

Forging a New Identity:
The Reconstruction of the Mexican Worker Family
In the Context of Transnational Communities

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In the past twenty-five years, the Mexican transnational community has become a major connection in the relationship between the United States of America and Mexico. It has emerged as a viable transitional point, the primary political, economic, and social link between the two countries. Today, the Mexican transnational community serves as an accommodating destination for migrants and, more importantly, as a medium by which migrants can stay connected to their home country, economically and socially, while residing abroad.

The transnational community is a product of modern migration which began after the collapse of the Bracero Program in 1964 (Cerrutti and Massey 2004). This period marks the end to the absolute hegemony of capitalistic enterprise which had established the base of the Mexican transnational community during the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, it marks the beginning of the Mexican transnational community as an entity which controlled its own social and economic development. This new self-determination established by the Mexican laborers in the U.S. enabled Mexicans to better control their lives and their future and, as a result, facilitated the growth of the Mexican transnational community in the U.S. The development of this community continues to define the economic and social parameters for the Mexican worker family, providing it with a new source of income in the form of remittances, which, in turn, redefines the Mexican worker family's goals in terms of social mobility.

This paper will examine the change in the economic model throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. I will begin with a history of Mexican migration to the United States followed with a discussion of the birth of the Mexican transnational community. I

will then discuss the impacts of social networks and remittances on migration, followed by my conclusions.

History of Immigration: Immigration as a Family Survival Strategy (1880-1964)

To understand the Mexican laborer and his family, we must understand his history. The migration of Mexican laborers to the U.S. dates back to the establishment of the current border between the two nations, following the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This treaty split a region that had already established economic links and a commercial network among itself, thus forcing the region to redefine its commercial interactions. The first manifestation of this redefinition was in the form of a free trade agreement between the Mexican state of Tamaulipas and the state of Texas. The interrelation of the region was deepened by Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz who expanded the free trade zone to include the entire border region. By doing so, he thought that the American fortunes which he associated with the capitalistic expansion of the American Southwest would flow over into Mexico. However, the capitalistic expansion of investment and infrastructure failed to yield prosperity in Mexico. In fact, the capitalistic model of the U.S. corporations only served to exasperate the class divisions, creating a rift among the Mexican people; the consequential tension resulted in the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

The Mexican Revolution brought a host of uncertainties for the Mexican people, the most significant of which was economic. Consequently, many Mexican heads of households decided to adapt new survival strategies for their families; they began looking for stability outside of their local economic sphere. Primarily, they looked to the U.S. for economic opportunity while, in turn, American capitalists looked towards Mexico for workers to fill the gaps in their labor force.

At the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. capitalistic expansionism, rooted in increased foreign investment, development of infrastructure in the form of trains, and industrialization, came to dominate the economic policy in Mexico. The American government wanted to expand its markets while the Mexican government wanted to find employment for the large numbers of landless and jobless individuals at home. As a result, both governments facilitated links between the Mexican laborer and the U.S. employer (Pitti 2003). Both parties consummated a marriage of convenience. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Mexican labor began to play an integral role in the American economy while the American economy and the jobs it offered became an integral aspect of the Mexican laborer family's survival strategy.

At first glance, the relationship was ideal: both the American capitalist and the Mexican laborer got what they wanted. The American capitalists knew that native workers would not work in unstable, poorly paid jobs with limited opportunity for advancement, such as those of the agricultural industry (Piore 1979; Portes and Bach 1985 as cited in Massey 1987). However, as Bach (1978) shows, in the Mexicans, the American capitalists found not only willing workers but also workers who met their needs, namely individuals who would work for relatively low wages and not make competitive demands on the agricultural land. Furthermore, American capitalists preferred the Mexicans to other foreigners because they did not organize as other immigrant groups, such as the Japanese, did. Moreover, Mexican workers did not view the jobs offered to them in the negative light that American workers did. For the Mexican worker, any job in the U.S. was a job that paid substantially better than what was available in his homeland. Additionally, the Mexican migrant worker did not look for advancement because, as Massey (1986) points out, he never viewed himself as anything but a member of his home community, thus he considered his stay in the U.S. as temporary. His goal was to accrue wealth in the U.S.

and to return to Mexico, namely at the end of the Mexican Revolution, when the country had gained economic and social stability.

