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ABSTRACT


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This paper is a comparative study of Mexican and Cuban immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1980 and 1994. During this timeframe, the number of immigrants arriving from Mexico and Cuba was vast. While their modes of entering the United States and their contexts of reception upon arrival differed, both groups faced similar struggles to integrate into the American cultural and economic system, and to raise and utilize their human and social capital.

1 This paper will only include the time period between 1980 and 1994 before the signing of NAFTA and before the signing of Proposition 187. It will not discuss the implications or resolution of the Balsero Crisis or decisions made under the Clinton Administration in regards to this crisis. It will not include any information on NAFTA, Proposition 187, or the Balsero Program or their effects.
Although both groups faced animosity and barriers to success on arrival, the Cuban immigrants have been statistically more upwardly mobile than the Mexican cohort in terms of their economic and social mobility. This paper investigates four variables impacting Cuban and Mexican social and economic mobility after arrival in the United States. These include: socio-economic status and education level on arrival, documentation status, ethnic enclave resources and spatial concentrations, and gender norms and reception in the United States. In this paper, the term ‘economic mobility’ refers to an individual’s ability to gain access to higher skilled and higher paying jobs, which can be based on the income a person receives as well as how an individual contributes monetarily to society. ‘Social mobility’ can be understood as an individual’s potential social status based on education, labor market experience, and language ability. The study found that although Cuban immigrants had significant barriers to mobility from the 1980s through the mid-1990s, they were more successful than the Mexican cohort in terms of social and economic mobility. This may be explained by their documentation status, levels of education and skills on arrival, connections through ethnic enclaves and spatial concentration, as well as their cultural views on gender and their reception in the United States.
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Introduction

This paper compares Mexican and Cuban immigration to the United States between 1980 and 1994 in order to investigate the relative socioeconomic status and mobility experienced by these two ethnic groups during this timeframe. Social and economic status is measured as immigrant educational levels, skill sets, and access to jobs and social networks. High levels of socioeconomic status have been found to provide immigrants with the human and social capital and networks needed to become upwardly mobile. To determine the socioeconomic mobility of each group, this paper will investigate the variables of documentation status, levels of education and skills on arrival, connections through ethnic enclaves and spatial concentration, and cultural views on gender and reception in the United States.

The largest group of immigrants in the United States is from Mexico, with over four million documented Mexican immigrants residing in the United States by the 1990s and an additional 100,000 to 300,000 undocumented Mexican immigrants arriving each year between 1980 and 1994 (Rosenblum 2011). While some of these immigrants cross the border with documentation, many migrants from Mexico arrive in this country without the proper papers required by the U.S. Government. Similarly, Mexican immigrants arriving in the United States have variable levels of success following migration. Some illustrate social and economic mobility, while others have been stuck in dead-end service jobs, or have been deported.
Of course, Mexicans are not the only Latino group that has migrated to the United States in large numbers or struggled to succeed upon arrival. Following thirty years of communist rule in which an earlier wave of Cuban intelligentsia escaped the Castro regime, approximately 10,000 Cubans staged a systematic migration from Mariel Harbor in Cuba to southern Florida in 1980, adding to the Cuban immigrant stock in Miami. This event triggered a mass exodus from Cuba to the U.S. throughout the 1980s. Cubans traveling on these boatlifts were supposed to be granted amnesty upon arrival to America according to the Refugee Act of 1980, although the amnesty was not granted immediately, as will be explained later in this thesis.

In 1985 Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach published *Latin Journey*, a book that compares the immigrant experiences of Cubans and Mexicans who settled in the United States. In their extensive 1979 study of the Cuban and Mexican populations in Miami and Los Angeles, Portes and Bach compare their origins of emigration, residential location, social adaptation, labor market participation and income, modes of incorporation, and the effects of the Cuban enclave in Miami. These authors conclude that Cuban immigrants in 1979 were more socio-economically successful than Mexican immigrants at that time. My study can be viewed as a follow up to this research. Since 1979, new immigration laws and policies were established that treated Mexican and Cuban immigrant groups differently. In addition, each group had access to different types of jobs and opportunities. This research paper offers a deeper investigation into the welfare of Cubans and Mexicans who arrived between 1980-1994 in order to understand if the conclusions that Portes and Bach made for the period before 1980 were still accurate a decade later.
The wave of Cubans arriving in the United States before 1980 was known for its high levels of education, skills, and job experience. Many of these “Golden Exiles” were wealthy elites who fled the communist regime established by Fidel Castro. This well-educated cohort quickly took root in Miami and “Little Havana,” the growing Cuban enclave in Miami, and began to flourish. In contrast, Mexican migrants coming to America before 1980 generally exhibited lower levels of education and skill. Yet, beginning in 1980, the newest wave of Cubans entering the United States showed similar levels of education and job experience as the Mexicans cohort. The Cubans arriving on the Mariel Boatlifts were generally not members of the Cuban intelligentsia or wealthy class. They consisted of less educated immigrants fleeing unstable economic conditions in Cuba. Additionally, political prisoners and patients from mental institutions, released by Castro to rid the country of ‘undesirables,’ arrived on the Mariel Boatlifts. This new wave of Cubans quickly developed a bad reputation after arriving in the United States.

Although the newly arrived Cubans and Mexicans in 1980 were comparable in socioeconomic status, Cuban immigrants appear to have achieved higher levels of social and economic mobility by 1994 than the Mexican immigrants, a pattern that was similarly noted by Portes and Bach in their research completed in the 1970s and 1980s. Further investigation is necessary to understand why these outcomes differ. Therefore, this paper will investigate how the effects of documentation status, spatial concentration, access to ethnic enclaves, and gender norms, impacted both groups on arrival. While spatial concentration is a contextual factor, documentation status can be viewed both as an individual-level variable, as well as a national-level one, because individual outcomes are often impacted by America’s immigration policies addressing the two groups. Gender
reception can be viewed as variables falling at both the national and local levels, because gender norms and values may be individual, community based, and national.

If in fact the Cubans migrating between 1980 and 1994 followed some specific processes and strategy in order to gain upward mobility following their arrival in America, this study will be useful to understand what factors can lead to significant achievements. This study will investigate these processes and will contrast the outcomes of Cuban migrants with the Mexican cohort. This comparison may be useful in understanding why immigrant groups such as the Mexicans have struggled to become upwardly mobile for decades and appear to remain ‘stuck’ in the lower socio-economic strata.

As the United States continues to become more diverse and transnational, it will be important for the entering and receiving groups to understand what must be done to allow for proper integration and transition into the host nation context. A study such as this can also provide insight into immigration policies that have had mixed results and outcomes for groups with similar characteristics that are entering the country. It is also important to be aware that each group studied may define desired levels of success and mobility differently from one another. In addition, the resources used to complete this study are more qualitative than quantitative in nature. There are limits to studies that focus on one or another variable and overlook a host of factors that have impact. I will, therefore, examine a number of factors and aspects of theories in order to gain a full understanding of the modes of incorporation as well as effects and results of social, political, and economic policy in regards to immigration in the given time period.
Measurement

This research project draws on and synthesizes a number of studies in the fields of sociology, history, and political science that address Mexican and Cuban immigration and settlement between 1980 and 1994. The context of reception in the United States, immigrant community life, and American policies towards both Cuban and Mexican immigrants entering the U.S. during this 15-year period provide vital background information needed for this study in order to assess the effects of documentation, spatial concentration and ethnic enclaves, and gender roles on the respective rates of upward mobility observed among the two immigrant communities. That social and human capital affect levels of upward mobility is the main theory investigated in this paper. As Carola Suárez-Orozco (1995) explains, educational attainment, skill sets, access to networks, and levels of English language ability are all vital to an immigrant’s socioeconomic achievements. Another theory that is investigated has to do with ethnic enclaves and how they can act as a stepping-stone to mobility for incoming migrants. However, it is intriguing to understand why broad differences exist between Mexican and Cuban enclave life, and why many Cubans either never leave or return after leaving, when a common thought is that those who leave the enclave are the most upwardly mobile. These theories will be investigated and compared to reach further conclusions.

I would also like to clarify that this paper will not investigate the variable of race or how race effects the integration of either Mexicans or Cubans into the American
economy or social society. It is apparent that the Cubans who arrived on the Mariel Boatlifts were stigmatized and categorized differently than the Cubans who arrived before 1980. While one of the major variables that differentiate the groups was race, this paper will focus on education levels and economic and social incorporation of the newly arrived Cubans, rather than comparing them based on race. One reason for this is that the purpose of this paper is to compare Mexican and Cuban immigrant groups as a whole rather than outlining internal diversity within each group. Research clearly indicates that black Cubans had more difficulty integrating into society in comparison to their white, educated, wealthier counterparts. Race is a consistently stigmatized factor, and it is a known variable causing differences in integration and mobility patterns. Race does matter and affects how an individual fares upon immigrating. While this fact is true, the focus of this paper is to compare the mobility patterns of Mexicans and Cubans based on documentation status, entrance into ethnic enclaves, and gender norms.

To summarize, a combination of policy investigation and past research studies will be used to investigate my overarching research question. This study is important because it is not only a follow up to Portes and Bach’s research done in 1979, but it can also help explain the key factors impacting levels of mobility and achievement for immigrants in general. My research compares two groups of Latino immigrants that initially appear to be significantly different, yet which turn out to have common socio-

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2 The comparison between black and white Cubans and their levels of mobility in the U.S. is summed up in a study done by Benigno E. Aguirre and Eduardo Bonilla Silva entitled “Does Race Matter among Cuban Immigrants? An Analysis of the Racial Characteristics of Recent Cuban Immigrants” written in 2002. In this study they interview 1023 Cuban Immigrants who have been in the U.S. for 90 days or less. These authors feel that black Cubans, while they receive more governmental assistance than white Cubans, were discriminated against in Cuba and are initially stigmatized in the US for their lower levels of human capital. They also find in their study that black Cubans are more likely to migrate legally than white Cubans. The authors do not make conclusions about each group’s integration into the U.S. or if they were equally economically and socially mobile after settling in the US.
economic characteristics. It is important to investigate why there is a common conception of Cuban success following migration when the Cubans entering the U.S. between 1980 and 1994 were comparable to Mexicans in terms of human and social capital.
Historical Background

Historical Context and Migration Policy: Mexico

Bracero Program

After WWII and until the mid 1960s, the United States implemented a guest worker program geared towards recruiting male Mexican agricultural workers ages 18 to 40. Farm size was growing and seasonal workers became necessary. Since foreign workers were less costly to employ than local workers, the United States started what was known as the Bracero Program. The number of Bracero workers admitted to the United States peaked between 1955 and 1956 at 550,000 workers, yet unauthorized Mexican laborers continued to cross the border to find work. By 1954, under pressure from the Mexican government, Operation Wetback was launched in the hope of preventing further unauthorized migration. This program removed over one million unauthorized Mexicans throughout the U.S. through the use of strict border control tactics and interior reinforcement. It was clear that although this program was implemented, Mexicans were still able to cross the border as part of the Bracero program, cross again after deportation, or find another means of entering America.

In spite of the difficult labor conditions and abuses, Bracero labor became popular among the male, Mexican workers and many moved to the U.S.-Mexican border with their families to gain greater accessibility to the program. This program ended on December 31, 1964, when President John F. Kennedy’s office found that “the braceros
were adversely affecting the wages, working conditions, and employment opportunities of our own agricultural workers” (Martin et al. 2006: 95). Although the program ended officially in 1964, there were lasting effects, and many of the workers stayed in America, despite their contracts ending. Mexican immigrants began to migrate from farms to cities, seeking other types of labor. One reason for this migration was that workers aged 40 and over were often replaced by younger workers and had to find alternative employment. In addition, the program created the development of ethnic enclaves and, as it ended, caused people to think of other ways to continue to come to and work in the United States.

Maquiladora Program

After the Bracero program ended, the United States and Mexico established *maquiladoras* under the Border Industrialization Program in 1965. *Maquiladoras* were assembly plants along the border that “imported parts from the United States, assembled them in Mexico, and paid duties only on the value added by the Mexican workers” (Martin et al. 2006: 95). Rather than employing male agricultural workers at these plants, the employees attracted to these industries were females who were looking for work that was not true manual labor. In addition, by working close to the border they had better access to their homeland and to the host country. “Rising aspirations and educational levels among women and blacks and a declining population of young adults have left a potential shortfall of unskilled workers” (de Janvry and Mines 1982: 445). Female Mexican workers were the easy and convenient choice to fill this labor gap. In addition, it was believed that female workers were willing to work for lower wages and would be better at this type of assembly work. Although the *maquiladoras* did not lead to job replacement for the ex-braceros, who were primarily male, they still became popular
places of work. While at the onset of the *maquiladoras* in 1965 there were only about 12 plants and 3,000 workers employed, by 1990, there were 2,000 plants and 472,000 workers employed (Martin in Siddique 2001: 36). The *maquiladoras* attracted a great deal of foreign direct investment. This type of employment acted as a stepping-stone for immigration and gave the employees work experience that could be used upon arrival to the United States labor force.

*The 1965 Hart-Cellar Act*

Along with the discontinuation of the Bracero program, the year 1965 was also pivotal because of a new immigration policy that was passed. The 1965 Hart-Cellar Act eliminated the quota system and set up selection criteria that gave preference to family members and those with particular skills. Unlike earlier immigration laws, the Hart-Cellar Act opened up immigration to migrants from non-European nations and ultimately increased America’s ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. When the act took effect in 1968, it increased migration flows. More people began to enter on tourist and diplomatic visas, and especially on temporary worker and student visas. Because of this inflow of new immigrants, amendments were made to this act. In 1976 one of these amendments established a 20,000-person migration cap per country. However, as caps tightened regarding how many people could enter the country legally, illegal migration numbers rose. People sought other ways to enter America.

*Policy: 1980-1994*

After the U.S. transitioned away from the Bracero program, other policies were implemented to try to create a smooth transition for the migrant workers. One of these programs allowed U.S. farmers to sponsor Mexican farmers to come to the United States
for work. During the Bracero program, “more than 4.5 million Mexican workers circulated in and out of the United States as *braceros*” (Fernández and Massey 2007: 106). After the Bracero program officially ended, Mexican workers who had succeeded in farming in the host nation and had become foremen began to recruit more young Mexican laborers to work in the country. With the support of the United Farm Workers (UFW), which helped to increase wages and off-season unemployment insurance benefits, more Mexican workers were enticed to become seasonal laborers. The UFW was also known for initiating and succeeding at strikes for higher wages. They had leverage as the employers were still paying these migrant workers less than they would have to pay American workers.

The Refugee Act of 1980 redefined who would be considered a refugee upon entrance to America and expanded the number of asylum seekers allowed to enter legally. In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act sought to control farm worker wages and benefits as well as allowing employers to find other means of recruiting workers at lower costs to themselves. It was a means of controlling and deterring unauthorized immigration while also legalizing 2.7 million undocumented immigrants, especially those that had arrived before 1982 (Goodwin 2013). Because of the mass legalization under this bill, people viewed it as simply providing amnesty to undocumented immigrants. Since these 2.7 million immigrants were now given legal status, they were able to return home to visit their families. In 1985-1986 the Special Agricultural Worker program allowed for laborers who had been working for at least 90 days to apply for immigration status. The workers were very enthusiastic about this program, but the U.S. did not foresee or have the means to control how many applications they would receive. One million Mexicans
were legalized under this program. This program did not only fail to manage the flow of migrants but it showed the Mexicans trying to cross the border that they could enter with falsified papers much more easily and that they could also bring their families (Martin 2001: 34). In the early 1980s about 25% of hired farm work was done by unauthorized migrants. By the late 1980s, the number had dropped to about 10%, but that number began to rapidly rise throughout the 1990s (Martin 2001: 34).

