A tale of two contexts: Mexican women's labor force participation in the United States and Mexico

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Introduction

- Between 1990 and 2010 the Latin American born population in the U.S. increased by 13 million
  - Over half of the new arrivals came from Mexico
- Considerable dispersion in areas of destination with growing Latino immigrant settlements in the Southeast and Midwest
- These changes have renewed concerns about issues of immigrant incorporation and well-being, including those connected with family dynamics and female labor force participation

Comparative approach

- Guiding assumption is that personal experiences and behaviors are affected by context
- Many possible comparisons:
  - Same context over time
  - Across receiving contexts
  - Between sending and receiving contexts
- The latter one is particularly well-suited to study issues such as
  - Determinants of migration
  - Disruption and adaptation
  - Emerging behaviors in connection with migration

Analysis

- Comparison of rates of female labor force participation among Mexican women in Mexico and the U.S.
- We focus on the intersection between migration and marital status as central transitions describing women's work careers
- Investigate the determinants of women's labor supply
  - Human capital resources, including differences in effect between sending and receiving contexts
 - Migration specific dimensions not applicable to sending regions

Data

- Original survey conducted in the Durham-Carrboro-Chapel Hill area in North Carolina and 8 migrant sending communities in Mexico
  - Bi-national design captures differences between sending and receiving contexts

- Durham Sample:
  - Community Based Participatory Research
  - Targeted Radom Sampling

- Mexico sample:
  - 8 municipalities purposively selected based on the places of origin of Mexican migrants
    - 2 in Michoacán, 2 in Guerrero, 1 in Veracruz, 1 in Hidalgo, 1 in Puebla, and 1 in Guanajuato

- Sample: men and women aged 18-45
  - 952 and 641 Mexican men and women who migrated to the U.S. after age 15 in Durham, NC
  - 800 men and 800 women in sending Mexican communities

- The survey collected retrospective life-history information, including detailed information on the sequence of family and migration events as well as labor force participation
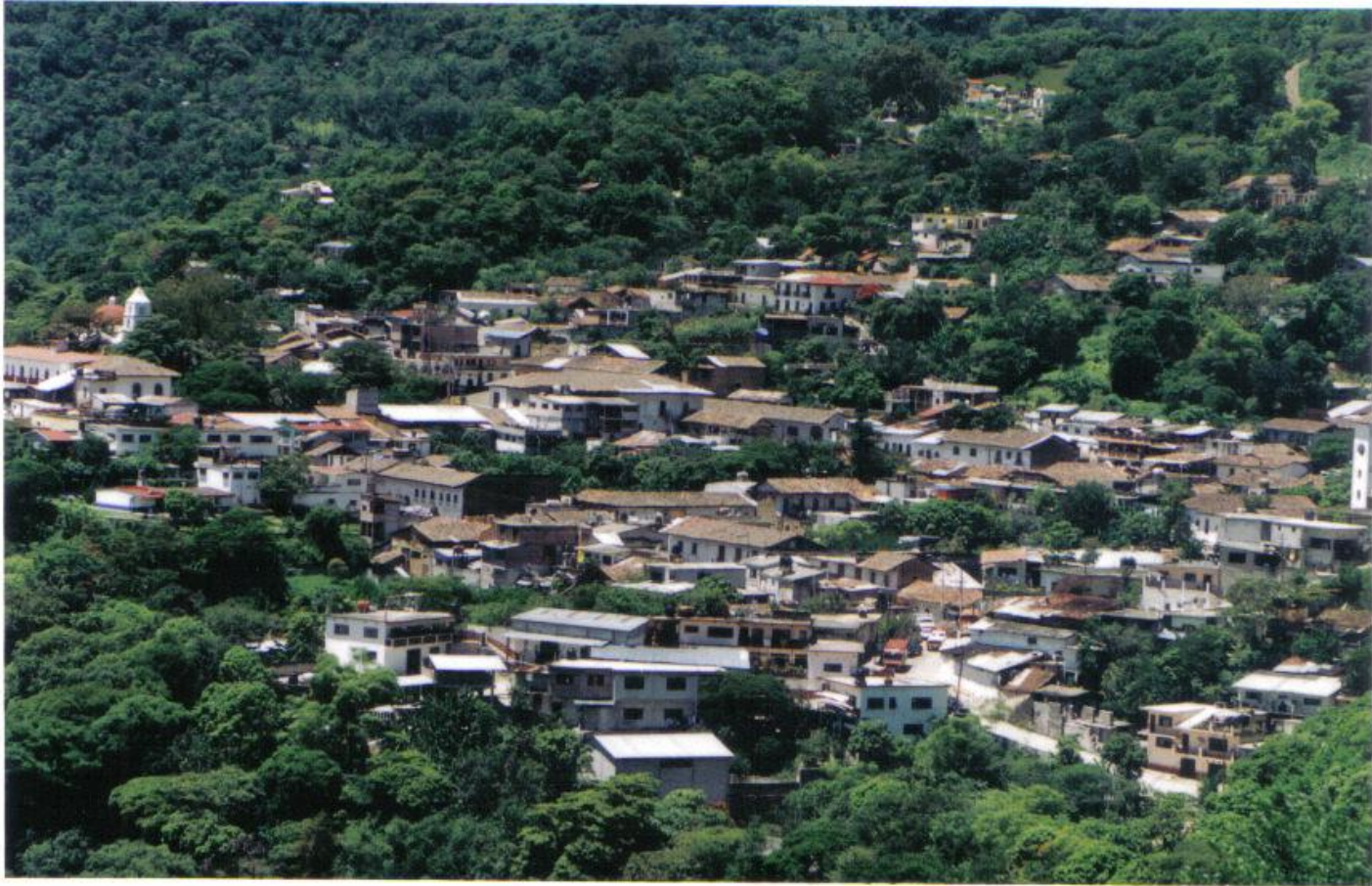
Durham neighborhoods

