

**The Southwest-Midwest
Mexican American Migration
Flows, 1985-1990**

by
Rogelio Saenz and Cynthia M. Cready
Texas A&M University

Research Report No. 20
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ABSTRACT

Despite their continued concentration in the Southwest, Mexican Americans have migrated to the Midwest throughout the 20th Century. This paper provides a historical overview describing the movement of Mexican Americans between the Southwest and Midwest over the century. The major focus of the analysis, however, is on the contemporary migration of Mexican Americans between these two regions. It is predicted that in light of the well-established historical migration routes between the Southwest and Midwest, the more favorable economic conditions of the Midwest in the 1980's relative to the earlier decade, and the expanding employment opportunities for Mexican Americans and other Latinos in certain industrial sectors in the Midwest, the net flow of Mexican American migrants occurred from the Southwest to the Midwest in the 1985-1990 period. The analysis seeks to assess this prediction and to determine the extent to which this pattern is observed across states in the region. Data from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) are used to conduct the analysis. The results demonstrate a net flow of Mexican Americans in the expected direction (i.e., from the Southwest to the Midwest), with the Midwest experiencing a net gain of nearly 7,400 migrants who moved between the two regions in the 1985-1990 period. While all states except Illinois and South Dakota experienced net gains of Mexican American migrants, Kansas, Minnesota, and Michigan were the only ones whose net gains were larger than 1,000. A variety of other more in-depth analyses are also reported in the paper.

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The Southwest-Midwest Mexican American Migration Flows, 1985-1990

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Despite its lengthy presence in the United States, the Mexican American population continues to be located predominantly in the Southwest. The 1990 decennial census revealed that approximately 83% of persons of Mexican origin lived in one of five Southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas), a proportion that was almost identical to that of the earlier decade. Not surprisingly, Mexican Americans are often viewed as a “regional minority.” This perception masks the significant Mexican American population that makes its home in other parts of the country and the long and established migration patterns connecting the Southwest with other regions of the nation. In the last several decades, demographers, sociologists, and historians have expanded the portrait of Mexican Americans to include those living outside of the Southwest (Aponte and Siles 1994; Arreola 1985; Boswell 1979; Cardenas 1976; Cook 1986; Estrada 1976; Rivera and Mejia 1978; Saenz 1991, 1993, 1996; Saenz and Anderson 1994; Saenz and Davila 1992; Saenz and Greenlees 1997; Wells 1976, 1981).

The earliest flows of Mexican Americans exiting the Southwest tended to head for the Midwest and Northwest regions. Saenz (1991) has referred to these regions as “periphery” regions of the Southwest in his attempt to illustrate the historical development of Mexican American communities in these areas of the country and the ongoing, continual migration flows between these areas and the Southwest. The largest Mexican American population living outside of the Southwest is located in the Midwest. In 1990, nearly 1.2 million Mexican Americans — close to 9% of the nation’s Mexican American population — resided in the Midwest.

*However, more than half of all Midwestern Mexican Americans lived in Illinois. In fact, this state has the third largest Mexican American population with about 624,000 in 1990, trailing California (6.1 million) and Texas (3.9 million). Furthermore, 3 in 10 Midwestern Mexican Americans are located in Chicago, which has the fourth largest population of Mexican Americans with nearly 353,000 in 1990, behind Los Angeles (937,000), San Antonio (478,000), and Houston (359,000).

Although Mexican Americans continue to be one of the most regionally concentrated ethnic groups in the country, a historical perspective reveals the increasing distribution of Mexican Americans. For example, while 94.8% of all Mexicans enumerated in the 1910 census were living in the Southwest at that time, relatively fewer (83.3%) made their home in this region in 1990. The Midwest represents the region outside of the Southwest that had the most Mexican Americans in both 1910 (3.3%) and 1990 (8.5%). This pattern is testimony to the Midwest’s historical and contemporary popularity in attracting Mexican Americans.

This paper seeks to obtain a descriptive account of the migration flows of Mexican Americans between the Southwest and Midwest regions. In addition, the analysis will also determine the extent to which these flows differ across native- and foreign-born groups. Data from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) are used to conduct the investigation. Before describing these data and the results from the analysis, we develop a historical context to better understand the contemporary flows of Mexican Americans between the two regions.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MEXICAN AMERICAN SOUTHWEST- MIDWEST MIGRATION

The roots of Mexican American migration to the Midwest extend back to the early part of the 20th Century. Mexican Americans, including Mexican nationals, were attracted to this region due to the demand for cheap labor in the agricultural and railroad industries (McWilliams 1948). Early in the 1900’s, employment opportunities blossomed in various industrial sectors including agriculture, railroad, and manufacturing in general (Acuña 1988; Saenz 1991; Valdes 1991). For instance, the fruit and vegetable industry bloomed with the technological advancements that increased production (Valdes 1991). In addition, railroad construction involved in connecting the Midwest to the West through railway placed a heavy demand on cheap labor (Acuña 1988; McWilliams 1948).

Although data are not readily available to determine the size of the population, it is likely that few Mexican Americans made their home in the Midwest prior to the turn of the century. However, several events resulted in Midwestern employers looking to alternative sources of labor in the early part of the century. First, World War I produced labor shortages as men went to war and rural areas lost workers to the war industry located in urban settings (Valdes 1991). Second, the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 designed to limit immigration to the United States in the early 1920's resulted in limits on the number of Southern and Eastern Europeans — the primary source of “cheap labor” for Midwestern capitalists — that were allowed to enter the country (Saenz 1996; Valdes 1991). Third, the agricultural sector experienced a reduction in its traditional labor force as European farm laborers began acquiring farm land (Valdes 1991). Fourth, the organizing efforts of labor unions, such as the International Workers of the World (IWW), made significant demands to improve wages and working conditions (1991). In their efforts to deal with these labor shortages, aggravated by increasing demands from labor unions, Midwestern employers turned to alternative sources of cheap labor. Mexican Americans, like African-Americans, represented an ideal labor supply.

