

A Conceptual Map of Knowledge for Research on Latin American Migration and Development in a Globalized World

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SUMMARY

This paper attempts to contribute to the academic debate focusing on the intersection of migration and development studies in the context of globalization by looking specifically at the cases of Mexican and Latin American migration to the United States. The main recommendation of this paper is to encourage the generation and dissemination of knowledge about the dynamics of migration and development by promoting changes in public policies and private practices in both sending and receiving communities that will offer some of the most vulnerable populations (e.g. poor migrants and their families) better livelihood choices. This effort requires not only the construction of research capacities in sending countries, but also the emergence of a more systematic practice of participatory and applied research both in receiving and sending societies. This new research should place at the center of its agenda the support and strengthening of the capacity of new actors such as migrant organizations and other grassroots organizations working at the local and transnational levels.

I. INTRODUCTION

The current wave of Latin American migration to the United States is taking place in the context of the increasing economic integration of Mexico and Central America to the U.S. economy. The increasing presence of Latin American migrants in the United States has created a sense of anxiety among native citizens. This increasing uneasiness with migrants in the U.S. has stirred some harsh anti-immigrant Congressional legislation that threatened to make undocumented status in the U.S. a felony. As a result of this, hundreds of thousands of immigrants marched during the spring and summer of 2006 and 2007 in major cities across the United States, with a political impact still unknown. These are important issues but the following two very important substantive aspects about the Latin American migration experience to the U.S. that should not be ignored:

- ❑ **Migration from Latin America is driven by powerful social and economic forces that will continue to operate no matter which bill passes in Congress.**
- ❑ **The integration of millions of immigrants into U.S. society will be a long and complex process of social, cultural and political adaptation for migrants and for people in communities where migrants settle --a two-way street--with implications at all levels of U.S. society.**

Within this context the following central question should be able to guide research that intends to address the challenges facing Latin American migrants: *“What strategies can improve the livelihoods and enrich the lives of the poor and excluded on both sides of the U.S.-Latin American divide, to ensure that those who migrate and those who stay behind have choices that enable them to build stable and secure lives for themselves and their children?”* The idea here is that the research agenda in this area should have a strong applied component that could provide new perspectives and insights and

contribute to a new public discourse linking immigration, social integration, and community revitalization in the current context of globalization.

This report attempts to synthesize some of the knowledge – not only from academic research in this area, but also from knowledge produced by community scholars and leaders, journalists, decision makers, artists, and migrants. The report emphasizes the two substantive aspects of the reality described above: the major driving forces of migration and imminent long-term social integration, mainly because they may be overlooked when attention focuses on more immediate and visible events.

This report begins with an examination of the regional labor market, the major shifts that have resulted from the current regional economic integration and trade liberalization, and their impacts on migration. Section II argues that current asymmetries between Latin America and the U.S. will make these changes persistent driving forces of migration. Because migration has winners and losers, Section III analyzes some of the most vulnerable groups in the system: women, children, indigenous migrants, and day laborers. With these groups in mind, Section IV looks at the incorporation of immigrants in U.S. society and analyzes the tensions that affect a more inclusive integration. Section V looks at the role of the Mexican migration as a case study to analyze both the positive and the negative impacts of migration in sending communities often overlooked. In Section VI, the report turns to the implications for future research. The intention with this report is not to make specific recommendations but to discuss the general implications of Latin American migration in general and Mexican migration in particular – U.S. migration for current and future research agendas.

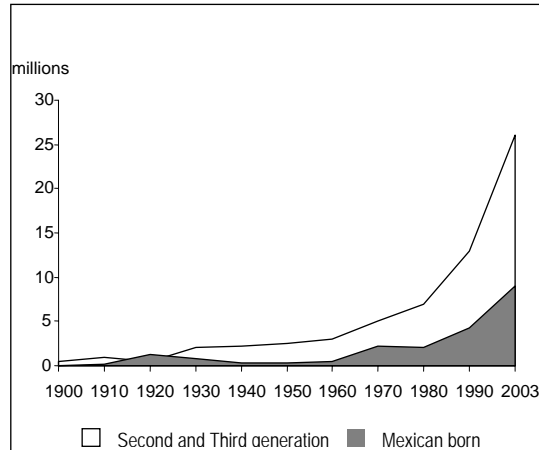
II. MIGRATION AND THE REGIONAL LABOR MARKET

Strong push–pull factors despite a decade of free trade

It is not surprising that recent research has found that a strong demand for cheap labor in the U.S. and the lack of livelihood opportunities in Mexico are still moving this migratory system.¹ This was not new; what have been more interesting to analyze are the impacts of regional economic integration and trade liberalization on the labor market, and their implications for migration. Figure 2.1 shows how migration jumped in the 1980s, when trade liberalization started even before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was in effect, and how it accelerated in the 90s with NAFTA. The claim that NAFTA was a remedy for migration was, perhaps, too optimistic.

¹ See the 2004's book *NAFTA's Impact on North America: The First decade* edited by Sidney Weintraub from the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Fig 2.1 Population of Mexican origin in the U.S.
Source: estimations by CONAPO (National Population Council, Mexico) based on the Current Population Survey.



Mexico: exporting goods but also “cheap labor”

The Mexican economy’s structural incapacity to create decent jobs perpetuates push factors of migration. Mexico needs to create at least 1 million new jobs each year; however, even when its economy was growing at a decent rate of 6.6% in 2000 it only generated 525,000 new jobs. This explains both the growth of the informal economy and persistent high migration rates. Roughly, 28% of the labor force was in the informal economy in mid 2005.²

Mexico’s exports increased significantly with liberalized trade (Figure 2.2). Labor productivity also increased but wages did not (Figure 2.3). The number of households below the poverty line increased from 12.9 million in 1984 to 15.9 million in 2004.³ The combination of a lack of jobs and low salaries is a powerful push factor. A brief review of key sectors helps to better understand the Mexican side of the system.

² See Dussel and Peters. *Liberalización comercial en México*. In: *México en Transición* (forthcoming), Gerardo Otero (ed). México, D.F.: MA Porrúa; 2005.

³ Ibid.

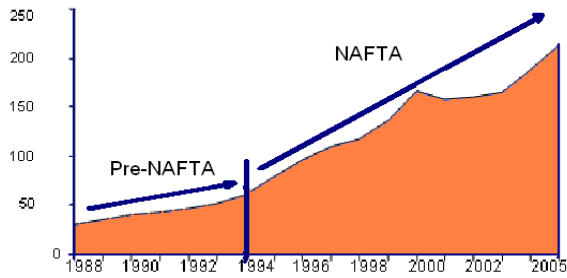


Figure 2.2. Mexican exports before and after NAFTA. Source: International Network for Migration and Development, with data from Banco de México (exports in millions of dollars)⁴

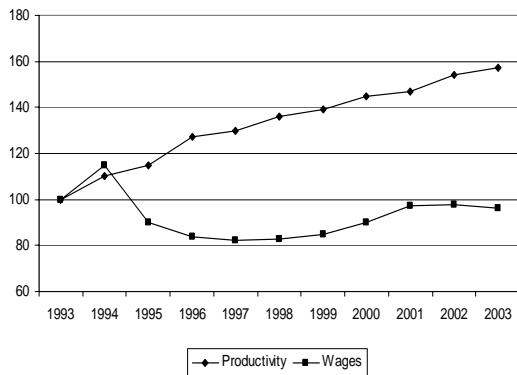


Figure 2.3 Evolution of manufacturing productivity and real wages in Mexico Index: 1993=100. Source: INEGI / STPS, Monthly Industrial Survey (EIMI), Economic Information Bank (BIE), Indicadores Económicos de Coyuntura.⁵

In the agriculture sector, the liberalized economy resulted in winners and losers. Market-oriented producers, mainly in the north, collected most of the benefits but adjustment costs were high for traditional, peasant agriculture. Small corn producers cannot compete with highly efficient and subsidized U.S. farmers. The impact is significant because the percentage of the population that still depends, at least in part, on agriculture is still large in Mexico (more than 20%). Migration from rural areas increased dramatically in the 1990s as shown in Figure 2.4.

⁴ See Raúl Delgado; NATC Internal Report; 2006.

⁵ Ibid.

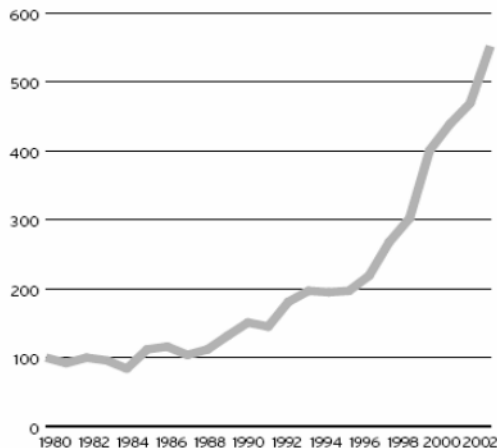


Figure 2.4. Migration from rural areas in Mexico to the U.S. (1980 – 2002); members of family units 1980 = 100. Source: E. Taylor and G. Dyer (2003). NAFTA, Trade and Migration.

Most of the new formal jobs created after NAFTA were in *maquiladoras*, the majority of which were located near Mexico’s northern border to minimize transportation costs; the boom in this sector promoted substantial internal migration to the Mexico-U.S. border. Jobs in *maquiladoras* are low-skilled / low salary, with up to a 1:11 wage differential with similar activities in the U.S. Given this salary gap and location, *maquiladoras* became an intermediate step for international migration. To make matters worse, many *maquiladoras* have closed since 2000, moving their operations to Central America and China.

According to Raul Delgado, the *maquila* is an indirect way to export labor: 97% of inputs are imported, and the product is exported. He concludes that exporting cheap labor – through *maquiladoras* and migration – is a preferred development strategy in Mexico⁶. The long term implications for Mexico are serious. Furthermore, this new labor-export model is structurally linked with a process of labor market restructuring of the U.S. economy that began in the 1980s.⁷

U.S.: restructuring labor for competitiveness

The U.S. is responding to increased global competition by restructuring its economy. Outsourcing production and services and lowering labor costs employing migrants in non-exportable industries are two central strategies. Figure 2.5 shows employment sectors where migrants are working. The percentage of migrants employed in agriculture has decreased as a result of growing numbers of migrants employed in construction, manufacturing, and services.

