

CROSSING THE BORDER

Research from the
**MEXICAN
MIGRATION
PROJECT**

**JORGE DURAND and
DOUGLAS S. MASSEY,**
Editors

CROSSING THE BORDER

"Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey have done it again! *Crossing the Border* is an authoritative collection of rigorous empirical analyses that synthesize several substantive findings about the changing character and consequences of U.S.-bound Mexican migration during the 1990s. Its authority derives both from the theoretical and methodological foundations of the ambitious, multi-decade Mexican Migration Project that revolutionized the scientific study of population movement, from the technical sophistication of the empirical analyses, and from the broad scope of topics analyzed. These include the broadened geographic origins and destinations of migrants, the transformation of gender and family roles, and the role of U.S. policy in transforming rather than ebbing the flow of new migrants. This volume is an excellent classroom companion to *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*."

—**MARTA TIENDA**, Maurice P. During Professor in Demographic Studies and professor of sociology and public affairs, Princeton University

"The bi-national Mexican Migration Project (MMP) represents the most significant, sustained research effort on Mexican migration to the United States conducted over the past twenty-five years. *Crossing the Border* systematically exploits the MMP to understand what propels this migration, how it is changing, and how it affects peoples and communities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. A companion volume to Massey, Durand, and Malone's path-breaking *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors* and an invaluable resource in and of itself."

—**ROGER WALDINGER**, professor, Department of Sociology, U.C.L.A.

"If Americans often extol European immigration to the United States, they no less frequently denigrate migration from Mexico, often in distorting and disdainful terms. For over twenty years, Douglas S. Massey and Jorge Durand have collected pioneering data on Mexican migrants to the United States. At least as much anything else, analyses of their data help to dispel negative images and myths about U.S. Mexican immigrants. *Crossing the Border*, an enormously insightful and useful book, contains the best and most representative examples of these analyses, thus demonstrating why the Mexican Migration Project is one of the most significant and policy-relevant social science accomplishments of the latter part of the twentieth century."

—**FRANK D. BEAN**, professor of sociology and codirector, Center for Research on Immigration, Population and Public Policy, University of California, Irvine

"For the past twenty years, Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey have continued to produce pioneering findings in the field of Mexico-U.S. immigration. Aside from their important intellectual findings, Durand and Massey have furnished a model for doing social science research. Combining surveys in scores of Mexican locales with intensive ethnographies, they have amassed an exemplary data set and in the process, they have also trained countless social scientists in data gathering and analysis. Much of that work appears in this book. Durand, Massey, and their collaborators have produced a rich and compelling volume about many dimensions of Mexican immigration."

—**EDWARD TELLES**, professor of sociology, U.C.L.A.

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The Russell Sage Foundation

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CHAPTER 16

APPENDIX:
THE MEXICAN MIGRATION PROJECT

Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey

AS UNDOCUMENTED migration has come to account for a larger share of total immigration to developed countries, an increasing fraction of demographic growth lies outside the usual modes of statistical measurement, creating major problems for demographers seeking to forecast the size and composition of national populations and serious headaches for social scientists seeking to study the determinants and processes of immigration. As Douglas Massey and Chiara Capoferro (forthcoming) point out, the data sources normally used to study immigration have serious inadequacies with respect to measuring undocumented migration. We therefore developed an alternative methodology, known as the ethnosurvey, to study patterns and processes of undocumented migration from Mexico.

Unlike other sources of information on Mexican immigration, ethnoscience surveys yield data that allow investigators to

- compare the characteristics and behavior of documented and undocumented migrants
- measure trends in the characteristics of both groups over time
- undertake longitudinal studies of the migration process
- discern the background and characteristics of migrants before and after they enter the United States
- undertake detailed cross-tabulations of Mexican migration based on large samples

- study transitions between different legal statuses and model selective movements back and forth across the border
- provide an ongoing source of longitudinal data that allows researchers to monitor the effect of shifting U.S. and Mexican policies

METHODOLOGY OF AN ETHNOSURVEY

The basic idea underlying an ethnosurvey is that qualitative and quantitative procedures complement one another and that, when properly combined, the weaknesses of one become the strengths of the other, yielding a body of data with greater reliability and more internal validity than would be possible using either method alone (Massey 1987). The ethnosurvey shifts back and forth between quantitative and qualitative modes during all phases of design, data collection, and analysis. Consequently, ethnographic and survey methods inform one another throughout the study. Once a site is selected for study, the ethnosurvey begins with a phase of conventional ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation, unstructured in-depth interviewing, and archival work. Early materials from this fieldwork are then made available for use in designing the survey instrument.

