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Emigration as a Social Policy: Neoliberalism, State Intervention, and Mexican Emigration

1. Introduction

For my doctoral studies in Political Science at the University of Texas-Austin, I have begun a project that examines the political-economy of labor emigration from less developed countries (LDCs). At its core, my study examines how international and domestic economic forces as well as domestic political institutions influence emigration patterns. My summer fieldwork in rural Mexico served as an opportunity to look for the existence or nonexistence of phenomena I have found in earlier statistical work, as well as gather new ideas, in an effort to better develop my dissertation proposal. A major motivation for pursuing this field project is rooted in the fact that the data on international migration and remittances are rough estimates that have the potential to cause misleading or premature conclusions. A field study is useful under these conditions because it can help a researcher to better understand the reliability or unreliability of his or her data. For this reason, I pursued an informal field study that allowed me the opportunity to converse freely with previous migrants and their families as to decipher what relationships exist between emigrating and remitting patterns in terms of more overarching political-economic phenomena.

In this report I first review the work I completed before going into the field. The second section discusses my aim, approach, and findings once in the field within the framework of my prior research. The final section summarizes how my findings in the field have influenced the trajectory of my dissertation project.

2. Prior Research

I will preface the review and findings of my field study in Mexico with a description of the questions, hypothesis, and evidence I had before going into the field. In prior work, my key aim has been to explore the larger political and economic reasons why people in less-developed countries (LDCs) emigrate to developed countries. My primary hypothesis is that many labor emigrants go abroad to save and remit money in order to offset income disruptions caused by international trade competition and price deregulation in certain domestic production sectors in the origin country. While the traditional function of robust public spending programs in advanced-industrialized countries has been to offset such losses and appease citizens that are most vulnerable to competition and readjustment, my theoretical and statistical analyses suggest that remittances may work to serve a similar "private" stabilizing and compensatory role in LDCs. In other words, when a country's pursuit of neoliberal reform and integration into the global capitalist system has not been complimented by government compensation, as is often the case in LDCs, citizens will seek remittances to independently recover income lost as a consequence of trade liberalization. As a political scientist interested in government institutions, I frame these questions in light of how emigration and remittance flows are beneficial to the state that engages in neoliberal market reform.

2.1 How Are Emigration and Remittance Flows Beneficial to the State?

In a rare study of government emigration policy preferences, Marc Rosenblum (2004) finds that migrant-sending countries largely support the outflow of citizens as a "necessary evil" that must be encouraged due to the large inflows of currency that those working abroad send to their families in the origin country. In what is a migrant-to-household (or community) transfer process, what benefit might migrant-sending governments realize from the inflow of remittances? The most widely explored explanation to this question examines remittances for their potential to promote sustainable economic development.

The remittance-development relationship begins with what has been termed the "multiplier effect" (Stahl 1989). This theory holds that remittances cause new demand and spending among recipients, which transfers the originally remitted money into the hands of producers and sellers in the domestic economy. New sources of income for these local economic actors will cause a second level upswing in demand and result in new and heightened spending among citizens who are not the direct recipients of remittances. Ideally, somewhere along this path of transactions, the originally remitted money will end up in the hands of entrepreneurs that invest in businesses that create jobs and new sources of income for members of the society. In effect, migrant remittances should cause greater spending, more local investment, increased employment and productivity, which in turn lead to higher levels of economic development than in their absence (Stahl 1989; Asch 1994).

A recent study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), however, has shown that the real impact of remittances on economic growth and development is less promising (Chami et al. 2003). This study demonstrates that when remittances are put toward savings and investment activities, such activities fall less along the lines of creating new businesses and more in terms of individual purchases that have little long-term effect on the economic productivity of society at large. Purchasing land, for example, may be a good investment for individual families, however its impact is unlikely to be realized in a grander economic sense. Using remittances to build a home, on the other hand, often creates new jobs. Still, the jobs created from such an investment have less sustainable income effects than if the money was being used to create or expand a business.