⁶ See James Zypher and Raul Delgado. “Mexico’s Labor-Export Model: Current Dimensions of Subordinate Economic Integration into the U.S.’s Process of Internationalization.” Unpublished Paper; 2006.

⁷ Ibid.

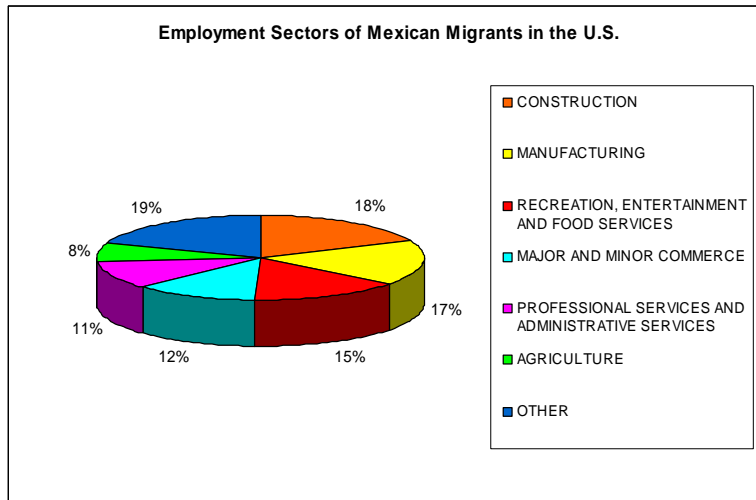


Figure 2.5. Employment of Mexican migrants in the U.S. in 2004, by percentage. Source: NATC with data from Current Population Survey.

Mexicans are the cheapest labor source among migrants from other countries, and because there is a large supply, these low wages are very stable (Figure 2.6). This combination of abundance and stability in the supply of low-salary workers has been crucial for the competitiveness and even survival of some sectors of the U.S. economy.

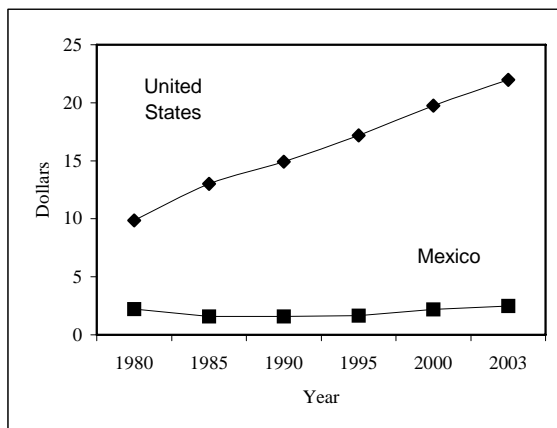


Figure 2.6. Wages in the manufacturing sector (dollars per hour) Source: Alianza Jus Semper (2005).

In U.S. agriculture, the participation of Mexican migrants is crucial: 75% of farmworkers are born in Mexico; 53% are undocumented. The predicted mechanization of the U.S. agriculture in the 1960s became the “*Mexicanization*” of its agricultural labor force, with a growing proportion of Mexican indigenous workers.

This diversification of employment across different sectors and localities in the U.S., coupled with tighter border controls resulted in a change in migration patterns: from circular to permanent. There is also a complex network of employment agencies, contractors, and recruiters that ensures the provision of workers where and when they are needed. Active recruitment in Mexico ensures a continuous flow of migrants while subcontracting in the U.S. minimizes employers’ legal liability.

Policy implications

This restructuring of the U.S. labor force, consolidated after NAFTA and supported by massive migration, has other implications:

1. There were job losses during the NAFTA decade, but a direct link with trade liberalization is difficult to establish;
2. Increased migrant labor results in a positive effect on consumer prices (although it may be small);
3. Some sectors would not be able to compete without migrants;
4. Undocumented migrants entering the U.S. labor force generate a negative impact on wages among low-skilled workers, most significantly on previous, documented migrants; and
5. Employers are the main winners in this restructuring.

According to Doris Meissner, the former commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, migration policies in the Mexico-U.S. case are driven by two pervasive addictions: Mexico's addiction to remittances, and the U.S.'s addiction to cheap labor. Certainly, the billions of dollars sent by migrants to Mexico (\$20b in 2005) alleviate poverty and lessen social tensions. At the same time, millions of migrants willing to work for low salaries, even in demeaning jobs, are good news for U.S. employers. The system operates with powerful winners and is driven by strong forces: the economic push-pull factors, social networks that facilitate migration, and a multi-million dollar industry around these flows of people (including airline, bus, and telephone companies, remittance agencies and banks, nostalgia markets, and illegal activities such as smuggling migrants across the border, and the industry of counterfeit documents).⁸ In the long run, however, this situation is unsustainable. Mexico's current "cheap labor export model" will eventually collapse.⁹ Similarly, in the U.S. the situation of 11 million undocumented migrants living in the shadows has serious consequences for human and labor rights, and heavy repercussions for the wellbeing of other migrants and native workers. Unfortunately, regional economic integration in North America did not pay enough attention to the great asymmetries among the NAFTA partners. While these asymmetries persist migration will continue.

In the next section, we analyze particularly vulnerable groups in this Mexico - U.S. migratory system.

⁸ See report on Nostalgia Markets prepared by Rick Mines from the California Institute for Rural Studies; 2006.

⁹ See Raul Delgado: NATC Internal Report, 2006.

III. THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS

Vulnerability exists on both sides of the border. In Mexico, poverty, social exclusion, and a lack of decent livelihood opportunities influence decisions to migrate. Because most migrants are working-age people and are often the most entrepreneurial, their communities' economies become increasingly dependent on remittances. Although the flow of remittances alleviates poverty, it also generates local inflation impacting the poorest sectors of the community – those who do not have the resources to migrate – increasing local inequalities. Once in the U.S., migrants are frequently trapped again by poverty and exclusion; and if they are undocumented, their vulnerability increases. Certain groups are particularly affected. This section focuses on four of the most vulnerable: women, children, indigenous migrants, and day laborers.¹⁰

WOMEN AND MIGRATION: LIBERATION OR FURTHER EXCLUSION?

Recent research has shifted its attention from the macro-economic concerns of migration to micro-level analysis. This shift in the research focuses its attention to the characteristics of migrant women, to understand why they migrate, map where they end up in the U.S. labor market, analyze new gender roles, and identify factors that make women more vulnerable or resilient to the social and economic distress of migration.¹¹ The proportion of Mexican migrant women has been increasing since the 1960s, and although not as high as other countries, is approaching 47%.¹² The median age of Mexican women who migrate abroad is 22 and about 20% have secondary education. 50% are single when they migrate for the first time.¹³

Why women migrate and where they are in the workforce

The same forces driving migration in general influence Mexican women's decisions to migrate. However, the feminization of poverty in sending regions is a strong push factor, and the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) generated a massive flow of women with its family reunification laws.

The impact of NAFTA on women's migration has been of particular interest to researchers. Among the jobs created by NAFTA, approximately 36% were in the informal sector where workers typically receive no benefits and have no contract protections.¹⁴ In the early 1990s, many Mexican women moved from rural areas to cities and entered this growing informal sector; later they also moved into manufacturing in the *maquiladoras*. Many of these jobs are low-wage, precarious, and do not enable women to pull themselves and their families out of poverty. When *maquiladora* jobs started moving to Central America and Asia in 2000, there was a significant increase in

¹⁰ This report does not address the situation of farmworkers that are also highly vulnerable. Many of these farmworkers are indigenous migrants.

¹¹ See: Blanca Suárez and Emma Zapata (eds.). *Remesas: Milagros y mucho más realizan las mujeres indígenas y campesinas*. Mexico. GIMTRAP; 2004. This book reports on ethnographic work in Mexico, which includes 50 case studies of women in transnational communities (see Box 3.1).

¹² See Hania Zlotnik. "The Global Dimensions of Female Migration," in *Migration Information Source*, March 1, 2003.

¹³ Preliminary analysis of data from the Mexican Migration Project's database persfile.mmp.107.

¹⁴ See Final NATC Report from the Women's Edge Coalition; 2003.

migration of women to the U.S. from the Mexican border-states such as Baja California and Chihuahua.

There are strong pull factors too. In the U.S., the combination of demographic change, growing participation of women in the workforce and reduced social services for child and aged care has increased the demand for migrant women in areas traditionally considered “feminine,” such as domestic work, childcare and healthcare. Many of them are characterized by low wages and a lack of legal protections and benefits. Over the course of the last decade, and as a result of the restructuring of the U.S. labor market discussed in Section II, another important trend occurred – a relative decrease in domestic work, and a significant increase in manufacturing. Finally, still there is a small and stable proportion of women farmworkers, at the bottom of the spectrum, picking fruits and vegetables (see Table 3.1).

Occupation	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2003
Unemployed	17%	8%	5%
Agriculture	10%	8%	9%
Manufacturing	31%	46%	53%
Services	25%	25%	24%
Domestic Work	18%	13%	9%

Table 3.1. Occupations of Mexican women migrants in the U.S., by 5-year periods from 1991-2003. Source: NATC, based on the Mexican Migration Project persfile.mmp.107.

Vulnerabilities and Resilience

Migration, as a transforming experience, can improve or worsen the position of women in families and society. It can have a similar effect on men, but seldom in such a gender-specific way. Migrant women can find themselves both in circumstances that create opportunities for greater economic, social and political participation, and in situations of vulnerability to abuse and discrimination. Their ability to take advantage of the benefits of migration and cope with exclusion depends on factors such as age, ethnicity, legal status, access to social networks, and the economic and political context of their migratory experience (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. The women left behind

Recent ethnographic work (50 case studies in Mexico) has been carried out to learn about the situation of women in high migration Mexican rural-communities.¹⁵ Women who stay in communities of origin not only take on added responsibilities in the absence of husbands, but often have to accommodate changes in family dynamics, manage remittance money, and negotiate new gender roles. As a consequence, social and emotional stresses are common.¹⁶ Extended periods of uncertainty about the well-being of their migrating relatives and newly acquired responsibilities generally induce emotional distress.¹⁷ In addition, intense periods of gender role renegotiation in the absence of men do not always yield women more power; indeed such renegotiations can reinforce female subordination.¹⁸ When women receive small irregular remittances for example, a gendered disempowerment generally deepens.