These “pull” factors attracting Mexican Americans to the Midwest occurred in tandem with “push” factors driving Mexican Americans out of the Southwest and Mexicans out of Mexico. First, the restructuring of the Southwest economy in the 19th and early 20th Century resulted in Mexican Americans becoming a landless proletariat workforce (Barrera 1979; Montejano 1987). These changes signified that Mexican Americans were no longer bound to their place of residence. Second, Mexican Americans continued to occupy the bottom rungs in the stratification system of the Southwest. Rodolfo Alvarez (1973) has argued that up to the time of World War II Mexican Americans represented a “caste” in the region. Jim Crow-like practices in the region, especially in Texas, gave Mexican Americans “second-class status” in the different social institutions. Third, the massive immigration of Mexicans fleeing the Mexican Revolution during the 1910's created a surplus of cheap labor in the Southwest, especially in Texas which contained the majority of persons of Mexican origin living in this country in the early parts of the century (61.6% in 1910; 50.8% in 1920; 48.1% in 1930).

These “push” and “pull” factors created a context which stimulated the movement of Mexican Americans, and Mexican nationals for that matter, to the Midwest. However, this movement was “helped along” by Midwestern employers who created sophisticated mechanisms for moving workers of Mexican origin to the Midwest.

In the early parts of the 20th Century, Midwestern capitalists sent recruiters to lure Mexican Americans along the Texas-Mexican border as well as Mexicans living south of the border. Recruiters hailed the better working conditions, better pay, and bountiful work opportunities available in the Midwest (Valdes 1991). Mexican Americans recruited to work in the region were transported *en masse* through railway as well as trucks (McWilliams 1948). Recruiters became known as *enganchistas* (“hookers”) in the Mexican American community. *Corridos* (folk ballads), such as *Los Reenganchados a Kansas* (The Kansas Contractees), recounting the movement of Mexican Americans and Mexicans to the Midwest, offer us a glimpse of this recruitment practice (Herrera-Sobek 1993:41-43, English translation).

*One day the third of September,
Oh, what an unusual day!
We left Laredo
Signed up for Kansas.*

*When we left Laredo
I committed myself to the strong saint
Because I was travelling illegally
On that side of the bridge.*

*One of my companions
Shouted very excitedly
“Now we are going under contract
To work for cash.”*

*Run, run, little machine
Along that Katy line,
Carry this party of laborers
To the state of Kansas City.*

*We left San Antonio
In the direction of Laguna,
I asked the contractor
If we were going through Oklahoma.*

*The contractor replied:
“Quiet, friend, don’t sigh,
We shall pass through Oklahoma
Right straight to Kansas City.”*

*That train to Kansas City
Is a flying train,
It travels one hundred miles per hour
And they don’t give it all the steam.*

*I say to my friends:
“Let him who doesn’t want to believe it
Get aboard the Santa Fe
Just to see where he will be by morning.”*

*On arriving at Kansas City
We wanted to return
Because they gave us a raw deal
With the aligning bars.*

*The American said
With a great deal of bravery
“Round up the Mexicans
So as to put them in the union.”*

*We replied to them:
“We will not join this thing called union,
This is not our flag
Because we are Mexicans.*

*“If you continue to bother us
We will go back
To the state of Texas
Where there is work.”*

*We got in a flier (gang).
We worked night and day,
All they gave us to eat
Was plain watermelon.*

*Fly, fly, little dove,
Light on that apple tree.*

*These verses are composed
For all the Mexicans.*

*Now with this (verse) I bid farewell
With the flower of the pomegranate,
Here one stops singing
The verses about the contractees.*

These recruitment efforts were quite effective in luring Mexican Americans out of the Southwest and Mexicans out of Mexico. Acuña (1988) notes that between March and August in 1923, recruitment agencies in Texas and Mexico recruited 34,585 persons of Mexican origin to work in non-agricultural pursuits in the Midwest and Pennsylvania. The most popular destination for persons of Mexican origin was Chicago. Indeed, Acuña suggests that Chicago became the “Midwest Mexican capital.” The railroads served as the springboard for Mexican American employment in Chicago. Acuña points out that Mexicans accounted for two-fifths of the railroad maintenance workers in this city in the 1920’s. Industrial opportunities also attracted Mexican Americans to other parts of the region, with other popular destinations including Detroit, Gary (Indiana), Kansas City, Loraine (Ohio), Saginaw (Michigan), St. Louis, St. Paul, and Toledo (Ohio) (Acuña 1988; McWilliams 1948; Valdes 1991).