Neighborhood map
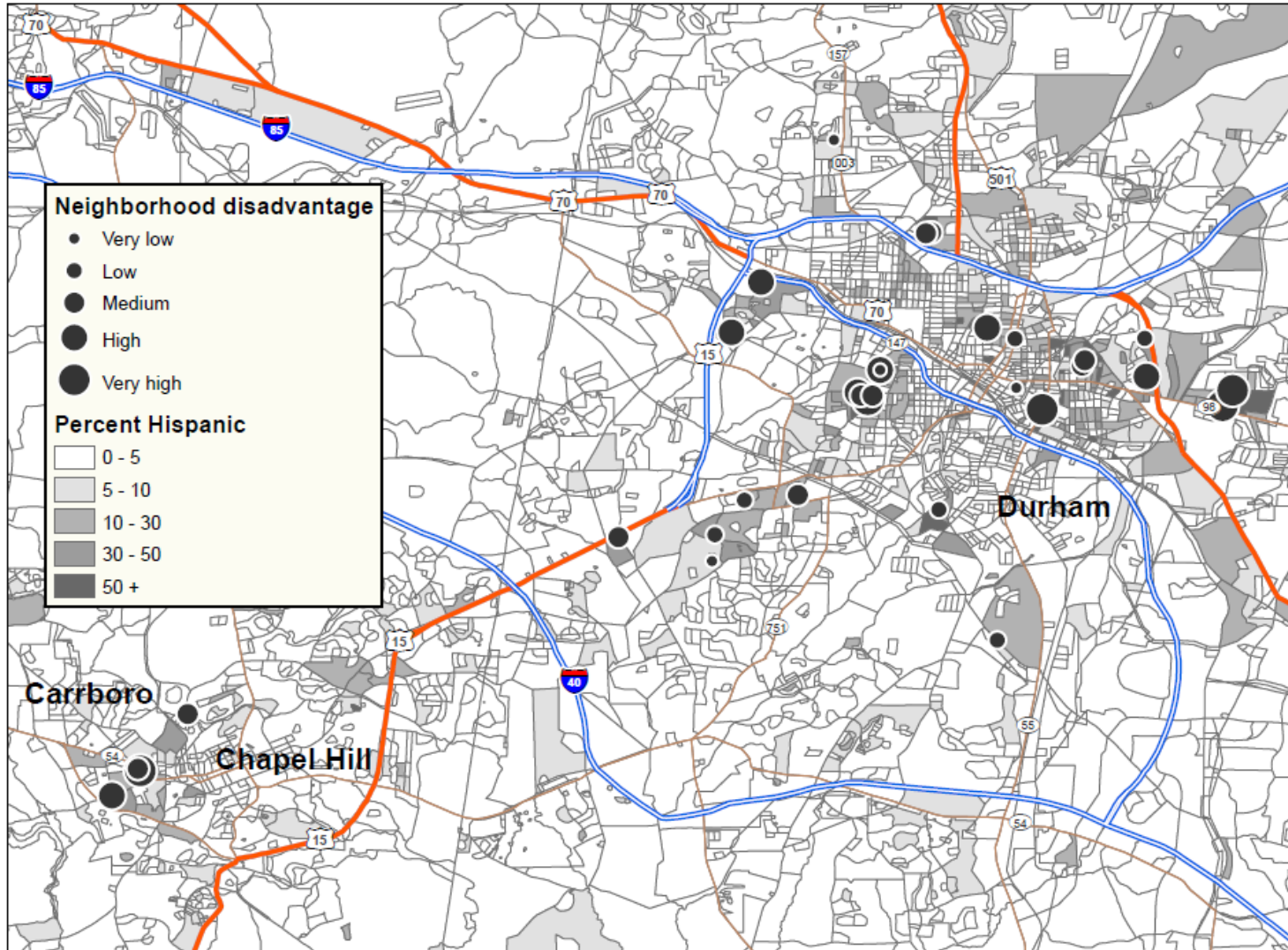
Mexican context: Maravatío, Michoacán