Women are mostly excluded from worker programs, resulting in higher levels of undocumented migration and increasing their vulnerability. Undocumented women are one of the most vulnerable, mistreated and abused groups, especially during transit. Obtaining work permits and residency status is more difficult for women due to the nature of their jobs. Marriage to a legal resident or U.S. citizen is often the only way to remedy their legal status. This kind of indebtedness to a spouse has grave implications for gender power relations and tends to increase vulnerability to gender violence.¹⁹

Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable both when they migrate (in transit and at destination) as well as when they are left behind. With men absent from villages, women's workloads increase substantially. They have to work farm fields but also they may be called for civil service to the community (occupying honorary "cargos"). Initially this could be seen as an improvement of their status. However, often they acquire the job because of their husbands' absence, and it merely implies extra work.

Despite bleak outlooks for women in migratory circuits, for some of them, migration has strengthened their agency within structures that normally offer few opportunities. Recent research has discovered multiple cases of women who have benefited from migration, or from living in communities with high out-migration where women represent the majority of the population. Surveys show many cases of women opening small enterprises in their communities (taxis, cellular "telephone businesses", switching from traditional subsistence crops to cash crops, etc.).²⁰ Savings from remittance money and access to microcredit schemes have promoted these activities.²¹ These cases demonstrate changing gender roles, entrepreneurship, innovation, and new skills among returning women.

¹⁵ See: Blanca Suárez and Emma Zapata (eds.). *Remesas: Milagros y mucho más realizan las mujeres indígenas y campesinas*. Mexico. GIMTRAP; 2004.

¹⁶ See Patricia Zamudio "Lidiando con Incertidumbres: Proyectos migratorios de los Veracruzanos," *Diversa*. Revista del Instituto Electoral Veracruzano.

¹⁷ See Fabiana Sánchez, *Migración y remesas: dos aliados del empoderamiento individual de las mujeres de la Charca, Atoyac, Veracruz.* In Blanca Suarez y Emma Zapata (coord.) *Op. Cit.* Vol. II: 175-218.

¹⁸ Peña Piña, Joaquín "Migración, remesas y estrategias de reproducción" in Suarez, Blanca y Emma Zapata (coords.) *Op. Cit.* Vol. II: 33-73.

¹⁹ See Guillermo Meneses. "La dimensión femenina del cruce clandestino de la frontera México-Estados Unidos, Tijuana: COLEF; 2005.

²⁰ See "Mujeres mixtecas al volante: un análisis transnacional de movilidad, trabajo y empoderamiento" by Julio Morales López. In Blanca Suarez y Emma Zapata (coord.) *Op. Cit.* Vol. I, 407-460.

²¹ See progress reports from AMUCSS' project on micro-banks jointly supported by Rockefeller and Ford Foundation. AMUCSS; 2005.

CHILDREN: AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE

Vulnerable children include those who are left behind in Mexico when one or both parents migrate, and those in the U.S., including the second generation.

Children in Mexico

Despite its potentially serious implications, the impact of migration on children who remain in Mexico has been relatively neglected by research and policy thus far. Recent research shows that adults in communities of origin face difficulties in caring for children when one or both parents migrate, even when they send remittances.²² Although households with migrants in the U.S. appear to gain economically from remittances, when those in the U.S. are the parents, the family members left behind struggle to meet the needs of the children, who become more vulnerable to educational, emotional, and health problems (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2. The education of children left behind

Current research has found that sending communities are using various strategies to deal with these situations, especially attempts to protect the education of children left behind. Resources made available by the state to rural schools in Mexico depend on the number of enrolled children. For example, researchers in Oaxaca have found cases of replacement migration, where indigenous families in the region are persuaded to move to neighboring villages in order to maintain enrollment levels and prevent primary schools from closing (Figure 3.1).²³ In other cases, parents are asked to pay a “drop out” fee if they migrate with their children.²⁴ These are drastic local policies. Another strategy to save educational services in Mexico is direct support to schools by migrants through collective remittances. The organized migrants of the Federation of Zacatecan Home Town Associations in Southern California have supported 127 education projects since 1999 (their remittances plus government matching funds total \$4.7 million to educational projects²⁵). Recent surveys show that a significant proportion of family remittances are invested in education, which is third among prioritized investments after food and health.

Children in the U.S.

There is a relative wealth of research on children of Mexican origin in the U.S.²⁶ The school performance of children of Mexican origin in places like New York and California is discouraging. Low levels of education among parents, the “myth of return” (thinking that they will finally return home), a high incidence of non-attendance, parents’ lack of understanding of the school system and its culture, and the large number of children without the academic preparation and English proficiency required to succeed in U.S. high schools are all contributing factors. Academic development is also affected by economic status, lack of access to health services, and inadequate housing. It is also noteworthy that these children are over-represented in schools that are recognized as

²² See Jody Heymann from Harvard University’s School of Public Health; 2004.

²³ Personal communication with researcher Rafael Reyes from the Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca (ITO).

²⁴ See Progress Report from ethnographic work by UAM in Oaxaca, 2006.

²⁵ Information provided by Efrain Jimenez, Director for Projects of the Federation of Zacatecan Home Town Associations of Southern California.

²⁶ See “*Poblanos en Nueva York: Migración Rural, Educación y Bienestar*,” edited by Regina Cortina and Monica Gendreau, Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla; 2004.

low-performing and that are generally burdened with teachers who have minimal qualifications and training.

New York City is the largest public school district in the nation; 38% of its students have Latin American or Caribbean background. In most cases these students don't speak English at home. In California, Mexican-Americans suffer socioeconomic disadvantages, dismal school performance, and the impact of racial ambiguity and negative stereotypes. This is particularly worrisome if we consider that this group will be the future majority in California.²⁷

VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN INDIGENOUS MIGRANTS

Mexican migration is increasingly multiethnic, reflecting the diversity in Mexico. Indigenous people have been migrating internally, within Mexico, for decades, and internationally since the 1940s with the "bracero" guest worker program. Migration from Oaxaca, a state with one of the largest indigenous populations in Mexico, dramatically increased in the 1980s, with the extensive incorporation of Zapotecs in urban services and Mixtecs in farm labor, often in the most difficult and lowest paid jobs. By the early 1990s, an estimated 50,000 Mixtecs worked in California's central valley, and 60,000 Zapotecs had settled in Los Angeles. Historically, most indigenous migrants were temporary visitors, working seasonal crops. However, the increased risk and cost of crossing the border without documents has led them to settle in the U.S. for the long term. This is possible in part because their networks have matured over the past two decades. Today they are spread across the U.S. and include other ethnic groups: Chatinos, Triquis, Mayas, Hnahnu and Nahuas.²⁸

To provide context for the vulnerability of this group, it is important to keep in mind that these indigenous people are particularly vulnerable in their own homelands. They have been historically discriminated against in Mexico – excluded economically, socially, and politically.²⁹ In the social sphere, in addition to all the obstacles that confront migrants in general (and especially those without documents); they also face entrenched racist attitudes within the host society, frequently from other Mexicans (contractors and employers).

Michael Kearny argues that the processes of migration and *racialization* have resulted in the creation of a new broad ethnic identity for these migrants bringing together people from different groups and communities (even those who have had difficult relationships in Mexico). For the first time now they identify themselves as *Mixtecos* or *Zapotecos*,

²⁷ See: David Lopez and Ricardo Stanton-Salazar. *Mexican-Americans: A Second Generation at Risk*. In *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*, edited by Ruben Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes. University of California Press; 2001.

²⁸ See *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the US*, edited by Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, UC San Diego; 2004.

²⁹ See David Bacon's *The Children of NAFTA*. University of California Press; 2004. The book includes the journey of a young Mixteco, Rufino Dominguez, who migrated from Oaxaca to the farm fields in Sinaloa in 1984 and became a farmworker organizer. He is now General Coordinator of FIOB, one of the strongest binational indigenous coalitions.

and even as *Indigenas*, terms that were formerly used only by linguists, anthropologists and government officials.³⁰

The concept of changing identities is central to understanding how these indigenous people build resilience, confronting discrimination through collective action. Despite the adverse conditions that they encounter, either in Mexico or in the U.S., they have nevertheless managed to create a wide range of civic, social and political organizations that are notable for the diversity of their strategies and goals, including bridging diverse ethnicities from a broad regional ethno-geographic sphere.³¹

THE DIFFICULT LIFE OF “DAY LABORERS”

On any given day, approximately 117,600 workers are either looking for day-labor jobs or working as day laborers in the U.S. This is a national phenomenon: men and women looking for employment in open-air markets by the side of the road, at busy intersections, in front of home improvement stores and in other public spaces. Nick Theodore and Abel Valenzuela, who have conducted the first comprehensive study on day labor in the U.S.,³² documented a market rife with violations of workers’ rights. In some cities, the rise of day labor has been accompanied by community tensions. The growth of day-labor hiring sites and rising levels of workers’ rights violations is a national trend that warrants attention from policy makers at all levels of government.

Box 3.3. Day labor and its vulnerabilities

The day-labor workforce in the U.S. is predominantly immigrant and Latino. Most day laborers were born in Mexico (59%); 75% of this workforce is undocumented. Day laborers are primarily employed by homeowners or renters (49%) and construction contractors (43%). Their top five occupations include construction laborer, gardener and landscaper, painter, roofer, and drywall installer. The vast majority (83%) relies on day-labor work as their sole source of income; three-quarters have worked in this market for less than three years, suggesting that many make the transition into jobs in other sectors of the economy. Day labor pays poorly. The median hourly wage is \$10 but employment is unstable and insecure, resulting in volatile monthly earnings. Median earnings during good months are \$1,400, falling in slow periods to just \$500. Even if day laborers have many more good months than bad months, most remain below the federal poverty threshold.

Day laborers regularly suffer employer abuse. Almost half experienced at least one instance of wage theft in the two months prior to being surveyed while 44% were denied food or water or breaks while on the job. They also report being arrested, cited, and insulted by police while they search for work. Workplace injuries are common. One in five day laborers has suffered a work-related injury, and more than half of those injured did not receive medical care.

