers to capital and credit, they use international migration to accumulate cash in the form of remittances and savings.

Gender has not figured prominently in either of these theoretical models. Neoclassical theorists generally consider women to be passive actors in household decisions; these decisions are managed by an altruistic male head, who evaluates various economic options and chooses those that provide maximum utility for the household as a whole (Becker 1991). In the new economics of labor migration, female mi-

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gration is viewed as part of a unitary household strategy developed cooperatively by its members (Wood 1981). In neither case are women assigned much agency, either as autonomous decision makers or as independent participants in household bargaining.

Recent scholars have challenged the idea that household members cooperate rationally in developing economic strategies: they argue that this view overestimates families' capacity to define objectives, evaluate means, and undertake actions. More to the point, it ignores conflicts of interest and power within the household (Gonzalez de la Rocha 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; Repak 1995; Roldan 1988; Tilly and Scott 1978). As Riley and Gardner (1993:200) observe, "[I]n reality 'household strategies' are more likely to derive from decisions made by the most powerful household members, decisions that, by affecting all household members irrespective of their involvement in the decision-making process, may give rise to dissent or resistance."

Ethnographic research suggests a key power difference by gender (Pedraza 1991). Within the family, husbands precede wives in migration not because of a strategy that has been devised consensually in keeping with the wives' wishes, but because the latter have been excluded from decision making (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992); thus they are left feeling vulnerable and fearing infidelity, abandonment, or widowhood (Chavez 1992). Fieldwork shows that the costs and benefits of migration fall differently on men and on women (Espinosa 1997; Goldring 1996; Grasmuck and Grosfoguel 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997).

The presence of a gendered power difference within the family does not mean that the women are entirely powerless, nor that they play no role in household decision making. Women can influence family decisions even if they do not have the final word, and their bargaining power varies significantly by age, household position, and parity (Ortiz 1996; Riley and Gardner 1993). Nonetheless, acknowledging the possibility of conflicting interests and gendered inequalities within the family challenges the view of households as rational, utility-maximizing, risk-minimizing, or capital-accumulating units.

Who migrates to the United States and why is determined not only by the gender division of labor within households, but also by the structure of opportunities available to men and women in sending and receiving societies, particularly labor market opportunities. The sex segregation of jobs, for example, shapes individual perceptions of the costs and benefits of migration. Moreover, several studies find compelling evidence of gender differences in the constitution of social networks and their effects on migration and employment (see Gilberston 1995; Greenwell, Valdez, and DaVanzo 1997; Hagan 1998).

In those few cases where gender-specific analyses have been performed, the estimated effects generally reveal significant differences in the determinants of male and female migration, especially with respect to life cycle factors. Kanaiaupuni (1995) found that a greater number of children

in the household reduced the odds of first migration among Mexican women, but it had no effect on the likelihood of male migration (see Massey and Espinosa 1997). Similarly, marriage generally reduced the odds of initial migration among men (see Massey et al. 1987; Massey and Espinosa 1997), but the findings for women have been contradictory. Donato and Kanaiaupuni (2000) found that marriage had a negative effect on migration, whereas Kanaiaupuni (1995) found significantly higher odds of out-migration among cohabiting women.

Socioeconomic factors also exert different effects on the likelihood of male and female migration. Donato and Kanaiaupuni (2000) found that education is related positively to the likelihood of U.S. migration among Mexican women; for men, however, the relationship is typically negative or zero (see Kanaiaupuni 1995; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Taylor 1986, 1987). In addition, landownership generally binds women to the community, but it frees men for foreign employment by providing collateral for loans to finance trips. Similarly, business ownership reduces the odds of male migration but increases the odds of female movement (Donato 1993). Espinosa and Massey (1997) found that access to social capital was generally more important in determining the likelihood of female than male migration, although the effect was positive in both cases.

Despite the generalized view that Mexican women migrate primarily for family reasons, fragmented empirical evidence suggests other motives. Most Mexican women work when they arrive in the United States (Chavez 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Reichert and Massey 1979); under certain circumstances—a history of family migration, conflict, or marital disruption—they become very likely to migrate for employment (Chavez 1992; Reichert and Massey 1979, 1980). In their sample of undocumented women, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) found that 40% of the mothers were working to support children left behind in the country of origin.

Among undocumented women in Los Angeles, Simon and Corona DeLey (1986) found that 69% came to the United States with the intention of working (compared with 44% of documented women). Similarly, 70% of the undocumented women rated economic reasons as "very important" in considering their move, followed by "personal benefits."

The overrepresentation of female migrants in domestic service and their relatively low earnings are well known. In their study of Latinas in Orange County, California, Chavez et al. (1997) found that 52% of undocumented migrants and 38% of documented migrants were employed either full- or part-time, mostly in service jobs such as housecleaning and child care, and (to a lesser extent) as waitresses, hotel maids, and kitchen staff. Among documented women, however, the percentage in services was only 34% (also see Ranney and Kossoudji 1983; Simon and Corona DeLey 1986).