The Immigration Act of 1990 increased the immigration cap intended to promote more legal or authorized entry of migrants. It also continued to allow for family reunification, more skilled migrant entry, and implemented a lottery system. In the 1980s and 1990s the quantity of Mexican women immigrating grew substantially, as did the number of entire families who would cross the border together. However, as anti-immigrant sentiment grew, government officials sought to create other policies to prevent immigrants from entering, to control for skilled migrant entry, and to limit social welfare benefits that migrants would receive. As the United States tried to decrease the number of immigrants entering the country, Mexico’s economy was experiencing chaos. This type of crisis only drove more Mexicans towards emigration from Mexico.

**Mexican Financial Crisis**

Between 1978 and 1981 Mexico’s economy was booming, with growth at about 8.4% per year (Alba). However, in 1982 this growth came to a halt and reversed. The import substitution industrialization method, government control, and protectionism that Mexico had employed seemed to have run their course and were no longer the means for development. Mexico’s crisis was one of foreign debt and in 1982 the government took back control of the banks. In order to pay back debts, Mexico’s strategy was to cut as

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3 See Francisco Alba, “Mexico’s 1982 Economic Crisis.”
much spending as possible. However, this led to wage decreases and to high inflation as
the peso was devalued. By 1983 GDP per capita was 10% less than it was in 1981 (Alba, pg. 1224). There were no real improvements or solutions to this crisis until 1986.

Between 1981 and 1986, the desire to emigrate from Mexico was high. A financial crisis acts as a push factor driving people to emigrate from Mexico to a wealthy nation like the U.S., where they felt they could receive better wages and work, which would allow them to have a higher standard of living. This caused the United States to tighten its border in fear of massive numbers of Mexicans seeking to enter the country. America also sought to expel as many Mexican nationals as possible. In 1986, Mexico signed onto the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the predecessor to the WTO, and also opened up its economy and trade markets. Throughout the rest of the 1980s and up until the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed, Mexico struggled to grow its economy and to change its policy to allow for trade liberalization and a properly functioning government.

Summary

There has been a clear shift in United States immigration policy towards Mexico. The Bracero program enticed workers to immigrate in vast numbers while more recent policy has deterred and prevented Mexican immigrants from entering the country. It had become exceedingly more difficult for Mexicans to gain the proper documentation in order to legally enter the country, therefore many chose to enter without documentation. Although the U.S. sought Mexican labor because it is less costly than recruited local labor, it is clear that the United States Government was fearful in the 1980s and early 1990s that too much Mexican immigration would not be beneficial. America seems to
desire cheap labor but does not want to have to provide abundant or prolonged social services to the Mexicans who are entering the country.

*Historical Context and Migration Policy: Cuba*

Between April and October of 1980, almost 125,000 Cuban migrants reached Southern Florida. These immigrants had traveled on what became known as the Mariel Boatlifts, Los Marielitos, or Freedom Flotillas. Fidel Castro, at first had not allowed for this mass exodus, but then he used it as a way to cleanse the Cuban population of unwanted segments. Although the first wave of Marielitos consisted of those migrants seeking political freedom, Castro then used the boatlifts as a way to forcibly remove those whom he found to be threats to his regime. These groups included criminals, homosexuals, and those considered to be mentally ill. These groups were labeled the “social undesirables” (Cavender and Hufker 1990: 321). It is important to understand why this type of refugee mass emigration from Cuba was so unusual at the time, and to explain the historical context from both the Cuban and American perspectives.

**1959-1980**

Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba in 1959 after the Cuban Revolution, which transformed a capitalist Cuba into a socialist nation. By 1959, Cuba was aligned with Soviet Russia, making it disliked by the communist-fearing United States. Cuba was in a massive recession at the time of Castro’s ascent to power, and Castro promised to alleviate some of this pressure. While there were many attempts by different groups of Cubans to overthrow Castro’s regime, none were successful. The United States had also attempted to overthrow Castro, but it failed. In 1961, Cuban exiles, funded by the U.S. Government, were slaughtered in a bungled operation called ‘The Bay of Pigs,’ and in
1962, the U.S. engaged in what was called “The Cuban Missile Crisis.” A United States trade embargo was put in place as part of the Cold War rhetoric and anti-communist attitude. “The U.S. embargo, in effect since 1962, prohibited routine cross-border visits to, as well as investment in and trade with, Cuba” (Eckstein 2006: 144). For this reason, the U.S. actually welcomed Cuban immigrants because they were seen to shun Communism and champion democracy.

There were many programs developed between 1959 and 1980 by both Cuba and the U.S. to either allow or permit Cuban immigration. It is important to note that especially before 1980, many of the Cuban immigrants that entered were among the elite classes in Cuba and sought to flee Castro’s repressive regime. This early cohort became known as the “Golden Exiles.” They were well educated and came with high levels of human capital (Eckstein 2006: 144). These immigrants were able to integrate and do well in America. The Cuban Refugee Program, which began in 1961, had helped these higher strata immigrants to resettle and “provided job training, placement services, schooling, and English language classes” for them (Eckstein 2006: 144). Many of these immigrants also benefited from a low taxation program and through working with the CIA on an anti-communist project. These programs enticed Cuban intellectuals by making anti-communist sentiment the key common factor. The United States was willing to treat other anti-communists exceptionally well to fight for their cause. There was continued success after 1966 due to the Cuban Adjustment Act, which allowed Cubans to qualify for resident and green card status after living at least one year on United States soil, regardless of their documentation status on entry. This was beneficial to the Cubans

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4 The information gathered for the beginning of this section was from the Dominguez article, which will be cited at the end of this paper.
entering at this time because it helped ease their fear of deportation and guaranteed them access to institutions.

However, while these programs did help a fair number of Cuban immigrants to integrate and succeed in the host nation, there were drawbacks to their achievements. Castro’s regime, in 1965 to 1973, banned the legal exodus of high skilled professionals from Cuba. So while the 1966 law allowed for the undocumented immigrants to qualify for legal status, exodus of highly-skilled Cubans was deterred. In their place came Cuban refugees with much lower levels of education and skills. “Most of the new adult male immigrants were semi- or un-skilled blue-collar workers or in clerical or sales occupations” (Zavodny 2003: 203). Between 1973 and 1975 there was a smaller wave of Cuban immigrants who came to the United States. Many of these immigrants had been working in Spain or were workers in the service sector in Cuba. After 1975, and until the Mariel boatlifts of 1980, migration from Cuba to America had just about come to a halt. Most intellectuals who were able to leave Cuba had reached America and the laws made it difficult Cubans of lower socio-economic status to have the ability to emigrate from Cuba. However, although immigration numbers at this time were low, the previous entrants had already created a Cuban enclave in Miami. Although the new entrants from 1980 onward were of a different socioeconomic status, Miami was still the entry point for these immigrants such that the enclave continued to be utilized and to grow.

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5 Madeline Zavodny focuses on Cuban reception in the United States based on race. There are both Caucasian and Black Cubans. Her study focuses on why Caucasian Cubans were vastly more successful than Black Cubans. This paper will control for race. I will be looking at overall success rates of Cubans not based on their race.
The Mariel Boatlifts began officially on April 21, 1980 after a group of Cubans sought refuge in the Peruvian embassy in Cuba. The embassy agreed to provide rations to the Cubans who left Cuba from Mariel Harbor on fishing boats and small vessels for the United States. On April 22, 1980 Cuba opened its coast to those who desired to leave. Throughout the end of April and beginning of June of that year, Cuban refugees continued to enter through both Key West and Miami, Florida in vast numbers. It was difficult for some of the rafts and vessels to travel from Cuba to Florida due to poor weather conditions and mixed messages between the U.S. and Cuban governments, but the refugees continued to pour into American harbors.

The United States initially welcomed the Cuban immigrants from the Mariel Boatlifts as political refugees. The Refugee Act of 1980 furthered the 1966 law to allow for asylum seekers and refugees to enter, although it required new arrivals to apply for political asylum and did not categorize them as refugees immediately. Castro made it clear that he wanted to rid Cuba of “undesirable” people or those that he felt posed a threat to his regime. Therefore, the attitude of Americans toward the people arriving on its soil changed. Although in reality only 5% of the immigrants fit into Castro’s “undesirable category,” this label created a stigma for Cuban immigrants, in general. This negative association had the effect of complicating the resettlement effort, because the new wave of Cubans was not accepted or easily integrated into American society.

Ultimately, this group gained more comfort in staying spatially concentrated with other Cubans in enclaves (Cavender and Hufker 1990: 322). During the early 1980s, the U.S.

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6 This information is gathered from the United States Coast Guard website and will be included in the “works cited” section of this paper.
Government demanded that Cuba repatriate those immigrants who had entered that were considered “excludables” (Dominguez 1994: 167). These people had been convicted of a serious crime in Cuba or who had committed a crime in America. By the end of 1984, Cuba agreed to repatriate about 2,700 of these people in exchange for more regulated migration relations. Between 1985 and 1987, these migration regulations had essentially ceased to function and the U.S. and Cuba still faced a stalemate much like that between the America and the Soviet Union.

However, when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, its relationship with Cuba also ended. The acceleration of Cuba’s economic decline occurred when the Soviet Union no longer had the means to provide financial support. Cuba’s imports and exports dropped significantly. While Castro did reallocate resources to keep the public health sector and education sector strong, this led to the deterioration of other aspects of infrastructure, such as transportation and roadways. As Cuba’s economy continued to fail, the education system and public health sector did as well.

Through charismatic speeches from government officials, including Castro, and by making promises to the Cuban people that the government would in fact provide them with a better life, the Cuban government continued to promote its nationalistic appeal. Between the Bush and Clinton presidencies, the U.S. instilled what was known as the Cuban Democracy Act, which was supposed to inform Cubans as to why the Cuban regime was not going to keep its promises and why Cubans should not continue to support Castro. It was also supposed to open up communication between America and Cuba so that the U.S. could try to influence Cuban policy from abroad. In 1993 America started to investigate human rights abuses in Cuba and also discussed sanctions.
However, one of the issues with sanctioning Cuba, especially in terms of food goods, is that people believed the U.S. was trying to starve the Cuban population.

In September of 1994, the United States and Cuba drafted the Cuban Migration Agreement. This was developed to allow “safe, orderly, and legal migration” from Cuba to America (Wasem 2009: 2). This agreement required that Cuba try to prevent undocumented immigration and to use persuasive methods to prevent people from trying to leave Cuba. As Cuba became poorer and the people who lived there continued to suffer, it was clear that Cuba needed to provide support to its residents to help allow and convince them it was a safe place for them to stay. The United States agreed to accept 20,000 Cubans at a minimum each year (Wasem 2009). Both nations agreed to allow for safe repatriation to Cuba for voluntary immigrants. However, few people (far less than 20,000 per year) actually qualified for this program, which was geared towards family reunification and towards skilled workers (Wasem 2009). Therefore, America began to use other laws to allow people who may not qualify as refugees to enter the country.

Summary

It is clear that the relations between the United States and Cuba were shaky during this time period. After the Mariel Boatlifts, there was no real legal emigration from Cuba to America, although those who managed to arrive were given refugee status. The Cuban government stigmatized Cubans who wanted to leave and penalized those who had economic and social ties to America (Eckstein 2006: 144). Cuba’s economy remained stagnant and the United States debated how it should handle the powerful Castro Regime. Although emigration outside of the implemented programs remained illegal, there were still significant numbers of people who fled Cuba. By the late 1980’s, 7% of Cuba’s
population had come to the United States (Eckstein 2006: 144). By 1989 the number of Cubans entering the U.S. by boatlift was in the hundreds. However, by 1993, this number was back up to the thousands (Wasem 2009: 1). With the declining resources and rising issues in Cuba, the population that entered during and after the boatlifts was not nearly as educated or high in human capital as those who arrived before.
**Documentation Status Comparison**

*Introduction: Defining Documented and Undocumented Immigration*

Many groups of migrants move across and within borders. The term ‘migrant’ can be defined as a person who engages in spatial movement and settlement. The term ‘immigrant,’ however, denotes a person who moves across national borders with the intention of settling in that host nation. Immigrants enter a host country either with or without documentation. The term “documented immigrant” denotes a person who enters a host country with the proper paperwork, such as a visa or with refugee status. Gretchen Livingston defines a legally documented immigrant as “having a green card, or being a bracero/contract worker, a citizen, an amnesty or Silva letter respondent, or a participant in the Agricultural Workers Program” (2006: 52). There are multiple types of visas; and the types of visas and paperwork can change each year. Alejandro Portes and Rüben Rumbaut outline the ways newcomers can legally enter the U.S. These migrants enter with documentation either as temporary or permanent immigrants or with refugee status as asylees. Documented migrants can enter using family reunification preferences or as contract laborers (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 22). Unlike those immigrants who enter a host country with the proper paperwork, other immigrants are either forced or choose to enter without documentation or become undocumented by over-staying their visas.

At the time of the Bracero program, the United States opened its doors to labor migrants. This action enticed many people to enter and seek labor in America. Over the
years, the U.S. has changed its policies on immigration and the number of immigrants that can enter the nation, based, in part, on the country from which they are emigrating. Programs such as the Bracero program allowed migrants to enter with documentation. When an immigrant has the proper documentation and paperwork they do not have to fear deportation and can enjoy the rights and privileges offered by that host country. However, when an immigrant lacks documentation, they may live in fear of being deported to their home country and they are not able to benefit from the same liberties and privileges that documented immigrants have. In a set of interviews with Mexican immigrants who had been granted asylum when the IRCA passed in 1986, Liz Goodwin discusses the impact of receiving documentation status on the outlook of migrants (Goodwin 2013). Ben, an immigrant who entered the U.S. in 1977 and received amnesty in 1986, explains that lacking documentation makes people feel like criminals and that they are treated like criminals. However, documentation, he claims, allows them to know they will be able to stay with their families. Examples such as this show the importance of documentation and its impact on the treatment of the immigrant by American society and its impact on an immigrant’s mental and emotional health.

Certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities are associated with residing in America. These factors can change based on an immigrants documentation status. If an immigrant enters with documentation they enter without the stigma associated with being undocumented. Immigrants with a lack of “papers, [live in] constant threat of deportation” (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 6). The U.S. provides different types of visas to different immigrants, depending on their reason for entry. Opportunities are different in terms of work and education without documentation. Undocumented immigrants are not
provided with the same social and federal services as documented immigrants (though this aid has been severely reduced since Proposition 187 passed in 1996). Without documentation, immigrants “cannot even take the first step toward assimilation” (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 13). However, obtaining refugee status or filing for political asylum can change these factors and open the doors for immigrants to more services and opportunities. Wellbeing is higher if an immigrant has documentation while not having to live in fear of deportation. Access to the formal labor market can help speed the process of assimilation as an immigrant can work their way up in terms of economic mobility. In addition, documentation status can help to allow immigrants to seek a higher education, which can push assimilation and greater wellbeing.