This study also indicates that remittances create a moral hazard problem that may be detrimental to the development process by discouraging productivity on the part of recipients. Problems relating to remittance dependency have been noted elsewhere with data that demonstrates decreasing levels of economic activity as remittance inflows rise (Asch 1994). Additionally, an increase in demand—satisfied absent increased domestic productivity, i.e. domestic supply—can cause the prices of domestically produced goods and services to rise (Hemele 1997). The inflationary effect is not only harmful to domestic buyers and sellers, but also problematic in that it can cause a forced appreciation of the local currency (Amuendo-Dorantes and Pozo 2004). Consequently, the price of exported goods will rise relative to other currencies, and hence lower a country's overall level of global economic competitiveness.

Furthermore, the benefits of remittances postulated by the multiplier effect theory assume that a great deal of expenditure is on goods and services produced by domestically owned and operated firms. The limits of the multiplier effect are realized if remittance recipients, by way of having a new source of income, increasingly become inclined to purchasing foreign goods and services (Hemele 1997). In other words, if citizens are not spending remittances on domestic products, this currency will not remain in the domestic economy and hence not contribute to new, domestically driven business, investment, and job creation. Remittances do have positive implications for development in that they can help to fund existing trade gaps (Ebiri 1985). However, trade imbalance problems may be exacerbated in the presence of remittances, as increased income boosts remittance recipients' demand for foreign goods. A growing trade imbalance will have a negative effect on development not only because it strengthens foreign producers at the expense of domestic producers, but also because balance of payment problems make the domestic economy less attractive to foreign investors.

Instead of acting as a harbinger for economic development by way of a multiplier effect, remittances more likely play a more localized role by funding short-term private consumption expenses for recipient families. Charles Keely and Bao Nga Tran advance the prospect that remittances most frequently fund household expenses relating to education, health, and basic welfare as well as assuage debt problems stemming from unfavorable macroeconomic conditions (1989: 504, 524). Deborah Meyers (1998), summarizing the findings of other studies, argues that across most major migrant-sending countries, remittances serve as a primary means of satisfying basic consumption and subsistence needs.[1] Additionally, remittances, as a means to funding basic needs, may be most commonly a temporary relief response in periods of macroeconomic downturn. Kapur (2004) finds that through emigrating and remitting, households are engaging in a form of private social insurance to cushion the effects of macroeconomic crises and shocks. Data demonstrating a marked increase in remittance flows following currency crises in fourteen LDCs convincingly supports this theory.

Oded Stark (1991) theorizes remittances in terms of relative deprivation. In other words, because "people are engaged in interpersonal income comparisons," they will work to attenuate socio-economic disparities by choosing family members to emigrate for the sake of realizing new household income via remittances (Stark 1991: 87, 119-134). Hence, social inequalities provide citizens with an incentive to migrate and remit. In a vein similar to Kapur's conceptualization, Stark's theory situates remittances as a response to some overarching economic phenomenon.

By downplaying prospects that remittances are a force in bringing about sustainable development and focusing on the alternative conceptualizations, three ideas emerge in light of the question of how remittances are beneficial to migrant-sending LDC government. First, remittances work primarily to fund consumption, whether this consumption comes in the form of the most basic human needs, social investment, or the satisfaction of socially driven material expectations. Second, remittances are pursued in response to some economic phenomenon. The literature finds that globally-linked macroeconomic instability as well as insufficient household incomes and domestic income inequality motivate citizens to emigrate and remit to families in the source

[1] See also Russell 1986; Keely and Tran 1989; Georges 1990; Pessar and Grasmuck 1991; Massey & Basem 1992; Taylor, et al. 1996; Siri and Delgado 1995; Boly 1996; Durand, et al. 1996; Russell 1997.

country. Third, implied from these theories, is that problematic aspects of the economy are cushioned privately on a household basis through the processes of emigrating and remitting. In effect, citizens are taking measures that insure against economic downturns on their own terms instead of relying on government spending and programs. By linking these three ideas to the International Political Economy (IPE) research, a more cohesive theory of remittances and their benefit to the migrant-sending LDC can be formulated.