Mexican context: Pahuatlán, Puebla

Age trajectories of FLFP

Percent of women working across contexts by age
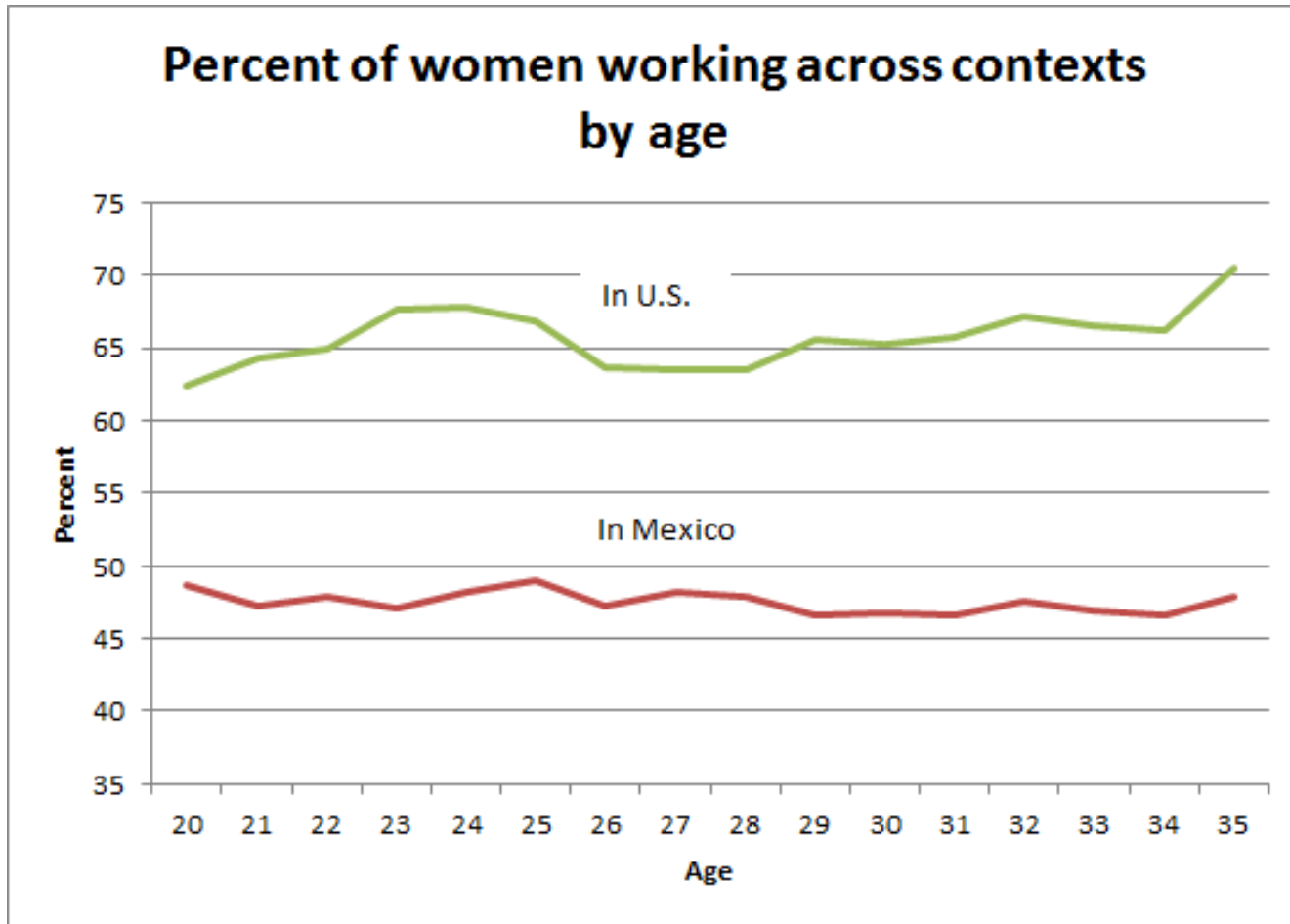
Intersection between migration and marital status at migration (ever migrants)