Agricultural pursuits also attracted Mexican Americans to the Midwest. Dennis Nodin Valdes (1991) points out that, while much attention has focused on the role of railroads and stockyards in attracting Mexican Americans to the region, the sugar beet industry was the largest employer of Mexican Americans in the Midwest. The sugar beet industry used similar recruitment techniques as the railroad industry to attract Mexicans to the Midwest. Michigan was one of the most popular destinations for sugar-beet workers. The state was known as “Michoacan del norte” (“Michoacan” of the north), a phrase emphasizing the similar pronunciation of “Michigan” and the Mexican state of “Michoacan.” Valdes (1991:3) lists the five predominant sugar-beet zones in the Midwest as: **1)** the area extending beyond the Saginaw Valley and eastern and central Michigan; **2)** the area in southern Michigan extending into neighboring northwestern Ohio and northeastern Indiana; **3)** the area covering the Southwestern part of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and eastern Wisconsin; **4)** the area including the Minnesota River in southeastern Minnesota stretching into northern Iowa; and **5)** the area in the Red River Valley in northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. Mexican Americans came to dominate the sugar beet industry by the 1920’s, with a 1927 survey indicating that persons of Mexican origin accounted for an estimated 75% to 90% of *betabeleros* (sugar beet pickers) in the sugar-beet areas of the Midwest (Valdes 1991:11).

Despite the significant flows of Mexican Americans to the Southwest, various structural factors prevented the permanent settlement of the population in the region in the early decades of the 20th Century. First, economic problems associated with the depression of the early 1920's limited employment opportunities for Mexican Americans, many of whom were encouraged to return to the Southwest or Mexico (Valdes 1991). However, the depression was short-lived and resulted in the rejuvenation of the recruitment of Mexican Americans to the Midwest. Second, the Great Depression had an even stronger impact on dwindling the flow of Mexican Americans to the Midwest. At this time, the Repatriation Program was created to strongly encourage Mexicans to return to their areas of origin (Valdes 1991). Throughout the country, social agencies used coercive, if not forceful, tactics to get persons of Mexican origin out of local communities (Bustamante 1981; Gomez-Quinones 1981; Mirande 1985). It has been suggested that between 500,000 to 600,000 individuals of Mexican origin, including U.S.-born children, were deported from 1929 to 1939 (Acuña 1988:202; McKay 1982:556). Acuña (1988:204) points out that repatriation "was severe in the Midwest," citing a passage from Humphreys (1941:505):

Even the families of naturalized citizens were urged to repatriate, and the rights of American-born children to citizenship in their native lands were explicitly denied or not taken into account. The case workers themselves brought pressure to bear in the form of threats of deportation, stoppage of relief (wholly or in part, e.g., in matters of rent, or by means of trampling on customary procedures).

To add to the economic forces countering the settlement of Mexican Americans in the Midwest, the demographic structure of the Mexican American newcomers to the region also played a hand in keeping Mexican Americans from becoming entrenched in the region. The initial flows of Mexican American migrants moving to the Midwest were predominantly males recruited on a contract basis. As such, the absence of families in the region was associated with the lack of firm roots holding Mexican Americans to the Midwest. Essentially, as contracted labor, Mexican American migrants went to the Midwest for the sole reason of temporary

employment. Saenz (1991) notes that the Midwest along with the Northwest were frontier areas where Mexican American trailblazers were only beginning to explore in the early part of the 20th Century. It would only be later, with the establishment of continual flows of Mexican Americans and the movement of families to these regions, that these areas would be seen as appendages (or peripheries) of the Southwest for Mexican Americans (Saenz 1991).

World War II, however, helped contribute to the resurgence of Mexican American flows to the Midwest. Labor shortages associated with the War resulted in the United States and Mexican governments establishing the Bracero Program, a program that allowed Mexican workers to enter the United States as contracted laborers to toil for a certain period of time. The Bracero Program spurred the entry of thousands of Mexican workers into this country. According to Grebler et al., more than 4.6 million work permits were allocated in the 1942-1964 period. Although numbers are not available, *braceros* (contract laborers) found their way into the Midwest (Acuña 1988; McWilliams 1948; Valdes 1991). The popularity of the Bracero Program among U.S. capitalists, especially growers, is evidenced by the fact that the Program was continued long after the conclusion of WWII. The Bracero Program was dismantled in 1964. For Mexican immigrants, the Program was important in further spawning social ties to different parts of the United States including the Midwest.

WWII was also important in stimulating Mexican American migration out of the Southwest, particularly to the Midwest. A large number of Mexican Americans fought in WWII, many of whom were decorated as war heroes. The participation of Mexican American soldiers in the War helped them break bonds to the Southwest. Many Mexican American soldiers had rarely traveled outside of their immediate ethnic enclaves prior to the War (Alvarez 1973). Undoubtedly, war-related travel to various parts of the country and the world helped Mexican Americans break some ties to their local communities. As migration researchers have pointed out, previous migration or visitation is associated with movement (Shaw 1975). In addition, Mexican American soldiers came into contact with a variety of people through their participation in the military. It has been suggested that this led to a better understanding of the place of Mexican Americans in

American society (Alvarez 1973). Prior to the War experience, Mexican Americans concentrated in Southwestern barrios had little information about the social and economic conditions of other ethnic groups in other areas of the country. This development of ethnic consciousness helped Mexican Americans attain a better sense of the subordinate position of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Armed with travel experience and ethnic consciousness attained through the WWII experience, it can be hypothesized that ties binding Mexican Americans to the Southwest were weakened after WWII.

The post-WWII economic boom also helped stimulate migration to the Midwest. The Midwest and Northeast have been traditionally viewed as the core areas in the United States economy, with the South and West regions representing periphery economic regions (Frey 1987). As the United States was transformed from an agricultural to a manufacturing economy, jobs in the manufacturing sector were disproportionately situated in the core regions. For instance, through the 1950-1970 period, the Midwest held approximately one-third of all manufacturing jobs in the nation. As a point of comparison, although the Southwest experienced faster job growth than the Midwest in this time period, far fewer jobs in the manufacturing sector were situated in the Southwest (8.4% in 1950, 9.0% in 1960, and 13.2% in 1970). With the passage of time, Mexican American farm laborers that had traveled to the Midwest on a seasonal basis, began “settling out” of the migration stream in manufacturing jobs in the region (Saenz 1991; Wells 1976, 1981). The settlement of Mexican Americans in the region signified the establishment of firmer roots as Mexican Americans in the region included a greater presence of families. The formation of Mexican American communities in the region facilitated the entrance and settlement of newer cohorts of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, with newcomers tapping social networks in their social and economic adjustment to life in the Midwest (Saenz 1991; see also Portes and Bach 1985).