However, upon further review, the relationship between the Mexican worker and the American capitalistic system during the early stages of the twentieth century was incredibly abusive. Despite their vast numbers, Mexican laborers did not have political and social pull (Bach 1978). The capitalistic system understood the need of the Mexican worker to earn a salary regardless of the working conditions and used this need to manipulate him. The position of the Mexican worker was further compromised by both the Mexican and U.S. governments which made no effort to protect the basic rights of the Mexican worker. The Mexican government simply wanted the workers to be employed at any cost, and the U.S. government wanted the business sector in the Southwest to continue to grow. As a result, American companies, with the aid of the laws created to benefit them in their capitalist enterprises, often exploited the Mexican worker for their own gain. For instance, with the aid of the Immigration Act of 1917, employers could threaten workers with deportation, thus stripping them of any bargaining powers they may have had, while forcing them into accepting harsh working conditions with low pay (Bach 1978). Nonetheless, since there existed a large income inequality between Mexico and the U.S., the Mexican laborer accepted these conditions for the first half of the twentieth century and filled the vacant jobs of the expanding agricultural industry of the American Southwest. Mexican workers quickly comprised the majority of employees in most agricultural and low skill jobs in the Southwest. Working in the U.S. was a strategy employed by a head of household to better his family; by doing so, the Mexican laborer earned more than he could in Mexico and, as a result, he could save more capital and invest it in his family which remained back in his home community.

Although the Mexican worker played an important role in the American economy, he did not always receive a ready welcome in the U.S. The capitalist system embraced the Mexican worker when it needed him and pushed him away when it did not. The Mexican government excluded and ignored Mexican laborers up through the late 1980s, thus allowing them to be manipulated throughout the twentieth century by the volatile American capitalistic machine. With the onset of the Great Depression of 1929, Mexicans in America faced much discrimination and hostility. This anti-Mexican sentiment, coupled with the success of Lázaro Cárdenas and the economic boom in Mexico, led many workers to willingly repatriate. Later, with the wartime needs of the 1940s, the U.S. once again beckoned the Mexican worker into the American agricultural fields. Although Mexico was trying to modernize the country, it had limited resources and so was forced to concentrate its efforts. As a result, the rural and agricultural regions were left at the bottom of the totem pole, leaving the individuals of these regions to continue their migration patterns (Sandos and Cross 1983). The capital returned by the migrants was a good source of revenue for developmental purposes that the Mexican government did not have the ability to provide. Consequently, the U.S. and Mexican governments jointly established a guest worker program, commonly known as the Bracero Program, designed to fill the labor needs of each nation. With the Bracero Program in place, the Mexican worker family had an avenue that allowed it to engage in the migration pattern which had become central to its survival strategy.

Unfortunately, the program became a medium for government corruption and the exploitation of the laborer. In Mexico, the work visas were issued in conjunction with bribes paid. Plus, in the United States, the capitalistic model, that prioritized profits rather than workers' rights, once again stripped the Mexican laborer of his leverage by allowing American

employers to subject the *braceros* to abuses, such as sub-par work environments, sudden deportations, and underpaid or unpaid salaries. As a result, many *braceros* skipped out on their contracts to remain in the country, overstaying the terms of their visas and thus becoming illegal immigrants, working at any job they could find. Others followed their lead and sought to come to the U.S. by any means possible; the entry into the U.S. through illegal channels increased dramatically. For the Mexican worker, the risks of navigating the illegal migration channels were no worse than the abuses sustained under the government-sanctioned program. Due to the wage disparity that continued between Mexico and the U.S., workers realized that by working in the U.S., in any capacity, they could monetarily support their families back in Mexico in a manner better than working within their homeland.