There are different categorizations of undocumented immigrants that have conflicting and stigmatized meanings. An undocumented immigrant can simply be a migrant who chooses to enter a country without documentation. This individual may cross the border with the help of a smuggler known as a “coyote” or by other means such as falsified documents. Once across the border, the goal is to remain undetected by U.S. law enforcement until a person receives proper documentation that would allow them to stay in the country. Another type of undocumented immigrant is a person who entered with proper documentation but has since allowed that paperwork to lapse, so it is no longer valid. For example, a person can enter a country on a tourist, business, or student visa, which allows that an individual to stay in the U.S. for a set number of months. The person may then choose to stay in America, even after that documentation has lapsed.

Other undocumented immigrants may be those who are refugees. Kivisto distinguishes refugees from other immigrants based on their lack of ability to choose to
migrate, explaining that refugees are forced migrants (2010: 52). Refugee status is established collectively, not individually. Upon arrival to a host country, refugees do not have documentation, but they are permitted to stay in that host country, given the danger of their circumstances back home. In contrast, asylum seekers chose to migrate on an individual basis because they feel forced to leave their home country due to some sort of danger or risk associated with staying in their home nation. Upon arrival in a host country, the asylum seeker must apply for refugee status and convince that country that they cannot return home due to this imminent danger.

Refugees can be further distinguished from other types of immigrants. Kalena E. Cortes distinguishes refugees from economic migrants. In her view, refugee migrants are “individuals fleeing persecution in their home country,” while economic migrants are “individuals searching for better jobs and economic security” (2004: 465). Upon fleeing a home country the refugee does so without documentation and due to the circumstances in their home nations, they may not be able to sustain transnational networks with contacts back home. Because refugees lack the ability to return home, they “may be more inclined to invest in country-specific human capital” (165). Cortes argues that upon arrival to a host country, a refugee earns less than an economic immigrant, but that they have faster economic growth, which leads them to surpass the economic immigrant in terms of the accumulation of human capital. Cortes concludes, “Refugee immigrants in 1980 earned 6% less and worked 14 fewer hours than economic migrants [but] by 1990 refugee migrants had made greater gains” (2004: 478). Given that Cubans are classified as refugees while Mexicans, many of whom enter without documentation, are labeled as
economic migrants, this statistic shows that those who enter with refugee status, like the Cubans, have higher long term achievements than economic migrants.

While authors such as Portes and Bach have argued that Cuban success is driven by their access to an economic ethnic enclave and entrepreneurialism whereas Mexicans have been stuck in the secondary labor market, Stephen Wallace states that scholars such as Thomas Sowell argue that Mexicans have lagged behind Cubans in their rate of assimilation due to their lower levels of cultural and educational attainment that they enter America with. In contrast, Wallace states that Silvia Pedraza argues that the reason Cubans have outperformed Mexican immigrants is due to their documentation status, which allows them to work in the mainstream economy. Wallace explains that Pedraza classifies Mexicans as economic immigrants while Cubans are viewed as political immigrants. Pedraza believes that U.S. Government policy towards each group of immigrants that has either promoted or hindered their achievements (Wallace 1986). The following section of this paper will investigate whether Pedraza’s theory holds true for specifically Cuban and Mexican immigrants. If it does, legal documentation status, which was granted to Cubans as refugees between 1980 and 1994 and offered to only a fraction of Mexican laborers who arrived as economic immigrants, could be seen as a significant factor contributing to the higher rates of Cuban immigrant’s upward mobility in comparison to that of the Mexican immigrant population.

**Mexican Immigrants and Documentation Status**

*The Changing Status of Bracero Laborers*

As previously discussed, Mexican immigrants are often classified as economic immigrants. Most choose to migrate to find a better job, wages, and lifestyle. While
conditions at home may force a person to leave, generally Mexicans are not granted political asylum. In addition, Mexico’s proximity to America, even with enforced border patrol, makes border crossing more feasible. At the time of the Bracero program, male workers entered the U.S. with temporary documentation as laborers. After the program ended, however, many of these workers chose to stay and seek other jobs. They had already established network ties and experienced life outside of Mexico. As Gretchen Livingston points out, their staying in America transformed them from documented into undocumented workers who “use kin networks [to gain] formal sector employment” (Livingston 2006: 49). Livingston goes on to say that there is a positive outcome when undocumented Mexican immigrants use networks to find employment, however, it can be detrimental for documented Mexican workers to use their kinship networks to find employment in the formal sector. As the Bracero workers’ status changed from documented to undocumented, they had to use any ties they had previously established to gain access to labor.

*Changing Policy and Changing Documentation Status: Effects on Settlement*

Throughout the decade from 1980 until the end of 1993, policy along the U.S.-Mexico border created apprehension for those who tried to enter American territory. The border was permeable, and border patrol agents were told to apprehend those who crossed over and to send them back to Mexico. Officials believed that strict border control would deter the immigrants from trying to enter or re-enter America. However, studies have found this was not the case. Instead, migrants who failed to enter safely and were sent back to Mexico simply tried to cross once again within a few days (Brownell 2001: 70). In 1986, the Reagan Administration passed the Immigration Reform and
Control Act, which legalized 2.7 million undocumented immigrants and dedicated additional resources towards greater border enforcement. However, this effort did not deter undocumented migrants from attempting to enter America. Peter Brownell distinguishes between two groups of undocumented Mexican immigrants: those who are temporary immigrants who enter for work and leave their families behind in Mexico, and those who seek to settle permanently. Women are more likely to desire permanent settlement, while men are more likely to return home (2001: 73). As border patrols become more stringent, immigrants are more likely to stay in America for longer periods in order to avoid being apprehended. This dynamic creates settlement patterns that are more fixed and is less likely to encourage return or circular migration.

In contrast to the research done on undocumented migrants, Peter Brownell, Slobadan Djaji, and Douglas Massey (1981) also investigate the economic drive of documented immigrants. They conclude that temporary labor migrants who enter the U.S. with documentation “may take into account the purchasing power of the wage earned in the receiving country and the purchasing power of the portion he can save to spend in his home country” (Brownell 2001: 81). These documented immigrants seek work in America, but they desire to bring their earnings home to improve their lives when they return. Massey argues that while “legal status clearly facilitates settlement by removing the barriers to employment and opportunity,” documentation itself does not lead to settlement. Rather, it is settlement that leads to a greater desire for documentation (1987: 1392). Massey concludes that economic immigrants are more likely to settle in the U.S. if they do not own land in Mexico, do not have a stable job in Mexico, and do not have a family in Mexico to return to.
To further compare Mexican documented and undocumented immigrants, Leo R. Chavez (1985) bases levels of achievement on household activity of each group. He makes two conclusions. The first is that documented Mexican immigrants start ahead of their undocumented counterparts by being able to gain access to the formal labor market and societal benefits and government assistance. However, over time, undocumented Mexican immigrants are able to catch up to their documented counterparts in terms of social and economic achievement after going through many additional steps. The second conclusion Chavez makes is that documented immigrants have a more stable home life than those without documentation, which allows them to integrate faster into American society. In addition, since the 1982 financial crisis in Mexico, more Mexicans were enticed to stay in the U.S., even if undocumented, because a return trip from Mexico would be more costly. The economic crisis served to enhance their desire to save earnings as well. Again, the longer undocumented immigrants remain in America the more likely they are to bring their families to the country where they now reside.

*Documentation and Networking*

When looking at how documentation status affects Mexican immigrants by gender, Gretchen Livingston’s study, which uses data collected from 1982 to 2003, explains that Mexican women, in the early 1990s, were more likely than men to be documented. Forty Four percent of women were documented while only 36% of males were documented (2006: 54). This may reflect levels of education where females had at least 8 years of formal education in Mexico and males had 7 years. Females were also more proficient in English than their male counterparts. Men tended to travel more than women and to take more trips back and forth from Mexico. A conclusion might be drawn
that Mexican males are more likely to draw on family networks to gain access to employment because of their lack of documentation and circular migration patterns. Conversely, females with documentation may be seen as less likely to use network ties to gain access to the labor force, since they would be eligible for work in the market economy. However, Livingston found that being documented does not reduce the usage of networks. Instead, having documentation allows Mexican immigrants to “take full advantage of the information available through migrant networks” (2006: 58). Livingston also concluded that when Mexican females use ethnic networks, it actually hinders their performance, which she measures as income. She argues that it is to the Mexicans females’ benefit to find work in the formal sector rather than drawing on ethnic networks to find employment.

Effects of Documentation Status on Labor Market Participation

The 1980 Census indicates that only 9.8% of Mexican males and 8.3% of females, ages 25 to 55 and living in California had some college education (Wallace 1986: 662).7 Those who filled out the census would most likely have been documented immigrants. In contrast, the undocumented immigrants are not identified in the census. However, it can be presumed that the same percentages, if not lower percentages of Mexican undocumented immigrants had some college education given that levels of education can be used as a variable to means to obtain a visa to enter America. In addition, in 1980, 28.9% of Mexicans living in California were living in poverty (Wallace 1986: 667). According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Mexicans had the highest unemployment rates of all

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7 Steven P. Wallace gathered the information obtained by the 1980 U.S. Census done in the state of California. He published his study in 1986 which compared Mexican immigrants to Central American immigrants.
Hispanic sub-groups and 25.7% of Mexican families lived in poverty (Suárez-Orozco 1995: 50).

Data gathered by Leo R. Chavez (1985) separates Mexican immigrants by documentation status. He finds that there are vast differences in human capital between documented and undocumented Mexican immigrants. In his study, undocumented Mexican immigrants spend approximately a quarter of the time in the U.S. as documented Mexican immigrants. This is partially due to the fact that a lack of documentation does not induce migrants to settle in a host country. In addition, some traveled with temporary work visas and as those visas expired, the migrant’s status would become undocumented, again enticing them to make the return trip to Mexico. Overall, Chavez notes that undocumented migrants have much lower English language capabilities, are ten or more years younger in age, and while they have about the same amount of years of education, they have much lower literacy rates in English (Chavez 1985: 315). Another important factor was the contrast in earnings and buying potential between undocumented and documented workers. Chavez found that the average income level undocumented families was $9,359 per year, while documented families incomes was $13,281, and only 3.8% of undocumented families owned a house, while 29.8% of documented Mexican families were homeowners (1985: 315). Furthermore, there is a stark contrast between male and female immigrants. Chavez found that 47.5% of documented women were currently working at the time of his study, while 63.5% of undocumented women were currently employed (1985: 315).

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8 Leo R. Chavez published his study on Mexican immigrants in the U.S. in 1985. His data was collected between March of 1981 and February of 1982.
Given that documented immigrants have a greater advantage in gaining access to the formal labor market, undocumented immigrants would be more likely to work in the secondary labor market due to their lack of human capital and documentation. Chavez provides the percentages of undocumented and documented Mexican immigrants working in certain labor market sectors and measures this by gender. The largest labor market sector, regardless of documentation status, is the service sector. However, significantly more documented males work in agriculture, construction and manufacturing. In addition, while no undocumented men work in the professional or public service sectors, there are small but meaningful percentages of documented males who do work in these sectors. Again, there is a contrast between males and females throughout these sectors. But what is perhaps the most revealing statistic is that while 36.5% of undocumented females are not participating in the labor market in any given sector, 52.5% of documented Mexican females were not participating either (Chavez 1985: 315). This indicates that documentation status may allow families to earn enough income that females are not required to participate in the market economy or contribute to the household income. On the other hand, it may be more necessary for undocumented females to supplement household income, as shown by their higher levels of engagement in the workforce.

*The Stigma Associated With a Lack of Documentation*

The stigma associated with being an undocumented immigrant can take an emotional and economical toll on the individual migrant. In an interview highlighted by Liz Goodwin’s study, Petra, a female Mexican immigrant granted refugee status by the IRCA, explains how the fear of living without documentation forced her to avoid taking
advantage of American social service programs. She explained, “We work really hard and we never went to the public to ask for help” (Goodwin 2013) She thought that if she asked for assistance, the government would know she was undocumented and then would exclude her from mass legalization programs such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986. Peter Brownell explains this sentiment of fear to ask for assistance, He argues, “Even when laws do technically offer undocumented workers protection, few are willing to seek the help of the state, given their presence in violation of immigration law” (Brownell 2001: 83). The undocumented immigrants are aware that they are not legally permitted to be in the U.S., and they associate their lack of legal status with their avoidance to seek assistance from the U.S. Government. In addition, their employers may exploit this fear by giving lower wages and fewer worker benefits to the undocumented laborers, knowing they will not go to authorities to complain.

The IRCA, which legalized 2.7 million undocumented immigrants, actually enhanced this wage gap. According to Brownell before the IRCA was passed, undocumented and documented Mexican workers received the same minimum wages. However, after the IRCA was passed, undocumented workers received 28% less in wages in order to deter undocumented migrants from entering America, as there was a smaller economic incentive (Brownell 2001: 83). This would make having legal documentation that much more important and worthwhile in terms of income. In addition, as new laws were implemented in America that sanctioned employers for hiring undocumented workers, a stipulation of the IRCA and of the Immigration Act of 1990, those immigrants who lacked documentation were forced to look elsewhere for work or accept whatever means of labor they could obtain where their legal status would be overlooked or ignored.
In contrast, another of Goodwin’s interviewees, Ubaldo, a Mexican male who was 26 years old when he received amnesty under the IRCA, explains the feeling of gaining documentation. “[I felt] like a million dollars,” he explained. “I knew that I was going to get a better future” (Goodwin 2013). This personal feeling of security can give an immigrant the drive to work toward a higher standard of living instead of having to live in fear as an undocumented migrant. As Ubaldo explained, Los Angeles is a very crowded city and it is difficult to get a job there, even if a person is documented. Lacking documentation, therefore, would make it that much more difficult to obtain good work. In addition, having documentation allows migrants to return home and visit their family, which is very comforting. Once documented, a person can utilize family reunification programs offered, while undocumented immigrants do not have this option (Chavez 1985: 308). Similarly, in an interview illustrated by Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, interviewee Maria clearly explained that if she were unable to receive documentation, she would simply go home to be reunited with her family (1995: 55). Therefore, undocumented immigrants may have more desire to return home if they are unable to bring their families across the border and settle.

The passing of the IRCA in 1986 provides an excellent benchmark for how documentation directly affected unauthorized immigrants in the 1980s. A study published by Sherrie Kossoudji and Deborah Cobb-Clark looked at the outcomes of the IRCA for Mexican male workers and how their newly received documentation affected their employment and incomes. The study found that “Legalization tends to promote mobility into occupations in which the unauthorized penalty in the previous periods was relatively large” (2000: 87). In other words, on receiving proper documentation, Mexican males
were able to seek work in sectors that they previously perceived to be too risky. With documentation, factors such as risk of deportation would not interfere with their ability to work. Before the IRCA, undocumented male workers sought work in the margins of the labor market. However, when the authors compare responses of jobs held before and after the IRCA passed, there were significant differences. There were notable increases in the numbers of those working as cooks, machine operators, masons, and in sales, while there were significant decreases in the number of immigrants working as farm workers, food counter occupations, and gardeners. Seventy percent of those interviewed experienced some sort of mobility after 1986 (2000: 88). The study also found that documented immigrants tend to be older, have a higher proficiency in English, and their wages also tend to be over $1.00 more per hour (2000: 90). This comparison of male workers who were undocumented before 1986 with those who were documented and interviewed again in 1992 shows a vast difference in an immigrant’s ability to be upwardly mobile when documentation status is taken into account.

