



Happiness and marginalization rates for internal Mexican migrants and the native-born population in Baja California, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

More than 3.3 million people were internal migrants in Mexico in 2010 (INEGI, 2011a). This internal migration has played an important role in the growth and expansion of cities in Mexico, particularly in the country's northern border region. Growth in the municipalities has been driven by neoliberal economic policies and factors of globalization. This paper considers the level of happiness and marginalization for those who were born in and those who migrated to the two largest municipalities in Baja California, Mexicali and Tijuana. This study finds that there are not many differences between the native-born and migrants' expressed level of happiness and marginalization level but there are differences in the municipalities. From these findings, the importance of place, its nature as well as manmade characteristics, and people are more important factors than marginalization or place of birth to finding happiness.

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1. Introduction

Migration in Mexico has occurred for centuries, since before the time of the Spanish Conquistadors, and has become a part of the culture of the people as they search for better opportunities and safety (Wilson, 2010). In 2010, more than 3.3 million Mexicans or approximately 3% of the population had lived in another Mexican state five years earlier. Overall, close to 20 million people or about 20% of the population are internal migrants now living in a different state than where they were born (INEGI, 2011a). This migration has played an important role in the growth of Mexican cities as people move from rural areas to large

metropolitan centers, and it places significant demands on local governments to plan appropriately to provide adequate services for increased population numbers.

Migration is a process that is conditioned by people's expectations, aspirations, and goals for a better life, while at the same time, it can compromise people's living conditions, personal sense of security, and communal ties. This can be seen in the U.S.–Mexican border region, where migrants find jobs and economic security and where the northern municipalities have had difficulty maintaining public services to meet this population growth (Collins, 2007). Migration thus has both positive and negative factors in people's lives that might impact individual happiness. Additionally, if looking at migration in the context of a physical condition in that it implies arriving somewhere, finding a place to live, obtaining a job, and achieving new living standards, then understanding the relationship between marginalization and migration provides another view of migrants' lives. Marginalization in this context is

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defined as living conditions that are suboptimal in terms of goods and services.

Internal migration is also similar to international migration in that it is networked-mediated, an extremely important variable. Additionally, individuals make an economic decision based on the costs and benefits to migration (Fussell, 2004; Ravuri, 2014; Rodríguez & Busso, 2009). People leave their homes in rural and some urban areas of Mexico to obtain better economic opportunities in the northern urban centers (Fukurai, Pick, Butler, & Nag, 1987; VanWey, 2005). Some benefits to internal migration in comparison to international migration include, but are not limited to, knowledge of the language, culture, and customs in Mexican society. Though migration is an issue discussed worldwide, very little has been written about the Mexican northern border communities and levels of happiness within the migrant and native populations. This study adds to the conversation. It provides new insight on happiness and the impact of migration, marginalization, and the importance of a community or the amenities of the place where people live on happiness.

1.1. Methodology

This study analyzes internal migration of Mexican immigrants to two northern border towns, Tijuana and Mexicali, both located in Baja California. Using a quality of life database the authors developed to understand the attitudes and perceptions regarding life in the U.S.–Mexican border region, this analysis conducts a comparative study of happiness and marginalization between migrants and natives. The questions used to explore these concepts are: Is there a difference in happiness levels by gender for residents in the northern border communities? What is the relationship between length of time spent living in a community and the level of happiness for the individuals there? Are there differences between the communities of Mexicali and Tijuana, Baja California that make people happier? Are migrants happier than native-born residents in these two Mexican border cities? Is there a difference in the level of marginalization among migrants and natives in the border communities? Does this difference in marginalization change the level of happiness for residents in the communities? The authors hypothesize that marginalization or a lack of access to goods and services; time living in the city; place of birth, whether a person is a native or migrant; the factors individuals like or dislike about the city or living conditions in a city, all contribute to happiness levels.

The data collection for this paper was part of a larger study on the quality of life in the U.S.–Mexican border region. Households in municipal urban centers were selected through a stratified, random sample based on Mexican census tract data (*Áreas Geostadísticas Básicas* or AGEB) to ensure a representative selection of the distinct zones in the cities. For the larger study, surveys were collected over a four-year period; however, the specific data used for this paper are from the years 2007 for the metropolitan region of Tijuana, Rosarito, and Tecate – referenced purely as Tijuana here, and 2008 for Mexicali. The survey work was done during the spring months. In Tijuana, 1,183 face-to-face interviews and in Mexicali 373

face-to-face interviews were conducted with the head of house or a person at home at the time, age 18 or over. The answers to the questions were based on a 9-point Likert scale. The larger survey instrument used to ascertain quality of life contains 63 questions. This paper analyzes the responses from the following subset of questions: Where were you born (city, state, and country)?/¿En qué país nació usted (ciudad, estado y país)? How long have you lived in this city (in years)?/¿Cuántos años ha vivido en esta ciudad? What do you like most about living in this city?/¿Qué es lo que le gusta más de vivir en Mexicali o Tijuana (según sea el caso)? What do you like least about living in this city?/¿Qué es lo que le gusta menos de vivir en Mexicali o Tijuana (según sea el caso)? In general, how would you rate your emotional state, i.e., your overall level of happiness?/¿En general, cómo califica su estado emocional, es decir, su nivel total de felicidad?

The quality of life data are merged with the marginalization data calculated by CONAPO using data collected by Mexico's Institute for National Statistics and Geography (INEGI). The marginalization data is organized by census tract or AGEB, which allows the researchers to correlate specific households to their level of marginalization.

Two tests are employed to evaluate the association between happiness and the other variables. The first test recodes happiness as a binomial variable and two probit models analyze happiness as the dependent variable compared with all other variables in the questionnaire, or the independent variables. The first probit model is if the respondent gave an 8 or 9 response to their level of happiness, then happy equaled 1; all other responses are given a 0. A Happy1 model for any answer of a 7, 8, or 9 was run to indicate the level of happiness; happy equals 1, and all other responses are allocated a 0.

The second test uses χ^2 test to determine if there is an association between dependent and independent variables. Taking the level of happiness as a dependent variable, the null hypothesis (H_0) is tested establishing that variables are not associated. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) indicating that variables are associated, V-Cramer is used to measure the strength of the association. V-Cramer analyzes the data on a scale of 0 to 1 with any value close to 0 being weakly associated and anything close to 1 as strongly associated.

This paper begins by defining marginalization and happiness, important concepts in understanding migration and happiness. The topic of internal migration in Mexico is then discussed, followed by an analysis of the northern Mexican border municipalities of Tijuana and Mexicali. Next, the dataset used for this paper is analyzed using the probit analysis. This leads the discussion of findings and suggestions and recommendations for further study.

2. Defining marginalization and happiness

Subjective well-being is part of one's quality of life (Dissert & Deller, 2000; Liu, 1976; Szalai & Andrews, 1980) and related to one's level of happiness. From a utilitarian perspective, happiness is seen as the ultimate goal to obtaining a good quality of life (Bartram, 2010, p. 345; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). Happiness can also be seen within

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