After the instrument has been designed, it is applied to a probability sample of respondents selected according to a carefully designed sampling plan. Qualitative fieldwork continues during the implementation of the survey or resumes after the survey's completion. The flow of analysis is organized to make preliminary quantitative data from the survey available to ethnographic investigators before they leave the field, allowing patterns emerging from quantitative analysis to shape qualitative fieldwork, just as insights from early ethnographies guide later statistical studies.

Quantitative data are gathered using a *semi-structured interview schedule* that lies midway between the highly structured instrument of the survey researcher and the guided conversation of the ethnographer. The schedule is laid out in a series of tables with variables arranged in columns across the top and rows referring variously to persons, events, years, or other meaningful categories. The interviewer holds a natural conversation with the subject and fills in the cells of the table by soliciting required information in ways that the situation seems to demand, using his or her judgment as to the timing and wording of specific questions or probes. Each table is organized around a particular topic, giving coherence and order to the "conversation," and certain specialized probes may be included to elaborate particular themes of interest.

A second fundamental feature of an ethnosurvey is the *collection of life histories*. Within the quantitative survey, the semistructured questionnaire is readily adapted to compile event histories on various aspects of social and

economic life, such as employment, migration, marriage, childbearing, and property ownership. Various facets of a respondent's life are recorded in separate tables in the event-history questionnaire. Rows refer to specific years or periods in the respondent's life, and columns correspond to variables relating to the facet of life under investigation. These tables provide structure to the gathering of life histories by guiding the flow of conversation between interviewer and respondent.

When properly compiled and coded, the various event histories (employment, marriage, fertility, migration, property ownership, border crossing) can be combined, with the aid of a computer, to construct a comprehensive life history for each respondent, summarizing key events for each person-year of life from birth (or some other relevant starting point) to the survey date. The construction of such retrospective life histories takes the ethnographic survey design considerably beyond the cross-sectional approach usually applied to census or survey data and permits the estimation of dynamic developmental models using sophisticated methods of longitudinal data analysis.

Although individuals may be the ultimate units of analysis, their decisions are typically made within larger social and economic contexts. These contexts structure and constrain individual decisions so that analyses conducted only at the micro level are perforce incomplete. Although individuals ultimately decide whether to migrate or stay, the decision is typically reached within some larger family or household unit; these households exist within larger communities that influence family decision making; and communities, in turn, exist within regions and nations.

A third feature of the ethnosurvey is that it is designed for the *collection of multilevel data*. Information is solicited from all household members, not only yielding individual information relevant to the migration decision but also enabling the estimation of household contextual variables like dependency, family income, life-cycle stage, and kinship connections to other migrants. At the same time, other modules gather information on variables that pertain directly to the household itself, such as property ownership, dwelling construction, home furnishings, length of residence, and tenure in the home.

If communities themselves are sampling units, and quantitative information is gathered on multiple communities as part of a cluster sampling design, then fieldworkers also complete community inventories that later enable researchers to construct aggregate-level data files. Data at the individual, household, and community level may be organized into separate data sets or combined into a single multilevel file. Either way, variables defined at various levels are available for analysis.

A fourth distinguishing feature of the ethnosurvey is its reliance on *representative multisite sampling*—the purposive selection of sites and the use

of random sampling methods within them. Communities may be chosen according to specific criteria designed to enable comparative analysis between settings, or they may be chosen randomly from a universe of possible sites to represent a population of interest. The latter procedure yields a representative cluster sample that generates unbiased statistical estimates. Whether chosen randomly or according to a priori specifications, however, both internal and external validity are greatly enhanced by the inclusion of multiple field sites. A variety of sites also enhances the strength of inference in qualitative as well as quantitative analyses.

Because migration is a social process that transcends distinct geographic and cultural areas, a fifth characteristic of the ethnosurvey is *parallel sampling*, which involves gathering contemporaneous samples in the different geographic locations that serve as loci for the social or economic process under study. In the case of migration, representative samples of respondents are surveyed in both sending and receiving areas.