Summary

It is clear that for Mexican immigrants, documentation status does matter. There is a consistent and vast wage and income gap between those who have and do not have legal documentation. Interviews about the effects of the IRCA further clarify the importance of documentation as a means towards upward mobility. Without documentation, Mexican immigrants are more likely to desire to return home to their families and invest the funds they earned in America in Mexico. In addition, documentation allows Mexican immigrants to live without the constant fear of deportation. Having an authorized status promotes upward mobility of Mexican
immigrants and laborers because they are able to access jobs in the mainstream economy
and resources provided by the U.S. Government, as well as through their own ethnic
networks established in the United States.

*Cuban Immigrants and Documentation Status*

*A Comparison of Those Who Arrived Before 1980 and in 1980 and After*

Since Fidel Castro assumed office as the political leader of Cuba, relations
between the United States and Cuba were persistently uneasy. Before the Refugee Act of
1980, the only Cubans who were permitted in the U.S. as refugees were “former political
prisoners and their families [as well as those] involving family reunification” (Palmieri
1980: 701). In 1980, thousands of Cubans risked their lives to migrate and did so without
the proper screening or documentation. The U.S. was not prepared for the large influx of
Cuban immigrants. Upon initial arrival, it was proposed that Cubans be given 60 days to
settle and then upon the end of those first 60 days had to apply for political asylum. This
was in contrast with the procedure for those who had arrived before 1980. These earlier
Cubans were treated as political refugees fleeing Castro’s regime, which appeared to
indicate that they were anti-Communists. However, the Carter Administration decided to
not grant automatic refugee status to the Cubans who arrived on the Marielitos. Instead,
the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1984 granted them residency status (Nackrud et al. 1999:
186). In addition, policy towards Cuban immigrants classified these immigrants as
refugees based on “anti-Communist political agenda” (1999: 177). Cubans arriving
before 1980 had a “major and positive impact on the economy of southern Florida” and
were received well by their new hosts (Mitchell 1992: 81). In contrast, those who arrived
on the Mariel boatlifts in 1980 were stigmatized by the American population and the
former Cuban immigrants. They had a lower educational and socio-economic standing, while others had been released from prison or mental hospitals. These factors made it difficult for Americans to accept these immigrants as refugees.

The Carter Administration panicked and tried to enforce sanctions upon those who facilitated Cuban entry via the boatlifts. However, as Cubans continued to pour into U.S. harbors, they were given temporary residency status and were allowed to obtain work and some federal assistance. Once Castro halted all exodus from Cuba in September of 1980, the U.S. was able to reflect and determine the best policy to implement for the 125,000 Cuban entrants (as well as a multitude of Haitian entrants). “Ultimately, all ‘entrants’ were able to adjust their status to more secure immigration categories” (Mitchell 1992: 84). Instead of being formally classified as refugees, the term ‘entrants’ was applied to incoming Cuban migrants, although they still were required to apply for asylum, which was basically guaranteed for Marielitos. After 1980, the U.S. allowed a few thousand Cuban refugees to enter each year, but no mass exodus would follow, especially related to seaborne entry. By 1987, the United States agreed to accept 20,000 Cubans per year who had registered for visas in Havana. This policy was normalized, or made consistent with American policy on immigration towards other Caribbean nations.

*Defining the Cuban Migrant in 1980*

Those deemed refugees were viewed differently from other immigrants. Unlike the economic immigrants entering from Mexico, Cuban refugees were viewed as those who are involuntary migrants or who were forced by a communist regime to uproot themselves and their families in order to enter a host country. Many Cubans who entered the U.S. categorized themselves as exiles. Once they left their homeland, they were
unsure if they would be allowed to return to Cuba, because Castro viewed those who left as dissidents. In addition, those who arrived before 1980 were more highly skilled and educated, and therefore were seen as more beneficial to the American economy. Conversely, those who came in 1980 and after were less skilled and given less assistance than the prior immigrants. For example, between 1959 and 1962, only 8% of entrants were considered to be unskilled, while in 1980, the number of incoming, unskilled Cubans rose to 45% (Pedraza 1985: 13). However, given the skill and education levels of the early arrivals from Cuba, they were able to construct enclaves and their own businesses. Their status as refugees along with assistance programs provided, substantially aided them in their efforts to gain mobility.

According to Pedraza, Robert Bach studied those immigrants who arrived via the Mariel boatlifts and concluded that although the new entrants were stigmatized based on their lower education and social status, and their reputation as “undesirables,” these immigrants were actually “‘from the mainstream Cuban economy’ and hardly scum” (Pedraza 1985: 25). Thus, these Cuban immigrants had enough skills to be mobile regardless of their stigmatization. There were many teachers who entered in 1980s, though the majority of entrants were blue-collar workers. Furthermore, like the Mexican immigrants arriving around 1980, this group of Cubans consisted of young males who were single, or were household heads who left their families behind (Pedraza 1985: 26). These entrants added to the lower strata of Cuban migrants and were clearly distinguished from the previous entrants who were deemed to be highly successful in America.
The Cuban path to integration and mobilization

While the Cubans who had immigrated to America before 1980 felt nostalgia for the Cuba they left behind, the new arrivals were ambivalent about a Cuba that currently existed. They had seen the deterioration of Cuba during Castro’s regime and experienced the negative effects on their own lives. Upon arrival, therefore, they were willing to work hard to rebuild their lives. Susan Eckstein explains that while the Marielitos were considered to be refugees in terms of their documentation status, they were, in fact, economic immigrants (2002: 799). While the previous arrivals did maintain some dislike of the new arrivals because of their differing reasons for entering and their different levels of human and social capital, many were willing to help their co-nationals by providing them with jobs and other assistance. An enclave such as Miami, which is discussed in the next section of this paper, offered the new Cuban arrivals a place of comfort to settle. In general, enclaves provide immigrants insulation from the segmented labor market, which consists of the “oligopolistic segment” or bureaucratic segment that is a highly controlled environment and of local or regional enterprise which may operate in “considerable economic uncertainty” and therefore lacks job security (Portes and Bach 1985: 16, 17) Cuban refugee status gave them the ability to work in the formal labor market, which further moved them away from the secondary labor market. While the concept of co-nationals working together is clearly beneficial to new immigrants, Cuban refugee documentation status along with governmental assistance programs had significantly allowed them to build this community.

In addition, their legal status “included federal assistance in areas such as resettlement, job training, education, housing, Medicare, and social welfare benefits”
(Nackerud et al. 1999: 177). The Refugee Act of 1980 combined this federal assistance with humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, the new wave of immigrants was more enmeshed in transnational ties than previous immigrants. They sought to use their documentation status, assistance from the government, and enclave ties to help them sustain these transnational ties. While Cubans were less likely able to afford to visit the U.S. from Cuba, Cubans in America sought to accumulate the financial means to eventually visit their families in Cuba, although U.S.-Cuban policy only permitted Cubans to visit Cuba twice a year. This policy contrasted starkly with Mexicans, who either risked trips home without documentation or freely traveled to and from Mexico once they gained documentation. The Marielitos, who lived in Cuba throughout the Castro regime and were able to see the deterioration of Cuba, tended want to help rebuild Cuba as much as possible. As Madeline Zavodny explains, “Political refugees, such as Cuban immigrants, may have greater incentives to adapt to the US labor market than other immigrants because their likelihood of return migration is relatively low” (2003: 217). Many Cubans sent remittances home almost immediately upon arrival in America. While they may have taken socially inferior jobs in the U.S. as compared to those they had in Cuba, their income vastly increased so that sending remittances was a possibility.

Refugee Benefits and Statistics of Success

Given the collective animosity towards the Marielitos, the question of Cuban success comes into question. Negative sentiment and stigma did impede the Marielitos and other Cuban immigrants following resettlement. Therefore, it is important to investigate the actual effects of refugee status on economic and social outcomes instead of looking solely at negative feelings towards them. The Refugee Assistance Act of 1980
provided social assistance to Cubans as well as other refugees (Aguirre 1994: 166). Although the Cubans who arrived in 1980 were not considered refugees immediately, they were still able to benefit from some assistance programs. In addition, although many Cuban entrants were forced into detention camps until the end of 1982, they were not required to leave America as were other undocumented immigrants.

To investigate how Cuban immigrants who arrived in 1980 or after succeeded in comparison to the Mexicans who arrived at this time, data of their comparative education, wages, and labor market involvement is necessary. Madeline Zavodny completed a study comparing the wages and earnings of male Cuban immigrants who arrived between 1960 and 1981, with non-Hispanic populations. While Zavodny compares white and non-white Cubans as well, her findings between the groups were averaged to create more accurate answers for this study.\footnote{I acknowledge here that the numbers used may not be 100% accurate. Madeline Zavodny compared white and non-white Cubans in her study, while my study discusses Cubans regardless of race. I therefore averaged the numbers she gave for each race to create a more accurate conclusion.} Approximately 20.5\% of male Cubans aged 25 to 64 had graduated high school, while approximately 17.9\% had graduated college (2003: 205). In comparison with Mexican immigrants during this period, Cuban immigrants had relatively high levels of education which would allow them easier access to the formal labor market.

\textit{Data Comparison: Educational Attainment, English Language Ability, and Levels of Income}

In data outlined by Carola Suárez-Orozco in the \textit{United States Population Estimates, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1980-1988} in \textit{Transformations} (1995), other factors that contribute to success rates are discussed. Suarez-Orozco emphasizes the impact of education on mobility rates, and suggests that documentation is
also an influential variable for newcomers’ success. Among Hispanic persons 25 and older, Cubans had a 62% rate of high school graduation, while 45% of Mexicans graduated high school during this time. Likewise, 20.5% of Cubans graduated college while only 6% of Mexicans did. Again, educational attainment can be achieved through networks and through legal documentation status. While undocumented Mexicans struggle to stay under the radar and are not given social assistance, this lack of legal status can hinder their ability to stay in school or receive a higher education. In contrast, Cubans have a refugee status that allows them to attend school, work in the mainstream economy, receive government assistance, and live without the fear of deportation.

Other measurements can also indicate success. When comparing English language ability in 1990 between Cuban and Mexican immigrants aged 18-64, 64% of Cubans said they spoke English very well, while 51.8% of Mexicans claimed the same. Only 0.7% of Mexicans in the U.S. said they did not speak any English, while all Cubans claimed to speak some English (Carliner 2000: 166). Given that English language ability is a key factor to successful integration into the America labor market, these data would suggest that English language abilities assisted Cubans in achieving economic integration. Social and government funded programs provided to immigrants with refugee status may contribute to higher levels of English language ability reported by Cubans. Other factors that may lead to higher Cuban success rates over Mexicans are higher educational levels and age. For example, the 1990 Census reported that Cuban immigrants were older than other Latinos. With a median age of 29.1, Cubans had lower unemployment rates (5.8%),
and fewer families living in poverty (12.5%) (Suárez-Orozco 1995: 49). In comparison, over 25% of Mexican families lived in poverty in California at that time.10

Lisandro Perez gathered data relating to Cuban socio-economic success rates. He found that Cuban success is family-driven, rather than individual- or community-driven (1986: 4). Essentially, this means that the configuration, structure, and family sentiment that Cubans have, drive their integration and success. These elements suggest that Cuban immigrants have a strong family unit in America. Perez’s data is collected from the 1980 U.S. Census, though some of the information is based on data from 1979. For example, in 1979 the Cuban family median income was $18,245, while Cuban male income, for those aged 15 or older, was $14,168 (1986: 9, 10). In addition, the 1980 census concludes that Cubans, aged 16 or older, had higher labor force participation than any other Hispanic-immigrant group. Cuban families also had high rates of elderly and female labor force participation, which helps to explain their high level of family income. Carla Davis provides further data on Cuban immigrant incomes. She bases her research on the 1990 Census and compares income levels of Cubans in the Miami Enclave to Cubans outside of this enclave in America. In 1990, “Cubans [had] a mean personal income of $15,626” (Davis 2004: 458). This income level is only slightly higher than that of 1980, and when accounting for inflation year-over-year, it is clear that Cuban income growth had significantly slowed from 1979 to 1990. However, documented Mexican individual income in the same year was $13,291. The gap between individual Cuban and Mexican earnings among the documented population was significant. In addition, as Portes and Bach relate, Cuban self-employment was higher than that of Mexicans. Owning one’s own business has been shown to increase immigrant economic success, as well. Thus,

10 See the section on Mexican documentation
Mexican income levels were lower than those of the Cubans for a variety of reasons, most particularly because of differences in education levels, English language skills, and aspirations for upward mobility.

**Conclusions**

Although the Cubans who came on the Mariel Boatlifts in 1980 and those who immigrated to the U.S. after 1980 were stigmatized by both the American population as well as their fellow compatriots, they were still been able to attain high levels of economic success following resettlement. It is clear that their refugee status entitled them to certain federal and social assistance that guided them towards mobility. In addition, while there was some animosity between the early and newly arrived Cuban immigrants themselves, the former Cuban immigrants aided the newer entrants in finding jobs. Mexicans, if undocumented, had to live in fear of deportation and lacked access to formal labor markets, while Cubans had access to employment opportunities and other privileges, in spite of their stigmatized image as undesirables.

Statistically, it is also clear that the Cuban refugee status was beneficial. As previously stated, refugee status is an incentive for Cuban immigrants to adapt to the U.S. labor market since returning home was not feasible. Over a ten-year period, from 1980 to 1990, Cubans had greater economic gains than other immigrants who arrived in the U.S. for economic reasons. According to Carola Suárez-Orozco, in 1990, only 5.8% of Cubans were unemployed and 12.5% were living in poverty, which is a low number when compared to the Mexican population. In addition, 64% claimed to speak English very well, which factors into their access to mainstream jobs in the U.S. economy.
Documentation status among the Mexican group also suggests how legal status correlates with achievement. Documented Mexican migrants had higher levels of English language ability and English literacy. According to the data provided by Chavez and Wallace, documented Mexicans earned nearly one and a half times the income each year of undocumented workers. They also earned over a dollar more per hour than undocumented workers, which adds up over time. While 29.8% of documented Mexicans owned a home, only 3.8% of undocumented Mexicans were homeowners. Finally, as will be reflected in the gender comparison section of this paper, documentation status correlates with a reduced female workforce. In other words, among Mexicans with legal documentation, 52.5% of females did not participate in the labor force, while only 36.5% of undocumented females were outside of the labor force. These numbers indicate that having documentation status in the U.S. both increases individual incomes and changes the labor force participation of women in the Mexican community.

The next section of this paper will investigate whether the ethnic enclave helps or hinders levels of achievement. As already noted, for Cubans, their ethnic economic enclave appeared to assist the new arrivals in a variety of ways. The following section compares labor opportunities and other resources available in the two respective enclaves and investigates why the Cuban enclave of Miami appeared to provide newcomers with better chances of achieving upward mobility than Mexicans had in Los Angeles.


**Ethnic Enclave Comparison**

*Defining “Ethnic Enclave”*

This section of my paper will investigate the affects of two major Mexican and Cuban ethnic enclaves, located in Los Angeles and Miami, respectively.\(^{11}\) An ethnic enclave can be described as a place of residence as well as a workplace. Per Magdalena Barros Nock, in 1980 Portes and Wilson defined an ethnic enclave as “a closed minority community, localized in a central and degraded area of the city”\(^{12}\) (Barros Nock, 2007: 114). This definition was expanded in 1985 by Portes and Bach, who describe an ethnic enclave as a “distinctive economic formation, characterized by the spatial concentration of immigrants who organize a variety of enterprises to service their own ethnic market and the general population” (1985: 203). The people who live in an enclave are generally of the same ethnic group and have the same country of origin. Within each enclave business owners employ and work with co-ethnics such that an enclave can be considered an economic area. This reinforces the social capital that the people of an enclave develop and have access to. Social capital, according to Douglas Massey, is “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or

\(^{11}\) The Los Angeles enclave refers to the city itself as well as the surrounding suburbs, which also are comprised of high numbers of Mexican immigrants. The Miami enclave focuses on Dade County which is known as Little Havana. Miami, like Los Angeles has surrounding suburbs which have high numbers of Cubans, in this case, who may work in the city but live in the suburbs.

