

Tracking migrants across borders: the Mexican Family Life Survey Experience

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Introduction

- Little evidence on tracking movers across borders. Some efforts to interview family of migrants in sending countries
 - Contribution of this paper is to present evidence on how this was possible in the Mexico-US case and assess its usefulness
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Roadmap

- ❑ Why is this information important?
 - ❑ Where the study departed. MxFLS
 - ❑ Design and protocols used
 - ❑ What were important determinants for success
 - ❑ Benefits of having this data
 - ❑ Where are we going
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Why is tracking useful?

- In the case of longitudinal surveys which present a lot of mobility, it reduces the **attrition** problem
 - It reduces **systematic biases**. As long as migrants are different than stayers, the larger the sample that gets lost in a panel the more biases will be introduced to analysis (Thomas, Frankenberg and Smith, 2001)
 - However, tracking is not easy
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Mexican Family Life Survey

- ❑ MxFLS: broad socioeconomic, demographic and health survey
 - ❑ Representative at national, urban/rural levels
 - ❑ Longitudinal survey design: (aim to span 10 years).
 - ❑ 2002 baseline: 8,500 hhds 35,000 individuals
 - ❑ 2nd wave: 2005, 3rd wave 2008; 4th wave 2011
 - ❑ 2.5% baseline moved to US btwn 2002-05
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Mexican Family Life Survey-US Migrants

- ❑ 10% within the age of 15-29
 - ❑ Provided an ideal setting to collect data on those who had left and those who had returned
 - ❑ Parallel fieldwork operation in Mexico & US to track and interview US movers.
 - ❑ 91% of US movers were tracked and interviewed
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Design 2005

- **Migrant**, individual interviewed in baseline, who between baseline and first wave had moved to the US and stayed or planned to stay for one year
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Design

- ❑ Go back to the original household, gather information about the migrant's location, contact and interview them via **phone**
 - ❑ If in the course of tracking them, they **returned** to Mexico, they would be interviewed in Mexico
 - ❑ We interviewed by **Proxy**, those who were considered migrants but were hard to get.
 - ❑ We conducted **face to face** interviews in the US
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Design

Table 1: Sample of U.S. migrants from 2002 to 2005

	Freq.	%
Interviewed	774	91%
US by telephone	531	62%
U.S. Face-to-face	89	10%
Mexico face-to-face	64	7%
Mexico proxies	90	11%
Not interviewed	80	9%
Total	854	100%

Source: MXFLS 2005 : Fieldwork Record information

Three stage process

- **Easiest Cases:** location information is obtained when an interviewer visits the household
 - **Moderate Cases:** more work towards building trust and address concerns towards negative consequences
 - **Difficult Cases:** Several visits to the origin households, permission to contact mover
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Fieldwork Protocols

- ❑ We used very well trained, high human capital interviewers
 - ❑ Parallel US- Mexico fieldworks in constant communication
 - ❑ Make use of printed guides with the history of the case
 - ❑ Recontact information from household members who stayed in Mexico
 - ❑ Recontact information of migrants of the same network
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Fieldwork Protocols

- To migrants:
 - Gave thank you monetary gifts to migrants (\$5-\$20 who participated)
 - Gratitude letters
 - Christmas Cards

 - Gave **incentives** to origin households
 - In-kind (despensas)
 - Monetary
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Determinants of success

Table 2: Logistic regression of the odds being interviewed in the US (N=854)

	Odds Ratio	t-value	p-value
Education	0.982	0.038	0.639
Male	1.236	0.355	0.462
Age	0.989	0.011	0.332
In-kind	0.830	0.257	0.549
Money	1.011	0.003	0.001
# US Calls	1.047	0.012	0.000
# visits in Mx	0.491	0.057	0.000

Source: MXFLS 2005 Fieldwork information record

Benefits

- ❑ This design is representative of recent Mexican US migration
 - ❑ Documented and undocumented migrants
 - ❑ Includes information of movers **before** and **after** they migrated to the US
 - ❑ Includes same information for relatives who stayed
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Benefits

- It will include information of **return migrants** and new migrants as more waves are collected
 - Research:
 - Migrant selectivity (education, health, labor)
 - Impact of migration on those who stay
 - Dynamics of migration and reunification
 - Return migrants (salmon hypothesis?)
 - Transfers and remittances
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Where are we going?

- ❑ In 2008 and 2011 we plan to carry out waves 3 and 4, respectively
 - ❑ We will continue to interview movers regardless if they stay or return to Mexico
 - ❑ We expect 1600-1800 migrants in the US
 - ❑ We will carry out face-to-face interviews
 - ❑ Collect biomarkers and measure preferences and collect information on expectations
 - ❑ Include a module on risk at crossing for those who crossed and those who did not
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Conclusions

- ❑ Tracking participants across borders is a feasible task
 - ❑ With future waves MxFLS will be capable of explore return migration
 - ❑ Will provide information of relevant groups to make comparisons on the new dynamics of Mexico-US migration
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Questions
