

Multiplying Diversity: Family Unification and the Regional Origins of Late-Age US Immigrants

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We use administrative data about new legal permanent residents to show how family unification chain migration changed both the age and regional origin of US immigrants. Between 1981 and 1995, every 100 initiating immigrants from Asia sponsored between 220 and 255 relatives, but from 1996 through 2000, each 100 initiating immigrants from Asia sponsored nearly 400 relatives, with one-in-four ages 50 and above. The family migration multiplier for Latin Americans was boosted by the legalization program: from 1996 to 2000, each of the 100 initiating migrants from Latin America sponsored between 420 and 531 family members, of which 18–21 percent were ages 50 and over.

This bill that we will sign today is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives or add importantly to our wealth and power. . . this Bill says simply that from this day forth those wishing to emigrate to America shall be admitted on the basis of their skills and their close relationship to those already here.

-Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965¹

At the height of the civil rights movement, President Johnson's vision of the Great Society resonated with the message of replacing the racist immigration quotas in exchange for a system privileging family reunification. But history shows that the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 had profound, unanticipated consequences. These resulted partly because architects of the legislation vastly underestimated the power of chain migration in driving future flows and partly because of policy choices made when high fertility rather than aging

¹Excerpted from President Lyndon B. Johnson's remarks at the signing of the immigration bill in 1965 (cf. Kennedy 1966, 148).

dominated domestic policy agendas. In addition to making family unification the centerpiece of admissions by broadening the preference categories to include adult relatives of citizens and legal permanent residents (LPRs), the 1965 amendments added parents of US citizens to the uncapped category.

A large body of research chronicles how the regional origins of new immigrants shifted since 1970 and subsequently altered the ethno-racial makeup of the US population (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990; Smith and Edmonston 1997; Hirschman 2005), with due attention to the rapid increase in the share of new legal permanent residents (LPRs) from Asia (Reimers 1992; Nowrasteh 2012). Until recently, however, there has been scant attention to changes in the age composition of immigrant flows (Terrazas 2009; Batalova 2012; Carr and Tienda 2013; O'Neil and Tienda 2015). This is understandable because working-age immigrants dominate new admissions (Smith and Edmonston 1997; He 2002) and because published reports from the Congressional Research Service and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Immigration Statistics provide limited age information about new immigrants.

Changes in the national origin and age composition appear to be related, but it has proven difficult to demonstrate how much and in what ways because no nationally representative population surveys include information about visa status for the foreign-born. That Europeans constitute the largest group among foreign-born seniors is not surprising because of low rates of replenishment with young workers after the flows receded and earlier arrivals aged in place. If employment is the primary driver of immigration, then it is unclear why by 2000 the Asian share of all foreign-born residents was similar to that of foreign-born seniors — 25 and 22 percent, respectively (He 2002). Jasso and Rosenzweig (1989) argued that family chain migration drove the rapid growth of migration from Asia and they imply, but do not investigate, that family sponsorship is related to the rise in late-age immigration. To date, only a handful of studies have examined how family chain migration drives changes in the demographic composition of legal permanent residents (see Jasso and Rosenzweig 1986, 1989; GAO 1988; Reimers 1992; Yu 2008; Carr and Tienda 2013).

Building on claims that the family unification provisions of the 1965 amendments drive changes in *both* the age composition and the regional origins of US legal permanent residents, we use administrative data to examine empirically whether and how chain migration links these

two trends. Specifically, we ask: (1) How does the prevalence of family chain migration differ among major sending regions, and (2) how does the surge in late-age immigration since 1980 vary by source regions and major sending countries? Specifically, we derive age-specific migration multipliers for the major sending regions and the four top source countries. These nations also feature the largest backlogs for numerically capped family visas (Wasem 2012), which has implications for the age composition of sponsored relatives who age as they wait for visas in multi-year queues.

In addition to improving on prior estimates of chain migration, our analyses clarify why the age composition of the foreign stock population from Asia and Latin America diverged (He 2002; Grieco et al. 2012). Before describing the data and estimation methods, we provide a brief overview of the logic that led to Congress's underestimation of the impact of the 1965 amendments on the regional origins of US immigrants. The concluding section discusses the implications of family chain migration in the context of an aging society and contemplated comprehensive reform.

POLICY BACKGROUND

The Congressional debates leading to the 1965 amendments reveal several issues that preoccupied advocates and detractors of immigration reform. According to Senator Edward Kennedy (1966, 145), then chair of the Subcommittee on Immigration, reform critics feared that the proposed amendments “would greatly increase annual immigration, would contribute to increased unemployment and relief rolls, would ease the bar to the entry of security risks, and would permit excessive entry of persons from Africa and Asia.” Others worried that the nation’s ethnic mix would change if the bans on immigration from Asia and Africa were rescinded. Having nixed the Bracero Program in 1964, there was little appetite for admitting unskilled workers that allegedly competed with natives. In allocating a mere 27,000 annual visas each for professionals of exceptional ability and for skilled occupations facing labor shortages, Congress envisioned German and not Chinese engineers, and British rather than Indian physicians; however, these employment visas proved pivotal for the surge in Asian immigration (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990, 40; Reimers 1992).

Champions of the family reunification provisions not only sought to end the discriminatory quotas that prevented sponsorship of relatives from

Southern and Eastern Europe, but also to establish universalistic admission criteria that were better aligned with the philosophical goals of the civil rights movement. In making family reunification the centerpiece of the 1965 amendments, reform advocates assumed that the expanded family preference categories would favor migrants of European stock, namely relatives of earlier immigrants, rather than Asians or Latin Americans. Reformers reasoned that the exclusion of Chinese and Japanese laborers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, coupled with the severe restrictions on immigration from the Asia–Pacific triangle, presumably implied few Asians to sponsor relatives. With Asians comprising about 1 percent and Hispanics less than 5 percent of the US population in 1960, neither group appeared to represent a huge future demand for family visas (Kennedy 1966, 1970; Bean and Tienda 1987; Hirschman 2005, Table 1).

That Congress vastly underestimated the impact of the 1965 amendments is old news, but the underlying mechanisms, and in particular how family unification migration multiplied flows from previously excluded countries, are less well documented. Not only did annual immigration flows increase, but the influx from Asia surpassed that from Latin America within a dozen years of the reforms. A less documented trend is a shift in the age composition of LPRs toward older ages — a partly predictable result of expanding the definition of immediate family members to include parents (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989; Carr and Tienda 2013), but also the long visa queues for family members subject to country-specific annual caps (Wasem 2012).