Percent of women working before and after migration
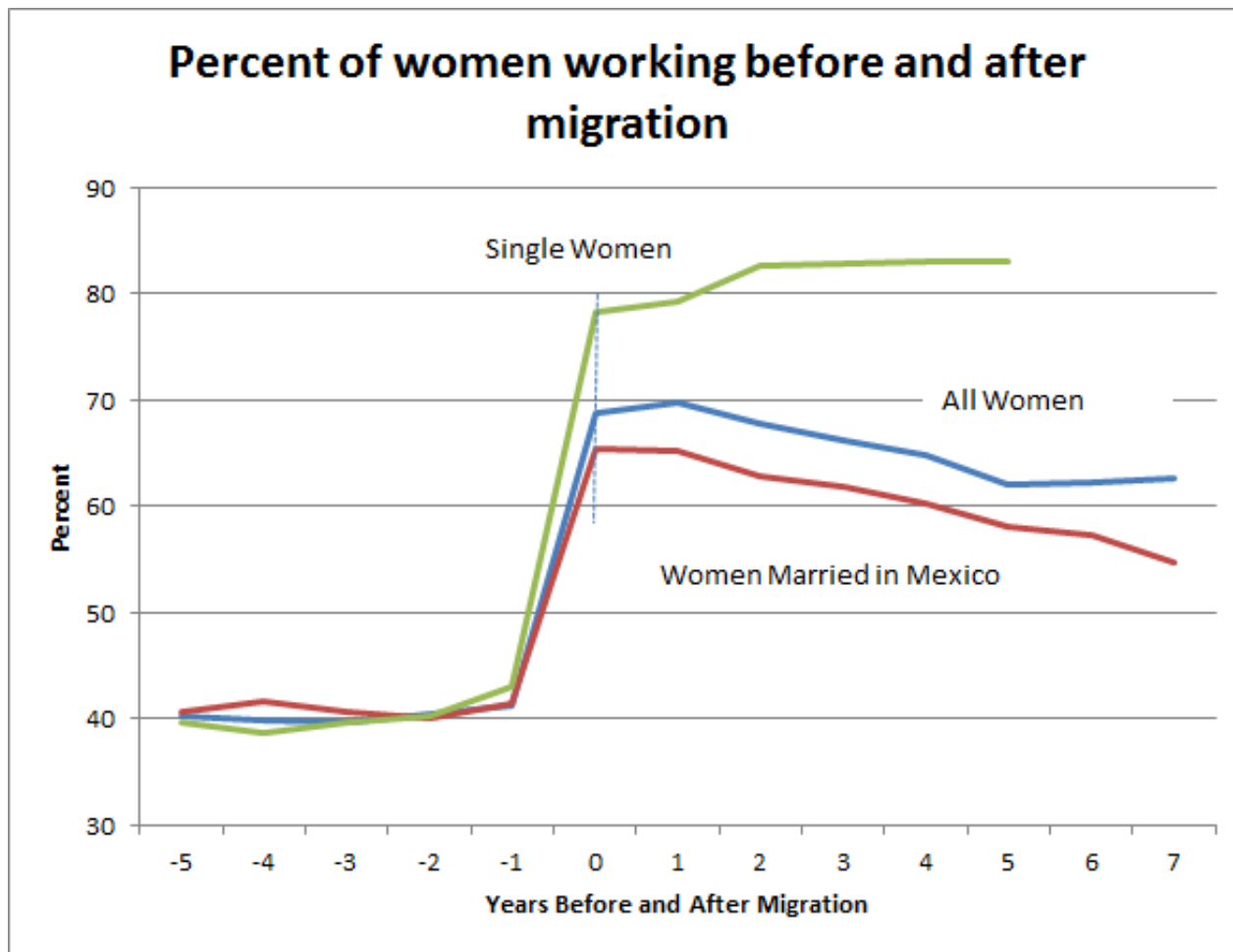
Intersection between marriage and context (ever married)