2.2 Trade Liberalization, Domestic Compensation, and Migrant Remittances

If we take remittances as a response to insure against overarching global and domestic economic conditions, an explanation of how flows benefit migrant-sending LDC governments is founded upon understanding the government's role in inducing and correcting for the economic conditions of which remittances are a response. A number of scholars have noted that new and dramatic increases in emigration and remittance flows began in the late-1980s with the onset of the contemporary era of globalization (Gammeltoft 2002; Castles & Miller 2003; Massey, Durand, & Malone 2003). Therefore, the economic conditions of which remittances are a response may be rooted in the increased adoption of neoliberal economic reforms by LDC governments over the past two decades. The object of this section is to frame the conditions LDC governments face in relation to globalization and neoliberal reform, and furthermore to explain how remittances are beneficial in mitigating the socially conflictual pressures that such policies induce or exacerbate.

Liberalized trade, where prices are determined by supply and demand in the context of a free market, is postulated to have a positive aggregate effect for all societies.

The Stolper-Samuelson theorem holds, however, that some will realize the advantages of free trade more so than others in society, as members of less efficient industries will be forced to experience income disruptions. In the process, cleavages between economic winners and losers are created, which, as Ronald Rogowski (1989) indicates, lead to the formation of class-based political coalitions that favor either free trade or protectionist policies. Michael Hiscox (2002) complements Rogowski's model by advancing the additional importance of social divisions that occur along industrial lines.

Under the lobbying pressure of disadvantaged coalitions, whose interests are more likely to be concentrated and less prone to the collective action problem than the dispersed winners of free trade, politicians seek means to mitigate the group-specific distributional consequences of free trade through various forms of government intervention in the market. Tariff barriers are a common outcome of this process, as their capacity to protect entire sectors or industries, as opposed to only specific firms or producers, makes them the most politically efficient option (Rodrik 1995).

One of the primary defining aspects of the current era of globalization, however, has been a marked reduction of trade protectionism and market regulation. The trade liberalization regime, embodied in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and World Trade Organization (WTO), has institutionalized the norm of free trade by first promoting tariff reductions and additionally, since the 1970s and 1980s, eliminating non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and other market regulatory devices. As a complement to the global push for market liberalization, countries have increasingly engaged in regional free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Single European Market, as well as bilateral free trade agreements that have been increasingly established between the US and smaller states like Morocco and Singapore and others in Latin America. Concurrently, regulation and price setting by governments and international organizations has increasingly been replaced by free market price setting mechanisms, which are dictated by the laws of supply and demand rather than an effort to preserve certain price thresholds.

According to Peter Katzenstein (1985), the prevalence of a global free trade norm makes the erection of protectionist barriers and regulatory devices less of an option for small or less powerful economies. Their dependence on access to larger markets necessitates the acceptance of free trade, despite the oft-cited lopsidedness of the norm's practical implementation. Katzenstein's seminal study reveals that governments of small European economies have used domestic welfare compensation as a way to mitigate the negative impacts of free trade. Domestic spending aids in maintaining social stability and political support by cushioning the damaging effects of trade liberalization.

Dani Rodrik (1997) and Geoffrey Garrett (1998) complement Katzenstein's research in broader analyses of advanced-industrialized countries, demonstrating increases in social welfare spending as countries further expose themselves to international trade. Alìcia Adserà and Carles Boix (2002) seek a deeper understanding of the positive trade-compensation relationship by modeling political influences in advanced-industrialized countries as well as other countries. For more developed democratic systems, public sector expansion tends to be robust and to precede trade liberalization, as free trade politicians seek to win support from opposing coalitions prior to pursuing a path of decreased protection and regulation. In less democratic systems the relationship is not nearly as strong. Because public support plays a diminished role in the policymaking calculus, politicians in less democratic or autocratic systems minimize robust social spending programs when engaging in liberalization programs.