Regional Origins of Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs)

In light of long-standing labor agreements with Mexico and the explicit exemption of Latin American and Caribbean nations from the country quotas imposed in 1924 (Tienda 2002), a gradual rise in legal permanent migration from the Southern Hemisphere is not surprising. The termination of the Bracero Program in 1964 without a legal alternative to satisfy the entrenched demand for agricultural workers had the unintended effect of spurring unauthorized migration from Mexico during the 1970s and 1980s (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). Moreover, prior to the imposition of country limits on Western Hemisphere countries, Mexico consumed between one-quarter and one-third of all visas allocated to the Americas (DHS 2011, Table 2). By imposing annual quotas on all

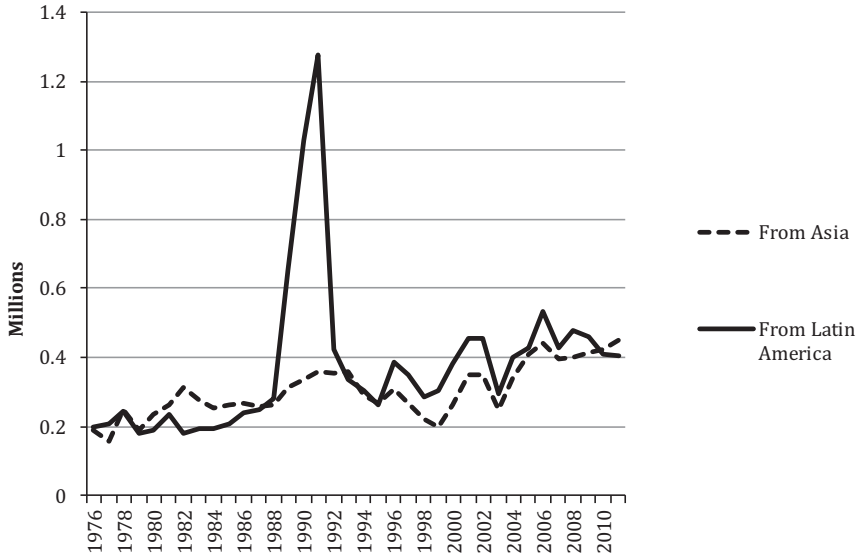
nations, the 1978 legislation was particularly consequential for Mexico because it further restricted legal pathways to the United States for family members subject to numerical quotas (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Tienda and Sanchez 2013).

The surge in Asian migration was unexpected not only because few US citizens of Asian origin had close relatives living abroad, but also because the 1965 amendments capped employment visas at less than 55,000 annually. Large numbers of LPRs from Asia gained admission as employer-sponsored skilled workers during the 1970s and 1980s (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989, 1990), yet the limited number of employment visas kept Asian immigration in check — at least temporarily; in 1990 Congress increased employment visas to 140,000 (Wasem 2012). Refugee flows have proven less predictable in their timing, magnitude, and source countries. Between 1955 and 1974, about 15,000 immigrants were admitted from Kampuchea, Laos, and Vietnam combined; over the next decade, over 760,000 refugees were admitted from these nations (Gordon 1987: Tables 7.1 and 7.2). Upon receipt of LPR status, refugees are entitled to earn citizenship and subsequently sponsor family members.

Published data from the statistical yearbooks of the (now defunct) Immigration and Naturalization Service show that within a dozen years after the enactment of the 1965 amendments, the number of new LPRs from Asia surpassed those from Latin America (see Figure I). For the next decade, immigration from Asia was consistently higher than that from Latin America. Because the vast majority of the beneficiaries of the legalization program authorized by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) hailed from Latin America, LPR admissions from the region spiked between 1988 and 1992 (Borjas and Tienda 1993). During the early 1990s, LPR admissions from Asia and Latin America converged, but owing to a surge in asylum requests from Central Americans and parole status granted to Cubans over the next dozen years, immigration from Latin America again surpassed that from Asia (Tienda and Sanchez 2013). Since 2010, legal immigration from Asia has, once again, overtaken that from Latin America (Nowrasteh 2012; Pew Research Center 2012).

The auspices of entry are important for understanding future immigration flows because of differences in propensities to naturalize and differences in opportunities to sponsor relatives. Jasso and Rosenzweig (1989) argued that both employment and “government-sponsored” admissions, which include both refugees and legalized immigrants, have the highest family sponsorship rates because most of their immediate relatives

Figure I. Legal Permanent Residents Admitted from Asia and Latin America, 1976–2011



Sources: 1986 and 1999 Statistical Yearbooks of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; DHS 2011.

live outside of the United States. The influx of over 700,000 refugees from Southeast Asia after the fall of US-backed governments in the region and the legalization of nearly three-million immigrants during the late 1980s dramatically increased the pool of new LPRs eligible to sponsor relatives upon becoming naturalized citizens.

Using administrative data for immigrants admitted in 1985 as spouses of US citizens, Jasso and Rosenzweig (1989, 872) report that the foreign-born were *four times* more likely than native-born citizens to sponsor foreign spouses, with immigrants from Mexico, the Philippines, Korea, China, and the Dominican Republic among the top five beneficiaries of the immediate family member entitlement. In Table 8, they reported that naturalized citizens from the Philippines, China, Korea, India, and Mexico featured the highest parent sponsorship rates. Although Jasso and Rosenzweig (1989) lacked information about relatives subject to numerical limitation (e.g., brothers and sisters and adult children), their findings based on numerically unlimited immediate relatives imply that family chain migration contributed appreciably to the dramatic growth of Asian immigration (884). This is a testable proposition with important implica-

tions for understanding changes in the source countries and age composition of future flows.

Age Composition of Immigrant Flows

Unlike Australia and Canada, the United States does not consider age in determining eligibility for admission (Walsh 2008; O'Neil and Tienda 2015). Although the vast majority of new LPRs are in their prime working ages, the expansion of the immediate family member category to include parents of US citizens appears to have altered the age composition of new LPRs by increasing late-age migration (Terrazas 2009; Batalova 2012). Using administrative data for LPRs admitted since 1980, Carr and Tienda (2013) show that increases in the number of numerically exempt parents of US citizens were largely responsible for the rise in late-age immigration. They did not examine the regional origins of sponsored migrants and thus were unable to empirically validate Jasso and Rosenzweig's (1989, 884) contention based on a single LPR cohort that parent sponsorship is "an overwhelmingly an Asian phenomenon."

Two primary mechanisms drive the growth of foreign-born seniors: *in situ* aging of adults who arrived during their prime working years, and sponsorship of adult siblings and elderly parents by naturalized legal permanent residents (Terrazas 2009). He (2002) shows that between 1960 and 2000, the *number* of foreign-born residents aged 65 and over was stable at around three million; in 2010, however, the number of foreign-born seniors (aged 65 and over) approached five million (Batalova 2012). Because Europeans were the major source of US immigrants until the 1960s, they comprised the largest group of foreign-born seniors through 2000 (Terrazas 2009); by 2010, Asians and Latin Americans surpassed Europeans among immigrant seniors.

With stock measures, it is not possible to determine how aging *in situ* and late-age immigration contribute to changes in the age composition of foreign-born seniors, but annual trends in exempt relative admissions reveal a sharp increase in the latter component after 1965.² Specifically, between 1967 and 1971, the number of exempt sponsored relatives rose from 47,000 to 81,000, with parents representing 11 percent of uncapped immigrants (DOJ 1971, Table 4). In 1981, over 151,000

²The published statistics do not tabulate class of admission by age; therefore, it is not possible to ascertain how much parent admissions contributed to late-age admissions.

exempt family relatives were granted LPR status, with parents comprising 22 percent of the total (DOJ 1981, Table 4A). Although the size of the exempt LPR cohort varied annually during the 2000s — from a low of 331,286 in 2003 to a high of 580,348 in 2006 — the parent share rose gradually from less than 18 percent in 2001 to 24 percent in 2010 (DHS 2011, Table 6).