This strategy is necessary because migration, like most social and economic processes, is selective. The population of people with U.S. migratory experience contains two classes of migrants: those who have returned home and those who have remained abroad. Since the decision to stay or return is highly selective of different characteristics and experiences, neither class is representative of all those with migrant experience. The use of origin or destination samples alone produces biased statistical analyses and misleading statements about migratory processes (Lindstrom and Massey 1994).

Parallel sampling raises certain troubling technical issues, however. Whereas designing a representative sample of returned migrants who live in a particular sending community is a straightforward process, it is more difficult to generate a representative sample of settled emigrants from that community who reside elsewhere. The main difficulty lies in constructing a sampling frame that includes all out-migrants from a community, since they are typically scattered across a variety of towns and cities, both domestic and foreign. To solve this problem, the final characteristic of an ethnosurvey is the use of *multiplicity sampling* (Kalton and Anderson 1986).

In a multiplicity sample of out-migrants, respondents in sending communities provide information not only about themselves and others in the household but also about some well-defined class of relatives—usually siblings—who live outside the community. When the survey of households in the sending community is complete, a sampling frame for settled out-migrant siblings will have been compiled, and a random sample of emigrants may be chosen from it. Researchers return to households containing relatives of the sampled siblings to obtain information necessary to locate them in destination areas. They then go to these destination

areas to administer the interview; the result is a representative sample of the out-migrant community.

THE MEXICAN MIGRATION PROJECT DATABASE

The ethnosurvey was first developed for implementation in four Mexican communities and their U.S. branch settlements during 1982 and 1988. Designed to serve as a demonstration project, these ethnosurveys yielded detailed information about patterns and processes of documented and undocumented migration to the United States as well as transitions between these legal statuses. The data were analyzed and the results summarized in Massey and colleagues (1987) and a series of related articles (reviewed and included in the bibliography of Massey et al. 1998). The methodology for an ethnosurvey was first laid out by Massey (1987).

Having demonstrated the potential of ethnosurveys to gather data on subjects resistant to study using the normal sources, in 1987 we proposed a five-year project that would annually survey selected communities throughout Mexico to build up, over time, a large and reliable base of data about the characteristics and behavior of documented and undocumented migrants to the United States. This proposal was funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and ultimately became known as the Mexican Migration Project (MMP).

Soon after its initial funding, the MMP was granted a Merit Award by National Institute of Child Health and Human Development that allowed for automatic renewal (subject to administrative approval) for a second five-year period. It was renewed competitively again in 1997 and in 2002 and as of this writing is completing its sixteenth year of continuous support. Including the four communities originally surveyed in 1982 and 1988, the MMP to date has surveyed eighty-one Mexican communities and U.S. branch settlements to build a binational database that contains information on 17,625 current or former migrants to the United States, 59.8 percent of whom (10,549 persons) were undocumented on their most recent U.S. trip. Among household heads, 5,512 had been to the United States, yielding 258,910 person-years of information. Data and documentation are publicly available through the project website, which may be found simply by typing the project name into a search engine such as Google (see also <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/>).

Basic data about the communities surveyed by the MMP and the resulting samples are shown in table 16.1. As can be seen, the MMP covers a variety of Mexican states, focusing on those that constitute the traditional heartland for U.S. migration: the western states of Aguascalientes, (Text continues on p. 330.)

TABLE 16.1 Information on Community Samples Included in the Mexican Migration Project