Because democratic processes and tax revenues are less reliable in LDCs, scholars are skeptical that the positive trade-compensation relationship holds in the developing world as convincingly as it does for the more developed liberal-democracies in Europe and North America. Recent empirical work supports this skepticism. A study of Latin American countries indicates that trade openness is correlated with decreased government spending on pensions and, in some cases, on healthcare and education as well (Kaufman and Segura-Ubiergo 2001). Nita Rudra (2002) advances similar findings through a broader analysis of fifty-three LDCs. Rudra maintains that discrepancies in domestic compensation between LDCs and advanced-industrialized countries can be accounted for by the fact that low-skilled labor coalitions in LDCs face collective action problems and limited political access. Kurt Weyland (1996) shows that domestic level organizational factors in LDCs may impede the distribution of state welfare resources. His examination of social inequality in Brazil indicates that even when a state is spending great sums of money on social welfare programs, the country's poorest citizens often never enjoy the fruits of these programs. For thirty-five LDCs, it is indicated that this narrow redistributive concentration occurs even in instances when freer trade allows governments to spend more money on broad social welfare programs. This seemingly paradoxical circumstance is explained by the increased clientelism and diminished attention to labor that results when governments focus their priorities on global economic competitiveness over social equality (Rudra 2004).

LDC governments that have pursued a path of trade liberalization and simultaneously avoided broad domestic compensation find themselves in a precarious position with their constituencies, particularly unskilled labor. Although collective action problems and lack of political access may limit labor's ability to organize and lobby the government, neoliberal administrations may see their survival threatened by populist revolutions. The rises of Luis Inacio Lula da Silva in Brazil and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, for example, indicate that public dissatisfaction with neoliberal reforms has the potential to shift power away from free trade and market capitalism proponents toward those that are more sympathetic to closed and socialist economic approaches.

To keep threats at bay in the domestic political realm, James Vreeland (2003) indicates that neoliberal LDC administrations engage in the practice of binding policy preferences to international agreements. Vreeland's study shows that high-level government officials actively seek IMF loan conditions as a step prior to pushing liberalization and fiscal austerity legislation in domestic legislative branches. The reasoning is that although many within the legislature that represent vulnerable constituencies will oppose the specific policy prescriptions of the IMF, they will not vote in opposition due to the perceived benefits of adhering to an established IMF agreement. Concerns over the state's reputation and credibility in the international community, as identified by Beth Simmons (2000), serve to bring legislative support to ostensibly IMF sanctioned policies that would otherwise be staunchly opposed.

Viewing IMF conditionality in this manner demonstrates that LDC governments will seek to capitalize on means that allow neoliberal reforms to proceed while minimizing social unrest in light of the income disruptions that liberalization will inevitably cause within some economic sectors. Because, as indicated earlier, migrant-remittances serve to satisfy the consumption needs of citizens as a response to overarching economic conditions that the state is unable (or unwilling) to ameliorate—such as the negative impacts associated with trade liberalization—emigration and the flow of remittances should also be seen as providing a certain level of insulation to LDC governments. In turn, governments aim to secure increased and more reliable flows by promoting emigration via international agreements and domestic management. It is within the context of this theoretical framework that I began to test my hypothesis through statistical work and preliminary fieldwork in Mexico.

3. Testing the Hypothesis: Preliminary Statistical and Field Results

By synthesizing the theories from the migration literature and theories from the IPE literature, I conclude that some individuals are pushed to emigrate in order to seek remittances, which may compensate for problems caused by global trade competition and price deregulation in circumstances where the government is not spending or distributing sufficient sums on social programs. I buttressed this theory with a statistical model that, when controlling for other key variables, indicates a strong positive relationship between the flow of remittances and exposure to international trade across twenty-one major migrant-sending LDCs for the years 1978-2000.