Percent of women working before and after marriage across contexts
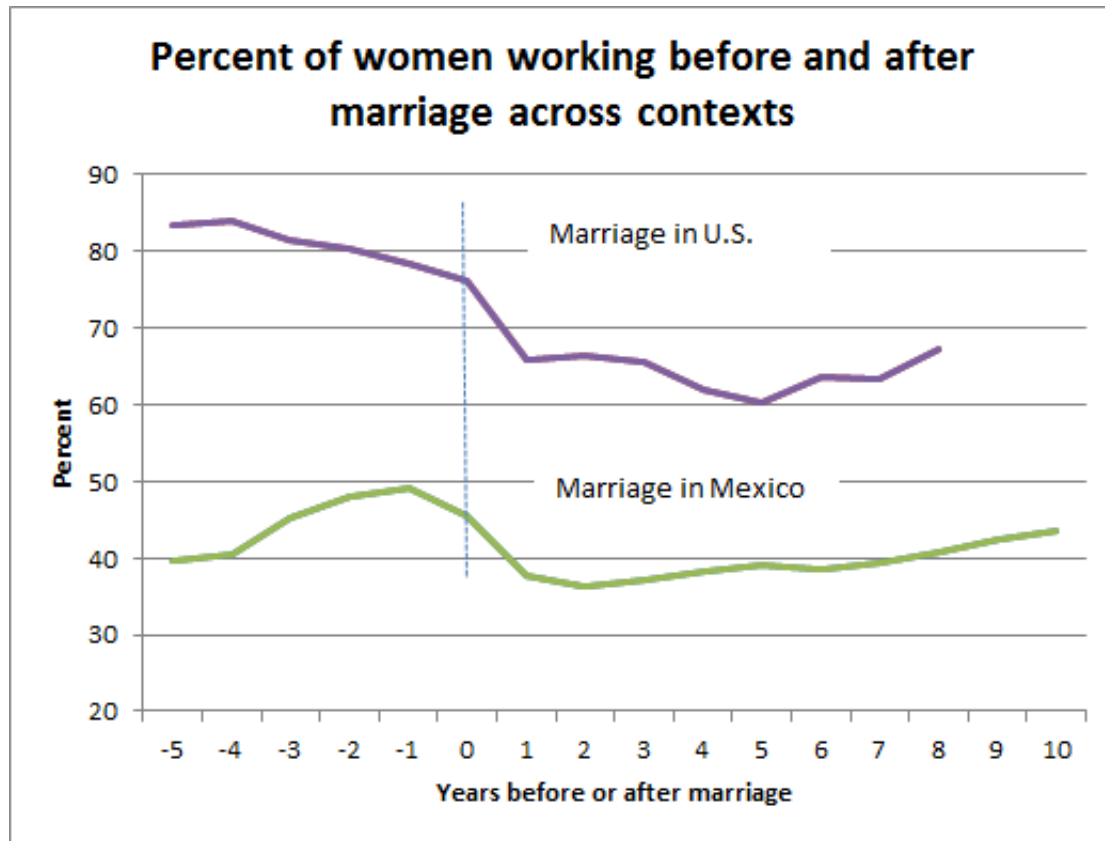
Working

Discrete-time logit model predicting likelihood of Mexican women working across contexts

	All	Mexico	U.S.
Intercept	-1.69 **	-2.02 **	1.32 **
Age	0.12 **	0.14 **	0.01
Age Squared	0.00 **	0.00 **	0.00
Educational attainment (reference= 0-5 years)			
6-8	0.14 **	0.17 **	0.07
9-11	0.17 **	0.20 **	0.11
12+	0.57 **	0.75 **	-0.14 *
Statuses in prior year			
Married	-0.83 **	-0.76 **	-1.28 **
Number of children	-0.06 **	-0.05 **	-0.08 **
Residence status			
In U.S.	0.92 **		