DATA AND METHODS

Establishing links between family unification entitlements and the changing regional origins and age composition of new LPRs requires information about entry visas and immigrant characteristics over multiple years. The best data source to meet these requirements is the *Immigrants Admitted to the United States* microdata (DOJ 2007), which we supplement with special tabulations from DHS.³ The microdata file consists of records for all LPR admissions between 1981 and 2000, including persons present in the United States who adjusted their status to permanent resident during those years, with the exception of the 2.7 million immigrants granted legal permanent resident status under the provisions of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Using custom tabulations requested from DHS, we augment the *Immigrants Admitted* data with summary tabulations: (1) for LPR admissions for the period 2001–2009; and (2) for persons granted LPR status under IRCA for the period 1989–2000.

Both the microdata and the customized tabulations contain data requirements for deriving age-, cohort-, and origin-specific estimates of family unification chain migration: namely, year LPR status was granted; age at admission to LPR status; visa class; and region (country) of origin. The augmented data file consists of a multidimensional table that cross-classifies admission *cohort* (groups of admission years), admission *age* (grouped), visa *class* (employment, government, family), and region (or country) of *origin*. Specifically, the analysis file consists of 51,210 observations with (Age*Cohort*Visa class*Origin) count data over 29 years rep-

³The DHS *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* does publish the aggregate age distribution of male and female LPRs, but not jointly by visa classes and regions of origin. The *New Immigrant Survey* provides visa status for persons granted LPR status in 2003, including persons who adjusted their visa status, but these data can only be used to estimate cross-sectional sponsorship rates, not migration multipliers.

representing nearly 25.5 million legal permanent residents admitted to the United States between 1981 and 2009. Each observation is a frequency count of LPR admissions for the given set of age, cohort, visa class, and regional (country) origin values.

In this classification, admission years are aggregated into five-year cohorts, beginning with 1981–1985; arrival age is aggregated into three broad categories: 0–16 (youth), 17–49 (working ages), and 50+ (late-ages); and countries are assigned to five broad regions (Africa; Asia; Europe; Mesoamerica; and South America).⁴ Visa class is a key requirement for estimating family unification chain migration. Following Yu (2008), we collapse 352 specific visa classes into 10 exhaustive categories that represent the major admission classes. Importantly, these major classes differentiate between (1) initiating versus family unification immigrants; (2) accompanying versus later-sponsored family immigrants; (3) citizen versus LPR-sponsored family immigrants; and (4) numerically capped versus uncapped immigrants. The distinction between citizen and foreign-born sponsors is important because of the demonstrated family links between past and future immigration (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989, 858; Yu 2008; GAO 1988). Our analyses use the typology developed by Yu (2008) and modified by Carr and Tienda (2013) to differentiate between initiating and family unification migrants.

Family Migration Multipliers

Immigration multipliers represent the “total number of future immigrants generated by immigrants who are not themselves sponsored by relatives” (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989, 861). Unlike immigrant sponsorship rates, which are based on ratios of sponsored and total LPRs admitted in a given year or cohort, multipliers are cumulative measures of immigrants

⁴We use the term Mesoamerica, which includes Mexico and Central America, rather than North America because relatively few US immigrants hail from Canada. This terminology also makes clear that Central America is not part of South America. We would prefer to classify Oceania with Europe, but the aggregated tabulations we obtained precluded reallocation of these LPRs. Because the number of immigrants from Oceania is relatively small, this allocation decision is inconsequential for our estimates.

directly or indirectly sponsored by an *initiating immigrant*, defined as the first in their families to move to the United States.⁵ Initiating immigrants must be sponsored either by non-family entities (e.g., employers or the US government in the case of refugees or legalized immigrants) or marry a US-born citizen. We define four categories of initiating immigrants denoted by the subscript “0,” and letters E, G, and S designate employer, government, and spouse sponsors:⁶

₀ E	Employer-sponsored initiating employee immigrants (excluding dependents)
₀ G	Government-sponsored initiating immigrants (excluding dependents, excluding IRCA)
₀ G'	IRCA amnesty immigrants (special government-sponsored initiating immigrants)
₀ S	Initiating spouse immigrants (sponsored by native-born citizen spouses)

Using these admission criteria, we estimate a series of *family migration multipliers*, which represent the accumulation of sponsored family members relative to the number of initiating immigrants per admitted cohort.

Only initiating immigrants can start new migration chains, which are activated either when spouses and children accompany (or follow) initiating immigrants. After naturalization, foreign-born citizens are entitled to sponsor both immediate family members and relatives such as adult offspring or siblings, thus activating the multiplicative properties of chained migration (Yu 2008). *Family unification immigrants* are defined as LPRs sponsored by family members who themselves are immigrants (both naturalized citizens and legal permanent residents) or who are the accompanying family members of an initiating immigrant. The calculations distinguish among four types of family immigrants: (1) accompanying family dependents; (2) numerically limited later-following family dependents; (3) numerically unlimited immediate relatives

⁵Others use the term “principals” or “original migrants” to designate immigrants who initiate a new chain; however, we prefer “initiating” because of its more intuitive meaning in the context of chain migration — the potential initiation of a new family chain.

⁶IRCA-legalized LPRs are distinguished from other government-sponsored immigrants because they are generally reported separately in published reports and were excluded from the *Immigrants Admitted* micro-data files.

of US citizens; and (4) numerically limited preference relatives of US citizens.⁷ The antecedent subscripts 1–4 indicate the sequence in the migration chain.

Accompanying family dependents	₁ D	Spouses and minor children who accompany initiating immigrants on admission to LPR status
Numerically limited, later-following family dependents of initiating immigrants (Sponsored by LPRs under numerically limited 2nd family preference categories)	₂ D	Spouses, minor children, unmarried adult offspring of previously admitted initiating immigrants
Numerically unlimited immediate relatives of US citizens (Sponsored by citizens under numerically exempt family preference categories)	₃ S	Spouses of <i>foreign-born</i> US citizens
	₃ C	Children of US citizens
	₃ P	Parents of US citizens
Numerically limited preference relatives of US citizens (Sponsored by citizens under 1st, 3rd, and 4th family preferences)	₄ F	Adult sons, daughters, and siblings, with associated dependents, of adult US citizens

The formula for the age-, origin-, and cohort-specific family migration multipliers is given by:

$$FMM_{jkt} = \frac{\sum {}_1D_{jkt} + {}_2D_{jkt} + {}_3S_{jkt'} + {}_3C_{jkt'} + {}_3P_{jkt'} + {}_4F_{jkt'}}{\sum {}_0E_{Jkt} + {}_0G_{Jkt} + {}_0G'_{Jkt} + {}_0S_{Jkt}}$$

where the terms in the numerator represent counts of specific types of sponsored family migrants, and the denominator terms represent the counts of the four classes of initiating immigrants. The core notation of each term consists of an uppercase letter and a leading subscript representing an aggregated admission class. Specifically, ${}_0E$, ${}_0G$, ${}_0G'$, and ${}_0S$ denominator terms represent employer-sponsored, government-sponsored, and spouse initiating immigrants, respectively. The numerator includes initiating immigrants' accompanying and later-following family dependents (${}_1D$ and ${}_2D$); US citizens' numerically exempt spouses, children, and parents (${}_3S$, ${}_3C$, and ${}_3P$, respectively); and US citizens' adult offspring, siblings, and their respective dependents (${}_4F$). Subscript j denotes

⁷Our definition of "family immigrants" differs slightly from that used by the DHS (Monger 2010, 2). For consistency with our distinction between initiating immigrants and their family members, we classify the accompanying family members of an employer-sponsored initiating immigrant as family immigrants, whereas DHS assigns them to employment-based admissions.

one of the three age groups at admission (<17, 17–49, or 50+) among family-sponsored immigrants; the subscript J , which applies to the initiating immigrant terms in the denominator, is an aggregate across all ages. The subscript k signifies region of origin (Asia, Africa, Europe, Mesoamerica, or South America) or, in more detailed analyses, a top-sending country of origin (China, India, Philippines, or Mexico).