The Death of the Bracero Program and the Birth of the Modern Transnational Community

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s identified the manipulative practices which were linked to the Bracero Program, such as the forced deportations under Operation Wetback, and exposed these practices for what they were, namely modern day slavery. Hence, the program was unilaterally eliminated by the U.S. government in 1964. This was the first time that the capitalistic machine was held in check by the U.S. government in any capacity. However, due to the needs of the Texan agricultural sector, which complained that the loss of the Mexican worker would be detrimental to its existence, the U.S. government passed the Texas Proviso which continued the visa worker program in Texas, which resulted in the continuation of the evident problems of the Bracero Program. Nonetheless, despite its shortcomings, the Bracero Program was instrumental in establishing transnational links between the U.S. and Mexico. Doug Massey (1986b) shows that men who gained experience through the Bracero Program used

their experience to establish direct links with their home communities, circumventing the Mexican and American governments' authority to contract undocumented workers from their home communities. This connection led to an increase in illegal immigration to the U.S. from Mexico, a trend that continued from the 1960s onward. Massey further notes that the vast influx of Mexicans during the Bracero Program established family connections, or kin based social networks (Glick 1999), which were previously scarce.

In 1965, legislation which proved critical to the formation of a visible transnational community, the Hart-Celler Act, was passed. Prior to this act, nations in the western hemisphere, such as Mexico, were exempt from the quota system, but now even Mexican migrants were subject to a quota. Nevertheless, the Hart-Celler Act served to strengthen the social links and family connections begun by the Bracero Program. The Hart-Celler act legalized the status of 2.7 million immigrants in the U.S., many of whom were Mexicans. At the same time, it allowed for the reunification of families. An increased rate of migration stemmed from these friend and family connections, and, in turn, these connections developed effective social networks which further facilitated immigration. The emergence of these social networks marked a notable change from the period preceding the Bracero Program during which there were very few such links. The development of the social networks instilled a tradition of migration in the Mexican family and encouraged subsequent generations to consider working abroad as a family survival strategy (Massey 1987).

At the same time, the growth of these social networks marked the rise of the modern Mexican transnational community. It emerged as the primary political, social, and economic link between the U.S. and Mexico. Domestically, the 1960s saw an increased political involvement of Mexican Americans. Organizations that were established in the first half of the century, such

as the National Council of La Raza and the American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), formed lobbies that began to pressure for Hispanic issues. Moreover, for the first time, Hispanic members were elected to congress which, in turn, led to the establishment of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (Panchon and Moore 1981). Internationally, the transnational community served as a viable transitional point between Mexico and the U.S.; the social networks which tied the community in the U.S. to the one in Mexico enabled people to migrate at reduced costs (Massey 1987). Furthermore, these social networks created an increased responsibility for the migrants living in the United States who completed the migration cycle (which will be discussed later), by earning and remitting capital, and, often times, ultimately returning to their home communities.

In short, from the 1960s onward, the ties of the social networks augmented the rate of immigration and, with the increase of migrants, the transnational community also expanded. Migrants began to redefine themselves within the context of the transnational community. For the first time, migrants identified themselves with the community in which they worked in addition to the community they left behind in Mexico. They visibly participated in the receptor community but, at the same time, continued their support of their home community. Through the social networks, the transnational migrants engaged in building connections, forming institutions, conducting transactions, and influencing the lives which were interconnected by the networks (Glick Schiller et al. 1995).

From the Hart-Celler Act of 1964 until the mid 1980s, in spite of the restrictive measures embodied in that act, Mexican migration continued to increase. The economic difficulties in Mexico continued to encourage migrants to make use of the social networks which helped them to migrate to the United States. Migration was easier than ever before. Migrants passed their

knowledge along through the social networks which helped sustain undocumented immigration, disseminating information about travel strategies and work availability (Reichert and Massey 1979; Massey 1986a). Jobs were not scarce; many low-paying, unstable jobs, shunned by native workers, were available to the Mexican laborer. Notably, Mexican immigrants continued to form a critical element in the agricultural economies of Texas and California. Unfortunately, as Cerrutti and Massey (2004) note, this time period coincided with economic distress, high rates of unemployment, increased inflation, stagnant wages, and rising inequality in the United States. Many Americans associated these negative developments to the substantial increase in illegal immigration, forcing the Regan administration to mitigate these circumstances. The outcome was the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 which was designed to combat the concerns of the American public while appeasing groups affected by such legislation. To combat the use of illegal immigrants, IRCA allotted new resources for the Border Patrol and established penalties for employers who hired illegal immigrants. Conversely, it granted general amnesty to long-term undocumented immigrants and put into place a legalization program specifically designed for undocumented agricultural workers, actions which garnered the support of the Latino and civil rights groups and the agricultural industry of the Southwest (Cerrutti and Massey 2004). The IRCA continued with the precedent established by the Hart-Celler Act and extended legal immigration as a means to reunite families. Furthermore, it solidified immigration as a family survival strategy for many Mexicans as the social networks were further solidified and expanded by the legalization of previously illegal residents.

