Mexican immigrants' socioeconomic integration in the United States

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Mexican immigrants' socioeconomic integration in the United States

by

Moushumi Choudhury

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Sociology

Program of Study Committee:
Robert E. Mazur, Major Professor
Betty L. Wells
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2004
This is to certify that the master’s thesis of

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has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
To my dearest son

Rishav Choudhury

for being so cooperative throughout my study period that is incomparable
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The depth of knowledge that I have achieved today, in these two years of my Masters’ in Sociology from ISU, has only been possible because of my major professor Dr. Robert E. Mazur. Amid emotional frustration, invariable constraints and physically draining days it seemed my goal would remain unfulfilled. In such moments Dr. Mazur’s intellectual insight, persistence, encouragement, unconditional help and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter awakened the depleted within me. I am grateful to Dr. Mazur for all his guidance throughout my course of study and for the support that he rendered me to make this thesis an integrated whole.

I am thankful and grateful to my program of study committee members, Dr. Balmurli Natrajan and Dr. Betty L. Wells, for being on my committee and extending their comments to make this work “perfecto.” Their comments and feedback have helped me immensely to immerse myself in the subject matter of my thesis work and to delineate the appropriate focus for my investigations.

I extend my thanks to Dr Lorenz and Dr Roberts who helped me in disentangling the statistical conundrum.
I am also thankful to my colleagues and friends who helped me from time to time with my queries—issues that would have never been solved without their input.
ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to understand the impact of factors that are responsible for economic success of Mexican immigrants in the United States (U.S.) over time. Economic success provides an important prism for understanding immigrants’ broader socioeconomic integration. This study draws on structuration theory, education as human capital, and social capital to explain the factors that enable immigrants to integrate successfully in the host society. Households’ socio-demographic composition, U.S. migration experience and social capital are hypothesized as important in understanding variation in immigrants’ economic success. Data for a sample of 738 U.S.-based Mexican immigrant households, from the Mexican Migration Project based at the University of Pennsylvania, are analyzed using ordinary least squares regression and binary logistic regression. Overall, Mexican immigrants’ socioeconomic integration is relatively low. Household heads with higher occupational level and income were male and had higher levels of education; more extensive U.S. experience and permanent residence also contributed to higher wages. Vehicle ownership, another indication of economic success, is associated with these same factors and social dimensions - size of household and more siblings in the U.S. Owning a business was associated with permanent residence, socializing with Anglos, and not needing financial help from others. Contrary to expectations, socialization with Anglos and permanent residence had a negative impact on wages. These findings are discussed in relation to social capital theory.
CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The scale, complexity, and context of contemporary international migration that links nations in the global economy's more and less developed regions are unprecedented and truly worthy of attention. Approximately 175 million persons currently reside outside the country of their birth, and almost one of every 10 persons living in the more developed regions is a migrant. During the 1990s, more developed regions have received each year about 2.3 million migrants coming from less developed regions (an increase of 28 per cent compared to the 1980s), accounting for two thirds of developed regions' population growth (United Nation Population Division 2002).

Scarce employment opportunities, low wages, and political unrest are major motivating forces underlying these global flows of humanity. In a broader sense, migration may be seen as a response to uneven socioeconomic development in the different layers of the global economy, changing the demographic profile in both sending and receiving countries. As the major core power of the global economy, the United States (U.S.) is the largest recipient of immigrants from developing nations. The U.S. foreign born population that is continuously growing (31.1 million in 2000), is an increase of 57% between 1990 and 2000, nearly six times the rate of increase of the native born population. Recent migrants in the U.S. represent a complex phenomenon, having diverse origins, regional concentrations, and differentiation in legal and socioeconomic characteristics.

U.S. migration levels and patterns that present significant challenges and opportunities in socioeconomic terms reflect policy changes based on the 1952 Immigration and Naturalization Act and its amendments in 1965 and 1990. The 1965 amendment
loosened restrictions on entry of relatives of those who had acquired U.S. citizenship, resulting in substantial increases in the volume of immigration and ambivalent responses toward newcomers who differed in geographic, ethnic, and racial background from their hosts (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). The passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) enabled an estimated 2 million undocumented Mexican immigrants to obtain legal status.¹

In major urban areas of the U.S., various immigrant ethnic groups have settled and integrated into the labor force, albeit increasingly through social networks of co-ethnics rather than conventional means of employment procurement. Immigrants and their families are disproportionately concentrated in low occupational status and low income groups, lack health insurance, and face food insecurity. Foreign born persons represented 14% of the nation’s 125 million workers in 2002, but 20% of its 43 million low wage workers. Immigrants from Mexico constitute a large proportion (30%) of the 31.1 million foreign born persons in the U.S. Recent trends in Mexico-U.S. migration suggest that, even with the advent of the present economic crisis and security measures, there has been little or no deceleration in the rate of Mexican migration to the U.S. – both legal and illegal, and no significant changes are anticipated for the near future (Passel 2004). While Mexican immigrants are heterogeneous in terms of socioeconomic and legal status, the majority fit the broader generalization of illegal, limited occupational skills, low income and poor language ability typically characterizing ‘manual labor migration’ (Alba 2004).

Compared to previous waves of immigrants in the U.S., recent immigrants have exhibited a greater gap in socioeconomic achievement compared to native born workers and families (Clark 1999). Many scholars associate Mexicans’ patterns of migration and their
segmented labor force experience with initiation of the second Bracero program in 1942 that clearly reflected U.S. economic interests for cheap labor. Emerging perspectives on migration reflect the reality of institutionalized migration, i.e., ‘cumulative causation’ and strong ‘migrant specific social capital’ and networks of family members, relatives, and countrymen (Massey 1990; Massey and Espinosa 1997:976; Alba 2004). Both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors are considered in explaining Mexican migration to the U.S. Concerning push factors, Mexican immigrants disproportionately originate from economically backward areas of Mexico and migrate to address their economic needs. Economic restructuring of developed nations constitutes the ‘pull’ factor operating.

Mexican immigrants arrive in the U.S. at a relatively young age and have, on average, a low level of education. Their limited English language skills above all predict poverty status. In a context of rising ‘nativism’ among non-Hispanic whites in the U.S., responses to immigrant populations with different backgrounds (race, ethnicity, language, religion) are often prejudice and institutionalized discrimination and segregation (Massey et al. 2002).

With limited education and low level occupational skills, even after a substantial amount of time in the U.S., Mexican immigrants tend to remain in low wage marginal employment, clustered into ethnic niches that Sassen (1995) characterizes as ‘middle man’ entry roles. Although recent cohorts of Mexican immigrants are being absorbed in food processing, construction, and sundry service industries in the Midwestern and Southeastern regions (Alba 2004), they overwhelmingly work under marginal conditions and occupy low wage positions.