Subscripts t and t' reflect five-year admission cohorts corresponding, respectively, to the early and later stages of the migration chain. For initiating immigrants and their accompanying and later-following dependents ($_1D$ - and $_2D$ -sponsored family members), admission cohort t consists of one of the following cohorts: 1981–1985, 1986–1990, 1991–1995, or 1996–2000. The multipliers are truncated in the year 2000 because, except for accompanying and later-following family dependents ($_1D$ and $_2D$), activation of family unification entitlements requires acquisition of citizenship, which calls for appropriate temporal lags in order to estimate family chain migration multipliers.

Sponsorship and Naturalization Lags

Sponsorship entitlements are constrained both by decisions of LPRs to naturalize and the waiting times to attain citizenship because only citizens can sponsor numerically exempt immediate relatives and several family preference migrants (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990). Therefore, in order to refine the link between initiating cohorts and sponsorship of family members, the migration multiplier calculations adjust the cohorts of citizen-sponsored family immigrants by introducing nine-year lags to correspond with one sponsorship generation beyond the initiating immigrant cohort. This is analogous to the immigrant generation cohort approach used by others (e.g., Park and Myers 2010) to model mobility with cross-sectional data. The nine-year lag reflects the average eight-year duration in pre-naturalization LPR status plus an additional year for visa processing delays; it is generous for migrants from Asia but not migrants from Latin America, whose average time to naturalization is typically longer (Lee 2010).

Operationally, subscript t' is applied to numerically exempt immediate relatives ($_3S$, $_3C$, $_3P$) and citizens' family preference relatives ($_4F$) in order to approximate the timing of naturalization and eligibility for citizen-based sponsorship among initiating immigrants from cohort t such that $t' = t + 9$. Figure II illustrates the generation-lagged citizen-spon-

Figure II. Cohort Matrix for Initiating Immigrant Cohorts by Generation-Lagged Citizen-Sponsored Five-Year Admission Cohorts

		Cohorts of Citizen-Sponsored Family Migrants (${}_3C, {}_3S, {}_3P, {}_4F$)											
		1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	...	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
Cohorts of Initiating Immigrants (${}_0E, {}_0G, {}_0G', {}_0S$) and LPR-Sponsored Family Immigrants (${}_1D, {}_2D$)	1981	X											
	1982		X										
	1983			X									
	1984				X								
	1985					X							
	...						X	X					
	1996								X				
	1997									X			
	1998										X		
	1999											X	
	2000												X

Source: Adapted from Carr and Tienda (2013).

sored relatives for initiating cohorts included in our calculations (1981 – 2000). Annual initiating immigrant cohorts (${}_0E, {}_0G, {}_0G', {}_0S$) appear on the vertical axis; accompanying and later-following LPR dependents (${}_1D, {}_2D$) are temporally aligned with these cohorts. **X** denotes the corresponding annual cohorts of generation-lagged, citizen-sponsored family immigrants (${}_3C, {}_3S, {}_3P, {}_4F$) that appear along the horizontal axis. The ${}_3S, {}_3C, {}_3P,$ and ${}_4F$ cohorts are advanced by nine years to reflect this lag, and the 1981–1985 initiating cohort corresponds to 1990–1994 ${}_3S, {}_3C, {}_3P,$ and ${}_4F$ family admissions. The gray cells indicate the five-year admission cohorts in multiplier estimates.

TABLE 1
LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS (LPRs) ADMITTED BY REGION OF ORIGIN, AGE AT ADMISSION AND FIVE-YEAR COHORT, 1981–2009
 (PERCENTAGES; NS IN PARENTHESES)

Region of origin/age at admission	Five-year LPR cohort						
	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2009 ^a	
Europe	(321,133)	(385,150)	(670,698)	(518,750)	(679,782)	(449,391)	
0–16	19.8	17.7	19.4	20.3	19.2	14.2	
17–49	67.6	70.0	64.6	64.2	67.3	69.2	
50+	12.6	12.3	16.0	15.5	13.6	16.6	
Meso-America ^b	(881,648)	(2,239,907)	(2,397,916)	(1,499,658)	(1,729,727)	(1,506,105)	
0–16	26.4	16.2	16.5	25.7	18.6	18.9	
17–49	65.4	74.8	75.6	60.9	67.4	64.4	
50+	8.2	9.0	7.9	13.4	14.0	16.7	
South America ^c	(198,576)	(286,757)	(300,662)	(276,410)	(398,739)	(468,442)	
0–16	23.4	19.4	20.6	21.1	17.3	15.7	
17–49	67.2	68.6	67.3	65.3	68.2	67.9	
50+	9.4	11.9	12.1	13.6	14.6	16.4	
Asia	(1,350,448)	(1,414,772)	(1,661,277)	(1,253,290)	(1,658,069)	(1,618,588)	
0–16	25.1	21.1	19.6	19.5	15.7	15.9	
17–49	61.0	61.6	62.5	61.7	67.4	64.3	
50+	13.9	17.3	17.8	18.8	16.9	19.7	
Africa	(76,989)	(115,261)	(160,012)	(221,103)	(311,362)	(437,013)	
0–16	13.9	11.8	16.5	19.1	16.9	18.2	
17–49	80.5	81.6	75.1	71.8	73.5	69.8	
50+	5.6	6.6	8.5	9.1	9.6	12.0	
Worldwide	(2,828,794)	(4,441,847)	(5,190,565)	(3,769,211)	(4,777,679)	(4,479,539)	
0–16	24.5	18.0	18.1	22.2	17.4	17.0	
17–49	64.1	70.0	69.5	62.6	67.9	65.8	
50+	11.5	12.0	12.4	15.3	14.8	17.3	

Notes: ^aThe 2006–2009 admission cohort represents four rather than five years. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

^bIncludes Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and Canada.

^cIncludes Oceania.

Source: DOJ 2007; and special tabulations provided by DHS in 2010.

*REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN FAMILY UNIFICATION
MIGRATION*

Table 1, which reports the changing age composition of new LPR cohorts since 1980, reveals considerable variation in the level of late-age immigration across regions and over time. As was true historically, working-age adults have dominated contemporary US immigration streams: approximately two-thirds of all LPRs admitted between 1981 and 2009 were in their prime working ages (bottom panel). During this period not only did the size of successive cohorts increase — from 2.8 million between 1981 and 1985 to about 4.5 million between 2006 and 2009 — but the share of late-age immigrants also rose. The worldwide averages reported in the last row show that dependent youth outnumbered late-age LPRs by more than 2:1 among LPRs admitted during the early 1980s, but after 2005 the share of youth and seniors was roughly equal. By definition, making family unification the major criterion for admitting immigrants implies large numbers of dependents among new arrivals.