\(^{12}\) The original quotation in Spanish is as follows, “una comunidad minoritaria cerrada, localizada en un área céntrica y degradada de una ciudad.”
In addition to building social capital, living in an ethnic enclave also allows immigrants to retain their human capital, consisting of education and skills, by giving them opportunities to find work without having to obtain more education, specialization in a certain field, or English language skills.\textsuperscript{13} The enclave creates an ethnic community in which immigrants feel comfortable with their levels of human and social capital.

This multifaceted definition has both positive and negative aspects. While it is clearly beneficial to the immigrants to have this type of ethnic network available upon arrival to a new country, it also makes integration into that nation more difficult. If a person chooses to stay within an enclave, their social and economic mobility often does not translate outside of that community. Logan et al. view an ethnic enclave as a transitional neighborhood where people live that provides market resources and social capital until an immigrant is ready to integrate into the larger society (Logan 2002). Once a person has accumulated enough socioeconomic capital, they tend to move out of the enclave and into a more mainstream segment of society. However, Cubans do not show a strong desire to leave the Miami enclave as is discussed by both Logan et al. and Carla Davis. In this section, Mexican and Cuban enclaves will be addressed to see the frequency of long-term residence there and the ways enclave life contributes or weakens economic mobility.

\textit{Argument and Thesis}

In 1985, Portes and Bach argued that a true Mexican ethnic enclave in Los Angeles does not exist. They stated that Mexicans essentially made up a good portion of the secondary labor market instead of working in their own economic enclave. Other

\textsuperscript{13} Portes and Bach discuss this further in their 1985 study which will be discusses separately.
scholars have argued otherwise, especially those who have studied the Los Angeles marketplace during or since 1986. However, the stigma associated with Mexican low-wage labor in Los Angeles and their lack of private, ethnic business ownership is juxtaposed against the Cubans living in the enclave of Miami, where a booming ethnic economy is said to exist. A comparative look at the two communities provides useful data and an understanding of contexts of reception for recent immigrants living in these two enclaves, which in turn can help to explain immigrants’ variable paths to mobility. This chapter will investigate each enclave and show why differences between the Miami and Los Angeles enclaves exist. It is argued that the Cuban enclaves have allowed for greater mobility for Cubans than the Mexican ethnic enclaves have for Mexicans because of three factors: the national origins of each enclave population; networking within and outside of the enclaves; and different structures and institutions within the enclaves themselves.

Why Los Angeles and Miami?

Los Angeles is home to many different ethnic groups, but the Mexican enclave is by far the largest ethnic community in the city. Miami, in comparison, is dominated by the Cuban immigrant population that represents two distinct waves of immigration from Cuba. The early wave, which is referred to as the "Golden Exiles," brought in highly educated elites who escaped Castro's regime. The second large wave, from 1980 on, known as The Marielitos, were less educated and represented the working class. Both Los Angeles and Miami are in close proximity to Mexico and Cuba, though initially Cubans were not allowed to return to Cuba as they were refugees, and both are located in the southern coastal region of the United States. Each city boasts a prominent city center,
tourist attractions, and very ethnically and economically mixed surrounding suburbs. In addition, after the late 1970s, Miami attracted Cubans who had less than a high school education, so the group appeared more comparable to the Mexicans in Los Angeles at that point because of their low levels of education.

A comparison of the educational levels of both groups illustrates a common theme of low-level of human capital between the two groups. For instance, Enrico Marcelli found that the average number of years of education for a Mexican immigrant in 1990 was 9 years, while Gretchen Livingston estimated that female Mexican immigrants had about 8 years of education, while their male counterparts had only 7 years (Marcelli 1998: 285 and Livingston 2006). While Cubans who arrived before 1980 at least a high school education, those who arrived after that date had on average less than a high school education. Thus, the post-1980 Cubans were similar to the Mexican cohort, although they tended to come from more urban backgrounds and had the benefit of legal documentation status in the United States.

While lower-skilled immigrants may benefit from the ethnic enclave economy, Mexicans and Cubans who are more mobile tend to move out of ethnic enclaves to suburbs or out of state. Contrary to this trend, however, scholars note that many Cubans with access to mobility still choose to stay in the Miami area or may return to Miami after years of living elsewhere. This paper investigates the unique qualities of each ethnic enclave to determine its impact on the social mobility of the immigrants who live there.

The Mexican Enclave: Los Angeles and its surroundings

As was noted earlier, Portes and Bach believed that Mexicans had not developed a true economic enclave by the early 1980s, which forced these immigrants to find low
paying and low skilled jobs in the open sector of the labor market. However, other scholars such as Robert Alvarez (1990), Magdalena Barros Nock (2007), John Logan (2002), and Philip Martin (2001) argue that an ethnic and economic enclave does exist in Los Angeles, even if it was not fully adept, economically, until after 1986. In fact, Michael Aguilera states that in certain parts of California, 59% of the self-employed are Mexican (2009: 414). Taking Portes and Bach’s definition of ethnic enclave into account, the concentration of Mexicans in Los Angeles, who constituted almost a third of the city’s population by 1990, might suggest that this city qualifies as a Mexican enclave (Rosenfeld 1999: 70, and Logan et al. 2003: 202). In addition, high percentages of self-employment and Mexican run businesses create numerous job opportunities for co-ethnics, which would further begin create the Mexican economic enclave in Los Angeles by 1986.

Philip Martin argues that the Mexican enclave in Los Angeles started to grow with the beginning of the Bracero program, and although Operation Wetback in 1954 deported one million migrants, the numbers of Mexican immigrants entering the enclave continued to rise. Between 1957 and 1962, 220,000 Mexican immigrants entered the United States (Martin 2001: 32). In the 1970s more migrants sought work in urban areas, so the Los Angeles enclave became a desirable destination. In 1990, there were close to four million Mexicans living in Los Angeles (Barros Nock 2007: 118). Upon arriving in the city, Mexican immigrants found work in restaurants, hotels, car washes, and in the market place. “The Los Angeles enclave not only gives opportunities to the immigrants
but also the population along the border, with the network and support for commercial transaction.”\(^{14}\) (Barros Nock 2007: 116).

Enclaves grew throughout the 1980s as American immigration policy allowed for a higher quota of documented Mexican migrants to enter, as well as allowing for family reunification by 1990. In addition, after the passage of the 1986 immigration legislation that granted amnesty to almost 3 million undocumented immigrants, the number of migrants entering the country without documentation continued to grow. A large majority of these undocumented migrants were Mexican. By 1990 there were a total of 4 million Mexican-origin people living in the Los Angeles area, and a quarter of the Los Angeles County population had been born in Mexico (Logan et al. 2002: 303, and Marcelli 1998: 284). In spite of the concentration of Mexican-origin people living in Los Angeles, they were not the only ethnic group inhabiting the area. The city was also saturated with Chinese, Salvadorans, and Filipinos, along with smaller groups of other East Asians, Armenians, and Iranians (Logan et al. 2002). Given this diversity and the surrounding suburbs that have a multitude of white natives, Mexicans in the Los Angeles area were exposed to a number of other ethnicities and cultures.

The Mexican social and economic enclave located in Los Angeles continued to grow until the early 1990s, when Mexicans began to seek work outside of Los Angeles and outside of California. While in 1990, Mexicans made up about 80% of the Hispanic population in L.A., by 2000 the number had dropped to about 72% as more Mexicans began to move outside of Los Angeles. (Barros Nock 2007:118). One reason for this drop was that as more females began to migrate before their male counterparts, their desire to

\(^{14}\) The original quotation in Spanish is as follows, “El enclave de Los Ángeles no sólo da oportunidades a los inmigrantes sino también a la población de la frontera, con la que se han hecho redes y afianzado transacciones comerciales.”
settle permanently was higher, and they were able to seek more labor in the formal sector, outside of the enclave. Another reason was due to the fact that Mexican families sought safer neighborhoods to raise their children (2007: 117, 119).

Even within Los Angeles there was a clear stratification of where Mexicans lived. In 1990, 69.8% of Mexicans lived in Mexican neighborhoods in Los Angeles, while the remaining 29.2% lived in non-Mexican neighborhoods throughout the city. Nearly twice as many of these Mexicans lived in the suburbs rather than in the city center, where the ethnic neighborhoods developed. In fact, among those Mexicans living in the Los Angeles suburbs, 70.5% settled in Mexican ethnic neighborhoods (Logan et al. 2002: 310). As more women and children began to enter with documentation, the Los Angeles enclave began to have permanency as families settled in the area and continue working. The rise of xenophobia, especially after 1986 with the Immigration Reform and Control Act, caused many of these migrants to stay in their own enclave to avoid discrimination, or to flee the state.

_Labor in the Los Angeles Enclave_

Although Los Angeles is considered to be a geographic location where many Mexicans settle, given the high number of other immigrants groups congregating in the area, Mexicans have not had strong concentrations in any particular part of the city. Instead, they are found clustered together in different areas such as Long Beach (Logan et al. 2002: 303, 305). In addition, some of neighborhoods where Mexicans live are converted farming or agricultural areas that make up the surrounding suburbs of Los Angeles. This is relevant because Los Angles is a “twentieth century creation,” where these suburban neighborhoods are newly developed (Logan et al. 2002: 203). It should
also be noted that Mexican immigrants desire financial stability so they can raise their purchasing power parity. Therefore, they pursue jobs that will allow them to reach that level of stability, and as a result, settle more readily into their new communities.\textsuperscript{15}

The Los Angeles enclave is industry-specific, meaning that there are different sectors to the economy such as agriculture, small businesses such as produce stands, the service sector, as well as factory labor. Most of the labor in these industries is within the secondary labor market, known for its low paying and temporary jobs. Michael Rosenfeld and Marta Tienda (1999) provide statistics on Mexican employment in Los Angeles in 1990. Twenty Five percent of Mexicans in Los Angeles worked as operators or as factory workers. Among the second largest group, 17\% worked in the service sector. Sixteen percent were craftsmen, while 16\% were categorized as laborers (Rosenfeld and Tienda 1999: 74).

Another aspect to this industry specificity is the trade that occurs between Los Angeles and Mexico regarding produce such as chile peppers, onions, and tomatoes, which are bought from distributors in Mexico and sold by wholesalers in America.

“Mexicans take advantage of knowledge from home regions and specific commodities in demand…in their adaptation into the economic sector of Los Angeles” (Alvarez 1990: 100, 101). The proximity to the Mexican border made more local goods available and helped Mexican immigrants to retain their sociocultural ties. They were able to buy goods at lower prices than from big stores due to the convenience of the marketplace. Many immigrants also worked in the service or transportation industries, which were lower paying sectors, so they needed access to cheaper goods. The enclave creates stability for

\textsuperscript{15} The concept of Mexican immigrants and stability will be further discussed in Gender Roles section of this paper.
Mexican families, and the Hispanic population develops a dependency on Mexican goods. This demand for Mexican goods then creates consistent business for the Mexicans who run the shops or stands in the marketplace (Alvarez 1990: 108).

By 1986, selling produce was a popular vocation. Within the enclave people had connections: there were those who acted as intermediaries, distributors, and consumers of the goods (Barros Nock 2007: 123). In 1986, the Wholesale Terminal Market was built. This was a more modern and commercialized marketplace that was the first in the enclave to set a standard for the type of marketplace that was to come. It led to an increased demand for Mexican goods to be sold in the market. There was a territorial concentration and consolidation of networks and markets in the area, which played a role in the development of local competition (Barros Nock 2007: 125). This type of growth allowed for the workforce to grow simultaneously.

The marketplace also allowed for both males and females to work together, which provided families with dual incomes and greater economic mobility. Women were also employed in Asian enclaves within Los Angeles (Light et al. 1994: 72). These were generally garment industries, but they helped Mexican women to gain work experience and skills outside of their own ethnic enclave. In addition, the Los Angeles enclave gave people the opportunity to open their own shop or bodega and to become entrepreneurs. Given the skills learned by owning a shop, this helped immigrants to receive enough experience to move up economically. This point is made by Portes and Bach in 1985 where they persistently argue that self employment and entrepreneurial ability leads to upward mobility. Without the creation of a network within the enclave, none of this would be possible. However, as Gretchen Livingston explains, the impact of a network
within an ethnic enclave differs by gender. If a woman uses this network to find a job, she is less likely than a male to find a job in the formal, or primary, sector, which can be either within or outside of the enclave. The results also differ by documentation status. Documented migrants use job networks, while undocumented migrants tend to use kinship ties to find employment (Livingston 2006). Although having a dual income can be necessary for upward mobility, the enclave does not necessarily allow for equal growth among the immigrants as there is less opportunity to work in the formal sector which is centralized outside of the enclave.

*Drawbacks in the Los Angeles Enclave and Steps toward Mobility*

Although this enclave offers financial and economic benefits to the Mexicans who live and work there by providing networks to finding employment, a place where a common culture is recognized, and social ties that offer them community and security, there are drawbacks to enclave life. The largest obstacle associated with an enclave is that it can create a dual economy that may hinder economic assimilation. As explained by Scarlett G. Hardesty, “the economy is divided into two parts: a monopoly (the core) and a competitive (or periphery) sector” (1988: 467). The core is characterized as a white-collar sector and the periphery is the blue collar and low skilled sector. An ethnic enclave such as the Los Angeles enclave moves beyond a blue-collar sector to a localized, self-constructed area in the center of the city. Immigrants advance by moving from the blue-collar sector toward the core ethnic economy. Although there is room for economic growth within the enclave itself, workers have barriers to mobility beyond the enclave due to a lack of education, an unstable job history, a lack of skills that would allow them to work in a high skilled labor sector, and sometimes a lack of proper documentation.
In addition, Alvarez explains that while many immigrants are employed in the marketplace, the owners of the biggest shops tend to be Mexican-American, not actual immigrants (1990). So, while the enclave gives job opportunities to the Mexican immigrants, it does not directly allow for their entrance into the general mainstream workforce. Alvarez argues that the immigrants must be entrepreneurial to succeed. The marketplace is not only stratified in terms of labor, but there is also a hierarchy of types of marketplaces that contribute to a lack of accessible movement of the immigrants. Those who live and work on the periphery must figure out a way to work and move out of the periphery and into the city center in order to succeed. The immigrants must use the enclave resources to gather enough capital, skills, and experiences to move deeper into the enclave and become socially and economically mobile. They must also rely on friends and connections throughout the enclave to help them succeed, which is why an enclave is an important pathway to mobility. However, as Livingston explains, “prior U.S. experience decreases the likelihood that men will use their network ties” (2006: 59). Her research indicates that many Mexican men make at least one return trip to Mexico. This pattern of circular migration would indicate that many incoming Mexican males have already lived in the United States and may be less likely to use their network within their enclave on their subsequent visits. This is in direct contrast with Cuban immigrants, whose exile status makes it extremely unlikely that they will make return trips to Cuba. Therefore, Cuban men would likely continue to use their enclave to their advantage.