3.1 Fieldwork in Mexico's Southern Huasteca Region

As mentioned, international migration statistics can often provide researchers with premature or misleading results due to the fact that it is difficult for authorities to keep perfect count of human movement and personal monetary flows. For this reason, I enlisted with a Mexican NGO—Servicio Desarollo y Paz, AC (SEDEPAC)—to work in a small rural community (about 100 households) in Mexico's Southern Huastecan region in the municipality of Xilitla, San Luis Potosí. The aim was to informally converse with former migrants and their families about why they emigrated and how they use remitted money. Additionally, I hoped to learn about connections between this local economy and the larger domestic and global economies simply by working, living, and observing life in the community over a period of many weeks. The choice to pursue an informal study of one community was made because I am at an early stage of my dissertation. Because I have observed preliminary evidence from this field study that validates my hypothesis, further fieldwork during 2006-7 will be more encompassing and systematic, involving the administration of surveys throughout a host of communities in various Mexican states.

The decision as to which community I would be living in was decided by SEDEPAC. The NGO knew that I was investigating themes of migration, but was not aware of the specifics of my research. In this sense, my placement was made blindly and not in an effort to accommodate the prior work discussed above. Once in the community, my plan was to ask as few questions as possible. More than anything I wanted to listen and resist the temptation to seek particular answers. I quickly found that questions on my part were rarely necessary, as most people were willing to talk at length about their decisions to migrate without any prompting or follow-ups.

In my conversations with the community's two primary political leaders and a host of other community members, I became accustomed to hearing two general perspectives. To the question of why people from this community emigrate to the US, most of the younger respondents told me that they left because a family member or good friend went before them: they saw a lucrative opportunity and an established means to achieving that opportunity. This response supports two important theories in the migration literature. Network theory holds that migration is perpetuated by the social links established by those who have already migrated and those remaining in origin communities (Massey et al. 1998). Also, another theory holds that people migrate and remit money due to relative deprivation experienced amongst fellow members within a community. People observe the wealth created when other community members work abroad and therefore seek to attain similar levels of wealth by migrating themselves (Stark 1991).

Still, for the purposes of my research, I found the most interesting answers to come from the elder community members. These men were some of the first to leave the community over one decade ago and were able to offer the foundational economic reasons as to why people started going to the United States. Time and again, these elder respondents referred to the drop in the price of coffee in the early 1990s. Traditionally, coffee has been the most important source of income to this community. Until the late-1980s, coffee prices held at a level that could support, albeit modestly, life for growers and their households. However, as the 1990s began, coffee prices dropped drastically. To this day, coffee prices earned by farmers in this community are about half of what they were in the late 1980s. This is despite a substantial price increase since January 2005.

3.2 Coffee Production in Mexico: From Regulation to Liberalization

The farmers in the small communities of this municipality, along with those in the nearby municipalities of Aquismón and Tamazunchale, produce about ninety percent of the coffee grown in the state of San Luis Potosí (Juarez 1998). For these rural areas, where coffee stands as the number one cash crop, it is estimated that coffee revenues are depended on for over half of household income (Ponette 2001). According to study of a coffee growing community in Aquismón, incomes from coffee production are primarily used to fund the basic household provisions that cannot be obtained through the common practice of subsistence farming (Ponette 2001). Additionally, however, the ability to engage in subsistence farming is often contingent upon coffee revenues because farming tools, rented land, and hired labor are frequently purchased with this money (Early n.d.: 134).

Dependency on coffee is rooted in two factors that make diversification and alternating between crops difficult for most small farmers. First, landholdings in rural communities are limited and often only able to sufficiently accommodate one cash-producing crop. Second, coffee production begins with a large initial investment of both time and money. It can take five years before a coffee grower is able to begin selling his crop due to coffee's lengthy maturation phase and decades before a grower pays off his original debts. (Early n.d.: 56) Hence, the decision to dedicate land to coffee production is a lasting one because farmers must continue to make use of available land as to pay off investments and avoid new income risks.