³⁰ See Michael Kearny “Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous Identity: The Case of Mixtecs and Zapotecs,” *Identities*, 7: 2: 173-195, 2000.

³¹ The most consolidated coalitions include the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front (FIOB), the Oaxacan Regional Organization (ORO), and the Coalition of Indigenous Communities, among others.

³² Nick Theodore and Abel Valenzuela coordinated the study, *On the Corner: Day Labor in the United States*, <http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/uicued/Publications/RECENT/onthecorner.pdf>.

Day-labor Centers

Worker centers have emerged as the most comprehensive response to the challenges associated with the growth of day labor. Community organizations, municipal governments, faith-based organizations and other local stakeholders have created and operate day-labor worker centers to reduce workers' rights violations and to help communities address competing concerns, especially over the highly visible nature of day labor. In 1992, there were only 5 such centers in the U.S. At the time of the study, 63 day-labor worker centers were operating in 17 states, and 21% of day laborers chose to wait for work in a center (Figure 3.7).

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles' project NDLO (the National Day Labor Organizing Network) is a collaboration of about three dozen community-based day laborer organizations. NDLO – broadly supported by a wide range of funders – works with local governments to help establish worker centers to move job seekers into places of safety and is currently working with members of Congress to secure the passage of a National Day Laborer Fairness and Protection Act, which would ensure safe and healthy work environments for all day laborers.

IV. INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS INTO U.S. SOCIETY

When immigrants arrive in the U.S they need to acquire a place in the society. They need jobs, housing, and many other basics; but they also need to be accepted socially and culturally, as individuals and as groups. Through this process of incorporation and over time, newcomers and hosts form an integral whole – a new society.

The process is long-term by nature (usually, spanning more than one generation), and involves two parties: the immigrants and the receiving society. The interaction between the two determines the direction and the ultimate outcome of the process. However, immigrants and their host society are generally unequal parties: the receiving society has much more power, and there is a risk that these inequalities during the initial process could be the origin of indelible inequities in the future.

The limits of the “melting pot”

Historically, the U.S. has prided itself as being a nation of immigrants, a melting pot, a place to which people have come from many places, leaving behind their cultures and histories to become new Americans. As such, the U.S. should have solid experience incorporating newcomers. But the new migration flows are in many ways quantitatively and qualitatively different from those of the beginning of the twentieth century, as is the context, making incorporation a complex issue (see Figure 4.1). Current flows are massive, comprising millions of people with a mix of legal and irregular status. Recent waves have increased the ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of U.S. society and have resulted in an historic demographic shift with 40.4 million Hispanics (or 14% of the U.S. population) becoming the largest minority population. Furthermore, this shift has been felt not only in traditional gateway cities like Los Angeles and New York, but also in those with less immigrant tradition in the South and the Midwest. Moreover, conditions in the U.S. are different; as discussed in Section II, there are deep demographic and technological changes, intense global competition, a transition from a manufacturing to a service economy with a restructured labor market, and weakening safety nets.

Another difference is that current flows come overwhelmingly from Latin America, with an increasing proportion of indigenous migrants. Those migrants arrive into a racialized

society that transforms them into a single Latino “minority” with the challenges of racial isolation and exclusion (which is accentuated for indigenous migrants, who are a more “visible minority”).³³

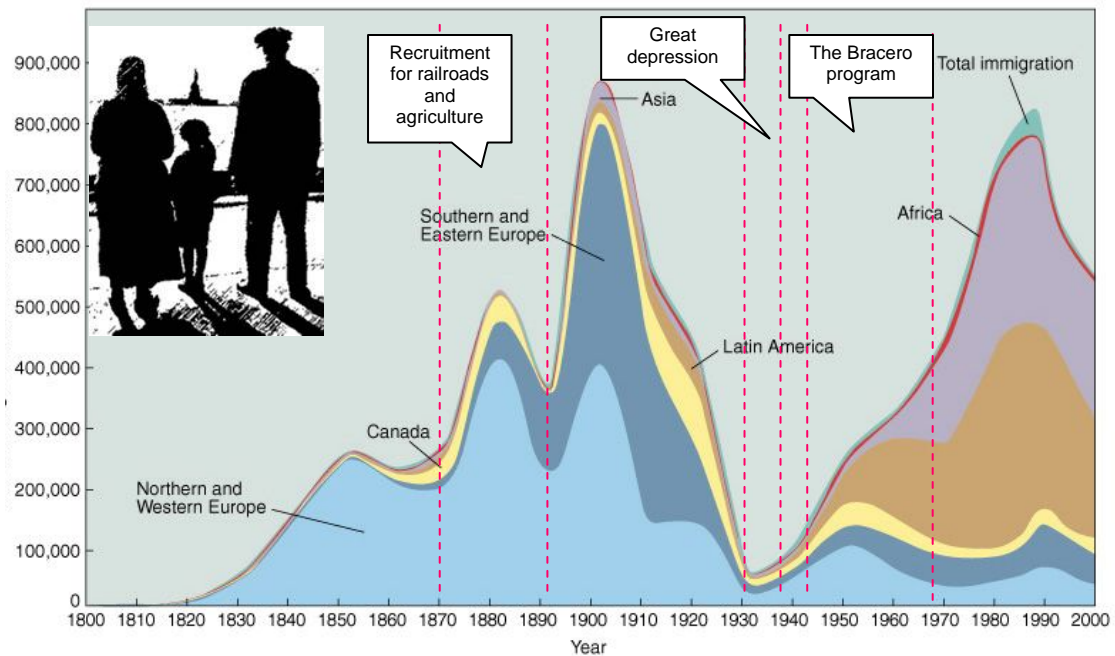


Figure 4.1. The two waves of immigration to the U.S.

Yet another difference is that Irish, Poles, and Italians at the turn of the twentieth century often viewed their migration as a one-way path with a transplantation of their roots to the immigrant neighborhoods of U.S. cities. Today, many migrants from Mexico and Central America maintain strong links with their hometowns due to easy access to less expensive means of transportation and communication. Moreover, coming to the U.S. and learning to live here is a gradual, selective, and highly individualized process of acculturation during which the migrant both keeps and sheds some elements of his or her native culture and chooses to adopt some elements of the American mainstream culture.³⁴ **The very meanings of “migration” and “incorporation” are different: for many current migrants there is a sense of living in two places simultaneously, in transnational families and communities.**

Assimilation or integration?

The previous discussion helps to explain why the traditional, unidirectional assimilation model of full incorporation into the “core culture” is not as effective as in the past. Assimilationists say that the problem is the unwillingness of Mexican immigrants to

³³ See Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of Representation*. University of Minnesota Press; 1995.

³⁴ See “*Immigrant Integration in Colorado*”, a report prepared by Susan Downs-Karkos for The Colorado Trust; 2004.

assimilate into the host society³⁵, but it is not so simple. Mexican migrants perceive many aspects of assimilation as desirable, such as learning English and placing their children into the school system. The loss of the native language, however, is less accepted and some aspects of cultural assimilation are somewhat resisted by new migrants (although the second generation is more receptive). Similarly, assimilation into predominantly minority inner-city neighborhoods, and into a surrounding youth milieu with an adversarial stance toward mainstream culture, is also a barrier to social advancement. Parents recognize the problem and often send their children back home, as detected in the Puebla-New York circuit.³⁶

A different approach to incorporation is conceptualized as a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host society (here we call it integration to differentiate it from assimilation). Integration is much more complex and goes beyond learning a new language, gaining access to the labor market and services, or increasing civic engagement. One of the most basic conclusions one can draw from the analysis of the socio-cultural incorporation of migrants in multiple environments, is that immigrants seem to thrive best in socially supportive conditions that allow them to change some of their social and cultural traditions at their own pace while retaining others. Research by Lourdes Arizpe shows that Mexican migrants quickly adopt many of the norms and values of the U.S. society, while still maintaining a strong positive valuation of their culture.³⁷ This gradual process of adaptation allows immigrants to build up their confidence and sense of belonging gradually but deeply. Because the process implies continuous interaction with the host society, there are also mutual adjustments and accommodations.³⁸ It is a two-way street; a mutual and dynamic process between the immigrant family and the receiving community.

This integration model, which perhaps has not been fully developed anywhere yet, should be grounded on equity and mutuality, and a pace of adaptation that is organic rather than forced. However, barriers are multiple and perhaps the most difficult ones are in the host community, which must cope with large influxes of foreigners in its schools, workplaces, housing, public spaces, and neighborhoods. As discussed in previous sections, competition for jobs, for instance, cannot be ignored.

Challenges and Tensions

Reactions to demographic shifts have often been restrictionist. Currently, the immigration debate is being framed in cultural terms. In *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* Samuel Huntington has forcefully expressed that U.S. society should be wary of large-scale migration from Mexico.³⁹ Of even greater concern are anti-immigrant sentiments that go beyond intellectual positions. The situation has created a polarized debate in Congress and the media, and resulted in the emergence of extreme anti-immigrant organizations, further exacerbating an already volatile issue.

³⁵ See Rogers Brubaker "The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 24. No. 4. July 2001 (pp. 531–548).

³⁶ See NATC Progress Report from Universidad Iberoamericana; 2005.

³⁷ See Lourdes Arizpe. *Los Retos Culturales de Mexico*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico; CRIM; 2004

³⁸ See Demetrious Papademetriou. *Policy Considerations for Immigrant Integration*. Migration Information Source October 1. Migration Policy Institute; 2003

³⁹ See Samuel Huntington. *Who are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster; 2004.

There are tensions between Latino migrants and African-Americans because they often compete for access to limited public resources, low-wage jobs, and housing. Furthermore, despite the sympathy African-Americans may have for the plight of immigrants, many black leaders feel increasingly uneasy with the comparison between the civil rights movement and the recent immigrant demonstrations.

There is an additional tension between new migrants' groups and traditional Latino civil rights organizations. Many of the latter had their origins in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, but new migrants have formed their own organizations, notably Home Town Associations (HTAs). As just mentioned, new migrants may have a sense of living in two places simultaneously in transnational families and communities, but this is not a situation that traditional Latino organizations like to maintain; their goal have been to have migrants become full U.S. citizens and concentrate on their domestic agenda.