Community Number	State	1990 Population	2000 Population	Survey Year	Mexican Sample	U.S. Sample	Refusal Rate
1	Guanajuato	52,000	65,000	1987	200	21	0.034
2	Guanajuato	868,000	1,135,000	1987	200	0	0.119
3	Jalisco	4,000	5,000	1988	200	22	0.140
4	Guanajuato	17,000	18,000	1988	200	22	0.057
5	Guanajuato	2,000	2,000	1988	150	10	0.085
6	Jalisco	5,000	6,000	1988	200	20	0.115
7	Jalisco	3,000	4,000	1988	200	15	0.010
8	Michoacán	6,000	8,000	1989	200	20	0.050
9	Michoacán	32,000	36,000	1989	200	20	0.037
10	Michoacán	2,000	1,000	1990	150	20	0.152
11	Nayarit	20,000	25,000	1990	200	20	0.029
12	Nayarit	12,000	13,000	1990	200	20	0.010
13	Guanajuato	21,000	25,000	1990	200	20	0.047
14	Michoacán	7,000	8,000	1990	200	20	0.057
15	Guanajuato	265,000	319,000	1991	200	20	0.057
16	Guanajuato	1,000	1,000	1991	100	10	0.029
17	Jalisco	31,000	35,000	1991	200	20	0.044
18	Zacatecas	8,000	7,000	1991	365	20	0.127
19	Michoacán	428,000	550,000	1991	200	20	0.083
20	Jalisco	3,000	3,000	1982	106	0	0.038
21	Jalisco	2,000	2,000	1982	94	0	0.037
22	Michoacán	7,000	7,000	1982	200	0	0.015
23	Jalisco	12,000	18,000	1982	200	0	0.038
24	Jalisco	1,650,000	1,646,000	1982	200	16	0.048
25	Jalisco	1,000	1,000	1992	100	7	0.029
26	Guanajuato	34,000	34,000	1992	200	15	0.095
27	Guanajuato	24,000	22,000	1992	200	15	0.127
28	Jalisco	73,000	85,000	1992	200	20	0.074
29	Michoacán	188,000	226,000	1992	200	13	0.083
30	Zacatecas	1,000	1,000	1991	187	0	0.025
31	Guerrero	85,000	105,000	1993	100	12	0.089
32	San Luis Potosí	489,000	629,000	1993	200	25	0.048
33	Colima	7,000	8,000	1994	200	20	0.087
34	Zacatecas	2,000	2,000	1994	149	0	0.063
35	Zacatecas	100,000	114,000	1994	239	10	0.142
36	San Luis Potosí	13,000	13,000	1994	201	5	0.024
37	San Luis Potosí	1,000	1,000	1994	102	5	0.000
38	San Luis Potosí	42,000	47,000	1994	200	15	0.052
39	San Luis Potosí	1,000	1,000	1994	100	0	0.000
40	Zacatecas	34,000	38,000	1995	201	30	0.107
41	Guerrero	7,000	6,000	1995	153	11	0.186
42	Guerrero	1,000	1,000	1995	100	0	0.107
43	Guerrero	515,000	621,000	1995	200	0	0.074
44	San Luis Potosí	1,000	1,000	1995	99	17	0.000
45	San Luis Potosí	1,000	1,000	1996	142	11	0.000

(Table continues on p. 328.)

TABLE 16.1 Information on Community Samples Included in the Mexican Migration Project (Continued)

Community Number	State	1990 Population	2000 Population	Survey Year	Mexican Sample	U.S. Sample	Refusal Rate
46	Zacatecas	1,000	1,000	1995	111	0	0.142
47	San Luis Potosí	3,000	4,000	1996	197	11	0.032
48	San Luis Potosí	3,000	4,000	1996	94	0	0.021
49	Oaxaca	1,000	1,000	1996	100	0	0.000
50	Oaxaca	1,000	1,000	1996	100	10	0.000
51	Oaxaca	9,000	9,000	1997	199	0	0.083
52	Oaxaca	213,000	252,000	1996	200	9	0.087
53	Sinaloa	2,000	1,000	1998	100	6	0.020
54	Puebla	1,007,000	1,272,000	1997	201	1	0.016
55	Guanajuato	1,000	1,000	1997	80	8	0.000
56	Guanajuato	1,000	1,000	1998	87	9	0.033
57	Jalisco	4,000	6,000	1998	201	20	0.057
58	Jalisco	1,000	1,000	1998	100	10	0.029
59	Puebla	2,000	2,000	1997	100	0	0.010
60	Puebla	2,000	3,000	1997	100	0	0.010
61	Puebla	9999	9999	1998	199	0	0.050
62	Sinaloa	3,000	4,000	1998	150	11	0.020
63	Baja California Norte	699,000	1,149,000	1998	150	8	0.068
64	Baja California Norte	699,000	1,149,000	1998	150	7	0.011
65	Baja California Norte	699,000	1,149,000	1998	150	8	0.085
66	Baja California Norte	699,000	1,149,000	1998	152	7	0.080
67	Colima	3,000	4,000	1998	72	10	0.029
68	Colima	1,000	1,000	1998	100	10	0.000
69	Aguascalientes	18,000	4,000	1998	150	1	0.013
70	Sinaloa	5,000	6,000	1998	202	0	0.010
71	Aguascalientes	2,000	2,000	1997	100	6	0.010
72	Guanajuato	41,000	41,000	2000	155	16	Pending
73	Durango	16,000	23,000	1999	203	24	Pending
74	Durango	9,000	9,000	1999	151	11	Pending
75	Durango	1,000	1,000	1999	101	6	Pending
76	Durango	348,000	427,000	1999	200	20	Pending
77	Nuevo León	198,000	226,000	2000	200	0	Pending
78	Chihuahua	4,000	5,000	2000	200	0	Pending
79	Chihuahua	3,000	4,000	2000	150	0	Pending
80	Chihuahua	516,000	516,000	2000	201	0	Pending
81	Chihuahua	1,000	1,000	2000	100	0	Pending