Thus, research to date suggests that women constitute a large and growing fraction of Mexican migrants to the United States, that their motivations for migration differ from men's, that females' migration decisions often are constrained by

patriarchal norms and gender-linked power differences within the family, and that the costs and benefits of migration are structured by social institutions that themselves are influenced by gender. The literature on Mexican migration, however, does not make clear the degree to which familial or economic motivations predominate in females' decision making, women's latitude to move independently, or the extent to which various structural constraints undermine labor force participation as a motivation for female migration.

Motivations cannot be observed directly, but can be inferred from a migrant's behavior. Motivations also may be complex, reflecting various intentions simultaneously and changing over time with personal circumstances and socio-economic conditions. One never can definitively identify motives for migration; in this paper, however, we consider gendered differences in migratory behavior and draw on prior research and theory to infer the existence of differences between men and women regarding intentions and the effect of patriarchal constraints.

We first consider differences in the timing of migration to the United States, focusing on when men and women migrate in relation to other family members and on the stage in the life course. We assume that actors who move before other family members are more independent and freer of constraints than actors who move after other family members have paved the way. Second, we consider the migrants' labor force behavior once they arrive in the United States, and examine how strongly U.S. employment is determined by different sets of factors for men and for women. We assume that migrants who do not work are motivated less by economic concerns than those who do. We also assume that when migrants' work and migratory behaviors are connected more strongly to various forms of capital (human, social, financial, real) than to various indicators of the life course (family position, parity, marital status), the auspices of migration are more economic than familial.

## SOURCE OF DATA

Our data come from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), which is funded by grants from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. (These data are publicly available to users at [www.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig/](http://www.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig/).) The MMP database consists of simple random samples gathered during the winter months of 1982–1983 and in successive years from 1987 to 1996 in 50 Mexican sending communities. Although most of these communities are located in the states of western Mexico (Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas), the traditional heartland for migration to the United States (see Durand, Massey, and Zenteno 2001), in recent years the sample has broadened to incorporate communities in newer sending states such as Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Puebla.

In choosing communities for study, the MMP investigators sought to include a range of population sizes, ethnic compositions, and economic bases. Communities were *not* chosen because they were known to contain U.S. migrants;

in fact, the MMP data incorporate a wide range of migration prevalence ratios, ranging from one community where just 9% of adults have gone to the United States to another where 60% have migrated (see Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994). Although the resulting sample is not strictly representative of all Mexican immigrants, it contains a broad cross-section of households and communities. When Zenteno and Massey (1999) systematically compared migrants from the MMP with those identified in an independent representative national survey of Mexico, they found remarkably similar profiles.

In most communities, the MMP sample size was 200 households, although in smaller settlements fewer households sometimes were chosen; in a few cases, a larger number was taken. Sampling frames were constructed by conducting a house-to-house census. Usually the entire town or city was canvassed, but in large urban areas this was not possible; specific working-class neighborhoods were demarcated and sampled instead. Except in one community, all of the interviews were conducted during December and January, when seasonal migrants return home to spend the Christmas holidays with their families. As a result, the community samples are representative of dwellings occupied during the winter months of the survey year.

These data were supplemented with nonrandom samples of out-migrants located in the United States during the summer following each winter's survey. From the Mexican samples, we determined where in the United States migrants went, and we sent interviewers to those areas to survey people who had settled abroad. We used snowball sampling methods (Goodman 1961) to compile the sample of settled out-migrants. In most communities, 20 out-migrant households were interviewed, but fewer households were surveyed in smaller settlements. Across the 50 communities, the sampling fraction averaged .267, although the range extended from .006 to 1.0. Refusals generally were not a problem; they averaged about 6% and extended up to about 15%. (This figure reflected local political conditions rather than concerns about the study per se.) Complete information on sample sizes, sampling fractions, and refusal rates for each community are available at the MMP website.

Respondents were interviewed with ethnosurvey methods (Massey 1987, 1999). Within each household, interviewers gathered basic information about the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the head, the spouse, the head's children, and other household members. They also determined which members had been to the United States, and from those persons they gathered basic data about the first and most recent U.S. trips: dates, durations, and destinations, as well as each migrant's legal status, occupation, and wages. From this information we reconstructed the exact timing of entry into marriage and migration for household heads and their spouses. We also reconstructed the timing of migration for sons and daughters relative to their parents' migration. Although we excluded other family members and single parents from the analysis, households containing only heads, spouses, and children constituted 90% of the MMP sample.

## THE TIMING OF MALE AND FEMALE MIGRATION

In Mexico, who migrates and why is likely to be related strongly to gender and household position. Not every family member is in a position to consider migration as a realistic alternative. Cultural values, normative expectations, and social institutions, as well as historical and structural factors, inevitably shape the range and number of choices.

According to MMP data, Mexican migration continues to be male-dominated. Among those age 14 and over with U.S. migratory experience, 52% are male household heads and 21% are sons. Female spouses and daughters together constitute only 22% of all migrants. Table 1 shows the extent to which male and female migrants began moving "independently." Never-married migrants are considered to be independent if they preceded their parents in migration; married migrants are defined as independent if they preceded their spouse in moving northward. Although migrants who have married but have no spouse present may have migrated independently, we cannot make a firm determination about their status because we lack information on the spouse's migration history.