Up until the 1960s, the income of coffee producers were largely determined by free market forces and prone to unexpected booms and busts that followed changes in global supply and demand. To stabilize prices in the international coffee market, the world's dominant coffee producing countries worked to establish the International Coffee Organization (ICO). The ICO was founded with the aim of keeping prices at a consistent and sustainable level by maintaining strict supply quotas amongst member producing countries—a regulatory strategy referred to as "restraint of competition" (Bates 1997: 25). The involvement of the United States, as the most powerful coffee importing country, made the successful operation of the ICO possible. Under predominately Cold War political motivations, the United States ratified the International Coffee Agreement in 1963, which in turn prompted smaller coffee importing countries to join the ICO out of fear of market exclusion. In effect, the survival of the ICO pivoted upon importing members' promise only to buy the more limited and expensive supply of coffee provided by member exporters (Bates 1997: 125-135).

The Mexican government as well sought domestic solutions to coffee market instability by establishing the Mexican Coffee Institute (INMECAFÉ) in 1958. However, it was not until the 1970s, and the economic devastation caused by a dramatic price downswing in the 1960s, that INMECAFÉ began focusing its regulatory efforts beyond simply buying coffee at guaranteed prices from a small number of coffee processors (Early n.d.: 110). In the 1970s, INMECAFÉ began organizing small farmers into local groups, providing production-enhancing support—such as pesticides, seedlings, and growing technologies—as well as offering credit and guaranteed prices directly to small farmers as an alternative to the low prices and expensive credit offered by private regional buyers (Hernández 1999: 88-89).

In sum, INMECAFÉ intervened to help small Mexican growers avoid price taking and become more competitive in the domestic purchasing market, while the ICO intervened to maintain price stability in the world market. Despite the successes of these programs, the emerging prevalence of neoliberal economics in the late-1980s caused a reversion to and reliance upon market forces. With this normative shift, both the ICO and INMECAFÉ were abandoned. Under pressure from U.S. business that feared competition from foreign firms buying and selling cheaper coffee produced in non-ICO member countries, and with its general emphasis on free market economics, the Reagan administration essentially made a renewal of the 1989 International Coffee Agreement impossible (Bates 1997: 172-175). With US nonparticipation, the ICO collapsed and its production quotas were no longer in effect. This circumstance was met by the increasing efficiency and productivity of coffee growers in Vietnam, a non-ICO member country. Hence, the result of the ICO's breakup was unconstrained exportation of coffee in the world market by former ICO members, new market competition from non-ICO members, and a drop in prices to less than half their previous value.

In Mexico, INMECAFÉ was dismantled over a four-year period, beginning in 1989, by the Salinas administration. As part of a larger economic liberalization project that resulted most notably in the passage of NAFTA, the American-trained economists of the Salinas government ended or scaled back the subsidies, credit, and guaranteed prices to producers of coffee and other agricultural products (Foley 1995). The end to INMECAFÉ's centralized regulation of the coffee market meant that prices received by Mexican farmers came to vary from place to place depending upon the level of regional political organization and regulation taken to fill the vacuum left by INMECAFÉ's absence (Snyder 1999). This fragmentation left many small coffee farmers only with the option of accepting the prices and terms of credit offered by less sympathetic regional buyers, who in turn were seeking to secure healthy profits in light of the global price decrease (Hernández 1999: 90).

Therefore, in the early 1990s, Mexican coffee farmers faced a tripartite economic crisis essentially stemming from global and Mexican economic liberalization programs. First, international deregulation and the end of country production quotas resulted in increased supply by former ICO member countries. Second, deregulation allowed the introduction of new market competition in export markets from non-ICO members like Vietnam. The rise in global supply culminated in a sudden and drastic decrease in the price importers offered for coffee. The these two factors were exacerbated by a domestic deregulation process in Mexico that left many farmers without the technological support, subsidies, and credit that had been needed to sustain their growing activities. As well, economically isolated rural farmers lost direct access to the international market, as fair purchasing and price guarantees by the central government became privatized and relegated to profit-seeking regional buyers.