Source: Data from Mexican Migration Project.

Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas. As far back as data exist, these states have accounted for at least half of all Mexican migration to the United States (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno 2001). More recently, the project has broadened its coverage to incorporate newer sending states in Mexico's south-central region (Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Puebla) as well as the north (Baja California, Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa).

Following standard procedures, within each state we selected a range of different-sized communities for study, from small rural villages of one thousand or less to major metropolitan centers with populations in the millions, with all sizes in between. In choosing communities for study, the goal was not to find international migrants but to incorporate a wide range of different kinds of communities with contrasting patterns of social and economic organization and then to enumerate whatever migrants turned up at each site. The success of the ethnosurvey in securing respondent cooperation is indicated by the low refusal rates encountered by MMP interviewers, ranging from zero in several communities to 18.6 percent in one community in the state of Guerrero (which happened to be near a zone of guerrilla activity). The average refusal rate was just 4.7 percent.

Because communities themselves were not randomly selected, the MMP does not yield a probability sample of Mexico, even for the states in which the samples are located. Technically, the eighty-one community samples are representative only of the combined population of those communities. Thus it is relevant to ask how accurate a portrait the MMP sample paints of U.S. migrants and their characteristics. Massey and René Zenteno (2000) use Mexico's 1992 National Survey of Population Dynamics to validate the accuracy of the MMP. This survey includes a question to identify those members or former members of selected households aged twelve and over who have been to the United States, either to work or to look for work, during the preceding five years, thus yielding a nationally representative population of persons with U.S. migratory experience with which similarly defined migrants captured by the MMP could be compared. Massey and Zenteno's (2000) analysis demonstrates that apart from geographic background, the MMP accurately captures the characteristics and behavior of U.S. migrants.

Here we update that earlier study by comparing the current MMP database of eighty-one communities with the most recently available round of Mexico's National Survey of Population Dynamics (known by its Spanish acronym, ENADID), which was fielded in 1997. Table 16.2 presents the regional distribution of U.S. labor migrants aged twelve and over identified from both sources using the regional coding scheme devel-

TABLE 16.2 Regional Distribution of U.S. Migrants Identified by the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) and Mexico's 1997 National Survey of Population Dynamics (ENADID) (Percentage)

Region and State	ENADID	MMP
Historical region	47.5	85.5
Aguascalientes	1.6	2.9
Colima	1.0	2.4
Durango	3.8	4.3
Guanajuato	9.3	16.1
Jalisco	14.0	16.7
Michoacán	8.6	14.3
Nayarit	1.9	3.1
San Luis Potosí	3.6	11.0
Zacatecas	3.9	15.3
Border region	28.2	7.9
Baja California Norte	5.8	3.2
Baja California Sur	0.2	0.0
Chihuahua	6.0	2.7
Coahuila	2.8	0.0
Nuevo León	3.8	0.4
Sinaloa	2.5	1.6
Sonora	3.0	0.0
Tamaulipas	4.1	0.0
Central region	22.0	6.5
Distrito Federal	3.9	0.0
Guerrero	3.5	2.6
Hidalgo	1.7	0.0
México	4.6	0.0
Morelos	2.0	0.0
Oaxaca	2.1	2.3
Puebla	2.5	1.6
Querétaro	1.3	0.0
Tlaxcala	0.4	0.0
Southern region	2.3	0.0
Campeche	0.1	0.0
Chiapas	0.3	0.0
Quintana Roo	0.2	0.0
Tabasco	0.1	0.0
Veracruz	1.2	0.0
Yucatán	0.4	0.0

Source: Data from Mexican Migration Project and ENADID (1997).

oped by Durand (1998). Given the purposive selection of communities for the MMP, it is hardly surprising that its migrants are not geographically representative of all U.S. migrants in Mexico. Because the MMP started in Mexico's historical region of migration and only later branched out to embrace other locations, the western states are clearly overrepresented in the MMP data. Whereas 86 percent of all migrants in the latest version of the MMP were from the historical sending region, only 48 percent of those captured by the ENADID were from this zone.