There are also tensions between new and old migrants, and among those from different countries. In most cases competition for jobs is central to these frictions, sometimes accentuated by cultural differences and nationalist sentiments. Nor can we ignore the intergenerational tensions that emerge within families, with parents often resisting cultural changes in their children.

A fluid situation: evolving institutions, new dialogues and emerging alliances

Recent research has found that organized migrants are emerging social actors, playing an increasingly important role.⁴⁰ This occurs even though many of these migrants continue to consider themselves to be Mexican, Salvadoran or Dominican. Recent analysis indicate that there are multiple ways in which these migrants can continue to express their national identities while still becoming incorporated into the U.S., without threatening secession, social conflict or national security, as Huntington alleges. These observations are in line with recent work by Alejandro Portes that shows that there is no contradiction between effective incorporation into the host society and maintaining family, economic, social, and cultural links with the community of origin.⁴¹

The institutional landscape is evolving with organizations changing and adapting to new circumstances and exploring new alliances. This is the case of the relationship between Latino and migrants' organizations. The experience of Latino organizations in civil rights issues could be very helpful for newcomers.⁴² Recent developments show these organizations renegotiating their relationships as seen in decisions by LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), NCLR (National Council of La Raza), and MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) to adopt pro-immigrant positions on different issues, and struggling to improve their relationships with Home Town Associations.

⁴⁰ See Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Xochitl Bada and Luis Escala-Rabadan "Mexican Migrant Civil and Political Participation in the U.S.: The Case of Hometown Associations in Los Angeles and Chicago." Paper presented at the conference *Mexican Migrant Social and Civic Participation in the United States*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington DC, November 4-5, 2005. Available at: www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

⁴¹ See Alejandro Portes. Paper presented at the CIRED II Workshop on Migration Policies organized by IME (Instituto para los Mexicanos en el Exterior, Mexico City, October 2-5, 2005.

⁴² See David Ayón. "Mexican Migrants and Mexican Americans/Latinos: One Agenda or Two?" Paper presented at the conference *Mexican Migrant Social and Civic Participation in the United States*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington DC, November 4-5, 2005. Available at: www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

A similar evolution occurred in unions. Traditionally, the union movement has been hostile toward new immigrants because they compete for jobs with native workers. They were also considered “unorganizable” (perhaps due in part to the lack of understanding that migrants come to the U.S. with an image of corrupted unions in Mexico). Today, as Ruth Milkman has demonstrated, unions see migrant workers as their base, and even as a source of leadership.⁴³

Recent surveys of immigrant-serving institutions in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, has shown the importance of community organizations and local service providers and the central role they play in the successful incorporation of immigrants into U.S. society. This landscaping work showed how these organizations are increasing their immigrant constituencies, including immigrants as staff, and becoming more responsive to their needs.⁴⁴

We cannot forget the importance of schools in the process of incorporation. One in five children in the U.S. today has an immigrant parent. This diverse group of children yields concentrated transformational power that will touch every community and business in the decades to come. According to Ruben Rumbaut, American schools serve as quintessential agents of acculturation for children of migrants.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, although many newcomers view education as critical to realizing “the American dream,” and they appreciate their children’s opportunity to access public education, we cannot include schools yet in the list of institutions that are changing and embracing the new concept of immigrant integration as a two-way process of adaptation. Certainly there are exceptions, as noted by researchers in Chicago, that allow, or better promote, migrant parents to participate in school activities, including school boards, which is a step in the right direction.⁴⁶

Churches are also playing a central role in immigrant incorporation. Recent research has sought to understand the case of Mexicans coming to New York City, where new migrants are welcomed by local churches. These churches then become spaces for socialization and information, and intermediaries to gain access to social services and economic resources when conditions of vulnerability for migrants are particularly high. They also contribute to social mobility for both migrants and the second generation (Box 4.1).⁴⁷ As Liliana Rivera, from the Autonomous National University in Mexico (UNAM), indicates that while religious practices have socio-cultural and organizational value among migrants, they are also important to facilitate the management of differences with the host society.

⁴³ See Ruth Milkman. “*Labor Organizing among Mexican-Born Workers in the U.S.: recent trends and future prospects?*” Paper presented during the conference *Mexican Migrant Social and Civic Participation in the United States*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington DC, November 4-5, 2005. Available at: www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

⁴⁴ See Hector Cordero.

⁴⁵ See Ruben Rumbaut. “Competing Futures: the Children of America’s New Immigrants. Migration Information Source; Migration Policy Institute. May 22, 2002.

⁴⁶ See Yale’s Bush Center in Child Development and Education toward the costs of research promoting understanding of the experiences of young immigrant children and the impact of immigration on school finance (2003 WC 004)

⁴⁷ See NATC progress reports from CIESAS and Universidad Iberoamericana, 2006.

Box 4.1. Asociación Tepeyac: A first step to learning how to live in New York

The case of Asociación Tepeyac is perhaps the most interesting case in the City of New York: a network of 40 community organizations housed in local Catholic churches in the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island that informs, organizes, and educates Mexican immigrants and their families about their rights, and prepares future leaders within the migrant community. Asociación Tepeyac serves and influences over 10,000 migrants through its grassroots structure.⁴⁸

Altruism and solidarity need not be the main motivations. We have seen that unions, Latino organizations, and even churches, as described by Tepeyac's Executive Director Brother Joel Magallan, are also looking for ways to increase their membership; targeting new migrants is one way to achieve this more practical goal. This is also the case with the business sector, which needs migrants as labor but also recognizes the growing purchasing power of the Hispanic population in the U.S. So far, business is a big winner in the current situation characterized by cheap labor. The great influence of corporations on policy issues relating to immigrants cannot be ignored.

Integration starts locally

The local context is crucial. As immigration policy and enforcement continue to be set and carried out almost exclusively at the national level, the practical impacts of immigrants and the process of integration are local issues. And as the number of migrants living in the U.S. continues to grow there are increasing tensions between the federal government's role in regulating borders, immigration and citizenship policy, and the day-to-day reality of states and cities. Ultimately, it is at the local level that practical ideas are tested and adapted. It is also at this local level, and particularly in cities, where the interaction between immigrants and native citizens occurs. As described by Brian Ray, an analyst with the Migration Policy Institute, cities are the bedrock of integration.⁴⁹

Confronting paralysis in Congress, numerous states and cities have been formulating their own policies in response to the realities of the expanding presence of legal and undocumented residents in their jurisdictions. Impacts on migrant communities are significant. On one side, there are initiatives to ease the integration of migrants into U.S. society such as the creation of special agencies by the governor of Illinois⁵⁰ and the mayor of New York City.⁵¹ But there are also initiatives that move in the contrary direction, such as Georgia's Security and Immigration Compliance Act, one of the most restrictive pieces of state legislation so far.

⁴⁸ See Liliana Rivera-Sanchez. "Religious Institutions, Actors and Practices: The Construction of Transnational Migrant Organizations and Public Spaces Between Mexico and the United States." Paper presented during the conference *Mexican Migrant Social and Civic Participation in the United States*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington DC, November 4-5, 2005. Available at: www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

⁴⁹ See Brian Ray. "Immigrant Integration: Building an Opportunity". Migration Information Source; Migration Policy Institute. October 1, 2002.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.nuevosiglonews.com/moxie/news/politica/jl-gutierrez-a-un-puesto-e.shtml>

⁵¹ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/imm/html/home/home.shtml>

V. DIASPORAS, REMITTANCES, POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

The uniqueness of the Mexican Diaspora

Mexico and the U.S., by many measures, have the most dense and extensive bilateral relations in the world. We can also assume that the Mexican-origin population of the U.S. is the world's largest diaspora concentrated in a single host society. This community abroad is not only large in size but has become a well-known economic resource for Mexico. The massive growth of remittances has had an impact on poverty and local economic activities, and has contributed to significant policy innovation and change in Mexico.

The network of migrants' organizations in the U.S.

Grassroots organizations formed by Mexican migrants have proliferated in the U.S. since the early 1980s, especially in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and Chicago. More recently, they have become more visible in less urban and rural areas but 80% of the total number of Home Town Associations (HTAs) is still concentrated in California and Illinois (see Figure 5.1).

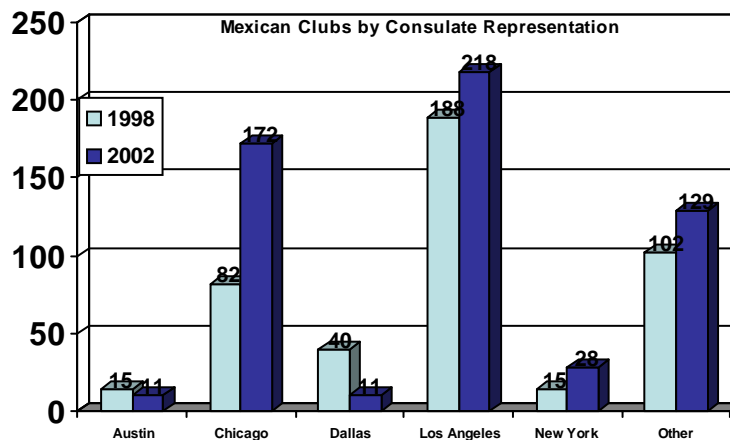


Figure 5.1 Increase in the number of Home Town Associations, also known as clubs, in key U.S. cities between 1998 and 2002. Source: Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar, from data from Mexican Consulates.

In many cases HTAs start as informal groups based on relationships with a town of origin in Mexico. This early organizational model is the first step toward formalization and the emergence of second-level structures: the federations. Traditionally HTAs have fundraised with a main objective: to finance projects in their hometowns in Mexico. A byproduct of these activities is a sense of community created by strengthening ties among migrants from the same village.

The upsurge of these organizations has had important implications. In contrast to the relative informality and political isolation that characterized migrants' groups until the mid-1990s, these new associations have now consolidated their organizational structures and become more outwardly oriented. Notably, the philanthropic activities they carry out for their communities of origin have changed significantly. While these projects have in the past been infrequent and haphazardly organized, investments in home community infrastructure have grown substantially in scale and have become much more formalized and systematic (Figure 5.2). The number of Mexican HTAs

continues to swell nationwide; there may be as many as 1000 registered in 46 Mexican consulates across 31 states in the U.S. This “scaling up” has increased the federations’ visibility, leading to a growing recognition in both the public and political spheres, which in turn has encouraged extended dialogue between them and all levels of the Mexican government (see Box 5.1).