The Migration Process

Migration is a social process that develops based on the experiences of the migrants and the evolution of their needs. Massey (1987) describes four segments of the process: departure, repetition, settlement, and return. The first departure segment was provoked by the Mexican Revolution and its disruption of quotidian life. Migrants from this period did not search for permanent relocation but, instead, looked to accrue wealth and then return and reestablish themselves in their homeland. These early workers engaged in seasonal migration in which they came to the U.S. during the agricultural work cycle. They viewed themselves solely as members of their home community and not participants of the receptor society (Massey 1986a); their goal was to earn money and to return with it to reestablish themselves in Mexico.

However, as the migrants realized that their wage earning potential in the United States was superior to that in Mexico, the repetition stage began. The migrant returned to work for another season drawn by the potential to earn more money abroad. Migrants, naturally, reused the connections they had established on previous trips. As long as job instability continued in Mexico along with the economic disparities between the two countries, Mexican workers returned to the U.S. with the same goals as before, namely to earn money abroad and to return home. But sustained participation in the repetition stage caused the workers to invariably develop stronger social and economic ties to the host society. These ties prompted the formation of social networks which served as bridges that linked the home community and the receptor community. With the presence of these links, workers felt better connected to their homeland while abroad and felt more comfortable in remaining away from their home for longer periods of time. These social links expanded through the increase of Mexicans in the U.S. coupled with immigration reforms and the appearance of organizations designed to assist the migrant worker. The migrant workers themselves assisted in the repetition of the cycle by passing on the lessons

they had learned to new generations of migrant workers searching for opportunity; this practice served as the motivation for a new generation of migrants to engage in the departure stage.

With extended residence in the host nation came the expansion of social connections in the U.S, which encouraged workers to engage in the settlement stage. This growth and consequential strengthening of the social networks enabled some workers to shift their strategies from remitting all of their extra income back home with a quick return to bringing some of their family members to the United States for a prolonged stay. Families could now make their decision to go to the United States based on information they received via these social networks. Concerns beyond the job market were explored, including education, the potential to become a citizen, and economic and social stability (Orellana et al. 2001). Panchon and Moore (1981) show that while many families reunited in the United States, only ten percent of them became U.S. citizens when given the opportunity. By and large, the Mexican labor family still envisioned an eventual return to their place of origin. The reunion of the family in the U.S. was simply a strategy to combat the difficulties created by the separation which resulted with the departure stage and which was prolonged by the repetition stage. These difficulties can be explained by Bryan Roberts' (1995) observation that the Latin American family typically operates as a cohesive unit that emphasizes the relative responsibilities of the various members. As a result, Mexicans make decisions which are for their collective benefit; being united helps the decision-making process.

The presence of a family unit in the U.S. led to the expansion of the social network by providing more relations abroad. Moreover, its presence in the Mexican transnational community led to a further strengthening of the community in the United States. With their families along side them, workers now invested most of their capital in the U.S. instead of

remitting it back home. In the past, the money remitted went to providing for the family; but with the family present, the survival strategy was one of creating the best life possible here in the U.S. where they enjoyed economic and social security that was not always present in Mexico. And this stability was further solidified with the passing of legislation that included provisions for the unification of families. With family blocs present in the U.S., the use of kin networks expanded and allowed relations such as uncles and cousins to migrate (Glick 1999). Additionally, with integration of families in the Mexican transnational communities came the rise of organizations within the community which catered to the new needs of families and, as a result, expanded the Mexican transnational community.