The left-hand columns present distributions indicating the relative timing of first migration for husbands, wives, unmarried sons, and unmarried daughters (who constitute 87% of all daughters) with U.S. experience who were living in the household at the time of the survey. (Henceforth we call these persons the "basic sample.") In the right-hand columns we expand the sample by including sons and daughters who were reported as having left the household but who were still unmarried at the time of the survey (the "expanded

sample"). We include these individuals on the theory that they may include absent migrant children who might resume household membership upon their return (see Massey and Zenteno 2000).

Both distributions suggest that Mexico-U.S. migration still is led primarily by males; women generally become involved *after* involvement by another (typically male) family member. Of the 2,035 female U.S. migrants identified in our basic sample, very few can be inferred as having moved on their own: just 3.8% of all female migrants were married with no spouse present and thus were potentially (but not necessarily) independent. Another 12.5% were married and moved either before or without their husbands, and 3.2% were unmarried and moved before or without their parents. All told, then, no more than 20% of female migrants, a clear minority, fit the profile of a potentially independent migrant.

In contrast, 38.7% of all females with U.S. migrant experience were unmarried daughters who clearly followed a parent northward; another 36.9% were married women who followed their husbands in migration. Thus three-quarters of all females with migrant experience left on their first U.S. trip only *after* a parent or husband had already gone. Among the 5,414 male migrants in the basic sample, however, precisely the opposite occurred: a clear majority left for the United States before or without either a parent or a wife. Nearly half (47.8%) were married to wives who had never migrated, and in another 12% of cases the husband left before the wife. In addition, 7% of male migrants were never married and moved before or without their parents. Thus, in two-thirds of all cases, men clearly led the way northward; this fraction does not include the ambiguous category of mar-

**TABLE 1. CLASSIFICATION OF U.S. MIGRANTS BY GENDER, MARITAL STATUS, AND TIMING OF MIGRATION WITHIN HOUSEHOLD: BINATIONAL SAMPLES OF 50 MEXICAN SENDING COMMUNITIES (PERCENTAGES)**

Marital Status and Timing of Migration Within Household	Basic Sample, <sup>a</sup> All Ages		Expanded Sample, <sup>b</sup> Age 15+	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Never Married				
Parents never in U.S.	6.5	3.0	11.0	6.3
Migrated before parents	0.5	0.2	0.8	0.6
Migrated after parents	24.5	38.7	28.6	42.3
Married With Spouse				
Spouse never in U.S.	47.8	4.3	41.6	3.9
Migrated before spouse	12.0	8.2	10.4	7.4
Migrated after spouse	5.0	36.9	4.3	33.2
Married, No Spouse	3.8	8.6	3.2	7.8
Total	100 <sup>c</sup>	100 <sup>c</sup>	100 <sup>c</sup>	100 <sup>c</sup>
Number of Migrants	5,414	2,035	6,213	2,257

<sup>a</sup>Basic sample: Fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters in sample households.

<sup>b</sup>Expanded sample: Basic sample plus unmarried sons and daughters outside household.

<sup>c</sup>Columns do not sum to 100.0 because of rounding.

ried men with no spouse present (who potentially add another 3.8% to the category of independent migrants).

Expansion of the sample captures more migrants, as we suspected it might, but in no way does it change the basic conclusion: in most households, males lead the way in international migration, whereas females follow either parents or husbands. Both distributions also reveal the parent-child bond as an important vector for transmitting migratory behavior for both genders. In the basic sample, one-quarter of all men and nearly 40% of all women with U.S. experience were introduced to international migration by a parent. This fact suggests that for many currently married migrants, the relevant issue of timing is not whether they migrated before their spouse, but whether they migrated before their marriage, presumably as members of their family of origin.

In Table 2 we cross-classify migrant husbands and wives by whether they began migrating before marriage and whether they migrated before their spouse. Although roughly three-quarters of all migrant husbands were married to nonmigrant wives, close to half of these men (34% out of 74%) began migrating before they were married, probably following a parent. Another 18.5% preceded their wives in migration, but again most of these (12.6% of 18.5%) began migrating before marriage. If we consider as clearly independent only those men who migrated after marriage and before their spouse or after marriage to a nonmigrant spouse, then we can say unambiguously that only 46% of married male migrants led the way northward. The remainder followed either wives or parents, mostly the latter.

The percentage of married women in the same two categories, however, sums only to 4.7%; this suggests that nearly all female moves are linked to a family member's prior movement. Among 61% of all wives with U.S. experience, the woman migrated after marriage and after her husband; in 14% of the cases the woman migrated after the husband but before marriage, suggesting introduction by a parent. When a wife preceded her husband in migration, the

great majority (15.2% out of 16.6%) had begun migrating before marriage, probably in response to parental migration. Thus, even though a minority of male migrants can be classified as unambiguously independent in moving northward, the proportion is still 10 times as great as observed among migrant women.

### DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION BY HUSBANDS AND WIVES

The results cited above suggest that Mexican migrant women follow rather than precede male relatives. Although a sizable number of males also begin migrating under family auspices, they tend to follow parents rather than spouses. These contrasting patterns suggest that the determinants of male and female migration may be quite different, a claim consistent with the limited work done to date.