Figure 5.2. Schools, clinics and roads in Zacatecas built with the contributions of organized migrants in California (from the Zacatecan Federation web site).

This Zacatecas Federation is a good example of the new role of migrants’ organizations as intermediaries with the Mexican government, and as local development agents promoting social investments in their hometowns. The Federation’s capacity to address the needs of Zacatecas residents in the U.S. while simultaneously mobilizing and investing collective remittances in Zacatecas has positioned it as one of the most influential transnational civic organizations in the U.S. (Box 5.1).

Box 5.1. The Case of the Zacatecan Federation of Southern California: Increasing the capacity of actors through participatory research.

The Federation's flagship program is a matching-fund scheme for its collective remittances. The idea emerged in 1986 and the negotiation with the state government resulted in the first model – the 1X1 program with dollar-per-dollar contributions from the HTAs and the state government. Later, in 1992 negotiations promoted by the Federation led to the creation of the 2X1 program, with an additional contribution from the federal government. Finally, in 1999, the Federation leadership was able to launch the 3X1 program, adding contributions from municipal governments. With the incentives of the matching funds, HTAs' participation flourished. With time, Zacatecas became the example for other states.

Every two years, the Federation conducts a democratic election of its new leadership: each member HTA is entitled to one vote. Its leaders are auto mechanics, postal workers, hospital administrators, real estate agents and tax consultants. The general assembly, the Federation's ultimate decision-making body, meets 12 times per year. Until 2003 the Federation had no paid staff. For Carol Zabin, Director of the Center for Labor Research and Education at Berkeley, the Federation's democratic and participatory culture has played a central role in its growth and effectiveness.

A team of UCLA academic researchers and Rockefeller Foundation officers from the North America Transnational Communities project (NATC) initiated contact with Guadalupe Gomez, President of the Federation, in 2001 and the idea of a joint project emerged in 2002 after a meeting with the organization's board of directors. By early 2003, a first grant was approved; it was the first grant from a major foundation to a migrants' organization in the U.S. The main objective was to strengthen the capacity of the Federation to promote and sustain strategic philanthropic investments in Zacatecas. The grant included funds to hire a full-time staff member to coordinate and oversee the Federation's investments of collective remittances and to create a system to plan, track, and evaluate the projects funded through the 3X1 program. At that time, the Federation included 75 HTAs. Efraim Jimenez, the owner of an auto repair shop in San Fernando CA, became the first Director for Philanthropy of the Federation (and the organization's first paid staff person). The grant also included funds for external technical assistance, which the Federation accessed through Mexican professionals from UCLA, the University of Zacatecas and other research and advocacy institutions.

With this new structure and resources, the Federation was able to dramatically expand its activities. In the U.S., it strengthened its programs helping new migrants to gain access to affordable housing, job opportunities and culturally appropriate services, and assisting them in their integration process through citizenship workshops. The Federation was also active in local and statewide advocacy initiatives through its involvement in various campaigns such as driver's licenses for undocumented workers and access to higher education for young migrants.

The 3X1 program was officially made national in Mexico in 2002. The ceremony for the occasion, led by Mexican President Vicente Fox and Guadalupe Gómez, marked a noteworthy shift in the relationship between migrants' organizations and Mexico's Federal Government. Since then, the program has been housed in the Ministry of Social Development. Each state participating in the 3X1 program has an executive committee to oversee the allocation of funds. In recognition of the Zacatecan Federation's leadership (and political power), the first meeting of the state executive committee was held in Los Angeles in August 2005. Observers highlighted the fact that Mexican officials traveled to California for the meeting, and that Efraim Jimenez coordinated the session.

Subsequently, the committee approved an important proposal initiated by the Federation: a change in the rules of the program allowing 3X1 funds to be used for productive projects to create jobs in the villages (up to this point it only supported projects of social interest such as schools, clinics, irrigation dams, roads, sewage, etc.). Creating jobs in communities of origin had been a long-time aspiration of the Federation and was one of the objectives of the second NATC grant, approved in 2005.

This level of access and the ability to shape important decision-making processes about the allocation of "real money" illustrates how far the Federation has come in terms of political weight, shaping in a very decisive way not only important policies emanating from the Mexican government but also taking leadership in their implementation and modification. The 3X1 program has supported 1,500 projects in Zacatecas from 1993 to 2005 with a total investment of more than \$60 million (Figure 5.2). In October 2005 the Zacatecan Federation became the pioneer in another milestone program: the 4X1 Program for Community Development.

This was the outcome of a short but intensive negotiation between the Federation, First Data Corporation, and the government of Zacatecas. This is a public-private partnership to increase the funding for basic infrastructure and economic development in states with high rates of migration. First Data, owner of the leading international money transfer company Western Union, committed \$1.25 million to the initiative.

Ginger Thompson, from *The New York Times*, eloquently captures the rising significance of the Zacatecan Federation as a transnational political institution, writing that “*Southern California is the capital of the Mexican diaspora, and a hotbed of Mexican politics, led by the Federation of Zacatecan Clubs. ... The Federation meets in a drab gray building in the City Terrace section of East Los Angeles [and] nearly everybody who wants to be anybody in Zacatecan politics has walked through its doors*”. She concludes that the Federation has become “*one of the most successful migrant fund-raising groups in the United States*”.⁵² For certain, the Zacatecan Federation is becoming more and more visible, and for the last two years, Efrain Jimenez has been traveling extensively advising other organizations of migrants in the U.S. He has also been invited to meetings in Europe, and the Philippines to describe the Federation’s experience.

While some could argue that this matching funds program has contributed to letting governments off the hook in their inherent responsibilities for public investment in development, it cannot be denied that the program has empowered migrant communities. In the U.S. the matching fund programs sponsored by HTAs have also contributed to fostering a sense of belonging and purpose for migrants who often feel alienated from mainstream society. The infrastructure projects in communities of origin have provided a good reason for migrants to gather and reconnect with their roots and give back to the place where they are from.

The response of the Mexican government

Since the beginning of the Fox administration, the Mexican government has increased its relationships with the Mexican diaspora. A major decision was the establishment of the Consultative Council of the Institute of Mexican Abroad with 137 members including 105 migrant leaders elected by the migrant community in the U.S. and Canada. The Council also has representatives from Latino and other U.S.-based organizations such as the Association of Farmworker, Hispanic National Bar Association, Hispanic Scholarship Fund, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), National Association for Bilingual Education, New American Alliance, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and United Farm Workers. The role of the Council is to advise the government on policies that relate to the wellbeing of the Mexican population abroad. The institutionalization of the “3X1” co-investment program was another landmark decision, as it was the new ID card issued by the consulates to Mexicans in the U.S. (the *matrícula consular*). In addition, the government expanded the consular network with parallel cultural institutes in major cities, set up an annual campaign to welcome migrants’ return, organized liaison offices for migrant communities from different states, and initiated educational programs in the U.S. A new guest worker program with the U.S., mirroring the one Mexico has with Canada, is a top foreign policy goal for Mexico’s current administration, which has assigned a special Task Force to work on this.⁵³

The result has been a sometimes comfortable, sometimes conflictive relationship between the migrant associations and the various levels of government. However, these programs have undeniably created a more predictable institutional framework through

⁵² See Ginger Thompson’s article “*Mexico’s Migrants Profit from Dollars Sent Home*”; in front page of *The New York Times* on February 23, 2005.

⁵³ See “*Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAV/P) as a Model of Best Practices in Employment Management of Caribbean and Mexican Migrant Farm Workers*” prepared by Rudi Robinson from the North-South Institute; 2004.

which migrant associations can interact with local, state, and federal governments in Mexico.

The impact of remittances in local villages

Remittances from Mexican immigrants reached \$20b in 2005 and are expected to be close to \$24b in 2006 according to Guillermo Ortiz, Governor of the Bank of Mexico. This is exceeded only by oil exports and is placing Mexico at the top of remittance-sending countries worldwide. Figure 5.1 shows the steady increase of remittances to Mexico since 2001.

Family remittances have a significant impact on alleviating poverty in sending regions in Mexico. Remittances are a main source of income for entire villages. Sociologist Luin Goldring, from York University, defines remittances as a “*welfare system supported by migrants.*” Mexican government statistics estimate that there are 1.6 million households that receive remittances on a regular basis, and that for 47% of them, remittances are the main source of income.

Recent research confirms the positive impacts of remittances on receiving households, as well as some other, less positive effects. 75% of the households receiving remittances today are not “poor households”. Most remittances are concentrated in 492 high-migration municipalities but these are not the country’s poorest. Migration is an expensive livelihood option, made more difficult and expensive by the new border controls. The poorest sectors of the population cannot afford to migrate. Additional research⁵⁴ shows that one of the impacts of Mexico’s main poverty alleviation program *Oportunidades* is to increase individual mobility in those households that receive the subsidy. One interpretation is that better-off households have the resources needed to finance the migration of some of their members. Some surveys also show that households use remittances to finance the migration of other members of the family. Isabel Cruz, the leader of AMUCSS,⁵⁵ a microbank project in a high-migration region of Oaxaca, noted that microcredit has been used to finance migration (Box 5.2).

⁵⁴ See Luís Rubalcava and Graciela Teruel. *Impact Evaluation Analysis in Poverty Level and Migration Rates of Beneficiary Households of the Human Development Program “Oportunidades”* 2005.