Despite the attraction of Mexican Americans to the Midwest, the economic restructuring of the 1970’s which witnessed the flow of jobs — particularly those in the manufacturing sector — to the Sunbelt also affected the movement of the

Mexican American population. Thus, Saenz (1991) reports that seven Midwest states (Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin) with significant Mexican American populations faced an outflow of Mexican Americans to the Southwest in the 1975-1980 period. Nevertheless, in a relative sense, the outflow of Mexican Americans from the Midwest to the Southwest was not as dramatic as that for the total population. Other analyses also based on 1980 census data have revealed that half of the Midwestern states (Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) were net exporters of Mexican Americans to other states — regardless of region — across the country during the 1975-1980 period (Saenz and Anderson 1994).

During the 1980’s, the Midwest continued to be plagued by economic problems. For instance, the region experienced an 11% reduction in manufacturing jobs between 1980 and 1990. Especially hard hit was Illinois, where almost one-fifth of manufacturing jobs in 1980 disappeared by the end of the decade (Saenz 1996). Even more dramatic is the fact that of the nearly 1.5 million manufacturing jobs that the United States lost during the 1980’s, approximately half of this loss occurred in the Midwest, with Illinois accounting for 17% of this decline (Saenz 1996). However, evidence suggests that restructuring in the meat- and poultry-processing industry has attracted Mexican Americans and other Latinos to the Midwest in significant numbers (see Bonanno et al. 1994; Cantu 1995; Stull et al. 1995). In efforts to cut costs, during the decade the industry relocated from larger Midwestern metropolitan centers to rural settings in the region, thus reducing tremendously the transportation expenses associated with moving livestock from feedlots to slaughterhouses (Broadway 1995; Stull et al. 1992). The industry also shifted its labor pool significantly, abandoning higher-wage Anglo labor for lower-wage Latino and Asian labor, particularly immigrants (Stull et al. 1992). The industry has relied heavily on tapping established ethnic social networks for recruitment purposes (Grey 1995). Reflecting these changes in the meat- and poultry-processing industry, numerous communities in Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska have seen dramatic increases in their Latino populations in the last few years.

In light of the well-established historical migration routes between the Southwest and Midwest, the more favorable economic conditions of the Midwest in the 1980's relative to the earlier decade, and the expanding employment opportunities for Mexican Americans and other Latinos in certain industrial sectors in the Midwest, we expect a net immigration flow of Mexican Americans to the Midwest from the Southwest in the 1985-1990 period. The analysis carried out below seeks to assess this prediction and to determine the extent to which this pattern is observed across states in the region.

METHODS

Data used to conduct the analysis are obtained from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS). The 1990 PUMS is a 5% sample of the nation's population. The PUMS contains weights which allow analysts to obtain estimates based on the population. The analysis presented below utilizes these weights. These PUMS data are ideal for conducting migration analyses for we are able to determine the place of residence of individuals in 1985 and in 1990, at the time of the census. The analysis is based on persons of Mexican origin five years of age and older who migrated between the Southwest (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas) and Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin) between 1985 and 1990. The sample based on this criterion contains 4,561 individuals, translating to a population of 98,203 when weights are used to obtain the population estimate.

The analysis presented below is primarily descriptive in nature. From the perspective of the Midwest, we obtain three migration-related measures—inmigrants, outmigrants, and net migration. Inmigrants include persons who were living in the Southwest in 1985 and in the Midwest in 1990. Outmigrants consist of people who were living in the Midwest in 1985 and in the Southwest in 1990. Net migration is obtained by subtracting outmigrants from inmigrants. Positive values on net migration (i.e., net immigration) signifies that the Midwest attracted more Mexican Americans from the Southwest than it lost to this region. Negative net-migration values (i.e., net outmigration) indicate that the Midwest lost more Mexican Americans to the Southwest than it gained from this region.

We recognize the problems associated with migration derived from the five-year question used in the census. These data contain numerous shortcomings that must be taken into account when considering our analysis (see Shryock and Siegel 1980). First, persons who lived in different regions at some time between 1985 and 1990, but who happened to live in the same region in 1985 and 1990, at the time of the census, are treated as non-migrants. Second, migrants are assumed to have migrated only once, as multiple migrations are not taken into account. Third, persons who died prior to the time of the census are not included in the analysis. Fourth, the data are subject to recall error since people are asked to remember their place of residence in 1985.

In order to assess the variability in the migration patterns across native- and foreign-born subgroups, we classify people into seven categories: **1)** Midwest born; **2)** Southwest born; **3)** Other U.S. born (including persons born in Puerto Rico, Guam, and outlying U.S. territories, or born abroad to parents who are U.S. citizens); **4)** immigrants arriving in the United States before 1965; **5)** immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1965-1974 period; **6)** immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1975-1984 period; and **7)** immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1985-1990 period.