To investigate more fully how the process of out-migration to the United States differs by gender, we estimate gender-specific models predicting the likelihood that husbands and wives left for the United States in the recent past. We coded the outcome as 1 if the person made a trip to the United States in the three years before the survey, and 0 otherwise. Respondents were considered to have "migrated" only if the trip was three months or longer; thus we excluded short visits for tourism.

We regressed this migration variable on indicators of general human capital (age, education, number of available family workers), migration-specific human capital (number of prior trips, duration of first trip, documentation), physical capital (home, land, and business ownership), and social capital (connections to various family members living in the United States and the percentage of persons age 15 and over who had ever been to the United States). In our model we controlled for community size using a set of dummy variables to indicate residence in a rural village (< 3,000 inhabitants), a small town (< 15,000), a small city (< 100,000), or a metropolitan area (100,000 or more). To avoid ambiguity

**TABLE 2. TIMING OF MARRIAGE AND MIGRATION AMONG HUSBANDS AND WIVES: BINATIONAL SAMPLES OF 50 MEXICAN SENDING COMMUNITIES**

Timing of Migration Among Husbands and Wives	Timing of Migration With Respect to Spouse			Total	N
	Migrated Before Spouse	Migrated After Spouse	Spouse Not Migrant		
<b>Husbands (Percentages)</b>					
Migrated before marriage	12.6	3.8	33.7		
Migrated after marriage	5.9	3.8	40.3		
Total	18.5	7.6	74.0	100 <sup>a</sup>	3,367
<b>Wives (Percentages)</b>					
Migrated before marriage	15.2	13.7	5.2		
Migrated after marriage	1.4	61.2	3.3		
Total	16.6	74.9	8.5	100	986

<sup>a</sup>Row does not sum to 100.0 because of rounding.

about the direction of effects, we defined time-varying variables as of three years before the survey date.

We employed two different estimation strategies. First, we estimated a bivariate probit model that simultaneously predicted the out-migration of husbands and wives together, allowing for a correlation between the two decisions. This model does not impose a causal order on the husband's versus the wife's migration. Then, after examining this model, we reestimated separate equations for husbands and for wives, using standard logit models. In keeping with our earlier finding that wives typically follow their husbands in migration, we estimated the husband's migration equation first; then, given the husband's migration status, we predicted the wife's behavior.

Table 3 presents the bivariate probit model estimated for the basic sample. The rho coefficient of .547 indicates that husbands' and wives' migratory behaviors indeed are correlated, although the model itself imposes no causal order on the two decisions. Coefficients that are significant at the .05 level (with a two-way *t*-test) are marked with an asterisk; significant differences between husbands and wives are distinguished with a superscript. The relative frequency of superscripted coefficients in the table reveals the degree of difference between husbands' and wives' international migration processes.

In general, the odds of migration are lower for wives than for husbands (compare the intercepts) and they decline more sharply as age and education increase. Education exerts no significant effect on the likelihood of wives' migration, but the likelihood of husbands' out-migration decreases very sharply with increases in years of schooling. Although the odds of U.S. migration increase with the number of U.S. trips at about the same rate for husbands and for wives, the duration of the first trip acts more powerfully to lower the odds of migration for the wife than for the husband. If the first trip was long, wives generally were much less likely to migrate during the reference period. Although legal documentation (not surprisingly) raises the likelihood of out-migration for both husbands and wives, the effect for the latter is about 2.5 times greater than for the former. In a salient contrast, migration by wives is connected more strongly to the presence of family members in the United States than is migration by husbands—in particular, to the presence of sons and daughters and nieces and nephews. Similarly, wives' migration is unrelated to the size of the origin community, but among husbands migration is significantly lower in rural communities than elsewhere.

In the picture that generally emerges from the foregoing estimates, a husband's migration is determined substantially by factors more relevant to employment (human and social capital), whereas the wife's is related more strongly to family considerations (the prior migration of children, nieces, and nephews). The acquisition of documents is also more central in promoting wives' migration than husbands'.

These basic results do not change when we impose a causal order by assuming that the wife's movement is contingent on the prior movement by her husband (estimates

available on request). The likelihood of a husband's migration still declines more sharply as age and education increase, and it is significantly lower in rural communities, whereas the wives' migration is determined more strongly by children's migration. Moreover, the possession of legal papers once again is more important in promoting female than male out-migration. The only real differences between the two sets of estimates (aside from the new term for spouse's migration) are that husbands' migration is related more strongly to the movement of siblings, and that wives' movement is related negatively to the prevalence of migration in the community. (Although not significant, the relationship for husbands is positive.)

As one would expect in view of earlier results, a wife's likelihood of migration is connected very strongly to her husband's movement. If a husband migrated during the reference period, we find a sharp increase in the likelihood that the wife would also migrate. Moreover, when we hold constant the wife's own documentation, the likelihood of her movement is increased quite strongly by the husband's documentation. In short, the process by which husbands are selected into U.S. migration have all the hallmarks of an economic decision connected to human and social capital, whereas the process by which wives are selected seems to be less economic and more social: it is connected to the prior movement of the husband, children, and other relatives and to the acquisition of documentation.

## DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION BY SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Although wives generally appear to conform to the profile of tied movers following husbands rather than acting as independent migrants, this is not necessarily the case for daughters. In Table 4 we consider the migratory behavior of unmarried sons and daughters. In this case, we have no strong a priori reason to assume that males necessarily precede females in migration; thus we employ a bivariate probit model that allows brothers' and sisters' decisions to be correlated and takes this fact into account in estimating their separate migration functions. To make the model estimable, we restrict attention to households in the basic sample that contain at least one son and one daughter. We then focus on the eldest child of each gender, and obtain 4,907 sibling pairs. Although this estimation strategy allows for a potential correlation between brothers' and sisters' migration, we prepared alternate estimates of separate logit models predicting the migration of *all* daughters and *all* sons. These, however, yielded essentially the same findings (available on request).

The rho coefficient of .384 indicates a moderate positive correlation between brothers' and sisters' migratory behavior, but significantly less than that between husbands and wives. We also find fewer differences in the determinants of migration between sons and daughters than between husbands and wives. Among unmarried children, gender differences thus appear to be milder; this point suggests that traditional role expectations are stronger when

**TABLE 3. BIVARIATE PROBIT MODEL ESTIMATES PREDICTING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT HUSBANDS AND WIVES MIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES (FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS) DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS: BINATIONAL SAMPLES OF 50 MEXICAN SENDING COMMUNITIES**

Independent Variable	Husbands		Wives	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
<b>General Human Capital</b>				
Age				
< 25	—	—	—	—
25–34	–0.504*	0.086	–0.665*	0.114
35–44	–0.727*	0.091	–0.887*	0.134
45+	–1.480**a	0.098 <sup>a</sup>	–0.963**a	0.154 <sup>a</sup>
Education				
None	—	—	—	—
< 6 years	0.030	0.068	–0.066	0.132
6 years	0.100	0.077	–0.073	0.139
7–12 years	–0.198*	0.087	–0.058	0.156
13+ years	–0.571**a	0.127 <sup>a</sup>	–0.086 <sup>a</sup>	0.219 <sup>a</sup>
Workers per household member	0.125	0.131	0.195	0.245
<b>Migration-Specific Human Capital</b>				
Number of prior trips	0.073*	0.004	0.092*	0.016
Duration of first trip	–0.005 <sup>a</sup>	0.006 <sup>a</sup>	–0.055**a	0.013 <sup>a</sup>
Documented	0.561**a	0.053 <sup>a</sup>	1.392**a	0.098 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Physical Capital</b>				
Homeownership	0.008	0.048	–0.094	0.091
Landownership	–0.049	0.064	–0.179	0.114
Business ownership	–0.215*	0.053	–0.224*	0.099
<b>Social Capital</b>				
No. sons/daughters in U.S.	0.235**a	0.038 <sup>a</sup>	0.490**a	0.043 <sup>a</sup>
No. siblings in U.S.	0.114*	0.016	0.113*	0.026
No. parents/uncles in U.S.	0.023	0.012	0.010	0.017
No. nieces/nephews in U.S.	–0.015**a	0.004 <sup>a</sup>	0.001 <sup>a</sup>	0.006 <sup>a</sup>
No. other relatives in U.S.	0.014*	0.007	0.018*	0.002
Prevalence of mig. in comm.	0.253	0.397	–1.058	0.711
<b>Community Size</b>				
Rural village	—	—	—	—
Small town	0.308**a	0.077 <sup>a</sup>	0.092 <sup>a</sup>	0.131 <sup>a</sup>
Large city	0.366**a	0.077 <sup>a</sup>	0.055 <sup>a</sup>	0.134 <sup>a</sup>
Metro area	0.330**a	0.087 <sup>a</sup>	0.074 <sup>a</sup>	0.156 <sup>a</sup>
Intercept	–0.932**a	0.122 <sup>a</sup>	–1.565**a	0.200 <sup>a</sup>
Rho	0.547*	0.038		
Log-Likelihood	–2,783.500*			
<i>N</i>	7,290			

<sup>a</sup>Significant differences between husbands and wives.

\**p* < .05

women marry, although the less significant differences between sons and daughters also could indicate a generation effect.

Both sons and daughters display an inverted U-shape age profile; the odds of out-migration peak in the 18–24 age interval. The only difference is that the relative likelihood

**TABLE 4. BIVARIATE PROBIT MODEL ESTIMATES PREDICTING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT ELDEST SONS AND DAUGHTERS MIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES (FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS) DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS: BINATIONAL SAMPLES OF 50 MEXICAN SENDING COMMUNITIES**