3.3 Emigrating and Remitting as Means to Recovering Lost Coffee Revenues

Respondents in the Southern Huastecan community repeatedly told me that the drop in the price of coffee marks the point at which large-scale emigration flows to the United States began. The initial price drop was made more problematic by the fact that the Mexican government was no longer in the business of supporting small growers. Even as coffee prices rose in the late-1990s, small farmers in this community still found themselves at a loss because, without government aid and support, they were unable to sufficiently compete alongside larger global producers. The need to be more competitive stems from the fact that, for this particular community, government purchasing at guaranteed prices came to be replaced by the activities of one monopolistic buyer, Nestlé. As a private global conglomerate, Nestlé's price offerings are based not only on considerations of global supply, but also quality comparisons with coffee produced throughout the world. This profit maximizing strategy is contrasted with the purchasing approach of INMECAFÉ, whose primary motivations can be assumed to have been rooted in the welfare and sustainability of small Mexican coffee farms and the Mexican coffee industry.

Because of these factors, community members could no longer make a living on what was their most reliable cash crop. Hence, beginning in the early 1990s, the remittances of male family members working in the U.S. soon came to replace coffee as households' primary form of income. Remittances continue to be this community's most reliable form of income, as fewer and fewer families engage in farming activities for purposes beyond household subsistence.

4. Conclusion: Implications for Future Research

For this single community, I observed contextualized aspects of what was predicted in my previous theoretical and statistical work. Liberalization and deregulation in the international and domestic coffee trades brought injury to this community's traditionally most significant form of income. In order to soften the blow of the international price decrease or allow families the means to cope with this income disruption, the Mexican government could have pursued various options, such as: (1) heavily subsidizing coffee production; (2) providing technologies to augment small farmers' level of competitiveness; (3) offering job training programs; (4) creating new local jobs or strengthening other local industries; or (5) spending more on social welfare primarily in the form of housing and food aid, as well as healthcare and other forms of social welfare. Instead, the Mexican government withdrew support in its larger program of neoliberal reform, leaving coffee farmers with only one option: to undertake private means toward recovering their lost incomes.

Because the economy is not a lab in which different experiments can be run, it is impossible to know if any one or a combination of these intervening actions by the Mexican government could have prevented the high rates of emigration from this community to the US. However, three things are certain: (1) This community's key source of income was negatively affected by global economic forces; (2) The Mexican government withdrew institutional support, providing little in the way of robust public spending or programs (welfare aid, subsidies, or new job creation) to rectify the economic downturn; (3) Community members began to emigrate to the US *en masse* with the drop in the price of coffee as they could no longer afford to purchase basic goods and services.

Taken together, these three points indicate that it is in the interest for the Mexican government to promote the emigration of its citizens in circumstances where particular industries or economic sectors are negatively affected by global trade competition and the government itself is unable or unwilling to engage in domestic regulation and compensation programs. Because the findings from this field study in many ways match the expectations I had from prior theoretical and statistical research, I plan to continue developing and refining my dissertation research objectives. This field study has alerted me to the very specific nature by which global economic forces may be prompting large-scale international emigration. The fact that coffee prices triggered such an outward movement of people in this single community indicates that my research should closely examine and compare the impact trade liberalization and government intervention have had on certain industries throughout the world and, as well, the influence of these variables on international migration flows. I would like to express my gratitude to the Center for Latin American Social Policy (CLASPO) for its generous support in helping me complete this project. CLASPO Summer Research Funds provided me with the means to spend time in this remote Mexican village and undertake an exploratory project that has been so valuable to the development of my dissertation proposal.

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