Working: U.S. specific determinants

**Discrete-time logit model predicting likelihood of
Mexican immigrant women working in the U.S.**

Intercept	0.840 **
Age at arrival	0.032 **
Time in the U.S. (reference= 1 year)	
2	0.230 *
3	0.191 *
4	0.169
5	0.109
6	0.025
7	0.000
8+	0.023
Documentation	0.719 **
Educational attainment (reference= 0-5 years)	
6-8	0.050
9-11	0.082
12+	-0.175 *
Statuses in prior year	
Married	-1.238 **
Number of children	-0.033
Pre-migration statuses	
Married in Mexico	-0.227 **
Worked in Mexico	0.426 **

The work trajectories of single women

Discrete-time logit model predicting the likelihood of single Mexican women working across contexts

	Both	Mexico	U.S.	
Intercept	-4.448 **	-4.578 **	-1.186	3.484 **
Age/Years in U.S.	0.296 **	0.301 **	0.272	-0.063
Age/Yrs. In U.S. Squared	-0.004 **	-0.004 **	-0.004	0.008 **
Educational attainment (reference= 0-5 years)				
6-8	0.130	0.189 **	-1.063 **	-1.366 **
9-11	0.279 **	0.311 **	-0.480	-0.620
12+	0.145	0.230 **	-1.364 **	-1.892 **
Residence status				
In U.S.	1.358 **			
Age at migration				-0.035
Worked in Mexico				0.946 **

Sample restricted to person-years before marriage

The U.S. sample includes person-years after migration

The work trajectories of married women

Discrete-time logit model predicting the likelihood of post-marital work among Mexican women across contexts

	Both	Mexico	U.S.	
Intercept	-0.094	0.189	0.484 **	0.636 **
Years in Union	0.065 **	0.090 **	0.017	-0.021
Years in Union Squared	-0.001 *	-0.002 **	0.002 **	0.004 **
Age at Marriage	-0.074 **	-0.102 **	-0.023 **	-0.033 **
Educational attainment (reference= 0-5 years)				
6-8	0.333 **	0.463 **	0.054	0.012
9-11	0.299 **	0.420 **	0.111	-0.016
12+	0.955 **	1.372 **	0.002	-0.017
Number of children	-0.139 **	-0.134 **	-0.182 **	-0.176 **
Worked before marriage	0.993 **	1.107 **	0.712 **	0.765 **
Residence status				
In U.S.	1.015 **			
Age at migration				0.008
Documentation				0.455

Mexican sample restricted to person-years after marriage and before migration
U.S. sample restricted to person-years after marriage among women who formed unions in the U.S.

Conclusions

- Context dramatically alters Mexican women's work trajectories:
  - Being in the U.S. increases the likelihood of women's work 2.5 times
  - For those who migrate single, work becomes practically universal after migration compared to 55 percent in Mexico
  - For those who migrate married, labor force participation reaches 60 percent after migration, compared to 35 percent in Mexico
- Difference in human capital determinants
  - In Mexico, work more prevalent among educated women
  - In the U.S., education plays not role in determining work
- Difference in the role of family constraints
  - Accounting for level of work, family constraints (marriage and children) are actually stronger in the U.S.

Conclusions

- In addition to differences across contexts, cross-national data allows for the investigation of context specific predictors
  - Women with older ages at arrival, documented, and prior work experience in Mexico more likely to work in the U.S.
  - Women married in Mexico less likely to work
- The work trajectories of single women in Mexico and the U.S. also show important differences
  - Education not a factor in the U.S.
  - Marriage and family constraints again stronger

Implications

- Cross-national data collection particularly well-suited to address questions such as the impact of migration on women's work
- Retrospective information useful for thinking about work and migration in terms of careers – breaking points
- Life-course approach allows for research examining intersecting domains
  - Such as marriage, migration, and work
- Subsequent research needs to investigate
  - Specific aspects of women's work, such as occupation, earnings, and educational/work mismatches
  - Household dimensions, including husbands' and other sources of support, in affecting women's work trajectories

Appendix: Migration Selectivity

Observed selectivity into migration

	Migration	Married Migration	Single Migration
Intercept	-7.896 **	-6.826 **	-10.484 **
Age	0.105 **	0.001	0.206 **
Age Squared	-0.001	0.000	-0.002 **
Educational attainment (reference= 0-5 years)			
6-8	0.322 **	0.212	0.430 **
9-11	0.584 **	0.592 **	0.594 **
12+	0.572 **	0.399 *	0.771 **
Statuses in prior year			
Married	-0.229 **		
Number of children	-0.099 **	-0.270 **	-0.042
Working	-0.136 *	0.292 **	-0.471 **
U.S. sample	3.656 **	3.450 **	3.830 **