RESULTS

We begin our analysis with an evaluation of the flows of Mexican Americans between the Southwest and Midwest between the 1985-1990 period. Table 1 reveals that slightly more than 98,000 Mexican Americans were involved in this movement in the 1985-1990 period. Overall, as we expected, the Midwest experienced a net immigration of 7,371 Mexican Americans *vis-a-vis* the Southwest, signifying that the Midwest gained 7,371 more Mexican Americans from the Southwest than it lost to this region. The net immigration pattern is evident across the Midwestern states, with 10 of the 12 having net gains in Mexican Americans. Kansas emerged as the state having the greatest net immigration of Mexican Americans, with a net gain of 2,764 persons. Minnesota (2,087) and Michigan (1,394) also showed net immigration of Mexican Americans exceeding 1,000.

Table 1. Midwestern State Distributions of Mexican American Immigrants and Outmigrants, 1985-1990

State	Inmigrants	% of Midwestern Inmigrants	Outmigrants	% of Midwestern Outmigrants	Net Migration
<i>Illinois</i>	17,052	32.3	18,737	41.3	-1,685
<i>Indiana</i>	3,505	6.6	3,365	7.4	140
<i>Iowa</i>	2,311	4.4	2,130	4.7	181
Kansas	6,219	11.8	3,455	7.6	2,764
<i>Michigan</i>	7,216	13.7	5,822	12.8	1,394
<i>Minnesota</i>	3,449	6.5	1,362	3.0	2,087
<i>Missouri</i>	3,387	6.4	2,799	6.1	588
<i>Nebraska</i>	2,507	4.7	2,385	5.3	122
<i>North Dakota</i>	365	0.7	474	1.0	-109
<i>Ohio</i>	3,038	5.8	2,213	4.9	825
<i>South Dakota</i>	673	1.3	427	0.9	246
<i>Wisconsin</i>	3,065	5.8	2,247	4.9	818
MIDWEST	52,787	100.0	45,416	100.0	7,371

Another way to evaluate the magnitude of the inflow of Mexican Americans to the Midwestern states is to examine the ratio of inmigrants to outmigrants. By this gauge, Minnesota had the highest immigrant-to-outmigrant ratio, with 2.53 Mexican American inmigrants moving to Minnesota from the Southwest to every one Mexican American leaving Minnesota for the Southwest during the 1985-1990 period. Four additional states had immigrant-to-outmigrant ratios exceeding 1.25: Kansas (1.80), South Dakota (1.58), Ohio (1.37), and Wisconsin (1.36).

In contrast to the general trend, Illinois and North Dakota experienced a net loss of Mexican Americans through migration to the Southwest. Illinois had a net outmigration of nearly 1,700 Mexican Americans, while North Dakota had a net loss of slightly over 100 Mexican Americans. The corresponding immigrant-to-outmigrant ratios for each state were 0.91 and 0.77, respectively.

Despite Illinois' net outmigration of Mexican Americans, the state continues to be the primary destination of Mexican Americans moving from the Southwest to the Midwest. Nearly one-third (32.3%) of Mexican Americans making this type of migration between 1985 and 1990 headed to Illinois. An additional one-fourth relocated to Michigan (13.7%) or Kansas (11.8%). The Dakotas represent the least popular destinations for Mexican Americans leaving the Southwest with only 1 in 50 such migrants choosing these locations (South Dakota, 1.3%; North Dakota, 0.7%).

However, Illinois was also the most common state of origin of Mexican Americans leaving the Midwest for the Southwest in the late 1980's. Slightly more than two-fifths (41.3%) of Midwest-to-Southwest migrants were living in Illinois in 1985. An additional one-fifth of these migrants left two states (Michigan, 12.8%; Indiana, 7.4%). The Dakotas, again, largely because of their small Mexican American population bases, were the least represented in the outflow of Mexican Americans headed from the Midwest to the Southwest — North Dakota (1.0%) and South Dakota (0.9%).

The Southwest as Context

Shifting the context to the Southwest allows us to determine the Southwest origins and destinations of Mexican Americans leaving the Southwest between 1985 and 1990. As alluded to earlier, the Southwest, as a region, was a net exporter of Mexican Americans to the Midwest (-7,371). Though three of the Southwestern states — Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico — followed this general pattern, Texas, alone, with a net loss of close to 10,000 Mexican Americans, accounted for most of the net outflow of Mexican Americans from the region to the Midwest (Table 2). In fact, of the 52,787 Mexican Americans leaving the Southwest for the Midwest between 1985 and 1990, three-fifths were living in Texas at the beginning-of-the-migration period. Furthermore, Texas had an immigration-to-outmigration ratio of 0.69, indicating that for every one person leaving Texas for the Midwest, only 0.69 made a move in the opposite direction. Slightly more than one-fourth of Mexican American newcomers to the Midwest relocated from California.

Table 2. Southwestern State Distributions of Mexican American Inmigrants and Outmigrants, 1985-1990

State	Inmigrants	% of Southwestern Inmigrants	Outmigrants	% of Southwestern Outmigrants	Net Migration
<i>Arizona</i>	2,791	6.1	2,062	3.9	729
<i>California</i>	16,574	36.5	13,945	26.4	2,629
<i>Colorado</i>	2,577	5.7	3,347	6.4	-770
<i>New Mexico</i>	1,488	3.3	1,499	2.8	-11
<i>Texas</i>	21,986	48.4	31,934	60.5	-9,948
<i>Southwest</i>	45,416	100.0	52,787	100.0	-7,371

California and Arizona, however, emerged as the only two Southwestern states having net gains of Mexican Americans. On balance, California gained 2,629 more Mexican Americans from the Midwest than it lost to this region in the 1985-1990 period, while Arizona experienced a net immigration of 729. Approximately 37% of all Mexican Americans leaving the Midwest settled in California. Nevertheless, Texas continued to be the primary state of destination for ex-Midwesterners, with nearly half (48.4%) of members of this flow headed for Texas.