Independent Variable	Eldest Sons		Eldest Daughters	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
General Human Capital				
Age				
< 14	—	—	—	—
14–17	1.025**a	0.177 <sup>a</sup>	0.438**a	0.223 <sup>a</sup>
18–24	1.643**a	0.171 <sup>a</sup>	1.071**a	0.215 <sup>a</sup>
25+	1.117*	0.180	0.850*	0.220
Education				
None	—	—	—	—
< 6 years	-0.106	0.182	-0.440*	0.234
6 years	0.026	0.186	-0.219	0.228
7–12 years	-0.294	0.181	-0.302	0.235
13+ years	-0.910*	0.221	-0.723*	0.315
Workers per household member	0.748*	0.189	0.552	0.321
Migration-Specific Human Capital				
Number of prior trips	0.087*	0.012	0.113*	0.051
Duration of first trip	-0.092**a	0.020 <sup>a</sup>	-0.165**a	0.036 <sup>a</sup>
Documented	1.363**a	0.106 <sup>a</sup>	1.961**a	0.149 <sup>a</sup>
Physical Capital				
Homeownership	-0.081**a	0.076 <sup>a</sup>	-0.329**a	0.121 <sup>a</sup>
Landownership	0.224*	0.078	0.191	0.123
Business ownership	-0.164*	0.077	-0.270*	0.129
Social Capital				
Mother in U.S.	0.774**a	0.130 <sup>a</sup>	1.173**a	0.171 <sup>a</sup>
Father in U.S.	0.288**a	0.089 <sup>a</sup>	0.022 <sup>a</sup>	0.157 <sup>a</sup>
No. aunts/uncles in U.S.	-0.030	0.028	0.039	0.042
No. grandparents/uncles in U.S.	0.001	0.024	0.004	0.033
No. cousins in U.S.	0.005	0.007	-0.010	0.010
No. other relatives in U.S.	0.002	0.006	0.000	0.008
Prevalence of mig. in comm.	1.504*	0.612	0.396	0.972
Community Size				
Rural village	—	—	—	—
Small town	0.070	0.115	0.298	0.211
Large city	0.336*	0.113	0.367	0.215
Metro area	0.223	0.123	0.194	0.227
Intercept	-2.993*	0.182	-2.850*	0.282
Rho	0.384*	0.060		
Log-Likelihood	-1,453.400*			
<i>N</i>	4,907			

\*Significant differences between sons and daughters.

\* $p < .05$

of migration starts higher and peaks more sharply among males than among females. Unlike husbands and wives, moreover, sons and daughters display the same pattern of selection with respect to education. In addition, the odds of migration for both sexes are higher when they originate in a family that contains more workers relative to dependents; thus geographic diversification of the labor portfolio is a workable strategy.

The odds of out-migration increase for both sons and daughters as the number of prior trips rises. Indeed, the effect for daughters is slightly greater than for sons, although the difference is not significant. In contrast, the negative effect of first trip duration and the positive effect of documentation are stronger for daughters; in addition, the difference is significant in both cases. (The gender difference, however, is still smaller than observed between husbands and wives.) The contrasting effects of legal status probably reflect the perception (and the reality) that undocumented crossing is significantly more dangerous for women than for men because of the added risk of sexual violation.

A household's physical capital generally is more important in determining children's migration than that of their parents. Movement by both sons and daughters is reduced by homeownership and business ownership, although the negative effect of the former is significantly stronger for girls. Owning a house or a business may reduce the odds of migration by sons and daughters because ownership indicates a higher standard of living, and hence less need for migration by younger family members.

Having a migrant parent is also crucial in promoting both sons' and daughters' out-migration. As one might expect, however, having a migrant father is the dominant effect for sons, whereas having a migrant mother is the dominant effect for girls; this finding suggests that the parent-to-child transmission of migratory behavior is gender-specific. This result is particularly interesting because it accords with prior research that emphasizes the gendered nature of social networks (see Greenwell, Valdez, and DaVanzo 1997; Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). The migration of both males and females is also predicted positively by the prevalence of U.S. migration in the community, although the effect is not significant for daughters. Thus sons and daughters generally evince similar patterns of out-migration, which is tied strongly to indicators of human and social capital; this finding suggests the possibility of common labor force motivations.

## MIGRATION AND WORK

Whereas 95% of men work when they migrate to the United States, international migration is associated less strongly with work among women, especially wives. Of wives who migrated to the United States during the three years preceding the survey, about half reported working on the trip; among migrant daughters age 15 or older, the proportion was two out of three. Although migrant women are significantly less likely than their male counterparts to migrate to work in the United States, their labor force participation rate in the

United States still is significantly higher than that observed in Mexico. Among women who had *not* migrated by the time of the survey, the age-adjusted rate of labor force participation was only 24%. Thus the act of female migration is clearly associated with a higher rate of labor force participation, even though the move itself may be strongly connected to life course factors. Among spouses who began migrating before marriage, two out of three participated in the U.S. labor market on their last trip; among those who began migrating after their husbands, the participation rate was only 50%. These data, however, do not make entirely clear whether employment is a significant motivation for female migration before the fact, or whether it emerges as a consequence of international migration.

In Table 5 we address this issue by estimating a multinomial logit model that predicts three possible outcomes for wives: no migration during the three years preceding the survey (the reference category), migration without work, and migration with work. If employment indeed is a motivation for a wife's migration, we expect migration involving U.S. work to be connected more strongly to human capital and less strongly to family indicators, in comparison with the equation predicting migration that does not involve work.

The picture for wives is not changed much by distinguishing moves that result in work from those that do not: we find relatively few differences between the two prediction equations. Although the coefficients for age are somewhat lower for migration without work than for migration with work, the overall age pattern does not differ greatly. The only two significant differences concern migration-specific human capital and social capital: the number of prior U.S. trips predicts migration with work more strongly than migration without work; and the number of siblings in the United States is related more strongly to migration without work than with work.