Frequent movement across international boundaries might underscore the value of maintaining ties in various social, economic and political realms. However, a society’s
prospects for development lie in the socioeconomic integration of newcomers and long term immigrants by addressing intertwined cultural, social, economic and political challenges (Ray 2003). Immigrants leaving a society of origin permanently and successfully integrating in another society require not one way adaptation on the part of immigrants but a two way process of mutual co-operation between host society and the recent arrivals, shaping the scope and opportunities for the society’s new members. Immigrants stimulate changes in the social fabric and institutions of their new society.

This study involves a micro level analysis of Mexican immigrants’ socioeconomic integration in the U.S. Socioeconomic integration of immigrants is a multifaceted phenomenon that involves participation of immigrants in the social institutions of mainstream society through marriage, religious or civic associations, community activities, intermarriage, acquisition of relevant occupational skills, and economic success. The present study constitutes an in-depth examination of one key aspect of the integration process - economic success and the factors that help explain its variation. What are the factors that promote or limit economic success as a measure of socioeconomic integration for Mexican immigrants in the U.S.? Research to date suggests that Mexican immigrants who enter the U.S. with low levels of education and skill tend to remain confined to low wage jobs.

Research on the economic and social integration of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. has focused on their human capital, occupational attainment and earnings over time compared to natives or other immigrant ethnic groups, and the dynamics of social capital exemplified by social networks (Chiswick 1984; Chavez 1992a:274; Portes and Bach 1985:23; Chiswick 1978; Karas 2002; Massey 1990; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Portes and Borocz 1989). This study uses structuration theory to explain the role of immigrants’
sociodemographic characteristics and migration experience, human capital theory regarding education, and social capital theory regarding networks as major determinants of immigrants' economic success assessed in terms of occupation, wages, and assets reflecting socioeconomic integration.

Given that legal immigrants’ access to support through the welfare program was substantially reduced as a result of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, whose authors proclaimed its goal as reducing dependency by promoting work, the findings of this study will be evaluated for potential policy implications concerning factors that contribute to successful socioeconomic integration and immigrant long-term welfare and well-being.

**Thesis Organization:**

The thesis is organized in three chapters. Chapter 1: “General Introduction” describes trends in migration processes (U.S.), starting with global migration flows between developing and developed nations, particularly to the U.S. and then focuses on the significance of Mexican migration to the U.S. The chapter also addresses why Mexican immigrants are an important population that needs to be studied, their motives and characteristics in the U.S.

Chapter 2: “Mexican Immigrants’ Socioeconomic Integration in the United States” is the manuscript written for the purpose of submitting to the journal *International Migration Review*. The study focuses on the factors that help explain variation in immigrants’ economic success. The study argues that economic success has implications for either enhancing or limiting socioeconomic integration of a population over time in any society. Based on the data gathered from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP71), it is hypothesized that
sociodemographic characteristics of migrants’ household (household head’s sex, number of household members, heads’ educational attainment, immigrants’ social networks and U.S. migration experience are major factors determining economic success of the Mexican migrants that effect their social integration in U.S.

Chapter 3: “General Conclusion” focuses on policy implications derived from the results of the study. It emphasizes the importance of the study for the discipline and outlines future research that can be generated from the study. The references cited in the thesis are collectively listed in the reference section at the end of the thesis.

Notes

1 The United States Congress enacted the IRCA in 1986 containing three principal measures: amnesty for undocumented workers; sanctions against employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers; and increased enforcement at U.S. borders. Amnesty was administered under two programs: the section 245A program commonly known as the ‘general amnesty’ program, intended for persons who had lived continuously in the U.S. since January 1, 1982; and the Special Agricultural Worker program for people who worked at least 90 days with perishable crops in U.S. agriculture between May 1985 and May 1986 (Alarcon 1995).

2 With the advent of the Great Depression, it was no longer profitable to obtain laborers from Mexico. With the U.S. entry into World War II, Mexican workers were reconsidered as a valuable commodity. In 1942, the U.S. launched the Bracero program with passage of Public Law 45, which enabled U.S. employers to recruit Mexican contract laborers for short term work in agriculture (45-180 days). To keep up with the demands for laborers, the Bracero program was extended under a series of U.S. statutes and binational agreements from 1942 to December 1964. The Bracero program brought more than four million Mexican workers, many of whom were repeater workers. For details, see Cornelius (1978:33) and Massey et al. (2002:36).

3 The mechanisms of migration have been explored to the extent that they promote growth in employment. Dynamic interplay among network growth, individual labor migration and local income distribution leads to the process of ‘cumulative causation’ that begins to ‘take a life unto itself’ irrespective of possible changes in the conditions under which it was initiated. For details, see Massey (1996:15).

4 Migrant-specific social capital is distinct from general social capital; when a family member (spouse, siblings) makes a trip to the U.S., either legally or illegally, that increases the
probability of further migration (Massey and Espinosa 1997). Furthermore ‘friends and relatives established in the U.S. often provide financing, advice, shelter, and jobs to newly-arrived authorized and unauthorized migrants. See Alba (2004).
CHAPTER 2
MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS’ SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

A paper to be submitted to the journal International Migration Review

Moushumi Choudhury and Robert E. Mazur

Abstract

The objective of this study is to understand the impact of factors that are responsible for economic success of Mexican immigrants in the United States (U.S.) over time. Economic success provides an important prism for understanding immigrants’ broader socioeconomic integration. This study draws on structuration theory, education as human capital, and social capital to explain the factors that enable immigrants to integrate successfully in the host society. Households’ socio-demographic composition, U.S. migration experience and social capital are hypothesized as important in understanding variation in immigrants’ economic success. Data for a sample of 738 U.S.-based Mexican immigrant households, from the Mexican Migration Project based at the University of Pennsylvania, are analyzed using ordinary least squares regression and binary logistic regression. Overall, Mexican immigrants’ socioeconomic integration is relatively low. Household heads with higher occupational level and income were male and had higher levels of education; more extensive U.S. experience and permanent residence also contributed to higher wages. Vehicle ownership, another indication of economic success, is associated with these same factors and social dimensions - size of household and more siblings in the U.S. Owning a business was associated with larger household size, permanent residence, socializing with Anglos outside work, and not needing financial help from family. Contrary to expectations, socialization
with Anglos and permanent residence had a negative impact on wages. These findings are discussed in relation to social capital theory.

**Immigrant and Immigration Problems**

Immigration has major socioeconomic ramifications for capitalist societies. Since the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1965\(^1\), twenty-five million legal immigrants have migrated to the U.S. (Nee and Sanders 2001). Immigration initiates a process of acquiring social and economic ‘place’ in a new society, with the relative degree of success achieved having important implications for both immigrants and their new society.

Hispanics constitute the largest minority ethnic or racial group in the U.S., with their 38.8 million people representing 13% of the total population. Among Hispanics, more than half (58%) were of Mexican origin (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The Mexican population nearly doubled during the 1970s and doubled again during the 1990s (Cuevas 2003). Based on recent demographic trends and increasing diversity, it is predicted that “Around the year 2050, [non-Hispanic] whites will become a ‘minority.’ This demographic change will affect everything. Alliances between the races are bound to shift. Political and social power will be re-apportioned. Our neighborhoods, our schools and workplaces, even racial categories themselves will be altered” (Chideya 1999:35).

