Extended Abstract Submission for the 2015 PAA

Assessing Geographic Dispersion & Limited Inclusion in NYC: DACA and the MIDA

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During the past three decades the Mexican-origin and Mexican-born populations in New York have been increasing not only in absolute numbers, but in visibility and relevance for local policies and academia. Mexican nationals represent the largest single immigrant group residing in the United States. Central American and Spanish-speaking Caribbean migrants constitute another minority group with apparently similar socioeconomic characteristics compared with Mexicans. However, despite high volumes of irregular or undocumented migration, high poverty levels, and low naturalization rates, the social incorporation of different Latino and Caribbean groups could be dissimilar due to differences in terms of contexts, labor trajectories, or racial/ethnic practices. Particularly Mexican migrants in the United States show very low levels of educational attainment and income.\textsuperscript{1} In this sense their social incorporation and family life seems to be threatened mainly by their migratory status and poor access to different forms of capital compared to citizens or ‘legal’ migrants.

After referring to the social assimilation/incorporation literature and to the most widely used demographic methods for producing estimates of the undocumented population in the United States, two central ideas are explored in this work. The first one is to analyze the geographic dispersion of the Mexican community in New York City as a non-traditional destination community. This is complemented with relevant characteristics for the Mexican-

\textsuperscript{1} Although the educational attainment for Mexicans compared to Central Americans, or compared to each Central American country, should be analyzed in more detail. For example, according to ACS 2010 data the Mexican-born population reported a higher percentage of population 25 and older with less than high school (60.1) compared to other Central-America-born population (49.7); Central Americans also had higher percentages of third level education (see Grieco et al. 2012).
born immigrant clusters in the city –first generation immigrants–, specifically in terms of poverty and overcrowding. Spatially, and as a first stage of a larger research project, this analysis is based only in the five boroughs (but we will expand to the metropolitan area and specifically towards the suburban areas of Long Island) and looks at the situation of what here is defined as Mexican immigrant clusters in contrast with other two groups: Chinese and Dominican. Most of the data sources for this task come from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey at the census tract level (see figure 1).

In 1990 New York City had the largest Latino population of any city in the United States, with 1.8 million residents, followed by Los Angeles with 1.4 million. According to the U.S. Census these two centers were the only cities with more than a million Latino-origin residents at that time. While L.A. has been considered the Mexican capital outside national territory (the city with the highest number of Mexican nationals abroad –around 2.6 million in 2007–) and since the 1950’s the main U.S. destination for Mexican migrants, NYC represents a somewhat recent destination. In NYC Mexican migrants are still not the largest minority group but their presence has increased significantly in the past 30 years. In 2000 the Latino population in the Big Apple increased around 20%, reaching 2.2 million residents according to Census data. For the 2000 to 2010 period the change was modest, and the Latino population in NYC grew 8.1 percent, reaching 2.3 million or 29 percent of the city’s population. By far, the Mexican-origin population experienced the highest percent increase in the last decade of the 20th century in NYC, going from 61.7 thousands to 186.9 thousands, a 202% increase. In 2010 the number of Mexican origin population in NYC is around 319 thousands

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2 We identified 16 Mexican-origin ‘core-inner city clusters’ in 2010 in New York City. These clusters were built under specific criteria: two or more census tracts with a Mexican origin population above 12 per cent, which is 10 points above the 2 percent average by census tract for the region in that year. Of the 16 clusters, four are located in the Bronx (around Fordam, High Bridge, Melrose and Mott Haven); one in Manhattan (East Harlem); four in Queens (Astoria-Ravenswood, Jackson Heights, Long Island City, and south of Hunter Point-Sunnyside Gardens); six in Brooklyn (near Williamsburg, Bushwick, North of Fort Greene, Brooklyn Heights, Sunset Park, Coney Island and Brighton Beach); and one in Staten Island (close to Port Richmond).
A second key idea is to present the Mexican initiative on Deferred Action or MIDA. This is a groundbreaking initiative to promote Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications and upward integration of New York’s rapidly growing Mexican community. With funding from the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, the Mexican Consulate, Together We Can, and support from the City University of New York (CUNY), this project seeks to improve the lives of Mexican immigrant families. The MIDA project is collaboration among partner institutions in New York and the region, including the CUNY Vice Chancellors’ Office, the Baruch College-Mexican Consulate Leadership Program, the New York Immigration Coalition, Masa, and Make the Road New York. Additionally, ten Mexican and immigrant serving community-based partner organizations promote DACA applications throughout NY City and State, plus two legal service providers. MIDA can also be defined as a multi-pronged initiative to promote at least 500 new applications. The project brings together an outstanding set of partner organizations with complementary abilities at outreach, services, media, data research and policy, and partnership with governments.

The MIDA project’s constituent partners bring an impressive depth of knowledge, service and advocacy to bear on the issues of DACA promotion and the conditions of undocumented immigrants in general. They also bring strong relationships from prior work into this collaboration. These partners have all been close observers of how DACA implementation has succeeded and failed over the past two years, and see concrete ways to promote DACA applications.

We believe that this comprehensive, innovative project can truly be a model for nationwide action, and serve as a template for future efforts – both for services in the wake of proposed “administrative relief” from the Obama Administration, or for comprehensive immigration reform. Moreover, the Project is being designed to form the basis of a longitudinal project to assess the long term effects of undocumented status and of
legalization, which will be important scholarship in the future debates over immigration reform and policies for fully integrating immigrant communities into the US.

References