This pattern of differences hints that work may be a possible motivation for the wife's migration. The results, however, are not very convincing, especially when compared with those for daughters (see Table 6). Here we observe a sharp contrast in the determinants of U.S. migration with and without work. In general, daughters' migration for work is connected more strongly to age and number of trips; selectivity with respect to education is sharper, although the latter difference is not statistically significant. Similarly, migration for work is connected less strongly to the presence of the mother and other relatives in the United States. Duration of the first trip and business ownership have less effect in decreasing migration with work. (The effect of homeownership is also weaker for migration involving labor, but this effect is not significant.) This pattern of results suggests that employment is an *a priori* factor in the migration decisions of at least some daughters.

## CONCLUSIONS

Past research gave only limited attention to women's international migration. We remedy this situation by analyzing the migratory behavior of mothers and daughters in compari-

**TABLE 5. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODEL ESTIMATES PREDICTING THE MIGRATION OF WIVES TO WORK AND NOT TO WORK IN THE UNITED STATES: BINATIONAL SAMPLES OF 50 MEXICAN SENDING COMMUNITIES**

Independent Variable	Wife Migrated to U.S. Without Working		Wife Migrated to U.S. and Worked	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
<b>General Human Capital</b>				
Age				
< 25	—	—	—	—
25–34	-1.929**	0.294 <sup>a</sup>	-1.246**	0.292 <sup>a</sup>
35–44	-2.412**	0.342 <sup>a</sup>	-1.564**	0.328 <sup>a</sup>
45+	-2.192*	0.348	-2.491*	0.390
Education				
None	—	—	—	—
< 6 years	-0.218	0.345	-0.462	0.364
6 years	-0.085	0.365	-0.384	0.384
7–12 years	-0.355	0.398	-0.196	0.399
13+ years	-0.509	0.592	-0.196	0.540
Workers per household member	-0.110	0.651	1.049	0.679
<b>Migration-Specific Human Capital</b>				
Number of prior trips	0.110**	0.041 <sup>a</sup>	0.202**	0.038 <sup>a</sup>
Duration of first trip	-0.124*	0.030	-0.140*	0.032
Documented	2.920*	0.271	3.016*	0.274
<b>Physical Capital</b>				
Homeownership	-0.332	0.222	-0.156	0.225
Landownership	-0.215	0.286	-0.477	0.303
Business ownership	-0.232	0.243	-0.776*	0.273
<b>Social Capital</b>				
No. sons/daughters in U.S.	1.081*	0.108	0.913*	0.110
No. siblings in U.S.	0.253**	0.061 <sup>a</sup>	0.123**	0.065 <sup>a</sup>
No. parents/uncles in U.S.	0.002	0.042	0.019	0.039
No. nieces/nephews in U.S.	0.003	0.014	0.014	0.014
No. other relatives in U.S.	0.030*	0.008	0.038*	0.007
Prevalence of mig. in comm.	-1.211	1.855	-4.115*	1.199
<b>Community Size</b>				
Rural village	—	—	—	—
Small town	0.310	0.357	0.212	0.345
Large city	0.285	0.368	0.102	0.361
Metro area	0.017	0.425	0.268	0.401
Intercept	-3.191*	0.523	-3.156*	0.536
Log-Likelihood	-1,756.980*			
<i>N</i>	7,302			

<sup>a</sup>Significant differences between equations.

\**p* < .05

son with fathers and sons, placing the decisions of each within the broader context of the family and its network extensions. When we examined the relative timing of males'

and females' moves between Mexico and the United States, we found that women almost always followed other family members, either the husband or a parent. Only a tiny minor-

**TABLE 6. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODEL ESTIMATES PREDICTING THE MIGRATION OF DAUGHTERS TO WORK AND NOT TO WORK IN THE UNITED STATES: BINATIONAL SAMPLES OF 50 MEXICAN SENDING COMMUNITIES**