Successful integration of immigrant populations is crucial at both the macro and micro levels for social and economic development in multiethnic societies. Integration is the process through which over time newcomers and hosts form an integrated whole. Long-term solutions to the immigrant and minority ‘integration puzzle’ in multiethnic societies requires respecting democratic principles that define these societies (Papadimitriou 2003). Processes
of immigrants’ integration have been a central concern among social scientists (Portes and Borocz 1989; Chavez et al. 1990; Chavez 1992b; Massey et al. 1994; Alba and Nee 1997; Karas 2002).

Integration is increasingly replacing the notion of assimilation, reflecting greater tolerance and respect for ethno-cultural differences and pluralism. Cashmore (1994:148 as cited in Vermeulin and Pennix 2000:3) defines integration as “a condition in which different ethnic groups are able to maintain group boundaries and uniqueness while participating equally in the essential processes of production, distribution and government.”

Low levels of education and occupational skills restrict opportunities for advancing economically and improving the standard of living and life chances among immigrants and their children. It also limits their net contribution in social and economic terms. Segregation, hostility and conflict have been observed as responses to contemporary immigration in various regions of the U.S. (Burke and Goudy 1999; Massey and Eggers 1990; Rosenbaum 1997).

**Understanding Immigrants’ Success**

Variation in immigrants’ success can be explained by a combination of individuals’ characteristics and agency on the one hand, and features of the host society on the other. Encouragement and assistance can accelerate the process of weaving immigrants into the social and economic fabric of host communities. Conversely, social exclusion or discrimination can significantly inhibit immigrants’ success.

Immigrants from different ethnic groups experience exploitation and isolation from mainstream society, although the process varies for different groups. However, Mexican
immigrants, disproportionately laborers, often experience extreme exploitation. In Los Angeles garment factories, Latino immigrant workers have been exposed to significant exploitation and social isolation; even Asians, comprising an upper stratum of the immigrant occupational hierarchy, have not escaped isolation from the larger society (Bonacich 1992). Immigrants are concentrated in low wage jobs with those of similar origins. However, given rising unemployment among low skill and low wage workers, immigrants have difficulty getting these jobs (Sassen 1995).

Some opportunities exist for immigrants in low paying service sector jobs. Shifting of manufacturing industries to Mexico (maquiladoras) and other developing nations has considerably reduced overall job availability in the U.S. Workers in surviving manufacturing industries are disproportionately native born, relegating immigrants to low skill, low wage jobs in service industries (Bean and Tienda 1987; Muller 1992; Greenlees and Saenz 1999).

Immigrants’ characteristics, efforts, adaptation and the receiving society’s institutions (especially education and the labor market) all play important roles in shaping immigrants’ success (Pennix 2003). Language has been stressed as a prominent barrier to immigrants’ success. The challenge of immigrants’ successful integration is compounded by social, economic, cultural, political institutions that are controlled by non-Hispanic whites (Ray 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

Among Hispanic immigrants, Cubans have been the most successfully integrated, especially through small business entrepreneurship. However, the initial wave of Cuban immigrants consisted disproportionately of white collar professionals and business people. Other Cubans worked in enterprises owned by Cuban employers. Many were able to get
higher wage jobs, whether inside or outside the Cuban enclave, or quickly start their own enterprises (Portes and Boröcz 1989).

The higher propensity for self-employment among immigrants in the U.S. is particularly striking among Cubans, Koreans, Chinese and Asian Indians. In contrast, Mexicans, Filipinos and other Latin American immigrants are much less likely to be self-employed (Portes and Rumbaut 1996); for example, Filipinos were only one fourth as likely to own firms as Asian Indians and about half as likely as Cubans. Ethnic based entrepreneurship is an important element in the growth of employment and income among some immigrant groups (Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

Mexican migrants are often considered to be ‘sojourners’ rather than ‘settlers’ (Cornelius 1978; Chavez 1988; Reyes 2001). Massey (1986) has divided immigrants’ process of socioeconomic incorporation into three phases. In the ‘sojourners phase,’ migrants enter the country with a view to earn a targeted amount of income. They remain largely confined to their ethnic enclave and participate little in social activities. In the ‘transition phase,’ migrants gain social contacts through multiple trips to the U.S. By spending longer periods of time here, social ties beyond the ethnic enclaves increase, and English language skills improve. Therefore, they are ready to access better paying jobs. Finally, in the ‘settlement phase,’ migrants have become residents or citizens of their adopted society. They then have better jobs, contacts are widespread beyond the ethnic enclave, and money is spent in the country of residence instead of remitted back home.

Immigrants rely heavily on their network-based social capital2 to successfully integrate in a new society. Acquisition of appropriate ‘social and economic ties’ (Massey 1986), and strengthening of ‘weak ties’ (Grannovetter 1973) are key means to their success
in the new society. Recent research has revealed that Mexican migrants have a tendency to migrate on a temporary basis and gradually naturalize (Alarcon 1994; Goldring 1990, 1991). Increasing permanence is also due to continuing trends in U.S. economic restructuring (Cornelius 1991:168, 1992:169; Chavez et al. 1990, 1992a). Transnational linkages also increasingly shape immigrant success (Kivisto 2003; Alarcon 1994, 1995). Transnational families have one or more members in the United States and one or more members in the home country (Chavez 1992a:129). Depending on the migration strategy adopted, the family is restructured to get maximum payoff on the dollars earned in the U.S.

Immigrants' human capital acquired in their place of origin and their inferior language abilities at their destination remains devalued in the receiving labor market. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mexican immigrants typically entered into market sectors with labor intensive work, low wages and few benefits, consistent with segmented labor market theory (Portes and Bach 1985). However, with recent large scale immigration, Mexican immigrants form a transitional labor force (Morales 1983 as cited in Chavez 1992a:277) into high wage, relatively more secure sectors of manufacturing and service industries (Zentgraf 2001:57; Alba 2004). Although many Mexican immigrants arrive in the U.S. as low wage and low skill workers, they still contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. Improved work skills and English language abilities that migrants gain enable them to access higher paying secondary sector employment. Overall, however, while immigrants inevitably acquire some 'place' in their new society, the nature of that place and its implications for individual and family life chances remain problematic.
Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on the factors that help explain variation in immigrants' economic success as a key component of socioeconomic integration. In examining the level of success by Mexican immigrants in the U.S., previous research has focused either on immigrants' characteristics or on networks (Massey 1987, 1990; Posas 1999; Tienda and Wilson 1992). The present study considers a combination of immigrants' characteristics and networks based on social capital as resources that immigrants use in their places of destination. This study draws on structuration theory and theories of human and social capital to explain observed determinants of economic success.