Although the border and central regions are underrepresented with respect to their actual contribution of migrants to the national population, their experience is nonetheless included in the MMP. Whereas 28 percent of all Mexican migrants to the United States originated in the border region, and 22 percent were from the central region, the respective figures among migrants identified by the MMP were 8 and 7 percent. Only the relatively unimportant southern region, which contributes very few (2 percent) migrants to the national pool, is still unrepresented in the MMP.

More relevant than geography are the social characteristics of Mexican migrants. Table 16.3 assesses how accurately the MMP sample represents the traits and behaviors of the population of migrants to the United States. As can be seen, the only MMP distribution to depart markedly from that found in the ENADID is that for community size. Compared with the national population of U.S. migrants, the MMP underrepresents those in rural communities with fewer than twenty-five hundred inhabitants (only 10 percent, compared with 36 percent in the ENADID) as well as metropolitan centers of 1 million or more (14 percent, compared with the ENADID's 30 percent). Migrants from the two middle categories (2,500 to 19,999 and 20,000 to 99,999) are correspondingly overrepresented.

Aside from this distinctive feature of the MMP, which follows from its nonrandom sample selection method, the distributions of other variables are quite close. According to the MMP, 86 percent of Mexican migrants to the United States are male, whereas the ENADID figure is 84 percent. The median age of migrants was forty in the MMP and thirty-eight in the ENADID, and mean ages were even closer, with respective figures of forty-three and forty-two. With respect to marital status, the ENADID finds 79 percent of all U.S. migrants to be married, compared with 78 percent so identified by the MMP. The educational distributions are also quite similar. In the MMP sample, 50 percent of migrants have less than six years of schooling, 27 percent have six to eight years, 13 percent nine to eleven years, and 10 percent have twelve or more years of schooling, compared with respective figures of 46, 29, 16, and 8 percent in the ENADID sample. These two distributions yield mean education levels of

TABLE 16.3 Social Characteristics of U.S. Migrants Identified by the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) and Mexico's 1997 National Survey of Population Dynamics (ENADID) (Percentage Except as Indicated)

Characteristic	ENADID	MMP
Size of community		
Under 2,500	36.1	9.7
2,500 to 19,999	20.6	35.4
20,000 to 99,999	13.5	40.9
Over 100,000	29.9	14.0
Gender		
Male	84.4	86.0
Female	15.6	14.0
Age (years)		
Median age	38.0	40.0
Mean age	42.2	43.1
Standard deviation	16.2	16.8
Relation to household head		
Household head	73.4	71.6
Spouse	8.8	7.5
Son or daughter	13.1	19.0
Other	4.7	1.9
Marital status		
Currently married	78.8	77.8
Never married	12.3	16.7
Formerly married	8.9	5.5
Years of schooling		
Less than six years	46.4	50.1
Six to eight years	28.6	26.7
Nine to eleven years	16.4	13.4
Twelve or more years	8.0	9.8
Median	6.0	5.0
Mean	5.6	5.1
Duration of last trip (months)		
Median	7.0	8.0
Mean	17.6	18.7
Number of unweighted cases	8,297	6,766

Source: Data from Mexican Migration Project and ENADID (1997).

5.1 years for migrants identified by the MMP and 5.6 years for those identified by the ENADID.