Independent Variable	Daughter Migrated to U.S. Without Working		Daughter Migrated to U.S. and Worked	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
<b>General Human Capital</b>				
Age				
< 14	—	—	—	—
14–17	–0.138 <sup>a</sup>	0.395 <sup>a</sup>	3.600 <sup>*a</sup>	0.636 <sup>a</sup>
18–24	0.813 <sup>*a</sup>	0.341 <sup>a</sup>	4.807 <sup>*a</sup>	0.619 <sup>a</sup>
25+	0.516 <sup>a</sup>	0.365 <sup>a</sup>	4.205 <sup>*a</sup>	0.625 <sup>a</sup>
Education				
None	—	—	—	—
< 6 years	–1.188 <sup>*</sup>	0.289	–0.673	0.463
6 years	–0.941 <sup>*</sup>	0.363	–0.548	0.444
7–12 years	–0.644	0.341	–0.796	0.444
13+ years	–0.981	0.515	–1.566 <sup>*</sup>	0.578
Workers per household member	1.664 <sup>*</sup>	0.575	1.573 <sup>*</sup>	0.562
<b>Migration-Specific Human Capital</b>				
Number of prior trips	–0.137 <sup>a</sup>	0.101 <sup>a</sup>	0.124 <sup>*a</sup>	0.066 <sup>a</sup>
Duration of first trip	–0.509 <sup>*a</sup>	0.071 <sup>a</sup>	–0.257 <sup>*a</sup>	0.055 <sup>a</sup>
Documented	4.952 <sup>*</sup>	0.235	3.666 <sup>*</sup>	0.291
<b>Physical Capital</b>				
Homeownership	–0.755 <sup>*</sup>	0.204	–0.380	0.227
Landownership	0.335	0.247	0.161	0.242
Business ownership	–0.784 <sup>*a</sup>	0.240 <sup>a</sup>	–0.263 <sup>a</sup>	0.237 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Social Capital</b>				
Mother in U.S.	2.508 <sup>*a</sup>	0.273 <sup>a</sup>	1.956 <sup>*a</sup>	0.335 <sup>a</sup>
Father in U.S.	0.027	0.245	0.030	0.301
No. aunts/uncles in U.S.	0.066	0.069	0.111	0.088
No. grandparents/uncles in U.S.	–0.078	0.042	0.078	0.063
No. cousins in U.S.	–0.028 <sup>*a</sup>	0.014 <sup>a</sup>	0.008 <sup>a</sup>	0.017 <sup>a</sup>
No. other relatives in U.S.	0.020 <sup>*a</sup>	0.007 <sup>a</sup>	–0.022 <sup>a</sup>	0.017 <sup>a</sup>
Prevalence of mig. in comm.	–0.672	1.857	0.298	1.828
<b>Community Size</b>				
Rural village	—	—	—	—
Small town	0.938 <sup>*</sup>	0.366	0.467	0.411
Large city	0.712	0.381	0.871	0.413
Metro area	–0.022	0.449	0.714	0.448
Intercept	–5.568 <sup>*a</sup>	0.409 <sup>a</sup>	–9.004 <sup>*a</sup>	0.714 <sup>a</sup>
Log-Likelihood	–1,923.150 <sup>*</sup>			
<i>N</i>	12,876			

\*Significant differences between equations.

\**p* < .05

ity of female migrants began migrating independently. Although males also were quite likely to be initiated into migration by a parent, they were far more likely than women to

strike out on their own: nearly half of all male migrants left for the United States before or without either a wife or a parent. This analysis confirms the conventional wisdom that a

majority of Mexican women generally begin migrating for family reasons. This does not mean, however, that economic or household strategy models are the appropriate explanations for women's behaviors. It may simply be that women's decisions are closely constrained by patriarchal norms, whereby men ultimately determine whether and when wives should join them.

This view was supported by our analysis of the determinants of U.S. migration among men and women. Fathers' and sons' migration was predicted strongly by indicators of human and social capital. Migration by mothers and daughters, however, was related more weakly to these indicators; it was predicted more strongly by family indicators (having sons, daughters, and siblings' children in the United States) and by documentation. (Possession of a green card is far more important in facilitating women's migration than men's.) This basic profile holds true whether one assumes that husbands' and wives' decisions are independent but correlated, or that wives' migration is contingent on prior migratory decisions made by husbands. Under the latter assumption, migration by the husband is a very strong predictor of out-migration by the wife. Moreover, the fact that a husband is documented greatly increases the odds that the wife will migrate, when her own documentation status is held constant.

Even though the initial motivation for female migration may relate to family rather than labor force considerations, a job may become relevant after the fact; and work may be a motivation for moving, even if it is not the primary motivation. To consider these possibilities, we estimated additional models predicting female migration to the United States as a trichotomous outcome: no migration, migration without work, and migration with work. This operation yielded little evidence that migrant wives were motivated significantly by labor force considerations. Among married women, migration with work and migration without work were equally unconnected to human capital and were connected more strongly to family considerations. In contrast, unmarried daughters' migration was more clearly identifiable as a labor force process. For these women, the determinants of migration with work closely resembled the pattern observed among sons, and differed significantly from that of wives and daughters migrating without work. That is, when a daughter's migration involved work, it was connected closely to indicators of human and social capital, and was related less closely to family considerations.

In sum, we find that Mexicans are selected into U.S. migration by a highly gendered process. Men generally become international migrants through one of two avenues: either they are introduced to the experience by a parent, usually a father, or they migrate independently, drawing on whatever human and social capital they possess to undertake the move and find work. In the great majority of cases, employment is the primary motivation for the move.

Women, like men, generally become international migrants through one of two avenues. The first is the same as for men: they are introduced to the experience by a parent,

in many cases the mother rather than the father. The second avenue, however, is quite different: they become migrants by following their spouse, something quite rare among men. Among wives, labor force participation may ensue, but apparently the decision to move stems more from family than from work considerations. Among daughters, however, international migration appears in many cases to be part of a broader labor market strategy, formulated either by the family or by the daughter herself. Moreover, when these daughters grow up and marry, they remain more likely to migrate and to participate in the labor force.

Although our analysis suggests that family considerations still are prominent in the *initiation* of female migration, especially among wives, female labor force participation may be more important in individual and family migration decisions about whether to continue migrating, whether to settle in the United States, and whether to remit money and invest at home, or how much. We leave the investigation of these important issues for future studies and other researchers.

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