The lens of structuration theory facilitates integration of macro level social structure with micro level agency in the study of migration (Mazur 1998). Livelihood strategies based on migration and household characteristics that shape economic success reflect human agency that connotes the 'capacity to make a difference' (Giddens 1994:14). Social actors continuously produce, reproduce and develop the social structures that, in turn, discursively and recursively form the set of rules, practices and routines that over time and space enable, mediate, or constrain an agent's position, choice and behavior (Lee 1996:9-10). The formation of household livelihood strategies can be conceptualized as transformation of the range and structure of available options. Such strategies consider the impact of individual decisions on household outcomes that, in turn, are deconstructed into constituent elements of production, consumption, distribution and reproduction (Davidson 1991:22). Household livelihood decision making may lead to modifying and re-modifying its structure, depending on larger societal opportunities and constraints.
Acquisition and maintenance of resources in the form of social and physical capital can vary by kinship, race, gender, class, and age since these - along with structural forces - improve or restrict a households’ access to labor markets (Mazur 1998; Davidson 1991). Therefore, this study views gender, education, and the number of household members as significant resources that shape a household’s economic success.

Human capital refers to abilities such as education, training, and skills that are presumed to have value in the labor market (Karas 2002:28). Investment in human capital is designed to increase one’s place in the occupational hierarchy, job prestige, higher income, and other benefits. Becker (1993 as cited in Karas 2002:28) implies much of the social inequality in income can be attributed to differences in education and training. Immigrants’ occupational attainment accrues better returns on their ‘migrant specific human capital’ that Massey and Espinosa (1997) directly link to ‘migration duration in the U.S.’ (Massey and Espinosa 1997:948). Viewed in their structural context, ‘country specific skills’ generate positive returns in the country where they were acquired and depreciate if used elsewhere (Chiswick 1984:716).

Chiswick (1978) pioneered the concept and application of human capital to immigrant economic attainment. Immigrants’ higher educational qualifications and better English abilities tend to reduce their reliance on the ethnic economy, increasing access to the broader economy. He argues that length of residence in the U.S. ultimately undermines immigrants’ dependence on low skilled, labor intensive jobs through acquisition of workplace specific skills and English language ability these, in turn, enable them to surpass the average earnings of the comparably educated native born population. Conversely, human
capital theory holds that workers lacking education and specific skills are marginalized (Karas 2002:29).

Social capital functions as an important resource by linking the individual to the larger society (Coleman 1988). Immigrants' utilize their country-specific human capital and social networks when they encounter various opportunity structures and strive for economic success (Portes and Bach 1985; Wilson and Portes 1980; Gotcher 2001:211). The propensity of Mexican immigrants to concentrate in ethnic enclaves may lower the socioeconomic rejection experienced by them (Portes and Bach 1985). However, social embeddedness (living and working with co-ethnic friends and relatives) may result in relative isolation from mainstream society and may yield less satisfactory employment outcomes. Socioeconomic incorporation in areas of low ethnic concentration improves immigrants' economic prospects if market factors ('demand for skill') rather than social factors ('ethnic traits') dominate (Tienda and Wilson 1992). Connections with diverse groups can enhance a populations' success. Solidarity within social groups creates ties that bring people and resources together. However, in unequal societies ties across groups (bridging social capital) are essential for poverty reduction (Narayan 1999).

Bonding social capital is a means for getting by (Briggs 1998); bridging social capital represents agency to get ahead. Putnam (2000) views bonding social capital as social and psychological support for low wage earners in ethnic communities to furnish entry level positions in jobs; bridging social capital, however, provides better access to information that may lead to accessing opportunities in the wider economy. A group might find it beneficial to bond along certain dimensions while simultaneously bridging across others (Putnam 2000:23).
Bourdieu’s perspective on social capital focuses on agency and freedom of incorporation into a stratified society, although the actor is not completely free to make a choice. Social capital represents an investment and a resource for linking immigrants to the larger society. Network volume and extensiveness of connections that an immigrant accumulates resonate with success and integration (Bourdieu 1986:249). Immigrant success is the result of a complex process involving different resources and strategies.

Synthesizing theoretical underpinnings discussed above, three sets of factors impacting socioeconomic success have been identified: migration experience in the U.S., social capital, and socio-demographic characteristics of the household. The model depicted in Figure 1 corresponds to these hypotheses:

- **H1**: Longer migration experience in the U.S. is associated with greater economic success
- **H2**: Greater social capital among immigrants is associated with greater economic success.
- **H3**: Favorable household socio-demographic structure is associated with greater economic success.

**Data and Methods**

This study utilizes data from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP71). The Mexican migration project (MMP) was a collaborative research project based at the University of Pennsylvania and University of Guadalajara (www.pop.upen.edu/mexmig). The data were collected using an ethno-survey approach to gather qualitative and quantitative data. “The ethnosurvey is a multi-method data gathering technique that simultaneously applies ethnographic and survey methods within a single study” (Massey and Zenteno 2000:744). To achieve greater reliability and more internal validity, quantitative and qualitative procedures
are combined. Two to five communities have been surveyed each year in Mexico since 1982. The sample size each year was approximately 200 households (a smaller number of households were interviewed if the community had less than 500 households). A follow up of the migrants from representative communities in Mexico was conducted in the U.S. This study uses the U.S.-based sample which has a selective sample of 10-20 out-migrant households from each community who were residing in the U.S.  

The MMP data are organized in different files according to the level of measurement. The principal unit of analysis used in this study is the household, drawing variables from the migration file as individual level file and household file. In this micro level analysis, Mexican immigrants’ individual and household level characteristics are hypothesized as determinants of immigrant population success in the U.S. The sample consists of 738 households, though some cases were dropped because of missing data. Based on the model presented in Figure 1, the dependent variables are occupation of household head, his/her hourly wage in the U.S., owning a vehicle, and owning a business. Independent variables reflect socio-demographic characteristics of the household (gender of head, household size, education), U.S. migration experience (total months of U.S. experience and whether permanent resident), and social capital (sources of financial help, siblings living in the U.S., living with countrymen, and socializing with Anglos). Only those immigrants who have a valid legal status and continue their stay in the U.S for more than two years can apply for permanent residence. Mexican migrants indicate a greater propensity towards settlement with ‘migrant specific’ social capital (Massey and Espinosa 1997).

Statistical analysis procedures utilized are ordinary least squares regression (OLS) and binary logistic regression (LOGIT), using SPSS 10.0. OLS regression was used to
estimate models with continuous dependent variables. Dichotomous dependent variables were analyzed with binary logistic regression.

Resources prevailing in the community of origin were initially included to assess the hypothesis that better opportunities in the community of origin are correlated with education and occupational status among Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Community level variables were initially selected to represent community specific human capital. However, due to the large number of missing cases, the community level variables were removed from the study. To get a better understanding of socioeconomic dynamics of Mexican immigrants, four case studies were selected randomly based on U.S. migration experience and gender of the household head. The four criteria that were selected are: 1) Male household head with longer U.S. migration experience; 2) Male household head with shorter U.S. migration experience; 3) Female household head with longer U.S. experience; and 4) Female household head with shorter U.S. experience.