⁵⁵ See: <http://www.amucss.net/>

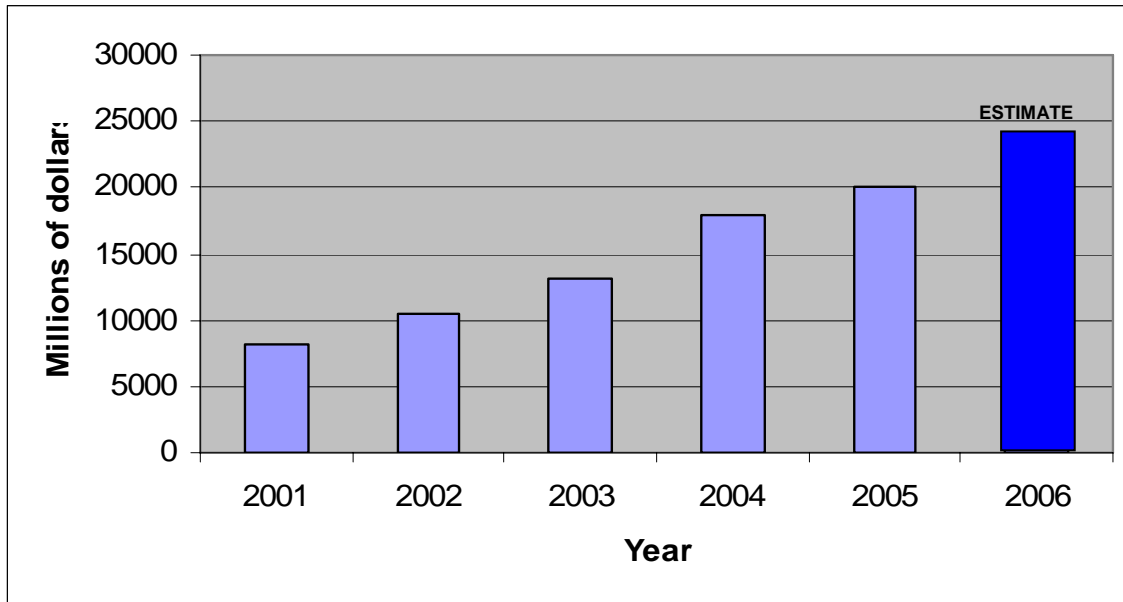


Fig. 5.1. Evolution of migrants' remittances from the U.S. to Mexico since 2001.

Box 5.2. Remittances and inequalities

David McKenzie, of the Department of Economics at Stanford University, studied the distributional consequences of migration and remittances.⁵⁶ His findings support the hypothesis that impacts are unlikely to be the same at all points in a village's migration history. Due to poverty and initially high migration costs, the first households to migrate are likely to be from the upper end of the income scale, and consequently, their remittances tend to increase inter-household inequality. However, migration costs decrease with time, partly due to more information and social networks. Furthermore, remittances have multiplier effects when spent on products and services produced by other community members. In the end, the migration option could also be available to those with less income, reversing the initially unfavorable effects of remittances on income inequality.

High-migration Mexican villages have been the subject of numerous studies; the most comprehensive of which is the University of Princeton-based Mexican Migration Project (MMP) – a multidisciplinary research effort initiated in 1982 that randomly samples households to collect social, demographic, and economic information including migration histories of household members, their employment, earnings, and use of U.S. social services.⁵⁷ Mexican researchers from a consortium (known as the NATC project) of five Mexican institutions⁵⁸ used a modified MMP survey combined with other research instruments to compare the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of high-migration villages in three migratory circuits: the historical or traditional (using Zacatecas as an example), the indigenous (exemplified by Oaxaca), and the accelerated/emergent (characterized by Puebla and Veracruz). MMP and NATC researchers have been in contact to integrate their databases; this is a work in progress (Box 5.3).

⁵⁶ See David McKenzie and Hillel Rapoport. *Network effects and the dynamics of migration and inequality: theory and evidence from Mexico*.

⁵⁷ See: <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/>

⁵⁸ Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ), Universidad Iberoamericana/Puebla, Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca (ITO) and CIESAS Campus Golfo.

Box 5.3. North American Transnational Communities (NATC) research on migrant communities in Mexico⁵⁹

Mexican researchers with North American Transnational Communities project (NATC) surveyed 1,300 households in 22 communities to better understand their socio-economic and cultural dynamics. They integrated three research instruments: a socio-ethnographic survey based on the one previously used by the Mexican Migration Project (MMP); a social accounting matrix (SAM) to analyze the structure of the village's economy based on the one developed by Edward Taylor and his team in the late 1980's, and in-depth ethnographies at the village level. This is still a work in progress but preliminary findings complement previous research and have illuminated salient data about the impacts of migration at the household, village, and regional levels.

- ❑ Remittances are important for the economy of households in all surveyed communities. In one community, they represent 60% of household income.
- ❑ Most of the remittances are used to address basic needs: food, housing, health care, and education. Only a small portion is spent on productive activities (a pattern that is not unique to Mexico). There is evidence that many migrants' households are using remittance money to finance further migration. Remittances also operate as a safety net to protect families from economic shocks (for example, using remittance money to buy livestock is a frequent "insurance" strategy).
- ❑ A significant number of households that receive remittances lack working adults who can use the money for productive investments; surveys in selected communities shows that 44% of the heads of remittance-receiving households are over 64 years old. Recipients are likely to be female (7 out of 10).
- ❑ In indigenous communities practicing traditional corn-based agriculture, the household economy is heavily dependent on remittances as subsidies.
- ❑ Although the larger proportion of remittances goes to consumption, there are important multiplier effects such as benefits to non-receiving households. Statistical models using the SAM show that these multiplier effects depend on the communities' economic base and opportunities for investment. In general, production multiplier effects are the highest in the service sector (home improvement, domestic services, medical, education, etc.);
- ❑ Benefits to agriculture depend on the potential of the sector in each village. In regions with unfavorable conditions for agriculture the multiplier effect is null – agricultural output does not increase as demand increases. In those villages with a better investment environment production multipliers can be as high as \$2.5 per dollar sent. Despite generally limited benefits in the agricultural sector, remittances do induce more equitable distribution of benefits.
- ❑ NATC research confirms greater benefits in communities with a long migration tradition such as those in Zacatecas; with a stronger economic base and better business options. Urban business in general shows a significant multiplier effect although this sector may not receive any direct inflow of remittances.
- ❑ SAM modeling helps to predict the adverse effects of a decline in remittances: a decrease of \$100 led to a decline of \$187 in village production, and \$178 decline in income; the greatest negative impacts of a decline in remittances is on landless households with the lowest per capita income in the village.
- ❑ In some communities a significant proportion of the remittances move to neighboring communities; NATC found a village where households receiving remittances are spending 66% of their income outside the community.

The stability and sustainability of remittance flows depend on the behavior of migrants and their remittance practices. The work of Manuel Orozco (Inter-American Dialogue) and other researchers indicate that:⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Gaspar Rivera-Salgado served as a consultant for the Rockefeller Foundation, from 2004-2007, coordinating the works of the consortium of Mexico-based researchers participating in the North American Transnational Communities project. This information was drawn from several reports to the Rockefeller Foundation regarding the results of the research carried-out by the participating academics (see footnote #60 for a full list of the participating universities).

- At least half of all Latino immigrants who have been in the U.S. for 10 years or less are regular remittance senders. Permanent migrants continue to send remittances (28% of the total flow) but they send smaller amounts. As migrants bring their families to the U.S. and become assimilated into society, the amounts of money sent and frequency of transfers decreases.
- Two thirds of senders dispatch money at least once a month; most remitters (56%) dispatch between \$100 and \$300 at a time. On average, permanent migrants remit a quarter of their earnings; while temporary migrants send more than half (55%). Those who immigrate at the age of 20 or younger have the highest propensity to remit.

In summary, only a small portion of family remittances is spent on productive activities but there are indirect impacts in production and income that depend on the socio-economic dynamics of the village (which may be linked to its migratory history). However, the profile of households receiving remittances portrayed by most surveys seems to underscore serious obstacles to the developmental use of the funds, since households have substituted remittances for wage income. Further, the degree of dependence on this income highlights the vulnerability of household and village economies to external shocks resulting from a change in remittance flows, which could occur, for example, with a change in U.S. immigration legislation. However, up to now, flows have showed high stability, in fact they have been growing steadily since 2001 (the expected growth for 2006 is 19%).

From poverty alleviation to development

Remittances alleviate poverty and improve welfare conditions in receiving households with spillovers throughout the whole village, but the question remains: do they promote sustainable, human development? This has been a recurrent question in recent research that looks at the intersection of migration and development. The two pervasive addictions discussed in Section II – the addiction to cheap labor in the US and the addiction to remittances in Mexico – are considered unsustainable in the long term by many analysts. Further, when migrants are helping to alleviate poverty through direct transfers, contributing to improve the infrastructure of their hometowns, and even exploring the creation of jobs through productive projects, some analysts wonder if it is realistic (and ethical) to also ask them to become major development agents. Many migrants who send money to Mexico remain poor by U.S. standards. The total flow of remittances is impressive but these are private transfers, “wages” of individuals working in the U.S. sent to their families in Mexico for basic needs. Local and national development placed on the shoulders of migrants would be unfair. It seems that a consensus is emerging among researchers around the idea that a development model based on remittances has practical, conceptual, and even ethical limitations.⁶¹

Section II linked migration with development and with economic growth without job creation. Although people should have the right to move (at least within the boundaries of their own countries), they should also have the right to find decent livelihood options in their own countries, where their cultural roots are. As Efrain Jimenez, leader of one of the largest Mexican immigrant-led organizations, mentioned: “*we want migration to be an*

⁶⁰ See Manuel Orozco, *Making the Most of Family Remittances*. Second Report of the Inter-American Dialogue Task Force on Remittances, May 2007.

⁶¹ This was the conclusion of a major international workshop in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2005. See: *Los Migrantes no son Fabricas de Dólares*; article in *La Jornada*, Masiosare Supplement 289, Mexico City.

option, not a necessity".⁶² Unfortunately, when the impacts of migration are simply measured in dollars sent back home, the social and human costs remain unaccounted for. A challenge that goes beyond financial remittances makes a new equation that would consider the costs of disrupted families, abandoned women, violation of basic labor rights, health risks, mental stress, and other vulnerabilities.

A model of development based on exporting labor and receiving remittances implies that Mexico would need to have a continuous flow of migrants to finance development. Unfortunately, many nations are not able to provide decent livelihood opportunities to their people (even when their economies are growing) and promote out-migration, and the return of remittances rather than people, as a state policy. This seems to be the model of Mexico; it is certainly a controversial strategy. The Philippines has been implementing similar policies for two decades, and development impacts have been small, if any. Mexico, with its natural resources and privileged position as neighbor of the world's strongest economy, should pursue a different path.