When looking at how enclaves affect the Mexican immigrant economically, it becomes clear that once a person moves into a non-ethnic suburb beyond the periphery of the city, their mobility really starts to increase. As illustrated in a 1990 study completed
by Logan et al., when Mexicans live in ethnic enclaves, they are less likely to speak English only, while most continue to speak Spanish. In fact, only 20% of those polled by Logan spoke only English, while up to 80% of the population spoke Spanish. However, once moving to a non-ethnic suburb, about 66% of the Mexicans studied spoke English only. The increase of English language capability has been recognized as a factor that allows for upward socio-economic mobility (Suárez Orozco 2011). In terms of income, the Mexican household in the ethnic enclave has a median income of about $26,000 per year while the Mexican in the non-ethnic suburb has a median income of $39,000. The poverty level also drops significantly, from $25% to 11%, when a Mexican moves to a non-ethnic suburb.\footnote{See John R. Logan, Wenquan Zhang, and Richard D. Alba, "Immigrant Enclaves and Ethnic Communities in New York and Los Angeles," \textit{American Sociological Review} 67.2 (2002): 314, Table 2b.} These data suggest that in order for a Mexican immigrant to gain mobility, it is in their best interest to use the enclave to gain stability, then to exit the enclave to gain mobility. Gaining English language capabilities is an important aspect to this process. However, findings on Cuban immigrant mobility outlined in the following section suggest that Cubans are more likely to have higher levels of mobility than the Mexicans observed.

\textit{Little Havana: Miami}

As was explained earlier in this paper, the first wave of Cuban refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the United States were known as the "Golden Exiles." In rough chronological order, emigrants from Cuba arriving before 1980 included, "officials of the Batista government, the upper class, business men and professionals, small shop owners, and others of the middle class" (Eckstein and Barbaria 2002: 803), who migrated and settled primarily in southern Florida. Portes and Bach explain, “The history of the
Cuban flow…has involved a substantial recomposition of part of the Cuban bourgeoisie in South Florida” (1985: 163). Thus, when the Mariel refugees entered Florida, they had access to resources established by those who had come before them to the Miami enclave. However, like the Mexicans who had entered around the same time as the Marielitos, this second wave of Cubans had inferior technical and academic skills to the earlier cohort as well as to American workers. They also had experienced Castro’s regime to a greater extent, which left them disenchanted with the government and lacking in resources. They felt leaving was their only real option. Unlike the earlier immigrants, who entered America with relative economic stability, those fleeing Cuba in or after 1980 were not wealthy or well resourced. They had to focus on finding work and becoming mobile as quickly as possible. “To overcome these disadvantages, they must invest in the acquisition of new human capital through retraining in the United States” (Portes and Bach 1985: 201). Over 200,000 Cubans arrived in the U.S. between 1980 and 1990 (Davis 2004: 451). Heike Alberts concludes that in 1980 half of these Cuban newcomers used the connections and networking available through family and friends in the Miami enclave to help them access capital and mobility (2005: 245). Studies show that immigrants who are self-employed generally have higher incomes. Self-employment is a common goal among Cuban male immigrants, although it was more common for the Golden Exiles than the Marielitos to actually own their own businesses.

*Miami: A Background*

Because of its geographical location along the southern tip of Florida, Miami has become a principal trade outlet with Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1985, “the area was home to close to half of the forty largest Hispanic-owned industrial and commercial
firms in the country” (Portes 1987: 349). The city’s proximity to Cuba led it to become a prime area of settlement for Cubans, and the burgeoning ethnic enterprise allowed Miami to become a core ethnic economy for the Cuban community. Miami is commonly referred to as “Little Havana,” and essentially acts a home away from home for many Cubans. In 1980, 60% of Cubans in the U.S. lived in Miami, and by 1990, 65% of persons of Cuban descent still resided in Miami.\(^{17}\) In addition, 86% of Mariel refugees lived in Cuban neighborhood in Miami (Portes 1987: 351). The mean income in 1990 for an individual Cuban in Miami was about $14,000.\(^ {18}\) They felt comfortable in Miami and tended to stay for long periods of time upon arrival, and many never left the enclave. In addition, secondary migration to Miami from other Cuban enclaves is high and contributes further to the enclave structure. Cubans are able to access capital within the enclave. “Much has been written about the economic power of the Miami enclave, the result of the admixture of the entrepreneurial and professional skills of early Cuban émigrés, access to capital, hard work and a positive reception and assistance by the U.S. government” (McHugh et al 1997: 505). The first wave of Cuban migrants of the 1960s set the tone and stage for the later Cuban migrants, which helped to ease the absorption and accommodation of the Mariel refugees.

\textit{Entering Little Havana: The Cuban Enclave in Miami}

The first wave ‘Golden Exiles,’ who arrived between the late 1950s and before 1980, were not fond of the Marielitos who poured into Miami in 1980. They felt the new

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\(^{17}\) Data is from the INS Immigrant Fact Sheet of 1997 and is provided by Carla Davis in her article “Beyond Miami.”

\(^{18}\) Let it be noted that Carla Davis (2004) states that mean personal income in 1990 for a Cuban in Los Angeles was $17,430 which is greater than half of the median family income for Mexicans in Los Angeles in the same year. In addition, based on the job categories studied by Rosenfeld (1999), the mean personal income for Mexicans working in factory labor (25% of Mexicans in Los Angeles) was $12,683 in 1989.
group gave Cubans a bad reputation, since the Marielitos were less educated and lacked the human capital that the older generations had. In fact, many had little job experience in Cuba and had less than a high school education. However, even in light of the class and cultural gulf between the two groups, the newest wave of Cubans arriving after 1980 were able to use the already established Miami enclave to their advantage and viewed the earlier cohort as a role model. “Cubans who came during Mariel admired the Golden Exiles for their good work ethics” (Alberts 2005: 239). The Marielitos quickly learned they had to work just as hard as the earlier migrants to have a stable and mobile lifestyle. Unlike the life that many of these later migrants had lived in Cuba, they could not remain idle, as was the lifestyle in Cuba. Many had lost their incentive to work when Castro’s regime cut off ties to import/export business and Cuba grew increasingly poorer. In 1982, the majority of Cuban-owned businesses were those in the service, construction, and retail sectors. Given that Cubans and co-ethnics work together, these would have been the primary areas of labor for the Marielitos.

Enclave Labor and Mobility

Although there was animosity between older and newer generations of Cuban migrants, there was still great loyalty among the Cubans as an ethnic group. The enclave in Miami was extremely useful when it came to the labor force. Alejandro Portes and Robert Bach have shown that self-employment allows for the greatest social mobility within an ethnic group. Cuban employers have a loyal and inexpensive labor force among their co-ethnics. In addition, Heike C. Alberts states, “Cuban employers will eventually help their employees to become self-employed, thus providing them with opportunities

19 This information is discerned from the 1987 study done by Sanders and Nee, who provide information from the 1982 Survey of Minority Owned Business Enterprises.
for professional advancement” (Alberts 2005: 244). However, Alberts found that some Cubans who arrived in 1980 or after were not able to use Cuban networking for jobs due to animosity between the waves of immigrants and an over-saturation of the marketplace. This group, instead, looked to employment agencies, advertisements, or professional networks to find jobs. Alberts also argues that finding work through outside networks was becoming more common for Cubans and that throughout the 1980s only about half of the arriving immigrants used the ethnic enclave to find work as the Cuban enclave economy merged with the overall economy of Miami. However, the Los Angeles enclave was not able to do this to the same extent.

The Miami enclave includes the self-employed and co-ethnics whom they employ. Portes concluded that during the 1980s, 20% of Mariel refugees became self-employed and that 44.9% worked at firms owned by co-ethnics (1987: 351, 352). Authors argue that self-employment allows for mobility such that those who can become entrepreneurial will be those who succeed. “Portes and Bach’s enclave idea offers a persuasive explanation as to why working class Cuban men earn more six years after arrival in the United States than did working class Mexican men” (Light et al. 1994: 69). If Cubans have been able to found businesses to a greater extent than Mexicans, this makes a strong argument linking self-employment to their higher upward mobility rates compared to their Mexican counterparts. “The Cuban ethnic enclave economy is hyper-efficient because of its vertical and horizontal integration, ethnically sympathetic suppliers and consumers, pooled savings, and rigid markets” (Light et al. 1994: 69). Interestingly, Carla Davis (2004) points out that although Cubans may benefit from the ethnic economy in Miami, their incomes actually increase in geographical areas with
lower populations and concentrations of Cubans. While these findings may appear to provide evidence against the value of ethnic economies, the higher levels of human capital attainment among Cubans who were resettled outside of Miami, as well as different market conditions in cities with lower populations, are additional factors to consider (Davis 2004: 464).

In addition to the purported economic benefits Cubans enjoy when living in or around the Miami enclave, they have also benefited from their involvement in politics in the enclave area. “By the early 1990s, Cubans dominated Miami’s city commission, and accounted for nearly one third of Dade County’s delegation in the state legislature” (Eckstein and Barberia 2002: 808). Such strong involvement in the American economy and government has led to high levels of integration of Cubans into American society. This integration allows Cubans to gain access to employment and upward socioeconomic mobility. Although the Marielitos and other Cuban migrants who came to the United States after 1980 had lower levels of human and social capital and were less skilled workers than the wave that arrived before them, they were able to integrate through their enclave better than the Mexicans of similar socio-economic status who arrived in Los Angeles during the same timeframe.

Conclusions

My initial research in this section was to discover whether Cuban and Mexican enclave structure explained why Cubans were, as a group, more upwardly mobile than Mexicans between 1980 and 1994. Both the Miami Cuban enclave and the Los Angeles Mexican enclave gave new immigrants access to income and capital that they would not have had otherwise. I found that the Miami enclave does experience greater
socioeconomic mobility when observing the job opportunities available to incoming Cuban immigrants, whose socioeconomic status, skill levels, and educational attainment on arrival were relatively low. This rapid upward mobility can be seen by the fact that in 1983, 26% of Mariel refugee households were living in poverty and 27% were unemployed, while by 1986, 35% were working for co-ethnics and 20% were already self-employed (Portes and Jensen 1989: 947). This upward mobility is primarily due to the fact that the Cuban enclave was developed by the earlier Cuban immigrants who came to the U.S. with high levels of human and social capital. They were able to build up the enclave so that when the Marielitos arrived, even though they lacked high levels of human and social capital, Little Havana was receptive to them. “A conducive environment may lead immigrants or their descendants into entrepreneurship despite the absence of initial capital or business skills” (Portes 1987: 344). These low-skilled migrants had quick access to labor and a support system that encouraged self-employment. As Portes and Bach argue, self-employment can be the key to mobility.

Conversely, the Los Angeles enclave is newer in comparison to Miami in terms of its historical presence, and those who established the Mexican enclave were not as highly skilled as the early wave Cubans. The ethnic enclave economy was stronger and more densely concentrated in Miami than in Los Angeles, and had more ability to absorb and employ incoming immigrants. Portes explains that upon arrival in the 1980s about one in three Cubans was hired by co-national private business owners, while only about one is six Mexicans who arrived at the same time were hired by their co-nationals (Portes 1987). This indicates that Cubans had easier access to employment in the ethnic economy
upon arrival to America than did Mexicans, and had stronger network ties that provided labor opportunities within their enclave of Little Havana.

In addition, levels of upward mobility related to socioeconomic status in each enclave can reflect an ethnic group’s definition of “success.” Given that Mexicans view ‘success’ as stability in terms of income and job security, while Cubans view ‘success’ as upward mobility within the workforce, Cuban immigrants aspirations aligned more closely with those of the mainstream American workforce in terms of income level and job status. Cubans seek to regain their lost social and economic status that once existed in Cuba, while Mexicans are seeking a better standard of living than they had in Mexico, a country in the midst of an ongoing financial crisis. Furthermore, the Cuban enclave appears to reflect the class structure that had been experienced in Cuba. There is a clear hierarchy within the enclave, which could be a reason that Cubans continue to strive for mobility. In comparison, the Los Angeles enclave has more infiltration from other ethnic groups. Thus, employment opportunities for a Mexican in Los Angeles seem far more limited than for the Cuban immigrant in Miami.
Gender Reception and Mobility

Introduction

Between the late 19th and 20th centuries, there has been a change in the dynamics of migration to the United States and a change in employment opportunities for both genders. During the earlier era of migration, from the 1880s to 1924, mainly men were spearheading the migration movement. However, since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, more women have entered on their own. Along with female entry increasing, there has also been a significant change in labor opportunities for each gender. As Nancy Foner points out, “Whereas in 1990, only 20% of women in the nation were in the paid labor force, by 2000, the figure was just over 60%” (2005: 89). Thus, as women had more employment prospects, though there were still vast inequalities, they had a greater incentive to migrate and greater access to power and independence in the domestic sphere. With women working outside of the home, the male-female dichotomy changed, as well. Males were faced with having to put in more work at home and accepting the fact that their female counterparts often brought in higher incomes.

As these gender roles changed in the country, both males and females were forced to decide how they wanted these changes to affect their domestic life. For women, working outside of the home was often an extra burden if their families were present. After they returned home from work, their duties in the home continued. Their workdays never seemed to end. In countries where being a homemaker was considered the ‘proper’
female role, it was not always possible to fully change this custom. In Latin America and the Caribbean, traditional gender dynamics were common. While women “strongly identify as wives and mothers,” they often arrived before their families and entered the labor markets first. Their husbands had little choice but to provide more work in the home (Foner 2005: 98). Thus, although gender roles may have been traditional in the home country, with limited opportunities available for females to work outside the home, in America, opportunities for women were more plentiful. As the number of immigrant women joined the workforce in America, their traditional gender norms were forced to change.

*Past Labor Opportunities for Mexican Immigrants Based on Gender*

The Bracero Program and the maquiladoras created clear gender roles in terms of labor in America. Mexican men who came to the country did outdoor manual labor and females worked in factory settings. Since the Bracero program gave men access to jobs and networking, they accumulated knowledge of the American labor system. This explains why many of the migrant Mexican men who returned relied less on social networks than women to find employment.\(^{20}\) Observing different employment patterns between the two genders raises questions about what role Mexican gender norms played in the reception of Mexican women and men, and how gender dictated what opportunities these immigrants had in the United States. It is also important to realize that female empowerment in the U.S. may not be due solely to increased employment opportunities,

\(^{20}\) This statement about social networks is applied from Gretchen Livingston’s “Gender, Job Searching, and Employment Outcomes among Mexican Immigrants.” She employs essays and research done in the mid 1980s to make her conclusions, hence the prevalence to my paper.
but also may be related to how spatial mobility and the separation of women from their spouses and families contributed to female feelings of independence.  

*Traditional Gender Norms and Changes in the United States*

Gendered household roles, traditional gender norms, and labor opportunities for each gender in both the home and host countries provided a basis for understanding whether gender affects mobility for Mexican immigrants in the United States. Gloria Anzaldúa tries to clarify cultural Mexican gender roles in, *Borderlands: La Frontera*. Anzaldúa writes, “In my culture [certain] words are all derogatory if applied to women—I’ve never heard them applied to men. Language is a male discourse” (1999: 76). She also discusses the concept that Mexican men are supposed to be *macho*. In other words, they should be strong enough to support and protect the family, but also able to show love. Anzaldúa argues that when men are in a place where they are impoverished or oppressed, this only makes them act more macho, and this ultimately results in a “hierarchical male dominance” (1999: 105). When a Mexican man feels inadequate or uncomfortable in his surroundings, he acts in a tough manner to prove to himself and his family that he is able to continue to protect and support them. According to Anzaldúa, the looming machismo of the men actually acts to make women stronger as they strive to protect and support their families just as the man has done. Through this process, women are able to gain dignity and respect.