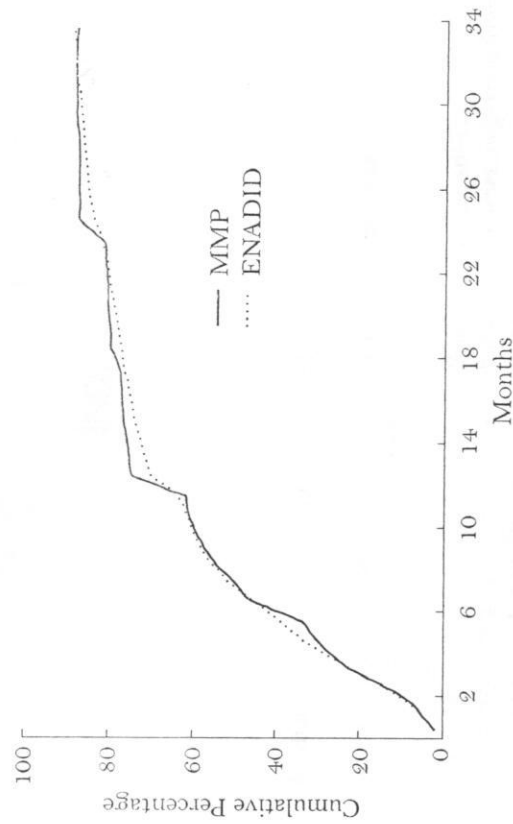
The only other significant difference in distribution between the two sources is that for household position. In general, the MMP contains a larger number of sons and daughters than the ENADID; whereas the MMP identifies 19 percent of migrants in the MMP as children of household heads, in the ENADID sample that figure is only 13 percent; but Massey and Zenteno (2000) have determined that this difference occurs because the MMP, owing to its careful procedures for determining household membership, was more successful in enumerating absent sons and daughters (mostly the former) who had been away for some time but were expected to rejoin the household upon their return.

In a study of international migration, perhaps the most important variables are those associated with migratory behavior itself. The only indicator of migratory behavior available from the ENADID is the duration of the most recent trip to the United States. In the MMP data, the average trip duration is nineteen months and the median eight months, indicating a long-tailed distribution skewed to the left. Trip durations as reported by migrants identified by the ENADID display a mean of eighteen months and a median of seven months, suggesting essentially the same distribution. Figure 16.1 presents the cumulative distribution of U.S. trips by duration for both MMP and ENADID respondents to demonstrate how closely the two sets of data correspond.

The foregoing systematic comparison suggests that, despite the non-representativeness of the its selection of sample communities, the MMP nonetheless captures the social and economic characteristics of U.S. migrants quite accurately, including the timing of their departures and returns. The great advantage of the MMP, however, is that it allows investigators to identify those migrating with and without documents, thus permitting detailed analyses of the characteristics and behavior of unauthorized migrants (see Massey and Espinosa 1997). In addition, the MMP elicits a detailed series of migration-specific data (about social ties to other migrants, for example) that are simply unavailable from standard demographic surveys such as the ENADID.

Each year since 1987, we have supervised the gathering of data from representative samples of households in four to six Mexican communities. Following the principles of the ethnosurvey design, each Mexican sample is supplemented with a survey of settled out-migrants from the same community who are located in the United States, using snowball sampling methods. Using a procedure developed by Massey and Emilio Parrado (1994), the Mexican and U.S. surveys may be weighted to

FIGURE 16.1 Months Spent by Return Migrants on Most Recent Trip to the United States, Cumulative Percentage



Source: Authors' compilation.

reflect their relative contributions to the total transnational population of each community.

The resulting information is organized into five basic data files: PERSFILE contains data on individuals enumerated in sample households; HOUSEFILE contains data on the households themselves; MIGFILE contains information about the household head's most recent trip to the United States; LIFEFILE contains detailed life histories for all household heads; and SPOUSEFILE contains labor histories for all spouses.

After administering the ethnosurvey to sample households, MMP fieldworkers complete an inventory of information on the community from a variety of sources: phone directories, interviews with local officials, archives, and Mexican statistical sources. These community inventories yield a community-level data file, COMMUN, which provides information on community characteristics from 1950 to the time of the survey. Included is information on population, labor force, industrial distribution, natural resources, agriculture, standard of living, community development, infrastructure, institutions, and migration prevalence.

Three additional quantitative files are also available from the database. MSACROSS is a cross-sectional file that gives cost-of-living indicators

for U.S. metropolitan areas contained in the Mexican Migration Project database, allowing researchers to adjust for differences in price levels across urban destination areas. MSAYEAR is a longitudinal file containing information on employment, unemployment, legalization, and population for all metropolitan destination areas from 1972 to the present; and NATLYEAR contains national-level indicators of macroeconomic performance in the United States and Mexico from 1950 to the present.

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