Results
The Mexican immigrant households in this study exhibited sociodemographic characteristics that are relatively traditional. The vast majority (93%) were male headed. Less than half of household heads had seven years or more years of education (only eight percent had at least some post-secondary education). While more than half of the households had three to five members, approximately one-fifth had either one-two members or consisted of six or more members.

Their social networks and social capital appear to be relatively well developed, but somewhat restricted to the immigrant community. Two-thirds of household heads had more
than 10 years of cumulative experience in the U.S. and slightly more had permanent residence or citizenship. Three-fourths of household heads had at least one sibling in the U.S., with one-third having three or more. Half lived with members from their country of origin upon arrival in their most recent trip to the U.S. However, only 39% socialized with Anglos beyond the workplace (i.e., at home or in their neighborhoods).

While more than two-thirds indicated relying on someone for financial help during their most recent trip to the U.S., most of these relied on relatives (40%) or friends (21%); few (10%) accessed financial help through a more formal source (employer or bank). Most of those employed were working in low skill and low wage occupations: agricultural or domestic workers (7%), unskilled laborers (30%), service workers (18%), transportation workers (4%), and 7% were unemployed. Nearly one-fourth (24%) were semi-skilled workers in manufacturing, construction, in sales, or administrative support. Some (9%) were supervisors, administrators, or professionals. One-sixth (17%) reported owning a business. Of the two-thirds of household heads for whom wage data were available, the modal category was $5-9 per hour (43%), but 19% received less. Only 5% earned more than $22 per hour.

Table 1 presents the results of OLS regression of occupation of household head. Variables were entered in blocks, beginning with ‘sociodemographic characteristics’ (Model 1), followed by ‘migration experience’ (Model 2), then ‘social capital’ (Model 3). As expected, household heads with higher occupational level were male headed and had higher levels of education. However, only these sociodemographic characteristics were significant in any of the models (see Table 1). The overall $R^2$ values were quite modest (10%). Explanation of variation in wages increased with each model in Table 2; the $R^2$ value in
model 3 is 23%. In addition to higher wages being observed in households that are male headed and have more education, household heads’ more extensive U.S. experience was also a significant factor. However, socialization with Anglos and permanent residence had a negative impact on wages.

Table 3 presents the results of logistic regression for owning a vehicle. Vehicle ownership is significantly associated with having a male headed household, a medium or large size household, more than 6 years of education, a longer period of time spent in the U.S., more siblings in the U.S., and permanent residence. $R^2$ values increased in each model, resulting in values for model 3 being 14% (Cox & Snell) and 24% (Negelkerke).

Table 4 presents the results of logistic regression for owning a business. The variables that are significant and positively associated with owning a business are number of household members, permanent residence, socializing with Anglos outside work, and not needing financial help from friends. $R^2$ values increased in each model, yet resulted in modest values for model 3 as 6% (Cox & Snell) and 11% (Negelkerke).

**Case Studies of Selected Households**

Four cases were analyzed for in-depth analysis. The cases were randomly selected based on the criteria mentioned below.

**Case #1: Male Household Head with Long U.S. Experience**

Felipe is a 55 year old male who came to the U.S. as an illegal immigrant in 1971 at the age of 27. His community of origin in Mexico (population 5285) is part of a municipality (population 16,975) that has a mixed economy, with an average of 0.56 hectares of cultivated
land per person but 84 manufacturing establishments. Felipe crossed the border only once. Upon arrival, he lived with relatives who helped him find a job. Due to his low educational level (four years of schooling), he was employed as an unskilled industrial worker (earning $5 an hour). After 19 months in that job, his employer sponsored him to obtain his green card that was received two years later. He is now a legal migrant with permission to live and work permanently in the U.S. Felipe works 40 hours a week, earning $15 per hour. Although he initially obtained financial help from his relatives, he now owns a car. His spouse, Rosario, is 59 years old; she came to the U.S. in 1961 at the age of 21. She has 7 years of education, but is not employed and stays at home. They have no children living with them. Felipe does not have any sibling currently residing in U.S. He is a member of a social or religious organization in U.S., but does not socialize with native whites beyond the workplace.

Case #2 Male Household Head with Short U.S. Experience

Ricardo is a 24 year old male who came to U.S. as an illegal immigrant in 1988 at the age of 21. His community of origin in Mexico (population 7025) is part of a municipality (population 20725) that has predominantly agrarian based economy, with an average of 0.19 hectares of cultivated land per person and only 7 manufacturing establishments. After staying in the U.S. for one year, he went back to Mexico and made his second trip in 1989. Ricardo had lived 4 years in the U.S. at the time of the interview. With limited education (six years), he was employed as an unskilled industrial worker in his first trip. During his second trip, he was helped by his relatives to obtain a job, and worked as a personal service worker in hotels and bars, earning $4.46 per hour. In 1989, he was sponsored through the Special Agricultural Worker program to obtain a green card, but continued as a personal service worker. He is
now a legal migrant, working 80 hours a week earning $6.25 per hour. Ricardo owns a car. His spouse, Gabriella, is 26 years old; she came to the U.S. with Ricardo. She has 9 years of education, but is not employed and stays at home. They have one daughter living with them. Ricardo has one sibling in the U.S. He is not a member of any social organization and does not socialize with native whites outside his workplace.

Case #3 Female Household Head with Long U.S. Experience

Margit is a 56 year old female who came to the U.S. as a tourist with a border crossing card in 1968 at the age of 31. Her community of origin in Mexico (population 187623) constitutes almost the entire municipality (population 217068), with only 0.08 hectares of cultivated land per person and but also only 15 factories. After staying in the U.S. for one year, she went back to Mexico. Margit made a total of four trips to the U.S., with her most recent trip in 1991. In 1973, Margit obtained her permanent residence. Margit has lived in the U.S. for 26 years. She has no formal education. From the beginning, she worked as an agricultural laborer. Her relatives assisted in her latest trip with getting that job; otherwise, she did not need any financial help. Initially during her latest trip in 1991, Margit received $5.75, and she currently works 50 hours per week earning $6 per hour. During her last trip to the U.S., she was living with a relative. She has four siblings in the U.S. Margit did not indicate belonging to any social organization, but does socialize with native whites in various social settings, including at home. Margit is a widow and mother of two sons who reside in the same household with other four members. One of her sons is employed, while the other one is unemployed.
Case #4 Female Household Head with Short U.S. Experience