In sum, the general Southwest-Midwest migration pattern is quite clear. The Texas-Illinois route paved by the earliest cohort of Mexican Americans leaving the Southwest to the Midwest at the turn of the century continues to dominate the flow of Mexican Americans between the two regions. The fact that both of these states experienced net losses of Mexican Americans suggests that Mexican Americans may be making inroads to other Southwestern and Midwestern states.

State-Specific Migration Exchange

Thus far we have only examined the flow of Mexican Americans between the Southwest and Midwest without identifying the unique state-to-state flows. Table 3 presents data illustrating the 60 possible Midwestern-Southwestern state-flow combinations. Slightly more than half (32 of the 60) of the Midwestern-Southwestern state combinations show net gains of Mexican Americans for the Midwestern states. South Dakota is the only state which had a net gain of Mexican Americans *vis-a-vis* each of the five Southwestern states. Two other states (Kansas and Minnesota) experienced net gains in Mexican Americans relative to four Southwestern states. In contrast, Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska had net immigration of Mexican Americans only relative to one Southwest state.

Not surprisingly, given the general data presented above, Texas was a net loser of Mexican Americans to 10 of the 12 Midwestern states (Illinois and North Dakota being the only two states from which Texas was a net gainer). Colorado also was a net loser relative to 9 of the 12 Midwestern states, with Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio being the only three states from where Colorado experienced net gains in Mexican Americans.

Table 3 also allows us to gauge the most popular routes connecting states from the two regions. Of the 60 possible routes, that between Illinois and Texas is the most popular, with a volume of 18,433 migrants heading in either direction. Thus, close to 19% of all Southwest-Midwest Mexican American migration occurred in the Illinois-Texas route. The next four most voluminous routes include the Illinois-California (14,542 migrants), Michigan-Texas (9,431), Kansas-Texas (4,895), and Indiana-Texas (3,989) routes. Together the five most popular migration routes account for 52% of total movement of Mexican Americans (98,203) between the Southwest and Midwest in the 1985-1990 period.

The data in Table 3 can also be used to determine the routes which produced the most positive and negative net migration levels among the Midwest states. Seven routes, all involving net flows out of Texas, had net immigration levels of 500 or more to specific Midwest states: Michigan-Texas (2,691 net immigration for Michigan), Kansas-Texas (2,097), Minnesota-Texas (1,817), Ohio-Texas (1,033), Iowa-Texas (957), Wisconsin-Texas (721), and Nebraska-Texas (547). In contrast, the highest net outmigration levels — from the perspective of Midwestern states — occurred in the Michigan-California (-1,029), Illinois-California (-508), Illinois-Texas (-499), Illinois-Arizona (-393), Iowa-Colorado (-327), and Illinois-New Mexico (-312) routes.

**Table 3. Mexican American Immigrants and Outmigrants for
Midwestern-Southwestern State Combinations, 1985-1990**

Midwestern-Southwestern State Combination			Net Migration	Midwestern-Southwestern State Combination			Net Migration
	Immigrants	Outmigrants			Immigrants	Outmigrants	
<i>Illinois-Arizona</i>	504	897	-393	<i>Missouri-Arizona</i>	238	78	160
<i>Illinois-California</i>	7,017	7,525	-508	<i>Missouri-California</i>	1,105	1,270	-165
<i>Illinois-Colorado</i>	459	432	27	<i>Missouri-Colorado</i>	299	0	299
<i>Illinois-New Mexico</i>	105	417	-312	<i>Missouri-New Mexico</i>	83	153	-70
<i>Illinois-Texas</i>	8,967	9,466	-499	<i>Missouri-Texas</i>	1,662	1,298	364
<i>Indiana-Arizona</i>	151	287	-136	<i>Nebraska-Arizona</i>	125	171	-46
<i>Indiana-California</i>	927	1,039	-112	<i>Nebraska-California</i>	753	995	-242
<i>Indiana-Colorado</i>	61	54	7	<i>Nebraska-Colorado</i>	585	657	-72
<i>Indiana-New Mexico</i>	275	87	188	<i>Nebraska-New Mexico</i>	85	150	-65
<i>Indiana-Texas</i>	2,091	1,898	193	<i>Nebraska-Texas</i>	959	412	547
<i>Iowa-Arizona</i>	95	171	-76	<i>North Dakota-Arizona</i>	15	0	15
<i>Iowa-California</i>	485	678	-193	<i>North Dakota-California</i>	65	171	-106
<i>Iowa-Colorado</i>	159	486	-327	<i>North Dakota-Colorado</i>	55	0	55
<i>Iowa-New Mexico</i>	12	192	-180	<i>North Dakota-New Mexico</i>	0	48	-48
<i>Iowa-Texas</i>	1,560	603	957	<i>North Dakota-Texas</i>	230	255	-25
<i>Kansas-Arizona</i>	266	231	35	<i>Ohio-Arizona</i>	224	206	18
<i>Kansas-California</i>	964	982	-18	<i>Ohio-California</i>	475	740	-265
<i>Kansas-Colorado</i>	931	540	391	<i>Ohio-Colorado</i>	163	195	-32
<i>Kansas-New Mexico</i>	562	303	259	<i>Ohio-New Mexico</i>	95	24	71
<i>Kansas-Texas</i>	3,496	1,399	2,097	<i>Ohio-Texas</i>	2,081	1,048	1,033
<i>Michigan-Arizona</i>	137	421	-284	<i>South Dakota-Arizona</i>	81	42	39
<i>Michigan-California</i>	834	1,863	-1,029	<i>South Dakota-California</i>	173	158	15
<i>Michigan-Colorado</i>	184	108	76	<i>South Dakota-Colorado</i>	125	24	101
<i>Michigan-New Mexico</i>	0	60	-60	<i>South Dakota-New Mexico</i>	39	0	39
<i>Michigan-Texas</i>	6,061	3,370	2,691	<i>South Dakota-Texas</i>	255	203	52
<i>Minnesota-Arizona</i>	102	107	-5	<i>Wisconsin-Arizona</i>	124	180	-56
<i>Minnesota-California</i>	603	545	58	<i>Wisconsin-California</i>	544	608	-64
<i>Minnesota-Colorado</i>	129	45	84	<i>Wisconsin-Colorado</i>	197	36	161
<i>Minnesota-New Mexico</i>	133	0	133	<i>Wisconsin-New Mexico</i>	110	54	56
<i>Minnesota-Texas</i>	2,482	665	1,817	<i>Wisconsin-Texas</i>	2,090	1,369	721

