

## *Mexicans on the Move: Migration and Return in Rural Mexico*

by Frances A. Rothstein  
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This book describes and analyzes migration patterns between San Cosme Mazatecochco in central Mexico and a community in the U.S. state of New Jersey. Rothstein's anthropological research on Mazatecochco began four decades ago. Although migration was not at the center of her initial research, her long-term knowledge of the community—both in Mexico and the U.S.—allows her to provide a comprehensive analysis of the causes and consequences of emigration and return. Her analysis focuses on the reasons, profiles, and ways in which returnees are reintegrated, by examining the way gender, family, and social networks shape the migration experiences in the U.S. and upon return.

The book comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 briefly discusses the various theoretical approaches for explaining migration and return in the context of the transformations that have taken place since the 1980s. Chapter 2 explores the effects of globalization and neoliberalism. The rural population previously employed in agriculture became factory workers, and the decline of the textile industry and the national economic crisis served as push factors. This chapter also highlights aspects that differentiate migration patterns in Mazatecochco from others: a relatively new sending area, a community with a large share of the population engaged in factory work, and a community where women migrated in order to find better economic opportunities rather than following their spouses or parents. Chapter 3 explores how life in New Jersey – defined by family, work, and leisure patterns – has changed over time, while chapter 4 explores what happens in these same dimensions on migrants' return. It discusses who comes back, why, and how they fare. The book concludes with a chapter with reflections on globalization and migration.

*What do we know about return migration from the United States to Mexico?* Recent estimated zero net migration rates are the result of a decline in emigration from Mexico and an increase in arrivals from the United States (Passel et al. 2012). This occurred during the past decade as a result of increasing deportations, enforcement, and an adverse economic and sociopolitical environment (Masferrer and Roberts 2016; Villarreal 2014). The old patterns involving circular or seasonal migration by male workers evolved into family migration and longer stays (Riosmena 2004). Economic factors are not the sole determinants of the decision to emigrate or go back; family reunification has proved to be of paramount importance for both emigration and return (Van Hook and Zhang 2011). The flow from the U.S. has increasingly included a large share of U.S.-born Mexican minors joining returnees; eligible for dual citizenship, they have not necessarily lived in Mexico before (Medina and Menjivar 2015; Zúñiga and Hamann 2015). In addition to changes in the composition of the flows, modifications in the geographical patterns of emigration (Riosmena and Massey 2012) and return have been documented, with a portion of returnees settling in places other than their communities of origin (Masferrer and Roberts 2012).

*How does Rothstein's book contribute to this literature?* The case study of San Cosme Mazatecochco addressed in *Mexicans on the Move: Migration and Return in Rural Mexico* explains the phenomenon of return to Mexico from an anthropological perspective. This complements results from the studies using mostly nationally representative

data summarized above. It analyzes some of the mechanisms behind the shift from male circular migration to increasing settlement in the U.S. and family formation, as well as family reunification, return, and reintegration, which are not always possible to explore through quantitative research. These mechanisms are clearly analyzed in the third and fourth chapters.

Key to understanding these mechanisms is knowing (a) how gender shapes social networks and social capital; (b) how weak and strong ties determine the experience of hard times in the U.S. as well as returning and re-integrating into the community; and (c) how the urban environment of the community facilitates return. By providing this information, Rothstein contributes to the growing literatures on gender and migration—particularly gender and return migration—as well as migration and social networks. A great deal of research on Mexico-U.S. migration has focused on emigration from rural areas and traditional sending states. However, emigration from new sending states and urban areas has increased over time. The unique position of Mazatecochco, located in the Metropolitan Area of Puebla-Tlaxcala—the fourth largest agglomeration in the country and 140km away from Mexico City—makes for an interesting case study that addresses the continuities between rural and urban areas that are often overlooked in migration studies.

*What is missing from the book vis-à-vis the recent trends of return migration?* Deportations. The book overlooks immigration enforcement enacted through border apprehensions, deportations with or without a criminal order, and local migration control measures. Why are deportations only mentioned at the end, in the conclusions? I do not know. Given its increasing importance during the period under study, I expected this issue to be addressed much earlier and more frequently. Also missing from the book, and partially associated with deportation, is the increasing number of U.S.-born minors and other family members that accompany returnees to Mexico, and the challenges they face. Did Rothstein consciously decide not to distinguish between modes of return in order to avoid the complex distinction between voluntary and involuntary return? Did participants avoid talking about deportations due to the stigma they carry? Is it the case that very few returnees to Mazatecochco were deportees? Is it that they mostly settled in New Jersey, which differs from other destinations? Are they returning somewhere else upon deportation? Did focusing on fieldwork carried out in the community of origin mean that this population was overlooked? Are deportees more likely to re-emigrate to the U.S. and therefore not observed in the community of origin? I wonder what differences would be found, if any, if the fieldwork had been conducted by following migrants back to Mexico even if they did not return to their home community.

Mexican return migration is an area of study that has recently received increased attention. It is expected to increase, partially due to U.S. President Donald Trump's threats of mass deportations. But enforcement is by no means a new phenomenon. Deportations reached a peak during Obama's administration, and it is uncertain how immigration policy will unfold after January 2017. However, the mechanisms explored and analyzed in Rothstein's book shed light on the mechanisms behind these issues. For example, I would expect social networks and social capital to continue to be key for migrants in coping with a likely adverse context in the U.S. and reintegration into Mexico. The migration experience in the U.S., values and attitudes towards returnees, and gender relations and expectations, as well as the economic and political institutions, will define how returnees fare back home.

For future editions, I would suggest revising the citations and references. I detected a few mistakes due to my own pedantic egocentrism! There is a typo in my last name on page 9—it says Masferrar instead of Masferrer—and later in the same paragraph, the author makes a mistake by writing my name as Massey—it says “Massey and Roberts” when referencing a comment we made on the entrepreneurial shift of returnees (which is not necessarily central to the arguments of our article, either).

*Mexicans on the Move: Migration and Return in Rural Mexico* is a short book and a quick read that provides a good overview of emigration and return from a non-traditional community in Mexico. Scholars interested in Mexico-U.S. migration or return migration in general will find it stimulating. Its price might deter some students from buying a hardcover edition, but I would definitely recommend submitting a request to the university library to purchase a copy if money is an issue.

## References

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