Rosita is a 44 year old female who came to U.S. as an illegal immigrant in 1979 at the age of 15. She comes from a community in Mexico (population 83412) that is largely urban, with the local municipality (population 101067) having only an average of 0.06 hectares of cultivated land per person and 390 factories. After staying in the U.S. for nine months, she went back to Mexico and returned to the U.S. in 1982; she repeated this cycle, making her third U.S. trip in 1985 and her fourth trip in 1994. Overall, Rosita has lived in the U.S. for 62 months. With only limited education (six years), she was a domestic worker during her first trip. During her second trip, she worked as an unskilled industrial laborer. She is currently employed in a retail establishment where she initially received $4.50 per hour, and earned $4.75 per hour for 40 hours per week at the time of the survey in 1996. Rosita had not yet received her legalization. During her last trip, she stayed with relatives. She has been helped by relatives whenever she needed financial help. She now owns a car and a restaurant. She has separated from her husband. Rosita has two sons and one daughter who live with her and are employed. All five members in Rosita’s household are employed. She has one sibling in the U.S. She does not socialize with native whites outside her workplace, nor is she involved with any social or religious organization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The central focus in this paper has been Mexican immigrants’ economic success as a prism for understanding their broader socioeconomic integration. Mexican immigrants have often been perceived as entering illegally and temporarily, and surviving at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. However, with time, some immigrants improve their ability to
successfully integrate into the U.S. Resources prevailing within ethnic communities are major factors that might explain the variation in socioeconomic attainment among different immigrant groups in the U.S. Cuban ethnic enclaves have been portrayed as having tremendous potential for upward mobility (Wilson and Portes 1980). However, while relatively recent Cuban immigrants have had approximately the same likelihood of obtaining a job as native born non-Hispanic whites, these Cuban immigrants are much less likely to hold good jobs or achieve economic mobility (Waldinger 2001:104). Latinos – especially Mexicans and Central Americans – are disproportionately characterized by poverty due to limited education, concentration in low paying jobs and foreign born status (Cantu 1997:29).

In this study, Mexican immigrants exhibit only modest evidence to date of upward mobility in terms of education and occupation attainment. The question posed by Waldinger (2001:82) – whether immigrants are able to get ahead after they have access to jobs based on strong social capital – finds at least modest support in this study. The hypothesis that longer U.S. experience entails better economic success finds moderate support in this study. Longer experience in U.S. found to have a significant positive association with wage and vehicle ownership. But contrary to expectation, holding a green card is negatively associated with wage. However, holding a green card is associated with owning a vehicle and owning a business. It appears that immigrants’ human capital is associated with longer U.S. experience, contributes little to occupational success but with time workplace related experience gives a rise in their income level. A study of variation in wages between legal and illegal immigrants showed that legal migrants earned a dollar per hour more than illegal immigrants; with time, the wage rates increased for both groups (Morales 1983).
To counteract labor market discrimination, new arrivals often seek employers of the same ethnic or national origin. However, with time, many immigrants consider themselves as permanent employees at their work place and gradually acquire English proficiency, country specific skills and better acquaintance with the working environment of host society (Chavez 1988). Application of the human capital model showed that wages of undocumented immigrants were determined by education, labor market experience, and time in the United States (Chiswick 1984; Massey 1987: 258). Irrespective of status (legal or illegal) – Mexican immigrants’ increased length of U.S. experience has a strong positive impact on rising wages. It is also evident that all four case studies experienced a rise in their income level over time. Legal status and permanent residence may not have any effect on wages in low skilled occupations; acquired human capital and migration experience are associated with a moderate rise in overall economic success. Mexican migrants still largely occupy the lower level in occupational hierarchy, owing in part to the dominance by native-born employers (Portes and Rambaut 1996).

Immigrants’ longer duration in U.S. and obtaining a green card enhances the adjustment of immigrants in host society; it also boosts their propensity for self-employment. Nee and Sanders (2001:402) found that immigrants whose education has been entirely foreign to experience a higher rate of transition into self employment. In a socio-legal conundrum, many Mexican immigrants see themselves as temporary settlers. Getting a green card enforces an attitudinal change towards settlement in the U.S. Therefore, accumulation of post-immigration experience better enables immigrants to acquire work in the host society, develop a network of social contacts, and gain business know-how to pursue self-employment (Nee and Sanders 2001:326).
The hypothesis that favorable household socio-demographic structure is associated with greater economic success received moderate support as well. Male headed immigrant households predominate and generally obtain higher wages. Female immigrants tend to move to join family members in the U.S; however, for the majority, economic opportunities remain the priority (Reyes 2001). Having more household members is also positively associated with having a business. As evident in Table 4, business ownership among Mexican immigrants is positively associated with having more household members. As noted by Sanders and Nee (1996: 235) in their field study, the family is often the main social organization supporting the establishment and operation of a small business. Self-employment is seen as acquiring a step towards start-up capital (Sander and Nee 1996:236). When sufficient capital is not raised within the nuclear family, immigrants often approach members of their extended family for assistance before seeking outside partners. Being married and living with one's spouse increases the odds of self employment among all ethnic groups (Sanders and Nee 1996:402).

Social networks were posited as an important determinant of socioeconomic integration. However, the hypothesis that social capital is associated with greater economic success received moderate support in this study. An interesting finding was the negative association between informal socializing with Anglos and immigrants’ wages. A separate analysis revealed that immigrants who socialized with Anglos at work had somewhat higher occupational levels. It may be that immigrants who socialize with Anglos outside their work are confined to low status jobs and disproportionately live in low income integrated neighborhoods.
Most Mexican immigrants in this study had low levels of education and were clustered in low skilled jobs. Portes (1997) notes that Mexican migrants have an unusual occupational distribution, as they tend to cluster in the operative and unskilled segments of the U.S. labor market. Burke and Goudy, in relation to the meatpacking plants (where Mexicans are situated in low scale manual labor) in Midwestern communities, note that longer lasting relationships could develop in the workplace between coworkers. The overall scenario is that with the large turnover within industries like meatpacking bringing new immigrant workers and families to the U.S. these communities remain fragmented between Latino and Anglo cultures (Burke and Goudy 1999:10).

The positive statistical association between socializing with Anglos outside work and having a business supported the hypothesis and the role of bridging capital. Various studies have found that while the use of ethnic resources facilitated business initiation, success in business was hindered by continued reliance on ethnic resources. Invariably, human capital or class resources like education contributed to operating a successful business (Hurh 1985; Yoon 1991 as cited in Sanders and Nee 1996:235).

The results were consistent with education being associated with having a business. For immigrants whose human capital is devalued in the new society, self employment (small-scale restaurants, shops, agricultural firms or informal economic activities) opens an avenue for economic activity, though it may simultaneously reinforce occupational segregation. Self employment is more evident among women who informally participate in ethnic associations (Nee and Sanders 2001). While men spend more hours at work, women undertake necessary social roles and obtain resources by participating in ethnic associations that are often used in
family businesses. Case study #4, a female with short U.S. migration experience, showed strong social bonding among family members is associated with having a business.

Although different socio-demographic factors, U.S. migration experience, and social capital do impact immigrants' integration, the overall trend reveals limited success in socio-economic integration of Mexican immigrants in mainstream society. Based on the analysis here, human capital received more support than structuration or social capital.