This pattern is mirrored for all regions with notable variations in both the initial levels and relative growth in late-age immigration over the 29-year period. During the early 1980s, for example, late-age immigrants made up 13–14 percent of new arrivals from Europe and Asia, respectively, but owing to larger cohort sizes, the absolute number of late-age Asian LPRs was four times that from Europe (see numbers in parentheses). By the end of the period, late-age immigration from Asia approached 20 percent — the largest share among all regions, which is consistent with the 2000 and 2010 stock measures based on census data (He 2002; Grieco et al. 2012). By comparison, about 17 percent of European LPRs from the 2006–2009 cohort were age 50 and over and the cohort was approximately one-quarter as large as that from Asia. Between 1981 and 2000, both the absolute cohort size and the share of late-age immigrants approximately doubled for new LPRs from Mesoamerica and South America. Only Africa sent below average shares of late-age immigrants throughout the observation period; however, even as the size of African immigrant cohorts mushroomed from 77 to 437 million, this region witnessed a doubling in the cohort shares of late-age immigrants (from 6 to 12 percent).

The migration multipliers reveal how family unification chain migration drives the regional diversification and age composition of new LPR flows. The first and second columns of Table 2 report the absolute

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF FAMILY MIGRATION MULTIPLIERS BY REGION OF ORIGIN, AGE AT ADMISSION, AND
FIVE-YEAR LPR COHORT, 1981–2000

LPR cohort	Initiating immigrants (<i>n</i>)	Cumulative accompanying and following sponsored relatives (<i>n</i>)	Family migration multipliers by age at admission			
			<17	17–49	50+	All
Europe						
1981–1985	128,235	228,878	0.44	1.13	0.22	1.78
1986–1990	178,928	208,684	0.33	0.70	0.14	1.17
1991–1995	308,902	373,634	0.38	0.66	0.17	1.21
1996–2000	215,868	359,383	0.46	0.89	0.32	1.67
Mesoamerica ^a						
1981–1985	221,260	765,742	1.09	1.98	0.39	3.46
1986–1990	1,497,026	921,425	0.18	0.34	0.10	0.62
1991–1995	1,380,413	1,329,522	0.30	0.52	0.15	0.96
1996–2000	312,381	1,313,381	1.23	2.22	0.75	4.20
South America ^b						
1981–1985	37,758	195,245	1.30	3.07	0.81	5.17
1986–1990	101,633	224,133	0.58	1.32	0.31	2.21
1991–1995	88,967	284,426	0.84	1.86	0.49	3.20
1996–2000	61,239	325,445	1.21	3.02	1.09	5.31
Asia						
1981–1985	472,080	1,044,320	0.55	1.16	0.51	2.21
1986–1990	403,160	1,033,399	0.66	1.40	0.51	2.56
1991–1995	526,489	1,222,461	0.58	1.28	0.46	2.32
1996–2000	301,427	1,192,213	0.87	2.03	1.06	3.95
Africa						
1981–1985	29,967	66,377	0.43	1.49	0.32	2.24
1986–1990	57,603	86,784	0.32	0.94	0.24	1.51
1991–1995	70,866	117,934	0.41	1.01	0.24	1.66
1996–2000	88,261	201,708	0.59	1.27	0.42	2.29

Notes: ^aIncludes Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and Canada.

^bIncludes Oceania.

Source: DOJ 2007; and special tabulations provided by DHS in 2010.

number of initiating immigrants and the cumulative number of cohort-sponsored family migrants for the major sending regions. The last four columns show the cohort-age-specific multipliers and the all-ages cohort multiplier (which is the sum of the age-specific multipliers) for the major regions. With two exceptions, discussed below, all of the family unification multipliers are above one, but there is considerable variation in *levels* of family chain migration. Substantively the 1.78 migration multiplier in the top row of Table 2 indicates that every 100 initiating European immigrants admitted between 1981 and 1985 collectively sponsored 178 *additional* family members; of these, 22 were aged 50 and older.

The multipliers, which vary in magnitude across regions and according to the size of initiating cohorts, yield several insights about how family

unification chain migration diversified immigration flows. Contrary to reformers' expectations, for example, the *lowest* multipliers correspond to Europe, and for the 1986–1990 and 1991–1995 LPR cohorts, the multipliers barely exceed one. Unlike immigrants from Asia and Latin America, moreover, the family members sponsored by Europeans during the 1980s and early 1990s primarily involved youth or working-age relatives. Only 12 percent of European family members sponsored during the 1980s were aged 50 and over ($22/178 = 0.12$; $14/117 = 0.12$). As European source countries included growing numbers from former Soviet bloc nations during the late 1990s, the share of late-age family members rose to 20 percent.

Further defying reformers' intentions, and despite the establishment of hemispheric and country caps designed to limit immigration from Asia, family unification multipliers for the region are consistently above two. The multipliers imply that during the 1980s and early 1990s initiating LPRs sponsored between 221 and 256 additional family members per 100 eligible sponsors; of these, between 20 and 25 percent were aged 50 and over. Asian family chain migration was particularly intense during the latter part of the 1990s, when the ratio of sponsored to initiating Asian LPRs approached 4:1. About a quarter of these sponsored LPRs were aged 50 and over. Although African migration streams are considerably smaller than those from Asia, the initiating cohorts grew steadily since 1981, as did the number of sponsored family migrants. New LPRs from Africa activated family unification migration chains by sponsoring between 151 and 229 family members per 100 initiating LPRs, with seniors representing between 14 and 18 percent of sponsored relatives.

Cubans and Mexicans dominated US migration streams from Latin America during the 1960s, but economic dislocations and armed conflicts in South America triggered an exodus from Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador during the 1980s (Tienda and Sanchez 2013). These flows sparked new family migration chains during the early 1980s and the late 1990s. The multipliers for South Americans imply that every 100 initiating immigrants admitted during the early 1980s and late 1990s sponsored over 500 family relatives by 2009, of which 16 and 21 percent, respectively, were aged 50 and over.

Family migration multipliers for Mesoamerica exhibit the greatest temporal variation because Mexicans and Central Americans were the largest beneficiaries from the IRCA legalization program, which dramatically increased the size of initiating cohorts during the 1990s. New LPRs from

this region are also taking advantage of their family unification entitlements by sponsoring relatives. The share of sponsored relatives aged 50 and over rose from 11 to 18 percent over the observation period, which parallels the national trend. The family migration multipliers for Mesoamerican initiating cohorts admitted in 1981–1985 and 1996–2000, respectively, imply sponsorship of approximately 350 and 420 additional relatives by 2009 per 100 initiating immigrants. That the multipliers corresponding to the 1986–1990 and 1991–1995 Mesoamerican cohorts are below unity is an artifact of the outsized initiating cohorts legalized under IRCA. Initiating cohorts from the region approached 1.5 and 1.4 million, respectively, during the legalization period, which extended through the early 1990s (see Table 1). Another reason for the comparatively low multipliers for these cohorts is the large representation of Mexicans, who average longer times to naturalization, and whose waiting times in the queue for country-capped visas are among the longest (Baker 2007, 2010). Nevertheless, the legalization cohorts jointly sponsored over two million family members by 2009.