Mexican American Intragroup Variation in Migration

The demographic literature on the Mexican American population indicates that this ethnic group is quite diverse (see Bean and Tienda 1987; Saenz 1997). This diversity makes the Mexican American population quite unique compared to other ethnic groups in the country. For example, a certain portion of the population can trace its ancestry to U.S. land to times predating the arrival of Europeans. At the same time, a significant segment of the Mexican American population has only entered the United States in the last few decades. It is likely that this diversity is associated with distinct migration experiences within the country. Therefore, this next part of the analysis

seeks to determine the extent of variation in Southwest-Midwest migration patterns across seven native- and foreign-born groups: **1)** Midwest born; **2)** Southwest born; **3)** Other U.S. born (including persons born in Puerto Rico, Guam, and outlying U.S. territories, or born abroad to parents who are U.S. citizens); **4)** immigrants arriving in the United States before 1965; **5)** immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1965-1974 period; **6)** immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1975-1984 period; and **7)** immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1985-1990 period.

The data presented in Table 4 depict the number of Mexican American Southwest-Midwest immigrants and outmigrants across the seven subgroups. The Midwest experienced a net inflow from three categories: Southwest-born Mexican Americans (9,120) and immigrants arriving in the United States since 1975 (1975-1984, 3,229; 1985-1990, 2,803). The inflow of Mexican Americans to the Midwest from the Southwest is dominated by people born in the Southwest, with 46% of the flow comprised of Southwestern natives. The Midwest, however, endured net losses of two native-born groups [those born in the Midwest (-5,629) and those born elsewhere in the United States except the Southwest (-75)] and two groups of foreign-born persons [those arriving prior to 1965 (-1,110) and those coming in the 1965-1974 period (-967)]. Nearly two-thirds of Mexican Americans leaving the Midwest to the Southwest are persons born in each of these regions (Southwest-born, 33.9%; Midwest-born, 30.2%).

second and third most popular destinations of foreign-born persons are Kansas and Michigan, respectively. Illinois is also the state of origin for the majority of immigrants leaving the Midwest for the Southwest during the late 1980's, with the range being from a low of 47% (among immigrants arriving prior to 1965) to 66% (among those arriving in the 1965-1974 period). While the second most popular state of origin of Midwest outmigrants is Indiana among immigrants arriving prior to 1975, Michigan is the second most popular state of origin among the two most recent cohorts of immigrants.

Indexes of dissimilarity comparing the state distributions of immigrants and outmigrants relative to the Midwestern-born subgroup indicate that immigrants are quite distinct as illustrated above (see footnote in Table 5 for a description of the indexes). Among all the native/immigrant subgroups, Mexican Americans born in the Southwest are the most similar to their Midwestern-born counterparts (indexes of

Table 4. Mexican American Immigrants and Outmigrants in the Midwest by Native/Immigrant Categories, 1985-1990

Category	Midwestern Immigrants	Midwestern Outmigrants	Midwestern Net Migration
<i>Midwest Born</i>	8,108	13,737	-5,629
<i>Southwest Born</i>	24,521	15,401	9,120
<i>Other U.S. Born</i>	1,918	1,993	-75
<i>Immigrant Before 1965</i>	888	1,998	-1,110
<i>Immigrant 1965-74</i>	2,831	3,798	-967
<i>Immigrant 1975-84</i>	9,757	6,528	3,229
<i>Immigrant 1985-90</i>	4,764	1,961	2,803

The data presented in Table 5 allow us to determine the distribution of Midwest-Southwest immigrants and outmigrants by native/immigrant categories across Midwestern states. With only one exception (the case of Mexican Americans born in a region besides the Midwest or Southwest), the different Mexican American native/immigrant subgroups are the most likely to be either moving to Illinois from the Southwest or leaving Illinois to the Southwest. The dominance of Illinois is particularly apparent in the case of foreign-born persons. For instance, anywhere from 38% (immigrants arriving prior to 1965) to 57% (immigrants arriving in the 1985-1990 period) of Mexican Americans migrating from the Southwest to the Midwest were found in Illinois in 1990. Yet, it should be noted that the

dissimilarity of 15.2 for immigrants and 15.9 for outmigrants). Native-born Mexican Americans born in a region other than the Midwest or Southwest are the most dissimilar compared to their Midwestern-born peers (indexes of dissimilarity of 27.2 for immigrants and 24.6 for outmigrants). There are a few differences worth mentioning between Midwestern-born Mexican Americans and the other two groups of natives. First, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin are more likely to be destinations for native non-Midwestern-born Mexican Americans, while Illinois and Ohio are more likely to be destinations among Midwestern-born individuals. Second, Midwestern-born Mexican Americans are more likely to be leaving Illinois and