With the family unit grounded in the U.S., two destination paths became prominent: that of eventual return to Mexico and that of assimilation into the United States. The pattern of return is enabled by the links the social networks provide, keeping migrants connected with their origins while firmly rooted in American society. Despite living abroad for an extended period of time, many immigrants indeed return to live and work or to retire in their home communities (Rhoads 1979 as quoted in Massey 1987). The other pattern is that of assimilation. Mexican families become so rooted into their American identity that returning to Mexico would uproot the family. That is not to say that these families ignore their identity; in fact, most embrace their Mexican heritage. Many of these migrants continue to support their home community, contributing monies for causes in their homeland. Smith (2006) also shows that despite settling down permanently in the U.S., Mexicans in the transnational communities can also remain linked with their home communities by establishing social organizations that focus on the concerns of these communities. Such organizations use the social networks which comprise the Mexican transnational community to raise money and to plan betterment projects for the home

communities and to raise support for the Mexican population's cultural identity.

Remittances: Patterns and Usages

The economic benefits associated with migration are central to the Mexican worker family's survival strategy. These benefits evolved over time, changing as new needs evolved and as migrants engaged in the different stages of migration. Since each stage has a specific set of circumstances and mentalities, it manifests different patterns of the exchange of capital (Warnes 1992, as quoted in Conway and Cohen 1998). In the beginning of the migration towards the U.S., heads of households were enticed to leave their homeland to work in the United States with the prospect of earning enough money to improve their social status in Mexico. Their goal was to save as much money as possible and bring it back home with them, returning to Mexico as quickly as possible (Massey 1986b). Since these migrants, being heads of households, had economic responsibilities, they chose to invest their entire income in their homes. They paid for their basic subsistence needs and with the money left over they invested in land or upgrades for their homes, commodities they could not easily afford if they were working in Mexico (Itzigsohn 1995). Thus, for most workers who had migrated, it became obvious that migrating to the U.S. and working there, even on a periodic basis, provided better economic opportunity than working in Mexico and, consequently, a better opportunity to provide for their families.

Evidently, with the realization that the earning potential in the United States was far greater than that in Mexico, even after factoring in risks such as working without documents, the repetition stage of immigration developed. Original migrants returned to the U.S. to repeat what they had imagined as a one time event (Massey 1986b). The jobs available in the U.S. were relatively high paying and provided for the survival of many rural Mexican households in the

face of limited domestic income opportunities (Taylor 1987). In light of this fact, for these households, migration was the best survival strategy available. With repeat migration, the social and economic links used by the workers deepened. These links formed into social networks (previously discussed) which served as a multifaceted infrastructure through which remittances flowed. Remittances, defined as the portion of migrant workers' earnings sent back to their fatherland during their working life or upon retirement (Inter-American Development Bank 2006), flowed through wire transfer services and courier services established to help migrants send money back home.

The nature of the exchange of money between migrants and their fatherland depends upon the status of the migrant in the U.S. In regards to migrants who wished to continue with the traditional pattern of earning and returning, Glick (1999) states that these networks, since they comprehensively link the U.S. and Mexico, helped temporary Mexican migrants in realizing their objective by linking them with family who facilitated their stay in the U.S. At the same time, Glick shows that the social networks also helped migrants establish stronger social ties which encouraged them to remain in the receptor country for longer periods of time. Family members in the U.S. provided new immigrants with a stable home, while connecting them with jobs with more longevity. Migrants could now reduce their trips back and forth to Mexico and thereby maximize their earnings further. Moreover, as these networks gained efficacy, they attracted a new breed of migrant worker: young individuals without families who were looking for financial opportunity, during times of economic struggle in Mexico. Since these young workers were not supporting families back home, they did not remit. Their goal was to earn enough money perhaps to marry well and improve their social standing or to finance luxuries they could not afford if working in Mexico (Conway and Cohen 1998). However, once these

workers married, it was possible that they would enter the repetition stage of migration and begin remitting or they would enter the settlement stage and settle in the U.S. for an extended period of time, which would decrease their propensity to send remittances. Remittances always decreased when families settled in the United States, obviously because the family, which the remittances supported, was now with the worker.