**Policy Implications**

Integration is no longer seen as a one-way process of immigrant adaptation to the dominant culture, but as mutually reinforcing changes in both the immigrant and receiving communities. Mexican immigrant communities in the U.S. exist in relative isolation and segregation. The Mexican immigrant population that has low levels of education, poor English language abilities, and low occupational status is increasing. Simultaneously, federal government support for poor people – especially poor migrants – is decreasing. Occupational competition may rise in response to coming waves of immigrants. Therefore, improved understanding of immigrants and the communities in which they settle might facilitate integration. However, the disjuncture between immigration flows and policies raises questions about how well immigrants and succeeding generations will be integrated into mainstream society and economy in the U.S.

Advanced capitalist societies are trying to cope with myriad social and economic forces, including immense numbers of recent immigrants. During the past two decades, the number of immigrant workers has risen sharply. One in nine U.S. residents and one in four low wage workers is an immigrant (Fix and Capps 2002). Migration can create opportunities
for both the host and the newcomers at the destination point, but – if poorly managed – can generate social and economic problems.

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the economic success of Mexican migrants in the U.S. During the government’s second Bracero program (1942-1964) approximately 2.4 million Mexicans migrated to the U.S. on temporary work permits. However, poor implementation of the program led to immense abuse of laborers, practices that are inconsistent with democratic principles (Meissner 2004). Despite their strong attachment to the labor force, Mexican migrants tend to have low levels of education, marginal occupations, and low incomes.

Limited skills and high competition rates for jobs impel migrants to enter into jobs within ethnic enclaves. Limited ability to integrate into the mainstream economy keeps migrant groups segregated. Ignorance of legal rights keeps migrants working in marginalized conditions. According to the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, promoting work should reduce welfare dependency of the legal immigrants. It imposed some eligibility restrictions for federal benefits such as welfare, food stamps and Medicaid on legal immigrants. Although permanent residents have the same benefits as citizens in participating and using welfare benefits, the participation rate has been lower among the former (Passel 2004). Welfare benefits should include training to improve the skills and earnings in collaboration with the state. Institutions at the local level should help immigrants to improve their language skills to be better integrated in the mainstream society. There is also need to implement policies and programs that eliminate discrimination and segregation.

Programs like Work Force Development and training policies should be more flexible to incorporate more foreign born workers. There should be tri-level cooperation between
local government, the private sectors and civil society to implement various training programs, English language teaching programs, and other work related skills of the host society to enhance economic success that would eventually incorporate immigrants socially.
Figure 1. Determinant of Socioeconomic Success Among Mexican Immigrants in the United States

- U.S. Migration Experience
  - Months in U.S.
  - Permanent Residence

- Social Capital
  - Financial Help
  - Siblings in U.S.
  - Live with Countrymen
  - Socialize with Anglos

- Economic Success in U.S.
  - Occupation
  - Wages
  - Vehicle Ownership
  - Own Business

- Socio-Demographic Characteristics
  - Gender of Household Head
  - Household Size
  - Education of Household Head
Table 1. OLS Regression of Occupation of Household Head, Mexican Immigrants in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model (2)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model (3)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Head (Female)</td>
<td>-1.054***</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>-1.063***</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>-1.064***</td>
<td>0.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members in Household</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of Head</td>
<td>0.476***</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.484***</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.472***</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Experience of Head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.152</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>-0.178</td>
<td>0.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Source Financial Help</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head's Siblings in U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Countrymen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.144</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing with Anglos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.241</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model F-test</td>
<td>25.57*</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.61</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial F-test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>712</td>
<td></td>
<td>712</td>
<td></td>
<td>712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05$
Table 2. OLS Regression of Hourly Wage of Household Head, Mexican Immigrants in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th></th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th></th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Head (Female)</td>
<td>-0.705**</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>-0.705**</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>-0.704**</td>
<td>0.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members in Household</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of Head</td>
<td>0.197***</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.261***</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.233***</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Experience of Head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.438***</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.391***</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td>-0.302*</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>-0.236*</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head’s Siblings in U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Countrymen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relations with Anglos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.338***</td>
<td>0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model F-test</td>
<td>8.75*</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial F-test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32.08*</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.05*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>439</td>
<td></td>
<td>439</td>
<td></td>
<td>439</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05
Table 3. Logistic Regression of Vehicle Ownership, Mexican Immigrants in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads’ Sex (Male)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.314**</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.269***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Members (1-2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>3.419***</td>
<td>0.242</td>
<td>3.147***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>3.208***</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>2.853**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head’s Education (0-6 y)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 y</td>
<td>1.756*</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>2.342**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 y</td>
<td>2.729**</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>3.194**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+ y</td>
<td>2.314</td>
<td>0.443</td>
<td>3.621**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head’s U.S. Experience (1-10 y)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 y</td>
<td>1.903*</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>1.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ y</td>
<td>2.417**</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>2.139*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Residence (Not)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.402***</td>
<td>0.245</td>
<td>2.112**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing with Anglos (None/Work Only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH Head’s Siblings in U.S. (0)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.275</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.964*</td>
<td>0.343</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>1.607</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>4.940**</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Financial Help (Relative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank/Employer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 Log likelihood</td>
<td>587.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>549.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2 \ (df)$</td>
<td>53.15 (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>90.89 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta \chi^2$</td>
<td>37 (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox &amp; Snell $R^2$</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke $R^2$</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>715</td>
<td></td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Parenthesis indicates reference category.
Table 4. Logistic Regression of Business Ownership, Mexican Immigrants in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Variables</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads’ Sex (Male)</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>0.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Members (1-2)</td>
<td>1.951*</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>1.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>2.770**</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>2.532*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head’s Education (0-6 y)</td>
<td>1.244</td>
<td>0.256</td>
<td>1.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 y</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>0.307</td>
<td>0.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+ y</td>
<td>1.498</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>1.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head’s U.S. Experience (1-10 y)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 y</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td>1.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ y</td>
<td>1.446</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>1.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Residence (Not)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.272**</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>3.223***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relations with Anglos (None/Work Only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Work</td>
<td>1.570*</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Countrymen (No)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.221</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH Head’s Siblings in U.S. (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.079</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>1.228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>0.410</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source of Financial Help (Relative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>0.893*</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank/Employer</td>
<td>1.481</td>
<td>0.347</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never Needed</td>
<td>1.189</td>
<td>0.256</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 Log likelihood</td>
<td>632.106</td>
<td>605.802</td>
<td>596.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (df)</td>
<td>11.660 (6)</td>
<td>37.964 (9)**</td>
<td>46.929 (18)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta \chi^2$ (df)</td>
<td>26.304 (3)</td>
<td>8.965 (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox &amp; Snell $R^2$</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke $R^2$</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Parenthesis indicates reference category.
CHAPTER 3: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Advanced capitalist societies are trying to cope with myriad social and economic forces, including immense numbers of recent immigrants. During the past two decades, the number of immigrant workers has risen sharply. One in nine U.S. residents and one in four low wage workers is an immigrant (Fix and Capps 2002). Migration can create opportunities for both the host and the newcomers at the destination point, but – if poorly managed – can generate social and economic problems.