Table 5. Midwestern State Distributions of Mexican American Immigrants and Outmigrants by Native/Immigrant Categories, 1985-1990

STATE	MIDWEST BORN		SOUTHWEST BORN		OTHER U.S. BORN		IMMIGRANT PRE-1965		IMMIGRANT 1965-74		IMMIGRANT 1975-84		IMMIGRANT 1985-90	
	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT	% OFMW IN	% OFMW OUT
<i>Illinois</i>	29.2	38.6	20.8	26.5	11.3	28.5	37.5	46.6	43.9	65.8	51.9	63.8	57.3	61.4
<i>Indiana</i>	8.4	10.0	7.3	7.2	8.2	8.2	4.7	11.6	5.7	6.5	4.9	3.6	4.2	0.0
<i>Iowa</i>	5.5	5.0	5.2	4.1	3.2	13.0	2.8	2.5	4.9	4.3	3.0	4.6	1.7	2.3
<i>Kansas</i>	8.5	7.9	10.5	9.5	20.2	5.8	15.2	8.2	10.9	4.5	15.3	3.8	13.0	10.8
<i>Michigan</i>	14.9	15.4	15.9	15.9	12.6	8.1	10.4	9.8	16.8	5.2	8.8	8.0	8.9	9.3
<i>Minnesota</i>	3.3	2.0	9.7	4.0	9.8	5.2	1.0	3.9	2.8	3.1	3.2	2.2	4.2	1.2
<i>Missouri</i>	6.8	4.0	9.1	10.0	6.1	10.4	7.7	8.0	4.4	0.6	2.6	3.8	1.1	3.8
<i>Nebraska</i>	3.5	5.9	5.2	6.2	8.1	10.9	2.4	5.5	4.0	2.8	4.6	1.7	4.6	3.6
<i>N.D.</i>	0.1	0.6	0.8	2.3	3.1	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
<i>Ohio</i>	11.5	4.9	6.0	6.7	7.8	6.7	6.9	2.8	3.4	4.3	3.2	1.7	0.1	1.8
<i>S.D.</i>	1.5	0.8	1.8	1.0	1.3	0.9	2.7	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.0	0.0
<i>Wisconsin</i>	6.9	4.8	7.6	6.6	8.2	2.2	4.3	1.2	2.4	2.9	2.1	4.2	3.8	5.8
<i>Midwest</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	8108	13737	24521	15401	1918	1993	888	1998	2831	3798	9757	6528	4764	1961
<i>Index of Dissimilarity</i> ¹	—	—	15.2	15.8	27.2	24.6	21.5	15.9	19.5	28.0	31.0	26.8	34.6	26.3

¹ The index of dissimilarity is calculated by $(|x_i - y_i|) / 2$, where x_i is the percentage distribution of midwestern in- or out-migration across the midwestern states for midwest-born migrants (columns 1 and 2, respectively) and y_i is the corresponding percentage distribution for a different native/immigrant category (e.g., southwest-born migrants, other U.S.-born migrants, etc.).

Indiana compared to their native-born counterparts, while the latter are more likely to be departing from Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska. Third, the residual group of native-born Mexican Americans are more likely than the other two native-born groups to have Iowa as the state of origin and are less likely to have Michigan and Wisconsin as the state of origin.

SUMMARY

Mexican Americans historically have been concentrated in the Southwest. Even today, slightly more than four of every five persons of Mexican origin in the United States are located in one of the five Southwestern states. Nevertheless, over the course of this century, Mexican Americans have ventured out of the Southwest with the Midwest being the most common destination. This analysis examined the migration flows of Mexican Americans between the Southwest and the Midwest in the 1985-1990 period. Overall, the results indicate that the

Midwest gained more Mexican Americans from the Southwest than it lost to this region during this five-year period. Although the route between Texas and Illinois continues to dominate in interregional migration among Mexican Americans, both of these states suffered significant net losses of Mexican Americans. Kansas and Minnesota were the only two Midwestern states that experienced a net immigration of 2,000 or more Mexican Americans from the Southwest, while California and Arizona were the only two Southwestern states which had net gains of Mexican American migrants from the Midwest. The results also demonstrate unique migration patterns across native/immigrant categories, with the Midwest being more likely to experience a net inflow of Southwest-born Mexican Americans and immigrants arriving in the United States since 1975 and a net outflow of Midwest-born persons and immigrants who came to the United States before 1975.

The results presented here add to our

understanding of the movement of Mexican Americans between the two regions of the nation that have the largest Mexican American populations. Obviously, the findings illustrate the dynamic nature of this population and counter notions suggesting that Mexican Americans are not likely to venture out of the Southwest. Although our task here was not to identify the factors stimulating the migration flows of Mexican Americans between the states comprising each region, it is likely that social and economic conditions represent the engine driving Mexican American migration. Future research should

undertake such analysis to identify the factors contributing to the movement of Mexican Americans between the two regions. It should also be noted that because we are relying on decennial census data, we are unable to capture migration flows occurring post-1990. Thus, major demographic changes taking place after 1990 in communities with meat- and poultry-processing plants are not captured in our analysis. As such, post-census studies are needed to update knowledge concerning the movement of Mexican Americans to this region.

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