Nonetheless, even today, the Mexican transnational community continues to support families in Mexico. Orozco (2002) argues that remittances remain one of the most important links between emigrant Latino and Latin America. With Mexico being the largest remittance receiving nation in the world, remittances continue to be a central aspect of the Mexican economy. Eighteen per cent of the Mexican population receives remittances (WOCCU 2004) with the amount remitted totaling over twenty billion U.S. dollars. In Mexico, this total has become more significant than income generated from tourism and direct foreign investment. These figures sustain themselves by the continuous support of vast number of migrants to the United States, which today numbers around ten million people (IADB; MIF 2006).

Furthermore, remittances from the U.S. to Mexico have expanded past the sphere of the worker sending money back to his family. The social networks are now bigger than ever and involve a host of organizations, including more than one hundred financial transfer companies, which support the financial transactions of the Mexican transnational community (IADB; MIF 2006). Additionally, hometown associations (HTAs) have emerged as a means for organizational remitting. These organizations fulfill a variety of tasks which center on sustaining their cultural identity and the welfare of their people, both in the U.S. and Mexico (Orozco 2002; Smith 2006).

The Development of a Transnational Civil Society

The civil society of the Mexican transnational community has emerged as an important actor in the welfare of families. Olvera (2004) identifies four ways in which a "vibrant civil society" helps to strengthen the Mexican transnational community while benefiting its members whether they reside in the U.S. or Mexico. First, civil society stabilizes the rule of law. Second, it creates the public spaces that aid in the discourse between social actors and political actors, such as that which is created by NGOs and HTAs. Third, civil society further develops the connections of the social network. Finally, with an even stronger social network, civil society can focus on generating a sense of Mexican identity and respect within the U.S.

Within the developing civil society, many organizations emerged to defend the rights of the workers affected by governmental policies. By doing so, these organizations accomplished two goals. First, they invoked the rule of law, which helped to create a sense of stability in Mexico which lacked stability for much of the twentieth century. Second, they established a dialog between social agents and political agents, which has led to increased transparency in the political arena. Organizations such as the Forum for Mutual Support (FAM) and the Convergence of Civic Organizations for Democracy (Convergencia) pressured for the deregulation of the political system that had led to the instability experienced by the Mexican laborer for more than one hundred years (Olvera 2004). Moreover, the deregulation of the political system caused the hegemonic structure of power that the PRI had enjoyed since its inception to decline, allowing for the political opposition to mount a viable campaign for and eventually win the presidency, with the 2000 election of *panista* Vicente Fox (Rubio 2004). This victory marked a change in the corrupt practices that had defined Mexican politics for decades and that had led to economic crises and the subsequent exoduses by many workers throughout Mexico's modern history.

As a result of the increased participation of social actors in the political arena, politicians have sought to win their support as a voting bloc by addressing their needs. In 1998, the Mexican government extended dual citizenship rights to Mexicans living abroad, a shift in the political exclusion practices of the twentieth century. Today, one of the primary goals of the Mexican government includes the legitimization of the Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S.; it is one of the objectives in the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (PMCE). Established in 1990, the PMCE has made a conscious effort to increase the links between the Mexican government and Mexicans abroad in order to assist them with the problems of day-to-day life (Figueroa-Aramoni 1999). The ability to be seen as an American in the U.S. and a Mexican in Mexico has given the transmigrant who naturalizes a great deal of leverage, allowing him unrestricted access to the benefits in each country. With this freedom of movement, even more worker families are able to benefit from migration, both directly, by participating, and indirectly, by receiving remittances and support from the newly effective civil society.

Conclusions

In examining the history of the Mexican migrant, it is evident that for decades he was the object of the whims of the capitalistic machine, but has since formed a viable community and is able to control his future. At the turn of the twentieth century, many rural Mexican workers struggled to find work and accepted the open opportunities available in the United States. The converse problem was true in the U.S. where the agricultural economy was desperate for workers. As a result, this period saw the manifestation of various patterns that would run throughout several decades until present day: consistently, the Mexican government used the American job market to satisfy the labor needs of its workers and the American industry, namely

agriculture, in times of need, embraced the Mexican laborers. Consequently, the Mexican migrant worker played a central role in the economy of both the U.S. and Mexico. He was the engine that motored American agriculture and he was the source of an influx of capital into the Mexican economy.