To summarize, not only does the magnitude of family chain migration differ over time and by region, but partly owing to large fluctuations in the size of initiating cohorts, the absolute numbers also differ appreciably. This is dramatically evident for migrants from Mexico and the Caribbean in the aftermath of the legalization program. Second, although the majority of legal permanent residents are in their prime working ages, late-age immigration rose for all regions, albeit not uniformly (see also Table 1). A comparison of the two largest sending regions — Asia and Mesoamerica — underscores this point. Third, the total number of sponsored family members depends both on the size of initiating cohorts and whether relatives are subject to numerical limitation: spouses, dependent children, and immediate family members of US citizens are exempted from country caps, but other relatives are not. The family unification late-age immigration multipliers imply that the 1996–2000 initiating LPR cohort from Asia sponsored roughly 320,000 relatives aged 50 and over $[(106/396)*1192213]$ compared with 235,000 from Mesoamerica $[(75/420)*1313381]$.

Although informative, regional trends conceal a great deal of country-specific variation that can clarify how Asia became the dominant regional source of new immigrants within a dozen years after the restrictions on entry from the Eastern Hemisphere were lifted (Figure I), and why the age composition of family unification chain migration differs across

regions. We focus on the four top-sending countries — Mexico, China, India, and the Philippines — because of their potential to intensify late-age immigration due to the growing visa backlogs for non-exempt family relatives (Wasem 2012) and because the absence of a cap for immediate family relatives, including parents of US citizens, potentially can accelerate the growth of late-age immigration in the future. This is particularly important for China, whose population will age gradually until 2015, and rapidly thereafter (Peng 2011).

FAMILY CHAIN MIGRATION: THE TOP FOUR SENDING COUNTRIES

Mexico is currently and has been the largest single source of legal US immigrants since the second half of the twentieth century. Between 1961 and 1970, for example, 454,000 Mexicans received LPR status compared with 428,000 for all of Asia, including 35,000 and 27,000 from China and India, respectively (see DOJ 1980, Table 2). Despite the long-standing role of Mexicans as a source of low-wage labor for the United States, employers sponsor relatively few LPRs from Mexico; rather, the vast majority of Mexican LPRs are beneficiaries of family reunification entitlements exercised by US citizens. Of the Mexicans granted LPR status in fiscal year 2010, for example, less than 10 percent qualified for an employment visa (Tienda and Sanchez 2013). Except for the federal legalization program that enabled over two million Mexican nationals to adjust their legal status during the late 1980s and early 1990s, family reunification remains the main pathway to legal US residence for Mexicans.

Owing partly to US involvement in the Pacific during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migration from the Philippines has longer antecedents than that from India and China. This is reflected in the consistently larger Philippine cohort sizes through 2000; thereafter, the LPR cohorts from India and subsequently China surpassed those from the Philippines, as shown in Table 3. After restrictions on Asian immigration were lifted in 1965, India and China joined Philippines in sending large numbers of legal immigrants to the United States by first availing themselves to the skilled employment preference visas and, after acquiring citizenship, sponsoring relatives (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989).

Table 3 shows rather distinct country profiles based on the size, growth, and age composition of new LPR streams. Between 1981 and 2009, about 1.2 million LPRs were admitted each from China and India,

TABLE 3
NEW LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS BY AGE AT ADMISSION: TOP FOUR SENDING COUNTRIES BY
FIVE-YEAR LPR COHORT, 1981–2009 (PERCENTAGES; NS IN PARENTHESES)

Origin country/ age at admission	Five-year LPR cohort					
	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2009
China	(126,689)	(135,923)	(222,430)	(177,277)	(250,964)	(289,748)
0–16	15.7	13.2	12.1	16.5	12.3	10.5
17–49	55.5	54.2	64.5	60.2	65.0	66.8
50+	28.8	32.6	23.4	23.3	22.7	22.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
India	(117,608)	(134,510)	(173,176)	(189,005)	(343,618)	(246,044)
0–16	17.2	16.1	17.2	16.0	11.8	12.7
17–49	65.6	62.6	62.6	63.2	73.1	65.6
50+	17.1	21.3	20.1	20.8	15.1	21.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Philippines	(219,319)	(255,750)	(280,475)	(211,425)	(266,637)	(260,174)
0–16	21.5	21.4	21.9	19.7	18.9	19.3
17–49	56.5	57.6	57.7	57.9	60.9	56.4
50+	22.0	20.9	20.4	22.4	21.2	24.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mexico	(334,507)	(1,320,175)	(1,488,140)	(757,593)	(875,719)	(575,561)
0–16	26.9	12.8	11.4	29.0	18.0	18.4
17–49	67.6	79.6	82.3	57.3	67.2	63.6
50+	5.6	7.6	6.3	13.8	14.8	18.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: The 2006–2009 admission cohort represents four rather than five years. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. IRCA amnesty immigrants for China, India, and the Philippines are suppressed because of small numbers.

Source: DOJ 2007; and special tabulations provided by DHS in 2010.

which compares with 1.5 million from the Philippines and 5.4 million from Mexico. Both India and China witnessed steady, if not monotonic, growth in LPR cohort size such that the 2006–2009 cohorts were over two times larger than the 1981–1985 cohorts (ratios of 2.1:1 and 2.3:1 for India and China, respectively). The LPR cohorts from the Philippines peaked around 280,000 during the early 1990s, but surpassed 260,000 after 2001.⁸

Because employment visas served as the primary gateway to Asian migration since 1981, prime-age workers dominated these streams, particularly for migrants from India. Nevertheless, the cohort shares of late-age migrants from the top three Asian source countries exceeded the global averages by a considerable margin throughout the observation period (see

⁸The peak and ebb during the 1990s may reflect timing of visa issuance, possibly due to backlogs because the average for these two-five-year cohorts of 245,000 is consistent with slow growth trend over the entire observation period.

last row in Table 1). For example, during the 1980s, between 29 and 33 percent of LPRs from China were aged 50 and over. Although this share fell to under a quarter during the 1990s, the absolute cohort sizes more than doubled, which corresponds to an 80 percent increase in the absolute *number* of Chinese LPRs aged 50 and over (from 36 thousand to 66 thousand). The size of Indian LPR cohorts more than doubled over the three decades even as the share of late-age migrants rose from 17 to 22 percent. In absolute terms, late-age migration from India rose from approximately 20,000 during the early 1980s to about 53,400 for the most recent LPR cohort. Unlike India and China, the cohort shares of late-age Filipino immigrants held steady between 21 and 22 percent until after 2005, when almost one-in-four new LPRs (over 62,000) were aged 50 and over.