Other authors have broadened Anzaldúa’s feminist-oriented view of gender roles. It is important to note that much of Mexico between the years of 1980 and 1994 was still rural and the non-urban Mexicans depended on farming for their livelihoods. Even as Mexico developed economically, there was a vast inequality regarding who had access to

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21 See *Beyond Home and Host Dichotomies* by Manuel Barajas and Elvia Ramirez, 2007; p. 369.
high-level work. Much of rural farming was subsistence-based agriculture, and families grew what they needed to survive. Silvia Pedraza explains that in rural areas, gender norms included the idea that women should not seek work outside of the home or earn wages (1991: 309). However, when women began to migrate they had the opportunity to escape the home, had access to spatial mobility, and sought other lifestyles. Pedraza and Anzaldúa agree that the traditional view of a woman’s social sphere is the household and family. Males in turn are supposed to make social connections outside of these spheres, which would allow them to financially support their families. Males are also those who tend to the fields and learn to do the proper agricultural work to support their families in a rural setting.

In terms of specific professions that Mexican women pursue, especially along the borderlands, these workers tend to gravitate towards the garment industry or domestic labor. For Mexican women, work in the garment industry is sustainable and can supplement their husband’s income, if necessary, so that the family can make ends meet. Women who work to supplement their husband’s income are found to obtain a more equal balance of power in the home and shift away from the male dominated sphere. It becomes difficult for a woman to give up this new power balance and they strive to continue working to sustain their influence. However, the reverse of the female empowerment theory may also be true. If a Mexican woman comes from the middle class in Mexico, she may experience downward mobility as typical jobs for female Mexican immigrants include domestic labor and garment industry labor (Rosenfeld 1999).

By the early 1980s the U.S. was in need of cheap agricultural labor as well as low-skilled urban labor. Mexican men were sought by American employers to fill these
positions. New types of work visas were created and the number of Mexicans migrating each year began to rise. However, when the Mexican economy plummeted in 1982, the U.S. was weary of the large numbers of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Latin America. The U.S. tightened its controls on entrance, but given how little work Mexicans could find at home they continued to seek other means of migrating for employment. By 1979 and throughout the 1980s, there was a growing rift between older men working the fields and younger men seeking employment in the city in the U.S. (de Janvry and Mines 1982: 448). In the early 1980s it was characteristic for males to migrate to America for short-term employment but eventually, more females ended up migrating from Mexico for more permanent settlement. If males similarly decided to settle instead of returning to Mexico, they had more incentive to bring their wives to America. If the females migrated first, their male counterparts often took on a more domestic roles in the household than before, and also tried to seek employment at home in Mexico. However, with family reunification programs and the high levels of amnesty granted by the IRCA in 1986, it became more popular for one partner in the relationship to migrate and settle before having the rest of the family join them.

The stigma of age also seems to be more applicable to Mexican males than females, given the manual nature of their labor. Employers have been known to rotate older workers out and replace them with younger laborers. Because of the abundance of job seekers, older workers are highly replaceable. Since income and stability in employment were significantly better in America relative to their Mexican employment opportunities, men had little incentive to strive for a higher skilled job in the United States. However, as Mexican immigrants worked their way through community networks
and ethnic enclaves, they often lost the desire to take on the lowest paid jobs. It is when Mexican men moved up on the job ladder that they desired to bring their families to America. In comparison, women’s job access is already considered more skilled than male oriented work, which traditionally consisted of manual labor.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s as more Mexican women began to migrate alone to the U.S., there was a shift in gender norms. The man was forced to take on a more traditional role in the household since they had to care for the children, their own parents, and to look after the house. This created a more egalitarian marriage dynamic. However, as noted earlier, even if husbands took on more domestic labor in their homes in Mexico, women struggled to give up the newfound sense of self they achieved in the United States. Giving up this freedom is not easy. Pedraza explains that if women stay in the U.S., they are able to have self-autonomy, but that if they return home, after time there will most likely be a shift back to the traditional gender norms. Robert C. Smith notes that people learn to cope with absence, but they still hope for presence. Coming home was often bittersweet for Mexican women, who had tasted a sense of autonomy in the United States and now had to conform to the more traditional, patriarchal nature of the Mexican household on return.

*Gender, Labor, and Space*

Gender norms in the home find their parallel in the market. Robert C. Smith points out a divide in the public/private space between genders. “Public space and work belong to men, while private space and domestic work belong to women” (Smith 2006: 96). As Mignon Duffy confirms in her 2007 article, “Doing the Dirty Work,” this gender

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22 Robert C. Smith discusses the differences between a traditional household and egalitarian household. His description of the norms of a traditional household is much like that of Pedraza’s which is why I did not redefine this.
stigma associated with the domestic sphere and the jobs that are deemed appropriate for women have plagued even those females who have escaped the home. Duffy explains that women engage in work that produces daily life and life for the next generation. This holds true for the type of work that Mexican women are engaging in today. They leave their own homes behind, but they still do the work that maintains another home such as childcare, domestic labor, and food service. Tradition is hard to break and Mexican women fall into employment patterns that reflect their life in the domestic sphere.

In 1992, Gretchen Livingston gathered data comparing social factors of Mexican men and women who migrated to America. This study showed that although Mexican men seem to have greater access to jobs through social networks, Mexican women appear to be more proactive about using their networks to find higher-skilled jobs than their male counterparts. Women were more proficient in English, more often had proper documentation, and they had at least one additional year of formal education than most men. Men were more likely than women to have visited America at least once prior to this data collection. This data is extremely intriguing. If men already have the social networks and job availability, perhaps women’s lack of access to these social networks makes them strive to find higher skilled work. While women’s quest for more skilled labor positions, such as office work or bank tellers, allows them to experience upward mobility, men fall easily into prescribed labor patterns that require fewer skills. Finally, this data collection also shows that men who use social networks to find jobs more often end up in the formal service sector, working as operators and as factory workers than women who use social networks to find jobs such as in the domestic sector. This suggests that Mexican women end up more socio-economically mobile than men.

See table 2 on page 55 of Livingston’s essay.
Thus, while in rural Mexico, job options for women may be severely limited because of the agrarian lifestyle of their village life, while in America, more employment opportunities are available. When women spearhead migration, they are not forced into a certain profession by their husbands; instead they can use kinship ties to learn about their employment options. Their independence helps them attain social mobility in the U.S. as they create pathways for themselves and for their families. As men are less likely to desire to settle permanently, and are more prone to return migration, they have fewer incentives to gain social mobility. The freedom and empowerment that Mexican women feel when entering America drive their ambition. However, if a woman is joined by her husband and family, having a job can become a burden. In effect, she may end up working two jobs, both outside and inside the home, as gender norms return with male-counterpart entrance into the United States.

*Effects of Gender Norms*

Anzaldúa, Pedraza, and Smith agree that Mexican men traditionally believe they are supposed to be *macho*. This *machismo* alone does not mean that they treat their families badly. However, *machismo* can translate to a sense of defensiveness that a man feels. In an interview completed by Barajas and Ramirez, a Mexican woman explains, “The man here, [in Mexico] thinks he is very *macho*. He wants the woman to shine his shoes, iron, cook, and treat him well, as if it’s the woman’s obligation... Because of their *machismo* [they] feel a woman has to do it” (2007: 367). Although this interviewee had never visited America, she was under the assumption that in the American women were more liberal than women in Mexico. The findings from the study completed by Barajas and Ramirez found that while in Mexico, no women reported having full authority in the
home, while more than a third of the women interviewed in California felt they had equal authority as their husbands (2007: 376). However, Robert C. Smith explains that when Mexican men are challenged by the system in the U.S., many become defensive and act more *macho* when confronted with the new, liberal attitudes that Mexican women adopt in the United States. In addition, Smith argues that because the jobs taken by Mexican men are so physically demanding, many turn to alcohol and may become physically aggressive with their wives (Smith 2006: 96). While this type of behavior cannot be condoned, it is important for their bosses and those in social services to take into account how stressful it is for men to have their traditional Mexican gender norms challenged. Programs of adaptation to American cultural norms could help Mexican men adjust more readily, and might also prevent further violence against their female counterparts.

Mexican women could also benefit from programs that help them to integrate into the new, less traditional lifestyle encountered in America. In Mexico, women are dependent on men for their livelihood; men are the providers. Therefore, when women are either forced into the workforce or choose to leave home and find jobs, they must learn to be independent. Smith discusses the four stages that women go through upon arrival. The first is the traditional stage, which is one of dependence on the man. In this stage, if a woman makes a mistake she is made to feel *vergüenza* or shame for this error and she must honor her husband. There is clearly a lack of balance of power and respect in this stage. The second stage is when the woman takes on some type of work outside of the home that is usually domestic in nature. In this stage, the man and woman share roles in the home and there is more ambiguity regarding gender roles. The third stage is usually for older women who have already migrated from Mexico and are either widowed or live
alone and provide for themselves. The fourth stage is more often observed among the second generation in America. In this final stage, women and men have an egalitarian relationship and the woman does not marry if she chooses not to. This final stage can be applied to all migrant women regardless of the era in which they migrated and where they migrated from, because it reflects the second-generation’s adoption of more mainstream American gender norms.24

Another gender norm has to do with traditional religious aspects. Traditional Catholicism does not condone divorce. When Mexicans come to America, it is common for them to turn to religion to enter into an ethnic enclave. Religious institutions help to provide Mexican immigrants with jobs and social programs to help them feel accepted and adjust to their new surroundings. In addition, a Mexican woman is traditionally required to “stay with [her] husband even when unhappy” (Smith 2006: 101). Even if a marriage is not making either partner happy they do not always believe they can change it. This can be exacerbated by the fact that for an immigrant family, two incomes are often necessary for survival. They cannot give up their marriage because it would mean a lack of sustainable income. A final reason that staying married would be important for Mexican culture is due to family values and norms. The parents want to keep a traditional lifestyle as a model for their children and view divorce as an American tradition they refuse to follow. In this sense there is a resistance by Mexicans to integrate into the American culture.

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24 The “stages” discussed in this paper are based on the analysis done by Robert C. Smith in *Mexican New York*: 2006.
Summary

While Mexican males have a continued sense of *machismo*, regardless of whether they live in Mexico or the U.S., changes in migration patterns have challenged this traditional male gender norm. With women spearheading migration by the late 1980s, Mexican females gained a sense of independence due to their spatial mobility and employment opportunities. Women used this empowerment to strive for economic and labor mobility. On the other hand, when Mexican men entered the America for the first time on their own they made use of network ties to find labor. If they made return trips to Mexico and back again to the U.S., they used these ties less frequently when they re-entered the American labor force. So, while women used their network ties to seek work in the formal labor market, their male counterparts remained in the secondary labor market and were less inclined to use network ties to find employment if they exhibited patterns of circular migration. Finally, although women often gained a sense of independence when coming to America on their own, the eventual arrival of their husbands and families often challenged their newfound power, placed added burdens on them both inside and outside of the home.

Cuban Gender Norms and Reception

*Traditional Gender Norms and Opportunities in Cuba*

In the earlier years of the Cuban exodus to the U.S., women and children dominated the migration flow and the men later reunited with their families. Having women precede men to the United States broke many Cuban gender norms. Pedraza points out, “The traditional Cuban notion [is] that a woman’s place is in the home” and, therefore, a woman was the one responsible for taking care of the family, not the one who
would traditionally migrating ahead of her husband (Pedraza 1991: 313). However, it became evident that in order for the Cuban family to be upwardly mobile, the women had to join the labor force in America. “Cuban women overwhelmingly saw work as the opportunity to help the family, rather than as an opportunity for self-actualization” (1991: 313). This Cuban attitude of self-sacrifice represents a clear difference in gender norms from the Mexican attitude of self-fulfillment. However, when comparing Cuban and Mexican women who work in the garment industry, both groups view the work as a transitory experience that must be endured until their husbands have sufficient income to allow them to discontinue working outside of the home. Sarah A. Blue stresses that “traditional gender roles in Cuba emphasize women’s responsibility for the well-being of their families, especially the sick or elderly relatives…[while] men provide financial support” (Blue 2004: 66). She also explains that, in Cuba, most women worked in some capacity outside of the home before they encountered the American labor market. This suggests that they built human capital and brought those skills with them to the U.S. Since a housing shortage in Cuba caused extended families to live together for periods of time, there was an emphasis placed on working together for the family economy.

In her article, “What are little girls made of under socialism?,” Verity Smith, suggests that in Cuba, men and women are divided under the law. The author refers to two magazines, _Mujeres_ and _Muchacha_, published throughout the 1980s, from which to draw her conclusions. For example, Smith found that when the magazine discusses adultery, even if the man is the one who committed the act, the woman is found partially at fault for having a “lack of solidarity” with her husband. In spite of these findings, the author acknowledges that there was a push for males in the 1980s to learn to help out in
the house. Cuban socialist propaganda tried to encourage women to become heroes for the cause. In doing so, Cuban policy had to promote the opportunity for women to work in less feminine sectors. However, at the same time, the propaganda stressed that women should remain feminine and fashionable at all times.

*Effects of Policy Changes in 1980: The Mariel Boatlifts*

In comparison to Mexican immigrants, who generally came individually and then brought their families to the U.S. later, Cuban refugees were able to migrate with their families. This gave both males and females the opportunity to find work and the dual incomes allowed for quicker family mobility. However, as laws and policy changed, Cubans began coming individually and then sending for their families later. With stringent policies in Cuba making it harder to leave, it simply became too difficult for entire families to leave at once. “The 125,000 Cubans who arrived from the port of Mariel….were young working class men who, if married, had left their families behind” (Blue 2004: 68). This type of outflow from the home country is similar to that of Mexican migration at the time. However, Cuban social programs did require some basic level of education for its citizens, while Mexican education systems were less strong. In addition, another wave of undocumented Cubans came to America in 1994 when the Cuban government refused to intercept any rafts leaving Cuba. After detaining over 30,000 of these migrants, the U.S. allowed the group into the country. This is in stark contrast with undocumented Mexicans trying to enter the country, who were often detained and sent back to Mexico.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, fewer Cubans were coming to America with levels of education as high as those of moderately skilled laborers. When Cuba’s
economy began to severely decline, Cuban motivations for migrating focused on escaping Castro’s regime, rather than migrating for better economic opportunities. The second wave of Cubans who migrated, the Marielitos, were of the lower class, and Castro had classified many of them as homosexuals, political dissidents, criminals, and people who were mentally ill. These so called “undesirables” were mostly men who found their arrival as refugees to be less than welcoming.