The worker-employer relationship was recognized by both governments and because each government identified benefits in allowing the lopsided relationship to continue, there was a joint effort to keep the Mexican laborer in his subordinate role while the capitalistic enterprise continued to reap benefits. The American capitalistic model wanted unrestricted access to the Mexican worker in order to maintain its agricultural economy. And since the capitalistic model only concerned itself with maximizing profit margins, it engaged in abusive and manipulative tactics to achieve that end. The model was very much a part of the Mexican government's strategy; Mexican politicians understood that by protecting the Mexican laborer in the U.S., the flow of capital into Mexico would be jeopardized. Accordingly, the Mexican government all but turned its back on the migrant worker. Despite that, many Mexicans engaged in migration in search of stability and better wages which were unavailable in Mexico. In working stateside, the Mexican migrant worker was able to buy commodities he never could afford while working in Mexico. It was the best strategy for providing for his family.

With little support from the Mexican government, the Mexican migrant worker was forced to fend for himself; he navigated the uncertain waters of migration by establishing routes and connections on his own. These connections in time blossomed into viable social networks with the passage of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. In turn, these networks became the basis for the Mexican transnational community. The social networks that evolved are multifaceted linkages between the U.S. and Mexico. They have revolutionized the migration strategy of Mexicans.

First, they facilitated the movement of people. Second, they enabled the transfer of monies, that is to say remittances. And as a result of these two characteristics, social networks have turned migration into a self-sustaining process with a continued flow of new inputs that are stimulated by the current participants of the process. The positive effects of migration, such as an increased standard of living, which is visible among families who use remittances to pay for items they ordinarily would be able to afford, the elevated economic status of return migrants, and the benefits of living abroad, which is heard of through the echoes of the social networks, continue to attract new migrants daily.

Because of the expansion of the social networks, the family structure has not changed significantly. Social networks allow for the relative ease of reunification of families. Either families relocate to the host nation or the migrant ultimately returns. While abroad and separated from their immediate families, most migrants remain with people they know, often time relations and, furthermore, they maintain solid contact with their families back home. Nevertheless, although the fundamental composition of families has not changed, their social status has generally improved. Remittances are invested in improving the household both in terms of its immediate needs and its status. Remittances have allowed some families to go from being in ruins to being prosperous. Such developments encourage many to climb the social ladder that, without the aid of the migrant structure, would be too slippery to manage. Immigrants who return tend to return because they have saved enough to move up the social ladder either for the purpose of marrying or for establishing themselves back in the home community with more prestige. In regards to the out-migration, most families who migrate to the United States enjoy a life which is better in comparison to what they had in Mexico.

Most notably, civil society has especially blossomed in recent years. It consists of

organizations that have further drawn Mexico and the U.S. together. HTAs are manifestations of what will happen in the future as more and more Mexicans decide to call the U.S. home; they will continue to support their origins and to preserve their identity. The social networks that are the foundation of the Mexican transnational community are strong enough to maintain the cultural links which Mexican Americans have with their roots. The social capital, which consists of the skills and cultural elements of each end of the spectrum and which forms the Mexican transnational community, will continue to cast its mark upon both sides of the transnational bridge. Consequently, the face of many American cities will change; they will exhibit a definite Mexican flare. Through this enduring pride in their heritage, Mexican migrants will continue to support their fatherland, thereby increasing the prospects of the original home community and jumpstarting the cycle of migration once again.

Just as past events have spawned sectors of the Mexican transnational community as it exists today and transformed the way people migrate and the way they form their survival strategies, current events will lead to further changes and yet another community will emerge. Soon there will be a new community that is comprised entirely of Mexican Americans born in the United States. It will mark a departure from consistent trends in the Mexican transnational community in terms of relating directly to Mexico. Nevertheless, this community will maintain a sense of cultural pride while permeating American society. However, due to the proximity of Mexico to the U.S., and the current strength of the Mexican social networks and transnational community, it is very likely that the current migration trends that cause Mexicans to seek opportunity will continue for as long as the capitalistic vectors that have historically provoked migration to the U.S. continue.

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