Mexico differs from the top Asian source countries in two key respects. First, Mexican LPR cohorts are more than twice the size of the three top-sending Asian countries (particularly the post-IRCA cohorts), which is important because cohort size influences the future scale of family unification chain migration. Second, the prevalence of Mexican late-age migration is consistently lower than that of the top three Asian nations over the entire period, which aligns with Jasso and Rosenzweig's claim about high levels of parent sponsorship from Asia. Mexico witnessed a trebling in late-age migration since 1981, rising from about 6 percent of the 1981–1985 LPR cohort to 18 percent of the 2006–2009 LPR cohort, which is just above the worldwide average of 17.3 percent (compare last row of Tables 1 and 3). Furthermore, except for the 1981–1985 LPR cohort, the *absolute number* of late-age Mexican LPRs is appreciably larger than each of the three top Asian origin nations. For perspective, fewer than 20,000 Mexicans granted LPR status between 1981 and 1985 were aged 50 and over, compared with 36,000 and 48,000, respectively, from China and the Philippines. Mexico was also the largest single source of late-age immigrants admitted between 2006 and 2009, when the number of new LPRs aged 50 and over exceeded 100,000.⁹

Bolstered by the higher worldwide ceilings and the larger number of visas for skilled workers established by the 1990 Immigration Act, country-specific estimates of family unification chain migration reported in

⁹Only between 6 and 8 percent of Mexican LPRs admitted during the late 1980s and early 1990s were ages 50 and over, but in absolute terms this represents over 100,000 and 94,000 late-age migrants, respectively.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF FAMILY MIGRATION MULTIPLIERS BY AGE AT ADMISSION AND FIVE-YEAR INITIATING LPR
COHORTS: TOP FOUR SENDING COUNTRIES, 1981–2000

Initiating cohort	Initiating immigrants (<i>n</i>)	Cumulative accompanying and following sponsored relatives (<i>n</i>)	Family migration multipliers by age at admission			
			<17	17–49	50+	All
China						
1981–1985	16,197	124,139	0.89	3.86	2.91	7.67
1986–1990	14,048	118,369	1.05	4.67	2.71	8.43
1991–1995	79,134	173,466	0.37	1.18	0.65	2.19
1996–2000	32,521	202,944	1.06	3.15	2.03	6.24
India						
1981–1985	12,825	127,998	1.78	5.55	2.65	9.98
1986–1990	15,370	147,538	1.61	5.59	2.40	9.60
1991–1995	29,086	169,794	1.05	3.30	1.49	5.84
1996–2000	36,162	184,830	0.81	2.62	1.69	5.11
Philippines						
1981–1985	36,569	217,329	1.38	3.11	1.45	5.94
1986–1990	47,110	180,656	0.93	1.92	0.99	3.84
1991–1995	51,059	206,017	1.00	2.08	0.96	4.04
1996–2000	39,568	200,769	1.08	2.33	1.66	5.07
Mexico						
1981–1985	124,385	233,377	0.60	1.06	0.22	1.88
1986–1990	1,093,752	316,008	0.07	0.15	0.07	0.29
1991–1995	1,084,947	686,966	0.18	0.34	0.11	0.63
1996–2000	102,647	654,398	2.01	3.25	1.12	6.38

Source: DOJ 2007; and special tabulations provided by DHS in 2010.

Table 4 reveal migration multipliers that are higher than the regional averages. Enabled by high family sponsorship rates among naturalized immigrants, each 100 initiating Chinese immigrants sponsored between 767 and 843 family relatives during the 1980s. That the United States offered refuge to thousands of Chinese following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre increased the size of the 1991–1995 initiating cohort more than fivefold compared with the 1986–1990 initiating cohort. The low multiplier for the 1991–1995 cohort reflects the refugee-produced bulge, but as column (2) indicates, the absolute number of accompanying and sponsored family migrants accumulated through the 1990s, even after the size of the initiating immigrant cohort was halved.

The family unification migration multipliers for India are even more striking, as index values approached 10 during the 1980s, indicating that every 100 initiating Indians admitted during the 1980s sponsored between 960 and 998 additional relatives by 2009; of these, approximately one-in-four were aged 50 and over. The multiplier index was nearly halved by the late 1990s; however, because the size of the initiating cohorts had

more than doubled, the absolute scale of family unification immigration increased as well — from 147 thousand in the late 1980s to about 185 thousand sponsored family members during the late 1990s. The multipliers imply that every 100 Indians granted LPR status between 1996 and 2000 on average sponsored more than 500 additional relatives by 2009.

Mexicans also have benefited from family reunification chain migration both in absolute and relative terms. Although Mexico's family unification multipliers were smaller than those of the top three Asian source countries through the mid-1990s, after 1996 they surpassed those of India and the Philippines, and converged with those of China. The smaller multipliers for the interim LPR cohorts from Mexico reflect the hefty IRCA cohorts in the denominator of the index; however, the absolute number of sponsored relatives was over double that from China and India during the 1980s and over three times larger during the 1990s. As legalized immigrants acquired citizenship, many activated their family unification entitlements by sponsoring spouses, dependent children, and parents

TABLE 5
SPONSORED PARENT ($_3P$) LPRs BY AGE AT ARRIVAL: TOP FOUR SENDING COUNTRIES BY FIVE-YEAR LPR COHORT, 1981–2009 (PERCENTAGES; NS IN PARENTHESES)

Country of origin/age at admission	Five-year LPR cohort					
	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2009
China	(22,229)	(27,742)	(33,695)	(26,619)	(36,949)	(39,062)
0–16	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
17–49	2.9	2.1	2.7	3.2	1.2	1.8
50+	97.1	97.9	97.3	96.8	98.8	98.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
India	(17,127)	(23,988)	(27,627)	(26,907)	(32,201)	(38,071)
0–16	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
17–49	4.6	5.4	5.9	5.0	3.7	3.8
50+	95.4	94.6	94.1	95.0	96.3	96.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Philippines	(39,710)	(41,451)	(38,767)	(29,642)	(31,427)	(40,136)
0–16	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
17–49	4.5	4.3	5.2	4.8	3.4	3.7
50+	95.5	95.7	94.8	95.2	96.6	96.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mexico	(10,023)	(19,576)	(22,342)	(87,215)	(115,261)	(89,769)
0–16	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
17–49	16.7	12.9	13.3	10.4	13.5	13.2
50+	83.2	87.1	86.7	89.6	86.5	86.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: The 2006–2009 admission cohort represents four rather than five years. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: DOJ 2007; and special tabulations provided by DHS in 2010.

as well as family members subject to the annual country caps, some of whom age in place in multiyear visa queues.

An examination of the uncapped visa category provides further insight into the underlying dynamics, and specifically the unintended consequences of broadening the definition of immediate relatives to include parents in 1965. For each of the top Asian source countries, the *number* of sponsored parents grew steadily as earlier arrivals naturalized and submitted visa petitions on behalf of their parents. Not surprisingly, over 95 percent of sponsored parents from Asia (compared with about 87 percent of those from Mexico) are aged 50 and over (Table 5). The modest dip in the number of sponsored parents from Asia during the late 1990s likely reflects the impact of the 1996 welfare reforms, which restricted senior immigrants' access to Supplemental Security Income (O'Neil and Tienda 2015). This change was particularly consequential for the Philippines; however, after 2005, the number of sponsored parents from the Philippines rebounded to the level of the early 1980s.

Late-age immigration from Mexico was lower than that from Asia during the early 1980s in both absolute and relative terms (see Table 4 and numbers in parentheses in Table 5); however, the intensification of Mexican family unification chain migration was accompanied by a rise in both the number and share sponsored family members aged 50 and over. During the 1980s and early 1990s, naturalized Mexican immigrants sponsored between 8,300 and 17,000 parents. And, as the outsized IRCA cohorts began to qualify for the uncapped family reunification entitlements, there was a surge in late-age migration from Mexico. Between 2001 and 2009, naturalized Mexican immigrants sponsored over 177,000 parents, which is well above the 25,000 parents sponsored by compatriots admitted during the 1980s. Whether intended or not, IRCA indirectly increased late-age migration from Mexico.