Other sending countries such as Colombia, Taiwan, and Uruguay are willing to explore more balanced approaches to avoid falling into the trap of a remittance-based development model. They want to benefit from the social investments of organized migrants and the intellectual contributions of high-skilled migrants to their countries. But they also look for other innovative ways to engage their diasporas, developing favorable environments for investment, and promoting return policies.⁶³ In cases of serious unemployment situations, circular migration including temporary worker programs designed to protect human and labor rights of workers, may be also part of a strategy.⁶⁴

⁶² Personal communication with the author. July 19, 2007.

⁶³ This was the topic of a Bellagio international conference that took place in July 2006, organized by the Migration and Development International Network. The conference analyzed cases from Mexico, Philippines, Turkey, Morocco, and India. Also, in September 2006, the United Nations General Assembly convened a High-Level Dialogue to discuss the nexus between migration and development. This led to the creation of a permanent Global Forum on Migration and Development. The Forum's inaugural session took place in Brussels in 2007. Two themes were identified as top priorities for the first meeting of the Forum: 'Migration and socio-economic development', and 'Best ways to strengthen the links between migration policies and development policies'. <http://www.gfmd-civil-society.org/index.html?current=2&page=2&page2=2&lang=en>

⁶⁴ For a comprehensive review of the guest worker program in Canada; see "Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAV/P) as a Model of Best Practices in Employment Management of Caribbean and Mexican Migrant Farm Workers" prepared by Rudi Robinson from the North-South Institute, 2004.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

MIGRATION AS A CROSSCUTTING ISSUE

The previous sections showed that migration can trigger precarious situations, but it can also generate opportunities for economic and social change. It can bring people out of exclusion but it may also transform current inequalities into persistent inequities in the future. We may see social and cultural acceptance of immigrants by the host society, or we may discover rejection and discrimination. Analysis of these vulnerable groups in this context showed that they struggle along these boundaries. And we see migration as a process that permeates different societal issues and cuts across different areas of academic research, innovation, and investment. Some examples follow.

During the 1980s and 1990s international philanthropy and academic research in Mexico and Latin America has emphasized work on natural resources management in rural areas. Under the new framework of Food Security, this focus has shifted toward improvement of traditional maize-based systems among resource-poor farmers, with an agricultural technology approach. This was considered central to improve the livelihoods of these people. Soon, the reality of poor communities in Mexico in states such as Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Veracruz has challenges their concept of food security, and their own theory of change. Increasing ethnographic work in these rural villages gave academics and foundation representatives a first-hand look at the impacts of migration in sending communities: depopulation, dependence on remittances, and a unique demographic pyramid with a high proportion of women, children, and elders that in some way mirrored the situation seen in Africa as a result of HIV/AIDS. As pointed out earlier, recent research has shown that this was not an isolated phenomenon: 31% of rural municipalities in Mexico showed negative population growth between 1995 and 2000. This demography creates unique challenges for agricultural research and extension. In addition, we now know that for many households in these regions, improving maize yields is important but achieving food security depends on having one or more household members in the U.S. More recently, research has confirmed that remittances are often subsidizing traditional maize production in many of these poor rural households.

Migration has also emerged as a crosscutting issue for academic researchers with interest in community development in receiving cities in the U.S. Consider how America's urban areas have changed – in the top 25 cities, the foreign-born presence rose from 15% in 1980 to 25% in 2000, far outpacing the overall increase in immigrants in the U.S. (see Figure 6.1). Working-age Mexicans that had left the communities covered by the Food Security program in Mexico were populating the poor neighborhoods that were the focus of academic researchers interested in urban poverty studies in major U.S. cities. There is very little interaction between scholars looking at rural development in Latin American and urban poverty in the U.S. It seems logical to foster more communication and space for exchange between these two groups of scholars.

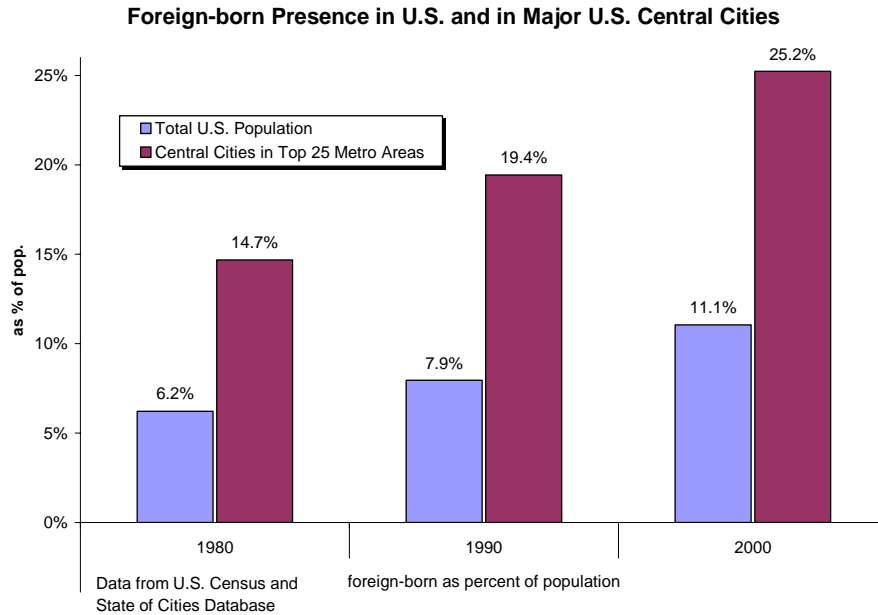


Figure 6.1. Foreign-born presence in the U.S. and in major U.S. cities.

Community development has traditionally focused on strategies for revitalizing distressed urban areas, combating high rates of joblessness and low levels of assets. But where the proportion of migrants is high, these traditional strategies may need to be rethought. First, the impact of the new migrants' labor force on native, low-skilled workers cannot be ignored. Further, while lack of jobs may not be the main issue for the newcomers – in many cases immigrants do not face major challenges connecting to labor markets (as discussed in Section II) – they do face the pernicious prevalence of low wages and labor law violations. These realities push the field of community urban development to find innovative solutions. The standard of success in an immigrant community may not be its stability but its ability to serve as a springboard – that is, as an effective entry point that launches migrants to social advancement without affecting the native poor. The case of day laborers discussed in Section III is a good example.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The research outlined above has vividly showed how migration has become a major livelihood strategy for millions of Mexicans, and how deep the impacts are on both sending and receiving communities. This process is massive and driven by powerful social and economic forces that will continue to operate no matter the changes in policy regarding immigration emanating from U.S. Congress in Washington D.C. Persistent push and pull factors are now complemented by strong social networks, an emerging culture of migration, and by a multi-million dollar industry of migration. Another important factor is the integration of millions of immigrants into U.S. society will be a long and complex process of social, cultural and political adaptation for migrants and for people in

communities where migrants settle – a two-way street – with implications at all societal levels.

There are groups that are particularly vulnerable including women, children, indigenous migrants, and day laborers. Still, migration is a transforming experience that can improve or worsen the conditions of people who, in many cases, are already vulnerable before they migrate. There are also impacts on individuals and groups that do not migrate but may be seriously affected: some in Mexico because of family disruption and others in the U.S. because of job competition. In other words, migration cuts across different areas of the agenda of research for development in a globalized world. These interconnections should not be neglected in future academic applied research.

The Mexican-origin population in the U.S. is huge in numbers but also in influence. The demography of many U.S. urban cities is changing fast and this is happening well beyond the traditional gateway cities. Interestingly, as a result of strong social networks and the advances in transportation and communications, for many migrants there is a sense of living in two places simultaneously, in transnational communities and families. Consequently, there is a continuous flow of people, money, ideas, and values across the border. Clearly, the flow of money has made one of the most significant impacts, and has made the Mexican diaspora a fundamental economic resource for Mexico; \$26 billion dollars was sent to Mexico in 2007, almost equal the earnings from the oil industry. These large sums of remittances are having a significant impact in alleviating poverty in Mexico to the extent that money sent is creating a parallel welfare system supported by migrants. Migrants also contribute to local economies building schools and clinics and even sometimes investing in businesses that create jobs. These are all positive aspects. However, we must be aware of the warning signs: relying on exporting labor is a controversial strategy for long-term human development for any country. Economic dependence is not the only risk; when the effects of migration are only measured in terms of financial flows, the social costs remain unaccounted. Exploring a different, more effective developmental role for the diaspora is an exciting challenge for academic research.

Historically, the U.S. has prided itself as being a nation of immigrants and, as such, it does have a solid experience incorporating newcomers. But there are important differences between the new flows of migrants and those of the beginning of the twentieth century. The traditional, unidirectional assimilation model of full incorporation into the “core culture” is not as effective as it was in the past. Integration of immigrants into U.S. society – economic, social, and cultural integration of millions who are already in the country – is also a huge challenge. It is crucial now to explore different approaches, despite polarizing debates, on the development of public policies that welcome immigrants in the countries of destination.

Reframing public discourse about immigrant integration is a very ambitious endeavor that will require innovative thinking and sponsors that are responsible and publicly trusted; independent foundations and universities can play a crucial role. Sponsors will need to think and act strategically, relying on their convening power marked by clear objectives, but also expanding networks of influence, initiating new dialogues, and promoting partnerships. When the challenge is to create a more positive discourse, hard data is essential but, in this case, humanizing the debate with new stories that underscore common values of migrants and native citizens is also important.

The debate must include influentials at the highest level from all sectors but sponsors must also keep in mind that effective integration occurs at the local level. It is in the cities and in its neighborhoods where new ideas are tested and adapted. Local leaders are also influential, valuable resources of ideas, and should be included in coalitions for

change. We must strive to learn more about the complexities of the institutional landscape at all these levels, and about tensions and conflicts but also opportunities – traditional organizations are changing, new ones are being created by migrants themselves, and new alliances are emerging.

To conclude, this paper has outlined some of the possibilities of knowledge production in the arena of research for immigration and development in an increasing globalized world and the opportunities to foster civic action, and social change. The link between migration and development will be an important part of the future, not only of this hemisphere, but of the globe. New solutions and partnerships will be needed to maximize the benefits of mobile livelihoods, protect the most vulnerable, and produce lasting mutual gains for sending and receiving countries. Academic research together with concerted effort from other sector such as philanthropy, intergovernmental institutions, non-governmental organizations and immigrant-led organizations can play an important role to seize the potential opportunities to respond to this important twenty-first century's issue.