The largest group arriving on the Mariel boatlifts consisted of those who wanted to rejoin family members who had settled in America. Among this group, nearly 70% was male, while 44% of them had principal occupations that Gastón Fernández classified as craftsmen and as laborers (Fernández 2007: 605). Furthermore, Fernández found that only 10% were professionals, while about 15% were classified as operatives. These Cuban men tended to gravitate towards the informal job sector or towards self-employment. In addition, the average age of the Marielito migrants was younger than 41, while the average age of those who arrived between 1980 to 1990 was 41, after 1990, the average age dropped to 35 years. As with the Mexican migrants, older men are more inclined to seek non-agricultural labor. Since more men than women arrived on the Marielitos, and since Castro had stigmatized the group before it departed, male Cubans faced more discrimination after arriving in America than their female counterparts. Fernández explains that undocumented Cuban females were rarely sent to detention centers, while male institutionalization was seven times greater than for females (2007: 620). It might be argued that American reception to Cuban males was much more negative, due, in part, to the media portrayal of the group.
Changes of Gender Norms in the United States

In Cuba, gender roles were changing during this time period. In the mid-1980s, “women composed 38 percent of the labor force and 56 percent of all professional and technical workers. [Fifty Four] percent of all university graduates [were] women. Indeed, women workers had higher educational levels than men in the same jobs” (Nuñez Sarmiento 2003: 11). One of the reasons for these increases was that the Cuban government was promoting female participation in all spheres of life. Cuba followed the U.S. in making the study of gender more popular and also had begun its own feminist movement. However, as the economy in Cuba failed in the early 1990s, female equality and levels of education and formal labor also declined. In addition, Cuban traditional culture stigmatized feminism and many in the community still felt strongly about differentiating between women’s versus men’s work. For example, if a man was a dancer by profession or a beautician, he was automatically thought of as homosexual (Nuñez Sarmiento 2003: 14). Although Cuba initially promoted female education and labor, with the downturn of the Cuban economy, gender equality also declined.

Anzaldúa explained that in Spanish, certain words, especially negative words, are feminized, this pattern was also seen in Cuba. However, instead of certain words being stigmatized as feminine and negative, in Cuba it seems that concepts are feminized in colloquial ways. For example, while the word for “poverty,” in Spanish, la pobreza, is the same in both Cuba and Mexico, in a Cuban context it is feminized. Divorce is also portrayed as feminine in the sense that in Cuba, when women decide to divorce, males believe that they like to make the process quick, while men seem to fear it more. This puts the woman in a less positive light. A final example is that the concept of gender
equality is also feminized as something that women strive for and is a one sided thought (Nuñez Sarmiento 2003: 15). This suggests that Cubans perceive women as trying to break tradition, so they feminize the terms associated with new gender dynamics. Cuban terminology and history, especially Cuba’s alignment with Soviet style rule and thought, seems to show sympathy towards men for the lives they have been forced to endure. It is therefore necessary to understand the issues that both genders have encountered in Cuba before this study turns to their arrival to and reception in the United States.

**Gender Reception in the United States**

Robert C. Smith explains that although the U.S. has a tradition of more balance of power in terms of gender, Mexican immigrants do not always desire this balance. Many feel that Mexican culture “values the family more than the American culture” (Smith 2006: 99). However, American gender roles are not necessarily egalitarian. As Barajas and Ramirez note, “The U.S. labor market is structured around policies reinforcing the patriarchal ideal of males as breadwinners and females as stay-at-home moms” (2007: 371). Some also believe that since Mexican culture provides more defined gender norms, they also have more gender privileges in their traditional culture than in American culture. However, American culture renegotiates what it means to be a Mexican man or woman. If a Mexican woman becomes too self-sufficient or egalitarian, she is seen as acting manly by traditional Mexican standards. This does not preclude the fact that many Mexican women in the U.S. strive for further independence and equality. The Mexican male continues to desire the role as the provider and household stabilizer.

In contrast, the Cuban female in the United States will work until her family has enough stability for her male counterpart to adequately provide for the family without her
help. The Cuban woman goes into the work force not expecting to have to work forever. The Cuban male, therefore, must strive for mobility, and not simply the stability that the Mexican male desires. Much of this difference has to do with the lifestyles each group endured in their home countries between 1980 and 1994. Cubans sought “security and the desire to regain their lost social status” (Portes and Bach 1985: 157). Many of the Cubans who had migrated prior to 1980 were of the middle and upper class in Cuba and, therefore, led a certain lifestyle that they desired to continue in America. They created certain social networking groups and enclaves that helped give the immigrants of 1980 to 1994 access to economic opportunity. The Mexicans who migrated before 1980 were generally rural migrants who were part of temporary labor programs, such as the Bracero or maquiladora efforts, and then who either chose to stay after the Bracero program ended or returned to Mexico and later came back to the U.S. They were not generally intellectuals or of the upper class, so the social networks the Mexicans accessed did not provide as much mobility as the Cuban networks. In addition, both migrant groups between 1980 and 1994 were predominantly male, though it was becoming more common for Mexican women to spearhead migration, so networks for males were more solidified than for females.

*Job Opportunities in the United States Based on Gender*

Given that both Mexico and Cuba had serious issues creating adequate labor opportunities for their citizen, for migrants coming to America, work was a top priority. However, certain American gender norms did affect the types of jobs that were obtainable by each gender. As Silvia Pedraza explained, although the creation of the Bracero program and the maquiladoras was long ago, the legacy of gender roles has
continued. In 1991 women still accounted for 85% of the workers at borderland export manufacturing plants (Pedraza 1991: 307). Although many women are able to find work in the garment, domestic labor industry, or other factory type setting, Connor and Massey use statistical analysis of demographics to show that in the United States there is a negative effect of being female in terms of obtaining work (1991: 8). However, women are more likely to work in high skilled labor than migrant men.

Conclusions

It is clear that gender plays a strong role in the reception of migrants and a person’s access to opportunity and mobility. However, it is also important to note that gender is evidently not the only factor that explains why Cubans were more mobile than Mexicans between 1980 and 1994. Overall, the research shows that Mexican males seek stability upon arrival in the United States while Cuban males seek mobility. Mexican women value their arrival as a time to break gender norms and seek independence. Cuban women, instead, see labor as a transitory experience. Given that Cuban women had greater access to work outside of the home in Cuba, their experience in the labor force in America is not as challenging to them as it is to a Mexican woman, who rarely worked outside of the home before arrival in America. In addition, while Cuban men continued to spearhead migration between 1980 and 1994, by the late 1980s Mexican women often entered the U.S. before Mexican men. Thus, when Mexican males later joined their spouses, women’s independence was challenged and the presence of traditional gender norms re-entered the household.

In addition, each group measures its own success differently, but when considering their respective definitions of success, economic mobility, and social
mobility, the Cuban migrant group can be seen as more successful by U.S. standards. In other words, Cubans seek to improve their earnings and job responsibilities year over year, while Mexicans are content to maintain the equilibrium once they find employment. It is important to see these conclusions in the context of the proposed time period of 1980-1994, and in relation to the political policies that were in place during this timeframe. At the time of the study, each country had different political and economic structures that played roles in the migration process, as well as different economic opportunities for each gender. The gender roles and opportunity for mobility in the home nation clearly affect the success rates of each gender upon migrating to the United States.
Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate levels of mobility among Mexican and Cuban immigrants to the United States during the years of 1980 through 1994. Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach published a study in 1985 comparing Mexican and Cuban immigrants in the United States based on research done in 1979. Since this study, there has been little subsequent analysis comparing these two groups. Given the broad policy, economic, and historical changes since 1980, particularly the rise of Los Angeles as a Mexican economic enclave as well as the Mariel Boatlift of 1980, it is important to take another comparative look at Mexican and Cuban immigrants in America. These two groups have been compared to determine how they each fared following migration and what factors led to more upward mobility. More specifically, I intended to determine if and why Cuban immigrants were more upwardly mobile than Mexican immigrants during between 1980 and 1994.

In order to reach my conclusions, I looked at variables that might impact these outcomes. The first variable, documentation status, reflected how American policy and law treated the two groups differently. The United States government determines who can and cannot receive legal documentation to enter the country. However, this variable also impacts immigrants as individuals once they have entered the United States, especially for those who live and work for long periods of time without the proper documentation. The second variables I investigated were spatial concentration and ethnic
enclave characteristics. I chose to study the Los Angeles enclave, which is a popular destination for Mexican immigrants, and the Miami enclave, which is where high concentrations of Cuban immigrants settle. Looking at residential patterns and ethnic enclave characteristics helped illuminate the social networks that immigrants used in order to gain access to social and human capital, which can play an important role in upward mobility. The third variable was gender roles and the ways in which gender roles changed in a new context. This section looked first at how gender was perceived in the home country and then determined how those perceptions and behaviors changed upon arrival in America. Each group brought with them different beliefs and traditions about gender roles, and these roles were challenged by the process of migration. This analysis clarified how certain cultural values from the home and host nation affected the social and economic mobility of Mexican and Cuban immigrants living in the United States as gender roles and expectations were negotiated by each immigrant group.

I found that Mexican and Cuban economic and social mobility in the United States is affected differently by each variable investigated. Mexican immigrants have little access to proper documentation; however the proximity of Mexico to the U.S. border allows them to enter relatively easily and quickly regardless of their documentation. As was illustrated by the interviews with Mexican immigrants, documentation status does matter. When the IRCA was passed in 1986, it is clear that Mexicans felt that gaining legal status would be extremely beneficial. They would not have to live in fear of deportation, would have access to the formal job market, and would be able to visit home more easily. For Mexican immigrants, lacking documentation status impacted their upward economic mobility because they did not have access to
mainstream jobs, social privileges, and citizenship rights in America and thus relied on kinship ties to find employment and social status while for documented immigrants, the use of kinship ties had a detrimental effect (Livingston 2006). This shows the bifurcation of access to achievement between documented and undocumented migrants.

In contrast, Cuban immigrants escaping Castro’s communist regime were granted refugee status. The United States policy towards Cubans during this timeframe gave them an advantage, because refugees had access to social and federal services and the right to work. As was seen with the IRCA that granted amnesty to over 1 million Mexican immigrants, newcomers with documentation status were afforded a sense of security, as well as access to rights and privileges inaccessible to those lacking documentation. However, because Cuban immigrants were refugees and because Cuban-U.S. policy toward Cuba banned travel or investments there, Cuban refugees generally could not travel home, so they had little access to transnational ties that might support or hinder social mobility. Overall, documentation status did not vary among Cuban immigrants given that they were ultimately given refugee status and therefore was not seen as a hindrance to economic mobility.

The effects of spatial concentrations, particularly regarding the largest ethnic enclaves for Mexican and Cuban immigrants, was nuanced and varied. There were differing levels of socio-economic mobility found within each enclave. Los Angeles is a relatively new space that gained growing acceptance as a Mexican economic enclave in the mid-1980s. A number of other immigrant groups resided within this enclave, as well. As a result of the ethnic diversity within the context of settlement, Mexican immigrants lacked spatial cohesion as an ethnic group. Instead of congregating within specific
neighborhoods, Mexican families were dispersed throughout different neighborhoods within the city. Additionally, Mexican immigrants were less likely than Cubans to found their own ethnic businesses that might offer jobs to co-ethnics. Thus, many Mexican newcomers ended up working for other immigrant cohorts in Los Angeles instead of for members of their ethnic group. Mexican immigrants in this enclave maintained service sector jobs or they worked in the produce sector. Given that this enclave fully developed recently and was not established by a wealthy or well educated group of Mexicans, there was little room for upward social or economic mobility within the Los Angeles enclave.

The Miami enclave, Little Havana, emerged in the 1950s, as the Cuban intelejentsia entered the United States. By the 1980s, Little Havana was a thriving Cuban metropolis with many immigrants engaging in politics and running their own businesses. While the new group of immigrants, Los Marielitos, did not have high levels of education or skills upon arrival, they entered into an enclave that had the resources needed to help them survive. Although, the Golden Exiles felt some tension and animosity towards these new Cuban refugees, they nonetheless provided their co-ethnics with job opportunities. Little Havana had been built by economically and socially mobile Cubans and readily available resources already in place for the incoming wave of Cubans arriving after 1984.

Finally, Mexican and Cuban immigrants have different cultural beliefs and customs related to gender roles and reception. Mexican men seem predisposed to machismo. They want to be the provider and breadwinner for the family, although this is not always possible. Thus, when Mexican women began to migrate before their male counterparts, the women gained freedom and independence while many of the men had to cope with sharing the domestic duties inside the home. However, because men had access
to Bracero labor through the late 1960s, they had developed strong network ties in Los Angeles, which made job access more available. Women had to use social ties to find work, though they generally found more formal sector work than men. In addition, more women had documentation than men between 1980 and 1994, which also helped women achieve some level of social and economic mobility.

Cuban views on gender differed from Mexican norms. While Mexican men boasted machismo, Cuban women had a focus on femininity. Regardless of what job they obtained, Cuban women were expected to retain their beauty and finesse. In 1980, more men than women entered on the Mariel boatlifts, whereas women generally entered the U.S. through family reunification programs and came with higher levels of human capital than Mexican women. Both genders sought work on arrival, with the Cuban women obtaining jobs that made use of the education and skills they brought with them from Cuba. A dual household income provided greater stability than a single household income, and the Cubans took full advantage of this. However, unlike the Mexican immigrants who both continued to work, the Cubans worked until they had enough money for the female to give up her employment in order to stay at home. In contrast, the Mexican female immigrants, who arrived with lower levels of education and skills, enjoyed the independence gained from working and desired to continue their employment once their families joined them. While a dual income was important to familial economic mobility, the Cuban community’s documentation status allowed them better access to jobs, while the ethnic enclave provisions added to their resources. Thus, even when Cuban females stopped working, their male counterparts were still better able to provide for the family unit as a whole than was seen among the Mexicans during this timeframe.
Thus, each variable observed plays a different role for these two immigrant groups in addition to the underlying roles of levels of education, English language capability, and skill sets brought with a migrant to America. A lack of documentation status for Mexicans, as well as their lower education and skill levels, hindered their mobility from the time of their arrival. Cubans, on the other hand, were provided refugee status, access to social and federal programs, as well as a feeling of security from deportation. Documentation status acted as a factor in building each ethnic enclave, as well. The Golden Exiles of Cuba not only had refugee status, but they brought with them high levels of education and skills that allowed them to build a resource-filled Little Havana. This ethnic enclave provided the less-educated and less-skilled Marielitos access to important resources. In contrast, The Los Angeles enclave did not have a similar foundation of highly-skilled and educated immigrants with documentation. Instead, their enclave was relatively new during this timeframe. Finally, different gender beliefs and roles did factor into the types of jobs acquired, as well as the social and economic aspirations of each group. Although it appears that gender was not the basis for the increased upward mobility enjoyed by the Cubans as compared to the Mexicans, gender roles had a greater effect on socio-economic outcomes when taking documentation status, spatial concentration, and ethnic resources into account.
Appendix A

Statistical Comparison of Mexican and Cuban Immigrants to the United States based on years of education, poverty levels, personal income, and knowledge of the English Language: 1980-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduated high school**</th>
<th>Graduated college**</th>
<th>Poverty levels***</th>
<th>Mean Personal Income per Year***</th>
<th>Speak no English***</th>
<th>Speak English very well***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexicans</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>25.7% (1990)</td>
<td>$11,320*</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubans</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>12.5% (1990)</td>
<td>$15,626</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mexican Mean Personal Income is an average between the income levels of undocumented and documented income per year according to the 1990 United States Census.

**These numbers are found in United States Population Estimates, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1980-1988 in Transformations by Carola Suárez-Orozco.

***Percentages according to the 1990 United States Census.
References


Barajas, Manuel, and Elvia Ramirez. "Beyond Home-Host Dichotomies: A Comparative Examination of Gender Relations in a Transnational Mexican Community."