Parents are not the only source of late-age immigration. Because siblings and adult children of US citizens are subject to annual country caps, the number of family preference LPRs from Asia has remained fairly steady over the last three decades. Nevertheless, due to the long queues for the oversubscribed family visas from China, India, and the Philippines (Wasem 2012), numerically capped relatives also contribute to late-age immigration by "aging in place" as they wait for their visa in a multiyear queue. Table 6 reveals that the share of sponsored family members aged 50 and over rose even as the cohort size remained stable. For example, among numerically limited family relatives admitted from the Philippines

TABLE 6
SPONSORED FAMILY PREFERENCE ($_2D$, $_4F$) LPRs BY AGE AT ARRIVAL: TOP FOUR SENDING COUNTRIES BY FIVE-YEAR LPR COHORT, 1981–2009 (PERCENTAGES; NS IN PARENTHESES)

Country of origin/age at admission	Five-year LPR cohort					
	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2009
China	(76,439)	(81,311)	(61,370)	(62,150)	(62,378)	(59,250)
0–16	22.3	19.3	18.4	19.5	17.6	18.9
17–49	66.6	66.0	66.0	61.8	59.2	58.3
50+	11.0	14.7	15.7	18.7	23.2	22.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
India	(78,156)	(79,319)	(80,381)	(81,264)	(70,719)	(58,028)
0–16	21.3	22.2	27.0	25.8	20.0	22.1
17–49	74.7	71.7	63.7	59.7	57.4	58.4
50+	4.1	6.1	9.3	14.5	22.7	19.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Philippines	(78,969)	(78,745)	(79,360)	(73,371)	(75,007)	(57,639)
0–16	24.9	25.1	26.0	26.4	27.2	27.3
17–49	67.8	67.2	62.6	56.0	50.2	49.3
50+	7.3	7.7	11.4	17.6	22.6	23.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mexico	(92,065)	(83,699)	(186,143)	(369,372)	(289,247)	(188,654)
0–16	36.6	29.9	41.5	42.4	30.4	29.1
17–49	61.1	67.1	53.4	52.5	63.9	64.9
50+	2.3	3.0	5.1	5.2	5.7	6.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: The 2006–2009 admission cohort represents four rather than five years. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: DOJ 2007; and special tabulations provided by DHS in 2010.

during the 1980s, approximately 7.5 percent were aged 50 and over; however, nearly one-quarter of capped family relatives admitted after 2005 qualified as late-age migrants. For the Philippines, the wait for a capped family visa can extend over 20 years (Wasem 2012). Similar trends obtain for capped relatives from China and India as both nations evince a steady increase in the cohort shares aged 50 and over.

Mexico stands as an exception in two respects: first, for every admission cohort, the absolute number of sponsored relatives is higher than that of the top Asian source countries; second, the share of late-age family relatives rose more gradually and never exceeds 6 percent of any given cohort. Nevertheless, partly owing to the outsized initiating cohorts legalized under IRCA, the number of capped sponsored relatives from Mexico more than doubled between 1986–1990 and 1991–1995, and nearly doubled again during the late 1990s (lower panel Table 6). Since 2000, the number of sponsored relatives from Mexico has fallen, but it is conceivable that higher shares will enter as late-age migrants as future family

members approved for admission age in the visa backlog queues. In 2010, for example, unmarried Mexican adult children sponsored by US citizens had waited 18 years to receive their entry visa (Wasem 2012).

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In making family reunification the centerpiece of the 1965 amendments to the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, Congress did not contemplate radical changes in the volume and composition of immigrants. Proponents of the reforms argued that tight visa controls for the employment preferences combined with annual hemispheric ceilings and country caps would keep the size of flows in check. Moreover, in the mid-1960s, the US population was relatively young owing to the baby boom; less than 10 percent of LPRs were aged 50 and over (DOJ 1971, Table 10). Given the regional ceilings and country-specific caps, it was reasonable to presume a linear, not multiplicative growth in new LPRs.

Although the number of work-related visas authorized by the 1965 amendments was quite low, at least until 1990, high naturalization rates multiplied the number of Asian immigrants eligible to sponsor family members (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989; Baker 2007, 2010). And sponsor relatives they did! Our analyses of new LPRs reveal that since 1980, each initiating five-year cohort from Asia collectively sponsored over one million family members. Furthermore, the estimates of chain migration indicate an acceleration of family unification chain immigration from Asia, such that each 100 initiating LPRs admitted between 1996 and 2000 sponsored almost 400 additional relatives compared with 221 for Asian LPRs admitted during the early 1980s (Table 2).

Additional reasons that the family unification provisions intensified the diversification of the immigrant streams are the huge refugee flows from Southeast Asia during the 1970s, and from Central America during the 1980s, but especially due to the generalized amnesty program that legalized nearly three-million LPRs during the late 1980s and early 1990s. These formidable additions to the “planned” LPR world quotas initiated migration chains as large majorities naturalized and activated their family unification entitlements. For example, initiating immigrants admitted from Mexico and Central America during the 1990s sponsored over 1.7 million relatives by 2009. That family unification chain migration from Mesoamerica appears to be accelerating suggests that the myriad status adjustment programs for

Central and South Americans since IRCA will continue to increase family migration streams as new LPRs qualify to sponsor relatives.

This study addresses several limitations of prior work by extending the timeline for estimating the magnitude of family unification chain migration beyond 2000, relaxing assumptions of synthetic methods that assume uniform cohort sizes, and disaggregating multipliers by age. Yu's (2008) estimates based on the *Immigrants Admitted* microdata are likely understated because they exclude the outsized IRCA cohorts. The longer observation period also permits an early assessment of how the increase in employment visas after 1990 boosted family unification migration. Jasso and Rosenzweig (1989) argue that employment and government-sponsored immigrants have the highest sponsorship rates both because they are unlikely to have many relatives in the host country and because they naturalize at high rates. Although their data only permitted estimation of multipliers for labor certified initiating immigrants over a single decade, their predictions were spot on for Asia. Following the massive legalization program that disproportionately benefitted Mesoamericans, parent and sibling sponsorship became a Mexican phenomenon as well. By increasing the base of initiating immigrants, our analyses suggest that other legalization programs, such as the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997, will likely foment family unification chain migration from the region (Tienda and Sanchez 2013).

Parents of US citizens, who are not subject to annual country caps or worldwide ceilings, are the major source of late-age migration, but the numerically limited admission classes consisting of adult sons, daughters, and siblings of US citizens increasingly contribute to late-age migration owing to long visa queues for oversubscribed countries. In fact, just a dozen or so years after the 1965 amendments went into effect, Reimers (1983, 24) predicted huge changes in US immigration, including backlogs for Mexico, China, and the Philippines as well as a large undocumented labor force. His predictions were prescient. Our analyses verify his predictions by showing how the parent exemption changed the age composition of LPR flows and by illustrating convergence in regional- and country-specific LPR cohort shares aged 50 and over. The provision in the 1965 amendments that explicitly exempts parents from the numerically capped visas is the primary driver of late-age immigration (Table 5), but the sizable backlogs for numerically capped family visas from Mexico and the

top-sending Asian countries portend further growth in late-age immigration (Table 6). Proposals to clear the backlogs may reduce the extent of aging in place for oversubscribed countries, but could also potentially increase family unification chain migration if the spouses of sponsored relatives activate new chains. This is a subject worth further research, especially if future reforms alter the family unification admission criteria.

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