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the socioeconomic success of Mexican migrants in the U.S. During the government's second Bracero program (1942-1964) approximately 2.4 million Mexicans migrated to the U.S. on temporary work permits. However, poor implementation of the program led to immense abuse of laborers, practices that are inconsistent with democratic principles (Meissner 2004). Despite their strong attachment to the labor force, Mexican migrants tend to have low levels of education, marginal occupations, and low incomes. In this study, most Mexican immigrant household heads were unskilled and working in low wage jobs despite being legal residents. The modal income among Mexican immigrants in this study was $5-9. However, the results suggest that with increased U.S. experience and human skill level, higher wages can be expected for some. Female headed households have lower educational level wages and chances of owning durable assets or a business. Traditionally, most females who come to the U.S. do so to join their family, rather than to join the work force; this has been changing in the past decade. Work force development and training policies should be more flexible to incorporate more female foreign born workers.
Limited skills and high competition rates for jobs impel migrants to enter into jobs within ethnic enclaves. Limited ability to integrate into the mainstream economy keeps migrant groups segregated. Ignorance of legal rights keeps migrants working in marginalized conditions. According to the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, promoting work should reduce welfare dependency of the legal immigrants. It imposed some eligibility restrictions for federal benefits such as welfare, food stamps and Medicaid on legal immigrants. Although permanent residents have the same benefits as citizens in participating and using welfare benefits, the participation rate has been lower among the former (Passel 2004). Welfare benefits should include training to improve the skills and earnings in collaboration with the state. Institutions at the local level should help immigrants to improve their language skills to be better integrated in the mainstream society. There is also need to implement policies and programs that eliminate discrimination and segregation. Recent government plans propose legalizing undocumented Mexican workers with temporary work permits and restricting entry to permanent resident status, likely giving rise to more uncertainty in migrants’ future prospects and plans. This could have a major effect on future generations of migrants.

Migration from Mexico has continued unabated despite the more restrictive security measures in place since 2001 because of continuous demand by the U.S. labor market and the lack of opportunities in Mexico. This has dramatically increased levels of undocumented immigrants. Cooperation between the private and public sectors therefore becomes an increasingly important policy issue in order to increase migrant laborers’ success. The immigration policy discourse will continue until a level of consensus is achieved in reducing the challenges that immigrants face at the local, state and federal levels.
Implications for Further Social Science Research

The relatively limited socioeconomic integration of immigrants raises an important concern for the future viability of second generations. At least one in four children living in a low-income family – having income below the poverty level – is the child of an immigrant. Yet two in three low-income immigrant families with children are two-parent families, compared to only 40 percent of native low-income families with children (Shukla 2001).

Half of immigrant families with children had incomes less than twice the poverty level in 2000, compared to only one-third of native families with children. How does low income status among first generation migrants, fewer programs to incorporate migrants into mainstream society, and policies specifying immigrant laborers as temporary workers affect future generations of migrants? How do cooperation and mutuality from mainstream community (or their absence) and hostile attitudes of the Anglo dominated society interact with the inequality gap? How effective can socioeconomic integration be in light of recent policies concerning temporary labor legalization? These questions open avenues for further research on the interdependence of socio-demographic change and socioeconomic integration. An important factor in integration is the impact of national policy at the local level. Incorporating spatial concentration and region additional factors will add important dimensions to the study of immigrant integration in future social science research and consideration of policy implications.
Notes

1 In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the national origins quota system, eliminating national origin, race, or ancestry as a basis for immigration to the United States. It established allocation of immigrant visas on a first come, first served basis, subject to a seven-category preference system for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens (for the reunification of families) and for persons with special occupational skills, abilities, or training (needed in the U.S.) (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Information, 2003). http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm (retrieved April 25, 2004)

2 The subcontracting of labor intensive tasks to small, nonunion immigrant dominated firms in such industries as garment, electronics, and construction is associated with low-skill, low wage, and low status jobs in major urban areas (Cornelius 1991, 1992). Another form of economic restructuring is a rise in the labor intensive informal service sector that lacks fair labor standards and practices, especially formal contracts and job related benefits (Sassen-Koob 1982 as cited in Chavez 1992a:276).

3 Transitional labor force, according to Morales (1983), “performs a valuable function until their employers mechanize, move overseas, or take other measures to make themselves more competitive.” Concerning undocumented immigrants, laborers in the transitional labor force are extremely beneficial to the employers due to their legal constraints and their positions can be manipulated in either case of economic recession or accession.

4 Social capital is embodied in relationships encompassing both types—within the immediate family members and kin and external ethnic and non-ethnic ties. Social capital is accumulated through social exchanges overtime, and is reflected in the sentiments of obligation and solidarity. It is an asset that yields profit whether in business, education or securing non-economic rewards like social approval and status (Coleman 1990; Portes 1995; Sanders and Nee 1996).

5 Networks are conceptualized as a set of interpersonal ties that link migrants and non-migrants in areas of origin and destination through bonds of friendship, kin, and shared origin (Massey 1990).

6 Education, knowledge of English and work experience are important factors that affect newly arrived immigrants’ employment prospects, but they are not sufficient to explain occupational attainment and earnings. Chiswick noted that Mexicans failed to get a fair return of their human capital, a phenomenon known as the ‘Mexican ethnic group effect’ (Portes 1995:24).

7 Refer to MMP database http://www.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig/databases/studydesign.htm
Depending upon the visa type, the required minimum stay may vary; for a temporary employment visa, a minimum 6 month stay is required. See “Work Visa” at www.bcis.com

Migrant specific social capital, distinguished from general social capital, is said to exist when a family member (spouse, siblings) making a trip to U.S. either legally or illegally, increases the probability of further migration. See Massey and Espinosa (1997).
## APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Head Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Members in Household</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-2)</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3-5)</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Head Educational Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0-6) Yrs</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7-9) Yrs</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10-12) Yrs</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13-19) Yrs</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent Resident (Green Card)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not received</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Financial Help</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank or Employer</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Need</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Heads’ Total Sibling Currently in U.S</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3-4)</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5-12)</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living with Country Men in U.S.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socializing with Anglos in U.S.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None/At work 61.3
Outside Work/ Neighborhood/At Home 38.7

**Occupation**

- Unemployed 8.4
- Agriculture and Domestic Workers 7.1
- Unskilled Worker 30.1
- Service Workers 17.7
- Heavy Equipment and Transportation Worker 4.2
- Skilled Workers in Manufacturing/Sales or Administrative Worker 23.5
- Professional/Supervisor/Administrators 9.0

**Household Heads’ Current Wage per Hour**

- (0-5.00) 18.5
- (5.05-9.00) 43.0
- (9.10-13.00) 20.7
- (13.01-22.00) 13.0
- (22.00-50.00) 4.8

**Owns Vehicle**

- No Vehicle 16.5
- Car and Pickup Truck 83.5

**Holds Business**

- No Business Holdings 83.2
- Yes 16.8
REFERENCES


